Chapter-I

Introduction

The past intrigues and unsettles man, just as the beckoning future fascinates him. It is not possible to know what the future truly holds for one, what lies beyond the horizon. As a result, the perturbation that arises in man because of his inability to see ahead is justifiable. The future also becomes a source of his dreams. It fills him with a sense of aspiration, promise and limitless possibilities. However, the past, which has been lived and experienced and, therefore, does not dwell in the probable and indefinite, like the future, gnaws at the very foundations of human intellectual thought and life by refusing to be ever known in its entirety, by refusing to be adequately translated from lived life into modes of thought and language. It remains, as Thomas Carlyle puts it, a “miserable, defective shred” (qtd. in Assmann 106). Shrouded in a mist of uncertainty and distrust, it then becomes not much different from an unknown future. Man then seems to be suspended in a limbo of uncertainty and indeterminacy, between past and future, where only the present seems to provide a solid ground to stand upon. The present becomes a vantage point and conveys to him his superior position in the grand progression of history.

Yet, as Karl Marx has said, “All that is solid melts into air” (qtd. in Terdiman 11). The solidity of the present evaporates when it is recognized that the present, the very fabric of our existence, is not only shaped by the phantoms of the past, but also constructs that very past. We are therefore faced with a profoundly paradoxical and ambivalent situation. Even though the past is enveloped in uncertainty and inadequately remembered and grasped, it continues to draw the contours of the present. However, this process of determination and construal is never overtly discernible. Various thinkers over the ages have “theorized this complex of invisible structures
organizing social activity” (Terdiman 33). Antonio Gramsci came up with the concept of hegemony to explain that power works through more insidious ways than the mere use of brutal force and coercion. Louis Althusser coined the term ideology to describe various social, cultural, and institutional practices that become the repository of the ideas of the dominant class. Foucault spoke of the discourses that work through a man, making him the subject and the object of history. Transmitted and incorporated by several social, cultural and political practices and discourses, the past then becomes an unwitting and “natural” part of our daily experience.

The overwhelming questions then facing man are: Can we ever truly know the past? How do we record the past? What does our ways of thinking of the past tell us about our present? How does the past determine the structures of our society and culture, the very organization of human life? Even before the staggering technological development that surrounds man in the twenty-first century took place, when the history of human civilization was its historical and cultural infancy, man has been grappling with these questions. Whether it is the scientific, religious, or philosophical explanations, they all begin and end with the discussion of memory, since, in the words of Paul Ricoeur, “we have no other recourse, concerning our reference to the past, except memory itself” (21).

The questions posed in the previous paragraph contain the very themes that will be explored in this work. Terms such as “truly,” “know” and “past” point to the relationship between truth, knowledge, meaning and the past. As memory is the gateway to the past, it becomes the focal point where issues of truth, knowledge, representation, history converge and have to be confronted.
1.1. Traditional and Contemporary Views on Memory

“Mnemosyne” or memory, the daughter of heaven and Earth, in Greek mythology is the mother of the nine muses that represent all the graces of civilization—epic poetry, history, lyric and love poetry, music, choral dance and song, comedy, sacred poetry and astronomy. It is, thus, regarded as the patron as well as the symbol of intellect, prodigy, creativity and inspiration since antiquity. As Mary Carruthers comments:

Ancient and medieval people reserved their awe for memory. Their greatest geniuses they describe as people of superior memories, they boast unashamedly of their prowess in that faculty, and they regard it as a mark of superior moral character as well as intellect. (1)

Ever since the age of Plato, memory has been viewed as a benevolent and guiding truth, knowledge and meaning-making faculty. The conception of memory has more often than not bordered on religious or spiritual vocabulary, with words such as divine, piety, soul etc. being evoked to describe it. Memory in Platonic worldview was regarded as a doorway to salvation, to divine and absolute knowledge, which had been forgotten by man when he entered the lower, material and imitative world. Plato himself remarked that “The mind of the philosopher only has wings, for he is always, so far he is able, in communion through memory with those things the communion with which causes God to be divine” (qtd. in Rider 13). Janine Rider explains that in Plato’s view, which was later adopted by Medieval and Renaissance thinkers, memory was the route to an absolute reality:

Before birth, man communes with the Forms (Beauty, Justice, Temperance etc.).

After birth, he must recollect or recover this knowledge he once had. . . . Plato
believed that the more he could strengthen his memory, the farther back, he could see, and thus, the closer he could get to the truth (54).

Considered to be a part of the essential human consciousness, memory was placed adjacent to and sometimes within man’s imaginative faculty. In a similar fashion, St. Augustine views memory as the only path towards God. For him, Rider points out, it is one of the three elements of the trinity of the soul, the other two being, will and understanding. Together they make up “one life, one mind, one essence” (15).

In Medieval times, memory was considered an integral part of man’s ethical or moral system and thought. A good memory was a mark of a staunch moral fibre of a person. Philosophers like Cicero believed that memory helped in building “character, judgement, citizenship, and piety” (Carruthers 11). Further, Carruthers says a person without memory was considered a “person without a moral character, and in a basic sense, without humanity” (14). The medieval society believed that the perfection of memory could redeem man’s original sin or his fallen state, taking him back to the gardens of paradise, to God.

In the Renaissance Age, memory was aligned with mystical and occult traditions and perceptions. It was perceived to be brimming with the potential to represent cosmic truth, to acquire for man “universal knowledge, and also powers, obtaining through the magical organization of the imagination a magically powerful personality, tuned in . . . to the powers of the cosmos” (Yates 191-92).

From the standpoint of scientific, social and cultural perspectives, memory is possibly the most beneficial mental and cognitive function of human beings. It is the resource of knowledge as well as the operating mechanism for the formation of new knowledge, learning processes and for the construction of past and future experiences. Memory is indissociably connected with the
way we constitute meaning out of the chaos of life. Moreover, memory is the vehicle for all types of cultural and symbolic expression. It is the chronicler and receptacle of individual, social and cultural history.

