

Healing Trauma and Reconstruction of Japanese Identity in the Post-War Period in the Novels by Kazuo Ishiguro and Haruki Murakami

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Abstract—Both Kazuo Ishiguro, a British Japanese writer, and Haruki Murakami show their views of Japanese history and try to explore the relationship between individuals and their country in the flow of history in their novels. “A Pale View of Hills” and “An Artist of the Floating World” by Ishiguro and “The Wind-up Bird Chronicle” and “Killing Commendatore” by Murakami refer to the Pacific War and use the post-war period when trauma and identity became outstanding issues in Japanese society as the background of the stories. From the perspective of trauma and identity theories, this article clarifies the similarities and differences of Ishiguro and Murakami in the way of representing the trauma caused by identity crises that Japanese generations coped with and the changes of Japanese identity in the post-war period. Through analyses of Japanese citizens’ and immigrants’ trauma of finding and choosing identities in the four novels, this article also indicates Ishiguro and Murakami’s messages of healing trauma and reconstructing Japanese identity.

Keywords—identity, Haruki Murakami, Kazuo Ishiguro, post-war, trauma

I. INTRODUCTION

Kazuo Ishiguro and Haruki Murakami are authors whose voices are currently drawing significant attention from readers worldwide. Their works influence not only the domestic literature in Japan and the United Kingdom but also transcend national boundaries, which has contributed to the creation of a new literary genre, today known by the term “global novel”.

In his entire career, Ishiguro has only written two novels about Japan: “A Pale View of Hills” (1982) and “An Artist of the Floating World” (1986). These debut novels can be considered as Ishiguro’s “debt of gratitude” to the country of his birth, a place he carries within his memories since he left Japan at the age of five, growing up as a citizen of the United Kingdom. With this background, Ishiguro views himself as someone without a clear-cut identity, a sort of hybrid or migrant, standing outside Japan looking in. He uses literature to construct an image of Japan from his fragmented memories, preserving a “non-Japanese Japan” or a Japan in his personal memory museum. Meanwhile, Murakami, born and raised in Japan, has witnessed the country’s historical fluctuations in the post-war period. Therefore, Murakami’s perspective of Japan can be seen as an introspective view of his identity. Although the works of Ishiguro and Murakami present two different narrative styles, they share common themes, such as memory, trauma, and the exploration of the relationship between trauma and Japanese identity in the post-war era.

Both authors regard identity crisis as a form of Japan’s post-war trauma. To heal this trauma, Japan must aim to reconstruct its identity.

The research question we pose in this article is: how do Ishiguro and Murakami portray trauma and identity in their works? How is the healing of trauma and the reconstruction of post-war Japanese identity represented in the works of these two authors? Applying literary trauma and identity theories to analyze four novels that address the theme of war or are set in post-war Japan, including “A Pale View of Hills” (1982) and “An Artist of the Floating World” (1986) by Ishiguro, “The Wind-up Bird Chronicle” (1994–1995) and “Killing Commendatore” (2017) by Murakami, this article aims to explore the similarities and differences in the artistic world of Ishiguro and Murakami regarding trauma and identity. We also examine Ishiguro and Murakami’s messages about healing trauma and reconstructing post-war Japanese identity.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF TRAUMA, IDENTITY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAUMA AND IDENTITY

A. Trauma

The term trauma was discussed by Freud from a psychological perspective in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) and “Moses and Monotheism” (1939). In these two studies, Freud examined trauma from a mental standpoint, using stories from Greek mythology and the Bible to discuss the nature of trauma.

In the 1990s, the connection between trauma theory and literature began to attract scholarly attention. Cathy Caruth can be seen as a pioneering trauma theorist with a psychoanalytic approach. According to Caruth, trauma is “[...] an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” [1]. She interpreted Freud’s works on trauma and deduced several features of trauma: traumatic experience is a belated experience until it recurs and is obsessively repeated in the unconscious; trauma, due to its shocking nature, could not be fully remembered and recognized in the first instance, thus it resists simple interpretation or forgetting; the scope of trauma includes both personal and collective trauma, and with its enduring recurrence, these traumas have a long-lasting and astonishing impact on an individual’s or a community’s life

[2]. Caruth went beyond Freud's ideas by pointing out the relationship between trauma and literary language: Trauma is an image of the unknown as it does not occur at the moment of the traumatic event but has a latency. Thus, trauma resists consciousness, refuses to assimilate into memory, leading to difficulty in verbal representation of it to transform it into the known. According to Caruth, "the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" is the similarity between trauma and literary language, therefore, literature is a suitable vehicle to describe traumatic experiences [2].

