

Narrative Structures Formed Through Memory In The Author's Work

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Abstract: This article examines the intricate interplay between memory and narrative structure in three of Kazuo Ishiguro's major novels: *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun*. The study argues that memory in Ishiguro's fiction is not merely thematic content but a decisive structural force that shapes voice, temporality, focalization, and the linguistic texture of narration. Through a comparative analysis of reflective, repressed, and artificially constructed mnemonic models, the article explores how unreliable narration, analepsis and prolepsis, euphemism, hesitation strategies, and fragmented narrative sequencing reflect the instability, selectivity, and constructed nature of memory. Findings highlight how Stevens's self-curated recollections, Kathy H.'s systematically fragmented memories, and Klara's algorithmic observational memory collectively challenge conventional notions of identity, personhood, and emotional truth. The article contributes to contemporary narrative theory by demonstrating Ishiguro's distinctive linguopoetic approach to representing memory as a fundamental mechanism in the formation of selfhood and humanity in modern fiction.

Keywords: Memory, narrative structure, unreliable narration, linguopoetics, analepsis, identity, artificial memory, Kazuo Ishiguro.

Introduction: Memory is messy, elusive, transient and the very terrain on which human experience and literary creation take root. Its fluidity and selectivity, along with its powerful role in shaping an individual's sense of self and their understanding of the past, make it an especially fertile ground for literary exploration. Within narrative, forms are not as much passive receptacles for plot and character; instead, they actively function as receptacles through which memory is constructed, crafted, and challenged. This multifaceted interplay between form and mnemonic material denotes a central role in establishing the thematic depth of a text and its very linguistic margins. The specific temporality, perspective, focalization, and rhetorical strategy of narrating a story directly determines memory's presentation to the reader, either as a presumptively reliable archive, a rigorously reconstructed fiction, a broken trace, or even an asserted historical record.

Scholars across a wide range of disciplines have argued at length about the subjective and constructive nature of memory. Cognitive psychologists like Frederic Bartlett (1932) demonstrated that memory is not mere

retrieval but an active reconstruction mechanism influenced by present-day schemata and cultural environments. In literary criticism, writers like Philippe Lejeune (1989) analysed how fictional narratives can also mimic the complex process of constructing memory and telling one's own story, forcing readers to consider the subjective and often untrustworthy nature of past accounts. Similarly, Hayden White's seminal work (1978) on tropology within narrative about the past underscores that all narratives concerning the past, even supposedly objective ones, are shaped by rhetorical choices that imbue them with certain meaning and narrative coherence. This very first assumption on narrative's profound capacity to mediate, construct, and even distort memory is crucial to grasping the very literary world constructed by Kazuo Ishiguro (2021).

Kazuo Ishiguro, the known author of complex style, melancholic atmosphere, and profound thematic explorations, always places memory at the forefront of his literary practice. His novels are characterized by characters grapple with hidden, repressed, uncertain, or systematized manipulated pasts, that compel

characters and readers alike to embark on long, difficult journeys of memory and interpretation. Ishiguro is not simply presenting memories as received facts; he analyses the very process of recollection itself, exposing its fallibility, its susceptibility to external forces, and its intimate, often strained, relationship with the construction of personal and collective self. As Brian W. Shaffer (2008) suggests, Ishiguro's characters "struggle to reconstruct, to come to terms with, and to accept a past that has been withheld, forgotten, or distorted, or is in the process of being forgotten" (Brian W. Shaffer, 2008). This constant, almost obsessive return to memory transcends simple plot device and becomes a central narrative and thematic mechanism that shapes the very fabric of his fictional worlds. In the blur of Stevens's dishonesty in *The Remains of the Day*, the oppressive and imposed collective amnesia of Kathy H. and her contemporaries in *Never Let Me Go*, or Klara's bespoke algorithmic inclusion and "re-making" of human experience in *Klara and the Sun*, memory is perpetually on trial, its legitimacy and meaning called into question.

