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A Study on Trauma in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro

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Abstract

As a famous Japanese-British writer, Kazuo Ishiguro initially attracted the attention of society for his special identity. However, he has always been committed to writing for people of different nationalities and generations, and he considers himself an international writer. This thesis will examine his books *A Pale View of the Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* in terms of trauma theory, exploring the traumatic events, the performance of the traumatized, the causes of trauma, the techniques of trauma narrative and the ways of healing. The exploration of these painful experiences in his novels not only reflects the social significance of Ishiguro's literary work, but also contributes greatly to solving the problem of trauma in real society.

Key words: Kazuo Ishiguro; trauma; identity; traumatic memory; traumatic narrative

1. Introduction

This dissertation examines Kazuo Ishiguro's novels *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World* focusing more particularly on the common theme of these works, trauma. Both works are narrated in the first person and unfold in the form of the protagonist's memories of the past. The narratives are mostly ambiguous, with hidden topics and facts that characters do not want to admit. These manifestations have the distinct features of post-traumatic symptoms. The novels present the traumatized people's painful state that they try to forget but cannot, highlighting the impact of these shocking experiences on their present lives, thus conveying the author's deep sympathy.

Through the study and application of trauma theory, the thesis analyzes the novel in terms of the manifestation of trauma, its causes and the characteristics of trauma narration, and summarizes that the author practices how to narrate unspeakable traumatic experiences in literary form by using the splitting of the narrator, combining personal experiences with history, and trauma imagery to express the plight of protagonists haunted by the past. The thesis examines the splitting problem of traumatized individuals in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, the residual memory and the resulting identity crisis, and explores how the author deals with the dilemma of trauma narratives –to show the fearful and painful side of trauma while the traumatized person is relieved through the narration of this sort of experiences. The characters in Ishiguro's works have lost the love and affection of their parents at a young age, which has a fundamental impact on their future lives. The novels present fragile interpersonal relationships that reflect the social realities of the present day. Historical changes lead to a sudden change in the social atmosphere, and the main characters' previous identities are denied and marginalized by the public, deepening their trauma even further.

Using the trauma and its consequences as a platform, Ishiguro presents the repression of individuals and the sense of alienation between people in modern society, showing concern for issues such as identity, gender, family relationships, social systems, and historical changes, and expressing a sympathetic compassion for the fate of ordinary people in the world.

2. A Bio-bibliographical Semblance of Kazuo Ishiguro

Since the twentieth century, the phenomenon of writing as an immigrant has become increasingly compelling, and the achievements of modernist, postmodernist and postcolonial literature prove that cross-cultural narratives and cross-cultural genre writing have become major features in the development of world literature. The global community of immigrant writers has gained more and more attention and recognition, among whom the Japanese-British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, is undoubtedly an outstanding representative. Ishiguro was born in 1954 in Nagasaki, Japan, and emigrated to England at the age of five to receive a traditional British education. As an immigrant writer, Ishiguro's rise to prominence in the British literary panorama has been smooth, and his works have not only received numerous awards, but are also recurrently present on the bestselling lists. Some of his novels have also been adapted into popular movies.

As a writer who grew up in a Western culture, he can hardly write in Japanese, except for communicating with his parents at home: “Reflecting upon his upbringing from the perspective of adulthood, Ishiguro views himself as having received a typical English education and a typical middle-class Southern English upbringing” (Shaffer 13). In several interviews, he has stated that the influence of Western writers on his own work was very profound. He prefers to read Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Charlotte Brontë and Dickens than Japanese authors: “So far, in my writing career, I’ve aspired more to the Chekhov: the spare and the precise, the carefully, controlled tone. But I do sometimes envy the utter mess, the chaos of Dostoevsky. He does reach some things that you can’t reach in any other way than by doing that” (Swift & Ishiguro 1998). Although he saw himself as an English citizen, shortly after he emigrated to England, the young man also went through a harsh culture shock at the beginning, because even though he had already settled down in the country by then, the family maintained the traditional

Japanese way of life: “At home there were different rules, different expectations, a different language. My parents’ original intention had been that we return to Japan after a year, perhaps two. In fact, for our first eleven years in England, we were in a perpetual state of going back ‘next year’” (Ishiguro 2017: 21).

After he became famous, part of the social interest he awakened came from the curiosity about his oriental features and distinctive Japanese name. The life experiences of this writer have made him a stranger not only in his place of birth but also in the place he is living in. His life abroad has distanced him from the culture of his home country. His unique background of being brought up by Japanese parents who speak Japanese at home makes him think differently from a native Englishman. It could be argued that Ishiguro’s childhood experiences have had a profound influence on his creative philosophy and the themes that prevail in his works. His early life as an immigrant has, to a certain extent, contributed to his emotionally detached characters. He belongs to the category of writers who have left their homeland, and in his works, he portrays with strong sympathy the people with their wounds and weaknesses, who try to find their own souls and search for ways to make themselves feel at home. He has admitted:

Actually, until I was about twenty, I did a lot of reading about Japan and whenever there was a Japanese movie, I would go see it. Looking back now, it had a lot to do with my wanting to write at all. Japan was a very strong place for me because I always believed I would eventually return there, but as it turned out, I never went back. This very important place called Japan which was a mixture of memory, speculation, and imagination was fading with every year that went by. I think there was a very urgent need for me to get it down on paper before it disappeared altogether. (Krider and Ishiguro 150)

This sense of anxiety of cultural belonging and the experience of running the risk of losing himself, being thrown out of the mainstream society and inhabiting the new cultural system of the transplanted land, are projected by Ishiguro in his debut novel and also in the second one. Although the author's own childhood tinges his early works, after he became famous, he was very reluctant to have the media focus on his identity,

although his oriental face and his birthplace were facts that triggered public attention: “I wasn’t a very English Englishman, and I wasn’t a very Japanese Japanese either. So, I had no clear role, no society or country to speak for or write about. Nobody is history seemed to be my history. And I think this did push me necessarily into trying to write in an international way” (Shaffer, Wong & Ishiguro 58).

Ishiguro's international approach to writing is mainly reflected in the way he combines real history with fictional storylines. Post-war Nagasaki has been a source of inspiration for many writers as a historically symbolic location. It was the place where the second atomic bomb was dropped in 1945, and together with the one that devastated Hiroshima three days earlier, it has become one of the most tragic memories in human history. However, Ishiguro does not choose to recreate history in his first novel, but through an ambiguous narrative that moves the focus of the story away from the event of the atomic bombing, away from the historical-political significance. For British readers, Nagasaki in *A Pale View of Hills* is symbolic, and for contemporary Japanese readers, 1948 is likewise a distant and unfamiliar time. This strangeness provides a convenient space for Ishiguro's fictional story. Instead of only talking about the pain of the Japanese, he speaks of all the suffering after the horror, the helplessness and embarrassment of not being able to be forgotten, but having difficulty in gathering the courage to mourn. Likewise, the Japan in *An Artist of the Floating World* blurs the specific location of the story, and in the absence of explicit symbols such as Nagasaki, the story presents a much larger container full of human emotions that the author wants to represent. The novel focuses on the loss of human beings after the war, their emotions, the grief of being blinded by history and self-deception.

Thus, Ishiguro's creative philosophy is of a global writer. He has no intention to deliberately seek the so-called Asian ethnic identity, but focuses more on the connection between ordinary people and history in his novels. The geographical boundaries of fictional narratives have long been broken down. Although his novels have a complex background and combine Eurasian civilizations, the specific depictions are extremely simple and subtle. His nuanced writing style and ambiguous narratives bury clues within the novels to present common themes: memories, wounds, and the eternal loss

of childhood innocence. He hopes to reflect a sense of survival of all humanity in his works, showing the common loss and uneasiness of human beings under different situations. Ishiguro's primary concern is the impact of historical change on people, and his narrative transcends geography, nation and race. In general, he is discussing the gap between history and human expectations:

I've always been interested in what happens to peoples' values when they have invested all their energies and the lives in the prevalent set of social values, only to see them change and to see what happens to people when, at the end of their lives, they find that the world has changed its mind about what is good and what is bad. (Feeney and Ishiguro)

At the end of *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Judith Herman wrote: "The massive communal atrocities committed during the course of wars in Europe, Asia, and Africa have focused international attention on the devastating impact of violence and have fostered the recognition that psychological trauma is indeed a worldwide phenomenon" (237). As an international writer, Ishiguro tries to create a channel between East and West, through the literary medium, so that readers can learn about different cultures and feel different ways of thinking. His works are strongly influenced by Eastern and Western cultures. In his novels, we can see hints of Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Charlotte Brontë and Dickens, while he was also very familiar with the psychological portrayal of Japanese directors such as Yasujiro Ozu and Mikio Naruse. Therefore, the tragedy of the characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's first and second novel, their trauma and suffering do not only represent the Japanese people after World War II, but it is a true reflection of the millions of people around the world who suffered from the ravages of war. Therefore, this thesis will focus on the causes, representations and consequences of trauma among the characters in *An Artist of the Floating World* (AFW hereafter) and *A Pale View of Hills* (PVH hereafter), and explore the narrative means by which the author reproduces the real state of the traumatized.

3. Literature Review

At present, research on trauma mainly focuses on three areas. First, trauma psychology research. Cathy Caruth can be acknowledged as the originator of trauma research, whose most representative works include the edited volume *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). Together with Caruth's contribution, Ruth Leys' *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000) focuses on trauma from a knowledge genealogy perspective. Second, sociological and historical studies. This trend might include works such as Lawrence Langer's *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruin of Memory* (1991) and Dominick La Capra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), among some others. Third, trauma memory and literary narratives, in which we could highlight paramount publications such as Kali Tal's *World of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996) and Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, and Forgetting* (2000).

The study of Kazuo Ishiguro and his works initially focused on his identity as an immigrant writer, and his dual identity and whether his works fall into the Japanese or British tradition. Japan in his novels is used by researchers as a channel for studying Japanese history and culture. Anthony Thwalte believes that the characters are “English version of that classic Japanese figure” (“In service”). As his different novels gradually came into the public eye, the research perspective on Ishiguro broadened as well.

The earliest monograph on Kazuo Ishiguro is Brian W. Shaffer's *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* (1998). It is the first volume to provide a critical approach on Ishiguro's narrative. The second is Mike Petry's *Narratives of Memory and Identity: The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* (1999). It focuses on four of Kazuo Ishiguro's first novels and provides an in-depth analysis of their content and writing techniques. The third is Barry Lewis's *Contemporary World Writers: Kazuo Ishiguro* (2000), which presents a thorough analysis of Ishiguro's work, paying special attention to the effects of family dislocation. The fourth is Cynthia F. Wong's *Kazuo Ishiguro* (1988), which explores Ishiguro's narratives work from the perspective of the reader's reflection theory. It is

also worth mentioning Matthew Beedham's *The Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* (2009), a monograph that builds on the previous studies and presents the reader with a more three-dimensional perspective. There are two further collections of research papers, which include *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspective* (2009), in which an array of university experts and scholars explore different perspectives on Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, and Shaffer's first use of trauma research to analyze Kazuo Ishiguro's work. In addition to this collection, *Kazuo Ishiguro: New Critical Vision of the Novels* (2011) analyzes Kazuo Ishiguro's novels from cross-cultural, colonial, and postcolonial perspectives. Finally, *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro* (2008), co-edited by Shaffer and Wong, contains nineteen interviews from the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century, focusing on Ishiguro's habits, creative purposes, ideas for his works, and his views on real-life issues.

4. Trauma and Trauma Narrative

4.1 Contemporary Trauma Theory

Before we can understand what trauma is, we must first understand how normal memory works and the difference between normal and traumatic memory as a way to better distinguish between painful experiences as told by traumatized people. Memory, as a basic mental process, is an essential function for people to learn, live and work. It is the recollection of an act, a feeling, an experience or a thing that has passed away. Memory is the burning of past life impressions in the mind, while recollection is the representation of memory and its artificial remembrance. Memory is often related to how people recall the past.

According to psychologist Sigmund Freud, “the process of memory involves both recall and forgetting” (43). This memory, mixed with fantasy and reality, will be gradually forgotten as time passes. How the memory subject programs the information into his or her mind determines how long this memory eventually stays. According to Maurice Halbwachs: “Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess.” (51). People encounter many diverse things every day, and their minds are inputting and outputting information every moment. People's memory of regular events will change a lot as a result, not to mention how certain memories, and the shock and influence brought about by the traumatic events will directly change the way the subject remembers.

Normal memory is very different from traumatic memory: normal memory is “encoded in a literal, linear narrative,” whereas traumatic memory “lacks verbal narrative and context, and is usually encoded in lifelike sensations and images” (Herman 35). The original meaning of “trauma” is “wound” and was originally used to describe the physical damage caused by some external, aggressive event. In the late 19th century, with the development of the industrial society, “trauma” added the meaning of

psychological damage, especially after World War I and II. At that time, trauma was described as the destruction of human tissues or organs caused by mechanical factors, and the corresponding phenomena of “post-traumatic stress disorder” and “shell shock”. Medical terminology entered the field of the humanities, and the definition of this notion changed from physiological external attack to both physical and psychological effects caused by sudden accidents. The main points of discussion in current psychological theories of trauma are: how memory works; the role of trauma symptoms; the effects of trauma on the traumatized person's memory and self-perception and what to do to get over this kind of situations. Freud argued that the causes of traumatic experiences vary from person to person, yet regardless of the cause, there are common features in the manifestation of post-traumatic themes. In his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), he referred to the similarity of the consequences of experiences such as war dysfunction and workplace accidents as “trauma neurosis” (188). He also mentioned that “the exciting causes due to environmental influences are” also the main reasons of trauma: “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (Freud 1957: 243). Freud believed that there is a “protective shield” in the human brain which is used “against stimuli” (31) and to protect the “mental apparatus” (34). Traumatic neurosis is the result of the destruction of the protective layers of the brain after stimulation. When trauma stimulates the unsuspecting brain, it can cause unexpected emotional impact on the person. This shock makes the individual play out the same event over and over again in order to fully understand the feelings of shock, fear and apprehension. In general, the human consciousness can filter out, through self-protective mechanisms, those things that are incomprehensible and threaten the physical or psychological health of the subject. However, “‘traumatic’ excitations from outside are powerful enough to break through the protective shield” (Freud 1953: 29).

