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Shaping Individual and Collective Identities: The Trace of Cultural Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* in the Realm of Jan Assmann Theory

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Abstract: Kazuo Ishiguro explores human emotions, trauma, and love in his novels, with memory playing a central role in shaping characters' identities. This study, drawing on Jan Assmann's cultural memory theory, investigates the role of memory in shaping individual and collective identities in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*. The study explores how personal and cultural memories influence characters' perceptions, beliefs, and interactions, shaping their sense of self and societal integration. It highlights how suppressed memories, unresolved traumas, shared historical memories, and societal narratives contribute to identity formation. Characters in the novel navigate trauma, loss, and identity construction amidst cultural memory and spatial dislocation. The experiences of characters like Etsuko and Sachiko illustrate the crucial role of memory in shaping individual and collective identities. The study reveals the intricate interplay between personal and collective memory as depicted through Etsuko's reflections on past tragedies and societal contexts in the novel. Ishiguro's exploration of memory, trauma, and identity construction showcases the profound impact of memories on both personal and collective identities. The findings demonstrate how the past continues to shape the present and influence personal and shared cultural histories.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro; Cultural memory theory; Individual Identity; Collective Identity; Trauma and loss; Personal memories; Social narratives.

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1. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro, a modern Japanese-British novelist, frequently explores themes of human emotions, trauma, love, and attraction in his novels, with memory serving as a central focus. Memory plays a crucial role in shaping the characters in his works, allowing them to navigate the complexities of loss and gain as they strive to attain what they deserve. In his novels, Ishiguro effectively explores different aspects of memory like trauma, unconsciousness, forgetting, memory manipulation, and narrative inconsistencies. The strong connection between memory and identity is a fascinating topic that delves into the core of what makes us who we are. Our memories shape our experiences, beliefs, and emotions, ultimately influencing our sense of self. From childhood recollections to significant life events, our memories play a crucial role in defining our identity and understanding our place in the world. In this introduction, attempt will be made to explore how memory intertwines with identity, shaping our perceptions and shaping our sense of self.

Memory serves as a crucial tool for human beings, enabling them to create a bridge between their experiences and their present reality. It acts as a repository of our past, storing a wealth of information, emotions, and experiences that shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. By drawing upon memories, one can reflect on past events, learn from mistakes, and make informed decisions in the present moment. Memory allows us to connect with our personal history, understand our identity, and navigate the complexities of life with a sense of continuity and coherence.

Memory serves as a powerful mechanism that helps us weave together the threads of our past and present, shaping our perceptions, actions, and ultimately, the sense of self. Memory can bring up feelings of nostalgia and sorrow in his creations, while also offering lovely and detailed portrayals of characters, happenings, and locations. In his novels, Ishiguro includes the idea of Nemesis from Greek tragedies in different ways and utilizes the stream of consciousness method, illustrating the complexities of memory that encompass both remembering and forgetting. Ishiguro focuses on memory in his novels due to its significance to his characters' choices and desires. He then elaborates on the details of historical events. Memory serves various functions in his writing: to prioritize the self, to avoid difficult realities, to support arguments with logic, to make comparisons between situations and characters, and to fulfill expectations. Memory can at times have a detrimental effect on individuals and communities, hindering their advancement and serving as a barrier to moving forward.

2. Methodology

This study will investigate the shaping of individual and collective identities in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* by employing Jan Assmann's theoretical explorations of cultural memory. The research will focus on how oral narratives contribute to identity formation within the context of cultural memory, drawing insights from Jan Assmann's perspectives on memory's role in reaffirming cultural identity. The core of this methodology is rooted in Assmann's differentiation between communicative and cultural memory. As Assmann states, "Communicative memory is limited to a short time span—approximately three generations—but is characterized by its immediacy, spontaneity, and dynamism" (Assmann, "Cultural Memory" 12).

In his "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," Jan Assmann differentiates between collective memory, which he refers to as communicative memory, and cultural memory, along with their respective social and cultural foundations. Assmann highlights two primary distinctions between cultural memory and collective memory. First, cultural memory emphasizes specific cultural characteristics that are absent in everyday or communicative memory. Second, he posits that cultural memory differs fundamentally from history, as history does not embody the qualities associated with memory. Assmann's focus on the distinction between collective (or communicative) memory and cultural memory is significant because he notes that collective memory is inherently linked to the everyday experiences of individuals. As he explains, "when we move from the everyday, we have cultural memory" (Assmann, "Collective Memory" 129). Cultural memory, according to Assmann, is rooted in pivotal historical events and is characterized by "figures of memory," which serve as fixed points in a culture's collective recollection. He elaborates that "memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)" (Assmann, "Collective Memory" 129). The primary function of cultural memory is to create and sustain a cohesive identity that endures across generations. Unlike collective memory, which tends to operate within a three-generation cycle, cultural memory is more stable and resistant to change. Consequently, the representation of history through various institutions and artistic means is essential. This representation becomes a practical process involving the transformation of established narratives to ensure the stability of society. This distinction sets the context for assessing the individual experiences of Etsuko, the protagonist in Ishiguro's novel, and how these experiences are framed within broader cultural narratives.