The historical calamities of the twentieth century and the psychological traumas of people in the twenty-first century seem to be a backdrop for the interpretation, supplement, and development of trauma theory. Generally, current trauma theory primarily focuses on psychological, sociological, and narrative approaches. In contemporary literary research, trauma theory also shows a strong connection with theories of feminism, postcolonialism, deconstruction... As M. S. Roth says, "contemporary theory is traumatophilic." [3].

B. Identity

The concept of identity is a significant issue within the realms of social science and humanities. However, the inherent meaning of this concept remains ambiguous, sparking debate amongst scholarly circles: "The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy." [4].

With a focus on ontology, philosophy has shown an early interest in the concept of identity. J. Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689) is often considered foundational to the concept of identity. Locke [5] theorized that human consciousness, which always accompanies thought, is what "makes personal identity" because it distinguishes an individual as a distinct entity (self) from others. From the 1950s, with a catalyst from E. H. Erikson's "Identity: Youth and Crisis", the concept of identity began to be widely discussed across various social sciences. In the 1980s and 1990s, under the influence of postmodernism and multiculturalism, humanities scholars started viewing identity as a significant concept to explore "the cultural politics of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and other social categories" [6]. Into the 21st century, amidst a diverse and turbulent world, the study of identity has attracted even more debate with fresh and multifaceted interpretations.

Divergent approaches to understanding identity have led to different perceptions about its formation and attributes. However, contemporary studies on identity generally agree on the following points:

(a) Identity is often viewed from two perspectives: personal identity and collective identity. In terms of personal identity, studies often examine it through a psychological lens, such as Hogg and Abrams' interpretation of identity as "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" [7]; through a physical perspective (i.e., the body); or a combination of both. The term "collective identity" remains debatable due to the openness of related concepts such as ethnicity, nation, and culture, particularly in the current context. Nonetheless, studies generally agree that shared aspects such as culture, politics, race, nation, language, and territory contribute to a community's collective identity.

(b) Identity is referential. Identity is situated within social relations, and it is within these relations that an individual or a community distinguishes themselves from other individuals and communities. This positioning suggests that identity includes both objectivist perception and subjectivist perception, meaning self-awareness or sense of belonging as well as recognition by others. In other words, identity is "the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others" [8].

(c) As a consequence of (b), identity contains both constancy and variability. Identity is conceptualized as a process, not a fixed state: "Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point." [9]. Due to external influences, identity is not static but continuously evolving while also preserving traditions and unique characteristics. The factors, methods, degrees of change, and preservation of identity are interpreted differently across various studies.

In our view, through the contradiction between inevitable constant change and the effort to preserve distinctive values, identity may be distorted, destroyed, created, or restructured. Identity is not a precise answer but a perpetual question awaiting new responses.

C. The Relationship between Trauma and Identity

Trauma and identity are interconnected concepts, with trauma often acting as a catalyst for change and redefinition of identity. This interaction between trauma and identity is not static but is influenced by significant events and experiences that can redefine and reshape the essence of identity. Consequently, we can examine this relationship through the lens of personal trauma and collective trauma, both of which can have profound impacts on personal and collective identity.

The correlation between trauma, identity, and memory is a pivotal one. Trauma and memory intersect in the sense that "through history that we are implicated in each other's traumas" [1]. Similarly, identity and memory are intrinsically linked. M. Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory" and P. Ricoeur's perspective on the unity between consciousness (about identity) and memory in "Memory, History, Forgetting" (2004) support this view. Shared consciousness of the past, preservation of language and territory (mental space) – These elements reflect the intertwining of identity, memory, and trauma. According to S. A. Simine, trauma and identity are connected to memory: "Like trauma, memory is inveterately connected with identity. As with trauma, the realms of personal and collective memories intersect in complex ways, and in both trauma and memory studies, there are complicated interactions between the biological, the psychological, the political, and the cultural." [10]. The examination of trauma and identity is incomplete without considering the role of narrative. Narrative provides an appropriate medium for representing trauma, emphasizing the parallels between literary language and the language of trauma. In much the same way, narrative is essential in the exploration of identity.

