


A psychological study of traumatic effects of war on female characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*



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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the psychoanalytical exploration of the female characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), focusing on how the postwar period is portrayed as a traumatic experience for women. Through a qualitative analysis of the novel, the research reveals the psychological effects of war and its enduring post-event impact on the female characters' psyches. The study is grounded in a psychoanalytic framework centered on the repressed unconscious, which accounts for the development of psychological disturbances due to suppressed memories and emotions. By discussing the postwar impact on multiple levels physical, psychological, social, and emotional—and by employing psychoanalytical concepts, it demonstrates the profound trauma experienced by the characters. Etsuko, Keiko, Niki, Sachiko, and Mariko each suffer unique psychological consequences that illustrate the layered impact of war. The analysis highlights suicide and displacement as physical consequences, repression and projection as psychological mechanisms, and marriage and motherhood as significant social pressures. Grief and loss emerge as powerful emotional forces that shape the characters' behaviors and identities. The findings indicate that the traumatic consequences of war persist even after geographical relocation. However, the way the female characters manage their psychological burdens reflects a therapeutic process, suggesting a resilient and adaptive response. The study offers insight into the literary representation of postwar trauma and underscores the value of psychoanalytical readings in understanding women's psychological resilience.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by examining the profound and enduring impact of war on female characters in the postmodern novel. It explores the different levels of effects caused by war on women who are proven to be traumatized. Physical, psychological, social, and emotional impacts are highlighted.

1. INTRODUCTION

A traumatic psyche refers to an individual's psychological and emotional state following a catastrophic experience. Trauma significantly impacts the psyche, eliciting complex responses as the brain and body work to understand, adapt, and protect from further harm (Caruth, 1996; Van Der Kolk, 2014). Such reactions, which can overwhelm an individual's coping mechanisms, often shape one's psyche in lasting and profound ways, affecting thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and behaviors (Herman, 1992).

The concept of "trauma" originates from the Greek term for "wound," referring to "a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope" (Garland, 1998). Trauma often begins with physical injury and progresses to psychological care. Freud's work on trauma established a foundational framework for subsequent trauma studies. He defines trauma as a response to an instant, intense incident or a sequence of experiences that are not fully

processed when they occur but later reappear through flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, or other repetitive symptoms (Freud, 1955). As discussed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1955), humans frequently repress distressing or profound memories. Repression plays a vital role in the unconscious, and Freud observed in various cases that people are often unaware of these repressed memories or painful experiences (Freud, 1955).

Freud's psychoanalytic theory includes key components such as repression, the unconscious, the compulsion to repeat, and the death drive, all of which are highly relevant to trauma studies. Repressed memories, rather than disappearing, often return in disguised or symbolic forms. The compulsion to repeat refers to the unconscious tendency to relive trauma in behavior or thought as a way of mastering unresolved experiences (Freud, 1955). Freud also introduced the death drive (Thanatos), a self-destructive force working against the pleasure principle, which has been linked to trauma survivors' withdrawal, numbness, or suicidal ideation (Frosh, 2010; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973).

In psychoanalytic theory, trauma from one's past often haunts one's adult life. Freud's theories form the basis of psychoanalysis in literature, helping readers understand texts more deeply through the resurfacing of repressed memories and desires (Felman & Laub, 1992; Whitehead, 2004). This approach enables researchers to delve into characters' thoughts and emotions, connecting their words and actions to their underlying psyches.

In Ishiguro (1982), the author narrates the life of the female central character, Etsuko, through two timelines. The story begins in the present, where Etsuko lives alone in England following the death of her British husband, Mr. Sheringham. Her oldest Japanese descendant, Keiko, has died by suicide, while her following daughter, Niki, British-Japanese, maintains a strained relationship with Etsuko. Niki visits her mother just after Keiko's death, struggling to understand Etsuko and even holding her accountable for Keiko's troubled and sorrowful life. Rather than directly confronting her role in Keiko's tragedy, Etsuko reflects on her life in Japan at the beginning of the 1950s, recounting the post-World War II environment and her struggles as a Japanese woman. She also revisits memories of her initial husband, Jiro, and his father, Ogata-San. A key subplot involves Etsuko's acquaintance, Sachiko, and her complex connection with her offspring, Mariko. Etsuko reveals that Mariko's mother intended to move her to America after her marriage to Mr. Frank, an American soldier, and this upheaval deeply disturbed Mariko. Freudian theory helps decode the psychological dimensions of Etsuko's narrative. Her indirect recollection and the projection of trauma onto Sachiko suggest displacement and repression, mechanisms central to Freud's theory. The novel highlights the war's extensive and nuanced impact on its female characters, encompassing physical, psychological, social, and emotional dimensions that shape their lives and mental states. Through Etsuko's and Sachiko's stories, trauma emerges as a recurring theme, demonstrating how war alters women's lives and reverberates through their experiences in profound, multifaceted ways. Thus, the study argues that *A Pale View of Hills* articulates a specifically gendered experience of trauma, shaped by the sociopolitical upheaval of post-war Japan and complicated by transnational identity. Through its central female characters, the novel reveals how trauma is registered not only as psychological distress but also as social estrangement, maternal ambivalence, and cultural dislocation. A Freudian psychoanalytic lens allows for an in-depth exploration of how these experiences are mediated, silenced, and displaced within the narrative, offering insight into the psychological aftershocks of war and loss in the lives of women.

2. STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study aims to investigate how war affects the psychological states of the female characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, categorizing the traumatic effects into four distinct areas.

- 1) Evaluate the physical effects resulting from suicide and displacement.
- 2) Exploring psychoanalytical theory, the psyches of female characters are examined in depth, involving the analysis of past events and their impact on female minds. The repression and projection of the unconscious in female

characters, along with how post-war memories haunt them, contribute to the development of psychological issues in individuals.

3) Investigating the social impact of the loss of affection and love due to the usability of their condition results in a fundamental influence on their futures. Therefore, primary institutions such as family, motherhood, and marriage are given different meanings.

4) Analyzing the emotional impact resulting in grief and loss that consumes the female characters.