Assmann contends that memory is essential for the development of selfhood and identity, operating on both personal and collective levels. He asserts that “memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood or identity” (Assmann, "Communicative" 109). To effectively analyze the interplay between memory and identity, this study will consider the synthesis of time, identity, and memory, recognizing that time serves as a crucial marker of identity, only perceivable in the presence of both time and space. Exploring the concept of the “diachronic identity,” (109) Assmann emphasizes that the human self is constructed from the “stuff of time,” and he approaches memory by delineating it into three interrelated levels: the inner neuro-mental, the social, and the cultural. On the inner level, memory pertains to the “neuro-mental system,” representing personal identity within an internal subjective timeframe (109). This study will examine these internal memories of the protagonist, Etsuko, to understand her individual identity. On a social level, memory emerges through communication and social interactions. As a collective construct, social memory shapes individual identity as a "social self" and recognizes individuals as carriers of social roles within a defined social context. In "Communicative and cultural memory," Assmann argues that cultural memory operates similarly, forming a collective identity shared by a cultural group. He posits that cultural memory can be transmitted across generations and recontextualized in various situations (110-111). To investigate this, the analysis will focus on how Ishiguro crafts Etsuko's narrative as a bridge between personal and cultural memory. Additionally, Assmann addresses the role of external objects as memory carriers. He acknowledges that personal memory interacts not only with other human memories but also with physical symbols, influencing how cultural memory is perceived. Assmann articulates an institutional aspect of cultural memory, noting that it may exist in forms that require "institutions of preservation and re-embodiment” (Assmann, "Communicative" 111). This exploration will consider how memorial practices and institutions within the narrative serve to solidify Etsuko's identity.

In "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," Assmann characterizes cultural memory by its “distance from the everyday,” which contributes to its enduring “temporal horizon” (129). This distance allows for the establishment of “figures of memory” that remain unchanged by the passage of time (129). The methodology will analyze how Ishiguro positions places within the narrative as carriers of memory, which can either affirm or challenge Etsuko's sense of identity. In her *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, Aleida Assmann emphasizes that places can confirm and preserve memories during phases of cultural forgetting, stating that “the places reactivate the memory, but also

memory reactivates the place, because biographical and cultural memory never arises solely out of places” (12). This reciprocal relationship will be a key focus in understanding the dynamics of memory in shaping both personal and collective identities in *A Pale View of Hills*. In summary, this study will utilize Jan Assmann’s theoretical framework to dissect the intricate ways in which cultural memory informs the identities of individuals and groups within Ishiguro's narrative. By focusing on the interplay between memory, time, and identity, the analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how cultural narratives contribute to shaping human experience.

3. Literature Review

A Pale View of Hills by Kazuo Ishiguro has garnered scholarly attention for its intricate portrayal of memory and its influence on personal and collective identities. While several articles have delved into the exploration of memory in the novel, particularly in relation to characters' memory and narrative structure, a limited number have focused specifically on how memory contributes to shaping individual and cultural identity within the text. The followings are a few related studies:

In "Between Memory and Trauma: The Search for Self in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *A Pale View of Hills*", Tanushree Haorungbam and Rajkumari Ashalata Devi attempt to examine how memory and the disruptive impact of traumatic experience affect our perceptions and interpretation of reality. They conclude that Etsuko’s recollection of her disorienting and disturbing past, however much ridden by trauma, is a self-deception, a shield from the obvious failures in her life, at the same time justifying her search for self in the face of trauma in her failed vision. In “Identity Crisis in Kazuo Ishiguro’s ‘*A Pale View of Hills*’”, Sagar & Shah explored the changes in identity in Etsuko’s character and focused on identity crises and reconstruction of the mixed identity in the cultural Second-space. They have examined how identity is interlinked with an identity crisis, and how identity is distorted and ambiguous during traumatic periods such as war. Pachuau and Lalrinfeli's paper, "Situating Kazuo Ishiguro Within the Realms of Memory and Identity," explores memory and identity as central themes in Ishiguro's novels. They highlight how memory's intricacies, like distortion and suppression, shape individual identity in *A Pale View of Hills* and *The Remains of the Day*. Memory enriches characters and plots, influencing identity formation as complex narratives. They argue that our interpretations of memories significantly impact shaping our identity. In "The Journey of Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *A Pale View Of Hills*," G. Akilan asserts that Ishiguro employs memory as a powerful force, guiding characters through past and present experiences to reveal

their inner worlds. Memory serves as a tool to engage readers and shape the novel's mood, as the protagonist meticulously recalls and strategically fills gaps between past and present events. In his paper, "Conflicted Memory, Irreversible Loss: Dissociative Projection in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* and Yasunari Kawabata's *The Sound of the Mountain*", Krystian Piotrowski compared Ishiguro's first novel to Kawabata's mature work, highlighting the thematic similarities in their portrayal of personal loss, alienation, displacement, and nostalgia. The findings indicate that both Ishiguro and Kawabata use memory, nostalgia, and loss as central themes in their works to explore the innermost feelings and experiences of their characters and that both authors employ similar motifs and techniques to convey the complexities of personal and cultural identity, as well as the transient nature of memory and emotion.

While both Lydia Gaukler's "Aspect of Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*" and Dorothee Birke's "Memory's Fragile Power" explore the connection between memory and identity, there remains a significant gap in understanding how the interplay between individual and collective memory specifically shapes the identities of characters within Ishiguro's work. According to Gaukler, individual memories are essential for maintaining biographical continuity, as they allow us to connect our personal past to our present selves (1), yet her analysis does not sufficiently address how these personal recollections interact with cultural and collective memory frameworks that influence the characters' identities and their relationship to the community.

Similarly, Birke highlights "the importance of memory is a recurring motif in numerous literary works" (143) and identifies memory as a pivotal theme in modern British literature; though, her survey lacks a focused examination of the dual aspects of memory—both individual and collective—and how they converge in the context of Ishiguro's narratives. This oversight limits our understanding of how characters navigate their sense of self within personal histories that are also intertwined with broader social and historical narratives. Therefore, further research is warranted to investigate the nuanced dynamics of individual versus collective memory in *A Pale View of Hills*, exploring how Ishiguro constructs a rich tapestry of identities that reflect both personal experiences and the shared memories of a community.

Despite the existing scholarly focus on memory and identity in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, there is a notable gap in research that specifically examines the interplay between individual and collective memory within the narrative. Most studies, including those by Tanushree Haorungbam and Rajkumari Ashalata Devi, Sagar & Shah,

and G. Akilan, explore either the impact of traumatic experiences on the character's self-perception or the broader theme of memory in shaping identity. However, they often neglect to fully analyze how these individual recollections are interwoven with cultural memory narratives, particularly within the context of post-war Japanese society.

