Editor's Notes

Like all of our readers we here at the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (*HJEAS*) have found our professional and personal worlds upended by the Covid-19 pandemic. Our wish for you and all our readers, contributors and staff is to stay well and stay safe.

This issue reflects the breadth and the depth of *HJEAS* scholarship with contributions from Canada, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Scotland, Singapore, Slovakia, and the United States, and subjects that range across the spectrum of American, Irish, and English Studies beginning with a revision of the colonialism of Belgium, England, and the Netherlands. HJEAS is delighted to welcome back José Lanters (see *HJEAS* 2.2 and 8.1), whose essay, "Rewriting History: Narrative Resistance and Poetic Justice in Martin McDonagh's *A Very Very Very Dark Matter*," discusses Martin McDonagh's challenging, if perhaps uneven, play, *A Very Very Very Dark Matter* (2018) about rampant racism, colonial exploitation, and brutality in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and its colonies. King Leopold of Belgium was especially notorious for his merciless treatment of the Congolese, who were pressed into service on the rubber plantations. Lanters's discussion places the play within this historical and artistic setting with the European and American treatment of the Blacks as less than human including exhibiting some of them as freaks, natural oddities, and sub-humans or creatures in an evolutionary ladder leading to White perfection, while enslaving native populations to extract natural resources to fuel the "home" country's prosperity. She also situates *A Very Very Very Dark Matter* clearly in McDonagh's body of plays and films, noting how it reflects his characteristic emphases and preoccupations, one of which is his almost constant irreverent treatment of western cultural icons, which in this play

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include the revered writers Hans Christian Andersen and Charles Dickens. Much of his criticism is justified as Andersen did "borrow" the story of "The Emperor's New Clothes" from Spanish sources and Dickens was a womanizer and heavy drinker who treated his wife and children often badly, culminating in his throwing her and the children out of the house. McDonagh's Catherine Dickens instead announces to her startled husband that she is leaving him "and taking just one of the children. 'The others are annoying'" (50). All of which forms examples of what Lanters terms "rewriting history"; that is, rewriting the narrative to ensure that "poetic justice" happens, rather than the rather sordid historical reality. "*Dark Matter* is the convoluted end-product of a process of bricolage," she argues in this detailed, highly informative, critical essay.

In "Black Flânerie, Non-White Soundscapes, and the Fantastic in Teju Cole's *Open City*," Dorottya Mózes develops the notion of the Black Flâneur by foregrounding "the flâneur's auditory experiences and practices in the city." Unlike the White Flâneur, who is able to blend inconspicuously into "the anonymity of the crowd," the Black Flâneur finds it impossible to escape from the White gaze and, therefore, listens rather than looks. Utilizing sound studies as an effective window on this important novel, Mózes analyzes how both silence and noise function alike as the "grounds for embodied and racialized history." The Black Flâneur plunges into a palimpsest of the history of slavery and its "unresolved unfolding" from the slave ships using the port of New York through the Race Riots of 1863 to the twenty-first-century police assault of Eric Garner. Such noises go unheard "by the white listening ear" but come alive for the protagonist-Flâneur.

In "Squirrels, Timber, and the 'Ecological Self' in William Faulkner's *The Bear*," Kenneth E. Hada brings his extensive knowledge of ecocriticism to bear on Faulkner's famous story in *Go Down, Moses* illuminating both the story's and the mosaic novel's conclusions. He contends that Faulkner comments on the historic dimension of the

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Mississippi Delta's deforestation in the story's conclusion with the madman defending his tree full of squirrels against all comers in a barren landscape, as well as in the ending of "Delta Autumn" with Ike as "the timorous, withdrawn old man" at the end of a wasted life having done nothing to protect the land he inherited. "From the perspective of the land itself, Ike leaves it vulnerable, to be scraped and scarred, unnecessarily and unjustly relegated to a cheap commodity." Using ethicist Martha Nussbaum's standard where "our talk about literature" will return "to the ethical and social questions that gave literature its high importance in our lives," Hada shows the limits of other partial readings of this story, especially that of myth criticism. He challenges readers to see the story afresh by acknowledging the necessity of a new vision that joins humans to wildlife and to timber rather than compartmentalizing them.