Memory plays a crucial role in identity formation and sustenance. Who people are is inextricably tied to what they remember and what they choose to forget. Denise R. Beike and others invert Descartes famous postulation “I think, therefore I am,” to read, “I remember, therefore I am” (4), in order to centralize the quintessential role memory plays in the creation of the self and consciousness. Locke identified the “importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time” (qtd. in Rossington and Whitehead 70). According to David Hume the human mind is bombarded with a succession of perceptions, which do not cohere into a continuous being. It is “memory alone that acquaints us with the continuance and extent of a succession of perceptions” and for that reason it is to be considered . . . as the source of personal identity” (qtd. in Rider 55). Though the processes of recollection, individuals and groups construct their past, affirm their present and anticipate their future. Reminiscent of the maternal Mnemosyne, it can therefore be seen as the umbilical cord connecting men to their roots. Personal and collective memory confers a sense of identity, shared values and continuity over time to an individual or a group. It enables us to develop our personal and collective identity by mediating between social context and individual experiences.

From this very brief glimpse into the varying historical and cultural perspectives concerning memory, it can be concluded that memory is the prism through which we understand and structure our existence in its entire multifaceted aspects—social, religious, cultural and political. It is the omnipresent adhesive force that binds our perceptions, knowledge and social
fabric. The value and indispensability of memory cannot be discounted as it is the bedrock and chief builder of all knowledge that we possess or may possess.

However, the traditional perceptions of memory mentioned above see it as an innate, harmonious and continuous link between the past and the present; impervious to the ever turbulent, capricious personal and psychological, social and cultural, political and economic milieu; unencumbered by ruptures and disjunctions in history; and a stable repository of a knowable, conscious self. As John Frow notes:

... memory is thought of as spiritually independent of the materiality of the sign; it is unstructured by social technologies of learning and recall; it is incapable of reflexivity (it cannot take itself as an object), and its mode of apprehension is thus rooted in the ‘inherent self knowledge’ and the ‘unstudied reflexes’ of the body; it is organically related to its community and partakes of the continuity of tradition.

... and evokes a continuity of passage between the living and the dead. (223)

Yet, the recent decades that saw the horrific period of the two World Wars and Cold War, national and international conflicts, genocides and human rights violation, and unparalleled development in sciences provide evidence to the contrary. “Intertwined with such beneficent and indispensable effects,” Richard Terdiman argues, “the uncanny ambiguity of memory manifests itself in just these sort of discomfiting survivals” (Preface viii). These disturbances have challenged and marred the reverential status attributed to memory as a singularly positive force in the individual, social and ethical world of man. They have instigated a crisis in representation, which is also a crisis in memory. The past has become estranged and memory is no longer able to effectively represent and safeguard it. Our conflicts and issues of history, truth, identity, representation and knowledge are necessarily implicated in memory. The traditional, canonized
idea of memory, according to Frow, disregards the “social organization of memory,” “its technological underpinnings,” “the materiality of signs” and the “representational forms by which it is structured” (224). The notions of divinity, purity and piety associated with memory are unveiled and memory descends from the divine pedestal on which it had been placed by the likes of Plato and St. Augustine and enters into the material realm, the world of signs—where it is a function of culture, society and politics. Therefore, despite its constitutional and enabling functions of identity and history formation—individual and collective—there emerges “another side to memory”—“unprecedented perturbations in memory’s practice and disturbing dangers in its effects,” that is, “memory as a problem, as a site and source of cultural disquiet” (Terdiman, Preface vii). Memory becomes an urgent concern because at the heart of the conflicts facing man are disconcerting and unavoidable practices and consequences of the dialectics of remembering and forgetting.

The ambiguous nature of memory, with both its salient constitutive and disruptive effects, leads to a rethinking of the definition of politics. Is politics circumscribed only within a limited or broadly designated realm of action and state/nation metabolic within a society or culture? Or, does it encapsulate all forms of human action and relationships, in particular all human acts of meaning-making, whether they are localized within the contours of strategic state rhetoric or within the non-state populace? For a thinker like Foucault, a single, fixed social or political structure does not emanate power from top-down. Power is dispersed. Horizontal, and not vertical. There are multiple, heterogeneous points and channels within social and cultural fields through which power relations originate, flow and intersect. Furthermore, power to Foucault does not only connote repression and subjugation. Power can be productive too, producing the very subject who at the same time resists it. So the questions arise: In what diverse ways does
memory enact a politics or how is politics endemic to a poetics of memory? What are the ramifications of such a politics? How is a politics of memory coincidental with a politics of truth and representation? Can the politics of memory also be productive, besides being a source of violence and atrocity?

These extremely pertinent questions and their possible answers provide the germ for the conception of the current study. The answer resides in envisioning memory as a political battlefield of meaning-making, ideology, public and symbolic representations. The commonly invoked metaphor of "battlefield" denotes that "nothing is neutral and everything is under discussion" (qtd. in Lamberti and Fortunati 129). Along with being politically motivated, this battlefield is inherently textual. Textuality is its *modus operandi*. It is founded on a continual (re)writing, re(inscription)—recollection and forgetting—of the past.

Any work that chooses memory as its subject risks running into troubled waters simply because of its long history and tradition that goes twenty-five hundred years back, the mammoth amount of work produced on it and the immense plurality and diversity of views regarding it. As Edward Casey says, "with memory, we are always already in the thick of things" (ix). A very brief introduction on memory and the way it has been formulated has been presented earlier. To define or trace out the history of the study of memory throughout the past few centuries or the description of memory through the perspective of various social and scientific disciplines is a Herculean task beyond the scope of this time and space bound study.

In lieu of the above theoretical contentions, the next section will deliberate on certain paradigmatic and methodological issues concerning memory—relationship between memory and representation; the textual and discursive nature of memory and their consequences on notions like truth, knowledge, meaning and the past; and the relationship between memory and power. It
will employ and draw on the theories of some key thinkers—Mary Carruthers, John Frow, Richard Terdiman, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault primarily. All these writers reflect different branches of study and, therefore, a holistic understanding of memory has been presented. After instituting some of the imperative parameters for the present study, it will proceed towards the analysis of the novels taken up for examination.

1.2. Memory and Textuality

The foremost step towards an understanding of memory involves the cognizance of memory as a form of representation. The past is always constructed, that is, represented. Memory is the “agent of that construction . . . the modality of our relation to the past” (Terdiman 7). The basic premise on which this work is based conflates two central ideas—the textual and discursive nature of memory. It then uses these ideas as cues to explore major issues of representation, truth and history. This work is supplemented by the work of Mary Carruthers, John Frow, Derrida, Freud, Ricoeur, and Carruthers, who have also meditated on the textual and discursive aspect of memory in their respective works. It views memory as an act of creative, active composition and construction of past experiences into familiar linguistic formats like story, narrative, quasi-narrative, anecdotes etc.

