The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.

- L. P. Hartley, in The Go-Between (1953)

The past is everywhere … Whether it is celebrated or rejected, attended to or ignored, the past is omnipresent.

- David Lowenthal, in The Past is a Foreign Country (1985)

…the past is not a foreign country but - once summoned - constitutes a domestic issue of the here and now…

- Stephan Palmié, in Slavery, Historicism and the Poverty of Memorialization (2010)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. 1. The Discourses of Memory

Memory in its incarnation as what might be called the voice of the past, associates with, participates in and insinuates itself within and across social and cultural spaces, communities, and even within trends of political belief, thought and ideology through diverse sets of interrelated processes into an intricacy of medial and material representation. And to understand the world as it has been and as it is now from this perspective of ‘the past in the present’ or to read it critically, it is necessary to examine and understand the relevance of memory, its presence, and the
dynamics of its manifestation and influence in contemporary social and
cultural discourses. This increasing saliency of memory as an academic
concern, and as a critical category in contemporary social thought,
besides its ubiquitous occurrence in recent research in the humanities and
in the social sciences demands particular attention therefore.

Memory, and the recalling of memory, occurs everywhere. It manifests
vividly and influences to a great extent many diverse cultural practices
and methods of production, in medial organisation and representation,
visual and aural performance, cultural and public memorabilia, religious
observances, ritual commemoration of past events within communities,
and even as remnants of counterculture propaganda. As conscious
practice, it occurs within bodies of spatial and structural phenomena,
even in case of ‘commonplace’ embodiments of culture like architectural
enterprises such as public buildings, plazas, parks, and memorials for
that matter, and in pop/street art or graffiti. Memory’s presence in public
culture can be observed in the form of commemoration through coin and
stamp issue by governmental agencies and as public celebrations and
holidays and also in the form of other memorials which may include
landmarks or art objects such as sculptures, statues or fountains which
embody and monumentalise a particular historical event, or even a
specific period of time in the past.
In cyber culture, especially in social networking spaces such as Blogger, Wordpress, and Facebook, the digital manifestations of memory have spread out widely with online forums and projects such as the University of Cambridge project called Memory at War (www.memoryatwar.org) which is an international co-op forum enquiring into the complex cultural dynamics, and available oral and visual histories of the 'memory wars' in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Also worth mention are forums such as The Memory Project (at www.thememoryproject.com) which deals with Canada's participation in the Second World War and the Korean War as witnessed and recounted by veterans of the Canadian army, and the Indian Memory Project (www.indianmemoryproject.com) which is a visual and oral history based archive circulated online and attempting to trace what has been called a ‘personal history’ of south Asian, specifically Indian (both pre- and post- Independence India) regions, cultures, communities and races.

Albeit some of the above mentioned references to memory manifestations, memory practices, memory projects and networks, are in a way aligned to a fixed set of specifics of nation and community. However, it must be understood that in cultural memory studies, the occurrence of memory in culture (or cultural practice) is not limited only to discourses of national memory, or remembering within isolated regions and insular boundaries as merely obsessive cultural nostalgia or
even just as mourning, ritual or otherwise, public or private as it was before. Memory and certain aspects of ‘memory production’ such as memorialisation and memory culture have transcended themselves from that earlier model of communitarian existence. Whereas previously, national memory, historical remembering, ritual mourning and nostalgia were current in memory practice, and in mnemotechnic culture, the ideal coordinates of cultural remembering in the contemporary era have evolved and are even now evolving to include and incorporate other aspects of culture apart from the aforementioned common and collective singularities.

And thus, in memory ‘practices’, and within related spheres of cultural embodying, it is these concerns like ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality and trans-nationalism that are now acceptable as major points of reference and interpretation. And that is evident from the specific interest that has been generated by recently formed sites of memory such as Ground Zero at the World Trade Centre location and September 11, or simply, 9/11. These occurrences have been viewed as primary sites of memory when it comes to transnationalism and ethnicity, or rather, when it is "Trans-National America" as visualised by Randolph Bourne or ‘multicultural America’ as it is seen in contemporary normative and descriptive sociological definitions of cultural diversity. Also, when one turns to spaces of memory like the Greenwich Village (where the
Stonewall raids of 1969 took place) which are central to remembering and memory in the history of queer studies, and to post-fascist memories of the sexually ‘repressive’ Nazi regime, as in how historical myths and sexual politics constitute a major locus for ingeminations of reconstructed memory narratives during wartime Europe, this notion of changing technologies of memory in culture is further attested to.

It is also observable that the ways in which memory manifests itself in manifold spheres and spaces are reflexive as well as rigid, influencing most spheres of contemporary human activity and thought, and goading individuals’ consciousnesses by sensibilising them to the past and to the inseparable connexion that it itself bears to the multifarious notions of identity, existence, and culture within societies, nations, ethnies, communities and in the context of individual existence, collectively and individually. Reflexive because the major ordinates of memory in culture, of cultural remembering, forgetting and archiving have morphed, the categories of memory and remembering having thus become increasingly inclusive, supplanting preexistent modes of national remembering, and unitariness. Rigid because the actual operative processes of memory at the individual or collective psychological level are in no way eroded or ‘changed’ by this growing inclusivity. And thus, memory ‘in culture’ is not what it used to be, speaking very broadly. Whereas once it was something more edificial, more of an unexplored
domain, now, in the wake of post-modern thought, and advanced memory discourses, it has become more pervasive, and persistent in a way that it cannot be excluded from logical analysis and study on the pretext of memory being vague, or non-reliable, which used to be once, at a time not so much far into the past, the standard arguments leveled against the study of memory by scholars, thinkers and academics.

But, ‘memory’ certainly cannot be defined by using a singular, ubiquitous notion of memory being just the past remembered. It is that primarily, of course. But memory as we understand it in its very dynamic, political nature within the sphere of discursive practice and formation is also more than just that. It is not just the past remembered. It is also the past that was forgotten and which is being recalled, or remembered, since the act of forgetting and the act of recalling that which has been consigned to oblivion is as much an aspect of the dynamics of memory as the act of remembering that which remains remembered (in visible memory) itself is. In dealing with memory, and the construction of memory, the past must be negotiated with in a way that is certainly distinct from how history views and records the past, writes it, and represents it, since memory is essentially the past as the present appropriates it, redefines and redesigns it, thereby leading to a reconstruction of the past as it was and as it is in the present, or as it will be in the future. The study of memory, among many other things deals
with this, the study of the reconstruction of the past in the present posited against the background of social constructions of reality as poststructuralist discourses acknowledge it, and within the context of a many tiered and intricate networking of social and cultural relativities.

In a generalised manner of speaking, memory, as cognitive psychology recognises it to be, is any sentient organism’s particularised mental faculty that serves to store, retain, retrieve and recall information, knowledge or experiences, or all of these together, or in diverse combinations of two or more, or even many of these. It is a system for storing and retrieving information, information that is, of course, acquired through our senses. Whether we see something, hear it or smell it will obviously influence what we recall, since in one sense, our memories are records of percepts. (Baddeley 2002: 9)

This particularly phased model is the one generally accepted in cognitive psychological studies to understand the structure of memory as it manifests itself as working memory, in the manifold aspects of human existence, beginning primarily with the social space, continuing onwards into the cultural space, and so on, although current memory research also has proposed newer models of memory, contrastive to this encoding-storage model of human memory.

In this model, the storing and retaining of the evidence and knowledge of things that have ‘happened’ in the near or distant past forms just one part
of the whole process of memory in case of human beings. It is that part of the memory process in which human individuals or collectives acquire and store, and also retain, the experiences of things, objects, situations and events which have happened in a past time. Cognitive psychology argues that these acquired experiences are encoded in a way so as to render their storage in the form of memories, consciously and otherwise, for retrieval and recall at a later time. In this, the process of encoding is primary and it provides for the construction, or the ‘making’ of memories in the conscious mind or otherwise. In saying that of course, one is impelled to enquire about the inextricable association of memory with time. The elapse of time in between the ‘construction’ and ‘making’ of memory, or memories and their consequent retrieval in the act of recall, or remembrance, or remembering deserves a close consideration, given the uncertainty, irregularity and apparent ambiguity of it all when it comes to the ‘time’ of memory. One can probably never be certain of the amount of time that is involved in each aspect of the memory process, whether it is the encoding of the sensory experience, or the making of a specific memory associated with that sensory modality, or input, or even the retrieval of one’s memories. The amount of time necessary for any individual for the committing to memory of a particular event is never fixed. Then again, it is the same case for the remembering of a memory. An individual A might require a different amount of time to commit to memory a particular pathway, or set of
directions than another individual $B$. And that is also the case when it comes to those different individuals remembering that set of directions or pathway.

There is, naturally, no temporal fixity that one can assign to either the ‘making’ of memories or the ‘remembering’ of those memories, just as one cannot possibly assign a specific temporal point to the origin of a particular memory. However, before such a consideration on the association of memory with time can be attempted, it is necessary to understand the nature of the act of recall, or retrieval and its place, and many ramifications too, in the memory process. The construction of memories by the intricate and often complex process of encoding, and successive storage, is followed, though not in a steady or immediate manner of occurrence, or in a successive trajectory, of course, by the process, or act of retrieval, or recall and/or recollection. The act of recalling or recollecting constitutes what can be called the summoning of the stored construct, the ‘made’ memory, or memories, in the future, generally in response to a given prompting in a process or an act that is in the future. The memory that a record of the past is thus retrieved in the future which becomes the present. The capacity possessed by the sentient subject in question to recall or recollect or remember things that have registered previously in one’s consciousness, or that are stored in
the subject’s memory, is what constitutes the act of remembering, conscious or otherwise.

Remembering, then, in psychological terms, is the recovery or the retrieval of memory from the murkier regions of the human mind, much like the recovery of treasure troves in romantic traditions of piracy narratives, where there is the recurrent presence of stolen fortunes in the form of the treasure trove buried by pirates in often remote and inaccessible places, they intending to return for their hoards later, often with the use of treasure maps. It so happens most of the time in these narrative accounts that these treasures are recovered long after the original hoarders have disappeared, by questing seekers using those treasure maps received in legacies, or by any other means, so very much as in Robert Louis Stevenson’s famous piracy adventure novel *Treasure Island*, the entire plot of which is constructed around the seeking of a treasure map, and then the seeking of treasure on a deserted island. And this is akin to the uncovering, or retrieval of memories from embodiments and spaces, sites and figures through the unraveling of memory narratives, or narratives of memory, as the case may be; the retrieval aspect of this model being the most significant and potent in its influence. In cultural memory studies and systems also, the concept of functional memory and the storage aspect of memory is something that has been duly commented upon and used in case of analyzing how
written texts and images act as agents of memory transmission over an extended period of time.

Thus, what memory is essentially depends on how it is constructed, with the ruptures and gaps of historical narrating and representation absent from its formations, as a construction in the social-cultural context, within a social-spatial framework, that repels unitariness and still unites many divergent strands of the past, and therefore indulges in a constantly-in-flux process of creating and recreating itself. The processual nature of memory is without doubt different from the basic nature of history in that memory is particularised, and specific, without the contradictions and severances that are encountered with the formation of history in its essence as a ‘collective singular’, as Reinhart Koselleck views it in using the phrase Begriffene Geschichte, or Begriffsgeschichte (the usage of the term and an explication of the methodology can be found in Koselleck’s Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time) which is literally the history of concepts, or conceptual history dealing with the historical semantics of terms, or as Koselleck says, with “the convergence of concept and history” (2004: 86). Or even just as geschichte, which is what history becomes actually, a monolithic spectrum of continuity, or a trajectory of ruptures, from point to point, whereby the construction of a past is affected by what can
be called, using a colours’ analogy, an achromatic synthesis, of all that is in the past, even if all the past cannot become part of history.

Memory, on the other hand, does not seek to enshrine the past as a simple narrative recording, nor does it seek to recount the past as objectified historical remembering does. Memory is the past, no doubt, but it is the past in the present, and more so than it being just the past as a relic, as a deposited past in the archive of experience. It is that voice of the past that is represented and embodied in the context of the present.

Memory therefore is not just a faithful, mimetic representation of the past, but it is rather a reiteration of the past in the present, distinct from being a response to a ‘what it was’ question and more an answer to a ‘how it is’ query, where as history, as Maurice Halbwachs would have probably viewed it, deals specifically with the past as it was and not the past in the present, or the past extending into the future.

This enhanced discursive interest towards necessitating in-depth investigations of these manifold aspects of memory and the past, of memory and history, of cultural memory, of memory and its representation, of memory in the context of the ever changing political and ethical nature of human society along with their influences on the contemporary human mind and current human existence, and of course, of the ways in which the contemporary human critical faculty views its
own sensibility towards time and the past, is something that can almost be called a necessary development. This alteration in attitudes towards memory and temporal manifestation is definitely in contrast to the wide network of relational investigations that various strata of space like borders, centrality, margins, nations, modes of cultural change in the form of the various processes of deracination and divergent mappings of home and belonging, the intricate politics of acculturation in ethnic and identitarian contexts, and the innumerable elaboratenesses of human locating therein have been studied and examined in the context of postcolonial and cultural discourse.