In conclusion, the relationship between trauma and identity is complex and multifaceted. Trauma can be a significant determinant in the reshaping and redefinition of identity, with memory and narrative playing crucial roles in this process. The understanding of this relationship requires

an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating perspectives from psychology, sociology, cultural, and literary studies.

III. TRAUMA AND IDENTITY IN KAZUO ISHIGURO AND HARUKI MURAKAMI'S NOVELS

A. *Trauma and Identity in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels*

The protagonists, an artist and an immigrant, in "An Artist of the Floating World" and "A Pale View of Hills" did not directly participate in the Pacific War. "An Artist of the Floating World" is set in a Japanese city between 1948 and 1950, after Japan was defeated in the war and occupied by the US forces. The story in "A Pale View of Hills" has two settings: Japan in the first few years after the war and England at the time when the second generation of Japanese immigrants grew up. In the two novels, Ishiguro depicts ideological conflicts between the old and young generations in family and society, which created identity crises as personal and collective traumas.

1) *The representation of the trauma caused by identity crises in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels*

Being faced with huge damage after the war, the issue of looking back at the past was raised in Japan. The old and young generations' different viewpoints about their roles in the war and the influences of the past on their life led to their identity crises. Through the tense relationships between parents and children, teachers and students, and elders and juniors, Ishiguro's novels evoke an image of post-war Japan which was full of traumas and division.

After the war, Ono in "An Artist of the Floating World", a nationalist painter whose works promoted Japan's involvement in the Pacific War, and Ogata in "A Pale View of Hills", a teacher who was on the wartime Japanese government's side, lost their position in their family and society, whether as a father, a teacher or an elder. Ono's daughter Noriko blamed her father for his political career affecting her marriage prospects. Suichi, his son-in-law, and Jiro Miyake, his potential son-in-law, alluded to Ono's generation for promoting the war and causing soldiers' deaths. Miyake even called those who supported the war "war criminals" [11, p. 56]. According to Ono, hatred towards his generation appeared all around him and became "the character of the younger generation" [11, p. 59]. Similarly, opposing political viewpoints made Ogata and his son more and more distant. Ono and Ogata also experienced the pain of being avoided and insulted by their former students. Being identified as war criminals led to different reactions among the older generation. In "An Artist of the Floating World", a military music composer committed suicide as an atonement. Meanwhile, although Ono and Ogata admitted their work might cause damage to their country, they argued they had "acted in good faith" [11, p. 123] and dedicated themselves for Japanese spirit. Despite their varied views, they all suffered from the trauma of being isolated, judged, and condemned by their community.

The young generation's identity crises came from their obsession to the war and their difficult life in the post-war time. Young soldiers who had participated in the war realized that they were not heroes but war victims, who had been deceived and "die for stupid causes" [11, p. 58]. The war not

only brought them physical deaths but also destroyed their identities. Kenji, Ono's son, had joined in the Battle of Manchuria and returned in the form of ashes, and what was worse was that the ashes of Kenji and his twenty-three comrades were mixed together. Ono held Kenji's funeral without knowing whether the ashes he received were definitely his son. During the funeral, Suichi, who had also been to the Manchurian battlefield, became angry and accused Ono's generation of being responsible for the meaningless deaths of young soldiers. For Ono's students, their relationship with Ono and propaganda posters caused trouble for their careers when the war ended. Therefore, they wanted to erase their old identity as nationalist painters by hiding the connection with Ono and making profiles that could satisfy "the American authorities" [11, p. 102].