The conceptualization of memory is predicated on what Frow calls the “logic of textuality” (228), that is, memory as “tekhnē, as mediation, as writing” (222). The word textuality has its roots in the Latin language. The word, Carruthers says, “‘textus’ comes from the verb ‘to weave’ and it is in the institutionalizing of a story through memoria that textualizing occurs” (14). The word “textuality” usually conjures up images of writing, texts and books—concepts apparently alien to or separated from recollection, which is considered a purely internal and “oral” phenomenon. However, Carruthers says that a “text” is not be equated with a book, which only
contains mechanical or fixed inscriptions: “‘Texts’ are the material out which human beings make ‘literature.’ For us, texts only come in books, and so the distinction between the two is blurred and even lost” (9). “Literature” here is taken to be the source of knowledge, history, wisdom and morality of a group. She believes that “texts need not be confined to what is written down in a document;” as long as they serve an individual’s or a group’s memory they can be in written or oral form (13-14). Roland Barthes, too, made the significant distinction between a text and a work. Work or oeuvre, for Barthes, implies closure. A text, however, is open-ended and plural. It constitutes “an explosion, a dissemination” (qtd. in Price 101). It stresses, in the words of Linda Hutcheon, “process, context, and enunciative situation” (PP 81)—ideas vital to the textual design of memory. A text is engaged in a continuous process of transformation and flux, similar to the way memory is involved in a perpetual act of translation and retranslation. The meaning of “text” is, therefore, enlarged to include our texts of memory and consciousness. Thus, this idea of textuality blurs the conventional distinctions between speech and writing.

The affiliation between memory and textuality may at first seem obsolete and rather far-fetched. However, this notion is not a very recent discovery. It goes back to the medieval times. In classical models, memories were “written” down on the soul, the psyche, the consciousness. Textuality entails space—writing is done on some surface. A cursory look at the prominent metaphors that have been used over the centuries to describe memory indicate that memory has been conceived as an indispensable dimension of space and a function of writing. The trope of the waxen tablet is, using Max Black’s phrase, the “cognitive archetype” of memory (qtd. in Carruthers 18). It is one of the earliest prototypes of storage-retrieval model which imagines the spatial and textual or inscriptive coordinates of memory. Other images or symbols, like slate, aviary, storehouse and memory theatres, usually conjured up to explain memory are all also
dependent on a three dimensional space and writing/inscription. Francis Yates in her seminal work *The Art of Memory* relates the story of Simonides’ act of recollection in order to remember and identify the bodies of the guests, who met with a fatal accident when the roof collapsed at the banquet, as exemplum of the connection between remembering and space. Simonides realized that through memory of the places (loci), he could remember the people (images) at the banquet (Yates 3). That is, he understood memory as a place or space where images could be stored. The story of identification of the dead bodies by Simonides, first mentioned in the work of Cicero in the first century BC, is about the “invention of mnemotechnics” or the art of memory (Boer 19). In *Partitiones*, Cicero likens writing to memory explicitly:

> Memory ... is in a manner the twin sister of written speech [*litteratura*] and is completely similar to it [*persimilis*], [though] in a dissimilar medium. For just as script consists of marks indicating letters and of the material on which those marks are imprinted, so the structure of memory, like a wax tablet, employs places [*loci*] and in these gathers together [*collocate*] images like letters. (qtd. in Carruthers 18)

He further claims that in order to perfect memory it is important to “select localities [*loci*] and form mental images of the facts” so as to facilitate the storage of the images in those localities. Further, and more importantly, he exclaimed that a person must “employ the localities and images respectively as a wax writing tablet and the letters on it” (Boer 19). Renaissance memory scholars made use of mnemotechnics in order to imagine and design convoluted structures for creating and storing ideas and images.

While the images of slate, tabula rasa, block of wax etc. demonstrate memory as a storehouse and preserver of knowledge, they also invoke the metaphor of writing and inscription.
in relation to memory. These scriptural metaphors establish the parallels between memory and textual processes by showing that the acts of recording and recollection are tantamount to writing. Simonedes was able to remember the stored images only because they had been stamped or written on his memory. That is, processes of remembering involve writing or inscribing on memory space, concurrent to written images on a waxen tablet or a page. Carruthers points out that the “medieval culture was fundamentally memorial” (9) and it made no distinction “between writing on the memory and writing on some other surface.” In Theaetetus, for example, Plato has Socrates liken the human mind to a block of wax which he calls the “gift of memory.” The wax block receives perceptions and thoughts in the form of images, as “from the seal of a ring.” Whenever man wishes to remember something, the engraving on the wax slab is brought into his conscious mind. Further, Socrates says: “Whatever is so imprinted we remember and know so long as the image remains; whatever is rubbed out or has not succeeded in leaving an impression we have forgotten and do not know” (qtd. In Rider 12). From this we gather that our impressions, mental pictures, ideas, thoughts, perceptions are received, recorded (textualized/written/inscribed) on and stored in memory (a coordinate of space similar to a waxen tablet or any other place of storage). As Frow says: “The metaphor of writing on wax tablets . . . shows that the ancients and their medieval heirs thought that each ‘bit’ of knowledge was remembered in a particular place in the memory, which it occupied as a letter occupies space on a writing surface” (226).

The metaphors of waxen tablet and writing persisted into the future systems of knowledge and entered the lexicon of key thinkers of philosophy and psychology. Even in the twenty-first century, the spatial and textual metaphors of memory continued to dominate memory studies, as in Pierre Nora’s conception of “sites” of memory (museums, monuments, archives, emblems,
celebrations etc.), which preserve “selectively incarnated” national memory (144). Moreover, human body is itself considered a site of memory. This idea is prevalent in trauma and gender studies in particular which speak of the body as the space where traumatic memories are inscribed or written down. In Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved, the character Seth, after being abused by her masters, carries the mental and physical afflictions of slavery on her back that take the shape of a tree. Scientists, too, speak of hereditary memories which are passed on just as text or manuscript might be passed on to future generations.