Trauma includes both subjective experiences and the historical past. In addition to defense mechanisms, the body and psyche have other ways of coming to terms with trauma, even though they arise after the trauma has already invaded the individual. After

this sort of experiences, individuals will have a variety of coping responses. When the trauma is caused by “the loss of someone who is loved” (Freud 1957: 244), people will do the “work of mourning until they become free and uninhibited again” (245). He, then, explains the difference between mourning and melancholia. He points out that, when “one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost” (245). The traumatized depressed subject refuses to acknowledge the loss of the object, refuses to restore a normal relationship with the external reality, and falls into emotions such as self-blame, depression, and apathy for a long time.

The French psychiatrist Pierre Janet also conducted extensive research on this aspect of the effects of traumatic memories on consciousness. He believes that human memory is divided into narrative and traumatic memory, the former

consists of mental constructs, which people use to make sense out of experience. But under extreme conditions, existing meaning schemes may be entirely unable to accommodate frightening experiences, which causes the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions: it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control. (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 160)

His theory implies that traumatic memories are not stored in the same place in the brain as ordinary memories, that traumatic memories cannot be altered and often haunt traumatized individuals, and that the conversion of traumatic memories into narrative memories is a necessary step in the process towards recovery. Janet believes that post-traumatic symptoms are controlled by “subconscious fixed ideas” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 163). This subconscious has a persistent effect on the cognition, state and behavior of the traumatized individual without the individual being aware of it: “The most extreme example is multiple personality disorder, where fixed ideas develop into entirely separate identities” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 164). Janet proposed that “traumatized individuals become “attached” (Freud would use the term ‘fixated’) to the trauma: unable to make sense out of the source of their terror, they develop difficulties in assimilating subsequent experiences as well. It is “as if their

personality development has stopped at a certain point and cannot expand any more by the addition or assimilation of new elements” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 164). In *A Pale View of Hills*, the little girl Mariko’s behaviors are a direct manifestation of these symptoms. Based on Janet’s idea about subconscious, Freud explains that “subconsciousness contains affectively charged events encoded in an altered state of consciousness” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 164). Later he and Breuer stated that “We must point out that we consider it essential for the explanation of hysterical phenomena to assume the presence of a dissociation—a splitting of the content of consciousness” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 165). However, at the end of the 19th century, Freud began to disagree with Charcot, Janet and Breuer, as he believed that “the ultimate cause of hysteria is always the seduction of a child by an adult. The symptoms of hysteria can only be understood if they are traced back to experiences which have a traumatic effect” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 165). But in the book *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* (1926), Freud re-embraced Janet's viewpoint when he mentioned “the compulsion to repeat the trauma is a function of repression itself.... Freud claimed that, if a person does not remember, he is likely to act out: ‘he reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without knowing, of course, that he is repeating, and in the end, we understand that this is his way of remembering’” (qtd. by Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 167).

Since then, many trauma theorists have offered their views on the definition of this concept, discussing the main question of whether the focus of research should be on the traumatic event itself or on the consequences for the individual. In this respect, Kai Erikson points out that trauma originally referred to the traumatic event itself rather than the harm it caused. However, “in both clinical and everyday conversations, trauma has been drifting somewhat ambiguously along the axis that reaches from the precipitating event at one end to the injury or disorder at the other” (1991: 456). Secondly, he mentioned that “trauma can result from a constellation of life's experiences as well as from a discrete event” (1991: 457). Ishiguro’s narratives seem to epitomize Erikson’s views, since he focuses more on the consequences caused by trauma than on

the traumatic event itself, and explores the causes of trauma because it is more helpful in elucidating the complex process of trauma formation.

Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* turns out to be an important contribution in contemporary trauma research and provides a more comprehensive account of the nature of trauma and the various stages of recovery. She analyzes this notion from a feminist standpoint, arguing that men and women experience trauma in much the same way. She examines the role of memory and the impact of trauma on the individual, and in doing so, concludes that female rape victims react to trauma in much the same way as male veterans. This research broke through gender boundaries and drew public attention to vulnerable groups such as women and children, and Herman's research demonstrated the devastating negative effects of trauma on individuals. Trauma can disrupt victims' perceptions of self and reality and cause them to cast doubts on the safety of their environment, thus hindering their relationships with family and even members of society: "Traumatic events destroy the victim's fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world, the positive value of the self, and the meaningful order of creation" (Herman 51).

Thus, instead of focusing on a single type of traumatic situation and victim, as Freud and Breuer did in the early days, contemporary trauma theory researchers have examined different groups of trauma victims. War, rape, incest and natural disaster victims, as a whole, linked their trauma with socio-political situations. In this vein, cultural psychology and literary studies examined the similarity of the effects of trauma on different groups of victims, focused on the common characteristics of trauma, and revealed various social factors that can bring it about.

4.2 Trauma and Narrative

Trauma victims often confuse the past with the present when telling stories about trauma, and they live with feelings of doubt and humiliation in the present, with feelings of guilt and shame, because the mechanisms of meaning in the past dictate their

understanding of the present. So how exactly can traumatic memories be repaired? The solution most researchers suggest is to return to the narrative: “Traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language” (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 176). They encourage victims to replace the traumatic memories with alternative, more acceptable images: “Memory is everything. Once flexibility is introduced, the traumatic memory starts losing its power over current experience. By imagining these alternative scenarios, many patients are able to soften the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror” (178).

The traumatized person must use language to heal the trauma. If one compares the language used in this recovery process with the literary discourse, one can discover the possibilities of literary expressions of trauma: “Literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (Caruth 1996: 3). She next suggests that “the conscious awareness of the threat to life—is not caused by a pure quantity of stimulus. The shock of the mind’s relation to the threat of death is not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the missing of this experience” (1996: 62). The absence of the parties involved gives trauma a formally compelling narrative structure for trauma fiction; why does this character react the way s/he does to certain events? What exactly is going on at the moment of the traumatic event? Such questions arise as the reader reads this kind of novels. Since the person is not really experiencing the traumatic event at the time it occurs, both the reader and the person in question are equally unable to fully understand the content of the narrative, putting both in the same position. By reading trauma fiction, the reader is able to experience how the trauma victim lives and, thus, truly understand all his/her surrounding circumstances.

In the course of a novel, information about trauma is conveyed in two ways: by the character and by the reader. The former usually strives to remember and tries to understand something that s/he failed to understand in the past, and sometimes adds

some information through other people in the story. This narrative model simulates the process of post-traumatic subjects experiencing repression to reproducing the traumatic event. In *PVH* and *AFW*, the protagonist intentionally or unintentionally conceals something from the reader, who, as an outsider, has more information about the traumatic event than the victim himself/herself, such as the context of the event and the social environment.

However, Tal is opposed to the use of rhetorical language to represent traumatic events, arguing that there is no way to truly recreate and understand the traumatic experience. She identifies three ways that US society responds to trauma, “mythologization, medicalization, and disappearance” (6). And she believes that people who have experienced traumatic events experience see things in a very different way compared with people who have not experienced traumatic events. She states that for those writers who have no personal traumatic experience, their “works are the products of the author’s urge to tell a story, make a point, create an aesthetic experience. It is a simply a metaphor, a vehicle for their message” (116). She, therefore, argues that the right to reproduce trauma can only be granted to writers who have suffered trauma, because writing requires firsthand experience of the traumatic event.

The paradox of Tal's argument is that while she claims that writers who have not experienced trauma cannot represent trauma victims and have no right to write about traumatic experiences, she herself is representing those who have. Edward Palm argues in his review that “Kali Tal, who was not in Vietnam, has no right to appropriate a Vietnam veteran’s trauma and put it to political purpose he has not endorsed” (155). Nicola King also suggests that the inconsistency of Tal’s theory lies in that “while she is extremely critical of assimilating the initial trauma of survivors, she is suggesting a vicarious identification is possible” (173). Tal overemphasizes the need for accounts of traumatic events to come from individuals who have experienced them. This view is too narrow, because perhaps it is difficult to restore the authenticity and shock of traumatic events by reflecting them in literary language. Yet, the starting point of trauma literature is to make the traumatized subject heal and transform social reality through literature. Patrick Bracken states that “traumatic experiences can have the effect of

awakening the mood of anxiety in individuals. His mood is already there in every human being and not something brought about *denovo* by the trauma. Rather, trauma can have the effect of revealing the anxiety that is a built-in dimension of human being” (143). Although Ishiguro does not fully experience the traumatic experiences of his fictional characters, readers can also feel the characters' suffering between the lines of his novels. Although there is no substitute for true traumatic experiences, fiction as a literary form can still reproduce the negative effects of this kind of distressing events, allowing readers who have not experienced them to feel the depression and grief of the characters. Ishiguro, as a writer who tirelessly explores memory, has repeatedly confirmed its key role in his creative process. Whether it is his early published works or his latest novels, almost all of them are closely related to memory. In this vein, the writer has always sought to explore the meaning of life by recalling the past. The formation of trauma is a complex process, which involves various factors, such as the character of the subject, the traumatic experience, and the reflection of others or the outside world are all related to the person's own perception of these experiences. The traumas described in Ishiguro's novels are difficult to be planned as a certain type of trauma, even in the same novel. As Cynthia Wong argues, “themes of the individual, the family, and the nation” are constantly present in his novels” (1995: 56). Ishiguro chooses the form of trauma fiction to help readers understand painful memories and histories, and to stimulate their awareness. His work makes people realize that fiction no longer merely conveys the surface meaning of words, but constructs a new discourse based on trauma that includes the reader.

5. Memory and Narrative of Traumatized Subjects

Traumatic experiences can cause indelible changes in the psyche, and they can also alter an individual's memory, self-perception, and relationships with other people. Despite the human capacity to adapt and the instinct to survive, a traumatic experience can alter the individual's psychological and physical stability, and can even affect that person's understanding of other experiences and wreak havoc on his or her life in the present. In *PVH* and *AFW*, Ishiguro effectively uses the first-person narrative to retrace the past. He places the subjects in their present identity crisis, and their memories exist independently of the subjects. Since traumatic events lead to traumatic memories, and human identity is achieved by memory and narrative, these distressing memories are unable to integrate new information into the original information, making identity impossible to proceed properly. Therefore, the main characters are never able to integrate new information into their original memories, but they do not give up, and they still try to find ways to construct their identities through their memories in order to survive. While writing about the trauma, the author also shows readers how these individuals construct their identities through imperfect memories and how they repair themselves.

Before analyzing how traumatic memory works for the characters in the *PVH* and *AFW*, it is necessary to figure out how normal or narrative memory works: “Healthy psychological functioning depends on the proper operation of the memory system, which consists of a unified memory of all psychological facets related to particular experiences: sensations, emotions, thoughts, and actions” (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 159). These memories are linked and received by the subject through linguistic tools. Through this process, consciousness gathers scattered memories to form an integrated memory. Narrative memory is thus a “social act” (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 163) that people rely on to make sense of the relationships between themselves and their surroundings: “It should be an aspect of life and be integrated with other experiences” (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 163). In contrast, it takes the traumatized

person more time to tell about the traumatic memory than to tell about the normal memory. It is fixed, unchangeable, and lacks sociality. Second, in certain specific situations, the traumatic experience appears in the victim's mind without warning, reminding them of the pain of the trauma they suffered in the first place: "When one element of a traumatic experience is evoked, all other elements follow automatically" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 163). The individual has no control over the trauma, and the helplessness caused by the recurring and persistent nature of that trauma leads to the victim's inability to live a normal life. For victims, memories of traumatic events are a source of pain, and they often reappear suddenly in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. Denial of the facts confronts the person with embellished facts. Another important difference between traumatic and normal memories is whether they have the power to change one's worldview and whether they cause one to reject those memories. Janoff-Bulman believes that post-traumatic stress disorder arises because the preconditions on which people depend for survival have been destroyed. These prerequisites are "the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, the self is worthy" (6). Herman also agrees that traumatic memories alter people's previously normal existence and lead to an identity crisis: "Trauma events breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis" (51). On top of that, many traumatized people persistently live as if they were immersed in the world of trauma and the current normal world at the same time, and it is often difficult for them to connect them, as Langer argues in his study of oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors. These survivors were unable to relate their experiences in the death camps to their lives before and after that time: "Humiliated memory is compelled to dwell in a twilight realm that ethical insight can never illuminate. It can thus never be joined to the world he inhabits now. This suggests a permanent duality, not exactly a split or a doubling but a parallel existence" (95).

