

DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR IN KAZU ISHIGURO'S NOVEL "THE REMAINS OF THE DAY"

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In this paper I try to analyze one of the most common psychological syndrome which a considerable number of humans all over the world are suffering from. It's called "the God-Bug Syndrome" and its effects on one's decisions and choices in life. It's where a smart educated person is pestered by two contradictory feelings, first that he is "as special creature as nature has yet produced and second that he's not very special at all." These twin feelings lead a person to the following conclusion: while he thinks that he is perhaps great, being trapped with a brain that really isn't big enough for his purposes, perhaps trapped in a corner of an academic discipline, a research field or in some other small place as we will see the hero of the novel under analysis, trapped by his creatureliness, and trapped by life's very smallness.

Keywords: Delusion, Self-revelation, Character disorder, Regret.

Introduction

In this paper I try to tackle in analysis a type of well-educated persons who exceed the border of the inspiring ambitions and dreams of self-success to another level which is considered hazardous not only for one's decisions and choices in life, but also the way they lead life. It's the level of pursuing delusions of grandeur. People who are against this view depend on what Maltz stated in his book "Psychocybernetics" that it helps to envision yourself as having accomplished anything before you actually start the process. In other words, one of the main tenants to success is to visualize in your mind in advance. Also they are suggesting that we can't charge people with the label of 'delusions of grandeur' for envisioning themselves in high places. They regard it not as a disorder, but rather an advantage for people who will go in the future to do great things.

Here, it's not that we randomly label others with delusions of grandeur seekers, because we need to be careful enough to differentiate between those who have self-esteem, self-confidence and strength of character and those who have this character disorder. It's where "a smart educated person is pestered by two contradictory feelings. The first feeling inflates him and makes him like a braggart, while the second makes him want to crawl in a hole and act carelessly." [1] These twin contradictory feelings lead a person to the following conclusion: that while he is perhaps quite smart he is nevertheless rather like an ant, trapped with a brain that really isn't big enough for his purposes, perhaps trapped in a corner of an academic discipline, a research field, a literary genre or even by life's few chances to offer.

Psychologists think that this view reflects two ways to look at life, as effectively special and as pitifully worthless; that both views, while they clash, are entirely real and appropriate; and that a person can cycle between these two views almost minute by minute, second feeling equal to life and up to life's challenges and the other pathetically inept and unequal to even thinking about making dinner the next. This mix of reasonable self-pride and reasonable self-pity, where what may be a completely healthy attachment to one's own specialness collides with existential reality, produces people who look confident one moment and ineffectual the next, motivated one moment and apathetic the next, sober and hard-working one moment and self-indulgent and addicted the next? When there are moments for a person he can brim over with life energy and big plans one moment and feel suicidal the next, that's typically the god-bug syndrome.

Psychologists have considered this tension a disorder and have coined phrases like "delusions of grandeur" and "inferiority complexes" to try to capture something of this "pathological" dynamic. Actually, what is stated here is not pathology but an intense contradictory knowing that anyone could pass through such feelings. In the past this syndrome has been pathologized in the language of Adler, a disciple of Freud's, "what we are looking at is a superiority complex driven by a hidden inferiority complex or an inferiority complex driven by a hidden superiority complex." [2] Adler puts it this way: "We should not be astonished if in the cases where we see an inferiority complex we find a superiority complex more or less hidden. On the other hand, if we inquire into a superiority complex and study its continuity, we can always find a more or less hidden inferiority complex." [3] Adler's god-bug is made up of two complexes.

In natural psychology, it is regarded as a phenomenon more than a mental illness. The self-inflation that Adler called superiority complex or the idealization of the self and the self-deflation or as Adler called the inferiority complex is located both in walled-off "unconscious" place that puts the person out of touch. Natural psychology also proposes a way out of this dilemma or at least how to deal with it. If one constructs an idea of meaning that takes these very matters into account, so that "both your next accomplishment and your next disappointment are accounted for in your personal picture of value-based meaning-making, you can get off your high horse and you can also get up from the dirt." [4] By taking charge of your construction of meaning, you can maintain a steady identity, one characterized by a new modesty and a new strength.

