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**MEMORY,
MATERIALITY,
AND AFFECT**

Creativitas: Critical Explorations in Literary Studies

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EDITORIAL

Memory's Material Turn: Affective Assemblages and Literary Transformation

As we present the second volume of *Creativitas: Critical Explorations in Literary Studies*, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in literary scholarship where traditional boundaries between memory and materiality, text and world, representation and reality are being fundamentally reimagined. This collection demonstrates how contemporary literary studies has embraced what we might call "memory's material turn"—a theoretical shift that recognizes memory not merely as a cognitive phenomenon, but as an active, material force that shapes both literary production and social transformation.

The theoretical foundation for this reconceptualization emerges from new materialist thought, affect theory, and memory studies. As Manuel DeLanda argues in his work on assemblage theory¹, we must move beyond static notions of structure to understand the dynamic relations between heterogeneous components—including memories, bodies, objects, and affects—that constitute cultural formations. This perspective finds resonance in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "affective assemblages"² where memories interact with material and social forces to generate both stability and transformation.

Karen Barad's "agential realism"³ further illuminates this dynamic by challenging the traditional subject-object distinction. In her posthumanist framework, memories emerge through "intra-active" relationships between bodies, texts, environments, and technologies. This understanding fundamentally reshapes literary analysis, suggesting that memories possess agency beyond their narrative function and actively participate in producing meaning and affect.

Postcolonial Memories and Resistant Materialities

¹ DeLanda, Manuel. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

² Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

³ Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, 2007.

Several contributions explore how postcolonial literatures mobilize memory as a material force of resistance. Anushka Saha and Stuti Chatterjee's analysis of Mamang Dai's poetry reveals how the mountain functions not merely as literary symbol but as "living repository of wisdom" embodying marginalized communities' cultural memory. Saha and Chatterjee demonstrate how Dai's engagement with the natural world creates what Rosi Braidotti terms "transpositions"⁴ that challenge anthropocentric and colonial hierarchies.

Dr. Fatima Zohra Hamrat's examination of French and Algerian colonial narratives, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's insights into memory, history, and forgetting⁵, reveals how literary texts function as "material-affective assemblages that mediate between personal recollection and collective history." Her analysis shows how French literature navigates tensions between symbolic repentance and systemic inertia, while Algerian texts "assert memory as a transformative political force."

Samavia Zia's study of the Lahore Museum applies Walter Mignolo's "epistemic disobedience"⁶ to challenge Eurocentric curatorial practices. Zia demonstrates how decolonial memory formation requires fundamental transformations in material practices through which cultural memory is preserved and transmitted, revealing the museum as an active agent in either perpetuating or disrupting "the colonial matrix of power."

Spatial Materialities and Urban Memory

Urban environments emerge as rich sites for exploring memory's material dimensions. Dr. Diana Turken's analysis of Nina Revoyr's *Southland* introduces "stratified spatiality" to understand how racialized cityspace functions as "geosocial strata" concretizing multiple histories. Her geological metaphors literalize urban memory's material basis: "Socio-Material strata work through breaks and violent collision, a geological metaphor concretizing social unrest."

This geological approach resonates with Henri Lefebvre's "production of space,"⁷ emphasizing how spatial configurations both reflect and shape social

⁴ Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity Press, 2013.

⁵ Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

⁶ Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton University Press, 2000.

⁷ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell, 1991.

relations. Turken demonstrates how Los Angeles' "racially stratified neighbourhoods" resist "the covering-over of history," connecting "originary violence of settler colonialism" to modern structures of exclusion.

Debapriya Sarkar's examination of Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography* explores Karachi as a site of "demographic transformation" shaped by partition and migration. Her focus on "intimacy" points toward affective dimensions of spatial memory that exceed representation, exploring how "personal memories of what makes a place 'home'" offer alternatives to "memories of violence and hate."

Digital and Traumatic Materialities

Dr. Barbara Renzi's study of Arbëresh music in digital spaces examines how online platforms function as "cultural archives and dynamic agents of memory." Her analysis reveals "digital materiality of memory" through three dynamics: preservation alongside reinterpretation, negotiation of authenticity within digital aesthetics, and fostering "affective diasporic connections" uniting fragmented communities.

