

Katharine Maus

“The Properties of Friendship in *The Merchant of Venice*”

At several critical junctures in *The Merchant of Venice*, characters propose divesting themselves of everything they possess, in a gesture of radical self-sacrifice to or on behalf of a loved one. This lecture attempts to make sense of these proposals as responses to unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) conundrums about friendship, possessions, and the limits of generosity.

Matthew Wikander

“‘This is not the man’: Falstaff and Martyrdom”

Prince Hal’s promise to “falsify men’s hopes” with his reformation receives ironic and punning fulfillment in Falstaff’s resurrection from his mock death at the end of *1 Henry IV*. The second part of *Henry IV* also ends with a lie, when the Dancer promises that “our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it.” Famously, Falstaff does not “die of a sweat” in France, but rather dies in his own bed, “cold as any stone,” and (simultaneously?) engages in comic erotic intrigue in what appears to be contemporary Elizabethan Windsor. In this paper, I propose not to tie up this particular loose end, but rather to unravel it a bit more. I want to revisit the identification of Falstaff with the Lollard martyr Sir John Oldcastle, but, moving in a direction suggested by Stephen Greenblatt and Richard Wilson, to cast a somewhat wider net. When Graham Greene complained that in Shakespeare’s world “the martyrs are quite silent,” he referred not to the reverberations of Oldcastle in the history plays but rather to the Elizabethan Catholic martyrs. In Falstaff’s refusal to stay dead, as it echoes through *Henry V*, we can catch faint reminiscences of martyrdoms from this other side of the controversy, including, especially, the gruesome, comic martyrdom of Father Thomas Pilchard.