Each aspect illuminates the various layers of the psyche and highlights the effects of the post-war period on female characters.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a descriptive approach to examining the traumatic impact of war on female psyches. It provides a comprehensive analysis based on an in-depth examination of the novel *A Pale View of Hills* (Ishiguro, 1982), using concepts from Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Reviewing the concepts of psychoanalysis is essential to fully understand the traumatic impact of war on the female psyche.

Freud (1955) argued that traumatic childhood memories may result in trauma in adulthood. He studied human inherited and developmental characteristics as essential features of psychoanalytic theory. The theory advocates for discovering the repressed unconscious, which can lead to the development of psychological problems in human beings. Therefore, the female characters' psyches have been examined in depth, involving the analysis of many past incidents and their impact on the female characters' present psyches. The primary goal of this theory is to examine the psyche, which is categorized into the id, the ego, and the superego. The id addresses pleasure-seeking; the ego balances the id and the superego. However, the superego is the most extreme part of the human psyche. In childhood, the id is active, while the ego dominates behavior in adulthood, and the superego develops later. Moral principles govern the rest of one's life.

As Freud illustrates in his theory, these characteristics influence people's behavior differently as they experience different age phases. The ego functions on the belief in reality, while the belief in morality controls the superego. The ego and superego regulate these aspects, and an individual acts consciously according to their understanding of right and wrong, considering both social and personal limitations. Humans usually suppress their desires and emotions when they are socially offensive or morally prohibited through resistance. Therefore, psychoanalytic theories are employed in literature to understand the human psyche and its relationships by exploring characters' unconscious, conscious, and subconscious minds. Moreover, the narrative structure of *A Pale View of Hills* complements the psychoanalytic exploration by employing fragmentation, ambiguity, and unreliable memory to reflect the protagonist's psychological disorientation. These narrative choices serve as manifestations of repression and unresolved trauma, especially in Etsuko's recollections. By examining Ishiguro's subtle use of symbols, dialogue gaps, and dream sequences, this study reveals how the novel itself becomes a psychological landscape. Through this layered approach, the research not only applies Freudian theory but also uncovers the emotional and mental processes that govern the behavior of the female characters. This dual focus on theory and narrative technique enhances the methodological depth and ensures a more nuanced understanding of trauma and repression.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is critical because it examines the female characters in Kanzo Ishiguro's discourse, focusing on the repressed unconscious of these characters to present female characters who have been haunted by the traumatic memories of war, resulting in the fragile challenges they face in their present. A central objective of this research is to explore psychoanalytical theory, which posits that the psyches of female characters have been studied in depth, encompassing the examination of numerous past events and their impact on the female psyche. Furthermore, this

research highlights the importance of psychoanalytical critics focusing on women in the texts of male authors. Fundamental to this paper is the incorporation of the traumatic impact of war.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several significant figures in psychoanalytic studies have recognized the foundational aspects of this study's central themes, particularly trauma studies. Caruth (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* is among the most essential works in psychoanalytic studies. The author is credited with pioneering trauma research, and her most notable work provides valuable insights into traumatic experiences. It includes several academic perspectives on the field of trauma studies. She acknowledges that critical questions about traumatic events are often intolerable due to their horror and power. The study also examines how traumatic incidents frequently manifest as memories that are difficult to identify as accurate. The findings suggest that these experiences are best interpreted not merely by gathering facts but by developing an awareness of when and why conscious understanding and memory break down. Furthermore, in a different book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth (1996) proposes that in the widespread and complex experience of trauma, individuals can no longer rely on simple models of straightforward experience and understanding.

Cathy Caruth argues that trauma provides a framework for rethinking history, particularly in moments when immediate comprehension is inadequate. She examines how psychoanalysis, literature, and literary theory engage with the complex narratives of traumatic experience. Central to her analysis is the tension between knowledge and unawareness, which she identifies as a key feature of trauma discourse. Drawing on Freud's writings especially *Moses and Monotheism* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Caruth presents original interpretations of how trauma functions at both individual and collective levels. She also emphasizes the ethical and political dimensions of trauma theory, underscoring the vital role literature plays in shaping its conceptual foundation. Through this lens, Caruth integrates psychoanalytic approaches into literary studies, making significant contributions to the evolving dialogue surrounding trauma and representation.

In Tal (1996), a comprehensive analysis is offered on how individual trauma is shaped and understood within broader cultural contexts. Focusing on events such as the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and gender-based violence, Tal explores how survivors form communities both implicit and explicit that are centered around sharing traumatic experiences. These communities engage in producing what she terms "literature of trauma," a mode of expression that allows survivors to process their experiences and communicate their reality to themselves, their communities, and the broader public. Survivors often draw on narratives of previous traumatic events and align themselves with other survivor groups, using shared experiences as a form of validation and emotional release. As these narratives are repeated and disseminated, they begin to shape collective memory and become embedded in national and cultural identity. However, Tal notes a tension between survivors and state institutions: while survivors often call for social change, the state may seek to preserve the existing order.

Ricoeur (2004) is structured around three central themes that mirror its title. In the opening section, Ricoeur (2004) explores the concept of memory and mnemonic practices through a phenomenological framework, focusing on the paradox of how present recollections can signify past, absent events. The second part engages with contemporary historiography, addressing questions about the nature and veracity of historical knowledge. Here, Ricoeur probes whether historians can genuinely detach themselves from memory, especially those memories that resist accurate representation, when crafting histories of memory. The final section explores the philosophical significance of forgetting, examining its role in facilitating memory and whether a harmonious form of forgetting can coexist with a fulfilling form of remembering. Throughout the book, Ricoeur engages deeply with the works of thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Kant, Halbwachs, and Pierre Nora.

Kumari (2023) *A study of trauma in Kazuo Ishiguro's A Pale View of Hills*. *A Pale View of Hills* examines the text through the lens of trauma studies and explains the effects of trauma on the characters' lives. This paper explores

the devastating effects of the world wars on individuals portrayed in the narrative. It suggests that, beyond the personal consequences of war, a sense of collective trauma is reflected through the older generation in Japan, who mourn the decline of traditional Japanese values.