And this is almost welcome, especially in the wake of interdisciplinary research and study in these current discourses because, as it is, only an amplified obsession with the present and the future cannot deal effectively with the burden of what has been in the past, and the trauma that follows the excruciating violence of the past in the present, all of that which the past offers as its primal gift to human society, with human memory, individual and collective, communicative and cultural, acting as its much active carrier, and also since any individual identity, or collective identity, or even communal identity cannot be stably visualised, and studied or understood without the political ramifications of the past and the memory of that past being taken into consideration within the growing space of the turbulent present in all possible ways.
And it is not the constituting of the past into *historical representation* that we are talking about here, and at the risk of sounding repetitive, this is definitely not history as one monumental ‘collective singular’ where the past is ‘recorded’ in perspectives collated to formulate a generalised ideological unitariness, in spite of the endangering dichotomy between continuity and rupture that associates itself with historical methods. On the contrary, with the emergence within radical contemporary discourses of concepts and ideates such as Jean-François Lyotard’s famous articulation of the postmodern being “incredulity towards meta-narratives”, his views of the ‘society of the future’ falling “less within the province of a Newtonian anthropology (such as structuralism or systems theory) than a pragmatics of language particles” (1984: xxiv).

Or the emergence in postmodernist historical discourse of attempts to ‘revise’ history, and not just ‘record’ it (revisionist history, thus), the study of memory can be assigned a broad range of definitions as the study of the nearly-all-inclusive sociocultural process and phenomenon of memory in the context of human experience, lived and distant, shared or personal, a reading of the past in the context of the present, and a refiguring of the past within the frames of the present.

This postmodern decentralization of existing modern methods of history writing calls forth the highlighting of a model of dialogic historiography with multiple histories whose actors and narrators are those previously
silenced and marginalized from historical records. In this context of the rethinking of history “as a human construct” the access to which “is entirely conditioned by textuality” (Hutcheon 1988:16), the multi-tiered dynamics of memory, its spaces, its sites and its symbols acquire immense significance since “the quest for memory is the search for one’s history” as Pierre Nora argues (Nora 1994:289). In the study of memory in culture, or the study of cultural memory, the past must be examined in ways that are critical of pro-essentialist perspectives of memory that confirm the nature of memory as being a reiteration of the past as it once was, as reality and historical record, and must instead focus on examining the past as more of a social and cultural construct, as a resultant of an attempt by conscious agencies to wrest together a version of the past, and to render it capable of becoming more than that in time; which is to become a voice of the past.

With the somewhat dramatic beginnings of twentieth century modernism (not modernity, here, though) and later ‘high’ modernism, and even earlier with the widespread influence of the Enlightenment and the rise of modernity in Europe, a generally popular focus was exerted in almost all spheres of social activity and cultural and artistic production on the ‘doing away of the past’, the ‘Anciens’, the old, and the initiation of the new, the future, the ‘Moderne’, the ‘just-now’. Every successive age and epoch at that time, during those turbulent centuries, including the time of
the revival of Romanticism in England and in the Continent, the Victorian age in England with its ‘Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations’ at the Crystal Palace, and the rise of Imagism and early Modernist movements saw the recurring reinstating of this popular need to expand the boundaries of the present into the future, almost ushering the latter into the present. This preoccupation with the forgetting of the past, and a desire to be with the future, in the future, and almost living it in the present was echoed very succinctly in Lord Tennyson’s famous poem “Ring Out, Wild Bells” from *In Memoriam*:

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.
...
Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

(Tennyson 1892: 576)

The word ‘modernity’, in most uses, denotes a certain attitude of rejection of preceding eras and periods, a renunciation of the late past, specifically, beginning in post-Enlightenment Europe with the initiation of the seventeenth century Académie française debate, which later escalated into a full-blown Continental argumentation in the following years. The rejection of the past, the Ancients (*Anciens*) by the Moderns (*Modernes*) in that famous “querelle des Anciens et des Modernes” (Eng. “The quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns”) which argued the certain
superiority of modern culture over classical, particularly Græco–Roman culture, was the prevalent principle of the modern era, of modernity. It was the privileging of a new commencement, and a re-interpretation of historical origin that qualified and supplemented this apparent irreverence to the primary position of the past, or the structures of the past, in the light of the present, as Paul de Man in his essay "Literary History and Literary Modernity," considered "the idea of modernity" as "consisting in a desire to wipe out what came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that would be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure.” He also continues by saying that “this combined interplay of a deliberate forgetting with an action that is also a new origin reaches the full power of the idea of modernity.” (1983:142-145). In this arena of tensities, the past of the Ancients, that institutional ideate, was renounced in favour of the radical ‘modern’ furthering of boundaries, the past effectively replaced by a future that was also uncertain and at the same time full of potential.

The present and the future in the present, that highly ‘modern’ attitude towards time remained primary in social importance and cultural significance until the 1960s, when in the wake of politically destabilising movements such as decolonisation and anti-imperialism, with the rise of social movements like the Renewal Movement, and the strengthening of new, more complex perspectives and ideologies like post-Apartheid
politics against existing simplistic supremacist ideologies of the pre-modern, or even modern West, things began to change, and with that also occurred a shift in existing attitudes towards the nature of the past and the future. Newer perspectives on the problematic nature of the controversies that either condemned or defended the contemporary historical treatment of past genocides like the World Wars, the Holocaust in particular, and then, in later years, the development of nuclear warfare and the debate about ‘humane’ usage of this new-found weapon, and the beginnings of the war on terrorism with most Western and developing countries and nations siding against extremism, the civilised world largely ceased to dwell solely in what Andreas Huyssens calls ‘present futures’ in his work *Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia* (2003).

This new perspective, this ‘present future’ was a constant preoccupation with the exploration of the untapped potential of the future. A new sensibility, a new awareness of time was thus made available for deliberation and possible absorption into thought and action. And as it so happened, the past therefore ceased to remain just a matter of archiving, and convenient forgetting.

The past was reborn as something more than just the past that has *gone before*. The past became part of the present, and the present began to lean more towards an encompassing vision of the past where previously, only the future with its dreamt-of thousand years of peace had been the
cynosure of the human imagination and of social thought. Even storage devices used to document the past visually and textually, like the video and still camera, and the computer, began to emerge in newer, more permanent, more efficient avatars. Where till the sixties decade, computational and storage devices were relatively rudimentary, with minimum storage capacity, in the eighties decade, with Apple and later Microsoft taking over the world of information technology and computer storage rising from bit to byte to kilobyte and megabyte, this new preoccupation with the past and the concern to retain and archive the past so that it would be readily accessible to the present and to the future generations became more and more pronounced. And it is probably all of this that can be estimated to have factored in the rise of a self-consciously postmodern, multicultural (as opposed to mono-cultural), ‘multi-ethnic’ society that attaches preeminent significance to memory as a social, cultural, and political force which challenges and rejects most of the fundamental historical narratives which had been used hitherto to provide shape and meaning to projects of the establishment of specific national and imperial identities.

The past, then, was no longer a ‘matter of the past’, easily forgotten, easily relegated to mere occasional reminiscence and nostalgia. It was no longer dead and done with. For the critical human mind, at that point in time, the past became as significant as the future, if not more, and the
present no longer was left seeking the future as its only destiny and aim. The past became as important as the other two aspects of time, the future and the present, and a new experience of time past seemed to enter the consciousness of the individual. The concern now was about how the past should be dealt with, how the past would be represented, how the past would interact and influence the present, and this most importantly so in the context of critical inquiry since a synchronic conception, and manner of dealing with culture, or texts, or narratives and representation was no longer viable, given the ephemeral nature and resultants of such encounters. A diachronic model, a reading of change through time, and not only in the context of language and literature, but generally in the context of cultural studies was sought.

This ‘turning back’ towards Time and the past in order to re-sensibilise the individual, and the community as well, probably, has been qualified by Andrea Huyssens as “a turning towards the past that stands in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity” (Huyssens 2003: 11). In relating to the necessity of memory discourses in contemporary social thought, Huyssens also links memory discourses to the envisaging of the future for the progressively consumerism ridden, global [or ‘glocal’²] world, regulating what he calls the ‘urban palimpsest’, the layering of history and memory, either incompletely erased, or morphed beyond
complete recognition, by the interplay of memory and amnesia, the acts of remembering and forgetting, in the context of urban spaces and the city-scape, the city being one of the centres of the rejuvenation of memory processes and discourses of memory in the later decades of the twentieth century. Veering the promise of the future away from the ‘liberalist’ narrative of economical, technological and cultural advancement, Huyssens hints towards the lived experience, the manifestation of the past through memory processes in the contemporary human condition, focusing steadily, albeit in a near utopian sense of structures, on the stark possibility of what can be seen as the globalisation of memory.

But these perspectives in the context of memory discourses in the contemporary era could actually be confirmed as having their origins in the preliminary theories, models and metaphors of memory, even in the ‘turning against memory’ vision of history and historical memory, most of which came into vogue with the emergence of what has been called the time of ‘late modernity’\(^3\). And at that, to look at the past, and to discern the wealth of perspectives, notions, knowledge and experience that the past offered to the human race, it became necessary to access it through the only available induct, human memory thereby leading to the emergence of what have been called memory discourses, and also memory culture in Western societies, in Europe and the United States of
America specifically, in the archeological and anthropological disciplines besides others, particularly with the rise of the previously mentioned controversy relating to the Holocaust in Europe, and other events that spanned the eighties decade in Europe, like the 1988 public commemoration of the Nazi agenda *Reichskristallnacht* (literally, the ‘Night of Broken Glass’ or the Pogromnacht, a set of successive coordinated attacks by SA paramilitary and civilians against Jews throughout Nazi Germany and parts of Austria which took place on 9–10 November 1938, carried out without any intervention by the German government. The anniversary of this heinous pogrom coincided many decades later with the Schicksalstag, or the tearing down of the Berliner Mauer, the Berlin Wall).

Memory and memorialisation as cultural discourses became principal concerns in this new critical epitome, especially with the publication of Pierre Nora’s work *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1992, Tr. *Realms of Memory*, 1996–1998) which focused primarily on national ‘sites of memory’, le lieu de mémoire against le milieu de mémoire or real ‘environments of memory’ in the context of the French national imagination, and also with the prior publication of Maurice Halbwachs’ work *La mémoire collective* (1950) which popularised the concept of ‘collective memory’ traceable to Émile Durkheim’s discussions on commemorative rituals in communities and societies of the past (in his
work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, first published in French in 1915) where he addresses the notion of social memory perpetuated by religious rituals as a means of ensuring a distinct social cohesion within the community, although it is certain that Durkheim did not quite explicitly use the notion of ‘collective memory’ as Halbwachs did, though. Halbwachs’ work and critique held to the premise that the study of memory would not be merely, or even at all, a matter of reflecting on the attributes of the immanent human mind. The examination and investigation of memory and memory processes, and culture, according to him, would more specifically be a matter of how minds work together in tandem within a given societal structure, and of how the manifestations and processes of memory are in fact contained and integrated by prior, existing social arrangements which also, in turn, are influenced by the dynamics of memory in that particular social space.

