



Warren, Monastery, Giant's Cairn and Nordic Myths—Cultural Memory Writing in *The Buried Giant*

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Abstract

*Japanese British author Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* tells the story of an elderly British couple's journey of finding their son and reminiscing. He writes the unfinished story between the Britons and Saxons in the post-Arthur era in a fantastical way, focusing on the grand propositions of history, memory and human survival. This article innovatively applies the Assmann couple's cultural memory theory to analyze the memory writing in *The Buried Giant* from the dimensions of media, power, and function of cultural memory. The warren, monastery and giant's cairn in the text are not only the carriers of individual, national and state memories, but also the necessary conditions for the buried stored memories to be awakened under the fog of amnesia. And the Nordic myths, as the cohesive structure in their cultural memory, play a crucial role in reconstructing their own cultural identity. As a result of which, this paper first analyzes the positive role that cultural memory plays in reconstructing identity and healing trauma for individuals, collectives, and nations under the shadow of the Holocaust. Secondly, it explores the writer's intention to contemplate the survival status of all humanity, comprehend the meaning of life, and call for peace in the context of globalization. Thirdly, it reveals the theme of "facing historical trauma, rejecting negative forgetting, inheriting cultural memory, achieving identity reconstruction, and pursuing harmonious coexistence".*

I. INTRODUCTION

Kazuo Ishiguro is a Japanese-born British novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature for his works that "uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world" in 2017. His focus on the themes of history, memory, and identity, revelation of human

nature and concern for the fate of the human community make him stand out.

The Buried Giant was his eighth novel published in 2015. It told the story of an elderly British couple's journey of finding their son and reminiscing. The protagonists Axl and Beatrice met Saxon warrior Wistan, Saxon boy Edwin, and Knight of the Round Table Gawain along

the way. They learned the truth about people's amnesia through various cultural memory carriers and cohesive structure in their culture. Originally, King Arthur, in order to cover up his crime of provoking war, ordered the mage Merlin to cast magic on the dragon Querig, causing her to release the "amnesiac fog". Finally, Wistan killed the dragon and people regained their memories.

Although many scholars have analyzed *The Buried Giant* from the memory perspective by combining various theories of trauma, ethics, fables, power and history, few have analyzed the text from the perspective of cultural memory. Even if there are, the majority of them still apply Halbwachs' collective memory.

Therefore, this article innovatively utilizes the cultural memory theory of the Assmann couple. Starting from the media, power and functional dimension of cultural memory theory, this article sequentially analyzes how material carriers carry cultural memories, how cohesive structures play a role in the text in the form of myths, and how functional memory and stored memory continuously transform and influence the development of the story when people forget.

II. CULTURAL MEMORY WRITING IN THE BURIED GIANT

In the 1980s, German scholars Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann proposed the "Cultural Memory Theory". They believe that "cultural memory" is the overall concept of all social knowledge within a certain interactive framework and the collective application of past knowledge, including the sum of rituals, images, and textual materials used in specific periods and societies. Besides, they believe that cultural memory is something that accumulates in the deep historical layers of a nation or cultural group. It serves an identification role for a certain race or group, which helps that group develop a sense of identity and uniqueness.

Domestic scholar Wang Mi (2016) dialectically categorizes the perspective of cultural memory theory into five dimensions: time, construction, media, function, and power, and points out that these five dimensions collectively interpret the connotation of "cultural

memory". This unique insight is an important entry point for us to understand Assmann's theory, providing us with a specific foothold to explore and outline the basic appearance of "cultural memory" from the complex theoretical exposition.

This article will analyze the memory writing in *The Buried Giant* from three dimensions: media, function, and power. It will demonstrate the positive role of cultural memory in reconstructing identity and healing trauma for individuals, collectives and countries under the shadow of the Holocaust. It will also explore Kazuo Ishiguro's deep thinking and literary care on cultural memory inheritance and identity recognition. Hoping that we are capable of using the glory of the past to shine on the present and future development of all mankind.

