

# **The Adaptation of the Character of Shylock in *Shylock Is My Name* and *Operation Shylock***

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims at studying the Jewish writers' adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* and how they have created a history of critical readings that gave new insights to “Shylock”, the Shakespearian character. In addition, the thesis studies how various social, religious, and political forces dictate and guide such critical implementations. It is the purpose of this thesis to study two adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice: Shylock Is My Name* (2016) and *Operation Shylock* (1993) in an attempt to figure out to what extent Philip Roth and Howard Jacobson have given a new and more acceptable identity to the eminent character of Shylock by depicting him as a victim rather than a villain, a human rather than a money lender in *Shylock Is My Name*, a patriot rather than an avenger in *Operation Shylock*. Modern novelists have chosen to portray the new Shylock as a positive representative of the majority of the Jews around the world. Thus those novelists want to defy *The Merchant of Venice* which has long marked the Jewish as hateful and vengeful people.

The rise of Shylock's character in the late modern literary works is worth studying. The changes on this character are drastic in the targeted novels. These changes can make readers

fall in love with such a character rather than despising it as they have always felt about Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The late adaptations of Shylock polished his character with fascinating and challenging techniques but also controversial. Both Howard Jacobson and Philip Roth justified all of Shylock's actions; they gave him the rational motives to act the way he did towards Antonio.

These literary works take a different dimension away from the stereotypical impersonation of the usurer Shylock, therefore depicting a new character that highlights the good Jew who is human and socially accepted. Those authors have introduced literary works that go parallel with the original text. It is the purpose of the study to show the evolution of Shylock's character and its reflection on the reader's ideology. Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* has enabled the researcher to study the character's richness, and finally, explore the hidden motives of the novelists which mean to polish Shylock's personality and present him as a more appealing, loved, and accepted character.