1.3. Poststructuralist Conception of the Textuality of Memory

The metaphor of inscription endorsed by traditional models of memory emphasizes the textuality of memory and, at the same time, the stability and coherence of the textualization process. The traditional configuration of memory relies on what Terdiman calls the localization theory or what John Frow calls, the “logic of the archive” (229)—ascribing fixed locations to impressions or memories in the mind space, paralleling the archiving process. An archive uses the “logic of inscription” as it collects, orders and stores the past in a methodical manner so that it can be readily retrieved and articulated as it really happened. The traditional model of the textual nature of memory presented above ossifies meaning, knowledge and reality. It posits realism, immanence and stability of the textual processes. What is once inscribed on memory is considered to be virtually unchangeable and incontrovertible. Perceptions, images and thoughts embedded on memory come to take the shape of permanent, enduring and transcendental forms. The traditional conception of the textuality of memory posits a “natural” relationship between the past and its recollection, between image/thought and reality/world. It presupposes a harmonious, ordered and balanced relation between what is perceived or experienced and its recollection. Cicero, for instance, speaks of “orderly arrangement” of memories in order to
achieve total recall. Carruthers highlights the common system of preparing a “rigid, easily reconstructable order” (8) in order to solidify relationships between signs and inscribe immanent meanings to them. In such a model, as Lois Shawver says, “everything must fit categorically into a form in the mind” (365). This idea is, then, based on a naturalistic or reproductive model of memory, which posits logocentrism and closure and propounds the immutability of inscribed texts and their ability to rationally and uniformly refer to the past without any interfering modulations and distortions between the past experience, the remembering subject, and the present context.

Yet, the dysfunctional working of memory undermines the monolithic, unidirectional codification of past in the present. Memory is neither a mummified artefact, nor “a benign and neutral ‘archive’ of our experience” (Terdiman 254). The paradigmatic working of memory is a complex, dynamic activity that involves diverse elements and processes. The conventional model of the textuality of memory is no longer tenable and therefore needs to be reformulated. The notion of the textual nature of memory is not to be relinquished or revoked, but modified and altered using ideas central to poststructuralism (in particular Derrida’s views on writing and the unconscious/memory), cultural studies and postmodernism, along with the emergence of new ideas in psychology and neuropsychology. Freud, Ricoeur and Derrida describe the functioning of the mind (including dreams and memory) in terms of texts, writing, discourse, narrative, language, tropology and metaphor. However, their theoretical postulations emphasize the slipperiness, elusiveness, changeability and instability of all signifying systems, most importantly that of the textual processes of memory. The uniformity, homogeneity of memory’s representational power is replaced by a more heterogeneous model of memory.
Poststructuralism made immense contribution to the study of memory by launching key theoretical forays on the conventional and orthodox notions of language, consciousness and being. It rejected and decentred the autonomy of the Enlightenment subject and rendered him as an effect of various discourses and practices acting on him. The boundaries between the external, objective world and inner, subjective reality collapsed. Poststructuralism also contended that our world and our experiences in it are structured by language, by linguistic utterances and formats. Human nature and essence were replaced by social and political subjects. The ramification of these radical propositions with reference to memory was that meaning, the relationship between the signifier and the signified, became unstable and indefinite. The notions of fragmentation, indeterminacy, and fluidity dislocated memory from the familiar territory of stability and transcendental immanence. The historical past could not be authentically and consistently recovered. The act of recollection became compromised and necessarily incomplete. Consciousness, therefore, lost its privileged status of absolutism and idealism. Memory’s failure to put forward untarnished truth and knowledge is in synchronization with the post-structuralist insistence that the human subject, culture and language are not monolithic essences, but are socially determined and mediated.

The emergence of postcolonial studies was also in tandem with the revisionist current in memory and literary studies. With its particular focus on the construction of empires and their lingering aftermath on the language, history, culture and psyche of the formerly colonized people, postcolonialism insinuated that personal and collective memory could be used to analyze and undermine the structures of empire. Franz Fanon’s foundational text, The Wretched of the Earth, based on his psychiatric work during the Algerian War of Independence, traced out how
memory traces or remnants of colonization and slavery continued to play out at the psychological level of the individual, inhibiting his personal, cultural and national dignity.

Not satisfied by the idea of the stability and the “model of an endlessly proliferating archive” which the traditional metaphors of textuality insinuate, Freud too revised and rewrote it as the “mystic writing pad.” His model of the psyche consists of a tripartite structure made up of the preconscious, conscious and the unconscious, which is the “source of timeless past” or indestructible memory traces. Freud studied representations (memories and dreams) by the human psyche as texts that could be analyzed, interpreted and modified. His topological model, Pirovolakis says, involves “hermeneutics of the psyche” (41) in the form of interpretation, displacement, selection, narrative construction, imagination, repression, erasure, forgetting and distortion. When recalled from the unconscious to the conscious mind, memories undergo a hermeneutical process so that we have a mediated and compromised version (screened memories) of the past. There is, therefore, tension between archiving ability of the mind (unconscious) and the hermeneutic and textual ability of mind (conscious). A past experience is not remembered as it was in the first instance of inscription, but is continuously revised and reworked or rewritten and reread. As Freud says:

. . . our psychic mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification: the material present in the form of memory traces being subjected from time to time to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances – to a retranscription. . . memory is present not once but several times over. . .(qtd. in King 16)

By portraying the psychical processes as textual and topographical, Freud “introduces distance into the very heart of perception, thereby casting into doubt the transparency of conscious presence” (Pirovolakis 9).
Paul Ricoeur too underlines the scriptural or textual working of memory. He considers the psychical processes, of which memory is a dominant part along with dreams and desires, as analogous to the workings of a discourse or a linguistic process (textual), or as he terms it, a “psychical discourse” (Pirovokalis 41). Ricoeur refers to the unconscious/memory processes as “paralinguistic distortions of ordinary language” or a “quasi language.” Ricoeur relates the archaeological excavation of memory traces as a drive towards expression, language, narrative, meaning and purpose—that is, towards the textualization and verbalization of mental images. A metaphorical language in Ricoeur’s view precludes a streamlined transition from one memory trace to another. The language of rhetorical metaphors is “an equivocal language of tropes where the link between the signifier and the signified is not given but something to be arrived at by means of toilsome process” (Pirovokalis 40). This toilsome process, or “retroactive realignment of the past” (67) as he says, takes the contours of active construction and narrativization in order to appropriate loss and difference in the textualization process. Ricoeur recognizes that metaphoric structural process grants access to reality and inform the history-writing process.

