Constructing Identity Through Narrative: A Comparative Analysis Of Gao Xingjian's And Kazuo Ishiguro's Fictional Worlds

Pushpa Choubey[1] , Dr. Shilpi Bhattacharya[2]

[1]Research Scholar, English literature Kalinga University, Raipur
pushpachoubey89@gmail.com
[2]Guide English Kalinga University, Raipur.

ABSTRACT

Using their respective fictional universes as a starting point, this comparative study seeks to illuminate the intricate connection between story-building and the act of identity-creation in the writings of two prominent modern writers, Kazuo Ishiguro and Gao Xingjian. Consequently, the study's end purpose is to reveal the authors' use of storytelling approaches to portray the intricacy of human identity formation within the setting of large social and personal traumatic events. They are very different people—a lighter, non-noble Chinese expatriate Nobel laureate and a dark-skinned British author with Japanese ancestry and a Booker Prize—but they have the same thematic vector: displacement, memory, and finding one's identity in a multicultural flux. For this reason, it is critical to highlight the writers' unique storytelling styles while also drawing similarities to the subject's depth. This study delves deeply into selected sources to demonstrate how Gao Xingjian and Kazuo Ishiguro have used narrative forms, character development, and themes to evoke existential dislocation and the quest for authenticity. This study aims to discover the 'universal' character of humans trying to define their identity in the face of flux by comparing and contrasting the use of narrative in these two writers. By using vivid descriptions of landscapes, authors Gao Xingjian and Kazuo Ishiguro demonstrate how the nature of self is fluid and difficult to pin down, prompting readers to examine the integrity of their own life experiences and the veracity of the narratives about themselves that are shaped by society.

Keywords: Narrative Techniques, Gao Xingjian, Kazuo Ishiguro, Literary Works, Narrative Structure

I.   INTRODUCTION

Academics in the fields of linguistics and cognitive narratology were very interested in narrative identity and, more specifically, in how stories could reveal not just the identities of the characters but also the writer's innermost "self" towards the close of the twentieth century [1–5]. In particular, the issue at hand is how to identify and catalogue the narrative devices that a writer employs to build and articulate the "self" he creates inside a tale. In addition, narrative identity has strong foundations in sociology and psychology and is the focus of multidisciplinary study. According to McAdams [6], narrative identity has been well-grounded in recent decades by an explosion of research from a wide range of fields within psychology, including social psychology, developmental and lifespan psychology, cognitive psychology, cultural psychology, and personality psychology [6].

"Voices" that are "Asianized" in novels and created via geopolitical means are the focus of Voicing Asia. Scholars who saw that the political aspirations of Asian American studies have persisted since its coalitional fight for a Third World university had resulted in politically prescriptive interpretations of literature first sparked this initiative. Most notably, Colleen Lye's assertion that "the formalist desires of Asian American literary criticism today are also deeply at heart historicist desires [7]" gave it more confidence. I have arrived at a more complicated disciplinary configuration by viewing "Asian voice" as a tool for fiction writing and a historical indicator of Asia's changing geopolitical position. This configuration uses "Asian/American" studies as a springboard for engaging in dialogue with fields such as geopolitics, narrative ethics, human rights, world literature formations, and Asian studies. To refer to "historical occasions of real contact between and interpenetrations of Asia and America [8]." David Palumbo-Liu first used the phrase "Asian/American." However, Regarding the more limited context of U.S.-Asian foreign relations after 1945, I may understand Palumbo-Liu's concept. The books written by Asians and published between 1986 and 2005 that I am analyzing hardly ever make this geopolitical backdrop clear. The narrative voices in these "post-Cold War" novels are categorized and understood as "Asian." However, this categorization and understanding is based on the historical framework of Asian modernity in the Pacific Century, which is the paradoxical result of U.S. containment policy in Asia during the Cold War American Century.

II.   LITERARY TECHNIQUES AND THEIR AIMS

Narrative techniques, a subset of literary techniques, are a set of deliberate actions taken by storytellers to help their readers internalize the story's message and, more specifically, advance the plot, which in turn makes the story more engaging, complex, and ultimately more complete. Literary elements are fundamental components of every written language; literary approaches are distinct from them. Novelists often use a wide variety of literary devices—approaches to literature focus on style, storyline, or point of view. Metaphors, similes, personification, imagery, exaggeration, and alliteration are common tactics that pertain to style, which is the language used to convey a tale. Some common plot approaches include background, flashback, flash-forward, and foreshadowing. A narrative is a series of events. Primitive, second-person, third-person, and third-person omniscient are common strategies that pertain to narrative perspective or the storyteller's position. To make their story interesting, the authors, in this case, use a number of creative strategies, including coming up with their own methods of storytelling. Hybridity in character development, evasiveness in personae, journey narrative, and memory narration are a few examples. Modern authors also often use the approach of creating egotistical protagonists that display symptoms of a "God-complex."