John Dryden over two centuries ago memorably observed that "great minds [are often] near aligned to madness" ("Absalom and Achitophel" 1681). The contemporary clinical psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison demonstrated the truth in Dryden's observation in important books using her clinical experience to evaluate several artists, poets, and musicians, including *Touched with Fire* (1993), *An Unquiet Mind* (1995), *Night Falls Fast* (1999), and most recently *Robert Lowell: Setting the River on Fire* (2017). *HJEAS* asked Professor István Rácz to evaluate Jamison's work in a review essay, especially her discussion of Lowell, who had an acknowledged clinical history and who once remarked wryly to an interviewer that "[m]ania is sickness for one's friends, depression for one's self" (*Robert Lowell Collected Prose*, 286 qtd. in Jamison, *Touched with Fire* 249). His discussion begins with Jameson's surprising assertion that depression is "a distillation both of what is finest in our natures, and of what is most dangerous." (*Mind* 5). Lowell being fully conscious "of its relevance . . . made it a creative force in his writing . . . [as] duality of mania and discipline, insanity and sanity was the major organizing force of his life." Rácz concludes that Jamison, while "not a

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literary critic, but a clinical psychologist . . . [with] a profound interest in poetry," has given us an in-depth study of Lowell and of manic-depression, "which is passionately enthusiastic and admirably accurate."

Few popular writers are as prolific and their work as varied as Orson Scott Card's, who has tried his hand at fantasy, science fiction, horror, Mormon drama, as well as How-to-Do-It books, commentary, and advice to writers. W. A. Senior in "Orson Scott Card's Speculative Fictions: Blending Science Fiction and Fantasy" investigates Card's signature blending of genres, especially his mixing of science fiction into fantasy and/or his injecting fantasy elements into science fiction. Senior necessarily limits his analysis to a clutch of short stories and three of Scott's best novels, the well-known *Enders Game*, *Treason*, and *Wyrms*. *Treason*, set on a convict planet, a "galactic Australia, where, long in the past, rebellious scientists were exiled," suggests a science-fiction plot with which the setting conflicts as it proves "quasi-medieval," borrowed from fantasy, where people are governed by hereditary lords who take their names from the founding and ruling families of scientists, such as Mueller and Schwartz, and whose governing motivation is to make war on neighboring powers for land and the precious commodity iron. In *Wyrms*, Card constitutes a science-fiction fable and allegory with links to both *Ender's Game* and to *Speaker for the Dead* on Imakulata, a planet which had been settled 5,000 years in the past by human colonists, but the novel itself follows the episodic narrative paradigm of fantasy. This fusion of the "two [genres] grants fresh perspective and associations as science and technology change people's lives and the world around them, prompting new questions and issuing in new challenges and puzzles." Clearly, this mix is Card's conscious choice that reflects his priorities which are rooted in story rather than a desire to observe and/or police any genre boundaries. He is, as Senior maintains throughout his essay, a compelling storyteller who focuses on the story's

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"relevance to his audience." The result of this melding of genres and attention to his readers is almost always a pervasive sense of wonder as Card "works his enchantment."

For many of us growing up in the United States Robert Heinlein's "juveniles"—what we today term his Young Adult (YA) fiction—played an important role in widening our vision to beyond planet Earth. Those books published as a series for younger readers by Scrivener's challenged our imaginations and often greatly expanded our knowledge of the known universe and its workings. For many of those young readers his juveniles have remained important well into adulthood, yet a vocal segment of latter-day critics deride them as anti-feminine, as promoting racial stereotypes or worse, and as talking down to his audience. C. W. Sullivan, a YA scholar and recognized authority on Heinlein's juveniles, demonstrates that such positions could only be defended by ignoring much—most?—of the contents of the books. His "Note on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Home Planet: The 'Other' in Robert Heinlein's Juvenile Science Fiction," exposes just how untenable such wholesale condemnation is by citing "chapter and verse" from the full range of all the novels.

Rita Nándori in "Imagined Homeland: *Inummariit* as the Basis for the Concept of Inuit Nationhood" shares the extraordinary story of the creation of the Inuit national identity, which spans the Arctic and includes the Inuit of several nations. She delineates four separate semi-sovereign Inuit territories in Canada that the state recognizes as the Inuit homeland on the cultural, linguistic, and historical basis of their shared identity. Preserving this common basis of their shared identity in the face of radical climate change, technological innovations, and western capitalism will be an on-going challenge for both the Inuit homeland and the Canadian nation.