The conflict between the old and young generations in the two novels towards the war indicates the change in the social status of fathers, teachers, and elders, who often got high positions in Japanese traditional families and society. It could be seen as the reversal of social hierarchy and core values in post-war Japanese society. Due to Japan's defeat, nationalism, and imperialism, ideas promoted during the war, were denied. Some Ishiguro's characters raised the question of what would be Japan's future national identity. The dilemma between a rejected past identity and an unformed new identity led to ideological conflicts. Ono and Ogata's generation believed that it was necessary to preserve Japan's traditional values to keep the national identity in the face of the increasingly strong influence of Western culture at that time. However, their voices were not regarded because of their connection with the Japanese government during the war. On the contrary, others, especially the young ones, tended to reject what made the Japanese spirit in the past, including art, education, and traditions to escape the trauma of war and to choose Western social paradigm as a model to build a new identity for Japan. In the two novels, the debates about wartime and post-war culture sketched out the atmosphere of Japan in those days. The paintings used for the wartime government's propaganda policies now were condemned for ethical issues. The article of Matsuda, Ogata's student, criticized Japanese traditional education as a deceitful system, which was one of the reasons why "the country was plunged into the most evil disaster in her entire history" [12, p. 147]. Jiro, Ogata's son, shared the same view: "[...] there were some faults in the old system, in schools as much as anywhere." [12, p. 66]. "Samurai", the model of Japanese hero, and the concepts related to this like "honor", were denied by a lot of young people in the post-war time. When Ono wanted to talk about "honor" with his grandchild Ichiro, he was informed Ichiro's father argued: "Western heroes are the better model for children now." [11, p. 36]. It is visible that the confrontation between traditional Japanese culture and Western culture in the post-war period deepened the trauma of war and the trauma caused by identity crises personally and socially.

The intergenerational conflict in immigrant families in "A Pale View of Hills" was portrayed as the two generations' struggle to choose their "old" and "new" identities. The novel mentioned this struggle through the opposing views of mothers and daughters on immigration, which had appeared

even before they left Japan, and the effects on their identities. Two stories of mother-daughter relationships were told in parallel by the narrator Etsuko, who lost her family due to the bombing of Nagasaki and immigrated to England with her daughter Keiko. The two mothers believed that immigration could be an opportunity to escape the pain of war and have a better future. On the contrary, their daughters did not want to leave Japan, so this became the beginning of their depression. Supposing America would bring them “more opportunities” [12, p. 46] to live their own lives, Sachiko worked hard to afford the trip to America. She left her ten-year-old daughter Mariko dropped out of school and not be taken care, and took no account of the signs of Mariko’s depression. Similarly, although Etsuko knew Keiko wanted to stay in Japan, she brought her to England just to lose her to suicide.

Through the relationship between Etsuko and her two daughters, Keiko and Niki, “A Pale View of Hills” depicted the trauma caused by identity crises of two generations in immigrant families clearly. Keiko’s inability to intergrate with the life in England and the lack of communication with her mother prevented her from family bonds and social relationships, which caused her identity crises and affected badly on her mental health. Blaming herself for being responsible for Keiko’s suicide, Etsuko escaped reality with her memories of their time in Japan. However, living in the past not only immersed herself in pain but also brought her back to the trauma of war which seemed to be buried over the years. Besides, the way newspapers in England described Keiko’s death as “an instinct for suicide” [12, p. 10] of Japanese people made Etsuko face the fact that the Japanese identity she tried to forget did not fade. Eventually, she and Keiko were just immigrants. Sharing the Japanese identity should have made a strong connection between Etsuko and her daughter but she missed the chance for that. In this circumstance, Etsuko experienced the identity crisis seriously. When she met Niki, the daughter she had with her new English husband, her identity crisis was even more deeper. The English name “Niki” that she gave her second daughter was her “selfish desire not to recall the past” [12, p. 9]. This name could be seen as a metaphor for Etsuko’s rejection of her Japanese identity. Her confession made readers expect a strong attachment between Etsuko and Niki but their relationship went colder and colder. Although Niki visited to comfort Etsuko after Keiko’s death, she was not interested in sharing her mother’s memories of Keiko and Japan. Moreover, what Niki talked about marriage and the role of women was very different from the view of a Japanese woman like her mother. The five days they spent together could not make their relationship better, so Niki “was anxious to return to her life in London” [12, p. 9]. Finally, Etsuko realized that Niki’s English lifestyle turned out to be something strange to her. It seemed she lost all her daughters in England. This truth left her mind captivated and fluctuated between the past and the present. It was like she had nothing but the tragic past and the vague future. At that moment, she felt the immigrants’ fragile and uncertain identity more clearly than ever.