A person's cultural background and social milieu could be described as a hybrid in literary works. Many authors have utilized the concept of a character from a diverse socioeconomic and cultural background in their works. The primary goal of introducing such a character is to broaden the book's audience. The majority of Ishiguro's main characters exhibit a trait indicative of hybridity. A Pale View of Hills' Nikki and When We Were Orphans' Christopher Banks are two prime examples. Trying to get away from something is called evasion. Avoidance and evasive personalities are those that the reader has a hard time getting a firm grasp on. These are used to envelop them in mystery and allow the story to be understood in whatever way the reader sees fit. To captivate readers, several authors have used such individuals as the story's hook. A Pale View of Hills, The Remains of the Day, and other books by Kazuo Ishiguro include evasive characters.

The eucatastrophe narrative device occurs when the protagonist narrowly escapes a dreadful and tragic fate due to a series of fortunate coincidences. It was writer J.R.R. Tolkien who first used the phrase "catastrophe"—meaning "the unravelling" or "the end of the plot" in Greek—to create this term. Even though it was out in 1955, his book The Lord of the

Rings continued to sell well until 2003. For the novel's finale, the eucatastrophe had to do with the goblin Gollum plunging into the lava, clutching the ring that had given the villain his power just as he was about to win the struggle for world dominance. The heroes are aided in their triumph as the ring is irretrievably shattered.

Kazuo Ishiguro perfects the art of using literary devices to captivate and enthral readers. In all of his writings, he employs a wide variety of tactics. To emphasize his point, he employs literary devices, including first-person narrative and the unreliable narrator, as well as his own unique approaches. Journey, evasion, memory, and the narrator's omnipotent self-perception are some of the weapons that Ishiguro consistently employs. When utilized correctly, these techniques free the narrator to deliver the tale by creating an appropriate backdrop.

III.   RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST

David Lowenthal stresses the importance of remembering one's history in his book The History is a Foreign Country. Remembering things we've done in the past connects us to who we were before, no matter how changed we are, which is why memory is so important to self-continuity, he argues. [9]. Life takes on significance, worth, and meaning when we can recall and connect with our history. Through delving into their histories, the narrators of Ishiguro's books construct their identities, shedding light on their present circumstances. By incorporating more of their history into their present, people affirm their identity and enhance it with the magnified remnants of their past, according to Lowenthal. The number ten. The work of Kazuo Ishiguro prompts thought-provoking inquiries on the function of memory and its construction in stories, as well as its connection to ideas of self-identification—a theme that recurs in stories that aim to reclaim the "before" self. As the saying goes, "what wasn't known then" [11]—what is remembered are events that happened in a state of innocence—and the recollections of the narrators in Ishiguro's works serve as a striking example of this truth. The structural concept of Nachträglichkeit (retrospectiveness) and Freud's allusion to the "retranscription" of memories both point in this direction. Despite Freud's heavy usage of the term, he never developed a theory based on Nachträglichkeit. "Afterwardness" is the translation given by Jean Laplanche. This concept clarifies that considering how our memories work today, they must inherently include knowledge of "what wasn't known then." "We stand outside the past and view its finished

operation, including its now known consequences for whatever was then the future," says Lowenthal, emphasizing the difference between interpreting the continuing present and living through it.

Ishiguro shows how individuals create false realities to make themselves feel better. His protagonists do this by fabricating a story about their lives to avoid confronting realities. He demonstrates that individuals are eager to put their fantasies ahead of their own needs. So, it's not uncommon for his protagonists to never experience happiness. The narrators' desire to hide their lives and their dread of being exposed are both shown via their pain hiding. For individuals who embark on a narrative journey towards self-awareness, remembering past mistakes and failings is a kind of both penance and judgment. Projects for What Remains of the Day Stevens, who, in order to deal with his repressed feelings, decides to face experiences he has previously ignored. He comes to terms with the fact that his life has been tragic, full of sorrow and suffering, as a result of this process. The emotional distance he keeps from everyone around him has also influenced it, and he is aware of this. A false feeling of security and emotional fulfilment has been bestowed upon him by his unwavering devotion to his work, as he now realizes.