III. MEDIA DIMENSION OF CULTURAL MEMORY—THREE MATERIAL CARRIERS

From the media dimension, cultural memory necessitates a fixed attachment and a set of unique symbol systems or presentation methods. On the basis of Halbwachs' "Memory Image" (Erinnerungsbild), Jan Assmann extends this concept by referring to these cultural symbols as "Memory Figure" (Erinnerungsfigurs). "Memory Figure" not only includes visual cultural symbols, but also includes narrative forms such as myths, proverbs, scriptures, paintings, even a street, a building, etc. All of these can be the carriers of "Memory Figure". Afterward, Aleida Assmann (2016) further explains that "Although there is no inherent memory within a location, they are of great significance for the construction of cultural memory space. Not only because they can fix memories on a certain location, but also they can reflect a lasting continuity that is longer than individual or artificial memories of the culture of the times."

In addition to examining the role of memory construction, cultural memory studies also consider how memory affects people or groups in various media. Material carriers, especially those locations, carry and strengthen cultural memories, making them the key to establishing individual and collective identity.

In *The Buried Giant*, the warren inhabited by the British people, the monastery built on ruins and the giant's cairn built on a hillside serve as three important material carriers of cultural memory, all of which demonstrate the tension and profound influence of it.

3.1 The Warren Inhabited by the British People

After the buildings were demolished in the war, the British went out into the hills and dug a big warren to avoid the same thing. Aleida Assmann (2016) believes that "Certain places will be endowed with a special memory because of their fixed, long-term connection to family history. This place is a 'place of the family' or a 'place of the generations' (Generation-enorte)." As a place of residence for British ethnic villagers, the warren is a place that embodies family memories and culture, which can be called a "Generation-enorte". Therefore, the warren can be considered as a part of British class and hierarchical identity, a part of the British collective cultural memories, a part of the British racial imagination, and a part of how British history has influenced the present.

Kazuo Ishiguro also incorporates cultural memory symbols of the nation into specific objects such as the architecture and daily necessities of the warren. At the same time, events occurring within the warren also serve as triggers to stimulate memories, prompting the subject to continuously awaken forgotten memories.

The internal architecture of the warren presents an open layout, with everyone gathering in the "Great Chamber" for warmth. They deliberately arrange for Axl and Beatrice to live on the cold outermost layer of the warren. The geographical distance brings psychological exclusion. Humans are memory's living carriers. And the interactions between different people play a crucial role in the inheritance and transmission of memory. However, in this warren, villagers temporarily lost their ability to speak and collectively fell into amnesia. Everything is in a state of aphasia, creating an abnormal atmosphere of memory and becoming a special symbol of memory. Due to the lack of communication, the elderly couple lacks the opportunity to form social memories and cannot

explore the reasons for unconscious forgetting. Besides, as a "place of the family", the warren solidifies past memories. The occasional flashbacks of memories by the elderly couple make them aware of their son's absence, leading to self-anxiety and triggering an identity crisis. Their demand for memory becomes particularly urgent.

In addition, the council of the warren prohibits the protagonist couple from using candles indoors. This behavior of depriving individuals' right to use their belongings by abusing local privileges exacerbates identity anxiety and promotes memory movement. Candles have distinct etiquette and order characteristics in ancient people's daily lives, social interactions, weddings, funerals, and other occasions. They play a crucial role in ancient people's lives and carry cultural memories in different rituals. (Ma & Xiang, 2021) Plato also describes the meaning of sparks in *The Seventh Letter* as "creating the original image of things in the depths of the soul" (Feng & Astrid, 2012). Flame is a representation of an uncontrollable cognitive ability that can ignite the web of memory, highlighting forgetting and abandonment in the long river of time. The flames generated by candles not only bring light and warmth to Axl and Beatrice, but also indirectly increase the couple's confidence in finding their son. Because the couple is able to recall the past of candles with their only remaining memory. "I (Beatrice) was remembering about it, Axl. And I was thinking maybe it's because of our lack of a candle when I first took this pain I now have. When we go back, I want a candle for our nights. I don't want that sprite or any other bringing us something worse." (Ishiguro, 2015) The symbols of cultural memory cannot be erased, the memories of history cannot be buried and the spark of civilization cannot be extinguished.

