

SAA 2025 / Seminar 47
Shakespeareans' Other Selves: Cultivating the Creative Life
Abstracts

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A few years ago, I wrote *Lizzie and Dante*, a contemporary love story, in which my Shakespeare professor heroine was grappling with stage four cancer.

I set *Lizzie and Dante* on Elba, an island off Italy, and shaped it around *Romeo and Juliet*. While characters discussed the play, a fundamental question was about the courage it takes to fall in love when near death is a certainty (star crossed, etc).

I am currently writing another contemporary novel featuring a Shakespeare professor, albeit one in good health. This novel is set in Oxford, and its focal point is *King Lear*. I plan to submit the draft opening pages and hopefully get your ideas about how Lear's daughters would have grown up if their father had been a rock star.

Keith Botelho
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For my contribution, I've decided to focus on my creative outlet, the book arts, particularly as it relates to my business, Crow Hop Rare Books. My creativity comes in the form of telling stories about physical objects, particularly the collections, archives, and ephemera that I source and catalogue for my business specialty areas (social movements of the mid-to-late twentieth century, including the histories of African American, Native American, and LGBTQ+ communities). I will delve into some of my creative processes (logo design, branding, marketing, cataloguing, photography, book fairs) and present some of the descriptions of historical archives I have sold. While this work gives my life balance, it has proven difficult to blend seamlessly with my academic career. I will reflect on these dynamics, thinking about living a life working with and selling books and ephemera and my role and responsibility in telling these stories.

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The piece I'll submit is an excerpt of my essay collection/ memoir in progress, "One Woman Show." In this chapter, I set out to understand a part of grief that has to do with apparently competing modern injunctions to "be here now" and to "move on." To do this exploration and analysis, I think with Bakhtin, in particular, his concept of the of chronotope or time space. I think with contemporary widowed women poets, such as Elizabeth Alexander and with *Hamlet*.

I am interested in the way his grief is problematically on display in the Danish court at the beginning of the play. I compare the competing grief injunctions that he faces—from his living parents—to move on (“all that lives must die”), on the one hand, and his dead father's call for revenge, on the other. In this way, I lean on the tools of my trade to process my grief, i.e. the texts I read and teach, especially Shakespeare, and of course I take many side trips to the *OED* along the way.

Marisa R. Cull
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Love at First: A Tribute to a Controversial Text

For this seminar, I'm sharing a portion of a novel I published in early 2021. This was my fifth published novel, and I had to this point avoided directly incorporating any of my academic training or interests into my fiction (of course, my training and interests subtly influenced my work in many ways). But when I started working on this novel, I was preoccupied with *Romeo and Juliet* as a hot-button text among genre romance authors and readers. Whenever the play is flagged in media (or on social media) as a “romance,” those authors and readers are keen to debate—eager to note that Shakespeare's tragedy has very little in common with modern-day genre romance.

I became interested in separating the notion of the genre label of “romance” from the elements of *Romeo and Juliet* that one might still today understand as *romantic*—as in occasions, activities, gestures, or even prose styles that are symbolic of or speaking to romantic love. I wrote *Love at First* with this central idea in mind: knowing I would be writing a “happily ever after,” as is essential for genre romance, I developed a story that paid tribute to Shakespeare's plays in subtle and overt ways. To this day it remains the novel that taught me the most about writing fiction; it also changed the way I thought about Shakespeare's work and how I teach it.

Alice Dailey
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My submission for our seminar on Shakespeareans' Other Selves is an excerpt from a formally experimental, critical/creative memoir titled *Mother of Stories: An Elegy*, which was published by Fordham UP in June 2024. The project centers on the figure of my mother, who died in 2017 following a toxic exposure to mold. Structurally, the book shifts between a roughly linear, seven-month narrative of sequential chapters and loosely organized interludes titled “Another Time,” which reflect more abstractly on recursion, memory, history, and the inheritance of religious and familial violence. Using passages of lyrical memoir, fragments of my scholarly work, original art, photographs, and manipulated text, the project marks a collision of the personal and scholarly selves as they encounter the unassimilable rupture of death. A work at once autobiographical and theoretical (or autotheoretical), it depicts a collapse of temporal dimensions—past into present,

present into past—and an erasure of meaningful distinctions between the literary, the mythical, and the real.

