

FOREWORD

I am delighted to write a Preface to this issue of the *Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language*, a journal run by doctoral researchers in the School of English, Drama and American and Canadian Studies (familarly known as EDACS). EDACS has the largest community of postgraduates in the College of Arts and Law, and one of the largest in the University, so it seems entirely fitting that this community should continue to produce a vibrant, themed, annual journal. This year's topic – identity – was the subject of a postgraduate colloquium run under the auspices of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School. As will be clear from the articles that follow, this rich subject matter generated interest and contributions from across the University and beyond.

The articles collected here address identity in a number of different ways, but central to all of them is the way that space and identity interconnect. The relationship between identity and space, whether overt or implicit, ties together articles ranging in chronology from the Middle Ages to the future, and in geography from North America to the UK to Japan and out into space. Paul Taylor tackles utopias, dystopias and science fiction using space almost as a metaphor for the identity of the characters he considers. Mariko Nagase addresses the genesis of editing texts, and how the identity of the editor infuses the way that the content shifts under editing: works written during the so-called Classical age transcend space to inform, and be informed by, Renaissance assumptions about themselves and the past. Shih Pei Chun examines what happens when Shakespeare's setting for *King Lear* is translated to medieval Japan, and assesses the cultural changes that shifting the space of the play illuminates. In Alina Cleju's essay, women's space is seen as inseparable from how the women Alina writes about (and the authors who constructed those women) created their individual personas. And John Hudson uncovers the allegory in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and then talks about how he staged the play – how it was made to unfold across space – so that the audience could 'see' Shakespeare's allegorical ploys.

This, then, is a rich collection of interdisciplinary essays about two-topics-in-one. It provides a wonderful vehicle to showcase the talents of the doctoral researchers who are central to the research activity in the University.

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