Besides, events occurring at the warren also serve as triggers for stimulating memory. Some suspicious wanderers appear near the warren. All residents inside the warren reject them due to their abnormal attire. Beatrice negotiates with them out of kindness, but this is seen by the villagers as a "curse-casting" behavior. In fact, these wanderers are survivors of the

Holocaust. The communication memories they bring themselves constitute a foreign culture, which has an impact on the already formed internal culture of the warren and promotes the flow of memories. It is precisely this collision of memories that has strengthened Axl and Beatrice's determination to embark on the journey of searching for their memories.

3.2 The Monastery Built on the Ruins

On their way to slay the dragon, the protagonists stop by a monastery for lodging. The monastery plays an important role in the novel because Ishiguro writes memories about specific people and objects within the monastery, making it a special memory image and carrier of cultural memory. The historical remnants, the monks and the strange ritual of the monastery all reflect the cultural memory it carries.

After arriving at the monastery, Wistan begins to feel uneasy. Axl thinks it is due to tiredness from the journey, but Wistan says to Axl, "Or maybe my fears derive simply from what these walls whisper to me of days gone by." (Ishiguro, 2015) From the sword marks on the stone tower walls and the temple layout, Wistan refers that this place was once a castle occupied by the Saxons. Through further investigation, he concludes that the current place of peaceful prayer was once a slaughterhouse, where innocent Saxons were slaughtered by the British. In fact, this place was originally a milestone material relic that carried historical and cultural memories—a wartime bunker, which was converted into a monastery during the time of peace. This measure is nothing more than a despicable attempt by the British rulers to cover up their bloody crimes and seek inner peace, demonstrating their intention to erase the cultural memory function carried by the architecture. Because monuments or other historical sites carry collective memories of commemoration. When imprints are erased, memories are forgotten, the course of history is denied, and people's confidence will also be on the verge of collapse. (Ma & Xiang, 2021)

The fog sprayed by Querig can erase a person's memory, but it cannot remove the material carrier of memory. The remaining

traces inside the monastery buildings record the brutal past and become a social existence in a specific era. Remnants not only reveal the abyss of memory, but also cross the abyss of memory, serving as a bridge connecting past events with the present reality and a connection point for new cultural memories. "The persistence of a location cannot completely disappear even in a new geopolitical order. Its persistence must serve a long-term memory." (Assmann, 2016) Even if monasteries are built on the ruins of wartime bunkers, the bloody atrocities committed by rulers in the past can still be traced back to the remnants. Ruins are the support and cornerstone of memory, and the painful memories of the Holocaust will never be completely buried. With the changing times and the continuous progress of human civilization, it will only remain fresh in people's minds. The fog will eventually dissipate, and the truth of history can never be concealed. This is the power of cultural memory.

Before the emergence of writing, the carriers of information were not books, but rather specialized carriers such as shamans, minstrels, priests, and others who possessed "a characteristic that was detached from daily life and duty" (Assmann, 2015). The British monks living in the monastery are supposed to be the inheritors of God's glory and cultural memory. But it turns out just the opposite. Because they know about the heinous massacre of Saxons by the British people that have occurred here. Although they are not the direct perpetrators of the massacre, they feel guilty and suffer from conscience torture for the atrocities committed by their own people. They believe that forgetting is the best way to heal wounds, using amnesia to heal the mental trauma of the two ethnic groups.

