

Critical Approaches to Literature: Moral

Reviews

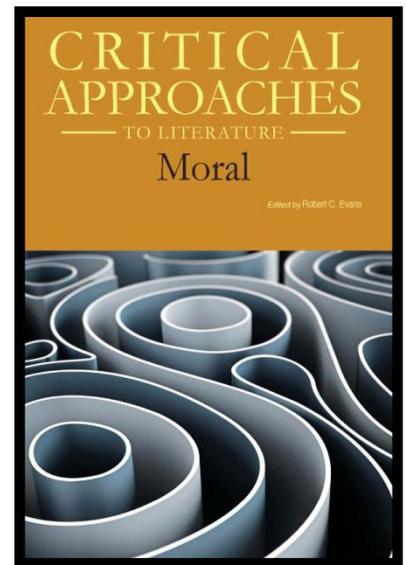
“This volume in the Critical Insights series presents a number of scholarly essays which examine literature from an ethical perspective. It references a broad selection of creative media, including poetry, short fiction, contemporary television, novels, and films. It examines an equally diverse list of moralistic approaches to this media. Tracking works from as far back as the Renaissance through to the modern day, this essay collection is also able to follow the evolution of the moralistic approach to literature study.

An opening essay by James S. Baumlin entitled “On Moral Criticism: A Feminist Approach to Caring” establishes the umbrella theme for the book, i.e., the need to “do justice to oppressed or marginalized groups.” The following 15 essays may touch on that theme in individual ways.

Four essays fill the Critical Contexts section of the book, and include an examination of historical perspectives, a survey of modern thought on the connections of morality in the narrative art, and more.

The 11 essays in the Critical Readings section **offer a diverse array of moral approaches across a spectrum of authors and media...**

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2 University Plaza, Suite 310, Hackensack, NJ 07601
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www.salempress.com csr@salempress.com

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Two essays focus on Shakespeare's *King Lear* as it is conveyed in film. Robert C. Evans' "The Blinding of Gloucester: Trauma and Morality in Some Films of Shakespeare's *King Lear*" examines the particularly horrific implications of seeing Gloucester's vicious blinding on screen. R. Kent Rasmussen later writes of the somewhat overshadowed notion of greed running the length of Mark Twain's evocative *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Susan C. W. Abbotson looks at a number of Arthur Miller's plays as a study of the playwright memorialized as "the moral voice of [the] American stage." The works of writers John Steinbeck, Zadie Smith, Anton Chekhov, and Edgar Allen Poe are also studied, while closing essays address the television series *Breaking Bad* and its complex view of morality and the relationship between morality and the emerging genre of creative nonfiction.

Resources include **an excellent piece applying different moralistic approaches** to Ben Johnson's (1572-1637) "On My First Son," a chronology of key moments in the evolution of moral thought vis-à-vis literature, a list of additional works on the subject, and a glossary."

—ARBA