In [Vyas and Manisha \(2023\)](#), evaluate Etsuko's ambiguous identity in the host land and the identity crises of other characters. *A Pale View of Hills*, a masterpiece by Kazuo Ishiguro, is based on Etsuko's memories and tells the story of her life experiences and the construction of her identity. Kazuo Ishiguro's fiction depicts the personal tragedies of human life.

In her 2018 essay, [Matek \(2018\)](#), examines how trauma and migration are portrayed not as isolated events but as continuous experiences throughout the lifespan of Etsuko, the narrative's main character. The analysis highlights Ishiguro's use of narrative techniques that mirror those employed by trauma survivors, particularly through a fragmented and unreliable narrative voice. The novel's structure is non-linear and filled with ambiguity, shifting between Japan and Britain, and exposing gaps in Etsuko's biography. These narrative disjunctions obscure the distinction between her past and present, suggesting that she is unable to fully separate the two.

[Guo \(2012\)](#) asserts that Kazuo Ishiguro has written most of his novels against the backdrop of World War II, specifically the Japanese invasion of China, the postwar decline of the British Empire, and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. The reader is reminded of the importance of remembering the past through Ishiguro's exploration of the emotional and psychological trauma inflicted on the protagonists by these historical scenarios. His fiction also explores fundamental topics such as how people deal with loss and the agonizing journey from self-deception to self-denial to self-redemption. Furthermore, Guo provides insights into how Ishiguro consistently concludes his novels with a positive message, inspiring hope for the future. Hence, his work demonstrates a strong interplay between literary and theoretical viewpoints, as well as an in-depth analysis of texts.

[Bhola and Pandya \(2024\)](#) explore Ishiguro's portrayal of pregnancy and the female body in *A Pale View of Hills*, arguing that themes of reproduction and motherhood are no longer treated as cultural taboos but rather as central to understanding female experience. The authors highlight how pregnancy influences women's identities and emotions, offering a nuanced depiction of the female body. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's theories on femininity, motherhood, and pain, which she presents as universal and biological rather than socially constructed, the analysis positions Ishiguro's narrative within a broader discourse on womanhood. Through the character of Etsuko, Ishiguro captures the psychological strain and societal expectations placed on women. Etsuko's own experiences with pregnancy and motherhood are marked by emotional hardship, making it difficult for her to comprehend how such experiences could be associated with joy or fulfillment for others.

[Piotrowski \(2016\)](#) argues that recognizing the defining features of [Ishiguro \(1982\)](#) fiction can be problematic, as it risks falling into simplistic or misleading classifications. He identifies self-exploration and the search for personal meaning as central themes in both authors' works. Renowned for their richly poetic and sensory portrayals of the past, Ishiguro and Kawabata explore themes such as loss, alienation, displacement, and the erosion of cultural identity. Their narratives often evoke vanished worlds that, while lost, continue to represent an idealized realm of fulfillment and emotional richness. In this way, the past overlays the present, becoming a sanctuary for profound emotions and memories. The study investigates how memory, nostalgia, and the experience of loss shape Ishiguro's first novel and Kawabata's later masterpiece. It also analyzes the fragmented nature of both texts, linking this to the psychological fragmentation of the characters, including signs of dissociation and emotional instability.

[Padhee \(2020\)](#) examines the narrative strategies employed by trauma survivors, with a particular focus on Etsuko, the protagonist of Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*. It analyzes how Etsuko engages in a process of self-reconstruction and healing through the use of evasive and self-deceptive storytelling. By reshaping and fictionalizing her past, Etsuko creates a narrative space that allows her to cope with unresolved grief and psychological distress. The research also considers how this act of storytelling serves as a therapeutic mechanism, aiding in the management of trauma. To contextualize this phenomenon, the study draws parallels with select

examples from Greek mythology, a French cinematic work, and clinical case studies involving trauma survivors, highlighting how the narration of inner turmoil can function as a means of emotional release and psychological recovery.

Shaffer (1998) critically approaches Ishiguro's narrative. Shaffer provides the first comprehensive critical analysis of the life and literary contributions of Kazuo Ishiguro, a Japanese-born, British-educated author known for his four highly regarded novels: *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *The Unconsoled*. Through this study, Shaffer demonstrates that Ishiguro's fiction is intricately crafted, psychologically rich, and deeply resonant works that reflect both his connection to Japanese literary traditions and the influence of prominent British writers of the twentieth century, as well as Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Central to Shaffer's analysis is Ishiguro's use of first-person narration, where narrators engage in the complex process of disclosing their pasts while simultaneously masking the more profound, often unsettling implications of their former experiences beneath the routines of their present lives.

Narratives of memory and identity: The novels of Kazuo Ishiguro focus on four of Kazuo Ishiguro's first novels and analyze their content and writing techniques (Petry, 1999). This book offers in-depth textual and narratological analyses of Ishiguro (1982). *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), *The Remains of the Day* (1989), and *The Unconsoled* (1995), situating them within the context of contemporary British fiction. The troubling memories of an old lady in *A Pale View of Hills*, the postwar guilty conscience of the painter in *An Artist of the Floating World*, the self-deceptions of the butler/narrator of *The Remains of the Day*, and the ambiguity of a renowned pianist in *The Unconsoled* are all connected to the same primary focus of memory and identity.

Contemporary world writers thoroughly analyze Kazuo Ishiguro's work. It focuses on the effects of family dislocation, investigates the role of memory and unreliability in his narratives, and explains why The Unconsoled (1995) is perceived as such a radical departure from previous works of fiction. Consequently, it examines the significance of dignity and displacement in Ishiguro's vision, as well as the connotations of home and homelessness in his novel (Lewis, 2000).