Halbwachs’ work on collective memory was later, in the eighties decade, forwarded and drawn upon by the Egyptologist Jan Assmann who proposed the term ‘the Cultural Memory’ in his book *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (1992), defining it as the external attribute of human memory by adopting the two different concepts of *Erinnerungskultur* (literally, ‘the culture of remembrance’ or ‘memory culture’ in German) and *Vergangenheitsbezug* (literally, ‘historical reference’, or more specifically, ‘referring, or reference to the past’ in German). The term
Erinnerungskultur, or ‘memory culture’, on one hand, can be used to define the ways in which any given social group or community ensures a modicum of uninterrupted cultural continuation by conserving, through specifically maintained relations of cultural mnemonics and representation, its own particular collective cultural knowledge and experience, and ensuring its regular dissemination from one generation to the next, making it possible for later generations in the community, or social group to restore, and reconstruct their cultural identity, in the face of possible destabilisation and displacement through prospective social and cultural ‘violence’, though not in the usual sense of the term associated with that word. Violence here would generally connote a probable discontinuity of tradition, of cultural routes, and patterns that may be supplanted by external deracinating forces like economic deflation, political upsurges leading to group exoduses, and even natural disasters that lead to mass rehabilitation. Vergangenheitsbezug, on the other hand, bespeaks a historical consciousness in itself but is distinct from what can commonly be termed ‘nostalgia’. This ‘referring to the past’ can perform a role of determining the collective identity of a people, a race, or a community, and providing them with an awareness of their singularity in time and space by constructing a shared past out of vestiges of the past retained in the consciousness of the community in question since the phenomenon of memory itself is both individual and private, as well as intrinsically collective and shared.
1. 2. Cultural Memory Studies

In cultural contexts, the category, and phenomenon of memory is something that colligates the past(s) (since there cannot be only one specific, unilateral, unanimously narrated past) as well as the present; Huyssens’ idea of ‘present futures’, and the relatable idea of a present past besides that, would be more significant terms to identify with in this case. Memory is recorded, and stored or archived, and retrieved, and reiterated, like reminiscences, as in the case of ‘nostalgic’ recounting within literary narratives, or like onscreen images that interfere with the linearity of visual presents as re-performances of the past. It is, as Jan Assmann says, “…what allows us to construe an image or narrative of the past and, by the same process, to develop an image and narrative of ourselves” (J. Assmann 2011b: 15). And though it is understandable from our previous discussion that memory and history are not the same thing, yet it is also not to say that they are entirely unconnected, for much of historical writing, in a very contemporaneous sense of the term, connects to memorial documentation as a major source of evidence; eyewitness accounts in accordance or in conflict with each other are an example of this.
And because the study of memory has gathered to itself such a vast conceptual and theoretical framework with many ramifications, divergences and also convergences over the millennia, it is important at this point to initiate a discussion of the dynamics of what has been described and mentioned previously as ‘memory in culture’ and also ‘cultural memory’. This may be best done by surveying closely the diversely existing methodology of cultural memory studies (after Maurice Halbwachs and Jan and Aleida Assmann) and the way it is to be examined in the context of art and literature or similar modes of artistic and textual production, besides viewing first the reasons and purposes that elicited the design of the very notion of cultural memory in the first place. The purpose behind this is of course to sequester the term ‘cultural memory’ (for the sake of an elucidated definition) and to place it within a specific formulation of a methodological nature so as to facilitate a further analysis of the case studies (literary narratives) that this thesis shall propose consequently.

The fundamental question arises, thus, as to what indeed is cultural memory. Before delving into the specifics of this question and the answers thereof, it is necessary to understand this fact that cultural memory is definitely not, as Astrid Erll states it, ‘the Other of history’, nor is it also ‘the opposite of individual remembrance’ (Erll 2011: 7). To use Erll’s definitive statement in this context, cultural memory can rather
be seen as a *multifarious entirety*, a synthesis of many perspectives and manifestations, or “a totality of the context within which such varied cultural phenomena originate” (Erll 2011: 7). The acronym ‘cultural memory’ came into vogue with the publication of Jan Assmann’s work titled *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (1992) where Assmann drew on the concept of ‘collective memory’ used earlier in 1950 by Maurice Halbwachs in his work *La mémoire collective* (1950). Using the two concepts of *Erinnerungskultur* and *Vergangenheitsbezug*, ‘memory culture’ and ‘referring to the past’ respectively, Assmann identified and defined the term ‘cultural memory’ in the context of cultural thought and memory discourse, albeit slightly ambiguously. Crucial to the understanding of this relatively new critical notion of cultural memory is the necessity of drawing a succinct distinction between the dynamics of history and memory, and an understanding of the connections and negotiations that occur between the two on several levels of representation, or simply speaking, primarily on the level of ‘writing’ history and ‘the narrative of memory’ (relatable to Linda Hutcheon’s premise of how textuality conditions the knowing of the past in the present). Hutcheon speaks, though in a related context, about how postmodernism aims “to make us look to the past from the acknowledged distance of the present, a distance which inevitably conditions our ability to know that past” (Hutcheon 1988: 230).
The writing of history, in the form of historical narratives, texts or accounts, is primarily a subjective, even immanent representation of what historians consider to be essential parts of the generalised schema of ‘official’ remembrances. The historian records, and writes the historical narrative as a critically subjective narrating of events as they occurred in the past; this is actually in the way of an inscription of the occurred event, or a transcribing, and utterance of the past within a framework of non-embodiment. History writing, in the Marxist materialist model as it is, is critical of the very nature of commemoration; though there is a connection that Walter Benjamin draws between historicity and the mnemonic aspect of history. But there is of course, and invariably so, a turning back from memory within the genre of historical writing. And the mode of inscribing that history adopts is more “the just estimation of things” than anything else (Hamilton 2003: 93). Qualifying this rejection of the past, and its ‘hallowed’ mnemonic aspect of nationalist commemoration and hero-projection, Karl Marx points out, in his *Der achttzehnte Brumaire des Louis Napoleon* (in English, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, and later renamed as *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) that

(m)en make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.
The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living (Marx and Engels 1977: 226).

The past therefore is singularly narrated, recorded even, within a trajectory of historical representation; it is not really present in the present. This alienation of the past from the present is something that history writing per se has not able to surmount or transgress without turning again to what has been defined as ‘new cultural histories’, and intersections between history and memory. This imposing of subjectiveness on the past in the writing of history is influenced by complex ideologies that are of course the concern of historiographical method and thought in ways more than one. The blame for this subjectivity or subjectiveness cannot rest only on the category of history or on the genre of historical writing as it is. That passes naturally onto the political and ideological complications that the official ‘writing’ had been possibly motivated by in the first place.

On the other hand, the narrative of memory in the present is a re-inscribing and a reconstruction of events that happened in the past, the detailed ordering of which remains uninfluenced, for want of a better word, by ideological initiatives. The alienation of the past from the present that history writing influences through its commentary and interpretation of the past is countermanded within memory discourses by the very essential nature of memory being a more objective instance of
the past. As Jacques Derrida, in “The Pharmakon” (*Dissemination*), says, memory is

as an unveiling (re)producing a presence from re-memoration as the mere repetition of a monument; truth as distinct from its sign, being as distinct from types...Memory is finite by nature....(it) always therefore already needs signs in order to recall the present with which it is necessarily in relation. (2004: 111)

This relation *with* the present as Derrida points out is what actually differentiates memory from history at the very core level. Whereas the nature of history is determined by its intrinsic feature of recording and commenting the past, the nature of memory in the present is fixed by how it re-embodies the past, becomes the past, and connects it to the present. History speaks of the past, while cultural memory is of the past a *re-embodiment (of the past)* in the most tangible ways possible.

When we affix the word ‘cultural’ to the term ‘memory’, it is not only memory in its elemental form, in its model of encoding, storing and retrieval that we understand, but something more than that. Cultural memory is, very simply speaking, memory that is *represented and re-embodied*, symbolically and materially, through *sites, loci or topoi*, or through any distinct strata of medial and material organisation. There is the important aspect of re-embodiment that must be noted here, of course. Pure, organic and objective memories can never be possible without those being represented, possibly in a literary narrative, through artistic production or generally through symbolical embodiment, just as
history cannot exist without the ‘writing’, inscribing or ‘constructing’ of
history, even if it is in the form of oral histories that in reality are never
written down, or inscribed and are remembered and quoted verbatim.
Space or sites, or places, or loci, or topoi, (like Nora’s precept of ‘Lieux
de mémoire’, ‘sites of memory’, or ‘places of memory’) is what enters
this equation as a furtherance of the idea of cultural memory in the form
of memorialisation, in the shape of memorials, or ‘sites’ of memory. And
it is this approach to ‘memory in culture’ in close connexion to spatial
and medial representation that is one of the most important aspects of the
diversely structured phenomenon of cultural memory. Here the word
‘media’ is not being used in the sense of ‘middle’, but as a derivative of
the word ‘media’, sing. ‘medium’, in the ways in which things, objects,
texts, or any constructed thing becomes a site for the re-construction of
the past.

In this context, what we would have to understand by ‘culture’ can
perhaps be best be outlined by Clifford Geertz’s notion of culture from a
very symbolic point of view as a particular community’s especial mode
of living within what he calls ‘self spun webs of meaning’. In his The
Interpretation of Cultures (1973), Geertz defined culture as “a system of
inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which
men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and
attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973: 89). Meaning, in the context of
culture, is therefore, from Geertz’s perspective, to be derived by synthesis, and association. The order of meaning is to be generated from being transmitted historically across epochs, ages and eras. And when it is memory, personal, individual and/or collective, a similar mode of reconstruction of meaning against the framework of the dominant social ethos, the symbol against the canvas of the community, is obviously resultant. Culture, then, in the context of cultural memory studies, cannot be restrained to the specific understanding of culture as acceptable in certain current cultural discourses which are concerned with the locating of contemporary cultural modes and phenomena vis-à-vis the various agencies that influence and shape existing means of living as well as the political dynamics of contemporary culture along with its historical originations, engagements and specifying attributes. In this context, the notion of ‘culture’ is more aligned to what cultural anthropology and other relatable disciplines consider a more symbolic order of definitions, the material and symbolic aspect of culture, much in affinity with the German model of cultural studies called Kulturwissenschaft. This symbolic aspect of culture in memory discourses was explored in great detail by the art historian Aby Warburg in his interdisciplinary project Mnemosyne. Warburg affirmed in his work the importance of the legacy of the Classical World, and the transmittance of classical representation, in the most varied areas of western culture through to the Renaissance. He laid particular stress on the power of cultural symbols to trigger
memories in the individual’s consciousness which would be thus affirmed by the sociocultural context and the community within which the individual was located.

The experience of spatiality and temporality, lived or imagined, together or distinctly associates reciprocally to culture and memory, and is influenced by both of those notions, at the same time determining these as well. Culture shapes experience by proffering intermediated perceptions that affect it, while experience affects culture, since individual experience becomes communicable and therefore, progressively collective. And what these ways are, the ways in which culture, memory, space, and experience interact to initiate the manifestation of cultural memory in the context of social, cultural, and racial identity, represented in works of art and in the literary narrative, is something that deserves a continued examination with particular focus exerted on the newly emerging, very recent critical discourse that deals with the intricate network of negotiations between the domains of history, textual dynamics, intertextuality and cultural memory within the literary narrative. Thus, a primary assumption which is valid for theoretical and methodological purposes in research in cultural memory studies is the idea that cultural memory is ‘constructed’, ‘re-embodied’, and made into its manifest forms by the negotiation of the past with the present, or vice versa, as the case may be. Most of its associated aspects
are the same, *constructs* rather than *givens*, *invented* rather than *in vogue* or *practiced*.

One of the central aims of Jan and Aleida Assmann’s formulation of ‘cultural memory’ was, as Astrid Erll notes it, “to describe the connection between culture and memory in a systematic, conceptually nuanced and theoretically sound manner.” (2011: 27) It has become, since then, increasingly multidisciplinary as well as vastly interdisciplinary by gathering to itself as a discipline and research area a host of allied, or even otherwise, disciplines like sociology, history, anthropology, religious studies, tribal area studies, ethnic studies, literary studies, and cultural studies, to name a few. The concept developed by Jan and Aleida Assmann is indebted, of course, to Maurice Halbwachs’ previously mentioned formulation of ‘collective memory’ in that they defined their own model of cultural memory using as a point of genesis the ideas and perspectives developed by Maurice Halbwachs in his three consecutive texts *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* [*The Social Frameworks of Memory*, 1925], *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte: étude de mémoire collective* [*The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land*, 1941] and *La Mémoire collective*, [*On Collective Memory*, 1950]. It is therefore imperative to discuss what Halbwachs says about ‘collective memory’ before delving further into what this contemporary model of cultural memory entails.
Arguing against the theories of the more individualised, psychological aspect of human memory proposed by his contemporaries like Sigmund Freud and his mentor Henri Bergson, Maurice Halbwachs contended that individual memory develops in interaction with in social frameworks (which he called *cadres sociaux*) and designated it also as a collective phenomenon and manifestation, since what individual and personal memory becomes actually happens only because of the individual’s reception of the knowledge of the past in interaction with the society and its frameworks which are constituted in turn by ‘the forms of surrounding objects’. To this effect, Halbwachs’ said that “(i)t is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.” (Halbwachs 1992: 38) As the product of social change, therefore, memory is itself a process, an ever developing, morphing representation of the past in the present within a particular socio-cultural space. What the individual remembers and what the individual forgets is entirely negotiated, in Halbwachs’ opinion, by the social and cultural group, or community the individual is a member or confrère of. Halbwachs attests to this perspective when he asserts that every collective memory spreads out and expands within an existing, enduring spatial framework since the received impressions we acquire cannot be retrieved without the support of this social framework. To recapture the past, it would therefore be
necessary, as Halbwachs says, to understanding how the past is actually continued, carried on, and ‘preserved’ by all that we see, perceive and live with on the tangible level of physical space. Halbwachs thus affirmed the importance of our turning to the notion of space and its many tiers of order and meaning if, as he says, the category of *remembrances* is to manifest itself.