Through a consideration of how Ishiguro's narrators remember, or rather fail to remember, their own pasts, and which specific linguistic and structural mechanisms are employed within these moments of remembrance, this analysis will delineate how memory functions not as content alone, but as an extremely structural force. It determines not only what is told, but how it is told, and therefore what is revealed or strategically concealed from the reader. Each of the novels, while variant in setting, genre, and specific premise, shares this comprehensive thematic concern of memory's shaping influence, but does so through distinct models of narrative construction and corresponding linguopoetic strategies, the focus of the ensuing close readings. The argument here will be that Ishiguro's power lies in employing divergent mnemonic models of narrative to question the very construction of personality, identity, and humanity in linguistically compelling fashion.

Reflection and the Deliberately Built Self in *The Remains of the Day*

Kazuo Ishiguro's Booker Prize-winning novel of 1989, *The Remains of the Day*, is a quintessential example of reflection, where the act of remembering is irretrievably bound up with the narrator's deliberately built, but ultimately futile, building of self and identity. The novel exists as the fastidiously written diary sheets of Stevens, a British butler of high stature and unflappable professionalism, over the course of a 1956 motoring vacation in the English countryside. His look-back first-person narrative, delivered through a sequence of internal monologues, keen observation,

and recounted past conversations, initially presents itself as a testament to his professional integrity, his unwavering commitment to a conceived idea of service, and his inviolate dignity. But beneath this conscientiously maintained exterior of precision, formality, and emotional reserve is a profound and pervasive unreliability, inwardly and increasingly revealing a life lamentably shaped by emotional repression, profound self-deception, and foregone opportunity.

Stevens's narrative voice is characterized by a compulsive finickiness with words; an absolute standard of accuracy tending paradoxically to distort or conceal deeper emotional reality. His choice of words, full of formal register, archaic language, and an abundance of euphemisms, is a verbal barrier against confronting unpleasant realities both of himself and of his former employer, Lord Darlington. An example is his constant and almost ritualistic use of words like "dignity," "greatness," and "professionalism" to describe his professional ideal rather than personal happiness or emotional identification, and this is a lexical buffer. This verbal armour protects him from embracing the enormous personal sacrifices he made in the name of a distant and ultimately hollow ideal (Ishiguro, 1989). As James Acheson (2011) insightfully observes, Stevens's words "are a deliberately selected tool of deception, for the preservation of space between himself and others, and between himself and his own innermost emotions". This linguistic screening is not an artistic gesture but a natural function of his construction of identity; his identification as the quintessential English butler involves the deliberate selection and presentation of his memories to conform to this rigorously idealized professional identity. Memory by memory, each memory is screened for exposure of vulnerability, uncertainty, or want, these being suppressed or re-framed in terms of professional duty.

The linear progression of the story, tied to the days of his motor tour, is regularly interrupted by anachrony, i.e., the intentional and frequently egotistical use of analepsis (flashback) and muted prolepsis, which actually build Stevens's recollections and his present observation. These time dislocations are not typically spontaneous bursts of actual memory, but rather controlled, frequently circuitous bypaths designed to reinforce his self-concept, justify past behaviour, or avoid confrontation with unpleasant realities face-to-face in the here and now. His meandering side trips on the precise meaning of "dignity" or the authentic nature of a "great butler," for example, are not capricious philosophical flights. Instead, they are deliberate attempts to intellectualize and rationalize

his past actions, particularly his coldness in moments of greatest personal significance, such as the death of his father or Miss Kenton's departure from Darlington Hall (Ishiguro, 1989). Similarly, the numerous flashbacks featuring Lord Darlington, aired apparently to excuse his ex-master's tarnished reputation and offer historical context for political change during the inter-war period, serve also to enhance Stevens's own staunch sense of loyal service, even as Darlington undertakes morally questionable acts. The anachronies' subtlety, offered as rational extensions of a modern-day idea, frequently forces the reader to recapture the underlying emotional narrative in what remains unspoken, involving the reader as an active collaborator in the detection of the pervasive unreliability of the narrator. This structuring technique thus involves the reader on a participatory level with the co-construction of Stevens's hidden reality.

