



Shakespeare and the Other



The Merchant of Venice and Othello weren't remarkably controversial in their own day, but in ours they raise unsettling issues of racism and anti-Semitism. How do you play Shylock after the Holocaust? Is he a fiend, or a victim? A comic stereotype, or a deeply injured human being? How would Shakespeare's audience have seen him, and how should we? And as for Othello: just how black is he, and what does that mean to the tragedy he enacts? Was Shakespeare more or less racist than his times? How much does that matter?

These are deeply engaging moral questions, but they aren't the only ones raised by The Merchant of Venice and The Moor of Venice. Loyalty, vengeance, venality, truth itself – both plays are inquiries into the nature of justice and the nature of evil.

And more: they are superb works of art. We'll explore not only the ideas of the two plays, but the artistry that invokes them. If a writer said the same things only crudely, would our reactions be the same?

The class will meet the **four Thursday evenings of May 2017, 7:30-9:00**, in the Community Room of *185 West End*. An administrative fee of \$10 will be collected at the first meeting.

We will be using **the Pelican paperbacks of the two plays**; it's much easier to discuss passages when everyone has them in the same format, so please do get these editions.

Finally, please have read The Merchant of Venice before the **first session, Thursday May 4**.

I'm looking forward to talking with you about these provocative works of art. Register with me, **Dr. Susan Fox**, at bordeliere@wanadoo.fr or with our **Registrar Eleanora von Dehson** at **212-875-0654**.