Primarily, Maurice Halbwachs’ ideas about memory and collective memory can be summed up into a series of basic assumptions. The first idea that Halbwachs generally proposes is that collective memory is the dynamic memory of the individual which is formed, reformed, and is operational within the framework of a given, present socio-cultural environment which he calls *cadres sociaux*, or patterns of thought and understanding in the form of given sociocultural frameworks. These *cadres sociaux* are again, in turn, formed by the individual’s communication and interactive exchange with the people, and the surroundings which they live with and in, on a conscious level, and on an unconscious level as well. This is indispensable as well as unavoidable, and to gain a balanced understanding of life and most of its aspects, a minimum level of social exchange is to be undergone for the individual to acquire the practice and knowledge of certain *collectives* like language, rituals, customs, ways of living, social behaviour and norms within the particular community in question. What therefore emerges is...
that the memories of the individual are determined by their affiliation to their community but these still take place in their own consciousness.

The other idea which sums up Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory is that the creation or construction of collective memory is perpetrated through ‘shared versions of the past’ (Erll 2011: 15) which result in different levels of group communication within a social group or a larger cultural community. It is, in the context of the relationship between the individual and the group, an exchange of sorts, with the individual’s memories being constructed in connection with the community’s memories and the community’s memory being realised and manifested in the individual’s memory. The individual act of remembering is effectuated only because the individual’s perception is moderated and regulated by the collective memory of the group, or the community. Thus, while collective memory is not any individual’s privileged recollection, it may be realised only through the individual’s point of view, from the perspective that the individual adopts in the act of remembering.

As said before, Halbwachs, from his sociologist’s perspective, views history as universal, as a neutral negotiation of the past with all its attendant ruptures and discontinuities that are central to the formation of history, whereas collective memory is selective and also restrictive, and
intentional since it gravitates more towards a realisation of the present and its necessary resultants and located circumstances. What is needed in the present is reconstructed in the form and aspect of the past in the present. This is what collective memory does also with certain specific manifestations of its own, especially with what Halbwachs calls *intergenerational memory* which is basically the transmitted sets of memories passed on from generation to generation in the form of family traditions about origins of the family, erstwhile native regions, significant ancestral presences within family narratives, rituals, customs and even memorabilia such as family residences, portraits, jewelry, or other fixed or liquid assets which have *been in the family* for long enough to gather to them associable narratives of memories, of the distant past communicable only within members of the family. These are perpetuated in turn by the typical transmission mode of *family culture* of which conformity and rigidity are specifically constituents of. The past, thus, is not just what happened in the past. It is a reconstruction effected through a volitional act of selection whereby knowledge from the present is utilised to create a remembrance of the past in the present, and this so on, not on a unitary level but as a continued process of alteration and reformation of past images in the present, as the present needs it.

From here, with Halbwachs’ formulations about the social frameworks of memory and the interdependence of the individual and the community
for the purpose of the construction of collective memory, Jan and Aleida Assmann’s concept of the Cultural Memory begins its own trajectory of development. Whereas Halbwachs spoke of collective memory being influenced and aided in its construction by everyday interactions between the individual and the social group besides being affected by ritual remembering, media-centric aspects and material manifestations in the group context, Jan and Aleida Assmann sought to differentiate between a model of communicative memory and what they identified as the Cultural Memory (not the generic ‘cultural memory’).

Communicative memory is largely informal, as the Assmanns defined it, and is naturally shaped, in all possible spontaneity and manifest in the form of experience recounted as eyewitness accounts or oral legends, while the Cultural Memory, as they speak of it, is formed by consciously established, ceremonialised, objectified, often performative locatings in the form of festivity, annual mourning, and other agencies and is manifest in the form of patterned objectivations and purposefully constructed designs of word, image, rhetoric and idiom besides music and dance which promotes a specifically registered semiotic order that seeks to replicate the past in the present with due intention, though the necessity that provokes such a construction may be both intentional and unintentional. Whereas communicative memory seeks the horizon of a near past, confirmed by experience and known history which is not distant, the Cultural Memory seeks the proliferation and possible
promulgation through specialised vehicles of transmission the
construction of *an absolute past*, as Erll calls it. In Jan and Aleida
Assmann’s perspective, therefore, the concept of cultural memory, or the
Cultural Memory, (different from ‘communicative memory’ which
embodies a *recent past*, the recentness of which, again, is more a
consciousness of past time rather than a temporal estimation of ‘real
time’) as they called it would then comprise, as Jan Assmann says,
that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each
society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize
and convey that society’s self image. Upon such collective
knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past,
each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.
(1995: 132)

Jan and Aleida Assmann capitalised both initials (the “Cultural
Memory”) in their work *das Kulturelle Gedächtnis* when they
specifically aimed to distinguish this concept from the generic usage of
the term ‘cultural memory’ and to differentiate it from the idea of
‘communicative memory’. Their thesis of cultural memory contradicts
Halbwachs’ assumption of the delimiting of the area of operation of
‘cadres sociaux’ at the juncture of informal, socially confirmed,
everyday cultural communication and the area of objectivized cultural
manifestation. For the ceremonial, performative aspect of culture as well
as the ‘objects’ that lie embedded within specific schemas of ritualistic
significance also exhibits a nature of cohesive formation whose potential
is immense when one considers the construction of identity within and
around communities and ethnic groups. This is what Jan Assmann refers
to as the ‘concretion of identity’ (Erll 2011: 109). Whereas collective memory is confirmed by everyday experience in the sphere of a social living, cultural memory is distanced from this regularized mode of cultural experience by virtue of its fixity in a trajectory of chronological time. Whereas individual memory relates to the inner construction of the self on a level of subjective temporality, communicative memory relates to the construction of the social self on a level of social temporality. Cultural memory, however, relates to the construction of a cultural ‘self’, a cultural identity on the level of historical or mythical time which is located in and itself locates an ‘ancient past’ untouched by the subjectivisation of social or individual temporality.

1.3. Cultural Memory and Ethnic Identity

An understanding of the nature of cultural memory naturally evokes a set of appurtenant questions; questions about the significance of the word ‘culture’ in cultural memory, about the formation of cultural identity through the mediality of cultural memory, or the mediality of cultural memory being influenced vastly by the existing cultural memory of a race, a nation or an ethnic community, and about how, in the context of the dynamics of production of cultural memory, the politics of cultural, ethnic, class, racial and/or migrant identity become an important area of interrogation. Even during that time in antiquity when the dynamics of
cultural memory was more defined by an *ars memoriae*, an art of memory, than a critical theory of memory, it had been instrumental in foregrounding the complex formations of individual and public identities. An example of this would be a well known account about the Greek lyric poet Simonides of Ceos (c. 556 BC-468 BC) which occurs in a number of texts like the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, in Cicero's *De oratore*, and also in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. The account speaks about the poet Simonides using the mnemonic *method of loci* to ascertain the identities of the individuals who perished in a freak accident at the house of Scopas of Crannon in Thessaly.

With a shift from the study of the arts of memory to the history and theories of memory, and to modern memory discourses, the preeminence of memory as an ‘other’, coextensive presence vis-à-vis the pale of history has gathered momentum in critical discourses about cultural, ethnic and social identities, communities and the heritage of the past. The cultural memory of a race, a nation, a community or an ethnie is linked to narrative accounts of the past articulated in either an individualistic recounting (memoir writing, for example) or in a polyphony of narrative voices, fictional or otherwise, that delineate a ‘going back to the past’ of and by the community in question. Objects, ritualistic paradigms, memory apparatuses/dispositifs [from Michel Foucault’s definition of the apparatus (dispositif) in “The Confession of
the Flesh” (1977), memorials, specific spaces of historical importance
and cultural significance, and sites of ‘remembering’, akin to Pierre
Nora’s lieux de mémoire as a “symbolic element of the memorial
heritage of any community…” (1994: xvii), become all too important in
these cases and contexts. Foucault calls the dispositif “a thoroughly
heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions,
architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures,
scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic
propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid.” (Foucault 1980:
194-228) It is perhaps possible to include this term in the context of the
identity-memory intersection to understand the ways in how social and
state apparatuses shape and influence the collective identity of a
community, or an ethnie by aiding the practice of remembering within
cultural communities and ethnies

The transfer of cultural knowledge that is effectual in these narratives of
the past is confirmed by the community’s, or the individual’s
negotiations with questions of identity, race, gender, class and cultural
belonging. Also, if it is the race, the migrant community, and the ethnie
that is considered as the recalling entity, the agent whose identity is
being considered, then the cultural memory of the individual or the
collective in this context would also subsume, however complexly, the
negotiations that that community or ethnie would have to encounter and
undergo in relation to the political entity of the nation state (hence, the mnemonic dispositif, which would be an aggregate of mnemonic discourses, structures, spaces and sites). An example of this would be the famous Native American memory of the “Trail of Tears”, the relocation of the Seminole, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations from their homelands to Indian Territory in eastern sections of the present-day state of Oklahoma in the United States following the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This particular event in the history of the Native American nations has been very significant in the context of memory culture and memorialisation when it comes to the Native American ethnies in the United States. Fictional, semi-fictional or historical narratives like Diane Glancy’s *Pushing the Bear* or Robert J. Conley’s *Mountain Windsong* have represented the event from the perspective of memory narration, or a fictionalisation of the memory of the United States’ government’s appropriation of native territories.

Using Hutchinson’s and Smith’s six-fold definition of the word *ethnie*, it might be possible to look at what cultural memory in an ethnic context would entail. Hutchinson and Smith define an ethnie as “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members” (1996: 6). This definition recalls, in a way, Max Weber’s usage of the term *ethnic group*
to connote those human collectivities which “entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization or migration” (Weber 389: 1978). It is also relevant to observe R. A. Schermerhorn’s definition of the ‘ethnic group’ as “a collectivity within a larger society [who] have real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood” (Schermerhorn 17: 1996). These definitions of the ethnic group or the ethnie exhibit three primary similarities; the sense of a shared ancestry in the distant past, a particular memory culture that is also common and shared, and a shared sense of cultural identity which, in most cases, may be relatable to a symbolic and material culture, to a normative culture confirmed by religion and faith, or ritual worship, and to a culture of shared origins in the present.

Especially significant and relevant to a deliberation on the intersection of ethnicity, identity and cultural memory is the fact that a common ethnic identity would ideally incorporate a shared sense of the past, a shared commonality of memory. And when this shared memory of an ethnic past is reconfigured in relation to the present, it becomes an inseparable part of the construction of ethnic identity in the present. In its aspect of recall and remembering, the cultural memory of an ethnie or a community (though these aren’t really interchangeably usable terms) is a
re-embodiment, a locating of its ‘historical memories’, a re-
memorialisation of its shared myth of ‘common ancestry’, and a
reconfiguration of the past linkages of the ethnie with its homeland that
have been influenced by historical forces of displacement and rupture
like colonisation or migration, as Weber says it, and their resultant
effects like de-settlement, and dispossession. In all these cases, it is the
ethnic past that is being negotiated with, be it the transmitted narrative of
ancestry, the symbolic elements of cultural identity, or the ‘belonging’
suggested by the idea of an ethnic homeland. Cultural memory operates
at all these levels and reconfigures the architecture of the ethnic presence
in the present, in the contemporary, in relation to a larger cultural
backdrop of the nation-state, the larger collectivity that it is posited
against, or even as conterminous with other ethnic groups with similar
socio-cultural positions as the ethnie in question.

