

“Curated Memories, Constructed Selves: Memory, Identity” in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* and Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Approval

This thesis titled “Curated Memories, Constructed Selves: Memory, Identity in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* and Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*” submitted by Tahura (ID No. 24163012) of Spring 2025 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master’s in English on October, 2025.

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Abstract

The topic of memory studies has seen a significant increase in scholarly attention in recent years, particularly in the humanities, due to its ongoing expansion and disputed nature. Using two dystopian novels that illustrate the frailty of individuality under institutional control—*Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro and *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry—this essay critically analyzes the relationship between memory and identity. Drawing from John Locke's memory theory of personal identity as well as current research on collective and cultural memory, the paper makes the case that memory serves as both the basis for selfhood and a site of resistance and institutional manipulation. Kathy's disjointed memories of Hailsham in *Never Let Me Go* serve as an example of how memory shapes and limits one's sense of self, even as it is influenced by social structures. In contrast, *The Giver* depicts a society in which everyone's memory is purposefully wiped, making people uniform and submissive until Jonas's memory inheritance reawakens his moral agency and individuality. Using a comparative approach, the research shows that whereas memory strengthens individual and collective identity, its manipulation or absence weakens selfhood. While Jonas's revolt restores memory to his people, Kathy's narrative act protects her humanity. Both texts simultaneously portray memory as a method of resistance. The study comes to the conclusion that memory plays a crucial role in human dignity and freedom by serving as the foundation of identity as well as a tool for fending off systems that aim to eradicate individuality.

Keywords: Memory; Identity; Individuality; Dystopian literature; Collective Memory; Resistance; *Never Let Me Go*; Kazuo Ishiguro; *The Giver*; Lois Lowry.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	II
Approval.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
Acknowledgement.....	V
Table of Contents.....	VI
Chapter 1 [Introduction].....	1
Chapter 2 [Literature Review]	12
Chapter 3.....	24
1.1. Methodology.....	24
1.2 Secondary Sources and Scholarly Engagement.....	25
Chapter 4 [Critical Analysis].....	27
1.1 Memory as the Basis of Identity.....	28
1.2 Institutional Memory Management and Identity Fragmentation.....	29
1.3 Memory as Identity Resistance and Maintenance.....	30
Chapter 5 [Conclusion].....	32
References.....	33

Chapter 1

Introduction

Memory is at the core of identity markers, and the focus is on how it is created and how it can be changed, even manipulated. Perhaps this is the reason why memory is so crucial to dystopian fiction. This dissertation explores two dystopian stories—*Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry—to illustrate the relationship between memory and identity and to provide an explanation of traumatic memory. In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro examines the intricacies of memory, demonstrating how identity is defined by memory through distortion, repression, and unreliability. Ishiguro has employed memory as a literary device in a variety of ways to enhance his characters and stories. In the book, the children of Hailsham bond with one another and find solace in their seemingly pointless existence by drawing on their experiences. Specifically, Kathy uses her recollections to reconcile her identity and sense of purpose in life. Kathy tells us about Hailsham School, where she lived and learnt, but only later in life did she realize its true purpose, thanks to her fragmentary recollections. Kathy uses her recollections to demonstrate to us how her mind represses unpleasant realities in order to cope with the realization of her predetermined fate. Fragmented memories that disclose suppressed trauma make people use their memory to defend themselves on a fundamental level (Freud, 1915). In her role as a caretaker, Kathy channels her mental energy from emotional distress into constructive activities that help her to control her thoughts about meaning and mortality. This essay looks at how memories impact identity in order to comprehend how our memories can influence our sense of self, which in turn can influence who we are. The study makes the argument that memories are intricate narratives that are created from a variety of sources rather than merely being straightforward recalls of past events. It makes the case that our identity and

feeling of self can be significantly impacted by how we interpret our memories. By concentrating on the themes of memory and identity, Ishiguro feels he can portray aspects of human issues, and his novels collectively imply human perseverance and hope. He employs memory as a dynamic phenomena that is flexible in the face of demands and circumstances in order to handle human challenges. According to Maurice Blanchot, his discourse evokes narrators who recall and recount "past experiences in order to dispose of memories and their history" (Mesher 147). However, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry explores a society in which identity is defined by a system of ostracizing and forceful power that dominates all facets of existence and lacks personal memory. The book examines the idea of collective memory and how individuals in positions of power can influence and control it, all while taking place in an apparently utopian community. In order to preserve a uniform and orderly existence and turn everyone into a state known as "Sameness," individuality and personal memories are suppressed in this overly controlled society. Protected from the harsh facts of the past and deprived of their own identities, the inhabitants dwell in ignorance. The existing power structures impose restrictions on the community's thoughts, emotions, and even communication, making it difficult to deviate from the accepted standards. It is decided that Jonas, the main character, will be the "Receiver of Memory," carrying the burden of collective memory. He takes on the role of the repository for all of the past experiences—both happy and sad—that society has decided to remove from its collective memory. As Jonas acquires access to these memories, he begins to doubt the oppressive conformity imposed by those in authority, and he strives to comprehend the true nature of his supposedly perfect world. Jonas is appalled by his current situation when he recalls the past, which was full with recollections of pleasure and sorrow. His painful recollections serve as a catalyst for changing the future. His recollections of delight, on the other hand, provide him

with the necessary backing to overthrow the power structures. The recollection of both joy and suffering, when combined, serves as a powerful spark for a future in which individuality is recognized. Jonas' encounters with harsh memories, such as war, starvation, and suffering, undermine the idea of a pristine and regulated society. These recollections help him comprehend the cost of conformity and the sacrifices required to retain their way of life. The recollection of agony serves as a catalyst for Jonas' developing disenchantment with the status system. Jonas' encounters with happy memories, such as sliding down a hill and feeling loved, give him a sense of power and purpose. These recollections contrast sharply with his society's emotional indifference, and they serve as a source of strength for him. The concern with memory shared by all dystopian fiction demonstrates the importance of power structures' ability to influence human memory and rewrite history in any totalitarian state (Opreanu, 2013). To give a clear point of view on the correlation between memory and identity, Descartes' famous postulation "I think, therefore I am" might be rephrased as "I remember, therefore I am" (Beike et al. 2004). According to me, this is one of the connections between memory and identity as our individual existence depends on our memory. Besides memory there are some aspects which matter to live as an individual.