Wong (2005)'s book on Kazuo Ishiguro examines Ishiguro's narrative work from the perspective of reader reflection theory. Wong indicates the common theme of memories repressed and revisited in Ishiguro's novels. Thus, the book explores his use of memory and its unreliability in narrative, his manipulations of desire, and how humans reinterpret worlds from which they feel alienated. The book offers a nuanced exploration of significant themes in Ishiguro's work, providing an in-depth analysis of issues such as identity, familial relationships, and societal roles. It also examines how his narratives construct time and space, alongside the fragmented and persistent influences of history, art, psychology, and cultural norms. Ishiguro's fiction is portrayed as a profound reflection on individuals grappling with unspoken suffering, emotional ambiguity, and the complexities of loss. The study highlights his subtle and often ironic portrayals of characters experiencing emotional detachment, as well as his interweaving of personal and political narratives. Through this lens, Ishiguro is positioned as a significant figure in the global literary landscape. His writing demonstrates a deep empathy for characters who attempt to reimagine or reclaim meaning within worlds that have become alien or unfamiliar to them.

Beedham (2009), a collection of essays that includes *the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*, expands on previous research and offers a more three-dimensional perspective. Beedham explores key themes in Ishiguro's work, including narration, memory, and ethnicity.

By drawing on the works of the aforementioned critics as well as other scholars on trauma, this paper reveals an additional layer to emphasize female psyches through the complexity of Ishiguro's writing, investigating the physical, psychological, social, and emotional damage these women encounter as postwar victims beyond those currently described in critical literature. Nonetheless, this paper focuses on the female characters' psyches and the effects of war on them. The narrative illustrates the struggles they endure as postwar women. This study contributes to the existing literature by examining the areas of women's psyches during the postwar period,

applying psychoanalytic theories to literary works. This paper is distinguished from other criticisms by its emphasis on the female impact on the psyche.

6. DISCUSSION

In Ishiguro's novel, the wounds of the female characters cannot be overlooked. He portrays the characters' lives in the postwar period. The discussion examines the multifaceted impacts of postwar trauma on the female characters, exploring their physical, psychological, social, and emotional dimensions. The discussion first addresses suicide and displacement as physical impacts, followed by an in-depth exploration of repression and projection as psychological impacts. Marriage and motherhood are then examined as social factors, while grief and loss are explored as powerful emotional forces affecting these female characters.

6.1. *Suicide as a Physical Impact*

A physical impact is a direct consequence of war. This causes female characters in the text to suffer injuries or the loss of loved ones. The presence of suicide is strongly depicted in the text, as a physical impact is evident. According to Freud, every individual has a self-defense mechanism that helps protect them. The female protagonist, Etsuko, employs this tactic to help protect her ego and cope with her dire situation. Keiko's suicide is deeply traumatic. The reader expects the mother to consider and discuss her daughter's suicide. Despite the significance of this event, Etsuko attempts to dismiss it by implying that she rarely revealed it: "For although we never dwelt long on the subject of Keiko's death, it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked" (Ishiguro, 1982). In Etsuko's declaration that Keiko's death influences their daily lives, although they rarely mention it, the novel portrays her death as the most traumatic event. However, the suicide occurred outside the novel's narrative structure. Although Etsuko's memories of her past serve as a therapeutic reworking of the trauma, the reader is never given a clear account of what happened, and the unsettling mystery persists until the novel's conclusion. Etsuko's recall suggests that Keiko was unwilling to leave Japan. This may have contributed to her unhappiness, which led to her eventual suicide.

Additionally, the narrative powerfully conveys the theme of displacement experienced by several characters. Many are forced to leave their homeland, leading to profound psychological distress and trauma. The war exacerbates this sense of alienation, contributing to the emotional turmoil they endure. One prominent example is Sachiko, who plans to emigrate from Japan with her American partner, Frank a decision that deeply unsettles her daughter, Mariko. Mariko expresses her resentment by referring to Frank disparagingly as a "pig" and recounts a disturbing incident in which she claims to have seen a woman drown kittens. Her erratic behavior and emotional volatility suggest deep-seated trauma. Mariko's refusal to abandon her kittens before leaving for America symbolizes her resistance to separation and loss. In contrast, Sachiko herself expresses anxiety and uncertainty about leaving Japan, revealing her internal conflict and fear of displacement. She remarks.

Furthermore, Mariko would be happier there. America is a far better place for a young girl to grow up. She could do many things with her life. She could become a businesswoman. Alternatively, she could study painting at college and become an artist. All these things are much easier in America, Etsuko. Japan is no place for a girl. What can she look forward to here? (Ishiguro, 1982).

6.2. *Repression and Projection as a Psychological Impact*

The novel's beginning establishes the atmosphere and psychological setting through its initial pages. *A Pale View of Hills* begins by depicting the disorder in Japan after the Second World War and how the narrator, Etsuko, a Japanese woman, struggles to rebuild her life in the aftermath of the war. Etsuko lives with her husband in a recently constructed apartment building to the east of Nagasaki, and she frequently observes the accessible ground in front of her block from her window.

Of the four, our block had been built last, and it marked the point where the rebuilding program had come to a halt; between us and the river lay an expanse of waste ground, several acres of dried mud, and ditches. Many complained it was a health hazard, and the drainage was appalling. There were craters filled with stagnant water all year round, and in the summer months, the mosquitoes became intolerable (Ishiguro, 1982).

Although it has been around 7 or 8 years since the atomic bombing, the city is still under reconstruction, and ruins remain. The expanse of waste ground revives the settlers' memories of what happened and metaphorically represents Etsuko's repressed life. Her friend Sachiko and Sachiko's daughter Mariko occupy their temporary house in a ragged wooden cottage, "standing alone at the end of that expanse of waste ground, practically on the edge of the river" (p. 11). In *Trauma, Memory, and History in Kazuo Ishiguro's Fiction*, Deyan Guo explains that "the emotional and psychological traumas hold a more agonizing spell on the survivors." Guo notes that since the bomb killed almost one-quarter of Nagasaki's inhabitants, people who had not lost family members during the Holocaust were as difficult to find as stars at sunrise. This is evident in the novel through the story of Mrs. Fujiwara, Etsuko's former neighbor, who lived a decent life before the war but endured a devastatingly traumatic event: the bomb killed her husband and four children, leaving only her eldest son and herself alive. Although she demonstrates great courage in dealing with the disaster, her hectic daily schedule running the small noodle shop reveals that she tries to forget her grief by giving herself no time to think about the deceased. She also confesses to Etsuko that sometimes she wakes up unconscious of where she is. In this sense, Etsuko's loss is as significant as Mrs. Fujiwara's. Following the explosion, she becomes an orphan and is taken in by Ogata-san, whose son Jiro later marries Etsuko.