My hope as a participant in the seminar is to get myself thinking (and possibly enlist others in helping me think) about what my next creative project will be. I'm currently editing *Measure for Measure* for the Arden Fourth Series and will begin a full-time Associate Vice Provost for Faculty position at Villanova in June. Neither of these roles will lend themselves naturally to creative work, but I know I will be dissatisfied if I'm not creatively engaged. I would be particularly happy to begin a project that incorporates the kind of experimentation I do in *Mother of Stories* with manipulated images and text, and I would be incandescently happy if I could somehow also engage with the history of photography that was important to the theorizing work of my most recent scholarly book, *How to Do Things with Dead People*. I am trying to think seriously about buying some kind of outmoded camera technology—a glass-plate negative camera, for example—to recreate in my creepy attic the studio of 19th c. spiritualist photographer William H. Mumler. I'm attracted to the theatrical and technical challenges of generating old-fashioned, 21st-century ghost photos and imagine that they would form the basis of a broader creative project integrating text and possibly other images.

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Burning Shakespeare: the audio stage.

Two years ago I published what was then my 25th novel, *Burning Shakespeare*, a tongue in cheek fantasy adventure about a college administrator, Robert Bliss, who sells his soul to the devil in order to wipe Shakespeare from history. Belial (the devil in question) insists that for complicated reasons about time travel and cosmic bureaucracy, this has to be done piecemeal and in person, so Bliss is escorted into the past where he attempts to destroy each copy of each play the moment it is published. In this he is thwarted by an angelic team assembled by an ancient celestial entity currently going by the name of Gladys, made of a team of twenty first century humans who all perished in the same freak rail accident. They aren't too keen on the assignment but have been told that if they can restore the Bard to his natural cultural prominence, they'll get their lives back. So there's that.

The novel came out with a small US press and did not rock the bestsellers list. We are currently working with an actor colleague to develop an audio book, and it is this which will, hopefully (we have to get a lot of recording done quickly), be my contribution to the seminar.

Peter Kuling
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For our seminar, I'll be sharing my two recently created Shakespeare VR creative projects: *Hamlet VR Experience* (2022) and *Macbeth VR Experience* (2024). Both will be available for playthrough via download prior to the SAA if you have a PC-based VR unit, but also in-person

once we arrive in Boston. My paper explores Shakespeare's understanding of how his characters and dialogue drive audiences' imagination and visualization. I'm especially interested in what non-speaking characters are doing during monologues and speeches as well as how his work (and other early modern plays) directly calls on spectators transform their experience of live performance into something hybridized and essentially virtual in their own minds. While VR allows my creative productions to fill in all the visual and immersive elements of Shakespeare's plays, I remain incredibly curious about how specific dialogue, unique stage positions (such as above or below), environmental changes, and magical special effects function in his plays but also heavily in contemporary adaptations. My submission will address some of the dramaturgical potential within Shakespeare's texts for specialized digital mediums like VR but also ask if Shakespeare had an early understanding of the virtualizing process occurring within audiences' minds during live performances.

Chris Laoutaris
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I will be sharing poems from *Bleed and See* (Broken Sleep Books, 2022). Shortlisted for the Eric Gregory Poetry Awards, these poems explore themes of disability, body-image, and caring, arising from my nearly fifteen-year role as a carer for my brother, George, who had a terminal neurological illness. The collection examines the histories and legacies of the presentation of the 'non-normative' body in art, literature, myth, ritual, and anthropological and archaeological forms of enquiry (particularly using early modern and Shakespearean intertexts), uncovering the roots of the prejudices which shaped its cultural inscription. The book begins with an introductory essay, reflecting on the composition of the poems through the prism of critical disability studies, analyses of early modern cultures of wonder and 'curiosity', 'crip' poetics, and the caring role, culminating in an appeal for a critically-inflected 'Poetics of Caring' as creative and therapeutic praxis. Luke Kennard described it as 'a courageous, moving and deeply moral collection... [which] invites us to think deeply, radically, and rewards us with... a profound literary and ontological history'. Neal Hall termed it a study in 'the dehumanizing of the other... those we "see" as different'. Sally Bayley defined the poems as 'a set of finely wrought objects we turn over and over as we encounter the difficult fact of living with disability... offer[ing] complex forms of material anthropology'.

James J. Marino
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I will be sharing a brief published short story, shorter than ten manuscript pages, and spend the rest of my ten pages on a reflective essay about the ways I keep my separate lives as scholar and fiction writer separate, despite various helpful suggestions about how I could combine them.

I cannot write much more of an abstract without a plot synopsis, which I think would be counter-productive.

Jane Marilyn Nead
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Making Meaning in Shakespeare

In this seminar I will talk about how my creative practice as a jeweller led to my doctoral studies and how the two are inextricably linked. As a jeweller, I began researching Shakespeare through my design process; as an academic, I discovered a materiality in Shakespeare's language that resonated with my own material knowledge. I will describe how reading Shakespeare as a maker has enhanced my understanding of his imagery and how my practice-informed approach adds to Shakespearean scholarship.