Added to that, memory has received a lot of attention in the twenty-first century, both in terms of literature and philosophy. It has been discussed for so long that the true understanding of memory has gotten jaded throughout the years. What we call 'memory' is a complex network of activities, the study of which demonstrates that the past is never 'one and the same,' but is constantly selected, filtered, and restructured in terms set by the questions and necessities of the present, at both the individual and social levels. Memory is viewed as a multidimensional phenomena with layers in the personal, communal, cultural, and historical domains. It is not only

about individual recollections, but also how they are shaped by larger societal situations. Memory is not a static idea, but rather a dynamic and developing one. Individual experiences, cultural developments, political goals, and social factors can all contribute to its evolution throughout time. Memory studies acknowledge that memory is not permanent and can be manipulated, forgotten, or altered. Memories are not just reconstructions of past events; rather, they are formed and reconstructed from both individual and collective viewpoints (Balaev, 2018). Memory is inextricably linked to both the construction and manipulation of identity. As a result, memory serves as a link between the past and present. Memory is now commonly regarded as the core of personal identity, and anything that harms it poses a threat to the self. Individual identities are intrinsically related to the collective memory of the greater society or group to which they belong. Individuals establish their identities based on shared memories. Collective memory, or shared memory of a group or community, is a notion that emphasizes the social dimension of memory and how memory is affected by and influences the larger social environment rather than being an isolated event. This collective memory is frequently distorted and exploited in order to create new realities in favor of ostracizing and forceful power dynamics. Personal and social identity formation are inextricably linked with collective memory. Personal identity is distorted by the manipulation and control of collective memory. Selective memory can lead to prior narratives that are biased and misleading about society as a whole. When certain events are highlighted while others are overlooked, the resulting narrative provides an incomplete view of the past. This distortion can result in a biased perception of historical realities and inhibit a well-rounded understanding of basic events. Selective memory stymies reconciliation attempts by missing critical episodes in our shared history that must be acknowledged and resolved. Selective memory can also be used to suppress individuality and

distinguishing characteristics. When memory is regulated, it is impossible to develop a distinct identity. Memory shapes all of our experiences, thoughts, and feelings. When these memories are erased, one is left with nothing to distinguish themselves and hence loses all sense of uniqueness. *The Giver's* civilization appears idyllic on the surface, but it enforces rigorous rules and regulations that limit personal freedom and originality. Memory serves as a means of remembering the past, as seen when Jonas recalls the history passed down to him by 'The Giver [of memory],' yet it may also be used to repress all that makes one distinct. This is represented throughout the narrative through Jonas' societal lens.

Also, memory is a complicated system capable of creating the illusion of a brief return to a forgotten past while simultaneously expressing the complex link between the past, present, and future. It is a reconstruction process in which we constantly draw on our past experiences to understand and make sense of the present, as well as plan for future events. This process of memory development and reconstruction can have either positive or negative consequences, depending on how we interpret the past and apply that knowledge to shape our present and future. According to Dorothee Birke, in order to answer the age-old question, "Who am I?" Most of the time, we look to our past to create a narrative for ourselves. When we compare our present selves to the selves we remember, we see ourselves as being in time, which is important for our sense of self (Birke, 2). Ishiguro is interested in memories and their complex role in identity formation. His works are about memories and how they can drift and shift, rendering the past lost and mute, and, most importantly, how they can haunt the present. His fictional characters cope with loss by making meaning of the past through recollections. Memory, both individual and collective, is important in a cultural context, therefore the framing axioms of literary historicism are frequently offered by the texts themselves as kinds of memory. Memory thus serves as a link

between the present and the past. It is now widely acknowledged that memory is the core of human identity, and anything that harms it endangers the self. To Daniel L. Schacter: "Extensively rehearsed and elaborated memories come to form the core of our life stories - narratives of self that help us define and understand our identity and our place in the world" (299). Discussions of personal identity in philosophy also revolve around memory. A theory of personal identification was introduced by renowned empiricist John Locke in his well-known work "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (Locke 1690) [1], which marked the start of the contemporary study of these topics. Locke believed that a person's identity was kept together with their consciousness, meaning that a person's personal identity was limited to the extent of their consciousness. Thus, he supports the idea that one's personal identity simply "Depends on consciousness, not on substance" and is a matter of psychological continuity. To put it more clearly, a person in the present is only the same as a person in the past if they can recall their prior thoughts and behaviors. Conversely, Reid and Butler used memory to offer the crucial proof of a previous existence. Thus, Reid writes: We know instantaneously, without the need for thinking, our own personal identity and ongoing existence, as far back as we can remember anything clearly. It appears to be a part of the testimony of memory, in fact. Everything we can recall has a connection to who we are that implies we were there when it was remembered. (Reid, 1785, Pg 586). The power of remembering experience in creating the appearance of identity over time is generally acknowledged by philosophers such as Hume, who deny the notion of an enduring self. Thus, Hume states that "memory alone acquaints us with the continuance and extent of this succession of perceptions, as such, 'tis to be considered, upon that account chiefly, as the source of personal identity'" (Hume 1739/2000, p. 168; see Baxter 2008 for treatment of Hume's complex and evolving position on self and memory). Theorists who

reject the persistence of the self must, in fact, demonstrate that memory gives us a false sense of who we are. Even though memory plays a noticeable part in philosophical debates on personal identity, the sense of personal identity that memory provides—the idea that I am the same person as someone from the past—is surprisingly underexamined. This sensation is used by Lockeans to construct a theory of personal identification, by Reid and Butler to support the idea of a persisting self, and by Humeans to argue that the sense gives us the appearance of a persisting self.