The aforementioned ideas are in keeping with Derrida’s views on writing and memory. In Derrida’s view, the past is remembered or the present constituted as a “synthesis of traces, retentions and protentions,” which are “irreducibly non-simple” as they do not allow a straightforward directionality or continuity between the origin/past and present/recollection. This he calls “protowriting, prototrace, or difference,” the latter being both “spacing and temporalizing” (Pirovokalis 54). Since Derrida describes temporalization process in terms of traces, writing, spacing, it can be equated with the textual processes that occur in memory. With each act of remembering, the textualization or the temporalization operation induces spacing,
separation, displacement and difference from the “source” or the “original” experience. This implies that recollection encapsulates both repetition (sameness) and difference (otherness) of the past from the outset. There cannot be one-to-one mapping between the origin or real event in the past and its recollection. Memory of experience, Terdiman says, “as a practice, as a discipline, presupposes a break between present and past, between historiography and its object—ultimately, between the dead and the living” (31-32). There is always an incommensurable gap between the past experience, the original impression on memory and its subsequent recollections. The gap symbolizes loss of some meaning, perception and memory. The idea of a supreme and total reality, excluding any loss, directly available to the transcendental subject is contrary and fatal to an active life. In Derrida’s reading, life becomes possible only when there is a complex interplay between presence and non-presence of meaning in the psyche. This idea is made manifest in the Jorge Luis Borges story of “Funes the Memorious,” which relates the story of Funes, a teenage boy. After a near-fatal accident, Fumes develops an extremely prodigious memory, leading him to remember in detail all infinitesimal events and occurrences such as the shape of the clouds at each moment. Perception, then, overlaps with retention and recollection, collapsing all sense of self-identity and continuity of experience. Certain loss or death of meaning is, thus, inescapable and essential for life. The past is always marked by the possibility of variation, difference and alterity. In this way “non-presentation is constitutive and absolutely ineluctable” in memory and consciousness (Pirovolakis 66).

Memory is, therefore, textual, but does not signify a whole, closed and stable system of signification and representation. The textualization process in memory eschews stability and stasis. It is a highly fluid phenomenon and does not culminate in a destination of closure or
totalization of meaning and representation. Textual processes not only occur at the moment of inscription or recording of an experience, but with each act of recollection, thereby making it an incessant reconstructive process. As Carruthers says: “Because it recalls signs, reminiscence is an act of interpretation, inference, investigation, and reconstruction, an act like reading” (29). Since memory is a form of representation that works through traces and signs, it cannot be equated with the past itself as there is always a slippage of meaning. A trace is not the object/event itself, but a shadow, a partial impression of the object/event. In opposition to the passive and reproductive model of memory endorsed in the past, the inherent fluidity of the textual processes suggests that memory does not passively record and accumulate the past. It does replicate the past “as it was” or as it was inscribed in the first moment of perception, but reconstructs it every time. Textualization that works through traces and signs encourages us to look at memory as unpredictable, unbidden, incomplete, elusive, selective and slippery. The textual tools and components of memory—interpretation, invention, selection, forgetting, perception, imagination, rearrangement, reassociation, rewriting—make remembering, according to Frederick Bartlett, not a “re-excitement in some way of fixed, changeless ‘traces’ ” (qtd. in Frow 227).

Drawing a parallel between memory and textuality, it can be concluded that “the representations of memory thus cannot be conceived (or depreciated) as the real in some derivative or residue form. They are the form that the real transformed by our work upon it takes in consciousness” (Terdiman 59-60, Original Emphasis). Each act of recollection thus textualizes the past anew and thereby defers, displaces the absent event while making it “present” at the same time. This creates a profound ambivalence and ambiguity within the working of memory. Memory is creative and destructive at the same time. Even though the act of remembering
retrieves the past, it distances it from the real by making the absent past different from what it “really” was. As Terdiman says: “To remember is always to be separated” (136). Memory creates as well as distorts. It reproduces and transforms at the same time, instates both continuity and discontinuity of experience. The real is, therefore, always compromised or altered and yet bears a partial semblance to what it was. This makes memory reside in a space between pure reproduction and pure invention—that is representation. This space is marked by sameness, difference and alterity—a space which involves the properties of both the ends without being reified into a singular presence.

1.4. The Inside is the Outside

Textuality can be correlated with the notion of memory as a discursive formation, that is, a reflection and a product of social, cultural and political factors. The cognizance of the textuality of memory, “temporalization and spacing” in Derrida’s terminology, “as ‘interval’ or difference and as openness upon the outside,” according to Pirovolakis, implies that there can no longer be any absolute inside” (56), an inside which is the uncontaminated and unmediated source of transcendental consciousness and reality. While dethroning memory from the seat of a transcendental source of knowledge, this idea paves the way for the internalization of and infiltration by external forces and reality, blurring the neat borders between them. The textual nature of memory, therefore, raises significant discursive questions about the materiality of memory and signification and narration. How does the material realm with its concrete as well as intangible flux of relations and forces determine the workings of memory?

Memories are contingent on social formations and cultural productions and hence subject to change. Carruthers notes that the term “textus” which forms the root of the word “textual” also “means ‘texture,’ the layers of meaning that attach as a text is woven into and through the
historical and institutional fabric of a society" (14). Textual processes denote the underlying "socializing" aspect of memory, which can also be understood as its fundamental discursive nature. The act of recollection is not unperturbed by contemporary conceptual and rhetorical apparatuses of groups and individuals. The past is always remembered and constrained in the present, and it is present, with all its multifarious, interlocking web of relations that structure the textual processes of memory. The focus of memory is not the past, but the retrospective and reconstituting present. The past is textualized and remembered, in Jeffrey Olick’s view, according to a “fluid negotiation between the desires of the present and the legacies of the past” (“From” 159). The past is always rewritten and recreated according to the inner rules, grammar and signifying practices of the ruling discourse of a group in order to serve contemporaneous needs. This makes memory not merely an internal, private phenomenon which is based on impersonal language/verbal or sign play, but a reflection and product of various interacting and tumultuous political-social-cultural-linguistic conditions. Our texts and narratives of memory are not constructed in a void, but in a socially, politically and culturally suffused environment. “Memory is never shaped in a vacuum; the motives of memory are never pure” (Young 118). Memory, therefore, becomes contextual as the traces of the past can be mapped on to the vagaries of social, cultural, and political situations in the present. Textual processes of memory have a dialogical relationship with material vestiges. As Jeremy Campbell says: “What memory is depends on context, and context changes” (qtd. in Rider 44).