When we try to understand how the God-Bug Syndrome works, we need to know at first its connection with the mechanism of the brain. The human brain can conceptualize ideas as abstract as the relationship between energy and matter; it can produce strings of words and strings of musical notes that evoke tremendous feeling; it can place itself in the vast universe and see itself living and dying. It can imagine, calculate, remember and more. It has to feel special. At the same time it knows perfectly well all about its limitations and its feeling nature. This God-bug syndrome is completely natural and exactly what you would expect a creature like us to experience. Now we must deal with it.

Discussion

By careful analysis to the story, we find that the hero is deeply impacted with the god-bug syndrome which controls his choices in his life. Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* is told in the first-person narration of an English butler named Stevens. In July 1956, Stevens decides to

take a six-day road trip to the West Country of England—a region to the West of Darlington Hall, the house in which Stevens resides and has worked as a butler for thirty-four years. Though the house was previously owned by the now-deceased Lord Darlington, by 1956, it has come under the ownership of Mr. Farraday, an American gentleman. Stevens likes Mr. Farraday, but fails to interact well with him socially: Stevens is a circumspect, serious person and is not comfortable joking around in the manner Mr. Farraday prefers. Stevens terms this skill of causal conversation “bantering”; several times throughout the novel and proclaims his desire to improve his bantering skill so that he can better please his current employer.

The purpose of Stevens’s road trip to visit Miss Kenton, the former housekeeper of Darlington Hall who left twenty years earlier to get married. Stevens has received a letter from Miss Kenton, and believes that her letter hints that her marriage is falling and that she might like to return to her post as a housekeeper. Ever since World War II has ended, it has been difficult enough for people to staff large manor houses such as Darlington Hall. Much of the narrative is comprised of Stevens’ memories of his work as a butler during and just after world war II. He describes the large, elaborate dinner parties and elegant, prominent personages who come to dine and stay at Darlington Hall in those times. It is gradually revealed through other characters’ interactions with Stevens, that Lord Darlington, due to his mistaken impression of the German agenda prior to World War II, sympathized with the Nazis. Darlington even arranged and hosted dinner parties between the German and British heads of state to help both sides come to a peaceful understanding. Stevens always maintains that Lord Darlington was a perfect gentleman, and that it is a shame that his reputation has been spoiled simply because he misunderstood the Nazis’ true aims.

During the trip, Stevens also recounts stories of his contemporaries; butlers in other houses with whom he struck up friendship. Stevens’ most notable relationship by far, however, is his long-term working relationship with Miss Kenton. Though Stevens never says so outright, it appears that he harbors repressed romantic feelings for Miss Kenton. Despite the fact that the two frequently disagree over various household affairs when they work together, the disagreements are childish in nature and mainly serve to illustrate the fact that the two care for each other. At the end of the novel, Miss Kenton admits to Stevens that her life may have turned out better if she had married him. After hearing these words, Stevens is extremely upset, as he never confesses what he really feels for her

It was said that “The Remains of the Day is a story both beautiful and cruel. It is a story primarily about regret: throughout his life, Stevens puts his absolute trust and devotion in a man who makes drastic mistakes. In the totality of his professional commitment, Stevens fails to pursue the one woman with whom he could have had a fulfilling and loving relationship. His prim mask of formality cuts him off from intimacy, companionship and understanding.” [5]

The main character in the novel, Stevens, the head butler at Darlington Hall, is the protagonist and narrator of the *Remains of the Day*. He is a mercilessly precise man and his relentless pursuit of “dignity” leads him to constantly deny his own feelings throughout the novel. For Stevens, “dignity” involves donning a mask of professional poise at all times. Although there is a merit in the ideas of decorum and loyalty, Stevens takes these concepts to an extreme. He never tells anyone what he is truly feeling, and he gives his absolute trust to Lord Darlington— a man who himself makes some very poor choices in his life. Although throughout much of the story it seems that Stevens is quite content to have served Lord Darlington—believing that Darlington was doing noble things at the time; Stevens expresses deep regret at the

end of the story for failing to cultivate both intimate relationships and his own personal viewpoints and experiences.

