

Editor's Notes

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The pandemic has proven much more resilient than many of us would have believed. This is the second issue of HJEAS fully affected by coronavirus and we fear it is not the last. Some experts warn there will not be a full return to normalcy and even if they are proven wrong, we need to maintain the good practices introduced as a result of lockdowns. One such innovation in the editorial practices of HJEAS was the initiation of an online user-friendly manuscript center helping both authors and staff members to manage submissions and increasing the transparency of the publishing process.

One of the worst hit areas of the global economy was the tourism sector, employing hundreds of millions worldwide and serving even more. While tour organizers, airline companies, and resort towns suffered huge losses in revenues, holiday seekers were denied much needed rest and recreation. With a special section dedicated to its cultural representations, we offer chapters in the history of the British seaside resort, which under present conditions is certainly at a crossroads. After long years of decline since the late 1970s, in no small part as a result of the UK joining the European Economic Community, and the ease of travel it allowed, seaside resort towns and beaches might be put back on the list of popular holiday destinations, especially amongst the lower income groups, due to Brexit. Thousands flocking to the Dorset seaside in June 2020 might give us an idea of things to come.

The touristic value of the British seaside is largely dependent on its cultural value that has been in the making since the early nineteenth century. Popular perceptions of Brighton, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Margate, Morecombe, Swanage, Newquay, and Whitby were shaped by painters, architects, novelists and poets, filmmakers, photographers, music hall

stars, and performers of popular music. The image of the seaside resort is jointly constructed by art and entertainment, high culture and popular culture, and occasionally by their synergies, as the cases of the Whitby Goth Weekend and the Bram Stoker International Film Festival held annually in Whitby testify. The seaside resort is both a real cultural space and a space mediated through culture be that the prose of Virginia Woolf, the paintings of Beryl Cook, the photos of Tony Ray-Jones, the films of the Carry on franchise, the stage plays of John Osborne, or such summer music festivals as Tunes on the Sands, and the Boardmasters Festival. The special section that kicks off this issue explores literary and cinematic accounts of the seaside towns spanning three centuries and follows a historical logic.

While the thematic section does not aim to situate Britain within the wider European context of seaside resorts, a topic worthy of attention in itself, Pieter Francois's article on nineteenth-century literary accounts of the Belgian town of Ostend show that British and Continental patterns of tourism were closely connected already in the early period of resort culture. The overview of Frances Trollope's and William Makepeace Thackeray's relevant writing, as Francois asserts, calls attention to the "productive intersection of literary and travel studies," while inviting us to explore the relationship between the place and the holiday-seeker's social identity. Cheaper living costs at the Belgian resort town attracted Trollope and Thackeray, just as many others also afflicted with genteel poverty, offering an escape from debt, public scrutiny and public downfall. The more fluid class expectations of the Continental resort town allowed, even for people with no stable income, a respectable living and access to elite circles, which they would not have been able to enjoy in Britain. With this background knowledge on the two English writers' stay in Ostend, we can read their accounts, as Francois does, not just as travel guidebooks, but also as manuals for social fugitives on how to navigate the social world of "Little Britain on the Continent." This name for Ostend was all the more sensible since national and religious identity remained important

even for long-term visitors, and so did the inclination to receive the cultural offering of the place through the lens of British resort culture.

Moving a century forward, and focusing on non-fiction writings about the British seaside resorts in the 1930s, Virginia Richter gives a taste of the intellectual debate and the critical scrutiny which capture seaside holidays either as a stronghold of a democratic mass culture or the Americanization of English tradition. Arguments listed in debates made the seaside resort, as Richter notes, “the site of negotiations of individuality and collectivity, dreams and economics, performances of gender and class roles, and national identity,” a discursive site with conceptual binaries and critical angles still valid today, and also used extensively in the articles of this special section. Richter introduces emerging features of seaside holidays from the 1920s, including the appearance of the crowded modern beach, new (sun)bathing and more hedonistic leisure practices, using Agatha Christie’s *Evil Under the Sun*, a novel that devotes considerable efforts to dichotomizing individualism and the mass experience, social respectability, and holiday hedonism. She next examines Yvonne Cloud’s *Beside the Seaside* for its positive accounts of the English seaside resorts in the nineteen-thirties, calling attention to their role in maintaining good health and allowing people self-determined living as a foundation of democratic culture. While Ivor Brown in *The Heart of England* shares similarly positive assessments, the *English Journey* by J. B. Priestley is much more sceptical and, for Richter, exemplifies both middle-class preference for decorum and the fear of American entertainment undermining the vitality of a native popular culture defined as predominantly masculine. Such contrasting narratives of the seaside resort draw on oppositions between the traditionalist-nostalgic and the modernist-emancipatory tendencies in cultural criticism, which continue to dominate public perception.