It would also be very relevant, at this point, to engage Herbert Gans’
formulation of ‘symbolic ethnicity’, especially considering historical
factors like migration and immigration that go into the shaping of an
ethnic identity, particularly in the context of the various diaspora groups,
or ethnies (if one can call it that) that exist around the world. In the
context of the future of immigrant ethnies and communities in the United
States of America, Gans conceived the idea of ‘symbolic ethnicity’ as “a
nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of
the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior” (Gans 9: 1979). Thus, he identified an increasing affinity towards the symbolic aspect of an ethnic identity in the United States among third and fourth generations of the many ethnies in the country. In the context of cultural memory discourse and ethnic identity, this concept of ‘symbolic ethnicity’ can be adjusted to connote an outward aspect of what can be called ethnic cultural memory which would naturally involve a more re-mediated formation, re-figuration and reconstruction of ethnic identity in the present. Gans’ formulation is relatable to the emergent, or situational view that ethnicity is socially constructed and invented through a process of adaptation, assimilation and involution of preexisting cultural experiences, attributes, histories and memory. This situationist view of ethnicity is opposable to the well-known primordialist view that ethnicity is something which is inherent, inherited and biologically/culturally transmitted through generations of a community or an ethnic group. It is supplemented socially and culturally, of course. But its origin is something that is primaeval. This particular definition of ethnicity is akin to nineteenth and twentieth century concepts of scientific racism and polygenism proposed by Georges Cuvier, Charles Caldwell, Louis Agassiz and others who argued variously for the different races of the human being as originated in different preconditions.
As Jan Assmann sees it, cultural memory is distinct from communicative and collective memory by virtue of being distant from the everyday. Because of this apparent *fixedness* in time, the manifestation of cultural memory would involve fixed eras, epochs, or more specifically, “fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” (J. Assmann 1995: 129). For example, a *symbolic ethnicity* of African American ethnic groups in twentieth century America would connote the ways in which the African Americans would have viewed their connection to Africa, something which is probably best illustrated by a few lines from Langston Hughes’ famous poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (1921) where Hughes wrote:

> I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
> I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
> …….  
> I’ve known rivers:  
> Ancient, dusky rivers.  
> My soul has grown deep like the rivers. (Hughes 4: 1999)

Hughes captures the African American’s cultural past in these brief and succinct lines which embody and narrate not a singularity of the past but an entire plethora of pasts *condensed* in the form of a symbolic image of the enslaved Negro labouring for the slavers, and referring, before that, to a Negro inhabiting, as it were, a long lost, distant homeland in a nearly maternal backdrop (As Hughes writes, “and it lulled me to sleep”) on the
banks of the river Congo in Africa. The word ‘condensed’ is significant here as it implies one of the specific ways in which cultural memory is configured within a text, or in the body of a literary narrative. The reconstruction of the past in these lines by Hughes bespeaks a delineation of African-American ethnicity that rests its articulation on the basis of certain very prominent symbols of a ‘Negro past’, a riverine homeland in Africa, a past of enslavement and labour, and an admonishment of racism and oppression perpetuated by ‘white America’.

Following Jan Assmann’s proposition about the performance of cultural memory, one can trace in these lines ‘a concretion of identity’ which sharply isolates and demarcates a position of the individual in relation to the ethnic group in question. There is then, a reconstruction of the Negro’s past in the present (also relatable to the poem’s reported genesis in the proximity of the Mississippi river during a train journey from Illinois into Missouri) through the articulation of the poetic, autobiographical narrative of the Negro. The cultural transmission of the narrative of enslavement and displacement (from the banks of the Congo to the Mississippi) that takes place, then, though this poem can be seen also in the light of Jan Assmann’s proposition that cultural memory subsumes the ‘formation’ and ‘objectivation’ of a collectively shared cultural knowledge of the past within “a culturally institutionalised heritage of a society” (1995: 129). There is also a reflexivity insofar as
the projection of the self image of the African American is realised in the poem through a preoccupation with its own contemporary identity and social existence against the backdrop of nineteenth and twentieth century America, and that especially so when Hughes makes reference to “Abe Lincoln” (Abraham Lincoln) and his ‘journey’ down the Mississippi. It is perhaps important, then, to reiterate and expand, at this point, what Jan Assmann has to say about cultural memory being “that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self image”. (1995: 132) Continuing forth from there, Jan Assmann says about the transmission and perpetuation of cultural knowledge through cultural memory:

The content of such knowledge varies from culture to culture as well as from epoch to epoch. The manner of its organization, its media, and its institutions are also highly variable…One society bases its self-image on a canon of sacred scripture, the next on a basic set of ritual activities, and the third on a fixed and hieratic language of forms in a canon of architectural and artistic types…Through its cultural heritage, a society becomes visible to itself and to others. Which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society (1995: 129).

Having deliberated on the issues of cultural memory and ethnic identity, it is now imperative, for the purposes of the proposal of this project being an attempt to investigate and examine selections from multi-ethnic literatures of the United States of America, to turn towards an
examination of the word ‘multi-ethnic’, or ‘multiethnic’ and what it would connote in the context of cultural memory studies before we turn finally to the intersection of literary studies and cultural memory studies.

On one hand, the nature of the ethnie, as discussed previously, is not primarily as a part of and within a given whole alone. The very nature of the ethnie is a whole in itself. The identity of an ethnic group or ethnie is confirmed by its own projection of the social and cultural self. On the other hand, the status of the ethnie or ethnic group is also complexly complimented by its relationship to the nation-state and the very syncretic nature of the state as a socio-political entity. What the exact nature of this relationship is cannot be assessed conclusively here since the parameters and ramifications of the dynamics of an ethnic-state-nation connection are multifarious to say the very least. However, to comment on the nature of the correlation between ethnic identity, multi-ethnicity and the nation-state, it would perhaps be necessary to trace a synthesis of interrogation of the dynamics of political power, and powerlessness that encompasses these categories in the contemporary.

Judith Butler says about the ‘state’ and its direct association with ‘power’:

States are loci of power...the state signifies the legal and institutional structures that delimit a certain territory (although not all of those institutional structures belong to the apparatus of the
state). Hence, the state is supposed to service the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship. (1-3: 2007)

The idea that Butler builds on in order to discuss the nature of the state is therefore this political exercise of power (that is primarily juridical) for the purpose of the creation of an edifice of the nation-state, a structure of cognition from the outside, and a stricture of constituency from within. The state restricts, limits and ‘binds’ in the name of the nation, and it also expels “in the name of the nation” as Butler states, in “conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully” (1-3:2007). The idea of the ‘stateless’ that Butler proposes in this context may also, in a way be relevant to the understanding of the ‘location-ing’ of the ethnic group within and in relation to the state and the nation. Relatable to this is the ‘instrumentalist’ view of ethnicity as a resultant of specific preconditions which are, in general, socially and politically oppressive, and exclusionary in nature. In this context it is easy to observe how emergent ethnies, for example the African Americans in the United States, and the Native American ‘nations’ too, who were posited diversely against the backdrop of an increasingly ‘monocultural’ (in this case, ‘monocultural American’) national fabric while being set apart by variegated factors of class, language, region and religion among others, needed to create a basis for their own distinct identity as opposed to the exclusive ‘identity’ conferred on them by the nation-state.
This *concretisation of identities*, if one can call it that, depended on a primary (not the same as primeval or primordial in this case) crystallization of ethnic ‘peoplehood’ through the determination and perpetuation of a set of ethnic symbols, traditions, principles and campaigns that attested and affirmed a rubric of collectiveness shared by choice or necessity by the individual with the ethnic group in question. “Peoplehood” can be defined as the awareness of a specific set of beliefs and collective characteristics the sharing of which makes the individual a member of a particular group of people. Borrowed from the Hebrew *Amiut Yehudit* (lit. ‘Jewish peoplehood’), the term was reportedly first used by the Jewish reconstructionist Mordechai M. Kaplan in 1959 in an essay titled “Religious Imperatives of Jewish Peoplehood” (primarily an address delivered by the author at the Rabbinical Assembly in May 1959.) A very important and significant example of how this transpired in the case of Native American ethnies in the United States would be the pan-Indian Red Power movement of the United Indians of All Tribes which ultimately led to historic events in ethnic American history such as the occupation of the deserted federal prison island Alcatraz in 1969, and the Longest Walks (1978 and 2008).

The actual phrase “Red Power” was first used in the public gatherings and campaigns of pan-Indian activists in the mid-1960s and was in all
probability formulated by the American Indian author Vine Victor Deloria Jr. Though the Red Power movement, the American Indian Movement, and the Right of Discovery, or similar attempts were not the first instances of the assertion of a Native American ethnic presence in the United States, yet, for the purposes of this illustration it is necessary to note how these historic events helped in the invention of a pan-Indian (or pan-Native American) ethnic identity in the United States. It would not be entirely incorrect to say that the situational and also the instrumentalist views of ethnic identity construction are also quite limited in the way that they provide for a uni-dimensional model of ethnicity. If it is at all the imposition of the state sponsored version of ethnic identity that is at the core of its construction, then where would the ethnic groups’ political and cultural assertion and their projection of ethnic selfhood find its expression? This is where later models of multi-dimensional ethnic construction step in, of course, with their negotiations of state-ethnic relations and the complex dynamics of such a connection besides their consideration of both pluralistic and individualist standpoints in this case.

In its seemingly dichotomous relationship with the state, where, then, does the ethnie stand? Where and how is its identity constituted in correlation with the identity of the nation-state and the political presence of the entity of the state? There can be several ways of looking at this
issue, of course. From a normative perspective of an ethnic group’s
development of identity in a chronological-historical manner to a
genitive perspective of how the ethnie is structured and formed, and from
a cultural perspective about how the ethnie is shaped by cultural forces
and historical events to a sociological perspective about how the ethnie is
subjected to impositions of subjectivity in relation to the nation-state. It
is necessary, however, given the context of cultural memory studies that
we look at the ethnie and its relation to the nation-state from a mnemonic
perspective in order to arrive at a working model of ethnic identity
construction through mnemonic practices. The previously discussed idea
of the ‘memory dispositif’ would provide a very relevant example of
how ethnies locate themselves in correlation with the state in terms of
memorisation and mnemonic practices. The ‘dispositif’, as Gilles
Deleuze says in his discussion of Michel Foucault’s work, is

a tangle, a multilinear ensemble...composed of lines, each
having a different nature. And the lines in the apparatus do not
outline or surround systems which are each homogeneous in
their own right, object, subject, language, and so on but follow
directions, trace balances which are always off balance, now
drawing together and then distancing themselves from one
another. (Deleuze 1992: 159-68)

Deleuze describes the apparatus, or dispositif as a complex construction
of linear projections whose natures are inherently diverse, and their
points of origins similarly heterogeneous. The structure of this
complexity is obviously dynamic, and not affirmed in any sort of
finality, though, the prior assumption of meaning and relevance in the context of this multi-dimensional ‘linearity’ remains constant to an extent. As previously mentioned, Foucault’s ideas about the dispositif were that it is

a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. (1980: 194)

Calling the apparatus a “system of relations that can be established between these elements” (ibid.), Foucault delineated a furtherance of his description of the mechanism of the dispositif as a formation that performs a response to an ‘urgent need’ at a given historic moment in the manner of “an interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely” (1980: 194). His assertions about the nature of the dispositif, and Deleuze’s elaborations on Foucault’s ideas stress primarily on the exclusion of the individual object, or event, or the symbol (as the case may be) as ‘individual’ and their inclusion within a network of composites. The complex foregrounding of the ‘unsaid’ takes place in direct correlation with that which is already the ‘said’, as it is. The dispositif therefore combines material elements, diverse material constituents, rather, with existing discursive formations, and initiates a complication of the discourse as that which bases itself on a renewed instituting of a serial of
subjectivities which also, in a way, are linear in nature, and multi-linear in their construction and dynamics. The notion of the dispositif, it can be said, thus makes way for the consideration of variable and heterogeneous elements that engage in a network of production and regulation in order for the construction of identities; the complex identities of the empowered and the powerless, the identity of the individual in correlation with the collective, the ethnic or the ‘stateless’ (if one can use Butler’s phrase here) in correlation with the nation-state or, in the case of mnemonic culture and memorial practices, the past of occurrences and event with the present of embodiment and concretion.

Giorgio Agamben, however, simplifies the dispositif (apparatus) by calling for an abandonment of “Foucauldian philology” in his assessment of the nature of the dispositif. He defines and identifies an apparatus as literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and - why not - language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses…(2009: 13-14)

Agamben’s inclusion of virtually ‘anything’ within the ambit of apparatus formation presents the character of the apparatus (dispositif) as a network that is established between these ‘elements’ as he calls them
(The words ‘apparatus’ and ‘dispositif’ are used here interchangeably since Agamben identifies the first as the English translation of the second). The term ‘apparatus’, he also says, “designates that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject.” (Agamben 2009: 11) Agamben’s definition of the apparatus presents therefore a broad area from which is it possible to assert a relative model of cultural and ethnic identity formation vis-à-vis the state ‘composed’ imposition of ritualised and edificial ‘official’ identities. In this model of the apparatus that Agamben proposes, there is also the presence that occurs of the ‘counter-apparatus’. The counter-apparatus is that which ‘restores’ that which had been ‘separated’ and put apart. The apparatus which ‘subjectifies’ is ‘countered’ by that which ‘desubjectifies’. But the ‘desubjectification’ in this case cannot be simplistically assumed to be an antithetical motion against the subjectification produced by the apparatus/ dispositif. The subjectification-desubjectification dichotomy that Agamben presumes is again a part of the play of power that defines and permeates the very structure of the dispositif or the apparatus. The counter apparatus is not distinct from the apparatus, but is, in a way, relational to it. Using this model of Agamben’s, it is possible to identify the role and purpose of the memory dispositif. However, in this connection, it is also relevant to
observe first how Laura Basu formulates the idea of the “memory dispositif”. She says:

Thinking in terms of memory dispositifs allows us to move beyond considering individual texts or media as they relate to cultural memory, to examine not only how conglomerations of various texts, media technologies or genres interact with each other to form, develop and proliferate memories, but also the relationships between these primary discursive texts and other areas of a society or culture. (2008: 60)

The memory dispositif, therefore, is a serial of linearities (which do not always meet or converge) that encompasses the mnemonics inherent in cultural remembering and the act of cultural recall in a complex negotiation with what has been termed ‘cultural amnesia’ and ‘cultural nostalgia’. The various ‘cultural texts of memory’, memory texts, memorials or ‘sites of memory’ that would naturally be subsumed within a dispositif of memory in culture are not only positioned in a manner of a conglomerate, or fixity as regards the re-construction of the past in the present, or simply speaking, in the context of the cultural memory of a particular community. The complex network of subjectivities, and desubjectification(s) that the dispositif in this case is would naturally seek to define and constitute a radically dynamic construction of ethnic identity confirmed by the cultural memory of the community in question. This, in a way, would also define how the ethnie stands in connection to the nation-state, or how its own self image is defined by the reconstruction of its own past in relation to the state which has, in the
past, played a different, oppressive, exclusionary role in the configuration of its identity. The symbols, the traditions, the texts, the systems and the materials of its past reconfigured in the present would not function on their own within a singular frame of reference and linear subjectivity but would rather participate in a bringing together of all those ‘re-usable texts’ in order that the identification of a memory dispositif that has in its diagonally extreme poles the edifice of the state and the emergent constituent of the ethnie.