Lydia Gaukler and Dorothee Birke have laid a foundation regarding memory's role in identity formation, but their analyses fall short of delving deeply into how the complexities of both personal and collective memories converge to influence the characters' identities. This gap limits the understanding of how characters in *A Pale View of Hills* navigate their identities throughout personal histories deeply influenced by shared cultural experiences and societal trauma.

Therefore, this paper seeks to address this gap by investigating how Ishiguro employs memory as a narrative device to explore the nuances of individual and collective identity formation in a post-war context. By focusing on the interplay between personal recollections and cultural memory, the study aims to provide fresh insights into how these interactions shape the characters' understanding of self and belonging in a rapidly evolving societal landscape.

3.1. Research Questions

This paper attempts to answer the following research questions based on the identified gap in the literature:

1. How does Kazuo Ishiguro utilize memory as a narrative device to explore the complexities of individual and collective identity formation in the context of post-war Japanese society in *A Pale View of Hills*?
2. In what ways do the traumatic experiences of characters in *A Pale View of Hills* reflect the interplay between personal recollections and cultural memory, and how do these interactions shape their understanding of self and belonging in a post-war landscape?

Attempts will be made to examine how Kazuo Ishiguro employs memory as a narrative device to explore the complexities of individual and collective identity formation within the context of post-war Japanese society in *A Pale View of Hills*. It will investigate the ways in which the characters' traumatic experiences reflect the interplay between personal recollections and cultural memory and how these interactions influence their understanding of self and belonging in a post-war landscape. Through this analysis, the study aims to uncover the multifaceted role of memory in shaping identity amidst the challenges of a rapidly changing society.

4. Analysis

4.1. Memory and Construction of Identity in *A Pale View of Hills*

In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *A Pale View of Hills*, the plot is intricately connected to the history of Japan and the ways in which it has shaped individual and collective identity. Set in post-World War II Japan, the novel follows the story of Etsuko, a Japanese woman living in England who reflects on her past in Nagasaki and Tokyo. Through Etsuko's memories and interactions with other characters, Ishiguro explores the impact of Japan's tumultuous history on its people. The devastation of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the cultural shifts in post-war Japan, and the lingering trauma of the war all play a role in shaping the characters' identities and relationships. The novel opens with her daughter Niki visiting, triggering Etsuko's recollections of her past in post-World War II Nagasaki. As Etsuko reflects on her life, the narrative delves into her interactions with Sachiko, a neglectful mother, and her daughter Mariko. Sachiko's indifference towards Mariko and the tragic fate of Mariko's kittens serve as powerful symbols of betrayal and loss, shaping Mariko's worldview. The novel also explores Etsuko's strained marriage, her daughter Keiko's tragic death, and the complexities of personal and cultural identity. Etsuko's recollections prompt introspection, revealing how traumatic events, relationships, and decisions impact her sense of self. The narrative underscores the intricate interplay between memory, trauma, relationships, and self-discovery in shaping individual identities and collective experiences. Through a nonlinear narrative structure, the novel weaves together themes of family, loss, cultural identity, and the lasting impacts of past events on present actions and perceptions.

4.2. Memory and Individual Identity Formation

Jan Assmann's theories on memory and identity suggest that memory—both communicative and cultural—is crucial to the formation of personal and collective identities. He argues that memory fosters social cohesion by enabling groups to share, learn from, and recollect their collective pasts, thereby shaping their identities in the present and future. Assmann differentiates between two types of collective memory: communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory, or “everyday memory,” is characterized by oral transmission, intergenerational sharing, and relies heavily on personal interactions within a community. This form of memory is inherently transient and limited to the experiences of the oldest community member. In contrast, cultural memory encompasses shared narratives that transcend individual experiences and persist over time. As Assmann elaborates in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*,

communicative memory consists of personal recollections exchanged through conversation, while cultural memory reflects societal narratives that shape collective identity (26).

This section seeks to explore the impact of memory on identity by examining how characters' memories influence their sense of self and shape their identities. Drawing on Assmann's framework, it posits that memories serve as complex narratives constructed from diverse sources, rather than mere recitations of past events. Etsuko's narrative in *A Pale View of Hills* exemplifies this duality as she reflects on her past in Japan, particularly her relationship with her daughter, Keiko. The fragmented structure of Etsuko's narrative mirrors her quest to piece together her past, highlighting the interplay between individual memory and broader cultural experiences. By acknowledging the unreliability of memory, Etsuko illuminates how her recollections may be influenced by her current circumstances and emotional state, suggesting that her interpretations of past events—particularly traumatic ones—could be colored by her present feelings of guilt and loss, as she states: "Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here [England]" (Ishiguro, *A Pale* 156) which reflects Jan Assmann's theory of memory by highlighting the subjective and context-dependent nature of recollection. Assmann emphasizes that personal memories are shaped by individual experiences and current circumstances, making them often unreliable. This aligns with his distinction between communicative memory, which can be influenced by biases and reinterpretations, and cultural memory, which is shaped by societal values and shared narratives. The acknowledgment of memory's unreliability underscores the dynamic process of remembering, suggesting that memories are not simply factual recountings but are actively constructed and reconstructed over time. This perspective illustrates the complex interplay between individual and collective memory in shaping personal identity.

Yugin Teo, in *Kazuo Ishiguro and Memory*, contends that the theme of memory is often associated with characters struggling with past traumas, compelled to revisit their histories in hopes of rectifying wrongs (7). His argument draws on Paul Ricoeur's insights from *Memory, History, Forgetting*, emphasizing the active and passive processes involved in either commemorating or neglecting events in memory or historical records. Teo suggests that Ishiguro's works provoke thought by demonstrating how characters control or constrain their memories, reflecting broader national tendencies to accept or reject accountability for historical events. The novel addresses two forms of trauma: the

individual trauma stemming from the loss of a child and the collective trauma of war and atomic devastation. These traumas are intertwined on both personal and social levels. Etsuko's life story, recounted through her memories, unfolds in the aftermath of World War II in the devastated Nagasaki. Initially seeking a better life in a foreign country, she ultimately grapples with the neglect of her daughter's well-being. Following her immigration to Britain, Etsuko faces the painful revelation that Keiko has taken her own life. Jan Assmann suggests that cultural memory encompasses more than personal experiences; it is shaped by enduring media and symbols that reflect societal values. He defines it as "the body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image," providing a foundation for groups to establish their unity and distinctiveness (J. Assmann, "Collective memory" 132). Etsuko's memories also connect with the greater cultural context of post-war Japan, where traditional values often collide with the harsh realities experienced by individuals.