Brigitta Hudácskó’s article offers textual evidence for many of the claims heard on the traditionalist side of the debate. The novel in focus, Dorothy L. Sayers’s 1932 crime story

Have His Carcase, resembles a mock Ruritanian romance set in the fictional seaside resort of Wilvercombe, which predates *Evil Under the Sun* by a decade, and also prefigures some of the latter's outspoken pessimism of what it perceives as the debilitating influence of consumer culture on holiday-makers. The central location of the story is the Resplendent Hotel, which hides behind the façade of a respectable institution from the Victorian era, while in fact it caters mainly for illusions and welcomes guests who are eager to live the superficial romance plots of Ruritanian novels. Hudácskó argues for the close correspondence between space and genre, hence her inclination to regard the hotel as a spatialization of cheap Ruritanian romances and to talk about protagonists Harriet Vane and Lord Peter Wimsey as being in the wrong genre while staying at the hotel. They are out of genre and out of space, as Hudácskó contends, since "they are reluctant to embrace the traditional gender roles offered to them by the classic romance plot" and its stifling ideas about passion and the roles one should prescribe to in a relationship. As such, taking control of their narratives and, by the same token, solving the murder case, requires them to unmask both the fictitious grandeur of the hotel and the fanciful pretence its residents embrace. The seaside resort in *Have His Carcase* is a space populated by make-belief identities and narratives founded on romantic clichés, not just a space of entrapment, a theme that will come up in other articles of the special section, but a space entrapped by the generic conventions of Ruritanian romances. Sayer's protagonists, Hudácskó asserts, escape the seaside resort, its self-deceptive fictions and debilitating illusions not because they are un-romantic, but because they pursue middle-class notions of romance with the promise of greater gender equality.

Film screenings became part of the standard entertainment mix in the early 20th century, and with the number of seaside visitors peaking year after year, there was a boom in movie theater building. By the late 1930s, seaside resort towns surely had the highest cinema/population ratio in the UK. In 1940, for example, Brighton had a population of circa

130,000, and 24 cinemas with a capacity of 23,000 seats. Besides gaining a dominant role in resort culture, cinema also saw a rise in narratives set in seaside towns in the second half of the century, as Zsolt Győri's essay argues, and recorded their slow demise. Certainly, the decline of the resort is rendered legible by an increasing number of films that no longer concentrate on the carnivalesque and liberating aspects of seaside holiday, but feature characters possessed by a sense of being lost in the world. Győri explores the associated notions of entrapment and escape in a historical selection of arthouse films focusing on how the protagonists' anxieties and troubled social lives are spatialized. Close readings of films "concentrate on the synergies between space and character, the pursuit of various imaginations, ideals, rites of passage and identity quests through which protagonists connect with seaside resorts." The article also illustrates the heterogeneous image of holiday towns, the construction of which takes different paths, and brings to light alternative cultural meanings when involving locals, tourists, fugitives, refugees, rebels, males, and females.

Seaside resorts also appear in more recent British films, yet the front regions—offering attractions, spectacle and entertainment for tourists—are generally absent in these works. Ewa Mazierska's article on *Jellyfish* (James Gardner), *Vs.* (Ed Lilly), and *Eaten by Lions* (Jason Wingard), all released in 2018, argues that the "'backyard' of the resorts is used here to represent wider problems afflicting British people, such as poverty, breakdown of families, or the lack of prospects for young people." Margate, Southend, and Blackpool are portrayed as places of social deprivation that feed, especially in Gardner's and Lilly's films, the young protagonists' frustration and feeling of entrapment. The Margate of *Jellyfish* gets as abusive as it is described by English artist Tracey Emin, the enfant terrible of the Young British Artists movement in her confessional art. Mazierska explores the characters' creative endeavors—a stand-up comedy performance in *Jellyfish* and the rap battles of *Vs.*—as carnivalesque spectacles that offer some relief for precarious teenagers, and also regards the

