

Obituary
in memoriam
Prof. Francisco Javier Sánchez Escribano
(1948-2014)

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Javier Sánchez Escribano, associate professor of English Literature at the University of Zaragoza, one of the founding members of SEDERI and Honorary President of the Society until his death last year. It goes without saying how much we owe to him. This journal is just one of the many fruits of his idea of having an academic society that could unite scholars in Spain (Portugal was to join later) working in English Renaissance Studies. The journal has grown over the years, but without that initial seed we would not be where we are now. Thank you for all the inspiration.

THE EDITORS



Without Javier's efforts, SEDERI would never have taken a decisive step forward. It is true on the one hand that the original idea for the association was shared by a bunch of friends, but it is equally true on the other that without his stamina and blessed stubbornness that distant project would not have taken wing.

It all started in León, with Professor José Luis Chamosa acting as host: Javier suggested in the course of a meal that we all (Professors Santiago González y Fernández Corugedo, Miguel Martínez and myself) should launch an associative venture centred upon English linguistic and literary studies of the Renaissance period. He had not given it a previous thought. It simply surged that instant and we all shared it, moulding it by adding that it might be a good idea to make of the eventual association a meeting point of different academic

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disciplines dealing with the period. We all agreed: we wanted other colleagues to open our eyes to alternative ways of understanding things. We wanted, in other words, to listen to a historian explaining the battlefield of Agincourt (that was the exact example given that day) so as to be able to understand *Henry V* from a different angle, this being a very rare academic perspective at the time.

From that point onwards, my view is that within a few months we had all contracted a great debt to Javier. He was the organiser of the first conference, held in Zaragoza. By then...all the paperwork had already been arranged. We even had a draft of the bylaws. And he had done it all. The only thing left out of the picture was the election of a president. I had the great honour to be the first, but only because Javier not only sternly refused to enter his name for the election (he would have undoubtedly been elected unanimously), but also because he practically pushed me forward for the process by freely and generously appointing himself my mentor.

He was ever what he chose to be: a hard working hand. I owe him, we all do I think, many a pleasant moment, many academic meetings that have made me grow, many new friends made in the course of a long string of years. Dear Javier, thanks for just everything.

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Juan Tazón
Universidad de Oviedo



The news of Javier's passing reached me in December of last year. It took me by surprise, as it most likely took most others that heard about it, because I was unaware of any condition that might have forewarned of such an outcome. But I was most particularly struck by the fact that his death had occurred several months before. Some of us knew that he had resolved to retire and live alone, and that he had chosen someplace on the east coast, away from colleagues and family, to spend this last part of his life. Professional and personal reasons combined in this decision. That he was not happy, we can infer now; that the severing of the ties that he had held for so long was so extreme, we could never imagine. The sad fact is that very

few people knew about his death and that perhaps therefore it was not reported in any of the usual academic web-lists that keep us posted on this type of news. Javier may have wanted to be left alone, but surely did not deserve this lack of acknowledgement.

Most, if not all, who knew him will agree with me that he was a good person. He was open and welcoming with all people, regardless of rank and age. He was so to me since my first acquaintance with him, back in 1996, during my first SEDERI Conference. I was a new scholar who barely knew anyone in the field of Renaissance studies, he was already the President of the Society; but he made me feel at home from the first minute, as I am sure he did with all other newcomers, and I thoroughly enjoyed that feeling —to the extent that I returned to the SEDERI family every single year afterwards. To this day, the Society's conferences continue to be very much the same warm, welcoming rendezvous of Renaissance scholars. I tried to hold on to this idea after I succeeded Javier, and I am sure the current President feels that this is one of her main duties, too, even if our task is actually minimal: this spirit of SEDERI transcends individuals and is defined by the ties that have been woven among those who attend SEDERI conferences.

I suspect that Javier was somewhat overwhelmed and puzzled by the growing relevance of SEDERI in the context of Renaissance studies, nation- and world-wide. He conceived of it as a small venue, where people-friends met to discuss issues relating Spanish and English Renaissance culture; and on one occasion he confessed that he was sorry to see it veering away from this line. Time has made inevitable changes in the Society: comparative studies are no longer the primary interest, and both its conferences and its journal now represent a more complex, energetic and variegated academic community. He may have felt at odds with this new face of SEDERI; if he did, he should not, because it too is very much his own creation, too: it is the body that encases the spirit. We owe it to him to remember this, and to let new SEDERI associates know about this.

Javier has passed away, but he lives on in SEDERI.

Juan Antonio Prieto Pablos
Universidad de Sevilla

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Hovering over the hectic life of academia are shadows of what might have constituted the cultivation of personal affinities with our colleagues, but which have not finally come to fruition. How many dear colleagues, fellows and friends do we keep in our minds, despite not seeing each other frequently, preserving perhaps a distant memory of them, an unspoken empathy, always awaiting a renewal of their friendship at conferences, seminars, lectures, and other such scholarly rites!

I was fortunate enough to share more time than I deserved with Francisco Javier Sánchez Escribano, mostly through our academic and professional endeavours, which gave me the opportunity to enjoy his warm and stubborn personality, that of a good Aragonese gentleman. However, as is usually the case with the dear deceased, my abundant share of his company now seems insufficient. If I had to point out only one trait of his character I would highlight his self-effacing perseverance, thanks to which the present as well as the previous issues of this journal have seen the light. Indeed the whole project of the Spanish and Portuguese Society for the Study of English Renaissance Studies (SEDERI) is, to a large extent, the result of his personal commitment, for which, deservedly, this pan-Iberian association made him honorary President.

A couple of pertinent good books and more than two score articles and book chapters, together with his earnest dedication to his students, constitute Francisco Javier's durable legacy to scholarship and to the promotion of English language and literature in Spain: "As well a well-wrought urn becomes / The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs."

He was wise to retire early to cope with the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" that sooner or later overcome us all. He had found his own Mediterranean *hortus conclusus*, where he led a life decidedly to be wished. Death has surprised him there too untimely, but, as I believe, happy and reconciled.

This humble offering is written to honour his name and his personality in this issue of the SEDERI Yearbook. May the journal last for centuries and keep a well-deserved remembrance of SEDERI's founding member!

Luciano García García
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