On the other hand, trauma is a common occurrence that affects people's minds in different ways. Individual, cultural, community, or intergenerational might all be involved. As a result of their desire to forget the traumatic event or events, trauma victims experience a skewed sense of memory and identity crisis, which can eventually progress to forgetfulness or an identity crisis on a collective level. On the other hand, even if we would like to, we cannot disregard or erase our past; instead, we must have the guts to remember it accurately. In order to deal with trauma and (re)form our identity, we must reimagine and rewrite the past. One of the main topics of scholarly debate has been the interconnected relationship between memory (the methods of recalling and accessing the past) and history (the study of past events). But in recent years, researchers have been more interested in how traumatic events affect memory and how victims, survivors, and descendants remember them. These events include colonization, slavery, war, genocide, sexual violence, acts of political and religious violence, forced migration or exile, natural disasters, pollution, disease, pandemics, and more. In the ongoing need for acknowledgment, restitution, and justice, the vocabulary of trauma has been used to discuss past injuries. Survivors, witnesses, victims, and people who believe they have been impacted by traumatic events all feel compelled to write and discuss trauma. According to Colin Davis and

Hanna Meretoja (2020), Furthermore, those who are not directly impacted by violent legacies are also concerned about them since they can be traumatizing for those who are. They bring up questions of collective accountability, like how to prevent the recurrence of previous atrocities in the present and the future and how to deal with the structural violence mechanisms that we may be sustaining in the present due to the mechanisms we inherited from the past (1). The "sign of the wound" and the fact that "the modern subject has become inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma" are characteristics of the modern world or modernity itself (quoted in Luckhurst 2008, 20). In addition to being regarded as an "all inclusive" phenomenon (Caruth 1995, 4), trauma also produces an enthralling cultural model because, as Roger Luckhurst (2008) notes, "it has been turned into a repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory, and selfhood that have saturated Western cultural life" (80). In contrast to regular memory, traumatized memory occurs by a process Janet refers to as "restitutio ad integrum," which states that "all other elements of a traumatic experience follow automatically when one element is evoked" (quoted in Van der Kolk & Van der Hart 1995, 163). The interdependence of traumatic components within a traumatic event is thus demonstrated. According to Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler (1995), "traumatic memories may be encoded differently than memories for ordinary events, perhaps via alterations in attentional focusing, perhaps because extremity of emotional arousal interferes with hippocampal memory functions" (508–09). As long as the trauma victim has adequate control over the incident and, until and until the traumatic memory can be transformed into narrative memory, it compels them to relive or reexamine the painful event since it is separated from consciousness. Berliner and Briere (1999) state that survivors of horrific events may appear to forget significant parts of their experiences, such as being mistreated, seeing bodies that have been deformed, and seeing murder (5). Because they

occasionally forget important details of their experiences, their narratives or testimonials become erratic. The impact of trauma on memory was broken down by Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler (1995) into the following categories: "traumatic amnesia," which discusses the loss of memories associated with traumatic experiences (509); "global memory impairment," which makes it difficult for victims to accurately describe their past and present; "trauma and dissociation," which refers to the fragmentary nature of memories (510); and "the sensorimotor organization of traumatic experience," which states that trauma is organized into memory on sensorimotor and affective levels (512).

Silvia Caporale Bizzini discusses how Banks in *When We Were Orphans* and Kathy in *Never Let Me Go* function as storytellers in both a Benjaminian and an Arendtian sense in her 2013 article, "Recollecting Memories, Reconstructing Identities: Narrators as Storytellers in Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*." In his 2014 work, "Memory and Identity in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*," S Y Guruprasad explores the issues of memory in both books. *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, *When We Were Orphans*, and *Never Let Me Go* are the five works by Kazuo Ishiguro that are examined in C. Lalrinfeli's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "A Study of Memory and Identity in Select Works by Kazuo Ishiguro" (2012). She investigates how identity and memory are intertwined and how one's choice of memories to accept or reject can question and change one's identity, drawing on theories of memory and identity. The 2014 study "Memory and Identity in Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*" by C. Lalrinfeli explores Ono's reflections on his past to pinpoint his own purpose and reject the intolerable emptiness and futility of his existence. She examines the ideas of memory distortion, selectivity, and unreliability through the character of Ono, demonstrating how these

memories help him come to terms with who he is. Yugin Teo explores the role of memory in Ishiguro's works using a conceptual framework in her 2014 book *Kazuo Ishiguro and the Work of Memory*. The current study is distinct from previous scholarship, even though Ishiguro's work has been the focus of numerous memory-related scholarships. In this study my main focus is on how memory shapes identity in order to understand how our memories affect our sense of self and how identity is influenced by the memories we preserve. This study makes the case that, depending on how we understand the past and apply it to our present and future identities, memory formation and reconstruction can have a good or bad impact on our lives. Ishiguro, like Brunner and Dennett, thinks that our individual memories and perspectives determine our identity, which is always changing. Ishiguro creates a universe in which the distinctions between memory and reality are blurred, making it difficult to tell fact from fiction. He contends that the stories we piece together and the memories we assemble form the basis of our sense of self. This point of view is in line with that of Brunner and Dennett, who believe that identity is a dynamic concept that is always evolving since it is formed throughout time. Brunner asserts that the self is a complicated mental structure that is created by a number of mental processes, one of which must undoubtedly be remembering, rather than an object that can be easily recalled (41). Furthermore, individuality is one of the components of well-being, according to John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* (1859) (p.57), and Carl Jung adds that uniqueness entails becoming one's own self in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933) (p.228). The focus of both of these theorists is on individuality and self-improvement. In contrast, this dissertation emphasizes on the memory and the formation of identity through memory through Kathy and Jonas in *Never Let Me Go* and *The Giver*. What makes these novels the subjects of interest is the fact that the characters' memories

are not lost through a natural process over time, but are stripped away by powerful external forces.