non-exploitive interracial relationships of the films as a clear sign that class is increasingly marginalized in British identity politics. This is somewhat at odds with the teenagers' prevailing narrative of precarious existence which highlights the decline of working class culture at seaside resorts well reflected in the lack of holiday crowds and protagonists seeking solitude. Foregrounding isolation and slow demise, both resort towns and residents featured in the films come to be possessed by a state of crisis; in fact, it is this state of economic, emotional, and moral emergency that provides the strongest glue between space and identity.

While most English gentlemen in the 1830s sought recreation and various forms of adventures at seaside towns, indulging in a resort culture which at the time was exclusively aristocratic, John Paget set out on a trip around Hungary and Transylvania, which turned out to be highly educational as recounted in his travelogue published in 1939. Paget found, as Márta Pellérdi's article convincingly argues, that this peripheral region of the old continent was much more developed and European than the prevailing colonial discourse of the time would have it. Despite an antiquarian interest in the Roman past of the country, its architecture and history, and not without romanticizing descriptions of Hungarian natural scenery—countryside landscapes featuring peasants and their atavistic customs—in the early chapters of the travelogue, Pellérdi asserts that “[i]n Paget's travel writing the hetero-images of the Other are surprisingly similar to the self-image of the traveler, especially when the Hungarian Protestant gentry and middle-class are described.” With a strong intent to settle in Transylvania, the homeland of his wife, it should come as no surprise that Paget would be drawn towards well-informed and open-minded liberal aristocratic families, who shared his visions of political and social modernization and, particularly, the integration of Hungary into European economic and trade networks.

Paget's pragmatic approach in terms of economy being the key to national welfare was proven on numerous occasions in decades to come but never as crucially as after the Great

War when Hungary was burdened with repatriations and was in a highly unstable financial situation. In such a financially instable period it was again an English-speaking liberal, this time the American Royall Tyler, who visited Hungary as a delegate of the League of Nations and helped secure the good reputation of the country in the international financial community.

Zoltán Peterecz's article based on meticulous archival research offers an exhaustive overview of the fifteen years Tyler, almost uninterrupted, spent in Budapest assisting the economic reconstruction of the country, and forming close working relations with consecutive Hungarian governments that also hoped he would advance US–Hungarian relations. According to Peterecz, the first five years of Tyler overseeing the proper administering of international loans allowed him to understand the economic and trade related challenges this agrarian country was facing, and led to his urging structural reforms, and the use of loans to modernize the economy. In the wake of the Great Depression that left the Hungarian financial sector on the brink of collapse, the services of Tyler again proved salutary. Realizing that the liberal responses to steep economic decline were not applicable to Hungary due its small internal market and agriculture-driven economy, Tyler stressed the need for economizing and tighter budgetary policies. His suggestions were, however, only partly taken heed of, as the Gömbös government decided to pursue trade agreements with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. These and other steps helped ease financial pressures, yet they put Hungary on a political path no pragmatic liberal would regard as his own.

The recent upsurge in racial tension in the US and elsewhere paints a grim picture about our ability to handle historically formed and inherited bigotry and discrimination. As White supremacists stormed the Houses of Congress in January, this cultural heritage proved more powerful than many would have imagined and, for the same reason, the article by Susan Lee and Csabafi about the correlation between anti-immigration sentiment (manifested in the degeneration theory) and cinematic nationalism stands more relevant than ever. The authors

explore W. Christy Cabanne's *Martyrs of the Alamo* (1915), a fictional account of the Texas Revolution against Mexico in 1835–36, a western celebrating the moral superiority, collective heroism, and patriotism of Americans, while portraying Mexicans as intellectually inferior, lascivious, lazy, and violent without being brave. Cabanne's film heavily draws upon the concern of the American public in the 1910s with immigration and the prevailing tendency to link immigrant bodies and disease with heredity and genetics, thus disguising social prejudices as medical evidence. Not only did immigration become politicized as newcomers were blamed for emerging public health issues and social problems, but they were deemed inferior on a basis supported by the cultural ideology of patriotism. *Martyrs of the Alamo* categorizes Mexicans as degenerates lacking hygiene in order to justify American violence against them and as such, one might add, it is not unlike other classical westerns featuring non-WASP characters. Yet, Cabanne's highly popular picture is one of the first to crystallize the logic of toxic patriotism that increasingly affects politics and media in the US.