Stevens is strongly influenced by his father. He constantly speaks of his father as though the older man perfectly exemplifies the quality of dignity, telling stories of his father's brilliantly self-effacing execution of his duties as a butler. It is clear that Stevens wishes to be like his father, and indeed, he succeeds very well. Though Stevens is clearly a very competent butler who is always gracious and precise, his inheritance of his father's impossibly formal interactions with other people ends up limiting his personal growth and relationships. The interactions between Stevens and his father are, for the most part, completely devoid of any sign of familial warmth. If Stevens's relationship with even a family member is so distant, we can easily imagine how difficult it is for him to break away from codes of repressed formality.

With Stevens, Ishguro uses two levels of narrative voice in one character; Stevens is alternatively a narrator who is superior to the story he tells, and also a narrator who is a part of, or within, the story he tells. "Stevens at once displays himself as both a paragon of virtue and a victim of historical or cultural circumstances beyond his own control. In this second role, he manages to cultivate our sympathy. His extra narrative role crumbles at the end of the story when he realizes that the façade he has cultivated is a false one." [6] Ishguro subtly increases the amount of doubt that Stevens expresses about his past actions, so that by the end of the story, a fuller picture of Stevens's regret and sadness has emerged.

Miss Kenton is the former head housekeeper of Darlington Hall; she and Stevens's father were hired at the same time. Miss Kenton is Stevens's equal in efficiency and intelligence, but she has a warmth and personality that Stevens never displays. When Miss Kenton first starts working at Darlington Hall, for example, she brings flowers into Stevens's austere room to try to brighten it up. Stevens summarily rejects Miss Kenton's attempts to introduce flowers. Indeed, the two disagree over household affairs with great frequency. Initially, these battles of wits only seem to highlight the affection of the two feel for one another, but as the years progress, Miss Kenton grows increasingly tired of Stevens' nagging and his unwillingness to admit any more personal feelings, even though this is the only way he knows how to communicate with her. She finally leaves Darlington Hall to marry someone else when it becomes clear that Stevens will never be able to let himself express his feelings for her. Miss Kenton, unlike Stevens, does not substitute Lord Darlington's values for her own; she makes decisions based on her own thoughts and beliefs. In this sense, she displays more dignity and personal integrity than Stevens ever does.

Lord Darlington is the former owner of Darlington Hall. He dies three years before the present day of Stevens's narrative. Darlington is an old-fashioned English gentleman who feels regret and guilt about the harshness of England's treatment of Germany in the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the World War I. This guilt is compounded by the fact that a close friend of Darlington's, Herr Bremann, commits suicide after World War I. This event, in conjunction with the dire economic situation Lord Darlington witnesses on his visits to Germany, inspires him to take action. In the early 1920s, he organizes conferences at Darlington Hall to allow prominent Europeans to meet and discuss ways to revise the Treaty of Versailles; later, he invites British and German heads of state to Darlington Hall in an attempt to peacefully prevent the Second World War. All the while, however, Darlington, never understands the true agenda of the Nazis, who use him to further Nazi aims in Britain. After World War II, Darlington is labeled a Nazi sympathizer and a traitor, which ruins his reputation and leaves him a broken disillusioned

old man at his death. Stevens always speaks highly of Darlington throughout the novel; he says it is a shame that people came to have such a terribly mistaken view of such a noble man.

The qualities of dignity and greatness pervade the hero's thoughts throughout the story. Early in the novel, Stevens discusses the qualities that make a butler "great", claiming that "dignity" is the essential ingredient of greatness. He illustrates the concept with a number of examples, finally concluding that dignity "has to do crucially with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits." [7] Stevens develops this exclusively professional mindset only too well. His pursuit of dignity in his professional life completely takes over his personal life as well. By suppressing his individuality in this manner, he never achieves true intimacy with another person. The fact that his view of dignity is so misguided is sad; we can tell that Stevens has wanted great things, but that he has gone about attaining them the wrong way.