Given the foregoing, this dissertation raises the following queries: Does an identity conviction necessarily accompany the recollection of memory? Does personal identity have to be present for memory to exist? Does memory serve as proof of an individual's identity over time? Given all of the apparent differences between the person now and the person forty years ago, one of the main problems facing a theory of personal identity is how identity can be explained through apparent changes in the self: How can I be the same person as a person who existed forty years ago? The same topics that this dissertation will examine are contained in these questions.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Memory is important because it plays a crucial role in the construction of identity, which is broadly defined as the creation of a sense of oneself in connection to the outside world. According to this interpretation, "identity" is not a thing or an object but rather an ongoing effort to position the Self and Other in social space and time in a meaningful way, with a focus on the temporality of being (Berenskoetter 2010, 2011). Scholars have focused their analytical attention on the ways in which representations of Self and Other are enacted and narrated (Campbell 1998; Ezzy 1998; Ricoeur 2004; Smith and Sparkes 2008; Brand 2010), as well as the practices and processes of identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Lebow 2012, Somers 1994). To comprehend the political power of memory is to comprehend its significance in this process. The ability of memory to accurately depict a prior experience or event that is significant to the formation of a social group's collective identity is what gives memory its political significance. It operates in the three domains of cognition, norms, and emotions, serving as a source of communal identification. First—and perhaps most obviously—memories function as cognitive echoes of our experiences, offering us significant historical context. This is more than just putting us in the past, as demonstrated by what psychologists refer to as episodic memory, which is the capacity of humans to recollect a subjective experience associated with a specific location and time (an episode). According to Tulving (2002), episodic memory allows one to "return" to a personal experience by providing access to its context, time, and location. According to an identity perspective, memory does more than only enable us to revisit specific past events as we recall them; it also gives our history significance and validates our historical identity by

providing us with insightful information about "where we come from." When this is done, "an understanding of the past...tells us who we are" (Lebow 2006: 3). Second, memories allow us to learn from the past as well as make sense of and gain knowledge about "our past." They offer a wealth of information and experiences that we might use to deduce normative, even moral, direction. To be more precise, memories are a source of learning that allows actors to generate information about unpleasant, unhelpful behavior as well as excellent, desired, and helpful behavior. Semantic memory is a term used by psychologists to describe a body of general knowledge that people have accumulated over time and that is essential to communication (Tulving 2002). It allows people to recollect facts, ideas, and other information. This is taken a step further by the identity lens, which maintains that memory offers the learning resources for identification, judgment, and communication. It serves as a tool for creating a normative framework that directs (inter)action and gives the actors who identify with it a sense of Self and Other. Third, emotions come from memories. "When we recall something, what we retrieve are not only images associated with the event in question but also the feeling tones," as Erik Ringmar (2018: 36) observes. A positive experience is linked to sentiments of comfort, pride, and joy, whereas a negative experience is typically linked to feelings of distress, grief, and rage. Because memories and emotions are complicated, it is important to use caution when asserting a clear connection between them. However, the existence of this connection places memory at the center of investigations of how emotions generate collective identity and form "affective communities" (Hutchison 2016; see also Ross 2006; Mercer 2014). The emotional impact of memories of trauma and violence is often the focus (Edkins 2003; Hutchison 2016; Gustafsson and Hall 2021), but emotions associated with other types of memories, including nostalgia, can influence communal identifications. Recollections are important because they elicit feelings and

offer normative and cognitive direction. As will be demonstrated later, they are sources of meaning that help us make sense of our past or pasts, how we interact with others in the present, and how we see the future. Such memories can offer ontological stability and help people manage their concern about their existence in the world (Subotic 2018; see also the chapter on Ejdus in this volume). Memories' capacity to guide us through existential issues both individually and collectively is what gives them political significance. In other words, memories shape social relationships and have the power to "provide distinctive identities to individuals and communities" in addition to informing and influencing our individual states of being (Lebow 2006: 3). According to this interpretation, memory is not merely a personal mental construct but rather something that may be shared and function as a form of group identification. The notion of "collective memory," first proposed by Maurice Halbwachs (1992; see also Kansteiner 2002; Olick et al. 2011), can be a helpful way to address the social aspect of memory and its capacity to form "mnemonic communities" (Zerubavel 2003). It begins with the knowledge that memory is a mental picture that arises in the human mind as a result of remembering, or recollecting. Individual memory is not produced and expressed in isolation, according to Halbwachs, a Durkheim pupil, who argued that remembering is not merely a personal or subjective activity. He believed it to be the result of social contact instead. This sociological interpretation was created by Halbwachs in opposition to a Bergsonian psychological understanding of memory as being retrieved introspectively. The internal creation of mental images only occurs in dreams, which Halbwachs claims "are valid only for ourselves and do not set limits to our fantasy" and have no external reality. According to Halbwachs (1992: 172), these dream frameworks are "nothing in common with [frameworks] of the waking state," when "time space and the order of physical and social events as they are established and recognized by the members of our group are applied to

us." Social frameworks provide meaning to memories as they are created when a person is conscious. Halbwachs contends that "we speak of our recollections before calling them to mind" (Halbwachs 1992: 173), arguing that language is the main social context in which memory is created and portrayed. It is neither necessary nor beneficial to limit the social manifestation of memory to language, as will be covered later. The idea is that the structures used to express personal memories are shared, which leads to the formation of relationships. They create an intersubjective construct that is public rather than private, known as a "collective memory." Anthropomorphism issues should be allayed by this conceptualization of collective, or public memory, which does not give non-human things like states human characteristics like a brain and the ability to reflect. The study of a social group's collective memory is distinct from the study of what its individual members recall at any particular time. However, it is predicated on the idea that people are social creatures who understand who they are in relation to one another, especially when it comes to events that create shared experiences, like a sporting event or a terrorist attack. This is taken a step further by an identity perspective, which holds that social frameworks are more than just instruments for expressing the sublime, which could imply that people are incapable of creating significant memories on their own. Instead, the human need to understand their temporal situatedness, create and preserve their normative frameworks, and experience their emotional states with others is what gives memory its worth as a social construct. It makes the assumption that there is a need to fit in with a social group and views collective memory as one way to meet this need. This presumption is also implied when nationalism researchers emphasize that a significant component of fostering a sense of "we" is the belief in a common past (Deutsch 1953; see also Gillis 1994; Davis 2005; Khalili 2007; Wertsch 2021). The idea that personal memories are expressed through social structures begs the

