

A PRELUDE TO *THE STUDIA ANGLICA POSNANIENSIA* SPECIAL ISSUE  
“AMERICA AND DEEP TIME: ALTERNATE TEMPORALITIES,  
GEOGRAPHIES, AND HISTORIES”

This cluster of essays anticipates the forthcoming special issue of *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* (2026) devoted to “America and Deep Time: Alternate Geographies, Temporalities, and Histories.” The project unfolds across two consecutive volumes of the journal. The three articles gathered here, published in the final issue of 2025, serve as a prelude to that larger undertaking. While complete in themselves, they also announce the conceptual and critical horizons that the 2026 volume will explore more expansively.

The idea for the special issue emerged from a shared intellectual moment in October 2023, when the annual conference of the Polish Association for American Studies “America and Deep Time” brought to Poznań scholars, writers, and readers attentive to expanded temporal and spatial frames. Two encounters proved especially formative. Forrest Gander’s poetry reading and conversation at the Faculty of English created a space of rare attentiveness, foregrounding lyric as a mode of listening across geological, ecological, and erotic durations. Equally influential was the keynote lecture by Prof. Wai Chee Dimock (Harvard University), whose work has fundamentally reshaped how American literature and culture can be understood across planetary scales, species histories, and uneven temporalities that exceed the nation.

Inspired by Dimock’s theorization of deep time as a set of coordinates “above and below the plane of the nation,” and by the ecological and planetary intimacies articulated in Gander’s poetry, the special issue as a whole examines how American literature engages with temporalities that unsettle linear chronology and bounded geography. Read through the lens of deep time, American texts emerge as nodes within expansive networks of circulation, vulnerability, and survival, where the subnational and the transnational intertwine.

The three contributions published in this issue begin to map that terrain. The first of these essays turns to the domestic sphere as a site where deep time becomes habitable, tracing how everyday spaces register and refract temporal scales that exceed the human. Ewa Kowal’s “Housing crisis time in two graphic narratives: Richard McGuire’s *Here* and Chris Ware’s *Building stories*”

demonstrates how contemporary graphic narratives help us think about temporality, crisis, and futurity. Drawing on crisis studies, housing studies, and hauntology, Kowal situates these works within overlapping contexts of financial collapse, climate change, and nuclear threat. Both McGuire and Ware mobilize the domestic sphere (the house, its inhabitants, and even its objects) as spectral figures through which global crises are refracted. In doing so, they render the most pressing anxieties of our present legible both in the near future and across the scales of deep time. What emerges is a tension between crisis and domestication. *Building stories* (2012) responds to the 2008 housing crash and homelessness crises by projecting a mid-22nd-century America transformed by climate change. *Here* (2014), by contrast, envisions rising seas in the early 22nd century and human extinction in the 24th, embedding these catastrophic futures within the everyday rhythms of a single domestic space. Both experiments with scale and perspective invite us to reconsider the relationship between the personal and the global, between the intimate and the planetary. As such, they provide a crucial lens for this issue's exploration of deep time, showing how literature can both register the urgency of contemporary crises and imagine futures beyond the horizon of human habitation.

The next contribution, "A fable for our entangled world: Reading Gary Shteyngart's *Our country friends* (2021) in assemblage Terms," explores human and interhuman relations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Martyna Bryla discusses Shteyngart's novel in the context of Thomas Newlin's ecological reading of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (1897), demonstrating the novel's indebtedness to the late 19th-century text, which in turn opens it to a deep-time perspective on the human condition. Drawing on the concept of assemblage, Bryla maps the recent global health crisis as a biological, historical, political, cultural, and interpersonal phenomenon that exceeds individual states and ecosystems. Relying further on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, she demonstrates how the novel develops in line with assemblage thinking about literature, functioning as both vehicle and participant in literary, cultural, and national exchanges across time and space. The scholar foregrounds both the novel's contemporary specificity and its universality. Shteyngart's protagonist, Sasha Senderovsky, uses the lockdown to materialize a childhood dream by gathering friends on his property, offering seclusion in private bungalows alongside communal, multicultural collectivity. Intended to revive memories of carefree summertime in New York bungalows for immigrant children, this utopian experiment ultimately recalls nineteenth-century transcendentalist idyllic projects: the initial mirth gives way to tension and conflict. Bryla's analysis argues that Shteyngart continues Chekhov's exploration of how the passage of time, especially under extraordinary circumstances,

reshapes relationships among people and with their environments. By examining formal features such as genre blurring, dream-like interludes, and intertextuality, Bryla shows that these elements are central to representing fragmentariness, simultaneity, and nonlinear temporality in lived experience, mapping them alongside the characters' attempts to manage chaos and confusion.

Where Bryla's reading foregrounds how crises reshape human relations and temporal experience, the final article shifts attention to the spatial afterlives of historical trauma, examining how deep time is reimagined through Black urban geographies. Ewa Klęczaj-Siara examines how post-slavery identities and spaces are reimagined in contemporary literature. Focusing on the South Bronx since 1973, Klęczaj-Siara explores how this historically stigmatized area—long associated with poverty, crime, and decay—has been transformed into a symbol of resilience, creativity, and pride. Analyzing two picturebooks, she demonstrates how children's literature redefines these spaces. In *When the beat was born* (2013) by Joshunda Sanders, the South Bronx becomes the birthplace of hip-hop, a global cultural movement through which young Black artists turned music, dance, and language into tools of resistance and self-affirmation. This creative energy, she argues, generated *Black joy* and inspired movements of cultural defiance worldwide. In *I can write the world* (2019) by Laban Carrick Hill, the narrative shifts to an eight-year-old girl from the South Bronx who, though removed from direct experience of slavery, lives amid its lingering social and spatial legacy. Determined to reimagine her community, she transforms the story of a marginalized ghetto into one of vitality and creative renewal. Klęczaj-Siara shows how the integration of text and illustrations by Black artists enables picturebooks to reclaim segregated urban spaces as sources of empowerment and cultural transformation.

Together, these essays offer a focused entry into the questions that will be developed further in the 2026 volume: how literature registers deep time, how it recalibrates scale, and how it reimagines America within planetary, transnational, and more-than-human frames.

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