The second impact is psychological, and female characters may experience significant psychological stress, mental illnesses such as depression, or survivor's guilt due to the horrors of war. They feel powerless, fearful, or hopeless. Ishiguro's female characters suffer from this insecurity. They consider themselves inferior due to war and the misfortunes and cruelties they endured. These victims' silenced trauma manifests in their aggressive behavior. Their trauma is deeply ingrained in their unforgettable past and causes them constant pain. The female characters are emphasized in this novel. Their stories indicate their serious psychological issues. Etsuko's daughter's death triggers her memory. The description of the room implies that her daughter's death has strongly affected her psyche. Projection is a mechanism that the psyche uses to hide thoughts, motivations, desires, and feelings that cannot be acknowledged.

Projections are present in the two characters, Etsuko and Sachiko. The projection between Etsuko and Sachiko cannot be overlooked. It is highlighted on many levels. Firstly, the features of their backgrounds can be viewed similarly. They share the same upbringing. They are from respectable families of the same age. Sachiko lived in a "most beautiful house with a pond in the garden" (21). She uses luxurious pottery, such as a teapot, that she describes as "a fine piece of craftsmanship made from pale China" (21). Sachiko's father is a businessman in America, and she is sufficiently educated to read a book written in English. Similarly, Etsuko was born into a distinguished family that appreciated Western classical music. She can play the violin, which was uncommon for ordinary Japanese people at that time.

The second point of comparison concerns the portrayal of women's husbands. The novel suggests that Etsuko uses Sachiko as a psychological vessel to externalize aspects of her dissatisfaction, particularly regarding her marriage and the societal expectations placed on traditional Japanese wives. Through Sachiko's experiences, the reader gains insight into Etsuko's strained relationship with her husband, Jiro. Etsuko recounts that Sachiko's marriage was arranged and seemingly ideal from a cultural standpoint, yet it was marked by oppression and limitations. As Sachiko reflects, "When I married, my husband forbade me to continue learning; in fact, he made me throw the book away" (p. 110). Both Jiro and Sachiko's husbands hold similar patriarchal views on marriage, especially in their belief that education is a privilege reserved for men. At the same time, women are expected to remain submissive and uneducated.

Etsuko also invokes Sachiko when discussing her relationship with her daughter, further reinforcing the idea that Sachiko serves as a projection of Etsuko's repressed guilt. Unable to confront her role in her daughter Keiko's tragic death, Etsuko unconsciously displaces this guilt onto Sachiko. In this way, Sachiko operates as Etsuko's alter ego, allowing her to narrate and manage her trauma at a safe emotional distance. This dynamic reflects a classic Freudian mechanism: repression, in which painful thoughts or memories are buried in the unconscious to protect the individual from overwhelming anxiety. Thus, Sachiko's presence in the narrative functions not only as a mirror to Etsuko's lived experience but also as a therapeutic figure, enabling her to process unacknowledged grief and psychological distress stemming from the aftermath of war.

The motif of dreams and ghostly presences plays a significant role in the narrative, particularly as manifestations of Etsuko's inner turmoil. Throughout the novel, Etsuko experiences disturbing dreams, including a recurring image of a young girl playing alone on a swing in a park. This dream sequence can be examined through Freud's theory of dreams, which posits that dreams serve as a window into the unconscious mind. According to [Freud \(1996\)](#), dreams are formed through a process of wish fulfillment, in which repressed desires and unresolved conflicts surface in disguised symbolic forms during sleep. He argues that the latent content underlying thoughts and emotions is transformed into the manifest content of the dream through mechanisms such as displacement and condensation.

Applying this framework, Etsuko's dream of the solitary girl may symbolize her repressed guilt over her daughter Keiko's suicide or her unresolved feelings of maternal failure. The child's isolation and vulnerability in the dream reflect Etsuko's emotional state and her subconscious attempt to confront painful memories she cannot openly acknowledge. In this context, the dream functions as a psychological space where traumatic material, suppressed in waking life, emerges in symbolic and emotionally charged imagery. The conception of dream elements suggests that they are unreal substitutes for something else that is unknown to the dreamer such as the purpose of a parapraxis substitutes for something the dreamer knows but cannot access (p. 114).

For Freud, the dream replaces something one wants to avoid and repress in the unconscious, and only through dreams does what is repressed in the unconscious surface to the conscious. Therefore, Etsuko's dream may be considered a substitute for her daughter, as they are the same age and tied by the image of a rope. Consequently, how Etsuko dreams about the girl recurrently suggests that she cannot overcome the traumatic experience of her daughter's death. Moreover, Etsuko's guilt and repressed mental anguish are discussed with her English daughter, Niki. She dreams of her stepsister, Keiko, although this is only implied in her story. The entire narrative of Etsuko, which glances into the past at the Sachiko-Mariko event, recounts her recollection in a confusing manner, obscuring and fogging it, and perplexing the readers. Sachiko shares her own story of her deceased Japanese daughter Keiko with Mariko and her emotional alienation. Her double existence is a narrative manipulation of Freudian displacement (as Barry Lewis believes and cites in the article *The Cathartic Narrative of Trauma in Kazuo Ishiguro's A Pale View of Hills — A Reconstruction of Personal Memory*) designed to heal her traumatized self unconsciously. According to a neurobiological study, "Memories evolve and change. Immediately after memory is laid down, it undergoes a lengthy process of integration and reinterpretation. This process occurs automatically in the mind or brain without any input from the conscious self. According to [Van Der Kolk \(2014\)](#), traumatic memories are stored differently from ordinary memories and are often retrieved not through language, but through bodily sensations, flashbacks, and nightmares (p. 137).