Although Stevens never overtly discusses what he thinks "regret" may mean, it becomes clear when he breaks down and cries at the end of the novel, that he wishes he had acted differently with regard to Miss Kenton and Lord Darlington. "The tone of the novel is often wistful or nostalgic for the past; as the story goes on, the tone deepens into one of regret as Stevens reevaluates his past actions and decisions, and finds them unwise." [8] Miss Kenton also openly says at the end of the novel that she often regrets the choices she has made in her own life. The overwhelming sadness of the ending is only slightly lifted by Stevens's resolve to perfect the art of bantering which seems a kind of consolation considering the irreparable losses he has experienced in life.

Literal and figurative loss abounds for almost every character in *The Remains of the Day*. Stevens loses his father, Miss Kenton, and eventually his hope of convincing Miss Kenton to work again at Darlington Hall. Miss Kenton loses her aunt, her only relative; and loses Stevens when she leaves to marry a man she does not love. Lord Darlington loses two friends, Herr Bremann and Sir David Cardinal, and his godson, Reginald Cardinal, when they die. Furthermore, Darlington loses his reputation and some degree of his own sanity by the end of his life. Reginald Cardinal loses his father and his godfather, Lord Darlington, to Nazi Brainwashing. There are both literal and figurative deaths of dreams and ideals.

What was so evocative as he travels through the country, stopping along the way in quaint inns and small villages, Stevens looks back over his life and performs what we today would refer to as a life review. He is completely obsessed with the question of what makes one a "great" butler, a topic he returns to over and over throughout the book, and he spends a great deal of time thinking about the quality of dignity and examining his life and his service at Darlington Hall for the signs of greatness he hopes to have achieved. Though he begins each chapter with a short discussion of where he is on his trip, Stevens reliably digresses into reflection, telling us stories of both his moments of glory and the mistakes he wishes he could take back and do over, and this fills the book with a sense of nostalgia and longing.

As he travels to meet with Miss Kenton, Stevens looks back on his time working with her and fills us with the details of a relationship he insists to be purely platonic and professional ... but it always seems that there is something else lying just beneath the surface. We get the impression that throughout his career, Stevens has been so focused on being; not just pretending to be or acting as a butler at all times that he has never allowed himself to let down his guard, form meaningful relationships, or express his true thoughts and feelings.

Stevens's encounters along the way are interesting and provide him with nice segues into his stories about butlering and life at Darlington Hall, which upon reflection, may not seem to be quite as grand or honorable as he once thought, but their real purpose is to build toward the

moment when Stevens will meet with Miss Kenton to discuss her recent letter. Stevens makes much of this letter throughout the book and spends several pages explaining to us exactly which phrases gave him to think Miss Kenton might be interested in returning, but he is never quite convincing enough, and we begin to understand that he is engaged in some pretty powerful wishful thinking. When the two are reunited, we hold our breath waiting to see what will happen.

Literary Review

Stevens is the narrator of his own story, and his smart butler's style of speaking can be contagious! That a writer born in Nagasaki in 1954 should have written a novel that so brilliantly captures the voice of a middle-aged English butler in the summer of 1956 reflecting on times past is remarkable. Ishiguro has lived in England since 1960, which makes him almost as English as Stevens, because Stevens has tailored his life to produce a complete façade. What makes his narrative so poignant as well as funny, its pathos and satire evenly matched and the sincerity with which the façade has been cultivated. As he travels Westward, taking in the scenery, Stevens's mind is more on the past than on the landscape. Yet, because he is hardly the sort of person who would launch into any activity as personal- and hence, improper- as recounting his own history, his story begins as a meditation on the "greatness" of the British landscape, which in his view, consists in its quiet, self-confident lack of conspicuous greatness. This leads him on to consider the "greatness" of Great Britain and greatness in general – which leads, in turn, to the burning question, what constitutes a great butler? For Stevens, the answer is contained in the word "dignity", a concept that means something different to him than it does to most other people:

"Dignity" explains Stevens, "has to do ... with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits. Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation... The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role... to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstances tear it off him in the public gaze..."[9]

What we can see in the story is a man destroyed by the ideas upon which he has built his life. Stevens is much preoccupied by "greatness", which, for him, means something very like restraint. The greatness of the British landscapes, he believes, in its lack of the "unseemly demonstrativeness" of African and American scenery. It was his father, also a butler, who epitomized this idea of greatness; yet it was just this notion which stood between father and son, breeding deep resentments and an inarticulacy of the emotions that destroyed their love.