Jan Assmann (2015) points out that the content of cultural memory uses "fixed objective externalization" as a carrier and realizes through "traditional and symbolic encoding and performance of text, images, rituals, etc.". The monks in the monastery often hold pagan rituals, regularly strapping themselves to instruments of torture and voluntarily offering their flesh and blood to feed birds in order to receive God's forgiveness. However, such a redemption ritual is sacred and benevolent at

the signifier level, while the signified is a barbaric reality that defies the principles of Christianity. "Rites work through collective force, and collective force also works through rituals" (Durkheim, 2008). The twisted confession ritual condenses the monks into a memory image, which contains a great deal of historical and cultural information and inspires individuals with amnesia to explore the truth. As Nietzsche said, "Memory is not written into the mind, but into the body. Only things that are constantly painful can remain in memory." Pain is a tool to strengthen memory. Therefore, scars become a body language that strikes directly into the depths of the recipient's soul. The monks externalize the forgotten past into written traces, solidifying the collective memory of members. These body texts are a call to cultural memory, arousing individuals with amnesia to question the present life and imagine their past identities.

3.3 The Giant's Cairn Built on a Hillside

At the end of the story, the protagonists climb up the mountain slope and see the Giant's Cairn. Tombs have always been witnesses and symbols of ancient history and culture. The excavation process of tombs "preserves the potential threat of traumatic past" (Feng & Astrid, 2012). As a typical tomb, the Giant's Cairn serves as a habitat for the dragon Querig. It continues the power of King Arthur and is also the center of power for manipulating the history of the Holocaust.

And there is a peculiar unnamed monument in the Giant's Cairn. Kazuo Ishiguro introduces it in the second person as follows: "Some of you will have fine monuments by which the living may remember the evil done to you. Some of you will have only crude wooden crosses or painted rocks, while yet others of you must remain hidden in the shadows of history. You are in any case part of an ancient procession, and so it is always possible the giant's cairn was created to mark the site of some such tragedy long ago when young innocents were slaughtered in war." (Ishiguro, 2015) Monument is a material manifestation of the past, permanently fixed in the form of stone, becoming a "cultural text". The shared past in a forgotten state relies on cultural forms such as writing, rituals and monuments, which help to

solidify identity and have the ability to reconstruct. (Liu, 2020)

Localities not only bear the important responsibility of storing and awakening individual and collective memories, but also bear the obligation of engraving and reconstructing memories. The highest ritual completed by Wistan, the dragon slaying, actually dissolves the center of power and opens up the core of cultural memory. Forgotten memories are rewritten, and the past and present are reconnected. The Giant's Cairn is reborn and everyone regains their memories. Those return memories enable individuals and collectives to establish a continuous identity on both synchronic and diachronic dimensions, which is not fragmented, but holistic. The collective and unified community consciousness established by the British and Saxon people will become a new cultural memory, illuminating the current and future path of peaceful development.

IV. POWER DIMENSION OF CULTURAL MEMORY—MYTHS AS THE COHESIVE STRUCTURE

According to Wang Mi (2016), the power dimension of cultural memory suggests that the subject manipulating cultural memory is not a "collective soul" or an "objective mind", but rather a symbol or sign. The power factor is hidden within the symbolic system of the cohesive power carried by cultural memory, attempting to manipulate and influence the normative and stereotypical effects contained within cultural memory. Putting aside the power factor, this article will focus on the symbolic system mentioned above in this section. This "cohesive" symbol system is actually an internal "cohesive structure" that every culture will form, as mentioned by Jan Assmann. It is rooted in the stable cultural accumulation layer deep in history and plays a role in connecting and connecting.