In Ishiguro's depiction, we see Etsuko negotiating her role as a mother while grappling with the historical and cultural trauma of her homeland. Her memories are not solely personal; they are intertwined with collective experiences of loss, dislocation, and the struggle for identity in a changing society. Etsuko's struggle to communicate her past to her daughter, as expressed in "I wanted to tell her about my life, but I found it difficult to put into words" (45), highlights the complexity of transmitting cultural memory, indicating that identity is both personal and communal. Finally, her acknowledgment that "I had to let go of the past" (112) reinforces the notion that while memories inform her present identity, there is a necessity to reconcile them for personal growth. Ultimately, Etsuko's journey through memory underscores the fluid nature of identity, shaped by both personal experiences and the cultural legacies of post-war Japan.

In "Traumatic Memory and Narrative Isolation in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*", Michael Molino approaches the novel from the perspective of trauma and argues that it reflects "individual experiences locked in a complex neurological and psychological struggle of traumatized memory" (334). Etsuko's identity is shaped by her life experiences, personal tragedy, social trauma, and the tragedies of Japanese history. At the start of the novel, Etsuko makes it clear that she is avoiding any reminders of her past. She rejects all connections to Japan and even hesitates to give her second daughter a Japanese name. The reason behind her reluctance to discuss her past is initially unclear, but it becomes evident that she is still grappling with the suicide of her daughter. Etsuko carries a sense of responsibility, having left Japan and her husband, despite believing

that Keiko would not find happiness in England. In *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*, Brian Shaffer posits that Etsuko utilizes various defense mechanisms to safeguard her psyche from revisiting her daughter's suicide. She consciously distances herself from certain memories and suppresses her recollection of the past as a means of shielding herself from distressing experiences (9). Etsuko does not want to talk about Keiko much since it does not bring her much solace. She only brings up her daughter because of the circumstances surrounding Niki's recent visit in April, which sparked memories of Sachiko after a long time, as the novel reads: "[there is] no great wish to dwell on Keiko now, it brings [her] little comfort.....because those were the circumstances around Niki's visit this April, and because it was during that visit that [she] remembered Sachiko again after all this time" (11). Etsuko not only avoids discussing Keiko, but she also refuses to accept her death. When she ran into her neighbor Mrs. Waters on the street and inquired about Keiko, she chose not to disclose her daughter's death. Etsuko later explains her decision to conceal the truth about Keiko's death: "It seemed easiest to say what I did. It was odd just now, with Mrs Waters. It was almost like you enjoyed [...] pretending Keiko was alive." (52) Supposedly, Etsuko is deliberately steering clear of addressing Keiko's suicide, and according to Niki, she even appears to be happy about it. The novel portrays the impacts of loss through Etsuko's experiences of delusion and insomnia. Although she appears to be successfully suppressing the idea of her daughter's death, at a deeper level, she is tormented by Keiko's spirit. She is unable to sleep and is having hallucinations of Keiko being hung in her room, as she describes: "I have found myself continually bringing to mind that picture of my daughter hanging in her room for days on end" (54).

Etsuko's mind is a labyrinth of distorted memories, blurring reality with delusion as she grapples with a haunting past of perceived motherhood failure. Attempts to bury painful recollections lead to their unintended resurrection, creating a paradox of remembrance and forgetfulness. The presence of her daughter's image on her wall serves as a constant reminder of her perceived parental shortcomings. Etsuko's fractured identity as a mother is rooted in deep scars from her traumatic history, marked by the horrors of war and Nagasaki's atomic bombing. The tragic loss of her family post-bombing and the heartbreaking discovery of her daughter's lifeless body continue to torment her. As she struggles with suppressed memories manifesting as ghostly apparitions, Etsuko confronts the enduring impact of trauma and loss on her identity. Etsuko's journey through her traumatic past serves as a catalyst, unraveling the intricate layers of her subconscious mind, where fantasies, fears, and desires intermingle. Her memories, shrouded in deception, contribute to her struggle with recollection, ultimately

leading to a disintegration of her sense of self and individual identity. Haunted by delusions and hallucinations, Etsuko is consumed by visions steeped in melancholy, each one a poignant reminder of her inner turmoil. In a poignant exchange with Ogata-san, a glimpse of her former self emerges as he fondly recalls her passion for playing the violin. During the post-war period when she resided with them, Etsuko's fervor for music was so intense that she would play well into the night, filling the house with her melodies. As she revisits this memory, Etsuko grapples with the justification for her actions, seeking to bridge the gap between her past and present selves. However, the void within her memory remains a stark reminder of the disconnect she feels. Despite her longing to reclaim the joy of playing the violin, the weight of her traumatic past acts as a barrier, stifling her attempts to reconnect with her former passion, as she recalls: "a great shame, Etsuko. And you were so devoted. I remember when you used to play in the dead of night and wake up the house." (Ishiguro, *A Pale View* 57).