5.1 Memory and Trauma in *A Pale View of Hills*

Langer's articulation of the dual worldliness of survivors encapsulates the traumatic feelings of Etsuko, the protagonist of *PVH*, who experienced the atomic bombing. In order to fit the dual worldliness of the traumatized individual, the author sets up a dual structured narrative for the story: the external frame is the narrative of Etsuko, who is middle-aged and living alone in the English countryside, about her recent situation, and the internal frame is the memory of Nagasaki, Japan, more than twenty years ago. Etsuko moved to England after World War II with her second husband, who died at the beginning of the story, and her eldest daughter, Keiko, who was born to her first Japanese husband and hanged herself in her bachelor pad in London not long ago. Her youngest daughter, Niki, born out of her marriage with her English husband, returns home to visit her mother at the beginning of the story because of her sister's death. Reading between the lines, we come to know that Etsuko lost her fiancé Nakamura and all her relatives due to the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and was left alone. Mr. Ogata, a former teacher, was a friend of Etsuko's father, and Etsuko had been in contact with him a while before the war. Under his patronage, Etsuko survived the hardships of this shocking event. Perhaps out of love and gratitude for Mr. Ogata, Etsuko married his son Jiro soon afterwards.

According to Etsuko's narrative, a few years after the end of the war, Nagasaki finally saw the dawn of recovery, and the Etsuko couple lived their newlywed life here. One early summer, Mr. Ogata, who was alone in Fukuoka, came to Etsuko's house and stayed there for a few days. At that time, Etsuko is three months pregnant. That summer, Etsuko met Sachiko and Mariko, an unusual mother and daughter, who had moved from Tokyo to Nagasaki, and became involved in their lives. However, since this story was told through the memories of Etsuko, which was on the surface of her consciousness, it cannot be fully believed. A few years after that summer, Etsuko left Jiro and took Keiko, who was seven years old at the time, to England with Sheringham, an English journalist she had met in Japan, with whom she remarried and had a young daughter, Niki. However, Keiko, who was purely Japanese, did not adapt to her new family and new

cultural environment, and after a life of self-imposed isolation that lasted for years, eventually left home and hanged herself, only to have her body found by her landlord a few days later.

In the novel, Etsuko's reliability of her memory is overly and repeatedly verified: "I can recall quite vividly that afternoon at the tram stop.... I am not sure now how it was we first met. I remember one afternoon spotting her figure ahead of me on the path leading out of the housing precinct" (15). Phrases such as "I can recall", "I am not sure", "I must", "it is possible" keep appearing in the narrative, because Ishiguro wants the theme of "traumatic memory" to be naturally reflected in Etsuko's narrative. Etsuko is not really remembering the past, but doing what she thinks is the act of remembering. She repeats this act over and over again, but without realizing it.

As a survivor, Etsuko instinctively avoids the most painful memories of that time. Although Etsuko lived in Nagasaki for seven more years after giving birth to Keiko, she wants to clear the memories associated with Nagasaki, and thus neither misses that summer in particular nor tries to make them more vivid by remembering Sachiko and Mariko. After Etsuko learns that Keiko hanged herself, although she always "wonders how long she had been there like that before they had found her" (113), this had not been a direct entry point for Etsuko's memories of Nagasaki. She has deliberately avoided mentioning anything related to Japan and Nagasaki, and in naming her youngest daughter, she "perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past-insisted on an English one" (4). In fact, Etsuko remembered the past because of a recurring dream about a little girl during the days of Niki's stay, who she saw swinging in the park one day.

In Niki's opinion, her mother repeatedly mentioned the girl on the swing because she saw the little girl as her daughter Keiko. This idea makes the dream linked to Keiko: "It was just a little girl I knew once" (212). Etsuko's statement, in turn, implicates Mariko as well: "The little girl isn't on a swing at all. it seemed like that at first. but it's not a swing she's on" (213). Etsuko's remark further gives rise to the serial child killings that occurred in post-war Nagasaki, with the scene of "a little girl ... hanging from a tree" (216). This shows that subconsciously, Etsuko believes that she drove her daughter to

the point of hanging herself, and this strong condemnation is linked to the “child killing” incident. According to Cynthia Wong, “the murders are a doubled wound on the society, because the young are regarded symbolically as the purveyors of their parents’ legacy and thus hold the promise of a new future; in this way, children of the reconstruction period –those who survived the bombing– became the salve for those who died in the war” (1995:141). Unlike normal people, Etsuko's memories are filled with fear and worry about her impending motherhood, which also reflects the despair of trauma victims about the uncertainty of their future lives.

In Etsuko's internal narrative, Sachiko and her daughter, Mariko, appear as complete strangers, yet sometimes overlap with the figures of both Etsuko herself and Keiko. Mariko, who lived in wartime Tokyo as a young child, once witnessed a woman dipping her hands in a river in an attempt to drown her own child. Her mother, Sachiko, said that after that, Mariko would always have hallucinations and would often say that she saw the figure of a woman. Although Sachiko always claimed that her daughter's happiness came first, she couldn't let go of her dream of going to the United States with Frank, a US soldier. The day she decided to leave Nagasaki in order to follow him, Sachiko regarded the cats that Mariko had kept as a burden and planned to drown them in the river. At that time, Sachiko said to her defiant daughter: “Don't you understand, it's just an animal. It's not your little baby, it is just an animal, just like a rat or a snake” (378). By using the word “baby”, the actions of the woman Mariko sees drowning her child in Tokyo are similar to those of her own mother who drowned her cats: “She put the kitten into the water and held it there. She remained like that for some moments, staring into the water, both hands beneath the surface. She was wearing a casual summer kimono, and the corners of each sleeve touched the water” (381). The image of Sachiko overlaps with that of the woman who killed her own child. As Sachiko drowns the kitten, she and Etsuko share the same gaze trajectory , first looking back at Mariko and then at the box containing the kitten at the same time, at which point the two women share the destiny of killing daughter in that moment.

In other words, on the surface, Etsuko follows a similar path to Sachiko's, but this is actually an illusion; in fact, it is not that Etsuko is repeating the path Sachiko took. To

be precise, Sachiko's story comes from the darkness of Etsuko's own heart, she is using Sachiko's story to narrate her own inner trajectory. Although Etsuko is reluctant to face reality, she feels that she must struggle with her painful past in order to establish her identity. Therefore, in the narrative, Etsuko refers to herself and her daughter, Keiko, as Sachiko and Mariko, respectively. In this way, she is able to put herself out of the picture and reconstruct her past from the perspective of a third party: "As the narrative evolves and as details become paradoxically more clear and murky, the reader discovers that Etsuko remembers the 'friendship [of] no more than a matter of some several weeks one summer many years ago' in order to explain to herself what happened to Keiko" (Wong 2005: 27)

Some details of Sachiko's life seem to map and foreshadow Etsuko's life, and her initial intention in recalling this experience seems to be to mourn Keiko more devotedly. Although it is not certain whether Sachiko's story is really Etsuko's own experience or how similar their lives are, at least the character of Sachiko serves as a vehicle for Etsuko to look at her past with a certain distance and guilt. Thus, Etsuko can carefully filter her memories, examine them, and modify them until she fully identifies with them and accepts them completely: "Sachiko, existed or did not exist, the meanings that Etsuko imputes to the life of Sachiko are obviously the meanings that are relevant to her (Etsuko's) own life" (Mason & Ishiguro 12). The merging of Etsuko and Sachiko enables the former to use the latter to stand trial in her place and assume her own responsibility for her daughter's suicide. Etsuko is initially determined to convince herself that she has made the best arrangements for her daughter and that she has always had Keiko's best interests in mind. Although her youngest daughter, Niki, persuades Etsuko not to blame herself too much, and although Etsuko herself wants to do the same, she is never able to let go: "This is precisely what Etsuko herself would like to believe but cannot, her guilt for removing Keiko from Japan being anything but absolved" (Shaffer 25). Unable to face up to the tragic reality, Etsuko insinuates her own identity through the character of Sachiko, thus collaging up the broken memories, and the traumatic past.

If we study the book carefully, we can also find several other places in the novel where the worlds of the two mothers and daughters hint at the intersection. For example, one night, Etsuko helps watch over Mariko while Sachiko is out. Mariko rushes out of the house and runs towards the river, with Etsuko chasing her: “She was sitting in the grass a short way in front of me” (182). The place where Mariko was found was by the river, and the willow trees around Mariko were drooping their branches. At that time, Etsuko's hand was holding a rope covered with mud:

I became aware of a separate sound, a rustling noise as if a snake were sliding in the grass behind me. I stopped to listen, then realized what had caused it; an old piece of rope had tangled itself around my ankle and I had been dragging it through the grass. I carefully released it from around my foot. When I held it up to the moonlight it felt damp and muddy between my fingers. (181)

This paragraph echoes Etsuko's memories, but the reader will question whether this is something that happened in reality or not. The nightmares of Keiko's suicide by hanging, the girl on the swing, and the Nagasaki serial murders in which the girl was hanged from a tree are all linked together, causing distorted memories of the “rope” to suddenly appear on the surface of the consciousness:

“What’s that?” she asked.

“Nothing. It just tangled on to my foot when I was walking.”

“What is it though?”

“Nothing, just a piece of old rope. Why are you out here?” (182)

A similar conversation takes place in chapter ten again: “The little girl was watching me closely. ‘Why are you holding that?’ she asked. ‘This? It just caught around my sandal, that’s all.’ ‘Why are you holding it?’ ‘I told you. It caught around my foot. What’s wrong with you?’ I gave a short laugh. ‘Why are you looking at me like that? I’m not going to hurt you’” (396).

Although the two dialogues are very similar, before the first one, Etsuko calls the girl “Mariko”, while in chapter ten, the author does not use that specific name, but only writes “the little girl” to refer to her. Besides, in this same conversation, she is trying to

persuade Mariko to follow her mother to the United States: “‘Yes, I promise,’ I said. ‘If you don't like it over there, we 'll come straight back. But we have to try it and see if we like it there’” (395). The repeated use of the word “we” shows that Etsuko's own experience of bringing her daughter Keiko to England is mixed with the memory of her conversation with Mariko: “But you see, Niki, I knew all along. I knew all along she wouldn't be happy over here. But I decided to bring her just the same” (401). It can be inferred from this passage that Etsuko and Keiko's relationship was likewise very tense before they left Japan.

It is important to note that the shocking fact of Keiko's self-hanging, which in the depths of Etsuko's heart, is combined with the memories of the little girl she saw in the swing during her walk and the murder of a child that took place in Nagasaki, which manifests itself in the form of a nightmare. In other words, what had happened in the past was not actually an omen of Keiko's death, but only that Etsuko saw these events as some kind of omen, linked it to Keiko's death, and created a fictional memory world that is indistinguishable from the real one. Of course, it is common for people to harbor a compensatory psychological implication, that is, to find justification for what happened in the past or to see it as an inevitable fate. It is this psychological factor that puts Etsuko in this situation. She often imagines that Keiko is in a strange city, hanging herself for many days before she is found: “The indelible image becomes, paradoxically, the inverse process of destruction; rather than seeing it as an alienated image, the viewer allows it to inhabit her own self so that, in refusing to diminish the power of the image, Etsuko here allows instead for a macabre intimacy, kind of emotional scab for possible healing” (Wong 1995: 142).

In the last chapter of the novel, Niki mentions that she has a friend who is a poet and she plans to compose a short piece for Etsuko's story, so she wants to get information about Nagasaki. Etsuko gives Niki an old calendar with a view of Nagasaki and says: “That's the view of Nagasaki port. This morning, I remembered a day trip we once took there. Those hills on the harbor are very beautiful. There was nothing special about that. I just remembered it, that's all. Keiko was very happy that day. We rode the cable car” (417). Inadvertently, Etsuko said the name of Keiko, who was not yet born at that time:

“Even this early in his career Ishiguro can be seen chafing against the restraints of a realist narrative mode” (Finney 2000).

5.2 Memory and Trauma in *An Artist of the Floating World*

For Etsuko, she clearly understands that the past is painful and that what she did was one of the causes of that pain, therefore, she always takes an avoiding attitude towards recalling the past. Although *AFW*, like Ishiguro's first novel, gravitates around memory. the main character Ono does not appear as a bystander to avoid pain when recalling the past as Etsuko does. He is proud of his past experience as a famous painter and he takes a positive attitude when he is recalling. The similarities in their memories lay in the sense of ambiguity and unreality. For the ambiguity of traumatic memories, it can be interpreted in two different ways. The first finds its origins from the traumatic memory itself. If Etsuko's memories of Nagasaki in *PVH* are vague, Masuji Ono's evaluation of his past and his perception of himself in *AFW* are in a constant state of change.

The novel revolves around the marriage of Ono's youngest daughter, Noriko. Faced with the reality of his young daughter's repeatedly unsuccessful marriages, Ono recounts his experiences as an artist before and after World War II through his own remembrances. As a very talented painter, he accepted to uplift the government's propaganda of militarism and glorification of war, believing that the Japanese Imperial Army was fighting a holy war to defend the country. He used his artworks to promote this spirit and became a famous painter with the government's support. Because of his important artistic status and great social influence, the marriage of his eldest daughter was immediately negotiated. However, after the war, the Japanese government adopted a different policy, and they began to pursue a democratization approach under the guidance of the United States. In the midst of this new social environment, there was a new understanding of the nature of war and the belief that this sort of propaganda had pushed the country into the abyss of war. Ono lost his high status in his family, the art world and politics, and not only did his former friends abandon him, but even his daughter considered his past a disgrace. Faced with the very different realities of the

pre-war and post-war periods, Ono continues to reflect on his life and the fate of his country in his memories of the past.

