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The Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language wishes to acknowledge the helpful assistance of several members of university staff who went beyond the call of duty to assist with this publication. Michelle Cullen was a guiding force in getting the journal off the ground and without her assistance this journal could not have been realised in its current state. Juliet Creese, Rebecca White and David Gould at the Shakespeare Institute assisted at various stages with advertising the journal. Hilary Gunton and Will Copper of Central Print, the principal stationers of the University of Birmingham, took especial care to answer questions, seemingly simple to them but concerning areas that were generally bewildering to us. Erika Hawkes from the Guild of Students promoted the journal on diverse occasions, as did the staff of the Shakespeare Institute Library and the Main Library at the University of Birmingham. Kate Welch and John Settle were particularly generous with their time. Tamasine Leighton-Crawford and Danny Pardoe also contributed to the journal's success through offering their support at various stages. Lastly, the editors wish to acknowledge with particular gratitude the excellent financial assistance of the Roberts Skills Training fund and the professionalism of Janet Newsome of the Graduate School, who, at an early stage in this publication, recognized the merits of promoting a multidisciplinary journal.

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FOREWORD

It is an honour for me to be invited to contribute a Foreword to this first issue of a new journal emanating from the University of Birmingham. I am especially pleased to see that much of the energy driving the enterprise derives from the Shakespeare Institute, which I joined as a student in 1958 and from which I retired as Director in 1997. In the interim I worked for some nine years for Oxford University Press as General Editor of the Oxford editions of the works of Shakespeare. The guiding principles of the edition of the Complete Works, and of the multi-volume single play editions now close to completion, are founded on a belief that textual dramatic scholarship should be constantly informed by a sense of the practical theatre, and by awareness of its demands and rewards. These principles were inculcated into me by my mentors at the Institute. Its founder, the critic and theatrical historian Allardyce Nicoll, was an early and major proponent and exponent of the interdisciplinary approaches to historical and theatrical scholarship which have characterized the Institute's work and influence, and which, as several of the contributors to this journal demonstrate, continue to inform its ethos. Universities are essentially institutions which combine a wide variety of disciplines and which should demonstrate the value of interaction among them. I wish this new journal every success in its efforts to further this endeavour.

Professor Stanley Wells, CBE
Chairman, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

GENERAL EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language (BJLL) is dedicated to uniting scholars from a wide variety of departments within the School of Humanities. Its model for providing this connectivity is the production of a collection of articles, notes, reviews and art pieces (published both electronically and in print) that exemplify an interdisciplinary approach to research.

A more particular understanding of the ideas expressed in the *BJLL* can be gleaned from the diverse content found within its pages. Stephen Wittek's excellent article on the long-term value of literary criticism introduces John Tepe's more traditionalist approach to English Studies. Similarly, John Goss's examination of the birth and parentage of Robert Barge establishes a set of evaluative criteria that calls attention to the interpretive techniques applied in Anna Gottschall's reading of the significations of male and female names in the Findern Manuscripts. Considerations of English and History and their associate inner disciplines – Literary Criticism and Medieval Studies – provides an in-road for writing on newer and less established pursuits in Humanities research. Jami Roger's trenchant account of the use of localised settings in recent productions of Shakespeare's *Much Ado* reveals that serious scholarly research into the history of performance is academically tenable. Wang Fang's interrogation of the lexical item "international community" draws attention to how the study of linguistics functions as a means for re-evaluating the importance of cross-cultural channels of meaning.

Initially formed as a response to the limited opportunities in publishing offered to postgraduates at The University of Birmingham, the *BJLL* has grown to involve the participation of over forty individuals. With three boards of referees – a Review Panel, an Editorial Board, and a group of dedicated Staff Readers – the current state of the *BJLL* proves that large scale projects can work and that sometimes difficult endeavours yield the most positive results. Furthermore, as part of the *BJLL*'s dedication to the history of Birmingham scholarship, this special launch issue offers an additional foreword by the esteemed scholar, CBE recipient, and Shakespeare Institute alumnus, Professor Stanley Wells. Professor Wells has, throughout his long and successful career, embraced an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Shakespeare's plays. His legacy as former director of this university's Shakespeare Institute has been his kind generosity in helping current students. These characteristics make him an exemplary alumnus and an excellent supporter of the wide-ranging articles included in this volume.

Laura Hilton and Joshua McEvilla

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SECTION I

ARTICLES