In practice, myths are the cohesive structures within a national culture. The term "myth" generally refers to the history that exists in the national memory. It fixes and internalizes factual history in the form of a story, and constantly reproduces it, giving a narrative form

to the unfathomable time. Mythology is not only a reference to the past, but also the radiance from the past can illuminate the present and future. (Zhao & Zhang, 2019)

For the English nation, the Celtic and Nordic myths are cohesive structures in their cultural memory, playing a crucial role in constructing their own cultural identity. The story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table is the most classical representation. Kazuo Ishiguro uses a large number of mythological prototypes from Celtic and Norse mythology in *The Buried Giant*, continuing the mythological theme. (Liu, 2019) However, while borrowing the symbolic system from mythological legends, he rewrites and reconstructs the symbolic metaphors. This subversion and reconstruction of myths demonstrates the writing intention of Kazuo Ishiguro—to be vigilant and reflect on the national discourse attached to legendary stories in the context of globalization, to contemplate the fate of all mankind and to comprehend the meaning of life.

4.1 Borrowing of Mythological Symbol System—Arthurian Legend

The novel begins with a profound sense of time: “You would have searched a long time for the sort of winding lane or tranquil meadow for which England later became celebrated.....Most of the roads left by the Romans would by then have become broken or overgrown..... Icy fogs hung over rivers and marshes, serving all too well the ogres that were then still native to this land.” (Ishiguro, 2015)

In the myth, under the leadership of King Arthur, the British fought against the Romans, Saxons, Picts, Scots, and Irish. During this time, Germanic mythology, Christian beliefs, and ancient European folklore blended together, competing to cling to King Arthur’s sacred bloodline. (Huang, 2020)

Memory is not only a carrier of history, but also an extension of mythology and a projection of reality. For those familiar with medieval European history in real life, keywords like “England” and “Romans” provide effective positioning clues, directly leading us into the most legendary era: around the 6th century AD. At that time, the ethnic struggle between the

British, Romans, and Saxons had just come to an end. The war of gods between ancient European folk beliefs, Indo-European mythology represented by Celtic, and Christian beliefs has just begun. Memories were shrouded in an endless mist. The amnesiac fog happens to be a metaphor for this period of history.

This fable writing style leaves readers with great flexibility: for readers familiar with specific cultural backgrounds, many implicit clues and connotations are exposed with the help of the hidden text of the legend of King Arthur. However, in cross-cultural contexts, these “keys” or “codes” that enter the story need to be re-identified and interpreted.

4.2 Rewriting of Mythological Symbolic Metaphor—Dragon Slaying

“Dragon slaying” is a cultural memory passed down from early human civilization. Influenced by the concept of animism, various ethnic groups have a fear of animals encountered in combat, forming a collective imagination of persecution and ancient memories and deep anxiety of the hunting era. This memory and anxiety have been passed down from generation to generation, forming a collective archetypal psychology. This archetypal psychology combines the characteristics of many fierce beasts that pose a threat to human survival, such as pythons and giant lizards, and ultimately transforms into a brand-new animal—the dragon. Early humans are accustomed to using witchcraft to solve problems they are unable to solve, such as disasters and epidemics. While eliminating disasters, they also have to offer sacrifices, so collective persecution is initiated, and the persecuted individuals act as scapegoats. As a symbolic ensemble, the “dragon” embodies numerous evil images and naturally becomes the most ideal “scapegoat” to play its role. The “dragon” must die because people hope to achieve peace through the primitive ritual of “dragon slaying”. (Zhang & Wang, 2020)

In the context of Western culture, dragon slaying is an ancient motif in European folklore. Its oldest version comes from mythology in the Near East: the evil dragon has been killed, and its body provides the world with structural materials. Dragon slaying is the core link of

creation mythology, and dragons possess both chaotic and sacred properties. In the *Bible*, the dragon slaying turns into a battle between divine power against evil, with the dragon representing evil. This is how the tale of the dragon has been appropriated and reconstructed by Christians. In medieval knightly legends, the protagonist kills the dragon, indicating that the power of civilization gradually strengthens its control over the chaotic natural order. Dragon becomes the opposite of order, characterized by frenzy and evil. Under the dual influence of ancient European beliefs and Christianity, symbolic symbols in folklore overflow the mythological framework and further symbolize, making the dragon slaying theme a standard accessory to hero legends. (Huang, 2020)

