

SEDERI XIV

**Yearbook of the Spanish and Portuguese Society
for English Renaissance Studies**

“Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you”

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The aim of the Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies is to promote, stimulate and give impulse in Spain and Portugal to the study and research of 16th and 17th century English language, literature and history, and their relationship with their Spanish and Portuguese counterparts, in all aspects: linguistic, literary and cultural.

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Editors' Foreword

“Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you” (*Hamlet*, III,ii,272). This line is uttered by Guildenstern, Prince Hamlet’s old friend, as he tries to make the Prince of Denmark aware of King Claudius’ and Queen Gertrude’s preoccupation about his behaviour. In one of the most brilliant displays of his antic-disposition, Hamlet refuses to engage in any meaningful dialogue with his friend and puzzles him to such an extent that Guildenstern protests: “Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame” (282-283). Meaning and words are, to be sure, one central topic in *Hamlet* —and in much European drama of the period. Indeed, Hamlet himself had already described one of his readings as “words, words, words” (II,ii,192), in one intellectual discussion with Polonius in which they probably refer to the Spanish Jesuit Fray Antonio de Guevara’s *Familiar Letters*.¹ Words without content, disjointed discourses, or madness with “method in’t” (II,ii,203-204) —in other words, a debate on language and meaning— are a constant preoccupation in *Hamlet*, and one of the reasons why this play has become one of the icons of Western literary criticism (and why we selected the “vouchsafe me” motto for *SEDERI 14*).

This new issue of the *Yearbook of SEDERI* presents a selection of papers which, as always, deal with a number of complex literary and linguistic topics of the Early Modern period in England —or the English Renaissance, as we have traditionally called it. Studies on dialectology, translation, or the use of modals and genitives in 15th and 16th centuries English coexist with analyses of texts by, among others, Skelton, Dryden,

¹ Prof. Díaz-Solís, from Appalachian State University, convincingly argues that this is the book from which, “madly attired”, Hamlets reads in II,ii. He concludes this after analysing Hamlet’s comment on what he is reading in (II,ii,196-204) and comparing it with several excerpts from Guevara’s text. In 1980 Prof. Ciriaco Morón, from Cornell University, had already suggested a Spanish source for *Hamlet*.

Jonson or, of course, Shakespeare. These works, written by scholars from Estonia, Scotland, England, Canada, the United States, Portugal and Spain, testify to the solid foundations of this journal, and to its long-ranging trajectory over the past fourteen years. In this sense, it is with pleasure and pride that we can announce that *SEDERI* is, for the first time now, the yearbook of the *Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies*, in a decision that, by including our Portuguese colleagues, makes clear the overtly international scope of this society and its journal.

Anyone with previous experience with this journal will surely notice some changes. As in the past, all the works published have been peer-reviewed, but the nature of some of the papers has changed. For the first time we have introduced notes and reviews, in an attempt to present our readers with a wider choice of contents and scientific progress, in line with the practice of other prestigious publications. Besides, in a perhaps less important change, *SEDERI* will distribute off-prints among contributors in an effort to make the publication more accessible to specialized readers. Finally, the journal will be published in the *SEDERI* website,² so that electronic access to this issue—and all it entails—becomes possible from now on.

We sincerely hope that all these changes, and above all the selection of papers by our reviewers, will satisfy most readers of *SEDERI 14*, and that the journal will prove a “pregnant”, or meaningful, reading for everybody; if not because of our wit, at least because of the “happiness that often madness hits on”.

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² See <http://web.uniovi.es/SEDERI>