The relation of the ethnie versus the state (if it can be termed ‘versus’ at all) would ideally begin from a position where the state apparatus imposes on the ethnic group the role of a subject, to be administered, and governed, to be identified and defined, to be named and renamed, if and when necessary. The memory of these ‘apparitions’ of the state’s regulatory influence persists in the cultural memory of the ethnie in question. The ethnie on the other hand would of course see itself as the oppressed subject in question in the end. However, that consciousness would not be a spontaneous figuring but a position born out of a chronology of pasts that have been and continue to be hostile to the potential self-image of the ethnie in the present and the future. A resultant of this would be the assertion of self identity through acts of cultural containment (and expansion, as well) by which the ethnie would come to a moment of choice, of urgency when the basis for a structure of ethnic cognition would be laid out through the development of an ethnic
character for a community (or a race). And it is thus that a counter apparatus of restitution would necessitate its appearance. This counter apparatus of restitution would automatically embody a direct contrast to the state’s regulatory processes, rituals, discourses and bodies that had hitherto confirmed the ethnic identity of the ethnie in question. Memory, or more specifically, cultural memory, then becomes an important element in the complex series of networks that is born from the regulating that the dispositif exerts, and the restituting that the counter apparatus brings to the fore. Within this plethora of forces, this play of counter-positive power relations, the performance and production of cultural memory achieves its significance as the cynosure of memory discourses in culture.

Referring again to the ethnic history of the United States, the memory dispositif of the Trail of Tears, or even the Battle of Little Bighorn would be interesting cases in point. The cultural memory of the displacement and dispossession affected by the state in the context of the Indian ethnic groups following legislations like the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and treaties like the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek signed between some of the native ‘nations’ and the United States’ federal government which successively recognised and de-recognised the ‘sovereignty’ of the Choctaw, the Cherokee and other ethnic groups together can be concluded to be many of the ‘heterogeneous’ constituents, or
composites, in a memory dispositif of Native American ethnic
dispossession in the United States of America. This would of course
subsume many modalities of later reorganization of Native American
ethnies following the pan-Indian Red Power movement, or the American
Indian Movement during which the Native American ethnies asserted a
creation of a Native American identity which was essentially different
from the erstwhile white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) character of
the United States, or the later monocultural character of the United States
being a ‘salad bowl’ of ethnic diversity. Within a memory dispositif,
therefore, one can trace the workings of a polymorphism of pasts, a
multilinear ingress of diverting, and often contradictory versions of the
past into the linearity of the present. The elements of a memory dispositif
would therefore subsume many different modes of mediation, through
rituals, through memorialisation, through commemoration and even
through monumental rememoration besides also including any other sort
of linearity that might contribute to the reconfiguring of the past in the
present.

In this context, it would be necessary to clarify what is being meant by
rememoration here. Though that sort of examination may tend to
complicate the case studies that follow this introduction to a certain
extent, yet it is necessary here to include this cursory observation of the
relationship of cultural memory, rememoration, commemoration and
their situationing within the architecture of the memory dispositif. By ‘rememoration’, I mean to suggest an act of recall, very broadly speaking. To ‘rememorate’ means to recall something that has occurred in the past, and which has been ‘silenced’, and to initiate its reconstruction in the present either through medial negotiation or through a processual progression towards a specific set of symbolic, or narrative commemoration. The word ‘rememorate’ is descended from the Latin ‘rememoratus’ which is a past participle of ‘rememorari’ (literally means ‘to remember’). In the context of cultural memory systems and the dynamics of cultural memory in medial representations, or commemorative practices, the practice and dynamics of the act of rememoration takes on a more complex and suggestive role. Within the complex architecture of cultural memory, or in the memory dispositif specifically, the act of rememoration acquires a distinctly political avatar. As Dee Horne says:

In addition to being a “source of knowledge” (36), social memory is “an expression of collective experience; social memory identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future” (Fentress and Wickham 25). Commemoration is “the action of speaking or writing about memories, as well as the formal re-enactment of the past”…rememoration is commemoration from the position of having been silenced…an act of resistance which, in turning “the present of narrative enunciation into the haunting memorial of what has been excluded, excised, evicted…becomes the unheimlich space for the negotiation of identity and history” (Bhabha Location 198) (original emphasis) (2004: 89).
Horne’s succinct differentiation between the two terms is more definitive, but the term ‘rememoration’ whose genesis occurs in complexity and intense significance earlier in one of Toni Morrison’s *Tanner Lectures in Human Values* delivered in 1988 and is invoked as well in her novel *Beloved*. As Kevin Whelan says, ‘‘Rememoration’, a term invented by Toni Morrison, displays an acute awareness that ‘the act of imagination is bound up with memory’ and that individual memory and social memory are inextricably linked.” (2005: 152) But the actual origins of the word and the phenomenon itself can be traced back to Plato and his tract *Meno* where Plato postulates a prior knowledge of the object within the subject’s experience. He speaks of the doctrine of rememoration in this context and narrates how his teacher Socrates expounds the theory of knowledge as recollection (*anamnesis*), which he demonstrates by posing a mathematical puzzle to one of Meno’s slaves.

What Whelan and Horne call ‘social memory’ may also be said to incorporate the dimensions of cultural memory as well, since the re-enactment of the past as Horne sees it is also a re-construction of the past in the present. Rememoration thus becomes an important constituent of the totality of the discourses of cultural memory, and a significant area of force, or rather, of resistance against ‘silencing’ where the ethnic voice seeks to liberate extant notions of the external culture about its own, internal cultural space. In that case, what is being rememorated is the
ethnic group’s own cultural past, as a deliberate project against external acts of racial, or ethnic discrimination perpetrated through a narrative of difference and of superiority, besides state sponsored pogroms of regulation and control. One of the most significant ways in which rememoration occurs in the context of ethnic cultural spaces is through literary and cultural productions which also constitute a very particular power relation within the ‘ethnic’ memory dispositif. Literary narratives about ethnic identities, cultural texts and ethnic literary production, then, can also be identified as significant elements of this complex network of apparatuses and counter apparatuses. Narrowing down further, it is possible to see these two elements, literary production and cultural memory, in conjunction and correlation within the dispositif, and specifically so in case of the memory dispositif in the context of ethnic societies vis-à-vis the regulatory and governing nation state in question.

The multi-ethnic American narrative as a vehicle of cultural memory would therefore, in the light of these arguments, assume the prominent character of a constituent element of the memory dispositif in the context of multiethnic America since it would, in a multifaceted manner, adopt the agenda of representing the ethnic past, or the many pasts of the ethnie in the present. The compulsory contradictions and the strategically aligned and potential alterations that Foucault identifies as the features of any dispositif are also exhibited by the memory dispositif. Which is why,
even as the counter apparatus, or the apparatus/dispositif grows into force and simulation, there continues to grow the *elusiveness* of the past. Finality, of course, is not the result that is demanded of the memory dispositif, if at all there is anything called the ‘result’ within the workings of an apparatus. Nor is historical truth the aim or purpose of it, even as mnemonic reconstruction is not. What is primary in this case is the absolution of the dispositif from the rhetoric of resultants and a re-concentration of the cultural memory of the ethnic group in question towards a genealogy of its own self-image. The literary narrative, with fictionality as one of its primary prerogatives, and embodiment (as in symbols, or sets of symbolic mediation) as one of its prominent strategies of configuring the literary space with the extra-literary world represents the ethnie in its genealogy of self, with its cultural memory exerting its subtle presence within the narrative frame of the text in question. The presence, therefore, of the literary narrative, of literary production by the ethnie within the purview of the state’s apparatus of governance achieves a complex character of its own by presenting and re-furbishing the past of the ethnie in question and continually re-configuring its present in correlation to its many pasts. As Zora Neale Hurston writes, “Like the dead seeming cold rocks, I have memories within that came out of the material that went to make me.” (1984: 242) The memory becomes the character of the present that is being spoken of, narrated and represented, through linguistic codes, symbolic systems,
and semantic strategies. The present that is seen, and *said*, thus, is thus a formation that results from a complex network of forces and agencies that continually shape-shift, align and realign themselves by re-iterating the pasts in the present, many of which remain *unsaid*, to use Foucault’s term, at times, and yet seem to exert their influences easily on the ‘acts of transfer’ that remembering and cultural recall ultimately become.

1.4. Cultural Memory, Literature and Literary Texts

The studies of cultural memory and of literature, and of literary narratives, interact and associate with each other in diverse ways. In its association with literature, memory not only has a factual, material basis but is inseparable from the fictional and aesthetic elements which are embedded within, and confirm the nature of the written text, and the literary narrative. All writing is, in a way, an act of remembrance, or recall, or of ‘*recordatio*’; the act of writing being identifiable with and relatable to the mnemonic processes associated with the famous “Method of Loci” in the classical eras. In this, technically, the word ‘*memoria*’ can be related to words in medieval Latin that can range from the word ‘*recognosco*’, meaning ‘to recognize, recollect, or recall’ to the word ‘*recordatio*’ which also means ‘recollection’, ‘memory’ or ‘recall’.
The past in its material re-embodiment is incorporated, as it is, into the body of the text, and not only in the sense of the Middle Latin *texere*, meaning ‘to weave’, an earlier antecedent of the word ‘text’, but also in the sense of *cohibeo*, ‘to embody’ and *erit*, ‘to be’. The register of literary language associates this presence of the past, of cultural memory, its objects and bodies with the signifying processes of language within the text in order to generate a re-construction of the past, which is what cultural memory is, very broadly speaking, within the literary narrative. The writing of cultural memory within literary texts takes place, thus, consciously and even unconsciously through a construction, or re-inscribing of the past by the voluntary and involuntary processes of composition that go into the *creation* of a narrative.

In this, through the art and act of writing, of inscribing, there comes to the fore the implication of a potential encounter between an art, and acts of memory, or recollection (*ars memorialis*, and *actae memoriae*) and an art, and acts of oblivion, *actae oblivionalis*, and an *ars oblivionalis*, as Umberto Eco calls it, since within the text the reconstructing of the past, the embodying of it as cultural memory takes place primarily in a continuum of what is being remembered, through the register of uttered language, and what is not being remembered, or what is being consigned to oblivion. Eco coins the term in his 1988 essay “An Ars Oblivionalis? Forget It” in an attempt to state the apparent impossibility of such a
model of the rhetoric of forgetting. The term is used here to generally
conne the acts of forgetting that take place within the ambit of the acts
of memory and remembrance that occur inside of the literary text. As
Toni Morrison says, using the metaphor of the floods on the Mississippi
River for the flash of recall that writers encounter:

All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory - what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our flooding. (Morrison 1995: 99)

The intersections of memory and literature are varied, as it has been said before. In poetry through verbal images and metaphors, in fiction through plot and incident, even characters, in drama through scene, metaphor and spectacle, and in a myriad other ways, memory asserts its prevalence and recurring presence by primarily reiterating the processes of remembering and forgetting within the narrative, within the structure of the text. In fact, the prevalence of memory in the field of literature is so wide-spread that it is possible to identify several different models of this literature-memory intersection. For one, there can be a formation of cultural memory within literature, or literary texts, embedded and incorporated within them through a negotiation of formalist elements, generic patterns and metaphoric usage; the presence of memory figures within literary narratives is an example of how this occurs. It is possible
also to trace a *re-writeable* trajectory *of* the cultural memory of literature as conterminous with the writing of literary histories at one level, which has been identified in current cultural memory studies with the Kristevan notion of intertextuality; that the essential nature of the written text is not contained or isolated but is actually transformed by the presence of previously existing signifying systems, ‘re-usable texts’ as they may be called in the context of cultural memory studies.