questions of where meaning is created and how memory and experience are related. Remembering that "experience, in all its emotional complexity...serves as the key reference point" is paramount (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 17). However, actors who attempt to "make sense" of and "learn from" an experience give it meaning; experiences themselves do not have meaning. Furthermore, a sociological perspective a la Halbwachs contends that the imaginative process of giving significance to past experiences takes place on a societal level. However, a social framework is rarely specifically created for a given event, which means it invariably distances the experience from it. In other words, there is no direct connection between the experience and the communal memory, or the image it conveys of the past. It can handle experiences that are not exactly the same, which is an advantage. Furthermore, it makes it possible for people and organizations who were not there to share the collective memory to learn about it "second hand" from those who were not there. Collective memory is given an integrative function by this, but there is also a chance that it may become disconnected from experience, lose its episodic aspect, and become semantic memory, to use the language that was previously established. The political potency of such a memory would be diminished, along with its existential and emotional strength. In order to keep a collective memory "alive" for new members and for generations to come, efforts are made to recreate or revive the connection to experience if it is thought to be crucial for establishing a feeling of community. Collective memory has the capacity to create meaning, hence it can and ought to be regarded as an entity with a unique ontological standing that merits independent study. Because it is connected with the structure of political communities, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to analyze the politics of collective memory. Social psychology and psychoanalysis provide the analytical skills and insights needed to understand the salience, content, and outlines of a political memory for a social group.

Nonetheless, a thorough understanding of the sociopolitical field or fields in which memory is embedded is necessary to comprehend its role in politics. This includes an understanding of the power dynamics, structures, and processes of these fields, as well as the actors who have the ability to promote, defend, and challenge the way the past is (or should be) remembered.

Since the debate's inception, theorists have been challenged by the problem of the differences between the person now and the person forty years ago. Hume responded to the issue by arguing that it is illogical to imagine that a person may have a true identity throughout time (Hume 1739). A person's identity cannot be rigidly defined over time because their psychology is ever-changing. The opposite conclusion was reached by Reid and Butler. They argued that since human identity is strictly diachronic, there must be something that is truly constant. Taking a direct approach to the problem, Reid argued that memory serves as proof of a rigid sense of self over time. He writes; "My thoughts, and actions, and feelings change every moment—they have no continued, but a successive existence; but that self or I to which they belong is permanent, and has the same relation to all the succeeding thoughts, actions, and feelings, which I call mine...But perhaps it may be said this may all be fancy without reality. How do you know—what evidence do you have—that there is such a permanent self which has a claim to all the thoughts, actions, and feelings which you call yours? I respond by saying that the best proof I have of all of this is recollection. I recall talking to someone like that twenty years ago, and I recall a number of things that happened during that conversation. My memory confirms not just that this was done, but also that I did it, as I now recall. I must have been alive at the time and have remained alive all since if I did it"(Reid 1785, Page 318). Reid interprets the fact that he can recall his previous existence as proof that he—the same self—did exist at one point. In a similar vein, Butler states that "every person is conscious that he is now the same person or self

he was, as far back as his remembrance reaches." This is because, when someone thinks back on an action they have taken in the past, they are just as certain of the person who carried it out—that is, themselves—as they are that the action itself was carried out. (Butler 1736, p. 295). A trauma sufferer "reproduces [forgotten and repressed events] not in memory but in his behavior; he repeats it, without of course knowing that he is repeating it," according to Freud (1959) (369). It is the "repeated recurrence [of the traumatic event] which thus constitutes trauma and points towards its enigmatic core," according to Caruth (1995) (5). Caruth emphasizes the painful return in "After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History" (2014): Trauma, life, and the drive itself are all attempts to get back that end up leaving. This character, this idea, and this tale—the tale, we remember, of the kid who plays "fort/da" with his reel—are all about memory and history. They are also about the idea of preserving its own history as it moves back and forth from its starting point. (22).

The way that Kazuo Ishiguro uses *Never Let Me Go* to link moral issues with traumatic mental states in a fictional future society is a topic of much inquiry. Ishiguro uses the power of memory to build character toughness, as new research shows. Because they live in a world that denies them the ability to make decisions, Geiszler (2020) claims that memory aids the clones in *Never Let Me Go* in creating illusory normalcy. Based on Freud's theory of the unconscious, Geiszler believes that Kathy selects some memories to retain because her mind unintentionally suppresses unpleasant truths. The findings of the study demonstrate that Kathy uses her recollections of Hailsham to both comfort herself and conceal the reality of her future. The novel explores the clones' buried terrible experiences. Whitehead (2019) claims that because Ishiguro's characters live with the knowledge that they could be rejected, they exhibit symptoms of group trauma. Whitehead claims that because society forbids them from expressing their anxieties, the clones

keep quiet about them (p. 54). Because narrative gaps often reveal hidden realities, the expert's study adds this novel to trauma studies. Readers analyze the novel's rupture between familiar familiarity and odd unfamiliarity in accordance with Freud's concept of the eerie. Graham (2018) claims that although clones seem human, their fate as organ donors creates unnerving emotions. Because clones embody both human features and defy normal human thinking, they provide new challenges to science and humans that challenge our moral bounds. For Graham, "The clones' existence disrupts our perception of what it means to be human, presenting an eerie reflection of our ethical failures" (p. 24). The impact of Hailsham on the clones' self-development is examined by numerous scholars. Baker's 2019 research reveals that Hailsham serves as a little civilization that teaches clones to accept their life passively. Baker explains that pupils appear to develop their own skills through Hailsham's teaching methods, yet they continue to be financial assets for others (p. 87). While our educational system claims to help kids develop personally, it is actually working to standardize students. At *Never Let Me Go*, characters are taught about their humanity via artistic endeavors. According to Smithson's 2021 study, clones can express themselves and resist persecution through creative endeavors. Smithson argues that "Through art, the clones assert their individuality, even as their creations are appropriated to validate the ethics of the cloning program" (p. 45). In fact, Through art, we may represent who we are and show how our own power is taken away from us.