The whole story is built on Ono's scattered and drifting memories. In Ono's narrative, the reader can feel the confusion and pain of his inability to adapt to the new political and social reality. He must face the Americanized daily life, the rejection of traditional values, and the condemnation of Japanese militarism, all of which he previously disdained. He could not accept the total rejection of Japan's past value system and the pragmatism-driven society that had replaced it. At the same time, his moral conscience makes him realize that the Japanese government of the past was problematic, and he therefore inwardly refuses to subscribe to the ideology advocated by the government he worked for before the war. Ono once believed that his past life was reasonable and that his art was a better expression of this patriotic sentiment. After the war, when this beautiful lie is unearthed, it dawns on him that the entire Japanese Empire is blinded by some illusory and absurd ideal, and that his art is not a reflection of the real world, but floats in the midst of an unattainable dream.

Therefore, when Ono is at such a moment of contradiction and crisis in his self-identification, he chooses to go deep into his memories again and again to find a reason to make his actions reasonable, and thus his memories are full of strong personal feelings and deviate from the truth. The main character goes back and forth between the present and the past and the past of the past. As Caruth points out: "The psychological trauma is belated and uncontrollable" (1995: 4). In order to escape the pain of reality, Ono's first approach is to glorify his past through memories. When recalling the past, his tone is proud, and he feels that it brings him a feeling of happiness when one's efforts are proven to be worthwhile. At the beginning of the story, Ono illustrates what an influential person he is by recalling how he bought his current home. His wife at the time "had begun to press me to find a new house. With her usual foresight, she had argued the importance of our having a house in keeping with our status – not out of vanity, but for the sake of our children's marriage prospects" (13). The mansion once belonged to a prominent family, and their criteria for choosing a buyer were not based on money, but on the buyer's character and achievements. And

when Ono learns that the family finally felt that he was most qualified to purchase the property after a thorough investigation, he “can still recall the deep satisfaction” (18).

He also spends a lot of time recalling the times when he was famous and talked with his students in a bar called “Migihidari”. They admired him so “it had become something of a habit that at some point in the evening, when we had all drunk a little, my protégés would take to making speeches of a loyal nature to me” (45). This self-complimentary recollection clearly reflects his true desire to see the past as a haven for his artistic, moral, and social achievements, where his personal ambitions and pursuits would not have been questioned or affected, had he not been influenced by subsequent historical events. He strongly wants people to think that what he did was worthwhile. It is this desire to affirm himself in his own history that gives him a tendency to glorify the past and justify himself in his memories. Ono also recalls in detail his first meeting with Matsuda, who persuaded him to abandon empty aesthetics because art should serve moral and social ends. It was that meeting that set him on the path of political art. There is no doubt that Ono tries to embellish his motives with this recollection, trying to prove that his original intention in making such a choice was to advance social reform in Japan and make it a fairer and more welcoming society.

The evolution of history mercilessly changes Ono's ideals and destroys the sense of accomplishment he was proud of before. The collapse of the value system he has worked so effortlessly for makes him feel helpless and desperate, therefore, the ambiguous narrative approach to the past is another way for him to escape from his traumatic memories. Although Ishiguro does not write about this self-deception directly, he places the protagonist's memories of the time of deception side by side with the words and actions of other characters or the public. By comparing the two, the reader can explore the truth. For example, regarding Ono's youngest daughter Noriko's failed engagement, the views of his first daughter, Noriko's sister Setsuko and her husband represent the views at the level of public consciousness. Unlike Noriko, Setsuko was married before Japan's defeat. She now lives with her husband Suichi and child. She often visits Ono after the war ended and shows her concern for her sister's marriage. Setsuko is deeply influenced by her father's authority. Before she gets married, she was

always afraid of her father's authority, and even now that she has a family, she is always cautious when talking to Ono and always watches his face. After she got married, her husband Suichi takes control of the family discourse, so she always speaks as "Suichi thinks" when talking to Ono. They believe that their father's status as a militaristic painter is the direct cause to cancel the engagement. However, Ono avoids this reality under the excuse that he cannot remember the past: "As I have said, I could barely recall what had taken place just one week afterwards, and now more than a year has passed" (54). In the conversation with Noriko's first fiancé Miyake, Ono once again shows his vague memory. The few descriptions of Miyake in the story unfold through Ono's memories. In Ono's view, the difference in status between the Miyake family and himself was so great that it was an honor for the young man to marry Noriko. So when Miyake broke off the engagement, Ono could not admit that it was because of himself, and he definitely could not accept Miyake calling him a coward. He thinks he may have confused Miyake's words with Suichi's: "I had after all come to regard Miyake as my prospective son-in-law, and I may indeed have somehow associated him with my actual son-in-law. Certainly, phrases like 'the greatest cowardice of all' sound much more like Suichi than the mild-mannered young Miyake" (55). Perhaps this statement stung Ono deeply and at the same time aroused in him feelings of guilt, which were difficult for him to accept.

As a result, Ono's memory activates self-protection mechanisms and the past begins to be forgotten and blurred. These diffused memories are presented in contradictory form in another of Ono's traumatic memories. When his father burns Ono's paintings, he says there is a burning smell in the house, "but when I glanced into the ashpot, there were no signs of its having been used" (44). Because it was difficult for him to accept the fact that his proud paintings were burned, he created the illusion to hypnotize himself that the ashtray without ashes represented the possibility that his father had not burned his paintings. After this, although he was curious to know what his parents had said in the reception hall, "neither do I remember why I was wandering around the house in the dark, but it was certainly not in order to eavesdrop on my parents –for I do recall being resolved to pay no heed to what occurred in the reception room after my

departure” (46). When he cannot help but remember the traumatic event, he tries to fictionalize some deceptive scenarios: “The protagonist employs one or more psychological defense mechanisms –in particular, repression– to keep certain unwelcome memories or intolerable desires at bay” (Shaffer 9).

However, no matter how hard Ono tries to embellish or blur the memory, traumatic memories can also emerge under certain circumstances. When the traumatized person sees an object or scene similar to the one in the memory, the traumatic memory will come back uncontrollably. In the novel, “the reception room” and “the smell of burning” are typical examples of evoking traumatic memories for Masuji Ono. Whenever Ono encounters a scene with these two images, the traumatic memories will suddenly invade his brain and interrupt his narrative. The smell of burning represents the scene of his father burning his paintings, a memory that is painful and infuriating for Ono. It also suggests memories of the death of his wife and the burning of his student Kuroda's paintings. These three scenes are extremely traumatic for Ono. He says that “from time to time, I still turn over in my mind that cold winter’s morning and the smell of burning growing ever stronger in my nostrils” (181).

6. Reasons for Trauma

6.1 Family reasons

If Etsuko's trauma comes from her own guilt and remorse over her daughter's suicide, then her daughter Keiko's suicide comes from her mother's indifference and ignorance. In other words, Keiko's pain led to Etsuko's trauma, and the root of all traumas is the mother's failure to behave as such. First of all, Mariko and her mother witnessed the horrific drowning of a baby by the Tokyo River, an event that caused indelible psychological side-effects in the young Mariko. Ishiguro does not mention this scene in the book, but for Mariko, her mother's deprivation of her own child was something too cruel and unspeakably dreadful. Although she appears calm on the surface, some of the bizarre behaviors she exhibits are probably a manifestation of self-healing as a way to face her deepest fears, for example, she once pretended to be a cat trying to eat a spider: "She moved suddenly and caught one of the spider's legs. The remaining legs crawled frantically around her hand as she brought it away from the wall. Her mouth opened wider, and then her hands parted and the spider landed in front of my lap" (180).

Besides, the trauma of living through this tragedy is manifested in the frequent hallucinations that Mariko experienced: more than once she mentions an unknown woman who wants to take her to a house across the river. Mariko's fear of becoming a target of persecution by the woman who killed her child is manifested in her reluctance to go to the other side of the river: "She said she'd take me to her house, but I didn't go with her. Because it was dark. She said we could take the lantern with us" –she gestured towards a lantern hung on the wall– "but I didn't go with her. Because it was dark" (28). Even though Sachiko emphasizes that no one lived on the other side of the river, Mariko is in a constant state of anxiety, and she is always worried that the woman might eventually come back.

Even though Mariko usually displays these apparently abnormal behaviors, her mother did not take them too seriously and completely neglected to care for her. This is how Sachiko explains to Etsuko about her daughter exhibiting post-traumatic symptoms: "Believe me, Etsuko, all this about a woman, it's just a little game Mariko likes to play when she means to be difficult. I've grown quite used to these little games of hers" (85). To put it another way, Mariko's strange behavior also seeks to attract her

mother's attention and show her eagerness for maternal love. The mother plays a very crucial role in the child's development by making her feel that the outside world is responsive to her needs, so that the child can gradually establish a trusting relationship with the outside world and grow as an independent individual. However, in the novel, Sachiko fails to live up to her mother's duty. She often leaves Mariko alone at home, causing her to suddenly lose the loving care of her parents, which makes the home, usually a source of security, the most dangerous place instead. She is also terrified by her mother's extreme act of abandoning her kitten, believing that she may have done the same to her in some way. In a small game she participates in at the park, Mariko insists on winning a basket, which, in her opinion, is a home for the kitten and an attempt to overcome her lack of security. But in the end, this kitten's home becomes a coffin to bury the cat. The novel uses the cat as a metaphor for what happens to Mariko. The home, a place that is usually associated with security for ordinary people, is the place that brings about her death. When Sachiko tries to drown the kitten in the river, for Mariko it is a re-enactment of the horrific scene of a woman drowning her own child. After this, she runs away from home once more, and when Sachiko and Etsuko find her again, she is lying in a puddle, bleeding from a thigh injury, but even so, this does not cause Sachiko any concern.

Living in a foreign country drags Keiko into a severe depression. She goes abroad and is in a very different culture in England. On top of that, going abroad does not only mean facing more unfamiliar cultures, but also dealing with the loneliness of having nowhere to call home. It is much more difficult to gain the homely warmth than to adapt to a new culture. There is no communication between Keiko, her stepfather and her sister Niki in their new home, and their relationship with each other is cold. Niki has said that "Keiko is the one excluded and alienated, both at home and in society, although Niki also senses that Keiko does not get along with the rest of the family, and although she has expressed that: "Dad should have looked after her a bit more, shouldn't he? He ignored her most of the time. It wasn't fair really" (401). She also has to admit that "she was never a part of our lives –not mine or Dad's anyway. I never expected her to be at Dad's funeral" (108). Instead of helping her deal with her sense of alienation and strangeness, her newly formed family makes her feel even more alone. She probably should have tried to adapt to the ever-changing life, surviving with multiple identities, complex relationships and multiculturalism, yet in the end, she did not succeed. As a teenage girl, after she and her mother emigrated to England, she confines herself in her

room every day, preferring to close herself off and completely marginalize herself rather than accepting to integrate in her new family.

When Etsuko recalls the time when Keiko lived with her family, she describes Keiko's closed self-life habits:

For the two or three years before she finally left us, Keiko had retreated into the bedroom, shutting us out of her life. She rarely came out, although I would sometimes hear her moving around the house after we had all gone to bed. I surmised that she spent her time reading magazines and listening to her radio. She had no friends, and the rest of us were forbidden entry into her room. (401)

Locking herself in a room is Keiko's self-protective reaction in the face of pain. The room, due to its lack of space and connection to the outside world, provides her with protection from the language barrier and the complexities of a foreign culture. Although Etsuko has promised her that they would return to Japan if she did not like this new lifestyle, Etsuko is selfish and deliberately ignores her daughter's feelings for the sake of her own happiness. The way Keiko is treated leaves her struggling with despair, pain and loneliness for the rest of her life. If Keiko in Japan still harbors the hope that she could be loved by her mother, in England she is just determined to escape from the family and from her painful life that she tragically ends by committing suicide.

In *AFW*, Ono's father is profoundly authoritarian, and the burning of all his beloved paintings when he was fifteen years old traumatized him for the rest of his life. The smell of the smoke he smells that night is deeply etched in his mind. Today, three years after the end of the war, when Ono sees two puffs of smoke rising from the ruins in the distance, "the sight of those columns against the sky put me in a melancholy mood. They were like pyres at some abandoned funeral" (50). Ono's father is stubborn and forceful, and when Ono is still very young, his father lays out a path for him to follow in life, intending for him to go into business and inherit his own business later. At home, his father also sets many rules, for example, the family's living room, which Ono is not allowed to enter without his father's permission. According to Ono's description, the living room is like a sacred place where only the important men in the family are allowed to enter because they are the backbone of the domestic economy, so when his father first agrees to let him enter and attend a meeting, he thinks: "Perhaps he wished to impress upon me from that early age his expectation that I would eventually take

over the family business. Or perhaps he felt that as future head of the family, it was only right I should be consulted on all decisions whose repercussions were likely to extend into my adulthood” (77).