The articles section of this issue of HJEAS is rounded off with two shorter pieces: a meditation on hallucinatory cinema and a review essay on recent Lewis Carroll scholarship. Mark Harris's piece well reflects his triple identity of artist, writer, and curator as he offers distinctive differences between today's non-evolving and non-narrative experimental films, a kind of cinema that champions digital entropy, and the utopian goal embedded in the hallucinatory qualities of 1960s psychedelic cinema. According to Harris, the turn towards intensely personal and often drugs-induced inner experiences defined countercultures willing to sacrifice commodity consumerism for the consumption of new sensory images. The euphoria of the previous decade had already evaporated in the 1970s when the hallucinatory aesthetic appeared in mainstream cinema as a tool of brainwashing, yet the dry and disembodied HD image and the surgical manipulations it was subjected to altogether lacked euphoria and championed the uncanny hallucinatory qualities of the hyperreal. The synthetic

image is a bad trip in inhabitable virtual environments where self-immersion and individuality is overtaken by endless self-remixing, and is underpinned by the many algorithms of consumerism. Digital technology no longer caters for countercultural communality, but for disconnection and alienation resulting in artistic practices. Harris explores “[the] hallucinatory probing of frontiers of obliteration” in selected works by Jacoby Satterwhite, Heather Phillipson, Ed Atkins, and Benedict Drew.

While hallucinatory qualities mean different aesthetic priorities in experimental and commercial cinema, there are a handful of directors, including Jan Švankmajer, Terry Gilliam, Tim Burton, and David Lynch, whose films have been likened to a psychedelic experience. What these filmmakers share is a fascination with Lewis Carroll’s literary universe that also keeps inspiring critical reflection. Anna Kérchy’s review essay looks at three recent publications of Carroll scholarship, all of which “attribute a specific goal, agenda, a systematic structure, a decipherable message, and a homogenized reading” to Carroll’s oeuvre. Laura Tosi’s *The Fabulous Journeys of Alice and Pinocchio* compares Carroll’s girl protagonist with Carlo Collodi’s literary creation of the wooden boy in a memorable reading, as Kérchy contends, of the thematic, structural, cultural connections, and adaptogenic qualities of the two texts. The second reviewed item, Kiera Vaclavik’s *Fashioning Alice. The Career of Lewis Carroll’s Icon, 1860-1901*, is a volume offering a historical overview of the iconotextual dynamics of how Alice was portrayed in intermedial projects and captured as a fashion icon by visual artists (including theatrical performances). Kérchy regards the extensive use of previously neglected documents and artefacts—amongst others, diary entries, illustrated editions, photographs, amateur illustrations, advertisements, cartoons, sketches, postage stamps, wallpaper, and kitchenware—as the most ambitious aspects of the volume. Laura White’s *The Alice Books and the Contested Ground of Natural History*, the third volume under scrutiny, relies heavily, as Kérchy asserts, on “recent twenty-first century

ecocritical, posthumanist philosophical agenda,” and the belief that in order to enjoy the absurd humor and the countless subtle ironies of the Alice volumes, we need to understand Carroll’s perceptions about science and nature.

Apart from essays, this issue of *HJEAS* offers reviews on volumes with such varied topics as the avant-garde British novel, recent developments in monster studies, pageant shows and public entertainment in early-modern London. The review section also introduces doctoral students’ critical assessments of challenging and topical issues, including the presidency of Donald Trump, encounters between the East and the West in Arabic North Africa, and sexual violence against women. I would take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Gabriella Moise, *HJEAS*’s review editor, who has been, for almost a decade now, doing an astonishing job of contacting publishers, recruiting reviewers for important new publications, and tirelessly editing submissions. She has single-handedly managed a section of this journal which everyone in the editorial staff regards as a section of supreme importance, and takes much pride in. Thank you, Gabi!

By the time you read these words, the pandemic, hopefully, will have been taken under control. Yet our message remains: Keep Safe and Keep Sane and Listen to Jazz.

Zsolt Győri

University of Debrecen