However, in *The Buried Giant*, the dragon is a thin and weak mother dragon, becoming a manipulated puppet. At the final duel, “she was so emaciated she looked more like some worm-like reptile accustomed to water that had mistakenly come aground and was in the process of dehydrating. The remnants of her wings were sagging folds of skin that a careless glance might have taken for dead leaves accumulated to either side of her.” (Ishiguro, 2015) In the traditional dragon slaying theme, the fiery and powerful dragon contrasts with the knight’s radiance, but killing a half-dead dragon like Querig is clearly not a great credit. With the modification of this detail, the props used to contrast with the hero are broken, and the knight’s towering image also collapses. More importantly, dragon slaying doesn’t solve the ultimate problem, and everyone doesn’t win a happy ending of victory and reunion. Instead, it opens Pandora’s magic box. As Kazuo Ishiguro himself said in an interview, “If the mother dragon is killed, the nation that forgot its hatred due to the existence of the mother dragon will once again remember its hatred and realize that the other ethnic groups living together today are its enemies, which will trigger another war.” (Chen, 2017)

Kazuo Ishiguro uses the “dragon slaying” as a representative of the scapegoat mythological motif, infiltrating historical narrative and literary imagination, and using the past to express the present. By borrowing this fantasy

story, the author not only reconstructs the war history of the British and Saxon peoples, but also incorporates ethnic conflicts between other countries into the metaphorical system, guiding readers to take part in the historical reconstruction of the text through the metaphor of multiple references. It actually highlights the author’s concern for the fate of different ethnic groups in their historical choices and the future of humanity based on peaceful development.

V. FUNCTIONAL DIMENSION OF CULTURAL MEMORY—UNBURIED STORED MEMORY

Aleida Assmann divides cultural memory into functional memory and stored memory from the perspective of function. Only a small part of cultural memory is the memory that people are constantly experiencing in the present, which has the meaning of constructing identity. Aleida Assmann calls it “functional memory”. And a large amount of memory is hidden in the “background”. “The factors of this type of memory are extremely different: some are inactive and unproductive; some are latent and unnoticed; some are constrained and difficult to retrieve normally; some are deeply buried due to pain or scandal.” (Feng & Astrid, 2012). Aleida Assmann refers to it as “stored memory”. Taking the construction of individual memory as an example, stored memory is similar to those amorphous, unorganized and fragmented memories.

Compared with functional memory, stored memory is shelved and forgotten in the name of memory, becoming the “other” in memory due to its inability to provide the identity and legitimacy needed at present. However, as Aleida Assmann (2012) once said, “If a culture does not value the ‘other’ in history, it cannot create a space for prosperity and development in art, science, and imagination.” Therefore, this “forgetting” will not become “true forgetting”. The boundary between stored memory and functional memory is not clear and insurmountable. On the contrary, the two can change into one another. And the need for current identity construction is the critical point of this conversion.

The Buried Giant maximizes the writing of memory and forgetting. The amnesiac fog

emitted by the mother dragon causes everyone to forget the past. But for the protagonist couple, this kind of “forgetting” is more like deeply burying and storing memories due to pain. As one of the few people with fragmented memories, they have long been aware of this amnesia from every abnormality in their warren. These clues have driven them on a journey to search for memories and their son. Later, in the monastery and the Giant’s Cairn, the memories stored in the ruins regain attention and become the basis for the protagonists to construct a new identity. In fact, those stored memories have never been “buried” like the title. They transform from background to foreground and return to the memory stage as functional memory. Between the choices of memory or forgetting, under the successful transformation of stored memory into functional memory, the theme contained in the novel is clearly revealed— “Facing historical trauma, rejecting negative forgetting, inheriting cultural memory, achieving identity reconstruction, and pursuing harmonious coexistence”.