Roland Barthes’ notion of the ‘intertext’ and Julia Kristeva’s ideas on ‘intertextuality’ thus can be related directly to the concept of ‘the Cultural Memory’ as the Assmanns have viewed it, in a significant intersection with textuality and the semiotic study of literary texts, and narratives. The cultural memory *of* literature, as we call it, or the cultural memory of the literary text therefore, presents itself as the unseen layering of meaning, objects, ideas and ideates within the literary text, much like the nature of the palimpsest, or the ‘mosaic’ of quotes from existing texts as suggested by Kristeva. The palimpsest, as we know it, conceals previous absorptions and layering(s) within itself. And yet, even after repeatedly assimilative attempts verging on meliorating erasures (which go into the ontogeny of the text) have taken place, it reveals *unseen* texts, subtle traces of *semi-visible* texts and the presence of extra-literary objects and figures as the literary work incorporates it.

As Roland Barthes in his *Theory of the Text* says,
Any text is an intertext. Other texts are present in it... The texts of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks. (1981: 39)

There is always language before and after the text, as Barthes sees it. And cultural memory, like the ‘anonymous formulae’ or ‘bits of code’ Barthes refers to, redistributes itself within the text. From the text to the literary work, the presence of cultural memory condenses itself into becoming a part of the narrative in a way that can be described as autonoetic. Each new act of writing, of inscribing the text in question thus can be equated to an interconnection between existing texts within the immediate ‘surrounding culture’ or even through an intercultural negotiation whereby the author makes references to cultural texts beyond the extent of that immediate culture; culture here, of course, denotes the shared sign system it has been perceived as. This placing of the past in the text, or the placing of the text in the past is what we identify as the cultural memory of literature.

The question that arises here, and which relates to the interrogation of cultural memory and its elements in the literary text, is the question of
visibility. In spite of its primarily visual association, the word ‘visibility’ in this context would, as is obvious, denote the appearance, the occurrence and the prominence, as well as symbolic visuality of literary and textual memory, or cultural memory within the literary narrative, and not its visualisable aspects in a socio-cultural context. The convergency of ‘visibility’ and ‘textuality’ suggests a mutual interdependence, here, of course. As Hugh J. Silverman says, “Visibility is perceptual textuality and textuality is written visibility” (1993: 276). But to extend this connection between visibility and textuality further, the comparability suggested by the use of the word ‘visibility’ here exerts itself and becomes denotative of a privileged prominence of certain, selective, more apparent schemas of cultural memory as posited against other less apparent ones within the text.

The literary text ‘embodies’ cultural memory. It becomes, for all ends and purposes, a manifest medium of cultural memory. However, the embedded cultural texts within it (those which the author makes reference to, or alludes to) are not always uniformly visible, or apparent. The dynamics of cultural memory within the literary narrative, especially in the twin contexts of the acts of ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting’ connecting to the entire presence of ‘memory’ in the text, therefore are negotiable in this sense of forgotten cultural memory and that which is remembered. What is more visible is more ‘remembered’, since it has
been re-constructed in a manner of greater specificity, and pervasiveness through language. What is less visible, that which is not specifically inscribed, or uttered within the weaving of the text remains less said, less scribed, less seen, and therefore less remembered. Or it can be the other way round, as well. That which is less seen is remembered as well, but is not negotiated easily with, and therefore not articulated as openly as those memories whose inscribing occurs with a distinct measure of intent and purpose.

The reason for that can be anything ranging from individual trauma, or collective trauma, or cultural agony, or cultural amnesia. The more visible elements of cultural memory, if those are accentuated to an extent of overarching recurrence within the text, also become, in a way, responsible for the non-visibility of the others. The reasons and strategies that go into that sort of an intra-textual negotiation are obviously linkable to what can be identified as the acts of cultural recall, or remembering and cultural erasure, or forgetting. The reign of the visible within the literary text influences the re-construction of cultural memory in varied ways which, in turn, evoke questions of exclusion, marginality and representation, especially in the context of identity formation as a literary-cultural thematic. The study of literary texts as mediums of cultural memory invokes this variable understanding; what is being forgotten, and what is being remembered within the text, besides the
reasons thereof, and the strategies involved, deliberate, or unconscious. And then, on the same level of textual understanding, there can be a further way of re-inscribing cultural memory as literature, as a literary text; the genre of memoir writing, diary writing or even the genres of ‘memory writing’ and ‘life writing’ (distinguishable from autobiographical writing) are examples of how memory and cultural memory can be refigured and re-distributed as literary texts. In this mode, the storage function of the written text, as Aleida Assmann views it in “Canon and Archive”, becomes the interface through which the memory of the past is configured and re-constructed as a literary text.

Whereas in the model of the intertext, it is a negotiation between the inner weave of the text and the surrounding culture playing within the domain of language, in this model of memory as literature, it is more of an edificial becoming; the diversely structured memory becomes the text instead of the text being transformed by existent memory texts. The issue of visibility remains there as well, though. The memory that is being narrated (the literary text as the ‘voice’ or as a conglomerate, a polyphony of ‘voices’ of the past and not solely as allusive or referential incorporations within a text) is variedly influenced in its embodying, in its re-construction by what aspects of it is resultant as primary or secondary utterance, and what elements of it remain subtle, unseen and embedded as inscriptions beyond what is the apparent structure of the
text in question. That which is visible in this case is not the entirety of
the memory narrative, or the narrated memory. That which remains non-
visible, partially forgotten, and mostly ‘un-remembered’, is also part of
the narrating of cultural memory in this case. Only, the hyper-visible
regime of the obvious reconstruction of the past conceals with the
shadow of a selected, particular version of the past, the other culturally
marginalised, less articulated versions and narratives of the past.

Besides the above intersections of literature and memory, there is a
specific role that the literary text performs as a medium of cultural
memory. Acting as mediums, or carriers, of cultural memory, literary
texts function like storehouses, wherein lies contained the probability of
cultural transmission on a material level. The existing, re-usable aspect
of the past, of cultural memory becomes, then, the primary element that
goes into this reconstruction of the structures of objectified memory
within the literary narrative. The difference between the model of the
intertext and this is that whereas the first occurs at a more primal level of
language becoming a mode of cultural transmission, this is something
that operates on a more formal level of aesthetic and rhetorical
configuration within the literary work; the novel, the poem or the
narrative, generally and leads onward to a more specific manifestation of
‘previous’ cultural texts, of cultural memories which is of course not
explicit but is discernable in the same way as layers within a palimpsest are.

An example of this would be the Romantic concept of the ‘spots of time’ which William Wordsworth first wrote of in the refurbished edition of *The Prelude* in 1805, (specifically in Book XII of that edition of the poem under the rubric “Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored”). He says in Book XII of *The Prelude*:

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence—depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,—

(Book XII; 1850: 565)

Since the narrative of *The Prelude* itself is avowedly autobiographical, the sense of the past becoming involved with the present in a manner of storage retrieval is obvious. However, the perception of memory becomes extensively spatial in this Romantic concept of space-memory-time fused together in a metaphor that is almost akin to a landscape in actuality. Some of Wordsworth’s best-known poems, such as "Tintern Abbey" also directly explore the mechanics of individual and personal memory in the guise of a speaker, or a narrator in many of these poems. These narrative personae compare and contrast their present individual selves to an earlier, remembered past of the self, all the while struggling to negotiate with the past that has been presumably lost and the remnants
of those things in the past that have remained accessible. In his ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems*, Wordsworth defined poetry as:

> the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. (1805: xlix-l)

His opinions about poetry and the role of the Poet in the Preface make it very apparent that Wordsworth believed memory to play an essential role in the creative process. Besides that, as well, Wordsworth in *The Prelude* assigns a specific role to the epic as the story of his own life, a narrative in which these ‘spots of time’, which are essentially in the form of emotionally confluent memories, form the primary organising principle of the autobiographical narrative as well as its centre of climactic achievement. With occurred incident morphing into poetic event accompanied by a somewhat vague trace of rhetorical strategy indicated through the use of phrases like ‘renovating virtue’ denoting the influential presence of reconstructed metaphors of memory throughout the book, it is obvious how the Romantic inclination towards a reformation of the past in the narrative of the present developed. This is one of the many ways in which the literary text fulfils its role as a storage medium of cultural memory.
Since, like cultural memory in its fundamental material aspect, literature is also, in a way, a symbolic system, especially in its semiotic aspect, therefore a significant number of similarities exist between it and the conglomerate of material and symbolic systems that cultural memory is. At a very elemental, functional level, the primary of these can be isolated and defined by looking at the similarities between the operational models of these two different symbolic forms. Cultural memory operates primarily between the acts of remembering and forgetting, and as a reconstruction of the past in the body of the present. The past is refigured, *condensed*, made into a more objectified construction in cultural memory. This model of *condensation*, as Astrid Erll comments on it, is something that is also similarly processed in case of the literary text. However, in the context of the literature-cultural memory intersection, this model of condensation is distinct from the Freudian application of the word ‘condensation’, though the principle operating in both is relatively the same. Thus, as is evident here, cultural memory deals with the making of memory discourses, or the mapping of memory spaces by a decidedly, though not predictably so, patterned mode of refiguring, by the combination, a bringing together, of varied (but selective) discourses of the past through a signifying strategy that strives primarily towards embodiment.
Erll identifies primarily three areas of the intersection between literature and cultural memory in this. The first she calls ‘condensation’ as it has been explained above. The second she identifies as ‘narration’, using the paradigm-syntagma relationship used in structuralist narratology to explain it (Erll 2011). In that the literary text aims towards the generation of meaning through specific strategies of narration, through particularised assignations of genre patterns, through metaphor and metonymy, and through narrative strategies that incorporate the formation of memory figures, or objects of memory. And the formation of these ‘memory figures’ is achieved through a process of selective combination and a construction of a specific order of causality and temporality; many diverse images, ideas, events, presences and significations are brought together within the text in a ‘narrative act of memory’ which functions in a mode of selection between available alternating memories. The primary aim of this ‘narrative act of memory’ is a reorientation of the past in the present, and a representation of those existing memories which are most suited to the present ‘narrative of memory’ in question.

An example of this may be cited here. In the poem “The Isles of Greece”, the British Romantic poet George Gordon, Lord Byron, creates a narrative memory-site (not ‘site of memory’, though) with an
impassioned address to “the isles of Greece/ where grew the arts of war and peace”. Still later in the poem, there occur names like that of the poetess Sappho, Polycrates, the poets Homer and Anacreon, and even mythical beings like Phoebus, events like the Battle of Thermopylae, the events at Marathon, the ‘Spartan dead’ recalling the protecting of Sparta against the Persians and cultural topoi that coalesce into the configuration of what can be called a mythical/legendary memory discourse. The allusions to the legendary "Islands of the Blest” itself occurs within quotes, as a citation that is consciously made. This bringing together of many diverse memory elements from the mythical and ancient past of the Grecian civilisation into a composite uniformity, an almost spatial representation of many pasts embodied and refigured into a coalescing of that past into a singular memory site which Byron calls ‘the isles of Greece’ is metonymic, of course. On the level of textual analysis, this directs the attention of the reader to the element of intertextuality within the narrative of the poem, of course. However, from the perspective of cultural memory, this poem becomes a powerful medium that carries forth the poetic concern of the Romantic poets like Byron and Keats with the ancient, the mythic and the legendary while narrating the contemporary. Byron’s selective mode of metaphoric and allusive usage in this poem also attests to the exclusionary nature of the ‘act of memory’ within the narrative.
This selection of *alternating memories*, or versions of the past, as it can be identified confirms that particular space within the literary work, that functions within, and outside of the weaving of the text and thereby ushers in the stabilisation of the formative processes of cultural memory within it. The condensation of memory figures that is executed through a selection of discourses of the past, of existing memories participates in tandem with the combinative aspect of the narrative of cultural memory as well. The *act of memory* as we see it relies extensively upon this part of the narrative strategy within the text. Along with the condensation of the narrative elements of cultural memory, the combinative aspect of the memory narrative is, like it is in narrative discourse generally, also responsible for the creation and perpetuation of meaning. Not all memories are narrative in nature, nor are all memories narrated, as well. The issue of visibility operates here as well on a multi-tiered level. There are memories which are visual, tangible, olfactory, aural or visual-aural, visual-olfactory, aural-olfactory and so on. These memories are rendered into the narrative mode through these processes of condensation and narration along with a specificity of genres of narration, as Astrid Erll sees it.

