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Les imaginaires de la maladie et du handicap dans la littérature et la culture écossaises : sources, contextes, théorie

Foreword

Avant-propos

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Introduction

- 1 Since the 1980s, Scottish literary and cultural studies have expanded beyond a concern with nation to attend to the imagination of gendered, classed and racialized subjects. Disability studies and the medical humanities are though yet to be brought fully into critical dialogue with Scottish literature and culture—a fundamental step for the theorisation of the many illness and disability representations to be found there. This special issue of *Études écossaises* provides a space for exploration of this richness and diversity. It brings together contributions that exemplify what recovering imaginaries of illness and disability in Scottish literature and culture might involve, and it provides proof of why we might want to embrace illness and disability as legitimate categories of analysis within Scottish cultural interpretation and critique.
- 2 Contributions span a variety of periods of Scottish culture, including the Victorian era (Lai and Nelson), the post-war period (Fath), the 1990s (MacBean) and the twenty-first century (Bokestaël, Glass, MacDonald). Some of the articles engage little-studied primary sources in Scottish literature, namely Tamsin Calidas' *I Am an Island* (Bokestaël), Ever Dundas' *HellSans* (Glass), Nasim Marie Jafry's *The State of Me* (MacDonald), Andrew O'Hagan's *Personality* (Spence) and the autobiography of Elizabeth Storie (Lai and Nelson). Others are analyses of established primary sources in Scottish literature, namely Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori* (Fath) and Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (MacBean), which illuminate aspects of these well-known texts that remain otherwise unappreciated. Each of contributions develops a medical humanities or disability studies perspective that brings out new readings of their chosen texts.

Summary of contributions

- 3 The contributions that locate themselves within a medical humanities disciplinary framework are Lorna MacBean's "Disabling States of Surveillance: R. D. Laing's *The Divided Self* (1960) and James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994)", Laura MacDonald's "Temporalities in Nasim Marie Jafry's *The State of Me*", Fred Spence's "Illness Beyond the Scottish National Imaginary: Anorexia and Scots-Italian Historical Trauma in Andrew O'Hagan's *Personality*", and Mathieu Bokestaël's "Insular Iconicity and Utopian Immunity: Inoculating the Self in Tamsin Calidas' *I Am an Island*".
- 4 MacBean draws upon R. D. Laing's theory of self-consciousness and the schizoid individual developed in his book *The Divided Self* (1960) to explore Sammy Samuels' response to the onset of blindness and the disabling social and institutional structures he is forced to engage with in James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, situating this analysis within a body of scholarship that has examined *How Late* as an existential novel. MacDonald examines *The State of Me* as a fictional pathography of the protagonist's experience of living with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) in late-twentieth-century Scotland, adopting a medical humanities framework to theorise the ways in which Helen's perception of temporality is rendered in narrative form. Spence examines Andrew O'Hagan's representation of health issues, anorexia and intergenerational / historical trauma in *Personality* situating this investigation within, and against, a Scottish literary and cultural context dominated by the exploration of those forms of madness, mental ill-health and altered psychological states that fit "the myth of the pathological Scot". Bokestaël studies the ways in which Calidas' novel deconstructs the mythology of self-containment associated with literary islands through its use of a biomedical and legal-political semantics of immunity to render the relations between the community and the protagonist.
- 5 The contributions that adopt approaches closer to a disability studies tradition are Rodge Glass' "Moving from 'the Realm of Hospital Room to the Realm of Political Minority': Ever Dundas' *HellSans* and the Radical Contemporary Disability Novel", Gabrielle Fath's "The Satire of Gerontophobic Ableism in Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*: A 'Salutary Scar'" and Dana Graham Lai and Holly Faith Nelson's "'There Was Death in The Powder and He Knew It': Dis/Ability and Tactics of Resistance in The Autobiography of Elizabeth Storie".
- 6 Glass develops a theory of how Ever Dundas' creative work moves the imagination of disabled communities away from a medicalized perspective towards one closer to political and activist contexts. Glass situates this shift within a specifically Scottish literary context and theorizes it as a manifestation of the development of the radical contemporary disability novel. Fath investigates the ways in which *Memento Mori* represents the intersecting violence of ableism and ageism in institutions of care for older people in the context of post-war Britain, debunking "statist myths" specific to the period. Lai and Nelson study the ways in which Elizabeth Storie's autobiography amounts to a "knowledge project" that provides key insights into the intersectional identity and oppression Storie experienced as a working-class and disabled woman in Victorian Scotland, and offers a powerful critique of the medical, legal, and ecclesiastical systems that contributed to this oppression.

Conclusion

- 7 All contributions develop original theoretical frameworks for studying narratives of illness and disability in Scottish culture, variously putting into conversation disability studies or the medical humanities with Scottish studies, or drawing upon philosophical studies (Fath, Bokestael) or historical studies (Fath, Lai and Nelson) to attend to imaginaries of illness and disability in Scottish writing. Some address the intersection of narratives of illness and disability with narratives of class (Fath, Glass, Lai and Nelson), age (Fath) or gender (Fath, Lai and Nelson). Others explicitly reflect on the disciplinary politics involved in bringing together the study of Scottish literature and culture with disability studies (Fath, Glass) and the medical humanities (Spence, MacBean, MacDonald), simultaneously foregrounding and critically engaging with narratives of illness and disability specific to a Scottish literary or cultural context.
- 8 Together, the contributions constitute a call for engagement with the multiple authors, texts and narratives of madness, illness and disability that await exploration in Scottish writing. They also encourage us to reflect upon the spectrum of visibility that different theoretical approaches generate, both when it comes to the medical humanities and disability studies and when the philosophical or historical frameworks that enable the analysis of imaginaries of illness and disability in Scottish culture are concerned. Finally, the articles in this special issue challenge us to interrogate the usefulness of utilizing the disciplinary framework of Scottish literature as a tool to facilitate the exploration of neglected authors, texts and narratives of illness and disability in Scottish writing. Is such a framework still needed and, if so, how does its existence (over-)determine the range of debates and angles we are most likely to adopt? Answering this question involves, in the first place, the willingness to search for alternatives and engage with a wealth of literary material that deserves exploration from as many possible theoretical and disciplinary standpoints as possible—in the process constantly expanding the range of the possible in Scottish Studies.

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