The effect of traumatic past and identity distortion is conceivable in Etsuko's continual dreaming a little girl in the park. The dream revolves around a seemingly innocent and recurring vision of a little girl playing in the park. Initially, it appears as a simple reflection of a past observation, but as the dream revisits the speaker night after night, it takes on a more haunting quality. The dream involves the speaker observing the little girl on a swing, attempting to make it go higher by pulling on the chains, but struggling to achieve the desired height, as she describes to Niki:

At first it had seemed a perfectly innocent dream; I had merely dreamt of something I had seen the previous day - the little girl we had watched playing in the park. And then the dream came back the following night. Indeed, over the past few months, it has returned to me several times.... pulling hard on the chains without being able to make the swing go higher. (47-48)

This repetitive dream, with its motif of the girl on the swing, carries a sense of frustration and helplessness for Etsuko. The act of pulling on the chains to make the swing ascend symbolizes a desire for control or progress, yet the inability to achieve the desired outcome hints at a deeper psychological struggle or unresolved issue within the speaker's subconscious. The dream's recurrence over several months suggests a persistent preoccupation or unresolved conflict that the speaker grapples with. The imagery of the swinging girl, coupled with Etsuko's futile attempts to elevate her, may symbolize a sense of stagnation, unfulfilled aspirations, or a struggle for agency and empowerment in the

face of obstacles. The revelation in the novel where Etsuko revisits her recurring dream about the little girl in the park, only to realize that the girl is not who she initially thought, adds a layer of complexity and darkness to Etsuko's subconscious struggles. When Etsuko confides in Niki that the little girl in her dream is not the innocent child from the park but someone she knew long ago, likely referring to Mariko, it unveils a deeper connection to her past and the unresolved guilt that haunts her. The unsettling realization that the little girl in the dream is not on a swing, as Etsuko had believed, but rather hanging from a noose, as suggested by Brian Shaffer, introduces a chilling and morbid element to the dream (26). This interpretation implies a darker and more sinister undertone, hinting at themes of guilt, loss, and perhaps even self-destructive tendencies within Etsuko's psyche. In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko's emotional turmoil is central to the novel's exploration of memory and identity. Following the tragic suicide of her elder daughter, Etsuko is consumed by feelings of loneliness and neglect from her younger daughter. This loss leads her to revisit past experiences, both joyful and painful, in order to come to terms with her grief and redefine her sense of self. As Etsuko recounts the sufferings, shame, and moments of happiness in her life, she is able to navigate the complexities of her emotions and find a way to move forward. By delving into her memories, she is able to mediate between sorrow and bliss, allowing her to process her loss and find a new understanding of herself.

Through this process of reflection and introspection, Etsuko is able to shape her individual identity after her devastating loss. By facing her past and confronting her emotions head-on, she is able to come to terms with her grief and find a sense of peace and acceptance. In doing so, she is able to find a way to move forward and redefine herself in the wake of tragedy. The loss of her daughter serves as a painful reminder to Etsuko of her shortcomings as a mother, leading her to reflect on her past actions. This is evident in her treatment of the tomato plants, which she has neglected and ruined, symbolizing her sense of guilt as an uncaring mother. Etsuko acknowledges this, admitting, "I really have been rather neglectful about those tomatoes this year" (92). This realization of her neglectful behavior towards the plants mirrors her feelings of inadequacy as a mother. Etsuko had failed to anticipate the consequences of her seemingly well-intentioned decision to persuade her daughter, Keiko, to leave her homeland and start afresh in a foreign country. In a poignant scene, Mariko manages to break free from a potential threat, but Keiko finds herself ensnared by the overwhelming grip of her emotions, unable to escape. This relocation deeply unsettles Keiko on a psychological level, ultimately leading her to take her own life. The weight of Keiko's

suicide leaves Etsuko haunted and consumed by the tragedy, evident in her relentless preoccupation with the event. The profound impact of her daughter's death underscores Etsuko's internal turmoil and the lasting scars left by the repercussions of her actions. The anguish of losing Keiko serves as a constant reminder of the devastating consequences of her decisions, casting a shadow over Etsuko's life and perpetuating her sense of guilt and grief resulting from her deep regret for her past behavior towards her daughter, Keiko. She acknowledges that in the new country they resided in, it was not uncommon for a young woman like Keiko to desire independence and to leave home. However, Etsuko realizes that her attempts to influence Keiko's decision to leave only served to alienate her daughter further, causing Keiko to sever all ties with her. Etsuko laments that she never anticipated the speed at which Keiko would distance herself from her, and she now recognizes that her daughter, who was unhappy at home, may have found the outside world overwhelming. The passage reflects Etsuko's remorse for her actions and her realization of the consequences of her behavior on her relationship with Keiko. As Etsuko grapples with the source of her grief and loss, which has deeply impacted her sense of self, she turns to her memories as a means of processing her emotions and reconstructing her fragmented identity. By revisiting her past experiences and confronting her feelings of guilt and sorrow, Etsuko is able to work through her loss and find a way to piece together her shattered sense of self. Through this process of reflection and introspection, she begins to find a path towards healing and self-discovery.

Despite being blamed for her daughter's suicide, Etsuko turns to her past in search of meaning and reassurance. As she reflects on her memories, she finds some relief in realizing that she was not the cause of Keiko's death. "What does it matter about the dirty little creatures?" (165). This moment marks a crucial connection between the past and present, where Mariko and Keiko, as well as Etsuko and Sachiko, are revealed to be interconnected. By exploring her painful past, Etsuko is able to make sense of her present experiences and find a way to work through her loss. This deep psychological and emotional relationship between the past and present is evident in the characters, particularly the protagonist, who uses her past as a means of mediation and agency in confronting her struggles and finding resolution to recollect her identity. Etsuko's migration to London brings about a new dimension to her identity as she grapples with dislocation and immigration. In this new environment, she carries her cultural memory with her, which plays a significant role in shaping her sense of self and identity. As Aleida Assmann states, "To participate in the group's vision of its past (...) means that one has to learn about it. One cannot remember it, one has to memorize it... it is

knowledge that backs up (not an 'I' but) a 'we'" (A. Assmann, "Re-framing Memory" 38). This underscores the idea that identity is not an inherent quality but is constructed through the shared experiences, narratives, and knowledge that a group collectively embraces. Also, Jan Assmann states that cultural memory is thus "exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms" (J. Assmann, "Communicative" 110), indicating that it relies on cultural artifacts, practices, and institutions to convey and preserve a group's identity over long durations. This notion underlines the importance of structured access and institutionalization in shaping collective identity, as cultural memory facilitates a deeper and more profound understanding of the group's self-conception and continuity across generations. The profound connection between Etsuko's loss of her daughter and her displacement from Japan is evident in her struggle to establish her identity in the unfamiliar setting of London. However, she finds herself unable to maintain her Japanese identity following the loss of her daughter. Etsuko's memories of her daughter's restlessness and desire to return to London reflect her struggle to adapt to a new culture. Despite her daughter's difficulties in adjusting, Etsuko is haunted by the past and often shares these painful memories with her younger daughter. The constant reminders of her daughter's restlessness and eventual departure weigh heavily on Etsuko, making it hard for her to find comfort in the bustling city of London.