When his father burns his paintings to discourage Ono from his dream to become a painter, Ono turns to his mother for help, but as a traditional Japanese woman, she has a low status in the family and no influence or voice. Despite her desire to help her son, there is nothing she could do under the social circumstances of the time. Faced with her husband's prejudice against artists and Ono's dreams, this helpless woman ends up siding with his father. Ishiguro portrays Ono's mother as a weak woman who is always cautious and careful with her words when talking to her husband, in contrast to his father, who has absolute authority that neither mother nor son can challenge. So, when Ono finds out that all his paintings have been destroyed, he says to his mother: “The only thing Father's succeeded in kindling is my ambition” (86). Ono's father's simple and brutal approach seems to consolidate his position as the head of the family, but in reality, it fails, as Ono does not follow his instructions to become a businessman. Instead, the conflict between father and son and his father's actions cast a shadow of trauma on the young Ono's mind.

Against his father's will, Ono becomes a student of Mori-san, whom Ono considers to have had a significant impact on his career. After Ono becomes a teacher himself, he learns his way of speaking and some of his actions from Mori. Ono is also one of Mori's most popular students, but after Ono is influenced by militarism, soon Mori-san becomes suspicious of the remarkable change in his painting style and one day, he secretly takes away Ono's paintings for study. When Ono discovers that his works have disappeared, he is very anxious, but when Mori-san tells him that he took them, Ono answers: “I am very relieved no harm has come to my paintings. I should have known there was some simple explanation of this kind. I can now put my mind at rest.... I am glad I can put my mind at rest regarding the safety of my paintings.... It was foolish of me to have worried. I'm glad the paintings are safe” (314). He repeats three times that he is happy to know that his paintings are safe, which means that at that moment, the scene that happened in his father's living room as a child thrives again in Ono's mind, and he seems to smell the burning smoke of his paintings, which deepens his uneasiness about their tragic fate.

The smell of burning from his childhood also evokes another memory of Ono, deeply related to this very moment. However, the difference is that this time, it is Ono that

destroys the drawings of his students. It happens in the winter of the year before the war begins, when Ono is already a member of the Cultural Committee of the Interior Department and an official advisor to the Committee of Unpatriotic Activities. Kuroda, who had been Ono's most favored student, questioned his teacher's ideas and gradually disagreed with him, leaning towards anti-war ideas. As a result, Ono denounces Kuroda to the committee, but Ono does not expect the police sent by the committee to burn all of Kuroda's paintings: “‘I had no idea’, I said, ‘something like this would happen. I merely suggested to the committee someone come round and give Mr. Kuroda a talking to for his own good.’ I stared again at the smouldering pile in the middle of the yard. ‘It was quite unnecessary to burn those. There were many fine works amongst them’” (324). Ono is unable to get rid of the psychological burden caused by the smell of smoke even today. A month before the death of his old friend Matsuda, Ono has paid him a visit. At that time, Ono notices a faint smell of smoke floating through the crack of the door, and says: “‘The smell of burning still makes me uneasy,’ I remarked. ‘It’s not so long ago it meant bombings and fire.’ I went on gazing out on to the garden for a moment, then added: ‘Next month, it will be five years already since Michiko died’” (353).

Ono's uneasiness will not dissipate for the rest of his life because the smell of smoke will awaken traumatic memories and guilt deep inside him, prompting him to recall the nightmares of his youth, reminding him of the wounds he has caused to others, and reminding him of the tragic fate of his wife and son who died in the war. For the young Ono, his father's control and oppression opens the path to his rebellion, causing him to escape from a life under his father's control and choose his favorite profession immediately upon reaching adulthood, but “the character formed in an environment under the control of the powerful prevents him from adapting to adult life. There are fundamental problems with the ability to develop a basic sense of trust, free will and initiative” (Herman 110). Ultimately, he goes down the path of promoting militarism. And, ironically, Ono himself is also a failed father, because he encourages his son Kenji to join the army, indirectly causing his death. His son-in-law, Suichi, also blames the real criminals who advocated war, led by Ono, for the deaths of the young men who joined the war. Both fathers try to choose a path for their children that they think is better, but they both end up in failure.

6.2 Social Reasons

Although the pain caused by Etsuko's neglect of her daughter and the trauma caused by Ono's authoritarian father are the root of all the traumas in the two books, there is another source that cannot be ignored. Although Ishiguro does not directly depict it in his book, its influence permeates the corners of everyone's life and it is hard to avoid, and that is the trauma of war. Erikson believes that “collective trauma is a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with ‘trauma’” (1976: 154). Individuals, as part of society and history, share collective memories brought to each person by large disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, wars, and other traumatic experiences. Jeffrey C. Alexander argues that “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1). In the twentieth century, the memory of war was undoubtedly a very important part of cultural trauma.

One remarkable feature of Ishiguro's novels is that the significance of historical events is determined by ordinary people, not by the government. He centers on the micro-narratives of common people, who come to replace heroes, and recounts the psychological effects of war on these individuals. Although these novels do not directly depict Second Sino-Japanese War and Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the shadows brought by events such as war always haunt the protagonists. Their personal traumas reflect the traumatic history of their nation and show the choices made by the characters at a particular time. The main characters, who have reached an old age in the story, have their social identities denied and marginalized by the public. This contrast between the individual and the collective deepens their trauma. In these two novels, individual memories of trauma and social history intersect, and contradictions and conflicts arise between collective and individual memories: “One of the structuring conflicts of each of his novels emerges from the main character’s struggle –usually unsuccessful– to reconcile his private memories with the public memories of the nation and his fellow citizens” (Lang 143). Ishiguro draws on historical events to show how the individual endures a military conflict, as well as the examination and acceptance of

the painful past, and the determination of personal identity in the context of social change. As ordinary individuals narrate their personal memories, history gradually reveals itself, and collective traumatic events such as war, the Holocaust, and racial persecution emerge one by one.

PVH and *AFW* are set against the backdrop of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and through the memories of the main characters, they show the most painful experiences suffered by people after these events. In *PVH*, Etsuko's narrative takes place five days after the suicide of her eldest daughter, Keiko, and the visit of her youngest daughter, Niki. Niki's visit triggers her mother's memories, even though the main body of the novel revolves around her past in Nagasaki, rather than Niki's stay. In the novel, Etsuko neither states the exact date of the recollection nor the time she lived in Nagasaki. From Etsuko's narrative, the reader can only know that she is recalling her life after 1945, since at the beginning of her recollection she says that “the worst days were over by then. American soldiers were as numerous as ever—for there was fighting in Korea— but in Nagasaki, after what had gone before, those were days of calm and relief” (8). This narrative suggests that the events she recalls occurred primarily near the end of the U.S. military occupation of Japan, when the U.S. army gradually turned its attention to the Korean Peninsula conflict. As Wong states:

What propels the narrative forward is exploring the peculiar atmosphere of a society reconstructing itself from the remains of nuclear destruction. Everyone in Nagasaki was profoundly affected by devastation. Etsuko's retelling of Nagasaki's efforts to rebuild serves as the quiet tone which permeates the telling hints at the story's implication for assessing historical facts. (1995:137-39)

The atomic bombing of Nagasaki is a tragedy that changed Etsuko's fate, but throughout the novel she refers to it gently as a “bomb” and mentions it only three times. The author deliberately avoids alluding to the atomic bombing, which helps him use her personal memories to express the unspeakable pain. Had the actual historical event been recreated in the story, the author might not have been able to accurately portray the grief of the victims because he did not experience the disaster himself, as the memory of the trauma is the most personal one. The author avoids a direct depiction of this devastating moment, as a way to show that that fear cannot be adequately articulated in words, nor can it be fully erased, as the traumatic events continue to haunt the survivors and disrupt their lives in the present. In the novel, most of the people,

represented by Mrs. Fujiwara, regain hope for their lives in the midst of the post-war suffering. However, Sachiko is indifferent to the noodle restaurant that Mrs. Fujiwara runs to make ends meet, and she refuses to recognize the efforts of others in rebuilding after the war. This rejection of her hope for life is more indicative of the serious consequences of the traumatic events for her. In addition, when Etsuko is adopted by Mr. Ogata, she is also in a state of severe trauma and is so mentally unstable that she even gets up in the middle of the night to play the violin. Despite the pain she experienced, she never mentions it directly, but only hints at it a few times, “the worst days” and “the tragedies and nightmares of wartime (8, 13). Etsuko asks Ogata what that time was really like for him, and Ogata says: “You were very shocked, which was only to be expected. Now, Etsuko, let's forget these things. I'm sorry I ever brought up the matter” (121).

Ono, the central character in *AFW*, and Ogata in *PVH* are in a similar dilemma, having been discredited after the war and both desperately trying to preserve their previous social status and the spirit of nationalism on which they depend. Regarding the connection between these two characters in both works, Ishiguro said:

In the first book, a lot of things that I thought were just going to be subplots took over. When I finished it, I thought: “Well, the aspect of this book that is most important to me is this bit that has ended up as a subplot,” which is a story about this old teacher, whose career has coincided to a certain extent with the rise of militarism in Japan before World War II, and who, after the war, in retirement, finds himself in the awkward position of having to reassess his life's work. I thought I would like to explore that strand much more thoroughly. (Kelman & Ishiguro 44)

Both stories take place in the years following the unconditional surrender of Japan at the end of the Second World War, at a time when the country was undergoing drastic changes. The values of the people have changed radically. Therefore, the personal recollections of the narrator differ in many ways from the public perception of history. There are intertextual episodes about these two characters in both works. These novels reflect the changes in Japanese society caused by the war, highlighting the changing status and relationships between men and women in the family, with the difference that what was a secondary plot in the first novel becomes central in the second. After the war, the traditional family model gradually disintegrates, the father's authority in the family no longer remains the same as in the past, and Japanese women begin to progressively break away from male control and strive for greater autonomy. In *PVH*,

Etsuko's recollections show that in an atmosphere where the public embraces the process of democratization in the United States, Ogata holds values that contradict it. For example, when Ogata hears that a couple voted for a different candidate in the election, he expresses great confusion. "What I heard the other day. A man was telling me this, a colleague of Jiro's, in fact. Apparently at the last elections, his wife wouldn't agree with him about which party to vote for. He had to beat her, but she still didn't give way. Thus, in the end, they voted for separate parties. Can you imagine such a thing happening in the old days? Extraordinary" (344).

Besides, Ogata represents the glorious pre-war generation in Japan, whose presence and influence are still alienating and unwelcoming to the young. In the story, Mr. Ogata is outraged by his former student Shigeo Matsuda's blatant attack on old-time thinking in an article for a newspaper. Matsuda publicly denies the importance of Japanese culture, argues that the principles Ogata stood up for brought disaster to Japan, and blames Ogata for the social harm he caused as a teacher. Matsuda believes that in the time of Mr. Ogata's youth, teachers taught students terrible things, most of them based on lies. And it was still a kind of brainwashing education, as students were forbidden to question and think. He also believes that the war has dissipated the values held by Ogata and his contemporaries. The Japanese militarism that Ogata supported has been rejected by the people, and the younger generation is eager to seal this memory and get over the trauma of the war as soon as possible. Ogata approaches Matsuda for a confrontation. In Ogata's view, although Japan had lost the war, it does not mean that the Japanese educational model was wrong. He believes that discipline, loyalty and a sense of duty are valuable qualities of the nation, which young people have forgotten today.

The same set of values that Ogata believed in also clashes with his own son Jiro's ideas. Because Jiro believes that it was the values of the previous generation that brought about the war, which in turn led to the trauma, the new generation must leave behind this obsolete ideology. These confronting perceptions between father and son lead to hostile dialogues between them. For example, when father and son are playing chess, Ogata tries to instruct Jiro on his strategy. He says: "Jiro, this is sheer defeatism. The game's far from lost, I've just told you. You should be planning your defense now, to survive and fight me again. Jiro, you always had a streak of defeatism in you, ever since you were young. I'd hoped I'd taken it out of you, but here it is again, after all this time" (289). Ogata shows difficulties to understand his son's reluctance to follow instructions. Jiro's open acceptance of defeat represents the view of the new generation

in Japan –admit defeat, accept the loss, and then try to forget. The very different views held by Ogata and the younger generation, represented by Matsuda and Jiro, show that the “destruction in Nagasaki was more than physical ruin; it also dismantled values long held sacred in the secular foundation of Japanese society, and it split the Japanese into generation factions” (Wong 1995: 140).

In *AFW*, the aging painter Ono used to paint and promote militarism during the war. After the war, however, his former colleagues, students, and even the government have changed their attitudes toward him, and he constantly struggles to reconnect with himself. Before war was declared in China in 1937, he was surrounded by suitors and his favorite bar, Migi-Hidari, was filled with patriotic banners and haranguing slogans. At the end of the war, US troops occupied Japan and began a process of socio-economic liberalization that ostracized Ono. The reader can clearly feel the dramatic change in his social status from the way Shintaro, a young man Ono meets at the bar, visits Ono twice in the story, before and after the war. At the beginning of the novel, around 1935 or 1936, Ono writes a letter of recommendation for Shintaro's brother, Yoshio, which helps him to successfully obtain the desired position. Afterwards, Shintaro, who brings his brother to his home to thank him, says: “I will be grateful to you for the remainder of my life. I will exert every particle of my being to be worthy of your recommendation. I assure you, I will not let you down. I will work hard, and strive to satisfy my superiors. And however much I may be promoted in the future, I will never forget the man who enabled me to start on my career” (37).