5.1 Unburied Stored Memory in the Warren

Axl, the book’s main character, is an old man who depends on his wife Beatrice. Due to their old age, they are unable to contribute much labor to the warren, so they suffer from the exclusion of other villagers. But for Axl, the biggest annoyance does not come from the rejection of his neighbors, but from the fragmented memories stored in his mind that often trouble him. These memories are fleeting and difficult to capture like a flash in the pan. Even though some happy memory fragments reappear in his mind, Axl’s inner joy is always mixed with a hint of sadness. One day, his memory becomes clear, and he finds the cause of the abnormality and makes the momentous decision to search for his son.

In addition, there is one more thing that has been bothering Axl for a long time. There is an important red-haired doctor in the warren. Her superb medical skills make the villagers seek her treatment whenever they feel uncomfortable. But in a few days, the patients she has treated cannot recognize her anymore. After a little longer, the woman suddenly disappears in the warren. No one noted this matter because they had forgotten everything.

But the protagonist Axl still has fragmented memories of her, insisting that there is such a person present. In the communication with his wife Beatrice and other working villagers, this psychological discrepancy that only he remembers and no one understands makes him more determined in his desire to search for memory and truth.

5.2 Unburied Stored Memory in the Monastery

Although locations do not possess intrinsic memory, they have significant implications for the construction of cultural memory spaces. The location itself can serve as a carrier of stored memory, as well as a trigger that can awaken the stored memory in an individual’s brain. On the way to slay the dragon, the protagonists come to the monastery for lodging. They find that the monastery built on ruins is a hillfort, which was built to fight off foes. Wistan further explains it: “This is today a place of peace and prayer, yet you needn’t gaze so deep to find blood and terror.” (Ishiguro, 2015) Because Wistan’s stored memories of war have already been awakened by the ruins in the monastery. This also demonstrates the influence of the “memory figures” stored in the individual’s brain on the observation and perception of things and the environment.

The stone tower in the monastery, as a special cultural memory symbol, constantly stimulates the stored memories of outsiders. The traces on the walls of the stone tower also constantly activate the cultural memory images stored in the brain. In the eyes of Wistan, the stone tower is a mobile battlefield filled with various traps. When a large number of enemies attack the stone tower, Saxon warriors defend and retreat along the steps, and the width of these steps only allows two people to stand. There are niches and torches hidden at the exit, and when the enemy approaches, Saxon warriors throw torches into the trench. Soon, the stone tower becomes a sea of hellish fire, leaving Britain’s enemies with nowhere to escape, while Saxon warriors escape using the hay behind the stone tower. Wistan uses stored memory to identify the heritage left by his fellow tribe. In the face of Lord Brennus’ hunting, Wistan imitates the fighting methods of his tribe and is able to escape. (Liu, 2020)

As one of the warriors of Saxon, the scene of the war between the two ethnicities is deeply imprinted in Wistan's heart, leaving him with indelible wounds. Although many years have passed since this war, he has never forgotten the suffering his fellow countrymen suffered. Faced with such scenes in the monastery, all the stored memories in his brain are awakened, and fragmented memories are gradually pieced together. He reshapes the memories of the war between the British and Saxons through dialogue.

In the fragmented flashback of stored memory, real events return in a vivid and precise form. In reality, the wars between tribes not only destroy his dignity, beliefs, youth, ideals, and pursuits, but also bring him the pain of losing his parents. In the process of regaining memory, Wistan faces historical trauma head-on. Besides, with the help of stored cultural memories, he integrates his traumatic memories while preparing himself for the reconstruction of his identity.