Linguistic cues of denied and repressed memory permeate Stevens's story and are the key aspect of his linguopoetic signature. Euphemisms are employed to soften the hurtfulness of unpleasant facts, making personal failures, emotional deficiencies, or moral trade-offs delicious professional necessities. His account of his dealings with Miss Kenton, particularly the strained, unspoken emotional tension between them and his flat refusal to ever so much as directly acknowledge her feelings for him or his for her, is full of such linguistic waffling. Their emotional interactions are usually reported in indirect speech, Stevens's highly filtered reading, or formal reported speech, all of which naturally diminish the romantic and intimate tension so tellingly clear to the reader (Ishiguro, 1989).

Hesitations, articulated through means of plethora of modifiers, rhetorical questions, elaborate circumlocution, and repetitious self-correction, also signal Stevens's fierce inner conflict to acknowledge his past feelings or to confess his deeply ingrained regrets. Sentences such as "I believe I am entitled to say," "one might perhaps be forgiven for thinking," "one may perhaps be forgiven for assuming," or "I have no reluctance in admitting" punctuate his narrative, where there is always postponement of straight-out utterance and consequently straight-out emotional involvement (Ishiguro, 1989).. This verbal tentativeness is an expression of his emotional paralysis, his inability to speak or even fully confess profound personal regrets and a life of self-inflicted emotional sterility. Furthermore, his habitual understatement, particularly in emotionally charged circumstances, serves to underscore the scale of his repression. His description of his father's final moments alive or his poignant farewell with Miss Kenton are remarkably without overt sentiment, expressed rather in an impersonal,

almost clinical, precision and a focus on niceties of procedure at the cost of emotional content (Ishiguro, 1989). This rhetorical control, paradoxically, increases the suggested tragedy and range of his personal cost for the empathetic reader. The cumulative result of these linguistic devices—euphemism, hesitation, and understatement—is a voice within the narrative which is simultaneously rigorously precise and passionately evasive, revealing the painful irony of Stevens's life.

The "linguopoetic" impact of Stevens's sparing language and filtered narrative is at the centre of his meticulously developed and ultimately tragic sense of self. His deliberately formal, almost archaic diction, elaborate, syntactically complex sentences, affection for abstractions, and devotion to an extremely formal style, creates at the same time a suffocating feeling of seriousness and unbreakable professionalism and hides beneath a profound sense of insecurities and emotional vacancies. According to Richard Corliss (1989), Stevens "buries feeling under an avalanche of proper behaviour and precise terminology". The constant self-revision and self-correction in his own internal monologue, the hallmark of an unreliable narrator, not only hide the truth; they constitute his very being as a butler who prioritizes decorum, apparent dignity, and professional reserve above all else. His selective memory, out of a psychological need to maintain an image of a blameless career and a good life spent in service, decides not only what is recalled, but how it is fabricated, and what value, if at all, it is assigned in terms of emotion. And so, therefore, Stevens's character and identity are not just revealed by his memories, but actually constructed by the process of language in remembering, or rather best, by the process of forgetting some inconvenient truths. This multifaceted interaction between Stevens's narrative voice, his manipulation of time, and his pervasive linguistic habits finally reveals how memory, carefully sorted and reassembled within a given linguopoetic structure, is the very basis for a life consciously, tragically, and perhaps necessarily, unfulfilled, one defined by the "remains" of what could have been.

Systematically Repressed and Fragmented Memory in *Never Let Me Go*

Never Let Me Go (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro provides a dense and unsettling examination of memory, not merely as a subjectivity possessed by the individual but also as a shared and often systemically suppressed reality. Narrated in the first person by Kathy H., a "carer" reflecting back on her life and that of her peers at the seemingly idyllic but really sinister Hailsham boarding school, the novel's reverse narrative gradually uncovers profound, devastating facts about their lives.

Kathy's narrative voice, personal as it is, is also characterized by a general detached, clinically-flavoured tone, a deliberate linguopoetic one that mirrors the emotional and information repression in the clones' lives (Ishiguro, 1989).. Her memories drift non-sequentially, frequently switching between recollections of Hailsham childhood, disorienting adolescent memories at the Cottages, and harsh adult realities as carers and prospective "donors." This patchwork structure, studded with ellipses, digressions, and a stream-of-consciousness narrative texture, linguopoetically reflects the fractured, slippery, and intentionally concealed nature of the "truths" withheld from them. As Amy J. Elias (2008) argues, such stories are "archive-effects," in which the act of remembering is a desperate, if often doomed, attempt to construct a coherent individual past out of systematically entombed facts (J. Elias, 2008). Such narrative fragmentation literally mirrors the fractured and choreographed nature of human histories.

