

**SAA Seminar: Shakespearean Alter Egos  
Dr. Kent Lehnhof (Chapman University)**

*This seminar focuses on the appearance/effect of alter egos and second selves in connection with Shakespeare. Papers might address a wide range of second selves in Shakespeare's works, including ambassadors, avatars, impersonators, surrogates, sidekicks, seconds, foils, rivals, friends, soulmates, twins, spouses, and offspring. Some participants might treat the theme more abstractly, as in the case of one's reputation, credit, image, office, or persona. Other might examine the alter ego as it relates to Shakespeare himself, taking up such topics as Shakespeare portraiture, Shakespeare's literary "successors," and "Shakespeare" characters in popular media.*

*In pursuit of this theme, participants are also welcome to analyze the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries as well as the operation of early modern culture more generally. Throughout, our objective will be to investigate what ensues and what it means when one person is supposed to be analogous or identical to another. We are especially interested in how relationships of this kind might ask, answer, or unsettle questions of identity, epistemology, and ethics (e.g., empathy, self-sacrifice, and "loving thy neighbor as thyself").*

**Epistolary Identity Construction in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*  
Mr. John Henry Adams (Arizona State University)**

In *Merry Wives of Windsor* (c. 1597), Sir John Falstaff attempts to seduce two different women with the same letter, simply inserting the appropriate name into the pre-written text. The letter attempts to rewrite its interchangeable addressee into a pliable lover and source of money for Falstaff even as it tries to make Falstaff into an alternate, more desirable version of himself. Unfortunately for Falstaff, his readers are quick to catch on to their own interchangeability: as one of the objects of his lust, Mistress Page, remarks, "I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names—sure, more, and these are of the second edition. He will print them, out of doubt—for he cares not what he puts into the press when he would put us too" (2.1.65-69). Falstaff's letter is a true form letter not merely in the sense of being derived from a template but by actually *being* the template with a blank space for the names. Falstaff's attempt to rewrite his readers highlights the connection between the written word and the identity of both the people who read and write it. Falstaff tries to take control of the women's identities by sending them a letter to force them into a chosen self; his letters' similarity to one another tips off his targets to his duplicity both in terms of his deceit and the universality of his seduction attempts. This essay takes a closer look at Falstaff's ineffective attempts to take control of the merry wives' identities as a critique of template-based writing and an examination the way in which writing attempts to take control of other people's selves.

**"Half a Knight" with Useless Knowledge: The Beneficial Failures of University Education  
Dr. Claire M. Busse (La Salle University)**

The early modern conception of the child as extension of the parent fueled parental ambitions to climb socially through their children, particularly through the education of their sons, a practice that had wider implications, for it threatened the traditional order and hierarchies of society, decreasing the distinctions between the citizens of London and the gentry and lesser nobility. Yet, attempts to increase one's social status through one's children also complicated the idea of the child as extension of the self. When successful, the child's rise in status would create a gap between parent and child both in terms of social position and social values. An even bigger problem arose when the attempt to rise in status

through the child failed. And indeed, attempts to rise socially through education were likely to fail. For, many of the children sent to university were being trained for positions that did not exist. This paper examines a number of plays that explored the question of what happens when the result of social climbing is a child who is less successful than the parent. While we might expect the image of the failed scholar would serve as commentary on the futility of the middling sort's attempts to rise above their station, the plays instead highlight the failure of education to match the needs of the middling sort—and by extension highlight the merits of the middling sort. The failure of the son becomes a means of revealing the parents' value.

**Cross-Cultural Clandestine Marriage and the Marital Second Self in *The Merchant of Venice***  
**Dr. Katharine Cleland (Virginia Tech University)**

My paper examines how the controversial social practice of clandestine marriage impacts the Renaissance ideal that a spouse serves as a “second self.” After the English Reformation, clandestine marriages became more controversial because they violated the rituals of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Since the prayer book's public solemnization served as the vehicle through which couples transformed into household partners, participating in a clandestine marriage called this transformation into question. Protestant moralists, such as William Gouge, caution that clandestine marriages cannot result in the companionate marriage ideal. In particular, I argue that the act of elopement hinders Jessica's ability to become Lorenzo's second self, delaying her integration into the Belmont community, in *The Merchant of Venice*. After very briefly examining how Portia's normative marriage allows her to claim the role of Bassanio's second self, I demonstrate how Jessica's elopement prohibits her ability to take on Lorenzo's Christian identity. Only after the Christian characters recuperate Jessica's identity as a responsible householder—the proper persona of a marital second self—can the couple be integrated into the play's comedic framework.