After all, despite sharing the trauma of war and identity crises, the old and young generations in “A Pale View of Hills” and “An Artist of the Floating World” could not get closer to each other.

2) The message of healing trauma and reconstructing identity in Ishiguro’s novels

In his novels, Ishiguro mentions two aspects of healing trauma caused by identity crises in post-war Japan. First, raising awareness of bad effects of the trauma needs to be noticed. Second, it is important to find solutions to heal trauma and reconstruct identity.

In the two novels, suicides caused by prolonged and unresolved identity crises could be seen as the prominent consequence of trauma. There are three characters who committed suicide: a nationalist musician named Naguchi, who composed songs to encourage Japanese soldiers in the Pacific War; a chairman whose company cooperated with the wartime Japanese government; and Keiko, an immigrant. In “An Artist of the Floating World”, Naguchi and the chairman had to face the condemnation of their community for supporting the war. They ended their lives because they believed that their work had contributed to deaths of those who were killed in the war. In “A Pale View of Hills”, Keiko’s depression which led to her suicide came from the dilemma of her inability in assimilating in England and returning to Japan.

Suicide is a sensitive issue in Japanese culture. Due to its popularity in Japanese literature, art, and real life, it may be identified as the characteristic representing Japanese identity, which Ishiguro himself indicated in “A Pale View of Hills” through the detail of Keiko’s death. The way Ishiguro’s novels talk about the characters’ suicides and public opinion on these deaths shows that suicides were considered not only as personal tragedies but also as collective crises. In “An Artist of the Floating World”, suicides were described as a common phenomenon in the post-war period: “Every day there seems to be a report of someone else killing himself in apology.” [11, p. 55]. Characters’ discussions about these suicides demonstrated different views of Japanese public opinion. A lot of characters supposed that suicides of those who supported the war were righteous and “noble gestures” [11, p. 56] of atonement. Others argued there’s no need “to apologize by death” [11, p. 55] because suicides might be “a great waste” [11, p. 56] and the loss of “best men” [11, p. 56] of the country. It can be regarded that Ishiguro’s novels evoked the necessity of trauma awareness in Japan, the country where the trauma of war has remained up till now, by examining how suicides happened and stirred public opinion.

As mentioned above, in the two novels, the battle between the “old” and “new” identities in the post-war period led to identity crises of Japanese people and society. For those living in Japan, the debates surrounding the demonstrations in the name of democracy and the pen wars about looking back at the past and choosing a future path for Japan mentioned in the two novels gave a big picture about identity crises in post-war Japan. For immigrants, locating themselves between their old and new identities was a restless struggle. From the perspective of an immigrant author, in his Nobel Prize lecture, Ishiguro also showed this struggle, which was depicted as the concern about how the image of Japan fading in his mind might destroy his Japanese identity and how he coped with it: “[...] I’d come to realise that with each year I grew older, this Japan of mine – this precious place I’d grown up with – was getting fainter and fainter. [...]. What I was doing was getting down on paper that world’s special colours,

mores, etiquettes, its dignity, its shortcomings, everything I'd ever thought about the place, before they faded forever from my mind. It was my wish to re-build my Japan in fiction, to make it safe [...]" [13]. Ishiguro's recognition of the fading Japanese identity and his effort to "put together" Japanese characteristics to "re-build" a new image of Japan suggested a method of healing trauma caused by identity crises. We find this suggestion in the similarities of the endings of the two novels. At the end of "An Artist of the Floating World", Ono smiled after the journey of observing two opposing scenes representing the past and the present: the ruins of war next to the new buildings and companies. "A Pale View of Hills" closed with Etsuko's goodbye smile to her daughter and the images of two countries appearing at the same time in her mind: the quiet fields in England in the present and the hills in Japan in the past. In our opinion, through these similarities, Ishiguro's novels give the messages of healing the trauma caused by identity crises of Japanese people and society in the post-war period. First, identity includes both the stable old form and the taking shape form, so we should let them connect and intersect with each other with a welcoming smile. Second, the coexisted images of the past and the present at the endings may be a message of harmony and reconciliation between the old and new identities. To sum up, accepting the truth that identity is changeable and searching for connection are necessary to heal traumas caused by identity crises and reconstruct identity on a more ideal level.