Kathy's narrative tactfully follows how she, Tommy, Ruth, and their associates gradually piece together the appalling reality of their existence: they are clones, they have been cloned for organ transplantation, their existence precisely mapped out, controlled, and brought to a close for the advantage of "normal" humans. The book therefore examines the state of collective memory among the clones, a memory that is apt to be shared, thought through, and re-interpreted among themselves in terms of half-whispered codes and general inference, yet simultaneously open to external decay or coercive re-formation by the "guardians" and the wider societal machinery that rules their lives. Their shared experiences at Hailsham, for example, form a common collective memory, but even such allegedly harmless recollections contain the unstated, the unsettling suggestions and half-disclosures that then coalesce into dark and unavoidable knowledge. The vagueness and deliberate holes in the memory suffuse the novel, not only probing what is recalled, but much more so, the extensive expanses of the remote and the less-remembered areas that mark their chopped-off lives. Words like "completion" and "donation" are euphemisms used in the clinical context to hide the ugly truth of their premature deaths, and the children's initial acceptance and internalization of these terms linguistically prove the insidious depth of indoctrination into a system that devalues their own humanity. Kathy's narrative keeps circling back to some pivotal points, such as the enigmatic "Possible" hypothesis of early models or the devastating rumour of delay, each recurrence to the story a little deeper, a little more wrenching in its comprehension, like a scar

tissue of memory that builds slowly over an ever-weeping wound. The communal act of remembering, therefore, is one of agonized realization and not nostalgic remembrance.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) is his contemporary take on his thorough inquiry into memory and its correspondence to personality and identity, shifting from human psychological repression or social manipulation in his previous work to the complexity of artificial intelligence (AI) and its specific means of viewing the world. Narrated in the first-person by Klara, an Artificial Friend (AF) designed as a sympathetic playmate for lonely children, the novel's distinctive observational mode of narration is an autonomous form of "memory" that in effect determines its overall narrative structure. Klara's consciousness, and, indirectly, her "memory," are based on relentless, diligent observation, incessant data collection, and sophisticated pattern recognition, which she employs to construct her intricate understanding of human nature, feeling, and the unpredictable universe in which she exists. As opposed to the human memory, which is inevitably fallible, subjective, and prone to emotional distortion or psychological repression, Klara's "memory" is found to be precise, quantitative, and continuously updated through her advanced optical and acoustic sensors. This inherent difference is key to comprehending the unique linguopoetic texture of her story and its implications in the process of identity-construction during the period of developing AI.

The book must make the vital distinction between artificially built, observational memory and human experiential memory, a distinction which forms the philosophical core of the book. Human characters like Josie and Rick possess memories rooted in personal experience, unprocessed emotion, and linear passage of time – memories that are fluid, sometimes agonized, powerfully subjective, and inextricably a part of their individual selves. Klara, however, constructs a high-level type of "memory" mostly by cached external observation and data filtering of enormous quantities. Her understanding of human sadness, for example, is built up from an internal feeling of sorrow but so much more from countless observations of humans being in grief or melancholy states, paying close attention to their body positions, face expressions, voice tone, and surroundings (Ishiguro, 2005). Her "memory" thus exists as a constantly shifting, extremely rich database, skilfully indexed and drawn upon for the specific use of prediction, pattern recognition, and companionship. When Klara attempts to "become" Josie for the purposes of the portrait or, more profoundly, as a potential surrogate, her "memory" is not an intimate

recollection of Josie's lived life but rather a cultured construction from intimate observations of Josie's routines, listening in on her dialogue, and breaking down her affective and behavioural patterns. This is a unique form of identity construction, in which self and personality are built out of external information and diligent impersonation rather than internal, subjective existence. This raises fundamental questions about the nature of a soul or the subject's own "essence" (Andrew, 2023).