Etsuko contrasts her own journey of identity reconstruction with that of Mrs. Fujiwara, who did not receive support from the Japanese community during the war period. Despite this lack of support, Mrs. Fujiwara endeavors to rebuild her memory and identity by reflecting on her past in Japan. This process involves revisiting her old days and experiences in an attempt to make sense of her present circumstances and reconnect with her cultural roots. Through this introspection and reflection on her past, Mrs. Fujiwara seeks to find solace and a sense of belonging amidst the challenges she faces in her current reality. Sachiko is another character in the novel serving as a model for Etsuko and her deceased daughter in terms of their shared cultural challenges in London and their mutual struggle to construct their new identities. Sachiko, a woman of middle age, is in a similar situation where she lost her spouse in the war and currently resides with her daughter Mariko. Mariko is a young girl struggling to adapt to the wartime, she is distrustful of everyone. She is not attending school. However, she has had her sense of self taken away from her as a result of being a casualty of war. Etsuko remembers her first encounter with Mariko. This meeting portrays the interconnected struggles of Etsuko, Sachiko, and Mariko as they grapple with cultural challenges and the impact of war on their identities. Mariko's trauma and distrust reflect the loss of her sense of self

due to wartime experiences, mirroring the broader theme of identity construction amidst turmoil. Etsuko's inability to fully construct her identity parallels the struggles of other characters in the war period, highlighting the complex and resistant nature of identity formation in such tumultuous times. This concept aligns with the findings of Sagar & Shah in their article, "Identity Crisis in Kazuo Ishiguro's 'A Pale View of Hills'," where they state: "Whatever she recalls constructing her identity, she fails as other characters also fail to figure out there in the war period. It is not exceptional for Etsuko, she too resists any given identity like other characters." (48)

The characters in the novel navigate a journey of trauma, loss, and identity construction in the context of cultural memory and spatial dislocation. Both Etsuko and Sachiko face the challenge of adjusting to traumatic situations and endure hardships to protect their daughters - Etsuko with Keiko and Sachiko with Mariko. Ultimately, both women experience the heartbreaking loss of their daughters. As Etsuko recalls these incidents from her life in London, where she meets Niki, she reconstructs her identity by drawing parallels between her experiences and those of Sachiko. Through this process of reflection and memory, Etsuko finds a connection to Sachiko and a deeper understanding of her own journey of identity construction in the face of adversity. In *A Pale View of Hills*, In "A Pale View of Hills," Ishiguro explores identity construction through the protagonist Etsuko's journey of reinventing the past. Characters confront trauma and strive to understand themselves, but often struggle due to past burdens. The novel delves into seeking truth and self-awareness, highlighting how avoidance of painful truths impedes personal growth. Ishiguro skillfully navigates memory, exploitation, and self-condemnation themes, illustrating characters' struggles with confronting their pasts and uncovering their true identities.

Etsuko's two daughters serve as mirrors reflecting conflicting aspects of her identity: Keiko embodies her Japanese roots, while Niki embodies an English persona. The loss of Keiko severs Etsuko's profound connection to Japan, leaving behind only a fading, distant memory of her past. Ishiguro's exploration of the past in the novel is not about rectification or redemption, but rather about delving into and reliving the often traumatic experiences that shape one's existence. Memory and identity play pivotal roles in illustrating the impact of trauma. Etsuko grapples with unresolved ambiguity, her traumatic guilt causing her to oscillate between past and present. Her recollections of a disorienting and distressing past, though clouded by trauma, serve as a shield, a form of self-deception that both shields her from her life's failures and justifies her quest for self-discovery in the aftermath of trauma and shattered dreams. In navigating this complex

terrain of memory, identity, and trauma, Etsuko confronts the challenge of reconciling her fragmented past with her present reality, seeking a path towards understanding and acceptance amidst the chaos of her experiences.

4.3. Memory and Collective/Cultural Identity Formation

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *The Pale View of Hills*, serves as a poignant exploration of the formation of collective identity through the lens of memory and cultural heritage, set against the backdrop of Japan's tumultuous history of war. In this section, attempts will be made to delve into how the protagonist, Etsuko, grapples with her past experiences and shared cultural memories to navigate the complexities of cultural identity in the face of migration and displacement. By examining Etsuko's journey in the context of Japan's history of war and the enduring impact of social trauma, we seek to unravel the intricate ways in which memory shapes collective identity and informs the construction of cultural heritage. Through a close analysis of Etsuko's narrative and Ishiguro's exploration of Japan's cultural memory, the aim is to shed light on the profound influence of shared cultural memory on the formation of collective identity in the novel. As stated before, in his "Communicative and Cultural Memory", Jan Assmann defines collective memory as follows: "Cultural memory is a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity." (110) In *Collective Memory and Collective Identity*, Ro and Edelman state: "The concept of 'collective memory' has been associated with broad discussions on collective identity, national identity, the hierarchy of power, and the relation of political as well as social structure to history." (4)

The intersection of collective memory and history is a complex and nuanced topic that scholars approach in different ways. While some emphasize the distinctions between collective memory and history, others view them as interconnected and complementary elements in shaping how societies remember and interpret the past. In the case of Japan during World War II and the atomic bombings, the historical events have left a lasting impact on the collective and cultural memory of the Japanese people. Kazuo Ishiguro's novels serve as a poignant reflection of this trauma, capturing the emotional and psychological aftermath of the war and the devastation caused by the atomic bombings. By delving into these historical events through literature, Ishiguro helps to preserve and transmit the memory of these experiences to future generations. His works contribute to the collective memory of Japan, highlighting the importance of remembering and understanding the past in shaping collective identity. Therefore, discussing the shaping

of collective identity through collective and cultural memory would be incomplete without acknowledging the historical context of Japan during World War II and the enduring impact of the atomic bombings on the nation's collective consciousness. Ishiguro's novels serve as a powerful testament to the significance of remembering and reckoning with the past in understanding and shaping collective identity.