However, when Shintaro visited again in 1949, he asked Ono to write a letter to prove that he had not been influenced by Ono. This incident has a great impact on Ono and is one of the driving forces that pushed him to face his current position correctly. The social environment presented in Ono's memory was once one of unity and loyalty to the country, but unfortunately, the current generation despises this belief. At the funeral of Ono's son Kenji, Suichi is very frustrated, and he says to Ono: “I get angry thinking about things. About the waste” (105). But Ono seems not to understand his meaning, he replies: “It's terrible to think of the waste. But Kenji, like many others, died very bravely” (105). The conversation between the two men marks the very different attitudes of the two generations toward war and their completely contradictory understanding of sacrifice. Before this dialogue, the author indirectly explains that Suichi is also one of the Japanese soldiers who are sent to fight in the war against China. Fortunately, however, he survived, and although he returns unharmed, he is never able

to let go of his wartime suffering and is constantly tormented by the painful memories of witnessing the deaths of his friends and comrades. According to Setsuko's explanation, she believes Suichi behaves this way because he has attended too many funerals of his peers, many of whom were of people he knew well.

The deaths of family and friends haunts the young man, leading him to resent the blind patriots and the government they supported, sending countless young men to war and to their graves. In contrast to the older generation, soldiers have a duty to protect their homeland in times of national crisis. For Ono, Kenji and the other young men who sacrificed themselves for their country are absolutely brave and honorable, yet to the new generation, such self-sacrifice is seen as foolish and unnecessary. Suichi's anger is widespread among post-war youth, and it is unlikely that Ono does not perceive it, but he is still unwilling to readily admit that his actions were wrong. For to admit that he is wrong would mean that he cannot maintain his original identity. Faced with Suichi's reproach, Ono feels very confused and does not understand why young people harbor so much resentment toward the older generation. "These days I see it all around me; something has changed in the character of the younger generation in a way I do not fully understand, and certain aspects of this change are undeniably disturbing" (107).

Suichi's anger and accusations against Ono may have come from a traumatic wartime experience. The war has depleted countless lives and resources, thus decimating Japan's overall national power. In a conversation between Ono and another young Miyake, the latter candidly expresses the thoughts of the younger generation, who believe that the older generation should take full responsibility for the defeat and that those who refuse to do so will be seen as cowards. Ono has a brief conversation with Miyake before Miyake and his own young daughter Noriko have broken off their engagement, and at that time Ono already sees him as a member of his future family. During the conversation, Miyake mentioned that the president of his company has admitted his mistakes by atoning to the families of the war victims by committing harakiri, the Japanese samurai form of suicide. Ono is shocked and confused when he hears this news, as he considers suicide to be a great waste. Although Ono and Suichi both use the word waste when indicating unnecessary death, the word has the exact opposite meaning in their heads. For Suichi, the deaths of his comrades were completely unnecessary because their sacrifices did not contribute to social improvement; rather, the loss of these young men has also been a great loss to Japan in various fields. In Ono's view, it is the suicide of prominent people like Miyake's company boss and the

famous composer Yukio Naguchi to take responsibility for the war that is a major loss. Ono believes that they could not be made responsible for the war because “after all, if your country is at war, you do all you can in support, there’s no shame in that. What need is there to apologize by death” (101).

Ono's words show the transformation of social values after Japan’s painful defeat. The higher a person's social status as a patriot during the war, the more profound the blame he endures after the defeat. Moreover, through his words, the reader can find that the previous generation believes that they are part of the country and do not have to be responsible for what they did during the war; they just serve the country. However, for young people such as Miyake, the suicide of the older generation is beneficial to them, because “we feel now we can forget our past transgressions and look to the future. It was a great thing our President did” (101). In post-war Japanese society, there is a general feeling of disgust for the war and hatred for those who led the country astray. Patriotic advocates, including Ono, become war criminals, and, therefore, it is considered not only reasonable but necessary for them to take responsibility for the war. At the end of the conversation, Miyake calls off his engagement with Noriko, because he feels he is not good enough for her. This is nothing more than a formal excuse, and the real reason is clearly related to the change in status of Ono, with whom Miyake discovers that their values are far apart during the conversation. It is for this reason that, as Noriko is about to get engaged again, Setsuko, the eldest daughter, urges her father to take some precautions to ensure that Noriko's new love affair does not go wrong.

Although Ono refuses to listen to his father's wishes when he is an adolescent, after he becomes a father himself, he wishes to be a typical Japanese parent, who likes to exercise authority in the home. The conflict between Ono and his daughters shows the crisis of fatherhood in the post-war period, as he unsuccessfully tries to dominate the other family members. The conflict between Ono and his daughters is illustrated by Senko's disapproval of his rearrangement of the house's yard and his parenting of his sister Setsuko's son, Ichiro. At the beginning of the novel, the reader gets a sense of his identity crisis as a father from the conversation between Ono's two daughters in front of him. In the words of his youngest daughter, Noriko, Ono used to be a “tyrant” father. From these words, we can see that, although Ono does not agree with his father's way of doing things, he later becomes just as authoritarian as his father. This shows that the negative influence of parents on their children lasts a lifetime and is difficult to change. But now, Ono has become a different person: “Setsuko probably has no idea of what

you're like these days, Father. She only remembers you from when you were a tyrant and ordered us all around. You're much gentler these days, isn't that so" (23). Today, Ono clearly understands that he is just a retired old man and no longer has the influence he used to have in the community.

Ono's declining status in the family is not only related to his loss of social prestige, but also to the changing atmosphere of society as a whole, as the defeat of Japan at that time severely tarnished the image of men. As a failed painter and patriot, his daughters no longer obey him, and Noriko even questions his aesthetic ability as a painter. She expresses her dissatisfaction with her father's arrangements on the yard and feels that he should not interfere where it is not necessary, and she even rudely says: "Father must be going blind. Or perhaps it's just poor taste" (190). For a famous painter, such a comment from his daughter is certainly a great shame. The disagreement between Noriko and her father indirectly reveals that Ono's past reputation for patriotic propaganda is meaningless in the present, and that, on the contrary, his patriotic beliefs have cost the lives of many people, including his own wife and son. Of course, Ono denies Noriko's accusations, just as he does with those of others. However, in the second half of the novel, he admits that "as far as I am concerned, I freely admit I made many mistakes. I accept that much of what I did was ultimately harmful to our nation, that mine was part of an influence that resulted in untold suffering for our own people" (220). Ono finally realizes that all the things he is proud of are actually dispensable, so he is unable to refute Noriko's questioning. In fact, throughout the novel, he has been trying to re-establish his authority, however, every time, no matter how hard he tries, he eventually fails. Thus, the tremendous impact of war on society is vividly reflected in the intra-family relationships. And this drastic change is too much for Ono to accept all at once, thus creating his current predicament.

Ono's entire recollection and narrative centers on how he becomes a successful artist and how he maintains his position as the head of his family. Out of his pursuit of aesthetics and his belief in becoming a painter, he defies the authority of his father and teachers, while in his love for art, he throws himself into a propaganda movement. However, his aesthetic ideas proved not to be accepted by others, such as his father, whom he believes directly or indirectly led him to follow a path he did not expect. In his constant struggle against authority, Ono considers himself a hero, and in the face of Noriko's disobedience, he tries to remind Noriko of the proper behavior of women in the family, somehow taking advantage of his wife's meekness and passivity. He tells his

daughter that although her mother sometimes comments on his paintings, the purpose is to make him laugh. Her mother admits she knows nothing about art. Ono's wife, like his mother, is a traditional woman, always seconding the opinions and decisions of men, and they represent pre-war Japanese women who always listened to their husbands' opinions. Noriko, by contrast, epitomizes the post-war Japanese woman, who has been given unprecedented power and status by the changes in society, and Noriko is unconcerned by her father's reminder, even replying with a sense of mockery: "So Father was always right about his paintings too, I suppose" (190). Noriko's answer is quite ironic, because along with the loss of Japan, Ono's career has come to an end, and his artistic and patriotic ideas prove to be definitely wrong. The daughter seems to be reminding her father that since he has lost his public reputation and family prestige, he is in no position to insist that his views are the only truth and cannot demand that everyone else must agree. This verbal argument about fixing the courtyard actually carries deeper meaning. Ono has actually sensed the changes in society after the war. However, despite his gradual realization of his declining status in society and in his family, he still believes that he has some influence to successfully arrange Noriko's marriage, even though in his daughter's eyes, all he has done is just interfering.

Ono is unable to regain his authority in the family, but he hopes to at least have some influence on his grandson Ichiro, imparting traditional Japanese ideology to him. However, no matter how hard he tries, in the end he cannot regain his position. One day, when Ono takes Ichiro to lunch, he promises Ichiro that he will let him try sake. That evening, with his two daughters preparing dinner in the kitchen, Ono tells them of his decision, not expecting to be reproached by his daughters. He is angry, and he replies: "There's no harm so long as you mix it with water. You women may not understand, but these things mean a great deal to a young boy like Ichiro. It's a question of pride. He'll remember it for the rest of his life" (277). This passage shows that gender differences in father-daughter relationships are also a clear issue, especially in Japanese society. Ono, whose authority as a Japanese male has been questioned by the entire society, wants to educate his grandchildren in the traditional Japanese way. In his conversations with Ichiro, Ono uses the word "woman" to address his daughter. This word implies discrimination on a gender basis, suggesting that Ono classifies women, including his own daughters, as a group without right to speak for themselves. However, the fact that women, previously classified by Ono as a vulnerable group, now have a voice of their own, deeply frustrates him. When his daughter objects to Ichiro drinking

sake, he also says: “You know, I remember your mother protesting in just the same way when I decided to let Kenji have a taste of sake at this age. Well, it certainly did your brother no harm” (278).

Ono's words once again show that, like his weak mother, Ono's wife has no right to interfere in family matters at all. Although his wife disagrees with allowing such a young boy to drink sake, she acquiesces to her husband's decision. Besides, Ono is so confident that the decisions he makes benefit others because he is unwilling to admit that sometimes his decisions are wrong. However, in the eyes of the other family members, he is just a reckless and arbitrary father whose self-confidence has made him blind and irrational. Faced with a father who cannot see his own shortcomings, Setsuko cannot help but criticize him: “There is no doubt Father devoted the most careful thought to my brother’s upbringing. Nevertheless, in the light of what came to pass, we can perhaps see that on one or two points at least, Mother may in fact have had the more correct ideas” (278). Setsuko's reaction shows that, although Ono does not want to admit that some of the decisions he made were wrong and negatively affected those around him, the fact that the war was lost makes everyone see him as a man who lacks judgment.

In addition to Ono's loss of absolute power of speech, another issue that is even more unacceptable to him is that although he had some influence in his youth, his influence does not seem to be as decisive as he thinks. At the beginning of the novel, Ono downplays the importance of his work and his personal influence. “This visit –I must admit it– left me with a certain feeling of achievement. It was one of those moments, in the midst of a busy career allowing little chance for stopping and taking stock, which illuminate suddenly just how far one has come. A few years earlier, such a thing would have been inconceivable and yet I had brought myself to such a position almost without realizing it” (37). Later, he re-adjusts his strategy and tries to admit publicly that he was involved in the imperialist movement, but then he realizes that his role in the memories of others is not that important, and that with the flow of time he has been reduced to a “historical footnote” (Lang 144). This cruel truth is told to him by his eldest daughter one day when he takes a walk with her: “Forgive me, but it is perhaps important to see things in a proper perspective. Father painted some splendid pictures, and was no doubt most influential amongst other such painters. But Father’s work had hardly to do with these larger matters of which we are speaking. Father was simply a painter. He must stop believing he has done some great wrong” (342).

The characters in Ishiguro's novels are located in a period of transition between old and new values, and they find themselves displaced, caught between different cultures, between a residual tradition and an unknown change. Unable to meet socially acceptable standards, their social identities can only be negative. These characters are ignored and even marginalized by the general public because they are unable to adapt to the changes in their surroundings. In order to reconstruct their identities, they can only go back to the past through their residual memories, which are often incompatible with public history. Through the characters of Ono and Ogata, Ishiguro explores how individuals find themselves convinced of beliefs that, over time, prove to be problematic and even despised. Like individual recollections, these collective recollections are subject to constant change, as social developments are likely to produce very different collective attitudes toward history.

7. Narrative Techniques

7.1 The Different Roles of a Narrator

As a writer of Japanese descent who emigrated to England at an early age, Ishiguro's cross-cultural experience allows him to examine and present trauma from a special perspective, offering reflection, consolation and courage to those who have suffered. He does not use realism to recreate traumatic events, but persists in exploring the inner reality of history, that is, the personal fate and inner emotions behind historical events from individual standpoints. For a long time after a traumatic event, people are in a state of self-severance, which hinders the normal development of their personalities. Most traumatized individuals do not present a highly emotional and uncontrolled state all the time, they are no different from normal people in their daily lives, and only when traumatic memories invade their consciousness without any previous notice, do they become slightly abnormal. In order to avoid confrontation with traumatic memories, traumatized narrators choose to protect themselves in various ways, the most common of which is to tell the story according to their own perceptions.