In Steven's view, greatness in a butler "has to do crucially with the butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits". This is linked to Englishness. Continentals and Celts don't make good butlers because of their tendency to "run about screaming" at the slightest provocation. Yet it's Stevens's longing for this kind of "greatness" that has wrecked his one chance of finding romantic love. Hiding within his role, he long ago drove Miss Kenton away into the arms of another man. "Why, why, why do you always have to pretend?"[10] she asks him in despair, revealing his greatness to be a mask, a cowardice, a lie.

Stevens's greatest defeat is the consequence of his most profound conviction- that his master is working for the good of humanity, and that his own glory lies in serving him. But Lord Darlington is, and is finally disgraced as, a Nazi collaborator and dupe. Stevens, a cut-price St

Peter, denies him at least twice, but feels forever tainted by his master's fall. Darlington, like Stevens, is destroyed by a personal code of ethics. His disapproval of the ungentlemanly harshness towards the Germans of the Treaty of Versailles is what propels him towards his collaborationist doom. Ideals, Ishiguro shows us, can corrupt as thoroughly as cynicism.

Ishiguro's novel reflects a portrait of the British aristocracy's flirtation with Nazism untinged by sentiment. In such a way, Stevens is an unreliable narrator, making excuses for his lordship- "Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all"[11] but the reader is allowed to see more clearly than the butler, and can't make any such excuse. At least Lord Darlington chose his own path. "I cannot even claim that," Stevens mourns. "You see, I trusted ... I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really, one has to ask oneself, what dignity is there in that?"[12] His whole life has been a foolish mistake, and his only defence against the horror of this knowledge is the same capacity for self- deception which proved his undoing. It's a cruel and beautiful conclusion to a story both beautiful and cruel.

In the early part of his story, the strait-laced Stevens plays perfectly the role of model butler as obliging narrator. Attentive to detail, solicitous of others, eager to serve, he primly sketches the history and current state of affairs at the great house and points out the agreeable features of the landscape as he moves slowly from Salisbury to Taunton, Tavistock and Little Compton in Cornwall. Much of this is dryly, deliciously funny, not so much because Stevens is witty or notably perceptive (he is neither) but because in his impassive formality he is so breathtakingly true to type, so very much the familiar product of the suppressive and anachronistic social system that has produced him and to which he is so intensely loyal.

With *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro turned away from the Japanese settings of his first two novels and revealed that his sensibility was not rooted in any one place, but capable of travel and metamorphosis. "By the time I started to write *The Remains of the Day*," he told the *Paris Review*, "I realized that the essence doesn't lie in the setting." Where, then, might that essence lie? "Without psychoanalyzing myself, I can't say ... you should never believe an author if he tells you why he has certain recurring themes." [13]

As going through the details of the story, we easily realize that the character of Mr. Stevens has flaws as all good characters do. The hero here changes his mind about certain topics several times throughout the book. One of Ishiguro's brilliant storytelling talent is that he gives us a normal man, not too much likeable or exciting, but a man we struggle to understand, first because we think there is nothing important to comprehend about him, but then later because we realize he has a hidden character with a complex emotional and intellectual past.

Stevens is a butler, serving an English Lord before and during World War II and an American gentleman during the days afterward. The fact that he is a butler shows Ishiguro's interest in exposing the heart of a man working in a profession which is dying out and which is not often described in detail or depth in literature.

Stevens colors the character of Miss Kenton through various events that occurred during the years they spent working together. His feelings for this faithful housekeeper are revealed gradually through the book, but only if we can reach into his mind and read the thoughts he won't speak aloud. When Miss Kenton, the heroine of the story, pops in and out of the book, but only if we can reach into his mind and read the thoughts he won't speak aloud.

