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CFP: THE OBJECTS OF MEMORY, THE MEMORY OF OBJECTS

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Deadline for proposals (150-word abstract, 5-7 keywords, 3-5 theoretical references, 150-word author's bio): 10 January 2021

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Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory is an open-access, peer-review, online publication for academic research, published twice a year by the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj, Romania. It promotes free-access for academic work and it welcomes authors who want to share their research and resources with their peers. It encourages, recognizes and rewards intellectual excellence in interdisciplinary and intermedial approaches of literary culture, visual culture and theory. The journal welcomes papers in English from the following domains: comparative studies, including digital and posthuman studies; literary studies, cultural studies, including social and gender studies; media and film studies, literary criticism and theory, cultural poetics.

“How does one become a subject?” Steven Connor asks in an essay dedicated to “Thinking things” (2010, 3). The answer comes immediately and definitively: “By means of the objects one takes oneself for” (3). Following Michel Serres’s analysis in *Statues*, Connor explores the co-constitutionality of subject and object, based on the premise that it is only when we are confronted with the impenetrability of things that the subject-object continuum moulds the human in a process that is “both inaugural and ongoing” (4) and that propels it out of itself. Attention to both things as the opaque solidity which disrupts the self-sufficiency of knowledge, and objects as the phenomenological foci of consciousness (Brown 2001; 2016) emerges in the wake of the sweeping redefinition of the human during the past decades. It is no coincidence that the same decades have witnessed the reconfiguration of memory studies in the direction of reconceptualising memory itself less as an “object” of research, and more as “part of larger networks and ‘media ecologies’

subject to boundless variations and remediations” (Knittel and Driscoll 2017, 381). This reconfiguration has been forced not only by what Sebastian Groes calls the “multiplicity of revolutions that together are radically reshaping the context of our thinking about what it means to be a human being” (2016, 2), but also by the awareness of the reification and commodification of everything material under the conditions of late-stage capitalism, which feeds the shapeless non-place of waste (Scanlan, 2005, 20) with an inflation of discarded objects (or their remainders) that muddles the retrospective tug of memory. The unabated accumulation of residual matter perturbs the recollective force of things, lost in the amorphousness of the junkyard. Faced with the abundance of objects, natural and manmade, we have no choice but to follow Bruno Latour and recognize our imbrication in networks of what F. Allan Hanson called “composite agency,” conditioning what and how we remember. Objects as storehouses of memory simultaneously constitute and transcend the capacity of the human to capture the past, crystallize the present or project a future. Whether we revel in things as “vibrant matter” (Bennett 2009) or as examples of the radically unknowable, things cease being merely mnemonic devices and reveal themselves as causes, their presence urgently placing us in coextensive webs of meaning and action. In a fluid world where technological prostheses, the viral propagation of bodies, codes and signifiers and the trappings of the “post-truth” era trigger historical amnesia, we turn to objects both as repositories of personal and collective recollection, and reminders of our immersion in the substantial and the concrete, a co-participation biologically inscribed in the very makings of our bodies.

Keeping in mind the necessity to redefine memory within different regimes of materiality, this issue of the *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* invites papers on literary and cultural topics considering the role of objects as agents of memory and their functions as nodes at the multiple intersections between the human and the nonhuman. Contributions may tackle (but are not limited to) the following topics:

1. Relics of trauma and cultural commemoration practices;
2. Souvenirs and memorabilia: catalysts of memory or commodified simulacra;
3. Museal memory objects vs the erasure of historical traces;
4. The obsolescence of stuff in the age of global pandemics;
5. The fragility of memory under the threat of apocalypse;
6. Personal archives: revisiting literature, criticism, and theory through memory artefacts;
7. Memory as database and digital archives;
8. Feminism and cultural memory;
9. Prosthetic memory and posthuman extensions;
10. The memory of matter and the genetic remapping of the human;

11. Reconfiguring memory in the age of the cognitive sciences;
12. Inscriptions of the Anthropocene within geological memory.

Please submit a 150-word original proposal that clearly explains how your study will contribute to, revise, or depart from existing debates around the topics of objects of memory and the memory of objects. Both proposals and final texts should be in English and should observe our guidelines as they appear on our website: <http://metacriticjournal.com/for-authors>. The final submission should consist of: a 5,000-7,000-word article, including a 150-word abstract, 5-7 keywords, a list of references (only cited works), a 150-word author's bio and the author's photo-portrait (jpg, separate file). Proposals and final submissions should be formatted as Word documents and sent to metacriticjournal@gmail.com.

Further reading:

1. Appadurai, Arjun (ed.). *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
2. Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Duke University Press, 2009.
3. Bond, Lucy, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen (eds.). *Memory Unbound. Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, Berghahn Books, 201.
4. Boscagli, Maurizia. *Stuff Theory. Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism*, Bloomsbury, 2014.
5. Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (1), 2001, pp. 1-22.
6. Brown, Bill. *Other Things*, University of Chicago Press, 2016.
7. Connor, Steven. "Thinking things," *Textual Practice*, 24 (1), 2010, pp. 1-20.
8. Groes, Sebastian (ed.). *Memory in the Twenty-First Century: New Critical Perspectives from the Arts, Humanities, and Sciences*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.
9. Hanson, F. Allan. "Which Came First, the Doer or the Deed?" in Peter Kroes, Peter-Paul Verbeek (ed.), *The Moral Status of Technical Artefacts*, Springer, 2014, pp. 55-73.
10. Hirsch, Marianne. "Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission", in Nancy K. Miller, Jason Trougaw (eds.), *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*, University of Illinois Press, 2002, pp. 71-91.
11. Knittel, Susanne C. & Kári Driscoll. "Introduction: *Memory after Humanism*," *Parallax*, 23 (4), 2017, pp. 379-383.
12. Kola, Adam F. "The Politics of the Archive in Semi-Peripheries", in Ursula K. Heise (ed.), *Futures of Comparative Literature. ACLA State of the Discipline Report*, Routledge, 2017, pp. 51-60.

13. Radstone, Susannah & Katharine Hodgkin (eds.). *Regimes of Memory*, Routledge, 2003.
14. Scanlan, John. *On Garbage*, Reaktion Books, 2005.