Moreover, [Leys \(2000\)](#) states that "the traumatic experience in its sheer extremity, its affront to common norms and expectations, shatters or disables the victim's cognitive and perceptual capacities so that the experience never becomes part of the ordinary memory system" (298). Thus, Leys agrees with Freud that individuals who have traumatic experiences tend to repress their past; therefore, they cannot remember the details of their memories. Consequently, remembering terrible events exactly as they occurred in the past appears impossible.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1955) suggests that individuals who have experienced trauma often display a psychological compulsion to repeat the distressing event (p. 24). This repetition may occur through interactions with different people, across various contexts, or through retelling the traumatic episode as a way of processing its emotional aftermath. Freud describes this as an unconscious drive to “restore an earlier state of things,” a process that can serve as a form of psychic relief. Literature has long reflected this phenomenon, providing numerous examples in which trauma is reimagined or retold as part of a therapeutic attempt to understand and cope with unresolved psychological pain (Padhee, 2020).

6.3. *The Social Failure of Marriage and Motherhood*

The war also impacts social roles, frequently disrupting social duties and prompting female characters to question societal norms and expectations, which can result in internal conflict or external resistance. This type of fear haunts the characters' psyches like a ghost. This novel depicts women's self-destruction of social roles in inflicting psychological trauma on their lives the failure of the institutions of marriage and motherhood consumes women's psyches.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Kazuo Ishiguro explores themes of displacement, loss, and trauma, which heavily influence the portrayal of marriage in the novel. Several examples of failed or troubled marriages serve as reflections of the broader postwar disillusionment experienced by the characters. The first is Etsuko and Jiro's marriage. Etsuko's marriage to Jiro is depicted as distant and unsatisfactory. Jiro is a traditional Japanese husband who embodies the patriarchal attitudes of the time, expecting Etsuko to conform to a submissive role. Their relationship lacks warmth, with little evidence of emotional support between them. Instead, Etsuko's memories of Jiro often show him as critical, detached, and dismissive, particularly regarding her views and opinions. This lack of mutual understanding and support creates a cold, strained atmosphere in their marriage, ultimately leading Etsuko to leave Japan and Jiro. Then, a marital relationship exists between Sachiko and Frank. Sachiko, Etsuko's friend, also has a troubled marital history. Although she once lived a privileged life, her marriage has failed, leaving her a single mother to her daughter Mariko. Her relationship with Frank, an American soldier she hopes to marry, further exemplifies her vulnerability and longing for stability. However, Frank is unreliable and dismissive of Mariko's well-being, and Sachiko's hope for a new life in America appears naive and desperate. Sachiko's willingness to abandon her homeland and take her daughter to a foreign country with Frank reflects her fragile emotional state and poor judgment, underlining her relationship's failure and lack of stability.

Subsequently, Mrs. Fujiwara's marriage is described. Although not as prominently featured, Mrs. Fujiwara's marriage is also a tragic example within the story. She has lost her husband and most of her children due to the war, leaving her emotionally and physically isolated. Her postwar life is marked by grief and hardship as she works tirelessly to maintain a noodle shop to support herself and her remaining child. While her marriage may not have been a failure in the traditional sense, the war's destructive impact on her family life highlights the losses and traumatic changes experienced by many women of her generation. Last is Etsuko's projection of marital failure onto Sachiko. The relationship between Etsuko and Sachiko is complex, with an element of projection in how Etsuko views Sachiko's life choices, particularly her relationship with Frank. Etsuko's criticisms of Sachiko's failed relationships and her concern for Mariko's well-being subtly reveal her dissatisfaction with her marriage to Jiro. By judging Sachiko's choices, Etsuko indirectly grapples with her own failed marriage and the cultural and emotional constraints she has faced. These examples reveal a pattern of failed or troubled marriages, reflecting the fractured state of the characters' lives in postwar Japan. Through these portrayals, Ishiguro explores how societal expectations, trauma, and cultural shifts following the war disrupt traditional family structures, leaving characters emotionally adrift and struggling to find fulfillment in their relationships.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro presents complex, often fraught portrayals of motherhood, where the trauma of war, cultural shifts, and personal losses result in strained and ultimately failed maternal relationships. First is

Etsuko's relationship with Keiko. Etsuko's relationship with her eldest daughter, Keiko, is among the novel's most prominent examples of failed motherhood. After moving to England with her mother and Niki, Etsuko's younger daughter, Keiko, is miserable and isolated. Etsuko acknowledges that she never formed a close bond with Keiko and implies that her parenting may have contributed to Keiko's feelings of alienation and depression. Eventually, Keiko's struggles culminate in her suicide, which haunts Etsuko. Despite her attempts to repress the memories, Etsuko's reflections suggest a deep sense of guilt, underscoring the emotional distance and unresolved pain in their relationship. Etsuko's failure to connect with Keiko, either due to cultural differences, trauma, or emotional neglect, is among the most tragic aspects of the novel's exploration of motherhood. Next is Sachiko's relationship with her daughter Mariko. This relationship also demonstrates themes of failed motherhood. Sachiko's life is marked by instability, and her relationship with her American boyfriend, Frank, leads her to consider taking Mariko to America. However, Mariko resents Frank and is deeply disturbed by her mother's decisions, which disrupt the stability she craves. Sachiko often neglects Mariko's emotional needs, and Mariko's distress is evident in her defiant behavior, such as her obsession with stray kittens and her reluctance to leave Japan. Sachiko's focus on her desires and her inability to provide Mariko with a safe and stable environment highlight her failure to prioritize her daughter's well-being. Their relationship reflects Sachiko's internal struggle and the consequences of placing her dreams over Mariko's emotional security. Next is Mrs. Fujiwara's grief and maternal loss.

