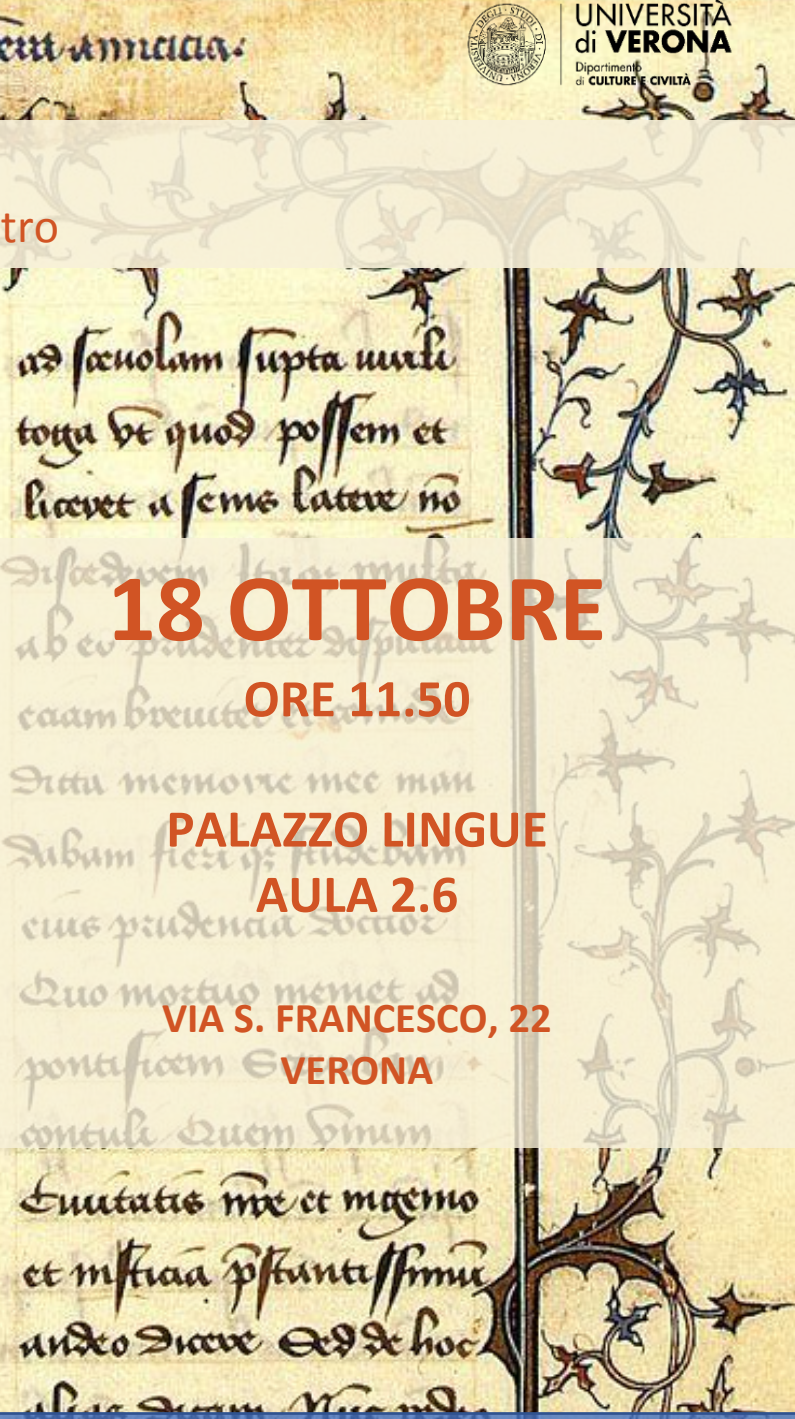




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Tzachi Zamir – The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Friendship in Shakespeare

Friendship is a value that has been praised since antiquity. Cicero, Seneca and many others regarded friendship both as indicating a noble character, and as ennobling: the exercise of the capacity to establish deep relations and commitments not due to blood-ties or political obligations. Yet, although contemporaries such as Montaigne were wholeheartedly endorsing the friendship tradition, the attitude of Shakespeare's plays toward it is skeptical. Why? It will be suggested that Shakespeare captured a tension built into the philosophy of friendship already in Aristotle and Plutarch: how friendship is at once other-regarding but also predicated upon some degree of self-love. The doubt expressed by Shakespeare's plays is that once self-love is put under substantive pressure, friendship tends to give way. The point is not simply that selfishness is more powerful than friendship. It is, rather, that some forms of self-love block or displace love to others.