The creative work I will be sharing was inspired by Robert Armin, a goldsmith's apprentice and actor who is believed to have played (and possibly influenced) the part of Touchstone in *As You Like It*. I will demonstrate the physical and material significance of the touchstone, a tool for testing the authenticity of precious metals, and explain my creative interpretation and how it developed through my design research. I will consider the challenges of combining creative practice with academic scholarship and how I navigate the two as an interdisciplinary scholar. Finally, I will reflect on the impact this has had on my practice and the importance of having a creative outlet that is entirely separate from my scholarship.

Peter A. Parolin
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An Other Self?

For a lot of my life as a faculty member at the University of Wyoming, I have acted in plays, both for the university's Theatre and Dance department and for a couple of small theatre companies in Laramie. Since 2005, I have appeared in over 20 productions. I've had the chance to tackle juicy roles, big and small, and to collaborate with diverse teams of theatre artists, young and old, amateur and professional. In my paper for our seminar, I want to think about the relationship between my performance life and my professional identity as both a Shakespeare scholar and an academic administrator. In some ways I am conscious that my acting has fed my professional life – I have developed new understandings of how plays work and of what I think drives certain characters and I have brought exercises from rehearsal halls into my classrooms. In other ways, being involved in plays has offered me a completely separate way of being in the world from how I am as a professional academic. I aim to explore what I have found valuable in so consistently pursuing creative activity that does not directly square with my professional identity. This seminar gives me the opportunity to consider how much my acting has shaped me, how much it has given me access to another self, and how, after all, it has also impacted the professional identity I have forged.

Ira Sen
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I will submit Act I of *Baar Baar Barish* (transl. *It Rains Over and Over*), my adaptation of *The Tempest*, for consideration in this seminar. My interest in *The Tempest* is three-pronged: it is a play that depicts colonial imaginations and world-building/re-fashioning; its foundation is labor linked to wood; and it experiments with how language is deployed to multiple ends. My play deals with all three of these dynamics, adapting and translating the relationships and themes in *The Tempest* to a park in the middle of contemporary Bengaluru. This move means reconsidering how each character and thematic line of *The Tempest* (as listed above) might interact with, modify, and adapt to its new setting and context. The fun thing about writing adaptations like these is that they simultaneously are and are not Shakespearean, depending on who is watching. One of my aims is to write something that is entertaining to a mixed audience, while still managing to put Shakespeare's play in conversation with other sources and influences. I will include a short framing analysis along with the script.

Andrew Sofer
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Versifying Shakespeare's Characters

I will be sharing a selection of metrical poems and song lyrics inspired by Shakespeare, published and unpublished, drawing in part from my collection *Wave* (Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2010). Among the speakers/singers are Miranda, Caliban, Autolycus, Lear's Fool, and Laertes' fencing master.

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<i>Duke</i>	And what's her history?
<i>Vio</i>	A blank my lord.
	<i>Twelfth Night</i> (2. 4. 109-10)

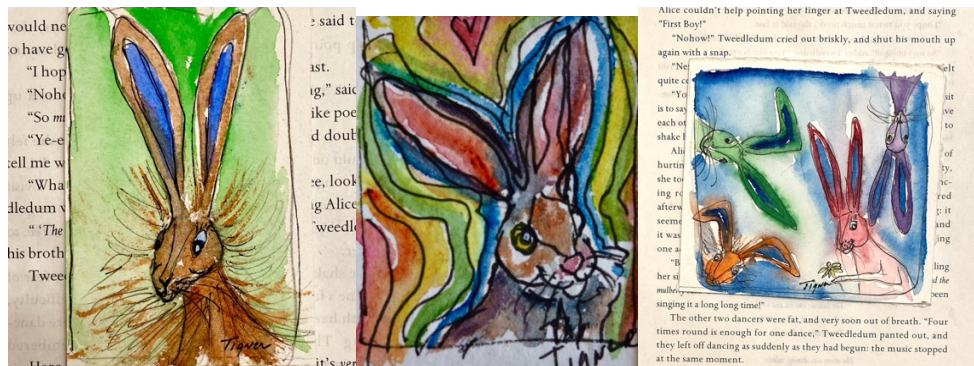
As improbable as it may seem, I began my first effort at journal writing in the spring of 1973 with this question addressed by Duke Orsino to Viola (disguised as Cesario), who responds with a statement of self-erasure.

And then I stopped. I did not attempt another journal entry for a full year.