The narrators in Ishiguro's novels come from different backgrounds, but all of them thematically revolve around the narrator's memories of unforgettable trauma. The recurring narrator's pain and remorse require a writing technique that can simultaneously reveal history and conceal the truth, and the art of rhetorical obscurity can meet this need. Michael Wood argues that Ishiguro's narrators employ the "discourse of the other" (171), when they recount the haunting past. Cynthia Wong points out that "to achieve the effects of both their suffering and their need for consolation, Ishiguro's narrators split into two distinct roles. Two levels of narrative voice can be distinguished from the one speaking in each of the novels: an 'extradiegetic' narrator is 'above' or superior to the story he narrates' and a 'homodiegetic' narrator 'takes part in the story'" (1995: 19). As critics have suggested, Ishiguro's first-person narrators are in fact split and pluralized "I's": they split themselves into multiple "I"s or project their own emotions onto multiple other subjects. At the same time, the reverse operation of self-replication is also valid, as the divided and diverse "I" changes from time to time into a unified and independent "we". The reason for this is that the "we" is often able to provide shelter for the weaker "I" when

necessary. In this way, the first-person narrator is not only recounting the past that “I” experienced alone, but also indirectly expressing the experience and history that “we” share.

In *AFW*, Ono tries to avoid facing his own weaknesses by telling stories of others to explain his own experiences, thus excusing his mistakes. After Ono reports his student Kuroda's work for its anti-patriotic tendencies, he turns his memories to his teacher Mori because he cannot directly admit his dad's mistake. Back then, Mr. Mori also detained all of Ono's paintings because Ono had betrayed his own creative ideas. The scene where the police burned Kuroda's paintings and the scene where Mr. Mori confiscated Ono's works are similar. Ono painfully recalls that “it is clear that such arrogance and possessiveness on the part of a teacher –however renowned he may be– is to be regretted” (321). This assertion can be seen as Ono's self-irony, but indirectly through his accusations against Mr. Mori. In this way, Mr. Mori becomes another “I” for Ono to avoid history. Apart from Mori, Ono also escapes his past through Akira Sugimura, the most respected man in town and the former owner of the mansion where he lives. Sugimura is not only respected, but also a lover of art, often sponsoring high-class art exhibitions with his own money. At the peak of his career, Sugimura decided to put up a large amount of money to build a cultural center for the city and its citizens, but halfway through the project he ran into a financial crisis and eventually had to abandon the project. Whenever Ono would walk along the river and see an empty lot where no museum had been built, he would always think “a man who aspires to rise above the mediocre, to be something more than ordinary, surely deserves admiration, even if in the end he fails and loses a fortune on account of his ambitions” (236). Ono places himself and Sugimura in the same category, believing that both of them are extremely similar in terms of their historical situation, their persistent pursuit of life goals, and their failure in the end. He blames both his and Sugimura's fiascos on their own short-sightedness, and believes that it is difficult for all people to change the course of history. They both lack the perspective to see beyond their own circumstances and are unable to see beyond the prevailing values of their time.

Ono's arrogance and cowardice are also reflected in the words and actions of other characters. He constantly uses the collective nature of “we” as a cover for himself and tries to shirk his moral responsibility for Japan's aggressive acts of war. The use of the word “we” is very tactful when Ono recalls the words of his friend Matsuda, who was also a supporter of militarism: “We are the emerging generation. Together, it is within

our capability to achieve something of real value” (305). Thus, Matsuda strongly encourages Ono to create militaristic works to fulfill the patriotic mission together. As Matsuda enters his old age and becomes ill, his words to Ono are filled with a tone of disillusionment: “We’re the only ones who care now. The likes of you and me, Ono, when we look back over our lives and see they were flawed, we’re the only ones who care now” (355). The change in Matsuda’s tone also suggests a change in Ono: the retired painter’s ambition has long vanished. Now he realizes that he is just one of the others. Matsuda’s repeated repetition of “we” is questionable. Is he really using the first-person plural, or are his words just a figment of Ono’s imagination? By using the word “we” in his recollection of Matsuda, Ono is pointing the finger at a larger group of people during Japan’s war, attempting to show that this socio-political, economic and humanitarian catastrophe is a collective error of judgment rather than his or Matsuda’s personal responsibility. Margaret Scanlan once accurately commented on Ono’s integration with the other characters’ experiences: “When confronted directly with a traumatic past, he tends to abstract and generalize it; when talking about others, he often seems to be talking about himself” (139). Ono’s tendency to hide himself in his narrative of others may explain why he unnaturally ends his narrative with a kind of collective optimism: “But to see how our city has been rebuilt, how things have recovered so rapidly Our nation, it seems, whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, has now another chance to make a better go of things. One can only wish these young people well” (364). The simultaneous appearance of the words “our” and “me” shows that the guilty “I” is once again seeking relief under the guise of “we”. Through this first-person plural pronoun, the line between the identity of the criminal and the victim becomes blurred. It is at this confusing intersection that Ono makes a temporary peace with his painful and incurable past.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko also tries to use “we” to hide the real thoughts in “I”. When her youngest daughter, Niki, comes home after Keiko’s suicide and talks to her about it, Etsuko thinks, “for although we never dwelt long on the subject of Keiko’s death, it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked” (*PVH* 5). She believes that her own neglect of her daughter has led to Keiko’s despair. Therefore, when she mentions that neither she nor Niki wants to mention Keiko, it is only herself that she really does not want to do it. As Etsuko begins to reminisce about her life in Nagasaki, she remembers that she and her husband were living in a new government apartment building after the disaster, and that she felt “they were small and rather

difficult to keep cool during the warmer months. And yet I remember an unmistakable air of transience there, as if we were all of us Waiting for the day we could move to something better” (12). After the trauma of the war, it is Etsuko that wants to move out most urgently, not just to move out of the apartment, but to escape the country altogether, the place that brought her so much pain. In the second half of the story, in the scene where Sachiko drowns the kitten, the images of Sachiko and Etsuko are fused together, and Ishiguro repeatedly uses the word “we” to describe the actions of “I” and Sachiko: “Instinctively, I followed her glance, and for one brief moment the two of us were both staring back up at Mariko. Sachiko got to her feet and we both of us watched the box. It continued to float, then caught in the current and began moving more swiftly downstream” (383). Although the killing of the kitten is also an indirect way of saying that Etsuko is responsible for Keiko's death, this scene is almost the most obvious hint in the whole story. Therefore, Etsuko, who is afraid of facing the truth, continues to hide herself in Sachiko's protective shell, using “we” as a reference, as if she hoped to mitigate her guilt in this way.

Through the fusion of “I” and “we,” the narrator walks through a maze of memories, intertwining with the experiences of other characters. By revealing the traumas of others, they are in fact healing their own traumas as well. By confusing the “we” as the object of the narrative with the “I” as the subject of the narrative, Ishiguro transforms the narrator's internal monologue into an imaginary dialogue with the characters. The direct expression of the narrator's inner conflict may have a disharmonious effect in the narrative, but the evaluation of the narrator's object “we” can express the conflicting thoughts of “I”. As a symbol of the first-person narrator's inner conflict, “we” helps to clarify how “I” actually confronts the inner hopes and pains. Truth is not a single constraint, but a combination of many aspects. Ishiguro's ambiguous narratives of the first-person narrators suggest that the unspeakable past is difficult to express directly by one's inner monologue, but can be inferred from the subtle differences between the monologues of the first-person narrators and their conversations with other characters in their memories. In both novels, the reader needs to infer the truth about his past from the narrator's recollected conversations, because the truths that “I” carefully hide are revealed unconsciously in the communication between “we”.

7.2 Intersecting Personal Memory and Collective History

It is no coincidence that these two works use the Second World War as a point of reference in time, and such a choice is not accidental. Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki in 1954, just a few years before the US Air Forces dropped the atomic bomb. This momentous event also allows him to connect his work to the common theme of war. He portrays the massive catastrophe through narratives of everyday life and focuses on the psychological reactions of people as they struggle to reconstruct the tenets of their lives after the war had shaken their own personal foundations. *PVH* and *AFW* offer readers the opportunity to glimpse the aftermath of war from a civilian perspective, while both the observer and the observed are highly variable. This double uncertainty is manifested in his subtle writing to reproduce the contingent nature of history in his novels. An unspeakable history is presented through the first person and the randomness of personal records. Through this form, the author explains the unreliability of memory and the unpredictability of the object of the narrative. His novel is not a reversion of historical circumstances, but aims to reveal how individuals endured the war, examine the unbearable past, confront the pain they had escaped, and finally accept their place in that particular period of history. Although Ishiguro claims that history is not his focus, historical facts seem to be intentionally addressed in his works in order to complicate the narrator's seemingly mundane narrative. In both novels, the narrators recount fragmentary memories of the past in the form of diaries, piecing together the postwar years as a period of dramatic social disintegration. Both stories encompass the trauma experienced by individuals whose lives have been upended by war.

The concept of time is very vague in Etsuko's narrative, and she never mentions the exact year of the events she experienced in Nagasaki. But through the scene of Etsuko and Sachiko visiting Peace Park together, readers can recall its first opening back in 1955. In the novel, Niki is studying in college. From this indirect information, we can see that the novel is narrated around the time when Ishiguro wrote the work (middle to late 1970s). In her reminiscent narrative, she is able to avoid the causal connection between the atomic bombing, the atrocity of murdering children after the war, and Keiko's despair and eventual suicide. These events do not seem to be connected, but simply pieced together by chance. Equally unaccounted for in Etsuko's recollections of

her past is her divorce from her first husband, Jiro, and her settlement in England with her second husband, Sheringham. Nor does she mention how she met Sheringham, a British journalist temporarily based in Japan, or why Jiro gave up Keiko's custody. In historical context, Etsuko's second marriage fits the profile of war brides that emerged after the war, a term that refers to "after World War II, tens of thousands of Japanese women moved with their new husbands, American soldiers, and assimilated into American culture" (Tolbert 2016). By portraying Sachiko as a reckless woman and a derelict mother, Etsuko implicitly expresses her remorse for marrying Sheringham against Keiko's wishes. She regrets that she has traded Keiko's happiness for her own future in England. In her recollections of post-war Nagasaki, Etsuko displays an unbelievable calmness as a war bride. In fact, her inner trauma, like that endured by her daughter Keiko and other war brides, is persistent.

Unlike *PVH*, the time frame of *AFW*'s story is clear, but the location where it takes place is very vague. Ono never names the city, but simply calls it "the city," and the story includes both fictional locations and the names of places that exist in Japan. Although the location is fictional, the novel is set at a real point in history. The entire novel consists of four chapters of Ono's diary written over two years, dated "October 1948," "April 1949," "November 1949" and "June 1950". These diaries document Ono's recent retirement and his experiences as an artist at the height of his career in the 1930s. According to Ono's narrative, chapters one and three are inspired by a visit from his eldest daughter Setsuko, while chapters two and four portray a quarrel with his student and the death of his friend Matsuda.

As Ono begins to recall his influence and privilege in the first chapter, Ono says nothing about the postwar Tokyo trial. The trial received worldwide attention, and the timing of its historical occurrence coincides with that of the first chapter. Although Ono does not actually mention this historical event, he cannot avoid it. The simultaneity of this public trial and Ono's personal reflections hints at the close connection between history and fiction. Through Ono's allegiance to the government and his students' superficial concurrence with him, the reader can glimpse the Japanese political leader's aggressiveness and the blind support of the people. Likewise, in Ono's guilt-ridden euphemisms, the reader can also see his excuses for his disgraceful past. In this like vein, Barry Lewis argues that the historical Tokyo trial is "the historical context in which Ono's shame and guilt are portrayed in an indirect way" (49). In addition, the historical fact of the US occupation of Japan, which also took place during that period,

is hidden in his narrative and can be seen as a decisive factor in the end of Ono's artistic career. Although the US figure does not appear in the novel, it permeates the Americanized speech and behavior of Ono's grandson Ichiro and Ono's son-in-law Suichi's acceptance of US values and identification with the powerful influence of the United States.

7.3 Trauma Imagery

In *AFW*, the mansion is a very important metaphorical representation. At the beginning of the story, the author devotes a lot of pages to delve into the origin of the mansion and its detailed interior construction. It was Ono's living place for decades, and many scenes of the story are set in this home. As such, it is inextricably linked to the story's theme of trauma and the characters' emotions. Throughout the story, one can see that Ono's tendency to “sulk in the house”, and his two daughters often tease their father about it: “He mops around the house all day” (20). Ono is often alone at home, and his daily activities consists of “hanging out” in his room or pruning flowers in the yard. The bombs hit the house during the war, resulting in the tragic death of Ono's wife, and his daughters often argue with him in the house when they grow up. Before the trauma caused by the war has completely dissipated, the trauma within the family begins to thrive.

The period around the destruction of his house, that is, around World War II, can be seen as a major turning point in Ono's life. It is a microcosm of Ono's rough life, as he goes from being a high and admired painter to a militaristic accomplice that everyone avoids. The change in the house suggests that Ono's glory days are over, and that his honor, status and position have all gone down the drain with the war. The house is supposed to be a shelter to protect the subject's physical and mental safety, but inside are ruins, quarrels and scolding, which make Ono, who is already suffering from a crisis of identity, be hurt again. At the end of the story, Ono's two daughters choose to live in a modern Western-style apartment, which enables them to enjoying the convenience of this sort of buildings. The old house is full of glory and glory of Ono's life, which makes Ono proud of his life, but he finally realizes that the obsolete will be replaced by the new, and the damage of the old house turns out to be inevitable.

The Kawakami pub is also a notable building in the story, a place for people to drink, eat, chat and be entertained. Before the war, it was a lively place where a group of

distinguished painters drank, and where Ono and his favorite students would choose to talk about their ideals. In addition to his residence, Ono's most frequent visit was to this bar, where the topics discussed were the most important part of his memories. When Ono wanted to avoid reality or refuse to explain the present, he would bring his thoughts back to the memories of the bar. In his mind, the bar proves to be as important as his home, where Ono felt comfortable and happy. After the war, the place is turned into a pile of ruins, and the government policy forces the bar out of business. Its gradual decay is representative of the buildings destroyed by the war, and Ono's second home is about to be destroyed. The two spatial images analyzed above, the mansion and the Kawakami pub can be derived from Ono's perception of the concept of "home".