B. Trauma and Identity in Haruki Murakami's Novels

1) The representation of trauma and the loss of identity caused by trauma

The identities of the traumatized subjects and the origins of trauma can be grouped into three categories among the characters in Murakami's novels:

(a) The first group: consists of soldiers who directly participated in past wars: Private Honda and Lieutenant Mamiya (an officer in the Kwantung Army during the Japanese occupation of Manchukuo) – survivors from the Nomohan campaign. Having directly experienced the horrors of war, witnessing a Russian commander flay his comrades, surviving miraculously, the war memories from Manchukuo (Manchuria) and the final days of World War II never cease to haunt him (Mamiya). Additionally, other losses compounded his trauma: his family passed away while he was at war for 12 years, his former lover married someone else, making Lieutenant Mamiya, the war veteran, nearly a soulless corpse. The war formed a significant part of his identity, rendering him incapable of leading a normal life like others, forever haunted by his war memories. He narrated his bizarre life and war past to the character Toru as a way to pass on his memories before his peaceful departure, ending his days of torment and trauma. In the novel "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle", the suicide of the younger brother of elderly artist Amada Tomohiko, a returnee from the Sino-Japanese War, is a fleeting detail in the novel but draws attention, as it is a death resulting from trauma, war memories, and a war-derived identity.

(b) The second group are the victims indirectly affected by the war: Having experienced childhood memories in Manchukuo, as the war came to an end, Nutmeg Akasaka and her mother boarded a ship back to Japan, but her father, a

veterinarian, never returned, having lost his life at the Beijing Zoo. Nutmeg's identity is haunted by memories of the Beijing Zoo, the encounter of the refugee ship she was on with a U.S. submarine, her father with a bruise on his face, and the sound of a winding bird. She incorporated these memories into stories she told to her son, Cinnamon Akasaka. Although Cinnamon is mute but highly intelligent, he seems to be a boy indirectly traumatized by a strange event and the war stories told by his mother, which play a significant role in shaping his identity.

The character, a renowned painter Tomohiko Amada, although not directly involved in the war, experienced his student years in Germany during the Nazi takeover of Europe. He was expelled from Europe and returned to Japan due to his involvement in the assassination event of a high-ranking Nazi officer, and his lover was executed. In addition, Tomohiko received news of his younger brother's suicide after returning from the Sino-Japanese War. The trauma of the elderly painter stems from these events. Upon returning to Japan, the haunting memories of the European battlefield transformed him into a different person, and since then, he could only live quietly in the world of painting, creating mysterious works including "Killing Commendatore". The experiences of war indirectly sculpted his identity, profoundly influencing his art and life. (Information about the artist's character: Tomohiko was once a student in Germany during the Nazi takeover. He was involved in a failed student-led assassination plot against a high-ranking Nazi officer, which led to the execution of his lover and his quiet expulsion back to Japan.)

(c) The third group – typically the main characters or the first-person narrators – are the young individuals living in modern Japanese society: They often experience failures in their personal lives, are abandoned by their spouses or partners, have little connection with their families, and don't belong to any social groups or organizations. In "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle", the protagonist, Toru Okada, is a middle-aged man living with his wife and a cat. He is unemployed but content with his current life. However, one day, his cat disappears, followed by the mysterious departure of his wife Kumiko. These sudden disruptions thrust him into existential crises right at the point when he thought he was leading a peaceful and happy life in their small home.

Similarly, the unnamed thirty-six-year-old portrait painter, the 'I' narrator in "Killing Commendatore", finds himself unexpectedly ousted from an unsuccessful career and a failing marriage. He decides to sever ties with the world and moves to a secluded house on a mountain, intending to paint only what he likes. The upheavals and losses from what seemed like a mundane life become the catalysts that push these main characters to a turning point in their lives. It is at this point that they realize their own insipidity, their lack of identity, and their lack of connection to life. Even the people they trusted and loved most have left them. These main characters are traumatized by these breakages and fall into profound loneliness - leading to an intense desire to seek their identities.

