

Faculty Research Awards Committee: Report on Funding

Dr. Wayne Narey

*Shakespeare's Othello and the Power of Language on the Renaissance Stage*

Presented at the conference *Shakespeare and the Power of the Renaissance Stage*, St. Etienne University, France; spring 2014

Dr. Yona Dureau of the University of St. Etienne invited me to take part in a multi-national conference on “the power of the English Renaissance Stage,” scheduled for the end of May, 2014. Participants included scholars from England, France, Germany, Poland, and America, of which I remained the sole presenter.

My paper focused on the use of language as the most dominant aspect of the Shakespearean stage; in particular, I argued that of all his tragic works Shakespeare's *Othello* most effectively uses language as a means for characterization. In a play with the fewest characters, the simplest of all his tragic plots, and the only work in which Shakespeare's protagonist lacks nobility, language defines the stature and fall of the tragic figure Othello.

The play presents a tension between what is said with what is done: how a soldier who claims a rudeness of speech ... “little blest with the set phrase of peace” creates a forceful presence who “falls” greater in tragic decline than any of the poets' exceptional tragic figures. *Othello* demonstrates how language on the Renaissance stage inexorably intertwines with the action it inspires—or, as Shakespeare says in another tragedy: “Action is eloquence.”

The conference lasted for three days, providing an opportunity to discuss one another's work, share ideas, and collegially provide suggestions on all of the papers. Fortunately, all presentations took place in either English or French so that little was lost in address and discussion.

Dr. Dureau chose several papers for a *Proceedings* publication, which now includes my presentation on *Othello*. In the past year, we have conferred several times, sharing ideas for one another's interests. Thanks to her encouragement concerning my *Othello* paper, I have furthered plans for a monograph on the play.

The funding provided by the Faculty Research Awards Committee made possible my interaction with Shakespeare scholars from Europe, those with varied interests and valuable insights, meeting in a multi-cultural atmosphere, which would have otherwise been an impossible, unfortunate missed opportunity.