**“I to myself am dearer than a friend”: The Problem of Care of the Self and Care of the Other in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona***  
**Mr. Andrew Kranzman (Michigan State University)**

The paper examines the dialectical tension in friendship encountered by one's position as a self and a friend. Through a reading of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I explore how attempts to balance selfishness and selflessness in friendship hinge on one's ability to reflect on their emotional investment. Such a dialectical emphasis on friendship, particularly the “contradictory requirements” of caring for the self and others, to borrow a phrase from Michael Rawlins, can best be understood through a reading of Cicero's *De amicitia* [*Of friendship*] and Michel Foucault's Collège de France lectures on subjectivity and “the care of the self.” Broadly conceived as understanding the self as provisional and contingent on social situations, Foucault's lectures on “the care of the self” in antiquity demonstrate that, while it is a complex activity frequently difficult to delineate, caring for the self implies, firstly, reflecting on how one is an emotional being. As I demonstrate, reading the ‘vulgar’ or ‘Englished’ translations of Cicero through a Foucauldian lens illuminates the primacy given to “the care of the self” in early modern friendship discourse and also underscores how friendship is frequently perceived as steeped in dialectical tension. Finally, I apply this reading to Shakespeare's early comedy in order to show how it is concerned with the care of the self and others as well as the necessity of self-reflection. As Shakespeare demonstrates, however, the ability to balance one's desires and a sense of duty to the self and the friend often produces an internal struggle that manifests through radical self-abnegation or selfishness.

**On Loving Thy Neighbor as Thy Self:  
The Ambivalence of Affective Identification in Shakespeare's England  
Dr. Kent Lehnhof (Chapman University)**

The Bible often invites its readers to view the other as an alter ego, commanding the devotee to "love thy neighbor as thyself." However, a number of post-Enlightenment philosophers have questioned the viability and value of using affective identification as a foundation for ethics. In my essay, I suggest that the early moderns were also ambivalent about this ethical program. To uphold this suggestion, I turn to two texts. First, I offer a tentative reading of the Books of Homilies that emphasizes its infrequent allusions to the ideal of loving one's neighbor as one's self, especially in those sermons that purport to teach us how to respond, both emotionally and materially, to those around us. Next, I turn to *King Lear*, showing how the play persistently points to the pitfalls of seeing the other as a surrogate for the self. As I read it, Shakespeare's great tragedy stands against sympathetic or affective identification, enjoining instead that we approach the other not as an alter ego but as an enigma, eternally unknowable.

**"Derivative from me to mine": Reproducing Parental Identity in *The Winter's Tale*  
Dr. Sara D. Luttfriing (Penn State Erie, The Behrend College)**

My paper examines the topic of the alter ego/second self as it pertains to discourses of sexual reproduction in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. During the early modern period, medical scholars were uncertain how much influence male seed had over the formation of a child, but women were linked to their children through an undeniable physical bond that began in the womb. In the play, Leontes's accusations of infidelity distract from the fact that, even when a woman was faithful to her husband, her bond with her children worked to consolidate her own control over their physical and mental development, transmitting her own identity to her offspring rather than that of their father. In Act 1, Leontes obsesses over the physical features that make his son Mamillius a "copy" of his father, but the play ultimately demonstrates men's failure to successfully shape children in their own image. By contrast, Perdita is repeatedly depicted as Hermione's double, and maternal influence is crucial to establishing Perdita's social identity and bringing about the play's comic resolution.

**"Is my name Talbot? and am I your son?": Father-Son Self-Destruction in *Henry VI, Part 1*  
Dr. Bethany Packard (Transylvania University)**

The Talbots of *Henry VI, Part 1* have critical reputations as exemplars. The father and son have been interpreted as representations of ideal family unity, family hierarchy, and heroism, among other things. I argue that they do manifest an ideal - a prominent early modern fantasy of cultural reproduction that depends upon the child repeating the parent. Repetitive reproduction presumes that children will copy their elders. They will share their parents' values, fulfill their parents' goals, look like their parents, and provide their parents with a form of immortality, all of which will supposedly enable stable social self-perpetuation. Young John Talbot brings this ideal on stage. However, the father-son likeness is so strong that young Talbot will not or cannot behave differently than his father in the face of danger. During the scenes they share, even when at odds with each other they act and argue alike. Both Talbots refuse to flee from certain death in battle, so their similarity, far from guaranteeing parental immortality, ensures the end of the family line. In addition to the repetitive ideal's disastrous consequences for the Talbots, through them Shakespeare demonstrates its inability to provide social or political stability. Although their deaths have often been critically viewed as a sign of social degeneration into chaos, such interpretations presume a formerly stable system in which repetitive children offered

stability. However, the deaths of the Talbots demonstrate that the repetitive fantasy has never been functional, even when seemingly brought to fruition.

**Female Identity in Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*  
Ms. Sue Pellerin (Wayne State University)**

This paper explores the role of alter egos in Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*. The paper suggests that Lady Happy creates the Convent as an alternative social sphere in which women can explore various personae that are not available to them in society at large. I focus in particular on the link between performance and identity, arguing that the Convent's emphasis on dramatic performance encourages a great fluidity and flexibility in the way women fashion themselves and relate to each other. The essay concludes with a discussion of the play's controversial ending in which the penetration of the Convent by the outer world ends this fluid interplay of personae and brings about a return to the fixed, rigid social roles Lady Happy tried to escape in the first place.