In "Searching Identity In; *The Remains Of The Day* And *A Pale View Of Hills* By Kazuo Ishiguro" Tanritanir and Karaman highlight the impact of World War II on Japan, particularly in the context of literature and cultural identity. They discuss the devastation caused by the war, including the bombings and destruction of Japan with nuclear weapons by the United States which led to a significant immigration of Japanese individuals to England, seeking refuge and a new life after the war (91). In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *A Pale View of Hills*, the protagonist Etsuko is forced to navigate through turmoil of loss, trauma, and dislocation as she copes with the memories of her past and her personal experiences. Set in post-World War II Japan, Etsuko is haunted by the trauma of the war and the bombing of Nagasaki, which has left a lasting impact on her psyche. As she struggles to reshape her individual identity in the wake of these traumatic events, Etsuko is also confronted with the challenge of coming to terms with the devastation and destruction that has affected her country and her people. Ishiguro paints a vivid and evocative picture of post-war Japan, capturing the atmosphere of a society dealing with the aftermath of a devastating conflict. *A Pale View of Hills* delicately portrays the process of recovery and remembrance in both the city of Nagasaki and its inhabitants following the devastating atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. In Etsuko's reflections, Nagasaki emerges as a city facing the aftermath of the catastrophic events that unfolded just a few years prior. The impact of the bombings on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was profound and left individuals deeply scarred by the unimaginable horrors they had witnessed. The fragility of human life and the profound value placed on survival marked the onset of an era overshadowed by uncertainties about the future of humanity.

In the post-war landscape of Nagasaki, a period of intense reconstruction ensued, despite the pervasive reminders of the atomic bomb's destruction scattered throughout the city. The devastation, both physical and psychological, defied adequate description, leaving survivors grappling with indescribable trauma and a desire to erase the haunting memories of the bombings. Witnesses to the horrors of the bombings often responded with a stoic silence, seemingly attempting to shield themselves from the overwhelming weight of their experiences. Etsuko, navigating the ebbs and flows of this fragile

existence, found her life and those of others irrevocably altered by the events that had transpired. The narrative captures a poignant moment in history where individuals confronted the harsh realities of war and sought to rebuild their lives amidst the ruins of their past. Throughout the novel, Ishiguro skillfully illustrates the sudden and profound changes that Etsuko and those around her experience in the aftermath of the war. They are confronted with devastating losses and endure both emotional and physical wounds, thrust upon them without warning. As Yugin Teo articulates in *Kazuo Ishiguro and Memory*, "There is a sense of a future that could have been, but one that has been suddenly removed and irrevocably changed." This sentiment encapsulates the profound impact of unforeseen tragedies on individuals, altering the course of their lives in ways they never could have anticipated.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Nagasaki is depicted as a city on the path of progress, despite the irreparable damage it has suffered. The city is experiencing industrial and economic growth, yet there is a pervasive feeling of emptiness and suppressed emotions among its people. While there is an outward appearance of optimism and politeness, there lies a deep undercurrent of resentment and sorrow within the community. Etsuko embodies the trauma, repression, and loss that the city is handling with as it tries to recover. Her inner turmoil reflects the anxiousness and uncertainty about the future that haunts her. The hollowness and sorrow she carries within her resonates with the sense of futility that seems to permeate the city. Yugin Teo describes Etsuko's anxiety and insecurity about the future as "emptiness and sorrow symbolize the city's inner turmoil at the generations of inhabitants that have been obliterated by the bomb" (53). In *A Pale View of Hills*, Sachiko is a close friend of Etsuko's who, despite losing her family in the bombing, remains hopeful and optimistic about the future of the city and its people. Sachiko's positive outlook symbolizes progress and the desire to move past the recent tragedy. When Etsuko, who is married to a Japanese man in Nagasaki, meets Sachiko, she is fascinated by Sachiko's dream of marrying an American and starting a new life in America. However, Etsuko's own inner struggles and past traumas cause her to view Sachiko's aspirations through a lens of personal turmoil, rather than appreciating Sachiko's optimism and aspirations for a brighter future. Two opposite ideas on future can be seen in the following conversation:

- So you see, Etsuko,' she said, "I'll be leaving Japan very shortly. You don't seem very impressed.

- Of course I am. And I'm very pleased, if this is what you wished. But won't there be...various difficulties?
- Difficulties?
- I mean, moving to a different country, with a different language and foreign ways I understand your concern, Etsuko. But really, I don't think there's much for me to worry about. You see, I've heard so much about America, it won't be like an entirely foreign country. And as for the language, I already speak it to a certain extent. Frank-San and I, we always talk in English. Once I've been in America for a little while, I should speak it like an American woman. I really don't see there's any cause for me to be worrying. I know I'll manage. (Ishiguro, *A Pale View* 23)