Mrs. Fujiwara, a secondary character, embodies a different type of failed motherhood shaped by grief and the devastating impact of war. Although she survives, Mrs. Fujiwara loses her husband and most of her children in the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, leaving her emotionally broken and isolated. The fear of losing her family has left her with a profound sense of loss, which she attempts to cope with by working hard at her noodle shop. While Mrs. Fujiwara's failure as a mother is not due to neglect or poor choices, her story reflects how war can disrupt and even destroy motherhood. Her narrative represents the struggles of women who, despite their resilience, cannot escape the emotional toll of losing their loved ones. Lastly, Etsuko's projection of guilt onto Sachiko is evidence of the failure of the marriage institution. Etsuko's repeated reflections on Sachiko's and Mariko's lives suggest that she may be projecting her guilt over her relationship with Keiko onto Sachiko's decisions as a mother. By focusing on Sachiko's perceived failures, Etsuko appears to distance herself from her feelings of responsibility for Keiko's unhappiness. Etsuko's narrative of Sachiko's troubled motherhood may reflect her troubled conscience as a mother, an attempt to work through her guilt, and unresolved trauma. This projection complicates Etsuko's sense of self and suggests her inability to fully reconcile with her role in her daughter's tragic life and death.

The portrayal of motherhood in *A Pale View of Hills* reveals the challenges faced by women in postwar Japan who are attempting to rebuild their lives while dealing with personal traumas and cultural displacement. The relationships between Etsuko and Keiko, Sachiko and Mariko, and Mrs. Fujiwara and her lost children illustrate different forms of failed motherhood shaped by neglect, guilt, cultural conflict, and devastating loss. These maternal failures underscore the novel's broader themes of trauma, alienation, and the lasting effects of war on family bonds.

6.4. Grief and Loss as Two Consequential Emotional Damages

Loss and grief are inevitable consequences of war; consequently, these emotions have a profound impact on female characters. Grief can be viewed as a ghostly image. In the novel, grief is highly emphasized through the image of a ghost. Etsuko feels that Keiko's ghost haunts the house. Etsuko claims that "someone had walked past my bed and out of my room, closing the door quietly" (174). She hears "a small sound, some movement from within" (88) outside her daughter's room. Her daughter's ghost is strongly associated with her feelings of guilt and grief. Anne Whitehead's idea is reflected in *Trauma Fiction* (2004). She argues that "the ghost represents an appropriate embodiment of the disjunction of temporality, the surfacing of the past in the present" (6). Whitehead claims that the image of a ghost is used as a literary technique, suggesting that the character's experience haunts them.

Consequently, Keiko is not the ghost that haunts Etsuko and remains in the house; it is the grief that the protagonist encounters after her daughter's death.

Female characters in the novel experience profound loss, mourning the deaths of family members, friends, or partners. This leads to a sense of isolation, emptiness, or existential questioning as they grapple with the meaning of their suffering. Etsuko experiences these emotions, which lead to trauma. Her life was devastated by bouts of chaos caused by war. She may have lost her family during the war, so she moved in with Ogata-San and married his son, Jiro. The readers are given no evidence of her married life with Jiro, which may indicate that she was unhappy. Even now, Etsuko appears haunted by memories of her elder daughter Keiko's suicide. Loss is also evident in the loss of her country. Etsuko describes the devastation of her country, the destruction of Nagasaki after World War II.

Rebuilding had commenced, and over time, four concrete buildings had been constructed, each containing forty separate apartments. Of these, our block was built last, marking the point where the rebuilding program had halted; between us and the river lay an expanse of waste ground, several acres of dried mud, and ditches. Many complained that it was a health hazard, and the drainage was inadequate (11).

Lee (2008) explains Etsuko's portrayal of "wasteground" and suggests that it is "a place of loss, desolation, and uncertainty, signifying the ruinous state of things in the aftermath of the war, giving testimony and serving as a tangible reminder of the catastrophic course of human history" (26). Lee emphasizes his argument on the historical aspect, asserting that the account is "Ishiguro's dialectical image of the historical process" (26). Before the war, Nagasaki was a vastly different place, with attractive valleys surrounded by mountains and rich in natural resources. Lee suggests that the author attempts to present the sad image of what happened in Japan and how the Japanese people coped with the postwar period.

7. RESULTS

The textual study of Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* is insightful in the field of psychoanalysis. The novel reveals the grief of the female characters through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theories. The analysis demonstrates that these female characters are under the control of the unconscious part of the human psyche. Anxiety and aspirations are evident as crucial parts of their psyches. Freud's psychoanalysis reveals the trauma of these female characters. These women are often led to turn to negativity due to the behavior and treatment they receive from the postwar community. From their childhood, these female characters suffer and are traumatized due to war. This study employs Freud's psychoanalytic theory to explore the psychological trauma experienced by the female characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel due to war. Similarly, Caruth (1996) contends that trauma often manifests belatedly and indirectly, as seen in Etsuko's recurring memories and emotional detachment.

7.1. Evaluating Suicide from a Psychoanalytical Perception

The analysis reveals that the war inflicts physical impacts on female characters, evident through direct trauma, abuse, and the loss of loved ones. A significant physical impact is Keiko's suicide, which serves as a haunting event in the novel. According to Freud's concept of self-defense mechanisms, individuals use these processes to shield themselves from overwhelming pain. Displacement is another crucial aspect of the trauma experienced by the characters, many of whom are forced from their homeland, heightening their emotional and psychological distress. Through suicide and displacement, the novel portrays the lasting physical and emotional scars left by war on these women. In comparison, Lee (2008) observes that Keiko's alienation in a foreign land—compounded by her strained relationship with her mother—leads to a deep psychological rupture. This aligns with Freud's notion of the death drive (Thanatos), where unprocessed trauma can result in self-annihilation.