On the other hand, reviews of *The Giver* are numerous. Empowering Students through History: *The Giver* as a Metaphor and Preparation for Studying History in the Secondary Classroom by Kristy A. Brugar (2012) explores it from the perspectives of figure of speech and tries to venture how it can support scholars to explore narration from dissimilar positions. According to Brugar, "The Giver can help bridge the gap between their acceptance and rejection of the lessons as

children learn to appreciate the abilities like citizenship and awareness that come with studying history." He is implying that this book can bridge the gap between kids' acceptance and rejection of the lessons as they learn to appreciate the civic engagement and awareness that come with learning about the past. It provides an opportunity to critically examine a community without a past, according to Brugar's additional analysis (p.89). Community is the topic of conversation that *The Giver* starts. Instead of just learning names and dates, Brugar says, kids studying history must evaluate arguments and make conclusions based on facts. The "history of all humanity," or human history and memory, is passed down to Jonas (p.86). Studying human history is made easier by this ground-breaking book. Ann Lawrence (1999) attempts to depict the various probabilities of the Giver, the Receiver, and their actions in *The Giver to the Twenty One Balloons: Explorations with Probability*, which is different from Brugar. The aforementioned Giver-related challenge was eventually made accessible as a final evaluation task, according to Lawrence (p. 509). She does an excellent job of describing the challenges of personal development. In their portrayal of Jonas, Ashley Garman and Lauren Homa describe him as "smart, brave, and clever," referring to the protagonist's issues (272). According to Garman and Homa, Jonas is as bold and wise as an eagle. They show Jonas as an active, good-natured individual who can change the dynamics of the ostensibly just society. Leaving behind the practical endeavor of life and society, Carter F. Hanson explores *The Giver* from the perspective of memory's utopian function in *The Utopian Function of the Memory* in Lowry's *The Giver*. Hanson departs from the practical endeavor of life and social being. It never gives hope for a better future, according to Hanson (p. 45). *The Giver* illustrates the complexity of life. Life is governed by a multitude of laws, customs, and surveillance methods. Hanson goes on to say that, like the Utopians, the people of Lowry live in total security, stability, and freedom from material

cravings (p. 47). Because memory suppression in many texts makes it impossible to examine and critique the social structure, Hanson claims that memory is essential to the dystopian goal (p. 48). According to Hanson, *The Giver* unquestionably lifts the ideals of the past above the tedium that pervades the book. Jonas wants his people to face their history by letting go of his role as Receiver of Memory so they can fully experience love and suffering and comprehend the consequences of their choices. Hanson argues that Lowry demonstrates that memory is the main utopian weapon for opening up the future, despite the fact that the majority of the book is about accepting the past as a means of gaining complete humanity (p.58). Another critic, Don Latham, offers realistic thoughts in "Childhood under Seize: Lowry's *The Giver*" where he explains how childhood is lost and how youngsters act like adults. According to Latham, Lowry blurs the boundaries between her youthful protagonists and the adults in their lives in this novel (p. 3). Latham contends that Lowry fails to make a clear distinction between adult and child motivations. Within the dystopian society portrayed in *The Giver*, security, seclusion, and, to borrow Lowry's term, "sameness" have come at the sacrifice of individuality and free will. It presents children as complex, multifaceted individuals who exhibit courage, compassion, and resilience when faced with adversity, according to Latham (p.12). Latham is not happy with the blurring of the lines between childhood and adulthood, despite his belief that children can perform a variety of roles as adults. The relevance of color is examined by Kyoung-Min Han and Yonghwa Lee, who associate with the context of consciousness and concur with Latham that the behaviors of young people are similar to those of adults. The hue has numerous implications for Jonas's events in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, which examines the philosophical and ethical significance of color. According to Kyoung-Min Han and Yonghwa Lee, Jonas's growing awareness of color leads him to produce a distinctive subject with a distinct internal space (p.

339). The fact that Jonas can recognize color adds to his maturity. The book's portrayal of Jonas's development as a mature character is heavily impacted by his whiteness. In front of the snowy backdrop, Jonas takes on and relinquishes his job as the Memory Receiver. It is important to understand the constitutive and transformational power of Jonas's color vision because it provides a fresh viewpoint on the novel's resolution. According to Yonghwa Lee and Kyoung-Min Han, Jonas is enthralled with colors during his training sessions with The Giver and remembers a time when people could see them (p.343). Making sense of color has significant historical, modern, and future implications. Susan Louise Stewart argues about the conditions and significance of Jonas's return to normalcy following his period of abnormality in a Return to Normal: Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, adding an enthusiasm of Jonas to return to normalcy. Stewart asserts that dystopian novels primarily address these concerns because they serve as cultural criticisms and models for what might occur if we continue in some of our current directions (p. 28). Stewart contends that Lowry pushes us to evaluate Jonas' culture rather than our own. It is much harder to recognize the beliefs at work, even though Jonas lives in a radically different society, because they are so similar to our own. Therefore, Jonas wishes for A Return to Normal (p. 33) in order to experience freedom and teach young adults the value of "revolting" against so-called "sameness" in order to enhance their lives.

It is helpful by looking into the critics and reviews in order to pinpoint the research gaps and missing elements. None of the criticisms of *Never Let Me Go* and *The Giver* described above have discussed how identity and individual existence might spark opposition. To my knowledge, the concerns of individuality and identity have not been particularly discussed by any of the book's reviews cited above. They haven't looked at the novel's focus on identity and how and why it works. They haven't given any thought to the problems of individual identity and how

they affect Kathy and Jonas. Therefore, these novels are ready for analysis and investigation from the perspectives of identity and individuality as instruments of resistance.

Chapter 3

1.1 Methodology

This study uses a qualitative, interpretive literary analysis to look at how memory and identity are related in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. The study is based on attentive reading, textual interpretation, and theoretical engagement with literary and philosophical studies rather than empirical or statistical methodologies. The method is comparative, examining how memory is implicated in the creation, repression, and reclamation of identity in two distinct dystopian stories. Philosophical ideas about identity, particularly John Locke's continuity of consciousness theory, which holds that a person's identity endures through memory, serve as the foundation for the methodology (Locke 1690). Political theory, including Hannah Arendt's observations on memory and totalitarian control, and cultural memory studies, especially Aleida Assmann's work on memory as a means of identity preservation, complement this theoretical framework. In the novels, memory serves as a location of both identity building and systemic manipulation. These frameworks offer conceptual tools for examining this process.

