

The 24th issue of *Ad Americam: Journal of American Studies*
Review by Emma Bálint

Ad Americam: Journal of American Studies

Łukasz Wordliczek (Editor-in-Chief), Andrzej Mania (Honorary Editor-in-Chief), Paulina Napierala (Managing Editor)

2023

Krakow, Poland: Księgarnia Akademicka Publishing

160 pages

ISSN: 1896-9461, eISSN: 2449-8661



The 24th issue of *Ad Americam: Journal of American Studies*

Review by Emma Bálint

Ad Americam: Journal of American Studies is a prominent and long-standing periodical, published annually by the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, that accumulates research in American studies primarily in Eastern Europe. Since 2000, it has provided a reliable and widely accessible space mostly but not exclusively for Polish researchers to publish their findings in the extensive fields of culture, literature, popular culture, society, politics, history, and more, all linked through their relatedness to the Americas. Their latest issue, the 24th in succession, was published in 2023 and provides an expectedly stimulating and expansive set of innovative papers concerning vibrant and diverse scientific areas. In order to provide due attention to each article, they will be introduced one by one in the following.

The opening paper titled “Barren, Silent, Godless’: Void and Wilderness in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*” connects and compares the renowned and widely celebrated 2008 novel in the title to the oldest collective experiences and memories of Americans: the colonial settlement period. Gonçalo Dias, the author of this article, argues that in the wild dystopian setting of McCarthy’s seminal work, the hostile wilderness by which the Puritans were met in the 17th century and the idealized notions of the early Puritan tradition as chronicled by John Winthrop can be discerned. In his concise paper, Dias emphasizes that instead of providing a definitive reading of *The Road*, he aims to expand on the vastness of interpretative possibilities of this influential literary work.

“#NeverAgainMSD and the March for Our Lives Movement: American Youth for Gun Control” by Marek Dziobak provides media and legal insight into protests against gun violence in the U.S. While focusing on the sociohistorical context and the 2018 events leading up to the founding of the March for Our Lives movement in Florida, Dziobak inspects an immense amount of media articles and political statements on the topic along with the legal outcomes of the students’ actions. Through scrutinizing this pressing and persistent American issue, this paper determines some of the motivations behind and the current state of the now nationwide, partially successful but highly influential student-led organization March for Our Lives.

Anna Jastrzębiec-Witowska’s article titled “Food-Insecure from the Start: Economic, Social and Political Conflicts of the 2022 Infant Milk Crisis” addresses the less vehement and often ignored issue of post-pandemic supply shortage within its social, economic, and political frameworks. Beginning with a detailed overview of the history of feeding infants in the United States since the 19th century, Jastrzębiec-Witowska provides an extremely comprehensive study of the issue, which has mostly concerned and affected lower social classes, manufacturing, and government agencies. Similarly to Dziobak, Jastrzębiec-Witowska also scrutinizes an impressive amount of media articles on the topic in order to draw conclusions and accurately evaluate and criticize the political reactions and economic solutions to this crisis.

Moving beyond the United States of America, Gabriela Kwiatek’s paper, “Canadian Federal Policies and the Inuit Youth Suicide Crisis: Trauma and Reconciliation,” identifies the Inuit youth suicide crisis ensuing from the 1980s onward as the result of Canadian Indigenous people’s intergenerational trauma caused by colonization and assimilation measures in the 19th century. After overviewing the turmoiled collective history and the increasingly strained living conditions of Indigenous people in Canada in the past in detail, Kwiatek conscientiously scrutinizes possible suicide risk factors today, including the lockdowns to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. The

author concludes with an optimistic outlook, noting and appreciating that the Canadian federal government is making an effort to prioritize Inuit-specific and community-based solutions.