1.5. The Politics of Memory

The textual and discursive nature of memory makes it unreliable, unpredictable, malleable and fluid, that is “notoriously and prodigiously fallible” (Terdiman 14). It problematizes memory as an ultimate authority of knowledge and the source of a pure and transcendental consciousness.
The traditional notion of memory is, therefore, to use Linda Hutcheon words, “subjected to ‘de-
doxification’ ” (PP 2002, 77). Concomitantly, the issues of truth, meaning, history, representation and knowledge become urgent and political. This politics of memory encapsulates multiple meanings. It engages memory in social-political praxis that illustrates the nexus between memory and power—use of memory to rationalize and maintain political order; the struggle for meaning and the “correct” or “true” recollection of the past that takes place in private as well as the public sphere; the processes and practices of memory which can establish and normalize meaning, truth or any discourse on the one hand, and on the other, overthrow absolute notions of truth, origin and the past. The politics of remembering and forgetting question accepted notions of referentiality and proposes alternate ways of constructing knowledge. They point to the essential constructedness of reality, history and knowledge. The vicissitudes of memory, its textual nature that is rife with political overtones, interrogate and problematize our perceptions and constructions of truth, meaning, reality, representation and history. Memory functions as, in Hutcheon’s terms, a “site of de-naturalizing critique” (PP 2002, 3) and through its polemics underscores the textual and discursive foundations of truth, past and historical knowledge. There is no escaping the logic of textuality. Truth, meaning and history are not pre-existing, organic or natural, but are textualized—constructed and revised—according to the changing material contexts. As Terdiman reflects:

... nothing is natural about our memories, that the past—the practices, the habits, the dates and facts and places, the very furniture of our existences—is an artifice and one susceptible to the most varied and sometimes the most culpable manipulations. (31)
The vagaries of memory question rationalist epistemological and positivist model of representation and history by undermining totalizing truth claims and the relationship between representation and the empirical reality. The inherent textuality of memory and its attendant flexibility makes a seamless and unobstructive recourse to the past problematic. There can be no mimetic chronological projection between the referent and its representation, and hence there cannot be any final, reliable guarantee of meaning. Reality does not pre-exist in a determinate form. The past is never available to/through memory in an intact, pure, ossified form, waiting to be found in its pristine form. Past and truth have to be articulated through textual processes of memory. Memory, therefore, confounds any naïve theories of epistemology and representation by highlighting the disturbances inherent in its apparently seamless working and effects. These ripples signify loss/absence and slippage of meaning. As Terdiman says:

The real historical referents . . . will never fit between our pages. In representation, reduction is inevitable . . . the past as past is gone without recourse. . . . So what we call past is always already and irretrievably a profoundly altered or attenuated version of the contents that were potentially available to consciousness when that past was present. Reduction is the essential precondition for representation. Loss is what makes our memory of the past possible at all. (22)

The politics of memory, therefore, deconstructs the notion of unproblematic presence and the equation of representation with reproduction. It demystifies the myth of pure origin—the provenance of meaning and truth. For Derrida, there is no “originary” experience or memory inscription that corresponds to the point of the “real event” in the past. The remembered event cannot coincide with the actual event since our access to it is only through textualization. There is then no transcendental or master memory which presents the source point of absolute
beginning. The source point or the past event is itself a textualized version that is marked by loss and difference. Origin (the "real" past event) is recapitulated not as an authentic presence of the absent past, but as a mediated, textualized event. The gap or discontinuity between the "original" event and its each subsequent recollection is absolutely incommensurable. This implies that a certain "non-presence" of meaning is inherent in recollection and representation. Difference and discontinuity are irreducible and originary. Derridean notion of difference then makes the idea of pure origin, or as he calls it, "the metaphysics of presence," the fountain of authentic meaning, experience, truth, knowledge, contentious. In Derrida's view, memory traces are conjoined to the past, but they never occupy the form of presence and immediacy. Difference is there from the original inscription, or as he says, "It is a non-origin which is originary" (qtd. in Pirovolakis 71). Memory does not unproblematically recuperate the absent (and dead) past as "fully present," but as an ever deferred or differential textualized effect which contains loss and reduction of meaning as the only absolute. Memory, therefore, conveys both a presence and absence of meaning. It emerges as the "belated effects of an originary differance" (Pirovolakis 63).

The opacity surrounding the past due to the variability of memory’s processes interrogates the very foundations of our modes of thought, knowledge and perception—the way we perceive reality. Through memory, "Textuality is reinserted into history and into social and political conditions of the discursive act itself" (Hutcheon PP 1988, 81). To view the past as textual does not imply the denial of the actuality of the empirical reality, but indicates that the past is only available to us through textualization, whether in the form of history, archives, documents etc. or memory—the most basic level of human consciousness at which textualization occurs. As Joan W. Scott says: "Experience is at once already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straight-forward; it is always
contested, and always therefore political” (qtd. in Price 85). The textuality of memory unsettles the one-dimensional nature of the past, power and truth. It sees the past, more as, to use Deleuze’s and Guttari’s nomenclature, “rhizomatic”—plural, non-hierarchical and diffused. It, therefore, posits provisionality and indeterminacy of meaning and truth.