When Miss Kenton first came to Darlington Hall, Stevens tells us that he and she clashed somewhat over various household issues and jurisdiction. As the two leaders of the numerous staff at the hall, both Mr. Stevens and Miss Kenton must learn to work together in order for the household to run smoothly. As the years went by, they grew in their respect for one another. We

read of the evening chats they would have over hot cocoa after the day's work was over. Stevens describes these talks as being of a professional nature, but we can safely gather that they also bear the weight of friendship and perhaps the possibility of something more.

As the present narrative rolls on, we know that Miss Kenton is now a Mrs. Benn who resides a few days' journey away from the Hall, and that Mr. Stevens is going to see her in the hopes of hiring her back on the staff of Darlington Hall after receiving a letter from her which told of the separation between her and her husband. At least, that is the motivation of which Stevens tells us. But we soon realize that there are perhaps other reasons he wishes to see her.

Dignity is a key theme in *The Remains of the Day*. Stevens often talks about it as though it is the ultimate virtue of a butler. The holding of this trait means the attainment of greatness in his world. He seeks this dignity with such fervor that he comes across as a rather hardened and emotionless man. Stevens has a serious nature, and he recalls many incidents in which we see him acting truly dignified, even when caught in extremely emotional situations. When his father dies in the midst of an important political dinner, Stevens goes about his work with an exterior that is so calm and emotionless, it's almost shocking.

This dignified demeanor appears to be an ugly look at a man without a heart, without any feelings. But we learn as we read that this calm composure is not indeed the absence of emotion, but rather the masking of it. Behind the mask is a man with complicated emotions, suppressed feelings, and a self-imposed duty to put work before all else. This man has grown old and he rambles as he considers whether he has lived up to his own standards. But the dignity is always there.

The last chapter of the book is by far the most emotional and most revealing. As Stevens reaches the end of the journey, he finds himself in the company of Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Benn, enjoying a private conversation with her on a rainy afternoon. They find each other much the same as always, only older. Stevens learns that in the days since Miss Kenton's letter detailing her separation, she has returned to her husband's house. They have a married daughter who is expecting a child. Stevens and Miss Kenton talk mostly of the happy memories they share, from the glory days of twenty years ago. Much has changed since then, but still they remember the good days.

As their time together is ending, Stevens asks what has been on his heart the entire journey – not about Miss Kenton returning to the staff of Darlington Hall, but about her unhappiness which seemed to be apparent in her letter. Miss Kenton replies that although she has regrets – regrets about what could have been with Mr. Stevens – She is not entirely unhappy. She has moments when life seems dismal, but the days go on and one can't turn back the clock. They agree that yes, they can turn back the clock, and they must continue on as they have always done. Mr. Stevens encourages Miss Kenton to enjoy herself and her husband, to make the most of the life she is given. And then she leaves on the bus in the rain, and Stevens is left with his own regrets, and a heart that is broken now that he truly realizes the possibilities that he gave up. But through it all, he covers himself with the dignity that he has always prized.

At the end of the story, Stevens is at the beginning of the dusk of his life, and he contemplates his past, weighing his actions on the scales of dignity and purpose. Were his many years spent at Darlington Hall all for nothing? He sacrificed every hour of every day working in the house of another man. He gave up his only chance at happiness with Miss Kenton. He spent the prime of his life serving a man who in the end was labeled a failure. What was it all for?

Stevens talks of how he thinks that butler's duty is to serve a good gentleman faithfully, without questioning the actions of this gentleman. But later, as the world changes, he doubts

whether this was the best course after all. He questions whether there is any dignity in not making his own mistakes, in leaving the living up to Lord Darlington while merely working behind the scenes of importance.

As the remains of The day sink beneath the horizon, Stevens sits on a bench waiting for the light to fade. "I gave my best to Lord Darlington. I gave him the very best I had to give, and now – well – I find I do not have a great deal more left to give." [14]

There is an elderly man sitting beside him on the bench. The man says, "You've got to enjoy yourself. The evening's the best part of the day. You've done your day's work. Now you can put your feet up and enjoy it" [15] We leave Stevens in the dying light of an age, as he determines to practice his bantering technique and gets back to work at Darlington Hall.