**Midwiving Fathers: Supernatural Generation and Suspect Recognition in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*  
Ms. Chelsea Phillips (Ohio State University)**

My interest in the topic of the alter ego/second self arises in relation to early modern conceptions of children as the second selves of their parents. The ideal relationship of children to parents is often described in metaphors of printing or coining; children are, or should be, exact replicas of their parents. Considerable anxiety existed, however, around the faithfulness and integrity of these copies.

In addition to fears about illegitimacy, belief in maternal impression suggested that a mother could physically alter the child in her womb with her thoughts, fears, and actions; unnatural births might be the result of political upheaval, witchcraft, or other malignant influences. These potential sources of interference in the process of copying raise questions about identity and the capacity of humanity to understand and control nature in Shakespeare's parent characters. To overcome these anxieties, parents must be able to recognize and receive themselves within their children.

For our seminar, my paper will focus on early modern understandings of, and anxieties surrounding, pregnancy and childbirth as the method by which "second selves" were created. I focus on the lost children of *The Winter's Tale*, and *Pericles*, specifically investigating how and why supernatural fears surrounding their origins disrupt recognition scenes. Ultimately, the loss of a child alienates a father and king from not only his family, but also himself; in recognizing his child, the father becomes midwife to his daughter, validating her identity and bringing about her reunion with the lost mother.

**"Friends, Romans, countrymen": Friendship and Flattery in *Julius Caesar*  
Mr. Jonathan Shelley (UC Berkeley)**

Renaissance theories of friendship are predicated on the idea that the friend is a kind of "other I" or "second self," a notion that emphasizes an exclusive parity and likeness between friends. My paper examines Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, a play that very explicitly deals with a political plot born out of friendly parity—Cassius asks Brutus to imagine him as a "reflection" or "glass" (1.2.70)—that is then seemingly unable to reconcile an expansive polity. Focusing on the play's concern about the distinction between the friend and flatterer, I argue that while friendship's inherent sociability engenders the

bonds that make possible a larger political community, such a political expansion risks erasing the distinctions that make friendship properly rare. While Brutus and Cassius appeal to like-minded “friends” in order to build a successful conspiracy against Caesar, they are unable to capture the support of all of Rome. Friendship, in a sense, reaches a kind of ‘breaking point’ in the play at which it undergoes a social contraction in order to reclaim exclusivity for itself. The play thus stages how friendship struggles to position itself between personal relations and greater, political alliance. Friendship adheres to a notion of parity or “second selfhood” but, unlike flattery, also serves as a logic for a proper mass sociality in the early modern period, revealing the possibilities but also limits of a reproducible self.

**“It Begins with Pyrrhus”: Allusion, Ambiguity, and the Source of Hamlet’s Delay**  
**Mr. William W. Weber (Yale University)**

Hamlet’s delay has often been seen as a conflict between two distinct alter egos: the thoughtful Hamlet whose conscience prevents him from embracing the morally dangerous path of revenge, and the vengeful Hamlet who must play the part of the typical Senecan avenger in order to fulfill his duty to his father, his society, and his genre. This explanation is obviously an oversimplification, but, more importantly, is also predicated upon a questionable tendency to grant effective autonomy to individual aspects of Hamlet’s character. By examining the Player’s Speech and its complicated allusive relationship to the *Aeneid*, this paper argues that the origin of Hamlet’s delay is not a conflict between discrete selves but rather the recognition that such a conflict is inevitably self-defeating. The ambiguity of allusive interpretation thus provides a way of seeing Hamlet’s identity crisis as a struggle away from, not toward, single-minded vengefulness.

**“Let my gravestone be your oracle”: Limitations of a stone alter ego in *Timon of Athens***  
**Dr. H. Austin Whitver (University of Alabama)**

In *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, C. 1500-C. 1800*, Nigel Llewellyn suggests, “In skillful enough hands and given sufficient ambition on the part of the patron, the monumental body could invent for posterity a completely new *persona*” (102). Usually this persona was created by survivors, but an individual could potentially ensure proper commemoration and present a personally scripted version of his (or more rarely her) own status, accomplishments, and even opinions in perpetuity all by the socially acceptable step of constructing a tomb while still living. This action, in effect, created an enduring stone alter ego. This paper examines a theatrical example of such self-monumentation; Shakespeare and Middleton’s titular *Timon of Athens* creates his own tomb and epitaph and tells a group of Athenian senators “Thither come, / And let my gravestone be your oracle” (5.2.103-104). Both this statement and his overlapping and conflicting epitaphs point to Timon’s efforts to create an enduring persona that can speak and teach long after his death. This paper explores both what Timon intends with his oracular monument and why his project fails. Although Timon is remembered in a fashion, his alter ego ends up doomed to be every bit as misunderstood as Timon himself was in life both because of the contradictory nature of his epitaphs and because of the willingness of survivors to rewrite his legacy.