The primary focus is on Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005). Using close reading approaches to uncover thematic patterns, narrative strategies, and symbolic uses of memory, both works are analyzed as main texts. Firstly, Kathy's disjointed memories in *Never Let Me Go* are highlighted as highlighting the emotional and personal character of memory, which is altered by longing and loss. In *The Giver*, on the other hand, Jonas's handling of collective memory emphasizes the difficulty and loneliness of preserving the truth in a culture that has made the decision to forget. Secondly, in *Never Let Me Go*, Hailsham and the larger donation system serve as examples of institutional control, where information is purposefully

kept secret to ensure clones comply. By playing with memory, students are guaranteed to absorb their roles without completely comprehending or considering their fate. Similarly, in *The Giver*, the community also obliterates collective memory in order to impose emotional homogeneity and suppress dissent, putting the onus of truth on a single Receiver in order to preserve social order. Finally, memory serves as a silent form of resistance in *Never Let Me Go* as Kathy holds onto her history with Tommy and Ruth, protecting her humanity and sense of self in a system that rejects both. These intimate memories subvert the institutions' dehumanizing narrative, despite their smallness. In *The Giver*, memory takes on a more overt form of resistance when Jonas decides to rebel against the community's authority and regain feeling, choice, and knowledge for himself and others after being awakened by the truth of the past.

1.2 Secondary Sources and Scholarly Engagement

The scholarly conversation surrounding memory and identity highlight how these categories are inherently social and created. Identity is a continuous process of placing the Self in relation to the Other, mediated by temporality and social context, as Berenskoetter (2010, 2011) contends. According to narrative-based perspectives, identity is performative and constantly altered by social interaction and storytelling (Campbell 1998; Ricoeur 2004; Smith and Sparkes 2008). Halbwachs (1992) provides a fundamental sociological viewpoint by presenting the idea of collective memory, which holds that personal memories are invariably enmeshed in communal social structures. He stresses that language is the main means of generating collective meaning and that language shapes and expresses memory. Halbwachs, however, also concedes that memory is more than just verbal expression, pointing to a more extensive social expression that goes beyond language.

Understanding the political and relational power of memory requires an awareness of its

intersubjective nature. The practices of identification are intrinsically placed within contexts of power, where images of Self and Other are continuously contested, as noted by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Somers (1994). Lebow (2012) and Brand (2010) also examine how historical and cultural narratives mediate these representations, providing identity with continuity over time. Hume (1739) was the first philosopher to dispute the rationality of a fixed personal identity in view of continuously changing psychological states, which sparked discussions regarding the continuity of identity over time. Reid and Butler, among others, pushed for a more cohesive understanding of selfhood in spite of change, challenging this cynicism. The way that memory shapes how people and groups perceive themselves in connection to the past is a psychological, political, and ethical process, and these tensions are a reflection of larger worries about this.

This study uses a comparative literary methodology to analyze how Ishiguro and Lowry depict memory and identity, looking at both similarities and differences. Through the use of comparison, it is possible to examine how identical concerns about individuality, control, and selfhood are expressed through memory in two distinct cultural settings (a British novel from the late 20th century and a dystopian young adult novel from the United States). Only two major books and a small selection of literary and philosophical thought are included in this study's purview. This study is limited to a literary-philosophical framework, even though memory and identity can be examined through psychology, neurology, or sociology. Furthermore, the results are interpretive rather than empirical, with the goal of advancing literary and cultural understanding rather than scientific generalization, given that both novels are works of fiction.

Chapter 4

Critical Analysis

The connection between identity and memory has long captivated literary scholars, psychologists, and philosophers. Since John Locke claimed in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) that identity is based on the continuity of consciousness, memory has been regarded as a fundamental component of individual identity. This view continues into current discussions in cognitive science regarding the formation of selfhood. Memory allows the self to remain consistent across time, whereas memory causes the self to fracture. By examining cultures where memory is regulated, repressed, or altered, literature, especially dystopian literature dramatizes this relationship. Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) are two important works that contribute to this discussion. In the dystopian society depicted in both books, the fight for uniqueness, independence, and moral consciousness revolves around memory. Using Kathy's disjointed memories, Ishiguro explores memory in her book. Her narrative both strengthens and weakens her sense of self. The novel by Lowry, on the other hand, envisions a society devoid of memory entirely, and the emergence of Jonas's uniqueness is marked by his waking through the inheritance of collective memory. This paper makes the case that memory is a narrative and thematic device used by both Ishiguro and Lowry to examine the resilience and fragility of identity under control regimes. I will demonstrate through in-depth analyses of both books how memory shapes identity, how its manipulation causes fragmentation, and how remembering turns into a resistance act.

1.1 Memory as the Basis of Identity

Kathy emphasizes the relationship between identity and memory through her first-person narrative. She frames herself through her memories from the first few pages: "My name is Kathy H. Currently, I am thirty-one years old and have been providing care for more than eleven years (Ishiguro, 3). The following is a mosaic of memories, not a chronological history, that has been cobbled together with hesitancy and self-correction—"I might have got some of it wrong" (Ishiguro, 37). This act of remembering gives her a sense of self. This disjointed narration is a reflection of what Kathy Knapp refers to as "memory as a technology of selfhood," in which identity is rebuilt through reliving and recounting past events (Knapp, 742). Kathy, for instance, remembers her bond with Tommy and Ruth at Hailsham, which both reassured and troubled her. She talks about the tense moment when Ruth stops her from playing a game: "I didn't even know why Ruth had been keeping me at arm's length all day" (Ishiguro, 52). In addition to being descriptive, this memory is interpretive; Kathy utilizes it to understand who she is and the people in her life. This is in line with Locke's notion of identity: Kathy is herself because she recalls being herself in the past. However, her recollections are intricately linked to institutional conditioning. Her identity is shaped by her guardians, art projects, and Hailsham, all of which are curated by the system that denies her agency. Kathy's identity is both validated and limited by her memories.