National and historical projects are fuelled by the nostalgia for a pure or idealized organic past—which the vicissitudes of memory demonstrate is itself a deferred (in the Derridean sense), textualized event. The politics of memory undercuts the view of history, as Keith Moxey says, an “unchanging metaphysical essence whose meaning is self-evident” (2). Though the textuality of memory can be instrumental in the sustenance of political and totalitarian regimes, it can also be anti-foundational and anti-authoritarian by showing that history, truth and knowledge are contingent formations always invested in textual or linguistic operations. As Dominick LaCapra says:

... the notion of textuality serves to render less dogmatic the concept of reality by pointing to the fact that one is “always already” implicated in problems language use... it raises the question of both the possibilities and the limits of meaning. For the historian, the very reconstruction of a “context” or a “reality” takes place on the basis of the “textualized” remainders of the past. (qtd. in Moxey 4)

This notion of tropological metaphors used by Hayden White reinforces the textuality of the past and knowledge and offers a critique of epistemological and ideological claims that form the political and rhetorical arsenal of state discourse. The historian like a writer uses various linguistic and tropological devices like emplotment, argument, metaphor and narrative in his compositional activity. In short, the historian uses as much literary or novelistic devices to arrive
at truth as a fiction writer would. This makes historical texts “verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found” (White 82).

If memory entails reductionism and loss and the notions of absolute recovery and immediate presence associated with it are debunked, the question arises what is truth and how can we know the past? Is truth, as Nietzsche says, “a movable host of metaphors, metonymies, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after a long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical and binding” (qtd. in Rider 58). Truths, for Nietzsche, are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions. While the current work may not whole-heartedly agree with Nietzsche’s statement, it acknowledges his notion of poetically and rhetorically constructed reality and values. That is, the use of textual processes of memory or “rhetorical metaphorics,” to recapitulate Ricoeur phrase, to construct and reconstruct the past and functional truths. This notion of the construction of the past carries political undertones and valency since the notion of textuality situates a subject in a web of material relations and forces. This leads to the formulation of memory as a site of contestation, conflict and struggle.

The absolute, irrevocable ambiguity and textuality in the working of memory—the break that it installs between the referent and its recollection—is “simultaneously constituting and deconstituting” (Pirovolakis 53). It makes memory politically volatile, rife with possibilities both for subordination and subversion, truth and lies. The question of truth, meaning, history and representation, therefore, become urgent and political.

The corrupting dangers of the ambiguous working of memory is most commonly evident in the complex, textual interplay of remembering and forgetting (amnesia) that is employed by state/national apparatuses and authoritarian regimes in order to centralize and the normalcy of
their dominion. The past becomes, in the words of Carina Perelli, a “central political commodity” (39), when it can be subjected to manipulation and totalization of meaning and history by oppressive political regimes and dominant social and cultural practices. History is the most ubiquitous symbolic and political instrument that is employed by nation states in order to legitimize and monopolize certain events of the past. There is no transparency in the creation and transmission of knowledge by the mechanisms of authoritative and totalitarian regimes. History becomes a pawn or tool for controlled remembering and forgetting. Memories are regulated and controlled in order to legitimize a version of the past over and above others, to enforce a homogenous and totalized image of a nation and to silence all forms of disruptions. Enforced forgetting or amnesia is a crucial part of the process of nation-building and history-writing. Memory is the chief, as Olick says, “ideological arsenal,” a site where struggle for narrative power—that is the “power of the story and hence the power of language, without which the bullet would have little meaning, and archival and institutional power, without which the story would have little authenticity”—takes place (Introduction 26). Dominant ideologies and hegemonies are formulated and disseminated through the power of memory and textuality. Practices of remembering are always embedded in the context of power relations. The field of memory is the locus where power relations and power struggles converge.

Textuality is memory’s pre-requisite condition. Even though it makes memory susceptible to abuse and manipulation, it cannot be taken solely as a source of disenchantment and disturbance. The repudiation of truth-claims of memory, along with those of any form of social and political authority, does not amount to an attitude of nihilism or anarchic relativism. Truth is “as mysterious as it is inaccessible” and yet, Albert Camus insisted, worth “being fought for eternally.” The very ambiguity and unsettled nature of memory, on the one hand, confounds our
reductive and facile notions of meaning, truth and knowledge; and on the other hand, makes truth and the past evade attempts of musealization and totalization by creating space for the enunciation of those stories which have been forgotten or brushed under the carpet. So, while the process of remembrance can easily be invoked to the exercise of power, it can also keep alive or develop alternative, even oppositional forms of identification and resistance. As Terdiman says:

...such discourses of difference and contestation inherently exercise a mnemonic function. They recall the dominant’s other; they restore to its flattened, false totalizations the perspectives that it has not been able to subsume and has consequently sought to exclude. Dominance, of course, is itself sustained by memory—but a selective, highly ideologized form of recollection that brackets fully as much as it restores. But although memory sustains hegemony, it also subverts it through its capacity to recollect and restore the alternative discourses the dominant would simply bleach out and forget. Memory, then, is inherently contestatory. (19-20)

This mnemonic function is envisioned in the novels taken up for analysis in the form of countermemory—a Foucauldian notion that contests and undermines invidious practices of remembering and forgetting employed by totalitarian utopias and nation states. Countermemory is an alternate form of remembering which excavates “subjugated knowledge”—experiences of the past which have been relegated by the mainstream discourses to the fringes of established cognitive, historical and cultural practices. They are, as Foucault claims, “knowledges that have been disqualified as nonceptual; knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity” (7-10). Subjugated knowledge is disinterred as part of a new historical
project termed by Foucault as genealogy, which subverts traditional practices of silencing and forgetting. Genealogies refute enforced unification, valorisation and monopolization of inherited truths. They produce “disunity” and block “the unifying function of the official history by bringing to the fore the oppositions and divisions in the political body” (Mediana 14). It brings the subjugated knowledge into the battlefield of meaning making along with other multiple and suppressed narratives. Counter-memories are situated, as Foucault says, within

an immense and multiple battle, but not one between knowledge and ignorance, but an immense and multiple battle between knowledges in the plural – knowledges that are in conflict because of their very morphology, because they are in the possession of enemies, and because they have intrinsic power-effects.

(179).