Additionally, he realizes that he has been denying his own emotions due to his commitment to the "dignified life" of an English butler. Recalling past events helps him see how much his devotion has cost him and how it has affected his life negatively. According to Deborah Gurth, memory is an interactive process that uses imagination to bring the past back to life and give it new significance (Gurth). At first glance, the book is about Stevens' efforts to boast about his time as a butler to Lord Darlington and his elegant maritime lifestyle. According to Mark Freeman's perceptive analysis, people must always be able to put their prior experiences in perspective with their current ones in order to figure out and refigure themselves and their environment in the other direction [12]. By delving into his history, Stevens tries to make sense of his existence while simultaneously undermining its foundation and purpose. After working for Lord Darlington for 35 years, Stevens is now employed by Mr. Farraday, an American. Farraday has ordered Stevens to go off on an expedition throughout England. Stevens claims to have encountered England and the world even though he has never left his life's confines; he claims that these experiences have entangled the structure that separates him from the world, so he doesn't

need to leave his confines. His hesitation to go stems from the fact that his departure will cause Darlington Hall to be vacant for the first time this century (The Remains of the Day 23). But as Stevens pulls away from home, the landscape starts to change, and a sense of terror replaces his initial apprehension about leaving the house at having "gone beyond all previous boundaries" (The Remains of the Day 23-24). Stevens has essentially distanced himself from his own identity since leaving Darlington Hall. His voyage throughout England is equal parts an investigation of his history and an examination of his own identity; it is the first time in his career that Stevens' identity has been left vacant, prepared to be studied from a new, outside viewpoint.

Another author who discussed a personal trait in his novels was Kazuo Ishiguro [13]. I'd written extensively on people who struggled with both forgetting and remembering. As a result, he raises universal and national concerns in his writings. Does a country's memory function similarly to an individual's? Is there a significant difference, though? What precisely are a nation's recollections? Then where are they stored? In what ways are they moulded and managed? Does forgetting ever provide the only means of halting violent cycles or preventing a civilization from collapsing into anarchy or conflict? But can willful forgetfulness and frustrated justice truly be the bedrock of free and stable nations? In my head, I was telling the interviewer that I wished I could put these thoughts into words but that I just couldn't come up with the ideas to do so at the time. "What if I stopped worrying about my characters and worried instead about my relationships?" was Kazuo Ishiguro's approach to writing. (the following) I reflected on the well-known difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional personalities proposed by E.M. Forster. He had said that a story's characters should "surprise us convincingly" in order to have depth. They grew more rounded as a result of this. A successful author, Kazuo Ishiguro, once said, "All good stories, never mind how radical or traditional their mode of telling, had to contain relationships that are important to us; that move us, amuse us, anger us, surprise us." This quote perfectly captures the essence of what makes a story compelling. My fictional characters might be more self-sufficient in the future if I prioritized my connections more.

IV.   LITERARY AND VISUAL TRADITIONS

"Discovering and revealing what is seldom known, little known, thought to be known but in reality not very well known of the truth of the human world" is what Gao Xingjian means when

he says that literature is valuable. The most fundamental and unquestionable aspect of writing is its honesty (...). Word games and writing strategies are not replacements for a writer's insights into understanding reality. What matters most here are the writer's ethics and the ethics of literature, in addition to the work's worth and the writer's attitude toward writing. 'The depiction of real life's truths, in the hands of a writer who takes writing seriously, is the foundation of literary fabrications, and this is what has kept works alive from ancient times to the present.' cited as [14]. "Literature does not merely make a replica of reality but penetrates the surface layers and reaches deep into the inner workings of reality; it removes false illusions, looks down from great heights at ordinary happenings, and with a broad perspective reveals happenings in their entirety," Mo Yan (2012) said, echoing a similar viewpoint. So, literature completes history by illuminating its blanks; history isn't all that humans have; literature also leaves a legacy. Such creations of literature could not be destroyed or undermined.

Gao Xingjian's background in contemporary art, gleaned from his studies as a philologist and his many creative interests, as well as his meticulous observation of reality and its changes, informed his plot structuring tactics. Even in the 1980s, when he was writing articles on theatre and literature, he was already leaning toward non-storyline dramatic and innovative forms; he also respected irrationality and dubious cause-and-effect reasoning. Human existence, Gao Xingjian was well aware, was fraught with secrecy, ambiguity, and hidden meaning; it defied reduction to simple, schematic patterns of cause and effect.