HJEAS has championed Scottish Studies over the years and is especially pleased to be able to include an interview by long-time contributor Attila Dósa of the Scots writer and public intellectual Tom Hubbard. His exposition of the various languages of Scotland is

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surely one of the clearest yet. (For a discussion of these languages see the special thematic block, "Scottish Studies Today," and in particular Kristen J. Lawson's spirited defense of Scots as a language in *HJEAS* 20.2.) Whatever our views, it is refreshing to see the anti-Brexit position characterized so clearly and succinctly as Hubbard does when he labels the Brexit debacle as "rubbish!" The consequences of this not-well-considered leaving of the European Union for and in Scotland are serious and wide-ranging in Hubbard's view as various factions reconsider staying or leaving Britain. A late-blooming writer, Hubbard has become an important voice in Scotland through his poetry and fiction mostly rooted in his native Fife.

As issue-editor, I would like to thank Andrea Timár for soliciting and editing the essays that comprise the thematic block, "Human Boundaries/Boundaries of the Human." These essays break new ground in three very different areas from Anna Kérchy's wide-ranging, comprehensive essay on the avant-garde's use of the human body in carnal performance, "Posthuman Somaesthetics and Interspecies Communication in Contemporary Humanimal Body Art Performances," through Dániel Panka's insightful new view of the nature of reality in Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, "Policing the Boundaries: The 'Mission Street Station Scene'" to József Pap's fruitful revisit to Seamus Heaney's most famous set of poems and their relation to the Northern Irish "Troubles" in "The Petrified Men and the Scarecrow: Substance, Body, and Self-image in Seamus Heaney's Bog Poems." All three essays discuss the implications inherent in the human interface with the Other whether identified as other animals or as beings technologically created with Artificial Intelligence or as those distanced from us by time's passing.

Kérchy addresses major issues of interspecies communication between animals and humans. Her even-handed essay delineates both the goals and the shortcomings of varied carnal performances, including Joseph Beny's famous 1965 lecture, "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare," where, as she dryly, perhaps even wryly, observes, "the use of dead animals

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surely limits interspecies communication.” The same should be said about the many popular and high-priced extravagant homages to Thanatos by Damien Hirst, who sacrifices huge numbers of animals to further his kitsch. Kérchy’s essay points out that like all avant-garde works, the best of these carnal performances push against the perceived and/or accepted definition of the limits of art thus helping to define those very limits.

No longer relegated to the dark corners of popular literature, Philip K. Dick now has his work packaged and published in uniform Library of America editions. Recognized as a highly influential, even seminal, writer of science fiction who has since his death provided numerous films with compelling storylines and inspired many fiction writers, Dick has also generated copious criticism, including several *HJEAS* essays (for example, *HJEAS* 24.1 [2018]). It appears at present that his most widely read story is *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, now published as a novella because of the great popularity of the film remake as *Blade Runner*. Panka demonstrates that as well-known as both the story and film may be, the significance of the strange Mission Street station section appears oddly neglected for, as he shows, this section is pivotal in interpreting the novel, especially in light of Dick’s mistrust of what often appears as “reality” (see *Time Out of Joint*, *The Truman Show*, and other fiction).

The emerging Hungarian scholar-poet József Pap concludes this thematic block with his new view of what are probably the most familiar early Seamus Heaney “Bog” poems together with some late ones. Linking that subject to Heaney’s preoccupation with Northern Irish tribalism, which led to widespread dehumanization of the Other, Pap shows that over a long and very fruitful career the poet shifted his view of the famous bodies in the bogs of Denmark as well as those in the bogs of Ireland. As “Heaney left behind an apologist viewpoint for sectarian violence,” according to Pap, his vision became necessarily more inclusive.

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In addition to these essays, this issue also has several important reviews including one honoring *HJEAS* Contributing Editor Professor Mária Kurdi. Congratulations to Professor Kurdi for this much-deserved recognition by your colleagues and peers.

HJEAS is pleased to welcome our new Copy Editor Mariann Buday, whose excellent work is evident throughout this issue. The editors and staff are grateful for her responding so quickly to the emergency occasioned by Kálmán Matolcsy's health problems that prohibited his doing this issue. Kálmán has been a mainstay in producing issues of *HJEAS* for over fourteen years, including assisting in the new design and choosing the new type face. Thankfully, he is now able to work and has agreed to stay on as "*HJEAS* Consulting Copy Editor," for which the editors and staff are most grateful. So welcome Mariann, and many thanks to Kálmán for his long service.

Stay Safe and Stay Well.

Donald E. Morse

Editor in Chief *HJEAS*

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Work Cited

Jamison, Kay Redfield. *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*. 1993. New York: Free Press, 1994. Print.

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