Jonas, in contrast to Kathy, starts in a society devoid of memories. His people have eradicated love, suffering, and even history. Upon experiencing memory for the first time through the Giver, Jonas is met with unfamiliar feelings. He is shocked by the snow memory: "He felt himself sitting... and the sled began to move forward...exhilaration surged through him" (Lowry, 81). Jonas feels a sense of nostalgia for the first time. "He lay face down, overwhelmed with pain... a

cry of anguish escaped him” (Lowry, 119). Later, Jonas learns about pain as the Giver relays the memories of war. Despite not being based on his personal experiences, these inherited memories become a significant part of who he is. Lowry implies that “without memory, identity collapses into mere functionality,” as Kucich points out (Kucich, 217). Only when Jonas is able to remember things that others cannot do does his uniqueness emerge. Thus, Jonas's identity is evoked by collective memory, but Kathy's is shaped by brittle personal memory. Locke's thesis—that to remember is to be oneself—is supported by both books.

1.2 Institutional Memory Management and Identity Fragmentation

The institution at Hailsham serves as an example of how identity can be controlled through memory manipulation. With the assurance that it will expose their "souls," teachers encourage their students to create art. Kathy remembers Miss Emily's later admission that "we took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls." Or at least show that you had them (Ishiguro, 255). Even though these recollections of creating art are quite intimate, they are shown to be instrumentalized. Thus, the memories of the pupils are influenced by institutional authority rather than being impartial. According to Cho, their recollections are "personal and programmed" (Cho, 152). For instance, Kathy nostalgically remembers the Sales, when students purchased random items, but she doesn't come to the realization that these recollections were a part of a study to watch how they behaved (Ishiguro, 40–42). The memories that form the foundation of her identity were always under control.

Lowry, in comparison, paints a picture of a society in which memory is completely erased by institutional control. By guaranteeing that communal memory is held solely by the Receiver, the Elders preserve Sameness. People are unable to recall alternatives, which prevents them from

challenging authority. When Jonas asks his parents if they love him, they say, "Please use precise words! You employed a word that has become so broad and meaningless that it is practically out of date (Lowry, 127). Because they don't remember love, they can't understand it. Arendt's caution that totalitarian governments destroy individuality by erasing memory (Arendt, 45) is particularly relevant in this context. Docility is ensured by erasing the Elders. The community's lack of identity is revealed as Jonas's awakening upsets this equilibrium. They are unable to even see themselves as independent entities in the absence of memory.

1.3 Memory as Identity Resistance and Maintenance

Kathy's memory is resistance in and of itself, even though she is powerless to change her destiny. She maintains her dignity and affirms her humanity by recounting her story. "I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever I was supposed to be" (Ishiguro, 288) is how she describes thinking about all the lost items that had washed up on the barbed wire as she waits in a field at the end of the book. Even while her body is set to be donated, the act of remembering—of recounting Ruth, Tommy, and Hailsham—guarantees that her identity will remain intact. Her tales reflect what Aleida Assmann refers to as "cultural memory," which is the narrative retention of identity in the face of erasure (Assmann, 2010). By writing her memories into a self-narrative, Kathy fights against being invisible.

On the other hand, memory as resistance is directly linked to Jonas's decision to leave the community. He is aware that when he crosses the line, the people will relive the memories. He would have starved in various ways if he had remained. A life full of emotions, color, and love would have been his (Lowry, 174). He reintroduces memory and, by extension, identity to society, making his rebellion not only personal but also societal. While Kathy uses narrative to maintain her identity, Jonas uses action to regain it. Both demonstrate that resistance is rooted in

memory, even when it is brittle or painful. Both books uphold memory as a crucial component of identity, but they also highlight its limitations. Kathy's recollections give *Never Let Me Go* purpose, but they don't lead to freedom. Even if she remembers, she is helpless. According to Higgins, "without recognition of personhood, memory alone cannot guarantee identity" (Higgins 309). The memories of the clones uphold humanity but do not guarantee liberty. In *The Giver*, Jonas is isolated by his memory. He feels isolated since his peers are unable to share his information. Hence, memory fosters uniqueness while severing a sense of belonging. The Lockean idea that identity is made possible by memory at the expense of community is complicated by Lowry.

The Giver by Lois Lowry and *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro both highlight the delicate relationship between memory and identity while illuminating its deep connection. In spite of systemic oppression, Kathy's story reinforces identity via memory, and Jonas's awakening shows how transformative memory can be. As a basis for moral agency, a prerequisite for individuality and a force of resistance against institutional domination, memory is emphasized in both books. However, they also warn that memory is insufficient even though it is necessary. Memory can comfort but not free, affirm but not alter, in the absence of community and recognition. In the end, these pieces serve as a reminder that remembering is a fundamental aspect of being human, and as such, remembering becomes the most radical act of all in societies that are set up to eradicate individuality.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

By comparing Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, it becomes clear that memory is inextricably linked to identity formation and that its erasure or manipulation is a social control mechanism. As both works demonstrate, memory is not only a personal ability but also a tool of culture and politics. According to Locke, selfhood is guaranteed to endure via memory, but the stories show that institutional structures always act as a mediator in this continuity. Although Jonas's awakening through the reception of memory emphasizes the function of recall in regaining individuality and moral responsibility, Kathy's memories support her identity while exposing its reliance on the well controlled environment of Hailsham.

These writings ultimately agree that memory serves as a basis for identity and a means of resistance to institutions that dehumanize people. In a society that treats her as a biological utility, Kathy's storytelling preserves shards of humanity, while Jonas's disobedience shows how memory can change a culture and restore agency and moral vision. Ishiguro and Lowry highlight memory's critical role in upholding individuality, moral consciousness, and human dignity by portraying it as both susceptible to manipulation and essential to freedom. Thus, the relationship between identity and memory in these dystopian settings suggests a more general reality: recalling is being, and controlling remembering is controlling the fundamental essence of personhood.

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