Life, he realized, is not a series of linear events with a definite beginning and finish. There are many unresolved plot points, tales that don't make sense, and stories that run in parallel, suddenly intersect, or overlap with one another. Some stories don't conclude or are only hypothetical or imagined. The colourful and ever-changing character of the universe and human existence is very difficult to comprehend. Consequently, there must be sufficient creative outlets to accommodate the ceaseless transformations of events, people, and things. A conventional, linear plot does not capture their intricacy and adaptability. Additionally, the contemporary narrative style has rendered the omniscient narrator a little old-fashioned. In his quest for fresh ideas and ways of expressing himself creatively, Gao Xingjian often explored the worlds of cinema, painting, and music. He saw that contemporary audiences were a product of a society that had evolved much over the last few decades, one

in which reality was characterized by multi-sound and vivid visuals that disdained linear storytelling and detailed explanations. Thus, contemporary literature must be capable of using shifting narrative tempos, interchangeable pictures, varying camera angles, using both close-ups and long shots, reflecting on the past and projecting into the future, and utilizing a stream of consciousness to delve into the character's mind. In his article "On the Idea of Fiction and Writing Technique," he addressed the matter. He thought that cinema art taught us to look closely, observe intently, and comprehend everything in a film, which was relevant to today's reality. The film's narrative techniques, which rely on fast-paced, visually appealing, and pervasively multi-perspective visuals, are more adapted to the hectic pace of contemporary life. Our perception of time and place is fragmentary, not continuous, according to the writers of French post-war new novels, who made a similar observation around two or three decades before Gao Xingjian's findings [15]. In his literary articles, Michel Butor stressed the rapidity and change of the contemporary world and the failure of storytelling methods to include the abundance of fresh information and relationships. Therefore, it was necessary to look for fresh approaches to original narratives. In their quest for such fresh inspiration, French authors looked to the visual arts, music, and literature. Gao Xingjian saw literature and theatre as arts that could daringly utilize methods from other arts since they were multilingual and multi-material. He delighted in blending many literary styles and genres in his narrative writing. Similarly, he was a fan of using a variety of materials in his theatrical productions. Tragedie and comedy, realism and the ludicrous, essay and poetry, the every day and the literary—all of these he blended. However, he was very careful to maintain the coherence and sequence of his literary and dramatic works at all times. He took these characteristics of structure and order from a variety of artistic disciplines, including the visual arts, music, and linguistic arts. Listening to music while producing prose and theatrical works was something that Gao Xingjian spoke about in a number of interviews and academic studies. His mind wandered to the possibility of bringing the writing process closer to that of music composition. His goal was to give the language a more melodic quality. Therefore, he stressed rhythm and tonal shifts in monologues, short narratives, and dialogues. In his work on literary composition and modern Chinese language, he also addressed these topics. Poetic worth was imparted to the story by the melodic nature of the language; this quality was audible on levels beyond those

of prosaic or dramatic writing. In his writing and music, Gao Xingjian sought to imbue it with the structural qualities characteristic of music. The rondeau and the quartet were two of the musical styles he used (The Bus-stop and The Weekend Quartet, respectively). In addition to organizing the plot of the play, he gave significant symbolic value to the leitmotif, a musical technique. Through his writings, he also popularized sound and topical polyphony. Topical polyphony is the practice of dividing a tale into many storylines that are either loosely related or do not have any connection at all. (The Other Shore; Wild Man). The bus stop, a piece of sound polyphony, included several voices in a variety of arrangements. To create a wide range of sound effects, Gao would sometimes mix and match the concurrent conversations of many characters, juxtapose human voices with music, separate main voices from supporting ones, collide dialogues with monologues, and so on. You may hear both topical and sound polyphony in Soul Mountain. Not only did the real quest for the titular mountain serve as the binding material and primary motivation, but it also represented the inner spiritual journey. In the form of bead-like components, this thread carried tales, conversation fragments, monologues, and notes that, like different melodic lines in music, would grow to considerable size and become rival storylines. These pieces' varied languages were associated with a shift in the acoustic layer. A novel network of intertextual links was also encouraged by the text's collage-like, non-uniform structure, the existence of stylization methods, the pastiche of different speech styles, the automated recording of daily conversations, and meta-literary digressions. The reader was tasked with solving the mystery by uncovering secret connections between the parts of this polyphonic, collage-like text. The use of such intricate narrative techniques gives the impression of drawing from Western avant-garde, post-modern, and modernist movements; however, it is justifiable to say that Taoist classical Chinese philosophy—with its processual and relational view of space, nature, and man—also had an impact. In Taoism, the world is not seen as fixed but as dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing. There is a constant, all-pervasive flow and circulation of energy in reality, and the cosmic web of connections is also constantly changing. This way of looking at things—through the lens of process, connection, and dynamics—is holistic; it breaks down silos and frees you from bias. Given Gao Xingjian's fondness for polyphony, collage, and film montage, as well as his support for stream of consciousness and stream of language, it is reasonable to assume that our environment and our mental

