

[Introduction]

Stanislav Kolář

In the 16-year history of the *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, this is the first-ever special monothematic issue. Its title, “Perspectives on Ethnicity and the Environment in American Studies,” mirrors the central theme of the Colloquium of American Studies which took place at the University of Ostrava on October 5–6, 2023, organized by the Czech Association for American Studies (see a brief report in the *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, vol. 15, no. 2, p. 95). This special issue is the outcome of presentations from the Colloquium, featuring a selection of articles that address social and environmental topics as reflected in American literature, film, and culture. While some papers focus primarily on ethnicity, the majority examine American society through an ecocritical lens. They delve into topics such as environmental justice and racism, pastoralism and anti-pastoralism in representations of the American landscape, and other key environmental and social issues, with intersections of race, class, and gender playing a significant role.

The volume opens with Ewa L. Wiśniewska’s article, which analyzes Sheri S. Tepper’s eco-dystopian sci-fi novel *Grass* in the context of environmentalism, feminism, and posthuman studies, foregrounding the interconnectedness of humans and non-human entities in the book. Nela Hachlerová’s paper explores the symbolic role of the desert landscape in Sam Shepard’s dramatic oeuvre and its effects on his characters, viewing these issues from an ecocritical perspective. Paul Von Blum’s essayistic contribution takes us beyond literature, introducing the socially critical art of two lesser-known Los Angeles artists, Yrneh Gabon Brown and Luciana Abait, with a focus on the representation of climate and the global migration crisis in their works. Anna Světlíková provides an ecocritical interpretation of two of Marilynne Robinson’s novels, *Housekeeping* and *Lila*, focusing on the representation of the natural environment, particularly the role of the wilderness. Petra Filipová’s article enriches the fast-burgeoning field of vegan studies, illuminating the narrative techniques and visual symbolism in the documentaries *Cowspiracy* and *Seaspiracy*. Majid Shirvani’s study applies Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope and the concept of dialogue to Philip Roth’s novel *The Human Stain*, elucidating the interplay between environment and society. Mark A. Brandon’s paper examines ethical dilemmas in the Czech anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička’s scientific research in Alaska. Finally, Július Rozenfeld’s study presents the results of his research exploring the attitudes of young people in Slovakia toward the United States and their perceptions of Americans in relation to environmental issues.

Due to space constraints, we were unable to include all the contributions on this topic in this issue. As a result, we plan to continue exploring these themes in the next edition of the *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, which will feature additional articles addressing the interactions between diverse social (ethnic) groups in the United States and the environment, hence broadening perspectives on issues that have both American and global dimensions.