7.2. Analyzing Two Fundamental Concepts, Repression and Projection of Psychoanalysis

The analysis of *A Pale View of Hills* reveals that Kazuo Ishiguro intricately weaves the psychological and emotional consequences of war into the lives of his female characters, mainly through Etsuko's journey. At the novel's outset, Ishiguro establishes an atmosphere of postwar disorder, where Etsuko struggles to rebuild her life in Japan, still grappling with the aftershocks of devastation. The trauma of displacement and loss also affects other female characters, such as Sachiko and Mariko, whose existence on the periphery of society in a temporary cottage represents their unsettled emotional states. Freud's concepts of repression and projection are central to Etsuko's psyche. The narrative's ambiguity allows readers to interpret Sachiko and Mariko as psychological projections or alter egos of Etsuko's repressed guilt. Piotrowski (2016) argues that Ishiguro's characters often exist in a liminal space between self and other, memory and fabrication. This resonates with the findings of Bhola and Pandya (2024), who assert that repression functions as both a coping mechanism and a narrative device in Ishiguro's fiction. Unlike straightforward trauma narratives, *A Pale View of Hills* engages in a self-reflective mode, resisting closure and emphasizing internal conflict.

7.3. Revealing the Social Catastrophe of Marriage and Motherhood

The analysis of *A Pale View of Hills* highlights how the traumas of war and cultural changes impact the characters' personal and social roles, specifically within marriage and motherhood. Ishiguro utilizes these failed institutions to illustrate the fractured psyches of his characters in postwar Japan, where the lingering effects of trauma create an environment in which traditional relationships struggle to thrive. Women, particularly, experience a loss of security and identity, resulting in relationships characterized by emotional distance, projection of guilt, and an inability to fulfill societal or familial roles as expected. The novel presents failed marriages that reflect the characters' disillusionment and emotional disconnection in the wake of societal upheaval. The novel also emphasizes failed motherhood, with maternal relationships often strained by trauma, cultural conflicts, and personal guilt. Ultimately, Ishiguro's portrayal of failed marriages and motherhood in *A Pale View of Hills* demonstrates how war's societal and psychological aftermath reshapes the characters' roles, leading them to question or even abandon traditional social expectations. This inner conflict manifests in their strained relationships, where societal expectations clash with personal trauma, resulting in characters haunted by guilt, repression, and loss. Through this lens, Ishiguro presents a haunting exploration of postwar disillusionment, as well as the profound and lasting psychological effects of trauma on women's lives and relationships. Beedham (2009) notes that Ishiguro employs failed families to underscore emotional detachment and societal breakdown. Unlike traditional trauma narratives where healing is a possibility, Ishiguro's characters remain psychologically stagnant, suggesting a cyclical return to trauma (Caruth, 1995; Freud, 1955). This aligns with the work of Anne Whitehead, who notes that trauma often results in temporal dislocation and disrupted identity formation.

7.4. Grief and Loss as Two Consequential Emotional Damages

The analysis reveals that loss and grief are deeply intertwined with the emotional impacts of war on the female characters. Grief in *A Pale View of Hills* is notably symbolized through the recurring image of the ghost, emphasizing its haunting presence in Etsuko's life. Her emotional struggle is represented as grief continuously confronting her after Keiko's death. Loss also manifests in various ways for the novel's female characters, each grappling with the devastation of losing loved ones, friends, or partners. This emotional impact can create feelings of isolation, emptiness, and existential questioning. Additionally, the novel portrays loss through Etsuko's memory of Japan. She describes Nagasaki as a city in ruins, scarred and altered after World War II. Grief and loss are central to the novel's emotional tone. Keiko's death represents not only a personal loss for Etsuko but also a symbol of historical and cultural mourning. The ghost motif aligns with Derrida's hauntology, reflecting how unresolved trauma returns in spectral forms. Caruth (1996) and Leys (2000) both explore how literature reanimates past

suffering to negotiate identity and memory. Etsuko's grief over Keiko and her nostalgic vision of Nagasaki depict an emotional landscape shaped by collective and personal trauma, making her narrative a form of psychic survival.

8. CONCLUSION

This research on Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* offers an insightful reading within the context of psychoanalysis. The study reveals the grief experienced by the female characters through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theories. The analysis demonstrates that the unconscious part of the human psyche influences these female characters. Anxiety and aspirations are evident as crucial aspects of their psyches. Freud's psychoanalysis uncovers the trauma of these female characters. These women often turn to negativity due to the behavior and treatment they receive from the postwar community. From childhood, these female characters suffer and are traumatized by war. This study employs Freud's psychoanalytic theory to explore the psychological trauma experienced by the female characters in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel as a result of war. By aligning Freud's ideas with contemporary trauma theorists such as Caruth and Whitehead, the study situates Ishiguro's work within a lineage of trauma fiction that explores memory, repression, and loss. Compared to earlier studies, this paper emphasizes how trauma affects women's social roles and emotional development post-war, providing a gendered perspective on Freudian interpretation. The findings highlight the enduring impact of trauma on the female psyche, illustrating how personal grief is intricately connected to historical violence and cultural rupture.

9. STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

This article outlines the targeted areas for ongoing research within the literary domain.

- 1) Future studies may apply other feminist psychoanalytical frameworks to explore Kazuo Ishiguro's texts in greater detail.
- 2) Future studies may also attempt to analyze Ishiguro's novels from a social and cultural perspective to examine their influence on the characters.
- 3) Future studies may employ feminist theories to investigate the themes of marriage and motherhood in Ishiguro's novels, focusing on how these themes are explored and developed.
- 4) Expand the investigation into the portrayal of women's traumatic effects in various novels. This expansion should include works by additional authors, beyond Kazuo Ishiguro.
- 5) Explore the literary representations of the impacts of the post-war period, focusing on male characters.

10. STUDY LIMITATIONS

- 1) The current research exclusively analyzes how post-war experiences are traumatic for the female characters in *A Pale View of Hills*. It excludes any additional novels by this novelist.
- 2) The scope of the research is confined to female characters, deliberately omitting any male characters from the analysis.
- 3) The study does not utilize feminist theories since it focuses on female characters. However, it applies one approach, psychoanalysis, to develop its argument.
- 4) The paper employs one theorist, Sigmund Freud, whereas there are many psychological theories.

11. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

Examining the impacts of the traumatic effects of war and the post-event effects on the female character's psyche. This research underscores the necessity of additional investigations into the repressed unconscious, which results in psychological problems in individuals. This novel delves into themes related to family, motherhood, and marriage. Such insights are instrumental in advancing the exploration of literature's intersectionality.

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