They project the lack of emotional belonging of the main character. In addition, the Bridge of Hesitation, which appears frequently in the story, is the third image on which the novel is sustained. The first chapter connects the bridge with Ono's house. Using it as a reference mark, the author points out the geographical location of Ono's house, and the bridge is also the path Ono must follow to get from home to the bar. After the author introduces the mansion, he then focuses on the bridge of Hesitation to lead to the bar, thus showing that the bridge is the medium that connects Ono's two homes. In the second chapter of the novel, the author explains the origin of the bridge's name: "We called it that because until not so long ago, crossing it would have taken you into our pleasure district, and conscience-troubled men were to be seen hovering there, caught between seeking an evening's entertainment and returning home to their wives" (139). The bridge is a place for people to hesitate and make a decision, but Ono emphasizes that he is not thinking about whether to go home or go for entertainment, but simply enjoys the scenery at sunset and examines the surrounding changes. In chapter four, after receiving the tragic news of Mr. Matsuda's death, Ono decides to walk on the bridge by the river to relieve his pain. Obviously, the bridge has a very important place in Ono's heart, so much so that it is his best choice whenever he has no one to turn to.

Although both the mansion and the bar are home in Ono's heart, they express two different attitudes in terms of their underlying meanings. In Ono's eyes, the two sides of the "Bridge of Hesitation" represent opposing attitudes to life: his own home at one end of the bridge, and the place of pleasure at the other. The happy land is a symbol of Ono's past glory, filled with his eloquent opinions and compliments, and even though it is now in ruins, he still likes to drink there and reminisce about his glorious past with Mrs. Kawakami. Therefore, the free land symbolizes the past and the house symbolizes

the present, and the bridge of doubt is the key pivot connecting the past and the present. Ono stands on the bridge and admires the sunset thoughtfully, his heart is inevitably struggling: should he go back to his house to face all kinds of conflicts and troubles, or should he go back to the glorious past and talk about it freely? The Bridge of Hesitation not only provides a place for people to wander and connect the present with the past, but it also implies the general doubt of the people who were traumatized by World War II. Ono's wandering behavior on the bridge also symbolizes the dislocation of the post-war Japanese people: should they bravely admit their mistakes and face the reality, or should they forget this dishonorable history? Generally speaking, apart from being a material shell for the characters to live or spend time in, the mansion, the Kawakami bar and the Bridge of Hesitation also imply a deeper meaning –they are both the place where trauma is carried and the place where that trauma heals.

Similarly, in *PVH*, both the bridge and the river are given deeper meanings. In the chapter two, Sachiko and Etsuko cross a small wooden bridge when they go to look for the missing Mariko. Etsuko suggests: “Perhaps we should look over on the other side” (52), Sachiko agrees with her and says: “We’d better look on the other bank” (53). Shaffer believes that the river in the story serves as “a gulf between the living and the dead” (27), therefore, the bridge connects two sides together. The same images appear in chapter nine, when Etsuko looks for Mariko again: “In time the small wooden bridge appeared on the bank ahead of me” (263). This time, instead of walking directly across the bridge, Etsuko stops on it, looks up at the night sky, and listens to the sound of the river flowing under it. When she finally turned around, she realizes that Mariko has been standing behind her. She tries to pick up the lantern and take Mariko home, but Mariko runs forward alone. “Her footsteps drumming along the wooden boards. She stopped at the end of the bridge and stood watching me suspiciously. A half-moon had appeared above the water and for several quiet moment I remained on the bridge, gazing at it” (266). As Shaffer points out: “Crossing over the mysterious river figured as crossing over into other realms depicted by Etsuko as strangely peaceful, tranquil, and inviting” (30). The other side of the bridge represents death, and Mariko runs across alone to imply Keiko's suicide, yet instead of standing on the shore representing life, Etsuko stands on the bridge connecting life and death, holding a lantern and showing Mariko the way. Such a scene once again suggests that Etsuko has an inescapable responsibility for her daughter's suicide, and she carries the lantern as if she were lighting the way to death for her daughter. Thus, after her daughter's suicide by hanging,

Etsuko, who is overwhelmed with self-blame, always dreams of a little girl she saw swinging in the park, and not only that, the image of a rope also appears in the story. The two images, the swing and the rope, materialize the scene of Keiko's suicide. Although Ishiguro never gives a direct description of Keiko's suicide, through these two recurring allusions, readers can already outline for themselves what the poor girl looks like when she commits suicide

8. Reconstruction of Identity

In both works, both the government and the people have developed an admiration for and begin to learn from Western culture as well as its political system. The dramatic changes in social and cultural thought during the war and the post-war period caused protagonists in *PVH* and *AFW* to lose their subjective identity in the tide of reform, and trauma arises as a result.

Cultural identity is an important national characteristic in literary and cultural studies, while national culture is the basis for the establishment of an individual's cultural identity. Stuart Hall explains that “cultural identity is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origins or a system of shared characteristics with other persons or groups” (Hall & Gay 2). Following the occupation of Japan by US troops, there is an inevitable collision and fusion of Eastern and Western cultures. In the post-war Japanese society, a new culture is about to be born, and how to reconstruct one's cultural identity in this new context is the key first step for the characters in the book to heal their wounds. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha introduces the term of the so-called “Third space” where they live. He argues that the existence of any culture or cultural system is based on a place called “Third space,” which “constitutes the discursive conditions of renunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (55). The third space offers strategies of resistance that allow the voices of the colonized to be heard. No cultural model can be dominant forever. At the same time, no one culture is superior or inferior to another. It is in such a place full of contradictions and controversies that identity is gradually revealed. This is also where the “other” and the “self” meet, a space that is the key to dissolving the East-West dichotomy, since “cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other” (Bhabha 52). For the separated groups, who have undergone tremendous geographical, psychological and social changes, a correct understanding and acceptance of the concept of “cultural heterogeneity” is the prerequisite for reshaping their cultural identity, and the key to maintaining the national spirit in the process of separation without falling into narrow nationalism.

In *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Griffith, Ashcroft and Tiffin also suggest that “a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour. It may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model” (9). In *PVH*, the reader can find many traces of a lack of self-awareness and cultural denigration. For example, after giving birth to her youngest daughter Niki, Etsuko insists on giving her a pure English name and wants nothing to do with Japan, a move that clearly reveals her resistance to her culture of origin. In Etsuko's recollections, Sachiko struggles to learn English and shows a strong desire to live in the United States: “I used to dream I’d go to America one day, that I’d go there and become a film actress” (162). She has also stated that this country is more suitable for girls, while in Japan there is no expectation. Thus, both the geographical distance from the homeland and the psychological withdrawal from the culture of origin prove the cultural denigration and the lack of self-awareness that arise in the process of cultural integration.

Despite all the difficulties in coming to England, settling there for many years and trying to bridge the gap, true integration into the British culture has always been elusive. Perhaps it is not because they are not accepted as immigrants or unable to integrate into the local society, but perhaps the most important idea is that both she and her daughter carry the special mark of “cultural hybridity” (Bhabha 112), and the key to solving the problem is to deal with this trait reasonably. As mentioned above, the indifference of the British media after Keiko's suicide makes her feel the insurmountable cultural barrier again after her daughter's death. She also confesses that her British husband never really understood Japanese culture, although he had published many insightful opinions about Japan. Gradually, Etsuko realizes that this culture, which she once hated to the point of fleeing, has an indelible and deep connection with her soul. Living in an unfamiliar cultural context forced Etsuko to constantly think about who she really was. At the end of the novel, when Niki says she does not want to have a peaceful life or have children, Etsuko's nostalgia and her identification with traditional Japanese values, rise up: “It’s not a bad thing at all, the old Japanese war” (279). It also proves that she has found an identity through her own way of belonging. Through continuous reflection on her own cultural marks, Etsuko finally identifies with and embraces such a cultural hybridity, and the cultural binary that existed inside her body is thus dissolved.

Unlike Etsuko, Ono never questions or dislikes his country's culture, and he steadfastly follows this path of patriotism. But his beliefs are shaken by the intrusion of Western culture. After the end of World War II, Ono's original social identity is shaken, and he also suffers from severe anxiety as a result of his identity crisis. All this stems from Ono's concern that he will not be able to live up to the socially recognized paragon of success. The loss of identity due to social changes forced Ono to rebuild his identity, and in this reconstruction, he endured the pain caused by the splitting of the self and strove to complete his self-redemption. True redemption is not obtained by others, but only by oneself. It is a psychological experience. In the process of Ono's identity reconstruction, the inner self and the other engage in a fierce struggle, but at the same time they refine each other, trying to repair the cracks between the individual and society, and helping Ono to understand himself correctly. In the story, Ono's conversations with his grandson Ichiro and his son-in-law Suichi can be seen as a collision between Ono's inner self and the other, as well as a collision between traditional Japanese culture and the new Western culture. As a representative of the new generation under the influence of the United States, Ono's grandson Ichiro likes cowboy movies and US heroes. One could say that Ichiro exists to constantly remind Ono that times and people's perceptions are changing. He performs cowboy horseback riding in front of Ono, but Ono knows nothing about it:

“Lord Yoshitsune perhaps? No? A samurai warrior, then? Hmm. Or a ninja perhaps? The Ninja of the Wind.”
“Oji's completely on the wrong scent.”
“Then tell me. Who were you?”
“Long Ranger!” (43)

In addition to that, he also has discussions with his son-in-law Suichi about whether Japan should learn from the United States. Ono feels that “we might be a little too hasty in following the Americans. Sometimes some good things are being thrown out with the bad. Japan has come to look like a small child learning from a strange adult” (256). As a confused retired old man of a backward era, like Etsuko, he must regain himself in the Third Place in order to reconcile with his past self. Suichi, however, is not convinced and has full confidence in Japan. As long as Japan persists in learning from the United States, the future is bright. Faced with a younger generation that was very different from his own, Ono chooses to compromise. At the end of the story, he

confronts the past and affirms his young self who spared no effort to fight for his beliefs, but at the same time, he admits that he has taken the wrong path because of his shortsightedness. In the end he thinks hopefully: “Our nation, it seems, whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, has now another chance to make a better go of things. One can only wish these young people well” (284). Although Ishiguro does not give a clear answer to the ending, at the end of both stories, the main characters gradually come out of their confusion, and they both re-establish their understanding of themselves in their own way in the space where the old and new times meet.

Conclusions

Although trauma theory has been studied for more than one hundred years, there is still no definite conclusion on the nature and root cause of trauma. The author of the text selected for this dissertation has not personally experienced a significant traumatic event, but he is able to reproduce trauma and expose the reasons behind trauma in his works as well. By studying trauma in his works, we can enrich the connotation of this concept and broaden the scope of application of this theory.

Ishiguro's work embodies profound insight and reflection, and it is full of exploration of traumatic memories of characters and human reflection on the struggle for survival of the Japanese national community. Today, the trauma left by war has been dissipated by the entertainment of modern society. Ishiguro does not only reflect on the damage caused by war to human beings, but also shows their general anxiety when they face the history that they cannot resist by their own power. Trauma is caused regardless of national boundaries, races and genders, and it pervades most of Ishiguro's novels. Different dimensions of trauma are interwoven in these two novels, from individual to collective, from family to society. The author shows the various stages of the characters' experiences of trauma, from initial confusion and helplessness, to repression and denial, to the exhibition of trauma and efforts to repair it. Many of the characters in the novels suffer bereavement: Etsuko's entire family and fiancé die in the atomic bombing, her eldest daughter commits suicide after emigrating to England, and other characters such as Sachiko and Mrs. Fujiwara lose their loved ones in the war. In *AFW*, Ono's wife and children die in the war, and Mrs. Kawakami, who owns a bar, also loses a loved one.

“Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that we formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience” (Herman 51). In order to avoid distressing and traumatic events, the characters in the novel often divide themselves into two roles when they recall. Sometimes they put themselves at the center of the story, and sometimes they hide themselves behind “us” and remember the past in an indifferent manner. The narrator's role in the novel changes from one to the other, but eventually the two converge, showing the traumatized person's journey from denial to gradual acceptance of the traumatic reality.

Ishiguro does not have direct descriptions of war scenes in the novels. This approach of blurring historical details reflects the author's caution regarding the narrative of trauma. As a writer who did not personally experience World War II, the atomic bombings and the changes in Japanese society after World War II, he blurs the exact time and specific place where the events took place. His narrative approach prevents possible inaccurate descriptions when recreating traumatic events.

In our current society, the factors that cause trauma are becoming more and more numerous. Whether it is the influence of the external world or the struggle in the internal world, these situations can easily strike people. Compared with physical trauma, mental trauma is more dangerous to people's lives. Only when trauma research is recognized and taken seriously can these wounded individuals and groups receive real relief. Ishiguro's own experience as an immigrant writer allows him to observe various cultures from a bystander's point of view, so that his concerns are global rather than limited to a single ethnic group. His works unearth the most hidden anxieties of human beings and profoundly reveal that post-war identity reflection is not unique to Japan, but a common reflection on the human experience and its memory.

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