

GENERAL EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The starting point of this issue of *The Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language* was a series of postgraduate events which centred on the topic of identity and narrative and were organised either at the University of Birmingham or elsewhere in the UK in 2010. Postgraduate students from the School of English, Drama, and American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham were involved in organising a conference on explorations of identity from various perspectives in the humanities. Held in June 2010, the College of Arts and Law Postgraduate Conference emphasised the importance of research on identity within literary, translation, theatre and cultural studies as a mode of communication, and also underlined how this research operates as a form of understanding the world and different acceptations of both the self and of the text. The present volume of the *BJLL* is therefore dedicated to uniting a series of scholarly perspectives from a wide variety of fields in the humanities through the production of a collection of articles, notes, and reviews. Similar to previous volumes of the *BJLL*, the third also includes external contributions that draw upon research projects conducted by doctoral students affiliated with other universities in the UK, Germany and Romania, in an attempt to underline current postgraduate research on the topic not only within the UK, but also internationally.

Indeed, a central issue in all the contributions to and discussions in this volume was the question of how identity has been conceptualised, examined and re-defined, especially as a result of how narratives, drama productions, aspects of material production of texts and literary theory have re-visited the concept. Drawing upon postgraduate research conducted in these fields, this issue is designed around a series of articles that explore conceptualisations of identity in the processes of constructing narratives, dramatic performances and productions, text editing, and translation. The various approaches to these questions and to possible theoretical answers focus on the aspects of biographical identity, the construction and interpretation of fictional worlds, responses to textual and drama productions, and cultural adaptations of classic texts. What all contributors highlight is that constructions of both self and text, including transformations brought about by modern theories of space and time, are usually integrated within particular narrative genres (such as autobiography, Bildungsroman, and dystopia), and also related to current critical approaches to editing, publishing, translation and adaptation strategies. Most articles present results of case studies that shed new light on the relationship between text and the emotive and evaluative

dimensions of identity construction. In addition, as underlined in the notes and book reviews, notions of identity, text and space stand for extensive areas of intellectual inquiry that have been researched in a variety of academic fields and from diverse theoretical points of view. While other disciplines, such as psychology and philosophy, have investigated human nature and claimed a particular competence for subject matters such as memory, mind, and the self, countless literary theories have been addressing the symbolic and linguistic nature of identity. The essays in this volume show that the focus on identity, and its relationship to how it is imagined in literature and discussed in criticism, is not only useful, but also productive for explorations of autobiography, identity, memory and discourse.

Paul Taylor discusses critical approaches to the literary genre of utopia/dystopia, its relationship with science fiction and how contemporary writers re-visit scientific understandings of time and space, and how recent utopias and dystopias re-shape the identity of the imagined worlds and fictional characters. In Alina Cleju's exploration of how contemporary women writers, via the created short stories, imagine the figure of the artist and literary production short stories, it becomes apparent that there is a literary tradition of contemporary North-American women writers who critique physical and cultural spaces that accommodate or infringe upon creative processes. John Hudson discusses the intertextual relationship between Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a series of allegorical metaphors in the Bible, which also affect the staging of the play. Mariko Nagase's essay examines editorial transformations which a classic text may undergo and their impact upon how the text itself has been subsequently appropriated to different literary traditions and related to conceptualisations of author, editor and text. Shih Pei Chun critically discusses the adaptation of the original text of *King Lear* in Japan, and the cultural implications of how the language itself and the setting of the play is translated into medieval Japan. These articles are followed by reviews of recent fiction and of books on Canadian film, representations of immigration to the Canadian prairie, gender and children's literature, and critical approaches to playwriting; and also by notes that discuss and reflect upon current research on the issue of identity and related topics within various academic environments within the UK. In addition to such diverse contents, the present volume includes a Foreword by Professor Leslie Brubaker, who plays a prominent role in the teaching of both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and also, as the new Director of the College of Arts & Law Graduate School, has consistently promoted postgraduate research within the College.