5.3 Unburied Stored Memory in the Giant's Cairn

At the end of the story, they climb the Giant's Cairn built on the mountain. There is nothing around it to remind its existence, and the weather is cold, with howling winds and no grass growing. As a special type of memory carrier, monuments contain the vitality of memory and trigger the stored memory in the individual's brain. When Beatrice walks up to the unnamed monument, facing the stone with her head down, as if apologizing. Upon seeing this scene, Axl feels only anger and fear surging in his heart, as their son has already died and their marriage has been betrayed. This unnamed monument symbolizes a traumatic past and is a trigger to resist forgetting and stimulate memory. Individuals who have experienced cultural trauma have a subjective tendency to forget, but the past is still stored in memory spaces such as monuments and museums, highlighting the tension of cultural memory in carrier reproduction and social processes. (Liu, 2020)

Once, the Giant's Cairn was a battlefield of conflict between the Saxons and the British, where countless innocent young soldiers were

slaughtered during the war. The memories stored in the brain are activated by the unnamed cairn, revealing the historical truth of the long-standing ethnic war. The fog of memory will eventually dissipate, and the truth of history can never be concealed. This is the power of cultural memory. The fragmented memory in *The Buried Giant* is not only a tool for the protagonist to reconstruct their individual identity, but also a tool for the author to re-examine national history and reflect on the issue of national identity.

After the dragon slaying, Wistan admits that he has developed a relationship with the British, and now he has become "weak" compared with his past vengeful self. In addition, Wistan also grants Axl and Beatrice amnesty, kindly reminding them how to escape the following bloody storms. He also adheres to their agreement, burying Gawain's body at the Giant's Cairn. All of this indicates that "facing history directly, rejecting negative forgetting and inheriting cultural memories" can help individuals overcome trauma and construct new identities. There's a chance that two opposing ethnic groups can work together to create a harmonious foundation for cohabitation.

In fact, Kazuo Ishiguro uses the literary war history of the British and Saxons to write modern social history. What he is referring to is "not only those societies that have recently recovered from conflicts, but also those with long-term buried memories." (Chen, 2017) To heal historical wounds and maintain ethnic relations, we must not use the negative approach of covering up memories to achieve forgetting. Any country that wants to achieve significant development must remember its historical memory and keep in mind its lessons. Countries need to work together to eliminate hegemonism and power politics in the cultural and ideological fields, refuse to forget, and face history squarely. If countries or ethnic groups with common traumas can transcend the traumatized past, there is hope for building a shared future. Human beings can coexist harmoniously and have a better future.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the contemporary context of

globalization, the conflict and integration of economy, politics and culture have led to a severe collision and fusion of memory and identity, making it easier for us to fall into the dilemma of identity recognition and chaos. Racial discrimination, ethnic conflicts, extreme religiosity and colonialism all to some extent erode self-identity. The internationalization issues arising from this provide more creative themes for literary writing.

Kazuo Ishiguro practices internationalist literary innovation with a focus on current international war and peace issues. Under this multidimensional influence, *The Buried Giant* explores and writes about international themes such as individual identity and memory, ethnic conflicts and trauma, as well as the survival and destiny of all humanity. This article studies the memory writing in *The Buried Giant* from the dimensions of media, power, and function of cultural memory theory. Kazuo Ishiguro focuses the grand proposition of human survival on the writing of memory. Through the fog of forgetting, he uses cultural memory as a tool to expose the dilemma of individual identity, re-examine historical events and reconstruct individual and national identity. At last, he contemplates the ultimate goal of humanity and attempts to persuade people to realize the meaning of life through memory, forgetting, and forgiveness.

As an allegory that uses the past to allude to the present, *The Buried Giant* conveys many messages of practical significance. It has been a long 15 centuries since the age of King Arthur in the 6th century. However, the act of forgetting history and extreme nationalism continues. We need to understand that forgetting is not the only way to end retribution and prevent social fragmentation. Abandoning memory will cut off the connection between the past, present, and future. Individuals and collectives will lose the bonds and roots they rely on to maintain their existence, directly leading to the inability to construct the future. Faced with the trauma of historical wars, both ethnic groups should have a correct view of historical memories. Transcending narrow self-awareness and ethnic identity, being cautious of national hatred and revenge will, establishing harmonious familial and ethnic relationships

and ultimately building a community with a shared future for mankind are the paths towards peace that every country must take.

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