It can be understood that Sachiko and Etsuko embody contrasting aspects of the city's collective memory. Etsuko's narration delves into the complex interplay of individual inner experiences, encompassing both the collective trauma resulting from historical events and the societal context in which she found herself. As Etsuko struggles with recounting her past, she is not only seeking to uncover the essence of life but also struggling to articulate her memories and experiences in a coherent manner. The profound connection between memory and trauma becomes evident in Etsuko's introspective journey. Through her recollections, she navigates the intricate layers of personal and collective history, attempting to make sense of the past while reconciling with the lingering effects of trauma. In this process of introspection, Etsuko confronts the complexities of memory, identity, and the enduring impact of historical events on individual lives. The conversation implies that many Japanese individuals share a desire to leave their Japanese identity behind and travel to a different country, possibly in an attempt to escape the psychological burdens of war that drove numerous people to seek solace beyond Japan after the war. The urge to separate from their Japanese heritage could be viewed as a result of the shared emotional distress felt from the wars. Moreover, the discussion also hints at what Etsuko may encounter in the future. The effect of war on Japanese memory in forming collective identity is significant. The Japanese psyche

continues to bear scars from the trauma and turmoil of World War II, prompting a wish to separate from their Japanese identity. The longing to leave behind previous experiences and create a fresh persona in a different country shows how war profoundly affects both personal and group awareness. In Etsuko's narrative, the quest for identity is depicted as a complicated and continual journey influenced by historical events and individual experiences.

In his paper "Traumatic Memory and Narrative Isolation in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*", Michael Molino distinguishes between traumatic memory in individual and cultural contexts, stating, "The personal experience of trauma exists initially within the individual's imperfect memory- inexplicably punctuated by blind spots, hallucinations, displacements, and other factors that preclude any notion of objective or reliable recall" (Molino 322). Within the cultural context, Molino notes that Etsuko carries her memories as "traces of a battlefield long after a war" (Molino 323). Etsuko's traumatic memory intertwines her individual recollections, marked by sorrow, uncertainties, and gaps, with her remembrance of the broader cultural collective memory. She endeavors to narrate a past that juxtaposes her seemingly ordinary yet delusional life against the background of significant historical events.

The novel intricately weaves together the dual strands of individual and collective memory through Etsuko's recurring dream of a little girl on a swing, juxtaposed with haunting flashes of "the little girl found hanging from a tree" (Ishiguro, *A Pale View* 100). This blending of personal and shared memory becomes evident as Etsuko conflates her own daughter's death with a series of child murders in Nagasaki, creating a vividly disturbing mental image that triggers deep-seated trauma in Etsuko's psyche. She grapples with the unsettling nature of this imagery, acknowledging that she is "disturbed by such image" (Ishiguro, *A Pale View* 156). The connection between individual and collective memory is palpable in Etsuko's internal turmoil, where her personal grief becomes entwined with broader societal tragedies. The intertwining of her daughter's fate with the larger context of child murders in Nagasaki underscores the complex interplay between personal recollections and shared historical traumatic memory, remaining in the collective memory of Japanese. This fusion of individual and collective memory serves to illuminate the profound impact of past events on Etsuko's psyche, as she navigates the haunting echoes of both her own experiences and the collective memories of a community scarred by tragedy. The statement from Haorungbam and Ashalata Devi's paper, "Between Memory and Trauma," aligns with the theme of the mingling of individual and collective identity in the novel. Etsuko's unfolding memories,

particularly the merging of the girl on the swing and the girl found hanging from a tree, symbolize the intertwining of personal and collective traumas. The image created, depicting Keiko taking her own life far from Etsuko, reflects the novel's exploration of how individual experiences become enmeshed with broader historical and societal narratives, underscoring the complex interplay between personal recollections and shared cultural traumas. The novel's title is inspired by Etsuko's blurred and uncertain memories of her past, referred to as a 'pale view.' Etsuko reveals the intricate layers of her identity through her storytelling, which becomes closely connected with Sachiko, a neighbor and friend she met during the post-war summer. As the plot develops, a notable similarity arises between Etsuko and Sachiko, suggesting that Etsuko might be sharing her own story through the character of Sachiko. The combination of Etsuko's story with Sachiko's persona blurs the lines between fact and fiction, prompting the reader to doubt the truthfulness of Etsuko's narration.

5. Conclusion

This paper addressed the significant role of memory in shaping individual and collective identity in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*. It explored how memory influences character's perceptions of herself and her relationships with others, and how it influences her sense of self and belonging within society. The findings show different strategies and process of construction individual identity by Etsuko as she grapples with the complexities of grief, loss, and identity in the aftermath of her daughter's tragic suicide. Through a series of memories and reflections, Etsuko navigates the intricacies of her past actions, seeking to bridge the gap between her past and present selves. The text explores various processes that shape individual identity, including reflection on past experiences, processing emotions through memory, reconstruction of fragmented identity, and seeking meaning and reassurance through the past. Etsuko revisits both joyful and painful memories to come to terms with her grief and redefine her sense of self. She uses her memories as a means of mediating between sorrow and bliss, allowing her to navigate the complexities of her emotions and find a new understanding of herself. Through reflection and introspection, Etsuko reconstructs her fragmented identity in the face of her daughter's death, finding relief in realizing that she was not the cause of Keiko's suicide. Despite being blamed for her daughter's death, Etsuko turns to her past to search for meaning and reconcile her grief, ultimately finding a way to move forward. Overall, the findings highlight the profound impact of past experiences, memories, and emotions on the process of shaping individual identity. Etsuko's journey serves as a poignant exploration of how one's past can shape their present understanding of themselves,

illustrating the complexities and nuances involved in reconciling grief, loss, and personal identity. As Etsuko grapples with the source of her grief and loss, turning to memories as a means of processing her emotions and reconstructing her fragmented identity, she ultimately finds a way to move forward and navigate the complexities of her emotions and personal history. The intertwining of personal and collective memory, as seen through Etsuko's reflections on past tragedies and societal contexts, illuminates the complex interplay between individual recollections and shared historical traumas. As characters grapple with their pasts and confront the challenges of memory, Ishiguro delves into the intricate connections between memory, trauma, and identity construction, showcasing how memories shape perceptions of self and society. The novel underscores the profound influence of memory on both individual and collective identities, illustrating how the past continues to reverberate in the present, shaping the narratives of personal and cultural history.

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