What is so prominent is his subdued musings on the past, Stevens offers formulations of immemorial English attitudes that are likely to strike many contemporary readers. Obsessed with notions of greatness, he proclaims that the English landscape is the most deeply satisfying in the world because of "the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle". As he puts it, "The sorts of sights offered in such places as Africa and America, though undoubtedly very exciting, would, I am sure, strike the objective viewer as inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness." [16]

Similarly, Stevens provides a long, solemn, yet unwittingly brilliant disquisition on the question of what makes a great butler, a topic that has provoked "much debate in our profession over the years" and continues to obsess him throughout his narrative. The key, he confidently insists, is dignity, which has to do with a butler's ability to "inhabit" his role "to the utmost" [17]

"Lesser butlers" Stevens muses, "will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation. For such persons, being a butler is like playing some phantomime role; a small push, a slight stumble, and the façade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath. The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing. They wear their professionalism as a descent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstances tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone. It's a matter of dignity." [18] "Mr. Ishiguro's command of Stevens' corseted idiom is masterly, and nowhere more tellingly so than in the way he controls the progressive revelation of unintended ironic meaning. Underneath what Stevens says, something else is being said, and the something else eventually turns out to be a moving series of chilly revelations of the butler's buried life – and, by implication, a powerful critique of the social machine in which he is a cog. As we move westward with Stevens in Farraday's vintage Ford, we learn more and more about the price he has paid in striving for his lofty ideal of professional greatness.

The pattern of progressively more ironic revelations begins to take shape on the first morning of the butler's holiday. At Salisbury, we start hearing about the complex fate of the nobleman to whom Stevens had so singularly devoted his long life of service. Lord Darlington was a sincere, well-meaning man, eager to further what he believed to be the common good of humanity. In the years just after World War I, he tried in unofficial meetings to persuade English and European statesmen to amend the Treaty of Versailles because he felt it was too harsh on the Germans.

Much of what Stevens tells us in the middle sections of the novel is about the man he once thought was the epitome of moral worth. Although he is too honest not to provide all the incriminating facts about Darlington, Stevens is still so caught up in his own dream of serving a

gentleman of international renown that he keeps trying to paint away the blemishes in his Lordship's portrait. This pattern of simultaneous admission and denial, revelation and concealment, emerges as the defining feature of the butler's personality.

As he pompously recollects some of his triumphs in service, he also describes incidents that allow us to glimpse layers of guilt and a capacity for self-questioning. On two occasions he tells anecdotes about recent encounters during which he went so far as to deny that he had worked for Lord Darlington. He also confesses of having made some serious errors in his daily rounds, slips caused by age but also, a reader has to feel, by some subterranean feelings of doubt about the course of his life.

Most troubling are his accounts of the death of his father, the dismissal of the Jewish housemaids and his relationship with the high-spirited Miss Kenton, who tried to get him to respond to her affection. In all these instances, Stevens had suppressed his feelings; he has retreated from the unruly forces of death, politics and love by claiming to be following a principle of order higher than that of narrow individualism. In the last section of the novel, Stevens does have two very brief and extraordinarily moving moments of self-recognition: one when Miss Kenton confesses that she wishes she had married him, and he speaks for the first time of sorrow and heartbreak; and the other when, in a conversation with a stranger on the pier at Weymouth, he is again stirred to talk about his attachment to Lord Darlington:

"Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes... He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted that I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really, one has to ask oneself, what dignity is there in that?"[19]

Yest, even though the shivery pathos of Stevens' recognition of his misguided idealism and barren life, the wry comedy remains. With so long a history of self-deception, the butler can only respond to this impasse by deftly creating another innocent fiction that will allow him to suppress feelings and knowledge in pursuit of a newly revised ideal of service. At the very close of narration, thinking of his imminent return to Mr. Farraday and Darlington Hall, Stevens reflects on the jovial American's habit of exchanging playful and teasing remarks, and he decides to sharpen his little-used skills at bantering so that he might better relate to his new, more egalitarian master.

Kazu Ishiguro's tonal control of Stevens' repressive yet continually reverberating first-person voice is dazzling. So is his ability to present the butler from every point on the compass: with affectionate humor, tart irony, criticism, compassion and understanding. It is remarkable, too, that as we read along in this strikingly original novel, we continue to think not only about the old butler, but about his country, its politics and its culture.