This third group of traumatized subjects, one could argue, is a distinctive type of character in Murakami's novels. The creation of such characters, dealing with traumatic experiences derived from seemingly ordinary life events, is a unique aspect

of his writing. It brings a new dimension to the exploration of trauma in literature, expanding its scope beyond the traditionally recognized sources like war and violence.

Similar to Ishiguro, Murakami views the loss of identity as a form of trauma. Through the depiction of the pain of individuals who have lost their identity, including both older generations returning from war and the newer generation living in peacetime, Murakami hauntingly presents various forms of trauma experienced by the contemporary Japanese psyche. Some people choose suicide as a reaction to trauma. They cannot bear the crushing, haunting criminalities of war, like the younger brother of the painter Tomohiko Amada, or Lieutenant Mamiya. Those generations indirectly affected by the war, like the mother and child in "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle", become permanently psychologically damaged and struggle to live a normal life. The elderly artist Tomohiko Amada, after returning to Japan, chose to sever all ties with his family and society. He isolated himself in a house on the mountain and turned to art in hopes of healing his soul. But it seems that this could not help him overcome the haunting memories of his past trauma, as the story reveals that Amada had destroyed or hidden all the paintings he had made, leaving only one in the attic of the house.

Art is essentially the language and means of self-expression for the artist. However, in "Killing Commendatore", both the unnamed painter and Tomohiko Amada behave in the same way: they hide or destroy their own artistic creations – their spiritual children. This is a manifestation of deep trauma in the artist class. In this novel, Murakami cleverly incorporates the message about the type of trauma experienced by an artist by mentioning the tragedy of the writer Franz Kafka – one of the legendary writers of world literature – who had asked his friend to burn all his works after his death.

Once these traumas occur, they push the fate of Murakami's characters into a state of loneliness and estrangement from the world, unable to share with anyone. The isolation from humanity, the lack of connection to groups, traditions, and national history of the characters, have pushed them into loneliness, an inability to identify their true nature, and an inability to find the meaning of life. This is the close relationship, a cause-and-effect relationship, between trauma and identity in Murakami's novels. Self-isolation from others and the world after being traumatized is also a type of response to trauma from characters in Murakami's novels. People shrink, voluntarily choosing to sever personal connections with others. But Murakami does not delve as deeply or as much into the issue of generational conflict consciousness as Ishiguro does. The writer does not delve too deeply into this issue but focuses on how to heal trauma and proposes solutions for rebuilding Japanese identity.

Murakami often uses the Shadow symbol to present the message about trauma and the loss of identity of modern humans. The shadow is a special artistic symbol, it represents the self, the soul, the original core of a person. Trauma is most clearly manifested through images of people losing their shadows (the Calcutec in the novel *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*), or shadows suddenly becoming faint (the character Nakata in "Kafka on the Shore"). For Murakami, not only individuals have shadows but each nation also has this aspect. It is the repository of dark

aspects, traumatic memories from the past, history: "It's not just individuals who need to face their shadows. The same act is necessary for societies and nations. Just as all people have shadows, every society and nation, too, has shadows." [14].

2) The message of healing trauma and reconstructing identity in Murakami's novels

In our view, to examine Murakami's method of healing trauma, it is important to understand his perspective on the issue of Japanese historical memory, particularly concerning wars. For Murakami, history is a mirror that stores events and collective memories that have occurred and are immutable. The author calls for an acknowledgment of historical truths and stands against "historical revisionism". "Because history is the collective memory of a nation, I think it is a grave mistake to forget about the past or to replace memory with something else," he emphasized in an interview for the *Mainichi Shimbun* newspaper. According to Murakami, to understand a Japanese person, it is necessary to place them within the flow of Japanese historical events.