The third intersection that Erll presents is the selection of genres for the narrating of memory, or the memory narrative. In this, she outlines
certain available formats of narrative which are culturally recognised and socially conditioned to fit the memory narration; Erll calls them ‘memory genres’ (2011: 148) in order to affirm and define the significance of such narrative strategies in the context of memory cultures. She says that these genres that are suitable for the narrating of cultural memory “provide familiar and meaningful patterns of representation for experiences that would otherwise be hard to interpret” (Erll 2011: 148). These three primary processes that Erll identifies and comments on can be collectively called ‘narrative acts of memory’ within the text because of the narrating of memory that these ‘acts’ perpetrate and perpetuate. The ‘narrative act of memory’ within the text is not without an agent, of course. The agent of this act is what Barthes calls the “language before and around the text” (1981: 39). Thus, it is the language of transmission, the transmission of a material culture through the polyphony of ‘voices’ that the literary text is that facilitates the dissemination of the influences of these ‘narrative acts of memory’ within the text and renders it into an efficient and effective medium of cultural memory. As Renate Lachmann says,

Literature is culture’s memory, not as a simple recording device but as a body of commemorative actions that include the knowledge stored by a culture, and virtually all texts a culture has produced and by which a culture is constituted…..Every concrete text, as a sketched out memory space, connotes the macrospace of memory that either represents a culture or appears as that culture. (2010: 301)
However, the ‘narrative act of memory’ in its occurrence within the memory text works not only to embody *the knowledge stored by a culture* and to reconstruct it in the form of *commemorative actions*. It also involves, as Paul Connerton says, an “act of transfer” (1989: 39). Connerton’s formulation primarily stressed on the twin modes of such transference in the form of memorial and mnemonic practices. However, this ‘act of transfer’ that coincides with the ‘narrative act of memory’ is something that is more inclusive than just that. Emerging out of a complex dynamic of recalling the past as a ‘shared past’ between the individual self and the collective self, between contested individual memories and normative collective ones, between diverse texts of the past, between history and memory, this ‘act of transfer’ would also entail a cultural transmission of the past into the present within the framework of the literary narrative.

In her discussion of the production of cultural memory in literature in *Memory in Culture* (Erll 2011), Erll takes into account Paul Ricoeur’s model of textual mimesis (proposed in Ricoeur’s *Temps et Récit*, 1983-85, translated as *Time and Narrative*, 1984-86). Whereas Ricoeur’s development of the circular model of mimesis in the context of literary emplotment, devising, and literary world construction was based directly on a principle of literary and extra-literary negotiations, Erll develops a model of mnemonic construction on the basis of the negotiations that the
literary narrative executes with the mnemonic elements of culture, with the versions of the past that are available to the literary text in question. Whereas the previous identification of the ‘act of memory’ within the narrative was primarily within its particular ambit of intra-literary structures, Erll’s model of mnemonic construction deals with the extra-literary mnemonic context, much like Ricoeur’s model involves the extra-literary world with the intra-literary. The aspects she identifies in this model corresponding to Ricoeur’s tripartite model “for the purpose of conceiving of literature as a medium of cultural memory” are “1) the prefiguration of a literary text by memory culture, 2) the literary configuration of new memory narratives, and 3) the refiguration in the frameworks of different mnemonic communities.” (Erll 2011: 153) The words ‘prefiguration’, ‘configuration’ and ‘refiguration’ are used in a very significant, strategic manner by Erll in this context so as to present a coterminous model of cultural memory in keeping with Ricoeur’s model.

The word ‘figuration’, which lies at the core of these three terms, would generally connote an emblematic inference at a preliminary level of understanding. Descended from the Latin word figūrāre (meaning “to shape”) and relatable to the Latin figūrātiō, ‘figuration’ would of course connote the act of shaping, or representing emblematically, or symbolically rather, any reality in question within an aesthetic work. In the context of literature, or art, this ‘figuration’ would suggest rhetorical
figures and similar tropes with all their associable inclusions. But, the
figuration of memory narratives that Erll speaks of is not only something
that operates at this level of narrative construction. It is not only the
formal embodiment aspect or the symbolic aspect of memory figures that
is suggested here but also the interdependencies that can be espied within
“the areas of pre-understanding that concern cultural memory” (Erll

This is relatable to what Norbert Elias speaks of as the idea behind the
figuration of the idea ‘figuration’. Figuration, as Elias defines it in his
book *The Civilizing Process* (1990), would be a generic term that is used
to represent and connote a network, or a *web* of inter-dependant relations
constructed among human beings, something which connects them, a set
of interdependence which assumes the form of a structure of mutual
influence. Though Elias’ formulation is primarily sociology-centric
(Elias’ figurational sociology), the technical aspect of the definition that
he provides can be used to understand what the word ‘figuration’ may
mean in this context. The interdependence that he suggests as being at
the core of figuration are relatable to the processual aspect of cultural
practice and mnemonic figuration that confirm the construction of
memory narratives, or memory figures that occur within a literary
narrative through allusion, reference and rhetorical selection. Even
Ricoeur uses the word ‘figuration’ to connote the three stages within his
mimetic model of narrative by terming the tripartite role of the author, the text and the reader as figuration, configuration and refiguration. In Erll’s opinion, literature’s figuration (or its prefiguration as she calls it) would refer to the material dimension of memory culture (for example, historiography, memorials, memory movies, and discourses about the past); to its social dimension (for example, commemorative rituals, different mnemonic communities and institutions); and to its mental dimension (for example, values and norms, stereotypes and other powerful schemata for representing the past). It appropriates elements from these dimensions through intertextual, intermedial, and interdiscursive references. (2011: 153)

In this way, the literary text performs the transfer of cultural knowledge, of the narrative of the past into the present through what has been called “commemorative actions” within the narrative. Through specifically strategised modes of remembering and narration (which may also be fictional and not just nonfictional recalling as in memoirs or autobiographies), that which is forgotten or obliterated from active memory, or is consigned to oblivion and is not present in social dimensions of memory, is refigured, and articulated within the literary narrative primarily through the instituting and formation of symbolic rhetoric within the emplotment of the story. The extra-textual world from which this selection of mnemonic elements is perpetrated holds the reality as an intermeshed structuring of correlated signification, an *intersignification* so to speak of, as Ricoeur calls it, but the selected
memory elements of the narrative structure occur within the text as constituents of a specific causal order of emplotment beginning from symbol and object, or site and spatial reconstruction to inference or from reference and allusion to a specifically purposed literary connotation. This corresponds to Erll’s second feature of configuration as mentioned previously. Whereas the mnemonic elements outside of the text are vastly diverse and can be said to exist in a constant state of flux, owing to the ceaseless additions of the contemporary to this repertoire of cultural paradigms and texts, the selection of these for the inner world of the text is again, a figuration that is planned, configured and strategised with a specific intent and purpose. Within this interstitial space (the space constituted by the narrative’s negotiation with the extra-textual world), it is not just a representation of reality that takes place. It is rather a construction that transpires, or more a creation of reality, or of memory in this case.

And with this, as Erll points out, comes to the fore the collective refiguration of cultural memory as effected by memory texts, memory narratives and the literature of memory in general (Erll also identifies two primary conditions for literary texts to effect the collective level of memory. One, the text must be perceived as a medium of memory, and two, the text must acquire an effective status in its reception). Ricoeur’s previously mentioned tripartite model draws to a cyclical close with the
act of reading of the literary text by the reader. This mimesis follows on with an intersection of the textual world with the reader-ly world. Drawn from the world of pre-existing reality and action, the text, configured within a fictional space, thus enters another world of action through the act of reading. This particular role that literature performs as a medium of cultural memory has a more collective effect in itself. What results from this, and as Erll notes, is a “temporal orientation….literary stories shape our understanding of the sequence and meaning of events, and of the relation of the past, present and future. Literature moulds memory culture thus through its structure and forms.” (2011: 155).

The representation of the past(s), whether these are imagined or actual, thus can permeate the world of reality in diverse ways and can influence the dynamic presence of cultural memory in as many ways too. How the recalling, the remembrances and the memories of a particular historical event are represented in a memory text read widely by people, from the community in question or from inter-communitarian spaces, across different socio-cultural strata may influence vastly the cultural memory of that event on the collective level by either adding to the original version of the past or by rendering its metamorphosis into a cultural remembering widely varied from how the event actually was received in its immediate mnemonic-cultural contexts.
1. 5. Multiethnic Memory Narratives

It is now necessary to conclude here this examination of the dynamics of cultural memory and literary studies and to identify the preferred method of analysis that this dissertation will adopt in its case studies which follow in the succeeding chapters. This introductory chapter will be followed by case studies of selected memory narratives by three ethnic American authors, namely Navarre Scott Momaday, Gloria Naylor and Jhumpa Lahiri. Three texts by each author will be included in each of these case studies. These texts will include Momaday’s The Journey of Tai-me, The Way to Rainy Mountain and House Made of Dawn, Naylor’s The Women of Brewster Place, Bailey’s Café and Mama Day, and Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies, The Namesake and Unaccustomed Earth. I use the phrase “memory narratives” with specific intent since the texts that have been selected as case studies for this dissertation are in effect, narratives of memory within which and associated which a distinct memory culture exists, contributing to the phases of figuration for each of them. Each of these texts shall be analysed in the light of the theoretical formulations that have been discussed and projected in this present introductory tract. The primary approach for these case studies shall be textual and symbolic; the case studies will aim at the identification of memory rhetoric and memory figures, and symbolic aspects of memory culture that have been represented in these texts.
However, using instances of Ricoeur’s tripartite mimetic model as well as Erll’s derivatives about literary texts and memory culture, or memory in culture, these case studies shall also attempt to read, aside of the textual aspect of the narratives, the processual aspects of these by taking into account the manner of figuration that has been used in each of these texts. It is also imperative to identify certain particularised mnemonic-narratological models which may be used in the succeeding case studies at this point.

Astrid Erll proposes the notion of the rhetoric of collective memory which, as she says, “describes such mnemonic potentials for literature to transmit versions of a socially shared past…as an ensemble of narrative forms which provokes the naturalization of a literary text as a medium of memory.” (2011: 157) She presents certain precise modes of such a rhetoric which includes the experiential mode of narrating the past as “lived-through experience” (2011: 158) in which the past is narrated as first-hand experience, usually utilizing the first person, intimate dialogue of seen and felt reality. This mode of narration is something that evokes a sense of the past as distinctly accessible, and not distant or faraway, even though the actual event of the past may be, for all purposes and effect, located in a distant or mythic past. The past is narrated in this mode by a voice, or many voices, as a story in the present. This reconstruction of the past participates, as may be seen, very actively within the structure of
the memory dispositif spoken of earlier by narrating different versions of a particular past in the experiential mode, what is achieved is a portrayal of the power play of ‘pasts’ and ‘presents’, sometimes in a manner of oppositions, through opposing narrations even, within the literary text in question. For example, Gloria Naylor’s *Bailey’s Café*, one of the texts that have been examined as case studies for this dissertation, is a narrative that uses this particular mode of mnemonic recall within its cycle of stories by representing historic events like Hiroshima-Nagasaki and Pearl Harbour as ‘lived-through experience’. (Erl 2011: 158) The apparatuses that thus come to the fore in this text through an experiential mnemonics, for example, are the coloured working class in post World War II America, the United States government’s role in the war, Pearl Harbour and the inevitable and very colourful race dynamics of American baseball. This sort of an experiential mode of narration may also be observed in Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*, as well as in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* where, though the experiencing I in these narratives becomes more of an experiencing and recalling entity, more a “We” than an “I”, more “ours” than just a “mine”.

Besides this mode of narration, Erl also lists other modes like the *antagonistic mode* of narration where only a single version of the past is privileged over the rest, and the *reflexive mode* where the past is narrated in the light of a critical reflection. Besides these modes that Erl...
identifies, I also propose other models like the generational mode of narration where the past is narrated alongside the present from the perspective of omnipresent narration (as in Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel *The Namesake*) and the mythic mode where the author uses creation accounts and folklore to affirm a narration of an ‘ancient past’ (as in the Assmanns’ formulation of “the Cultural Memory”). An example of this may be *The Journey of Tai-me* by N. Scott Momaday. Along with these strategies of reading the texts earmarked for case study, the analyses that follow this chapter shall also include semiotic estimations of the intertextual aspects of the texts in question. For example, this sort of an ancillary reading (since this would be in participation with the figuration aspects of these texts) shall include citations present in the text (the recurring repetition in *House Made of Dawn* of tracts from *The Way to Rainy Mountain*), cultural symbols (graphic representations of cultural myths and figures by Al Momaday in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Journey of Tai-me*), religious rituals (like Gogol’s Annaprashan in *The Namesake* and the Native American peyote rituals in *House Made of Dawn*), and historical events and their portrayal in the texts (like the Leonid meteor rain in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*). The primary strategy of course shall remain the derivatives from the mnemonic-narrative model proposed by Astrid Erll which has been discussed earlier besides the ideas of narrative commemoration and rememoration. The aim of these case studies first and foremost shall be to see how the ethnic
literary text becomes, through its narrative functions and figurations, a potent medium of that ethnie’s cultural memory.