These counter-memories not only recover new or forgotten perspectives but also trace the trajectories of discursive formations of knowledge bodies. They throw light on how and why certain truths are privileged and others are considered inferior or trite epistemes. Genealogical excavation of Counter-memories highlights power relations that underlie political and social structures. Genealogy is, therefore, the insurrection of subjugated knowledges. It challenges the canonized versions of the past and interrogates the unity of the monopolized interpretation of the past by presenting silenced and forgotten aspects of historical experiences in alternate ways. As Jose Medina notes:

Subjugated knowledges remain invisible to mainstream perspectives; they have a precarious subterranean existence that renders them unnoticed by most people and impossible to detect by those whose perspective has already internalized certain epistemic exclusions. (11)
All the three authors taken up for study are united in their resistance to totalitarian utopian ideologies of their times, dictatorship in Gabriel García Márquez, Soviet communism in Milan Kundera, and terrorism/Religious fundamentalism in Salman Rushdie. To this end, they employ different forms of countermemory. Márquez offers his vision of myth, the carnivalesque and the discourse of gossip/rumour to combat a debilitating autocratic rule; Kundera presents "devils' laughter" in opposition to the ideological manipulation of memory and history; and Rushdie uses a combination of gossip/rumour, laughter and local histories to challenge the discourses of nationalism and globalization. These countermemories are all ways recovering and rewriting a forgotten past, questioning official epistemological exclusion or marginalization of alternate 'remembrances and underscoring the textuality of the past.

Countermemory in the form of carnivalesque storytelling and laughter resists being essentialized as a totalizing history or truth (History/received history) or a totalizing story (pure fiction/invention). It blurs the distinction between history and story and underlines the textual and constructed nature of history, truth and knowledge. Countermemory does not return us to the total actualities of the past as they were. It transforms the past even while repeating it. This is in keeping with the Derridean notion of difference and is also similar to Prices' idea of a creative or "poietic history" (3) which she considers an act of language that allows us to critique obsolete, oppressive versions of the past and to conceive of new ways to imagine the past. The carnivalesque and laughter, therefore, function as in-between, performative spaces where enunciation of meaning and the past takes place in a continuous process of writing, reading and retranslation. It incorporates fragmentation, absence and indeterminacy, as well as meaning and presence. In this manner, "the past as referent is not bracketed off or effaced . . . it is incorporated and modified, given new and different life and meaning" (Hutcheon PP 1988, 24).
Countermemory refutes the empirical modes of knowledge and fixed cartographies of nationalism and History that exclude or forget alternative claims to truth. The functionality of countermemory, therefore, entails the possibility of offering subversive power to stage resistance and demolish the normalized and sanctified versions of the past. It undermines the claims to legitimacy of dominant political and social institutions and practices. It reveals and unmasks the physical and symbolic violence constituted by the politics or strategies of remembering and forgetting that form the crux of institutional practices and national or historical formations. It therefore acts as a form of intervention. The “non-presence” in memory does not carry only negative connotations, since it allows for the vocalization of different, conflicted, dissented meaning and truth. It is the space where counter-memories reside, forever threatening the dominant discourse through the alternative possibilities contained in alterity and absence. It always contains space for the other and constitutes a critical project of demystification and debunking of national or official historical myths and authoritative modes of knowledge.

Demystification, as Terdiman says, is fundamentally a task of remembering:

The privilege of any dominant discourse is to “go without saying.” Through the politics of remembering and forgetting dominant discourses claim to totalize the world of possible utterances. On the other side of the line defining the “field of struggle” within any culture, counterdiscourses seek to upset the pretension of the dominant to exhaust the field of possible speech. The privilege of counterdiscourses is the obverse of their limitation: because they have not yet become triumphant or transparent, they have an analytic power and a capacity to resituate perception and comprehension that their dominant antagonists cannot exhibit. (19)
The ambiguity of memory is transmogrified into a source of imaginative and creative that reconfigures the foundational and conceptual apparatuses of meaning-making, knowledge, history and truth. The “absence of mnemonic harmony” (23), to use Terdiman’s words, therefore, should not be viewed only as debilitating. What makes memory symbolically and politically relevant is its inherent ambiguous nature, the fact it cannot be recovered in its pure or pristine form leads to multiple and diverse interpretations and understandings of the past.

The textual model of memory as envisioned above, therefore, enables us to view memory as a site of conflict, where production and representation of knowledge, truth, meaning and history are inextricably bound with power and control. Drawing on Foucault’s illustration of the insidious mechanisms of power and knowledge, memory can be considered a contested terrain, where truth, knowledge, history and the past undergo a constant, conflictual process of textualization and signification in tandem with the shifting socio-political conditions and forces. This marks a shift from “epistemological to axiomatic concerns” (Price 5). The politics of memory is, then, equivalent to a politics of representation and identity, it is a field where alternative stories and memories confront and negotiate to create a niche for themselves in historical and nationalist discourse. Memory becomes a space where struggle for power is enacted in the form of remembering and forgetting (writing and rewriting) by groups and individuals with varying interests and motives.

In this manner, the struggle for the creation of meaning and truth constitutes another facet of the politics of memory. The engagement of memory in a struggle over meaning is a form political praxis that indicates that history, reality and knowledge are acts of textualization according to competing systems of values. By visualizing memory and power in repressive as well as productive terms, it is established that power cannot be completely eradicated. Before
and when there can be an “idyllic and harmonious social order,” there will always be a conflict for the replacement of invalid truths as well as redundant, exclusionary and tyrannical ways of perceiving reality by the creation of new beliefs, stories and values. Power is, therefore, not only corrupting and debilitating, but also productive and life or self-affirming. In fact, the notion of memory as a site of constant struggle for meaning is in consonance with Foucault’s and Nietzsche’s ideas on power/politics. According to Foucault, power is omnipresent, permeating all social relationships and actions. It is the absolute irreducible feature of any society and any attempt to purge it entirely itself amounts to a form of domination. Domination in Foucault’s taxonomy has a negative subtext, as opposed to power relations. Domination is tool for suppression and exclusion. Power takes the shape of domination when it stops being a fluid and plural force and becomes static, hierarchical and homogenous. Contending “antagonism as ontological,” Saul Newman observes that Foucault believes that “power and violence would be present in any social order, even a post-revolutionary one. In other words, there is no dialectical reconciliation of opposing forces (43). Nietzsche sees power as a potent ability for the implementation of will and action. Man is driven by a desire for power. For Nietzsche, “to deny the reality of this power struggle would be to succumb to ‘passive’ or negative nihilism. Active nihilism would be on the other hand to affirm rather than negate, this tumultuous world of power, and out of this create a new system of values” (qtd. in Newman 41). In line with these thoughts, it emerges that memory cannot be completely disentangled from power. Like power, it is both constructive and destructive, a gift and a burden that must be carried as human beings.