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Shylock's Daughter

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

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This is **The Merchant of Venice** from the other side of the ghetto wall. Pressler gives Shylock two daughters: Jessica, the beautiful one that Shakespeare knew, who deserts her religion and her people, and marries Lorenzo; and Dalilah, the adopted daughter, a little above servant, who gradually acquires the courage to make her way out of the ghetto. This is an intense book, for twelve-year-old and upwards, that moves between the experience and thoughts of Shylock and his daughters, and allows each their own authenticity. It offers a discerning view of the confinement of the ghetto, and of the strengths and weaknesses that it engendered; and playing on the Shakespearean link, an interesting, though slightly more anachronistic, view of the confinement of gender roles. There is much historical background that weighs rather heavily on what is already a demanding read and there is even an 'Afterword' by the translator which, while seeking to explain the book point, largely repeats it. The translation is clear and idiomatic but does not, to my mind, quite overcome the difficulty of lost resonance and nuance that all translators face.

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