My essay will trace some of my entanglements with Shakespeare's plays in terms of my writing life, mainly through the poems that I began composing in the mid-1970s and beyond. Many of my early poems were inspired by reading and teaching Shakespeare. Among those that I include here are: "Antony in Drag," "Cordelia," "Cressida," "Desdemona," "Pericles," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Teaching Shakespeare: Masterplots." I conclude with "To You Sigmund Freud," a poem that alludes to *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*.

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For my SAA contribution to the seminar, I plan to create—illustrate and write (with my collaborator Catherine Field) the first Milly and Dilly Silly Stories book, *Milly meets Dilly*. I first conceived of Milly and then Dilly when I was working on my solo exhibition, *The Year of the Rabbit*, in 2023. The summer before the November exhibition, I was traveling, so my work for the exhibition was a series of watercolors of hares (watercolor being more portable than other media). As watercolor paper rarely fits the cradled boards (upon which I attach the watercolors), I often must trim the watercolor paper to fit the boards, thus leaving 2' to 3" strips of expensive watercolor paper. I hate to waste, so I thought I would draw little rectangles on watercolor strips and do fast doodles of hares or rabbits that I would then watercolor. These 2" x 3" doodles I then matted to fit an 8" x 10" frame. I named each rabbit and hare, as they all have distinct personalities. What I noticed that one funny hare character kept showing up, Milly. Pretty soon, a companion hare began to emerge, Dilly. Milly, Dilly and their Leporidae friends were quite popular in the show. Many people said to me that I should do a children's book, which I put away in my head for later. During this time, I had been talking to Catherine Field (a renaissance scholar and fiction writer) about Milly and Dilly, and we decided to collaborate with me as the illustrator and her as the head writer. We talked a lot in 2024 about doing the series, but never actually got around to manifesting it. As it is always helpful to have a deadline, the SAA seminar date in February is just that. The first book in the series introduces Milly and Dilly and shows the beginning of their friendship, which is based on their love of silliness. The illustrations, as I am conceiving them now are how Milly and Dilly try to make each other laugh by being silly. I am imagining that some of what will be happening will be how the hares turn themselves different colors and do acrobatics. We are also planning to have a lot of rhyme in the text. For the SAA, I will present a story board, along with a discussion of the process.



Lina P. Wilder
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My project will be a continuation of two of my obsessions when it comes to metal work. The first is the most obvious link between my work in metal and my academic work. In literature, I have an attachment to what a former student, when summing up my Milton course, referred to

as “all that old stuff.” In metal, I adore an obsolete, impractical, time-consuming technique, all the more if it is unprofitable (and it usually is).

The second obsession also relates to my scholarly work, although less obviously. I love direct manipulation of metal. Metal is malleable. Metal is traditionally thought of in opposition to writing and/or paper as durable, and it is: reversing the normal hierarchy, Horace made a monument more lasting than bronze in his poetry (Ode III); Titus Andronicus wishes for a leaf of brass and a gad (a rod, usually spiked) of steel. Metal is durable, but it is also subject to endless reshaping.

I plan to make a hammer-raised hollowware vessel with a chased surface, using some of the techniques of one of my favorite metal artists, David Huang. Chasing is a technique known since antiquity in multiple cultures around the world, albeit in slightly different forms. It is a method of embossing the surface of metal using a hammer and a series of metal punches. Hammer-raising is a similarly ancient method of creating hollow vessels by hammering sheet metal held at an angle over a raising stake. Together, these techniques capture metallic malleability. Between the seeming stability of a finished metal engraving and the formlessness of molten metal is annealed metal, the solid but softened metal that can be pushed or hammered into shapes which seem to retain their capacity to move.

Jordan Windholz
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This past October, I published my second book of poems, *The Sisters* (Black Ocean, 2024). Featuring eleven original illustrations (by an artist friend), it is a collection of prose poems originally conceived as bedtime stories for my daughters. I began the project just as began my position at Shippensburg University, first as a yearly term hire, and then as a tenure-track professor. At Shippensburg, while my primary function is “the early modernist,” I teach both early modern literature and creative writing courses—not only because I have the qualification to teach both, but also because budget constraints have meant the department, like so many departments, has had to do more with less. This dual role has afforded me some institutional latitude to pursue my creative work even as I have had to continue my research on early modern literature. While *The Sisters* was published this past Fall, my academic monograph—*The Single Life: Unpatriarchal Manhood in English Renaissance Literature*—will be forthcoming this Spring from the University of Alabama Press. As the only person in my department who has this kind of dual role, I hope to reflect upon and share what it means to have a creative “other self” that is and is not recognized institutionally.