Iga Machnik's paper titled "The Problem with a Peremptory Challenge [sic]—a Tool of Racial Discrimination Within American Jury Selection Process" examines the shortcomings and rules that discriminate against members of minorities within the system of selection for jury duty in the United States, the risk of which lies in that it might in turn greatly influence the outcome of a trial. After overviewing the origins of peremptory challenges in medieval England and in the U. S., Machnik examines recent attempts to minimize the possibility of prejudice taking place in judicial processes through the introduction of the Batson claim in 1986. The author concludes that despite the recognition of the problem and certain preventive measures, systemic racism, however subtly and indirectly, is still an issue within the American judicial system.

"From Ipanema Across the Ocean – Brazil's Image Abroad Through Music" by Carlos Panek is the second article in the volume that takes a glance beyond the United States of America, discussing how various genres of Brazilian music have shaped the image of Brazil in the world. Panek considers music a soft power that, besides contributing to representing the Brazilian identity within and outside the country, may also have significantly influenced their international relations. The paper examines lesser-known but significant genres of music, such as bossa nova and Brazilian heavy metal, in order to challenge cultural stereotypes of this particularly heterogeneous nation.

The journal issue includes one intriguing study on Polish-Canadian affairs in Kamila Przygoda's research article titled "Québec Separatism in the Polish Weekly Newspaper *Czas* [*Polish Times*]." This paper examines the attitude and the voice of the Polish diaspora—as expressed through the articles published in the weekly newspaper *Czas* in Winnipeg—in the momentous question of maintaining unity in Canada during the movement of Québec separatism between 1960 and 1980. As Przygoda observes, although the newspaper mostly featured reprints from other Canadian newspapers, it is apparent that the Polish, possibly resulting from their exclusion from the tumultuous events happening in their home country at the time, showed a deep interest in the debate.

"Eviction Moratorium in the New York State During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Development and Analysis of Legal Solutions" by Aleksandra Rachwał provides legal interpretation of a grave issue. After a brief introduction to the housing disputes caused by the regulations during the pandemic, Rachwał observes the solutions offered by authorities both within the State of New York and on the federal level, most of which only proved to help temporarily, ending at the beginning of 2022. Nevertheless, Rachwał opines that the security provided by the moratorium in New York State was a useful and suitable solution at the time and that solutions to local problems are most fit to solve problems if they are created by local authorities.

The concluding paper of the journal's 24th issue is a literary-political one, which, together with the first article, appears to provide a thematic frame for this topically rather heterogeneous volume. "The American Revolutionary Spirit: Jefferson's Ward System and Whitman's Poetics" by Kiyotaka Sueyoshi examines the poems and journals of Transcendentalist poet Walt Whitman in light of and reflecting President Thomas Jefferson's revolutionary ideas on governmental structure. In Whitman's "Song of Myself" in particular, the motif of the door is seen by Sueyoshi to radically represent the poet's wish for Jefferson's ideal of self-government.

Volume 24 of *Ad Americam* thus contains nine exciting papers in literature, music, politics, history, health, and a wider range of cultural conflicts, connected by being set in Inter-American domains. Each text addresses a very stringent and current event or issue within and near the United States, holding a critical and objective mirror to the most relevant affairs ensuing on the continents today. It is admirable that the authors of this particular issue have assembled from Poland, Hungary, Portugal, and Brazil, providing their readers access to their far-reaching and wide-

ranging insights. Furthermore, it is also praiseworthy that this issue nurtures and embraces young talents by including the voices of numerous undergraduate students, graduate students, junior researchers, and specialist consultants alongside the writings of esteemed scholars.

The research articles included in *Ad Americam*'s 24th issue are organized in chronological and thematic order, each skillfully edited and the whole of the volume sophisticatedly designed. The publication is well-organized and easy to navigate: the cover lists the titles of the articles included in the issue, each paper is preceded by a brief abstract and a set of keywords, and there is a section dedicated to the short biographies of the contributors to the current issue and one proudly and informatively listing the titles and contributors of all previous issues at the end of the volume. Reading such good-quality periodicals can benefit any scholar interested in American studies, whether they are BA students or lecturers.