Although Mr. Ishiguro was born in Japan in 1954, he has lived in England since 1960. In his first novel, "A Pale View of Hills", he portrayed stricken life in Nagasaki during the 1950's without ever mentioning the atom bomb. In his second book, "An artist of the Floating World", he gracefully yet tough-mindedly explored the conflicts between tradition and change in modern Japan by charting the rambling reminiscences of an eminent old painter troubled in the late 40's by the consequences of his earlier allegiance to imperial designs. Now, what remains of the butler's "day" occurs in July 1956, the month in which President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, a turning point in contemporary British history. Stevens doesn't

mention that either. But a reader is likely to keep thinking about many of the larger issues raised by the butler's plangent story, and for a long time.

"Lord Darlington, I should say, had actually witnessed my father's fall of a week or so earlier. His lordship had been entertaining two guests, a young lady and gentleman, in the summerhouse, and had watched my father's approach across the lawn bearing a much welcome tray of refreshments. The lawn climbs a slope several yards in front of the summerhouse, and in those days, as today, four flagstones embedded into the grass served as steps by which to negotiate this climb. It was in the vicinity of these steps that my father fell, scattering the load on his tray – teapot, cups, saucers, sandwiches, cakes – across the area of grass at the top of the steps. By the time I had received the alarm and gone out, his lordship and his guests had laid my father on his side, a cushion and a rug from the summerhouse serving as pillow and blanket. My father was unconscious and his face looked an addly grey color. Dr. Meredith had already been sent for, but his lordship was of the view that my father should be moved." [20]

When Kazu Ishiguro's parents brought their 6 year old son to England in 1960, they thought they would soon return to Japan and prepared him carefully to resume life in a different world. But they ended up staying, and Mr. Ishiguro grew up straddling two societies, the Japan and his parents and his adopted England.

In his first two novels, Mr. Ishiguro evoked a Japan struggling to rebuild and come to terms with a tarnished past. In "The Remains of the Day", he turns his eye on another myth-shrouded society, that of Britain in the last days of empire. Although each of his novels is set at an important historical moment, Mr. Ishiguro says he is more interested in examining the way people, and by extension societies, come to face truths about themselves. Ishiguro tended to focus on elderly characters out of his concern about how members of his generation would account for themselves in the years to come. He said "I tend to write out of a projected fear of what would happen. To combat complacency, I suppose I'm always trying to remind myself in my writing that while we may be very pleased with ourselves, we may look back with different perspective, and we see we may have acted out of cowardice and failure of vision." [21]

"What I'm interested in is not the actual fact that my characters have done things they later regret", Mr. Ishiguro said. "I'm interested in how they come to terms with it. On the one hand there is a need for honesty, on the other hand a need to deceive themselves – to preserve a sense of dignity, some sort of self-respect. What I want to suggest is that some sort of dignity and self-respect does come from that sort of honesty." [22]

Conclusion

What we can see in the story is a man destroyed by the ideas upon which he has built his life; a man much preoccupied by "delusion of grandeur. Though Stevens never says so outright, it appears that he harbors repressed romantic feelings for Miss Kenton, his colleague at Darlington Hall. Stevens fails to pursue the one woman with whom he could have had a fulfilling and loving relationship because his prim mask of formality cuts him off from intimacy and companionship.

His pursuit of dignity leads him to the continual denial of his feelings throughout the novel. This character disorder resulted in a man with complicated emotions, suppressed feelings and self-imposed duty to put work before everything else. Finally, it leaves him at the end of his life rambling around, with a broken heart and regrets at the chances he gave up through his life.

Through all these regrets, he still covers himself with the dignity that he has always prized. Obviously, this God-bug syndrome is so chronic even at the moment of revelation. I think it would be psychologically healthy for everyone to evaluate his actions and decisions in life from time to time, keep asking himself “Am I doing the right thing?”, and most importantly “Am I hurting the ones I love?”, “Am I hurting myself?” just to give yourself chances of rescuing the remains of your day.

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