creations form a more complex web of interconnected relationships than meets the eye. In his essay On the Idea of Fiction and Writing Technique, Gao Xingjian argued that stream of consciousness was a unique form of artistic narrative language that could transcend time and space constraints, bringing together seemingly disparate realms such as memory and reality, the past and the present, and even illusion and dream. Real and imagined, tangible and intangible, everything was flowing together in a single current.

Emptiness, a key idea in Chinese aesthetics, was associated with calm and stillness. Both Gao Xingjian's theatre and paintings included it regularly. He followed the lead of the Polish stage director and theatre reformer Jerzy Grotowski—whom he undoubtedly admired at one point—in describing a minimalist stage—one devoid of props, lighting, sound effects, and elaborate costumes—in his essay The Means of Modern Theatre. Gao argued in an essay titled "What Kind of Theatre Do We Need?" published in the middle of the 1980s that contemporary Chinese theatre should draw inspiration from folk performances and the Beijing opera instead of relying on unnecessary stage equipment and decorations. One of his core ideas for giving theatre its lost charisma was this. Convention, long thought to be the very heart of the theatre, may once again take centre stage on an empty stage. As he stood on the platform, an actor was like an artist hovering over a sheet of white paper, brush wet with ink. On the bare stage, he conjured up the most intricate universes, events, and characters with just his skill, without the use of any support. An unanticipated freedom was bestowed on both the artist and the audience by the empty stage, which resembled a blank sheet of paper. It freed their imagination from the confines of probability and enabled it to flourish freely. You could see this minimalist trend, this drive for less is more, and even an air of asceticism in Gao's plays and paintings. This, in turn, led to his cerebral distancing and emotional reserve, which in turn enhanced the exceptional grace and precision with which he used these techniques in all of his work. Gao Xingjian meticulously tended to the dynamic tension generated by the spatial arrangements of people, stage-props, and modest decorations in both his ink paintings and plays, which were constructed from meticulously prepared sequences of images. According to the principles of oneiric imagination, which permit the coexistence of reality and imagination, Gao created ambiguous images brimming with deep, hidden meaning by using light and dark, shade and brightness as if painting, and by situating the actor onstage, where a stage prop, when lit appropriately, could take on

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symbolic meaning. He created the impression of perpetual motion and spinning in his ink paintings by spreading ink on the paper in blots of varying intensities that overlapped, merged, and entangled with one another. These methods revealed the ever-changing, procedural character of objects and events. There is an endless cycle of metamorphosis in everything around us, from our own creations to events in the past and those that may happen in the future. A lengthy book, a collection of short stories, or even a drama may be crafted from the recordings of such a lifestream. It has the potential to generate narratives that are either longer or shorter in length, as well as a string of recorded comments or rapid cinematic cuts.

V.   CONCLUSION

Finally, the complex connection between story building and identity creation has been illuminated by comparing the fictional universes of Gao Xingjian and Kazuo Ishiguro. Each of these writers has shown how narrative can be a powerful tool for examining the nuances of identity in the face of personal hardship, cultural relocation, and social revolution.

Kazuo Ishiguro's vivid portrayals of individuals struggling with their cultural background and the stories told by Gao Xingjian, who was a Chinese expat, both provide deep understandings of the human condition. Their shared exploration of memory, trauma, and the search for authenticity prompts readers to consider the complex and ever-changing nature of identity.

This research has shown how each author depicts the building of identity differently by analyzing narrative structures, character development, and thematic elements. In contrast to Gao Xingjian's use of existentialist themes and experimental storytelling approaches to portray existential doubt and dislocation, Ishiguro's novels subtly delve into memory, yearning, and the want for belonging.

In spite of these dissimilarities, the writings of both writers stress the significance of accepting one's complicated identity and the power of narrative to shape one's sense of self. As they immerse themselves in the stories, readers are encouraged to contemplate their own experiences and how they face the difficulties of being themselves in a dynamic and unpredictable environment.

Looking at the works of Gao Xingjian and Kazuo Ishiguro side by side proves that literature may provide light on the human condition. These writers' multi-layered stories serve as a

reminder of the power of storytelling to alter our perceptions of ourselves and the age-old struggle for self-discovery.

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