The relationship between memory and trauma emerges in Dr. Claudia Zucca's analysis of Amelia Rosselli's *Diario in tre lingue*, demonstrating how traumatic memory "can act as a material force that actively shapes the text and its production." Zucca's insight that "trauma is not always visible" but "works beneath surfaces, re-emerging in unexpected ways" points toward what Cathy Caruth calls the "unclaimed experience" of trauma⁸.

Dr. Prayag Ray's study of post-Troubles Northern Irish poetry reveals how "repressed memories of the Troubles manifest in fragmented, indirect expressions as poetic form attempts to mediate and sublimate trauma." His identification of "five sites of inscription—objects, spaces, bodies, animals, and mood or affect" demonstrates memory's material effects beyond conscious representation. Ray's concept of "strategic forgetting" as "material force instrumental to the peace process" offers nuanced understanding of forgetting's active role in transformation.

Oral Traditions and Geopolitical Memory

⁸ Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Dr. Kehinde Oyetimi's analysis of African poetry's engagement with oral traditions reveals memory's materiality through "the materiality of oral traditions." His study of Okot p'Bitek, Mazisi Kunene, and Niyi Osundare demonstrates how poets adapt oral techniques into written forms reflecting "material realities and emotional landscapes of their respective cultural histories."

Oyetimi's concept of "affective memory"—"how emotions, sensory experiences, and physical spaces shape collective recollections"—reveals how environmental poetics foregrounds "the materiality of the land as both a memory-bearer and a site of cultural survival." This ecological dimension resonates with multispecies memory that extends beyond human consciousness.

Dr. Mausumi Sen Bhattacharjee's analysis of India-Bangladesh enclave literature, drawing on Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*⁹, demonstrates how partition functions as "site of memory" generating "abjection" and shaping identity formation. The "chitmahal" emerges as "geopolitical trope" embodying political boundaries' material effects on lived experience, generating what Julia Kristeva calls "abject" identities resisting normative frameworks¹⁰.

Loris Luo's analysis of mourning politics in contemporary China reveals how state power operates through material control of mourning practices in "the Republic of Amnesia." Her examination of the June 4th Incident, COVID-19 victims, and Li Keqiang's death demonstrates mourning as "societal and political act rather than purely personal one."

Toward a Material Poetics of Memory

These essays collectively point toward a "material poetics of memory"—an approach recognizing memory's agency in shaping textual production and social transformation. This moves beyond hermeneutic methods treating works as symbolic representations toward understanding texts as active participants in memory's material becoming.

This material poetics finds foundation in Jane Bennett's "vital materiality,"¹¹ emphasizing non-human actors' agency in cultural formations.

⁹ Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*, vol. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24.

¹⁰ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia University Press, 1982.

¹¹ Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Applied to literary studies, memories, affects, and objects function as "actants" participating alongside human agents in producing textual meaning and cultural transformation.

The implications extend beyond academic criticism to cultural politics and social transformation. These essays reveal literature's active role in both perpetuating and challenging power relations through resistant materialities of postcolonial poetry, digital transformations of diaspora culture, and strategic forgetting in post-conflict societies. Literary texts emerge as material-affective assemblages participating directly in struggles over collective memory and cultural identity.

As we move forward, we invite readers to consider how this material turn might transform engagement with literary texts and cultural formations. The challenge is not simply to recognize memory's material dimensions but to explore how this recognition might enable new forms of literary and cultural practice contributing to more just and equitable futures.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the advisory board members, associate editors, in-house editors, and editorial assistants whose dedicated efforts have made this volume possible. We are particularly grateful to Prof. Ranjan Ghosh, Professor of English at North Bengal University, for his invaluable guidance and ongoing collaboration that has enriched our scholarly endeavours. Our sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. Bidisha Kantha, Assistant Professor of English at Xavier Law School, St. Xavier's University, for her thoughtful guidance and support throughout this project.



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