In a dialogue with Hayao Kawai in the United States, Murakami expressed his view on the individual's relationship with history: "I had a sense that in order to capture the individual in Japan, the only choice was to deal with history. If you try to depict a present-day individual, someone living in our age, the definition of an individual in Japan becomes, as you suggest, extremely ambiguous. But somehow I felt that by bringing in the underlying threads of history, it would be easier to understand an individual living in Japan." [15]. From this perspective, he constructs characters who embark on journeys to explore historical memory, experiencing the collective psychological trauma of the previous generation. This journey is a form of self-healing for the young individual. The character's journey backward in time, the exploration of history and memory, and the collective pain, is a quest for their personal identity. The motif of the character performing an unexpected task, returning to the past, and entering another space to experience history, war memories, is the author's way of representing the trauma and historical memory of Japan through the lens of individuals.

Murakami proposes a method of healing trauma for the Japanese, which is to accept, confront, and coexist with their own shadows. He writes, "You have to patiently learn to live together with your shadow. And carefully observe the darkness that resides within you. Sometimes in a dark tunnel, you have to confront your own dark side." [14]. Only by understanding and dialoguing with the past generation, by retrieving war memories and reflecting oneself in the great mirror of national history, can the young individual find healing methods and "discover" their inherently fragile and undefined nature.

The protagonist undertakes a journey and returns to the society they once belonged to. They face and resolve personal issues and gain a deeper understanding of their role in the community. This establishes a new identity in reconciliation and understanding of the past and history. In "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle", the character Toru embarks on a quest to find his wife and resolve his personal issues. He returns to the real world and understands his own pain and the hidden nature of Kumiko's suffering. If Ishiguro's painter character in "An Artist of the Floating World" is depicted by the author as having the value of their work in a previous era

(the style of appeasement), then in Murakami's "Killing Commendatore", the author focuses more on the process of creation, the painting of the young artist (drawing a portrait of himself – the faceless man) rather than discussing the nature of art or the painting process of the old artist. This implies that healing and reconstructing identity are focused on the younger generation, who are the present and future of Japan. The young painter in "Killing Commendatore" paints a portrait, discovering himself in the process, thus painting his own identity.

Murakami emphasizes the transformation of characters after they discover their identity. This transformation includes an increased consciousness and an understanding of their responsibility towards the collective or nation. This is metaphorically a rebirth of the self, and discovery of self-identity at a higher level of existence. This is the message of healing trauma and reconstructing identity in Murakami's novels. Thus, compared to Ishiguro, Murakami focuses on solutions to healing trauma and a new image of Japanese identity rather than depicting ideological conflicts between generations of Japanese people.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this study, we have utilized literary trauma theories and identity theories to examine the post-war novels of Kazuo Ishiguro and Haruki Murakami. Despite differences in the depiction of subjects, causes, and manifestations of trauma, both authors converge on viewing the crises of identity as a form of trauma and propose methods of healing Japan's wounds through identity reconstruction. By offering different perspectives on post-war Japan, Ishiguro and Murakami express notable thoughts on the Japanese spirit, thereby displaying their responsibility as writers towards their country. Additionally, both authors exhibit their unique styles of global literature. Ishiguro's non-Japanese image of Japan and Murakami's traumatized yet magical "wonderland" of Japan are not merely stories of Japan's trauma.

Could the healing solutions and identity reconstruction proposed in Ishiguro and Murakami's novels also be suggestions for countries worldwide enduring historical disasters? In today's diverse and volatile society, trauma caused by identity crises is not an isolated phenomenon. As trauma cannot be forgotten and identity cannot be erased, confronting the past and history to re-examine the relationship between trauma and identity is essential to understanding oneself and the world. As Cathy Caruth once said, "[...] history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, and it is through history that we are implicated in each other's

traumas", healing cannot occur, and identity cannot be located unless we establish connections and harmony.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

In this article, Truc Bich Nha Nguyen wrote Abstract, Introduction, and utilized trauma and identity theories to analyze Haruki Murakami's novels in Sec. III.B. Trauma and Identity in Haruki Murakami's Novels. Nhung Thi Thuy Phan wrote the literature review in Sec. II., Sec. IV, and utilized trauma and identity theories to analyze Kazuo Ishiguro's novels in Sec. III.A. All authors edited and had approved the final version.

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