

Program
Early Modern Workshop no. 7

Baroque: From Concept to Exhibition
Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice*

HamletStage, Copenhagen, October 25-26, 2023

The address for HamletScenen is Kronværksbyen, Helsingør, buildings 13-16. Here's a link to their practical info page: <https://hamletscenen.dk/en/practical-contact/directions-and-parking-info/>

October 25

13.00-13.10: Welcome and introduction

13.10-13.55: Mikkel Bogh in conversation with Edward Payne on the Exhibition: *Barok – Ud af Mørket (Baroque – Out of Darkness)*, SMK, May 27- November 5, 2023

13.55-14.10: Break

14.10-14.55: What is the “baroque”?

Edward Payne:

Taking as our point of departure an extract from the volume *Rethinking the Baroque* (ed. Helen Hills, 2011) and an object from the exhibition *Baroque – Out of Darkness*, we will discuss the problems posed by the “baroque” that cut across disciplinary divides and involve the interpretation of objects, whether textual or visual, on the academic and museum “stage.”

14.55-15.15: Break

15.15-15.45

Ekko fra Venedig

Anne Sophie Refskou in dialogue with Lars Romann Engel on the play “Ekko fra Venedig” a reinterpretation of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, running at the Hamlet Stage (HamletScenen, Kronborg Castle, Helsingør) October 21- November 5. Director: Christopher Berdal

15.45- 16.20:

Magnus Tessing Schneider

The Face of Shylock and Not the Face of Shylock: On Allegory as a Dramaturgical Concept

Relating an early modern concept of allegory to the historic practice of actors’ doubling several characters in a play, the paper uses a reconstruction of the original doubling plan for Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* as a key to an allegorical reading. What happens if the

same actor doubles as Shylock and as his son-in-law Lorenzo while another actor doubles as the serious Antonio and as Lancelet the clown? In that case, the face of Lorenzo would simultaneously be the face of Shylock and not the face of Shylock, and the resemblance between the Jewish and the Christian character ‘cannot be conceptualized because it cannot be grasped’ (Machosky 2013). Exploring this perspective opens for an interpretation of the play as a reflection of the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Elizabethan England.

16.20-16.35: Break

16.35-17.15:

Anne Sophie Refskou

Straining “the quality of mercy”: Compassion and Humanity in the *Merchant of Venice*

In this talk I analyse the emotional discourse in act 4, scene 1 of *Merchant of Venice*, showing how the scene’s repeated references to the cognate emotions of pity, mercy and compassion mark out Shylock’s ethno-religious separation from the Christian characters. Shylock is described as “an inhuman wretch / Uncapable of pity, void and empty / From any dram of mercy” (4.1.4-6), which equates his lack of compassion towards Antonio with a distinct sense of otherness, even to the point of excluding him from the category of the human. That is, to the Christians, Shylock’s cruelty makes him ‘beastly’; he is a perverse instance of Pythagorean *metempsychosis*, embodying a ‘wolfish’ soul: “Thy currish spirit / Governed a wolf who hanged for human slaughter” (4.1.135-36).

As I will show, Shakespeare routinely deploys compassion as a taxonomic marker of humanity, following a pervasive pattern in early modern understandings of this emotion, yet he also deviates from that pattern, signalling to the audience that compassion and human exceptionalism do not always sit comfortably together. Drawing on recent scholarship on early modern emotions together with insights from critical posthumanism, I thus read the discourse of compassion in *Merchant* as a key example of Shakespeare’s conflicted engagement with this problematic emotion.

17.15-17.50: Wine

18.00 (Selfpaid) dinner at 'Værftets Madmarked' at Kulturværftet (a bit like street food)

20.00: *Ekko fra Venedig* HamletScenen, Kronborg Castle, Helsingør, (please remember to buy tickets! The play is in Danish)

<https://hamletscenen.dk/forestilling/ekko-fra-venedig/>

October 26

10.00-11.30: Visit to *Barok – Ud af Mørket* (Baroque – Out of Darkness) SMK