The "linguopoetic" impact of Klara's precise, almost clinical accounts and her own unusual narrative standpoint is profound and multifaceted. Her description usually consists of straightforward, declarative statements, indicating her logical, sequential thought process. When she uses metaphor or anthropomorphism—like her veneration of the Sun or her belief in "invisible strings" to pull people together it is usually in an effort to explain intricate human thoughts in a way that can be understood by her own system or to better communicate with humans, not an inherent, native form of communication. Her "world view is guided by her AI processing of visual data and by her devotion to being a true companion" (Carlos, 2022). This is conveyed linguistically in her one-track thinking about the "patterns" of human behaviour and her pitiless, quasi-programmed, hopefulness, even before human irrationality, cruelty, or existent desolation. Her tale, in this manner, is an extraordinary view into the world of humans, refreshed within the reader's imagination through the medium of an alien but deeply empathetic mind. The novel's exploration of Klara's artificially constructed memory forces fundamental questions regarding remembering, consciousness, and, above all, having a personality, particularly when these concepts are detached from traditional human biological, emotional, and psychological contexts. Klara's narrative structure demonstrates Ishiguro's persistent fascination with memory as something malleable and multi-dimensional, pushing its boundaries into the artificial world and thereby continuing his richly reflective critique of what, precisely, constitutes personhood and humanity in an increasingly technological age.

CONCLUSION

This detailed analysis has closely explored the ways narrative forms, as complex containers of memory, significantly affect the linguopoetic texture and thematic focus within Kazuo Ishiguro's chosen novels: *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Klara and the Sun*. By a study of the particular mnemonic processes employed in each novel, this research has highlighted Ishiguro's continued preoccupation with

memory as a constitutive factor in the construction of personality and identity, interest neatly interwoven within his distinctive prose and narrative form.

In *The Remains of the Day*, we encountered Stevens's first-person retrospection narration as a deliberate self-construction in which the claimed veracity of his own narrative is progressively eroded through embedded unreliability. His language—replete with euphemism, hesitation, and perpetual understatement—is linguopoetic indices of his repressed and unclaimed memory. This limited language and censored narration directly echo his carefully built personal and professional persona, exemplifying how selective memory, when linguistically incarnated, can become a life characterized by emotional emptiness and catastrophic self-delusion.

Never Let Me Go realigned our attention to fractured and systemically repressed memory, which showed us how Kathy H.'s first-person retrospective account slowly reveals deep, heartbreaking realities about her life and the lives of the clones. The investigation centred on the complexity of collective memory among the clones, and its erasure or enforced reinstatement because of their unique circumstance. The ubiquitous vagueness and deliberate gaps in their memories, expressed through a detached voice, iterative locution, and circumlocutions, underscored the profound linguopoetic impact of systematic memory erasure on identity and fate, and how an unfinished past can foreordain a doomed, tragic destiny.

Finally, *Klara and the Sun* presented a contemporary evolution of Ishiguro's memory problems, delving into artificial memory and observational narrative. Klara's first-person observational account was alleged to be a real form of "memory," meticulously constructed through observation, data collection, and pattern noticing. The crucial distinction drawn between human experiential memory and machine-constructed memory, expressed in Klara's clinical, almost scientific language and distinctive narrative voice, greatly educated the reader about the nature of human feeling, true connection, and the heart of identity in an increasingly technological world.

This study opens up many intriguing doors to further investigation in terms of memory, narrative theory, and representations of artificial intelligence in contemporary fiction. Further investigation may explore how cultural memory and historical trauma are suggested (or explicitly) narrated through comparable linguopoetic means in Ishiguro's other novels, or intergenerational memory in his novels. In addition, a further, more subtle comparison of AI stories in

contemporary fiction, focusing on the linguistic construction of artificial consciousness and memory, would be an addition to the larger debate. Finally, the reader's process of reconstructing such fractured or untrustworthy memories and its influence upon how they experience personality is fertile ground for reception studies. The enduring power of Ishiguro's universe lies in its ongoing invitation to delve into the mysteries of recollection, challenging us to reassess our perception of self, history, and the elusive aspects of truth.

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