

Introduction to the 20th Anniversary Edition of *AMERICANA e-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*

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Réka M. Cristian, Founding General Editor

Zoltán Dragon, Founding General Editor

Twenty years from its inauguration, *AMERICANA e-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* is still conveying the excitement that brought its first issue to life in 2005, when this emerging digital-only journal appeared on the local level as a new alternative to the print academic environment for publications in our field. Our e-journal was founded at a moment when online publication was still an uncharted frontier and the very idea of an open-access, peer-reviewed journal devoted to American Studies in Central Eastern Europe was bold—but we also felt that it was urgent and necessary. Our ambition was clear from the onset: to create a space of dialogue that transcends disciplinary, national, and language borders, and to explore how “America” could be read not as a fixed entity, but rather as a set of ever shifting images and narratives. Two decades later, we are certain that this ambition has continued and will continue to define us. With few people trusting the enduring nature of digital publications then, we ventured to put together the first issue with our always enthusiastic colleagues from the Department of American Studies, University of Szeged, among them some of our former teachers and mentors.

When the e-journal was launched twenty years ago, we wished to articulate a complex gesture: an act of homage, and the promise of critical dialogue. Don DeLillo’s debut novel, *Americana* (1971), lent us not only a title but also a sense of orientation toward the mediated image of America, including its myths of identity, mobility, and communication, and the convergence of representation and lived experience. DeLillo’s protagonist, David Bell, turns his lens on the American landscape, to create a visual documentary in search of the meaning of America and its authenticity in the modern world, but what he discovers is but a hall of mirrors where the image always precedes the event, and the recording of life becomes life itself. We wished to turn this paradox into a fruitful scholarly engagement across a myriad of disciplines, which has become the testimony of two decades of original scholarship.

Already with the first issue, *AMERICANA e-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* became a thriving platform for an ever-expanding number of authors from Hungary and also from abroad. Ten years after, in the 2015 Anniversary Edition, we were „confident that this has merely been an overture” and hoped “to see where the story of *AMERICANA* leads tomorrow.” Our tomorrow, it seems, remained perennial, and we are now celebrating the 20th anniversary of the birth of *AMERICANA* based in Szeged, looking forward to continue providing this forum for everyone interested in writing, reading and researching in the field of American Studies and the Americas.

Over the years, similar to many digital publications, *AMERICANA e-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* has had many advantages compared to the print medium, including that of the open access, hyperlinks, no library space nor shelving costs, no limits in size, quick publishing time, and so on — essential assets that made our e-journal available for larger masses and, as such, prosper from its onset. In the context of the exponential expansion of e-journals at the beginning of the 2000s, *AMERICANA* found itself quickly into the mainstream venue of Americanist publications in Hungary and also abroad, attracting an increasing number of readers and authors from across the globe. To make it more inclusive, we also opened its platform to talented students, not just to our colleagues in the field, and we intend to keep this practice.

In twenty years, we cooperated with many authors (among which many were recurring collaborators), language editors, review editors, invited guest editors, board members and advisory board members alike, and we would like to take the opportunity to thank each of them for all their support and commitment to our scholarly mission, materialized in 37 volumes of issues and special issues over time. Our thanks go also to all who have contributed to the visual art and the design of the journal covers throughout the years, including photographs and various design works that made *AMERICANA e-Journal* also a visual feast.

If DeLillo's *Americana* offered a critical metaphor for mediated vision, our own *AMERICANA* project has sought to cultivate a counter-image, to forge a scholarly space where ideas are not simply reproduced but never cease to be interrogated. Looking back now, the journal's history reflects this ongoing work of re-vision, whether in studies of literature and visual culture, politics and philosophy, or in the exploration of the American imaginary across global and local contexts. We have watched American Studies itself evolve from postmodernism toward posthumanism, from the optimism of digital connectivity to the ambivalence of platform capitalism. Through these transformations, *AMERICANA* has remained committed to critical reflection and open access, publishing contributions from established scholars and emerging voices alike.

Like a photograph, an academic journal is both a record and a projection, as it captures a moment in the present that soon becomes the past, while at the same time pointing toward futures that remain to be deferred. Looking back through our volumes, one encounters these temporalities in the form of critical returns to the past, speculative gestures toward the future, and the constant negotiation between the local and the global, the image and the word through the deep focus and scholarly magnification of a transnational vein of American Studies.

As we celebrate this anniversary, we are reminded that an academic journal is also a collective act of faith in conversation, in polyphony, in curiosity, in the hope and possibility of shared understanding across distance and difference. The editors, authors, reviewers, and readers who have shaped *AMERICANA* over the past twenty years have done more than sustain a publication: they have sustained a community of inquiry. For that, we express our deepest gratitude.

We would like to commemorate the birth of our enterprise with this special 20th Anniversary Edition of *AMERICANA e-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*, which includes the works of present Department of American Studies members from the University of Szeged and international colleagues, hoping that the next twenty years (or more) will be as fruitful as the first were.