

Id, Ego and Super Ego in Stevens' Personality

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Abstract: *The mixing of literary theory or criticism with many different literary texts is one of the most interesting changes in the field of research in the modern era. In modern times, literary theory's critical lens is used more and more to explain how a wide range of texts should be read. This trend has become increasingly widespread. The conduct of research in the modern era necessitates innovation; specifically, this refers to the procedure by which a specific theory infiltrates the territory of something that is referred to as a "text." The turbulent times of the post-war period made the 1960s an ideal time for the emergence of the theory of psychoanalysis, along with two of its father figures, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. This period was perfect for its emergence when taking the 1960s into account. This theory vividly depicted the complexities of the mind and the repercussions of thoughts, and most importantly, it captured what would have otherwise remained hidden: the complexities of human nature. The problems that are associated with the human mind are, without a doubt, the most important ones in psychoanalysis, despite the fact that numerous other issues have established themselves as important components of the theory of psychoanalysis. The novel The Remains of the Day, written by the renowned Japanese author Kazuo Ishiguro, who was born in Japan and won the Nobel Prize, exemplifies, without a doubt, the complexities that are associated with the main character of the book, Stevens, the butler. This book has traditionally been classified as either post-imperial or post-colonial, which has resulted in the inherent presence of the theory of psychoanalysis being relegated to a secondary role in critical discourse. There are a lot of events that take place in the book that seem to point in the direction of this theory. With the help of psychoanalytical theory, the purpose of this paper is to make an attempt to bring to light the inner thoughts that were going through the mind of Butler Stevens. This paper will adhere to the hypothesis that this novel can, in fact, be read in a manner that is comparable to that of a psychoanalytic novel*

Keywords: Id, Ego, Super ego, Psychoanalysis, Literary theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Judith Butler, in her famous book, *Gender Trouble* remarks,

“there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler 2006:34).

The line before it fits perfectly with the main character of the play, an old butler named Stevens who works at Darlington Hall, which is near Oxford. Stevens embarks on a journey through the English West Country that lasts for six days and takes him from Salisbury to Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall before finally bringing him to Weymouth. This one person's personality is much more impressive than that of any other character in the book. The eccentric old butler who carries this book, to be more precise, steals the show by having the pendulum of his life become stuck between the simple but potent words "dignity" and "duty". He does a great job of making sense of what Judith Butler was trying to say with that line. He played his part, he did what he needed to do, and none of these things were enough to deter him from the path of serving, or more accurately, from the path of fulfilling his responsibility as a butler. He made his own world of duty with skill, one in which the idea of helping others was ingrained in his mind from the start. This again is something that says a lot about the English society of the time.

When Stevens's journey itself starts to look like it's carrying more than a few hidden meanings, that's when the narrative really starts to get going. This journey also represents his attempt to come to terms with the fact that his long years of professional service, from which he has drawn enormous vicarious satisfaction, have been devoted to a man, Lord Darlington, whose political naivety and moral weakness were utterly destructive for his own country. This journey also

represents his attempt to come to terms with the fact that his long years of professional service have been devoted to a man who has drawn enormous vicarious satisfaction from him. Stevens' years of long and devoted service provided him with ample material for his various thoughts, which once again highlight the theory of psychoanalysis. In one sense, Stevens's entire life becomes a pure dedication to Lord Darlington, regardless of the nature and character of the latter, and in another sense, it becomes a denial of his own existence. Regardless of the nature and character of Lord Darlington, In other words, the dedication shown by one side demonstrated the other side's resistance to the influence of materialism. Numerous psychoanalytical aspects are brought to the forefront by the telling of the gripping and equally captivating story of the butler in the context of a narrative structure that alternates between the past and the present.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives will be envisaged for the research work:

1. To address the different workings of the mind in the personality of Stevens which in a way contributes to the incoherence or the distortion of the basic plot. This fact drives home the point that human memory is always correlated with various events which can be interpreted at various personal and historical levels. Having said so, this very assertion also replicates the point that this text is not a mere fiction but something which has traces of the personal life of the main character.
2. To portray that Stevens was the inherent victim of his own sense of "dignity." The refinement or the politeness which he always stressed on proved to be his nemesis at the end. To substantiate, it was seen that Stevens was never able to come out of his sense of "duty" to lead his "own" life.
3. To show the amalgamation of literary text and literary theory thereby contributing to the fact that there are numerous inherent psychoanalytical elements in the text.
4. To bring to the fore various ramifications of psychoanalysis in the text. Although the term "psychoanalysis" appears to be a hidden term in relation to the text, the paper will aim at proving the depiction of the traits in the character of the butler, Stevens to be falling under this umbrella term.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Even though the main focus of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* is on Stevens's story of his own memories, the book is full of psychoanalytical and other theoretical ideas. The problem of ignoring or overlooking major issues, such as the novel's setting of July 1956, the year when the Suez Canal was nationalised, the location of Darlington Hall, the six-day road trip of the butler Stevens to Compton, Cornwall, and the sense of "dignity" and "duty" as shown by Stevens towards someone who was not a gentleman in the real sense' of the term, is one of the significant problems associated with previous research on this novel.

After looking into the above issues in depth, we can say for sure that the novel has clear signs of psychoanalytical criticism. This is because we have left no stone unturned in our investigation. As a result, the focus of this thesis is on the fundamental question of addressing these components and bringing them to the forefront, which, if successful, would demonstrate that the novel is purely psychoanalytical in its nature. The problem of not addressing these issues has a negative impact, not only on the complexities of the novel but also, simultaneously, on the research that should be done on the novel. This research is an attempt, albeit a humble one, to bring to the forefront the many different psychoanalytical elements that are present in the novel. In doing so, it unearths the various historical events that are revealed to have direct connections with the life of Stevens, the butler.

It is a well-known fact that people, whether they are aware of it or not, have a lot of thoughts and ideas that are really just illusions. This is true whether the thoughts and fancies are entertained consciously or not. These illusions, in a sense, play an important part in relieving the inner complexities of the mind as well as the internal stress that comes along with them. A psychoanalytic school of thought, of which Sigmund Freud is the towering colossus, would be the most appropriate framework for analysing such a state of being in an individual. Freud's psychoanalytic theory can be considered a science to some extent because it focuses primarily on the unconscious (id) and the conscious. These are the two most important components of the theory (ego). It is impossible to understate the significance of Freud's contribution to the development of contemporary psychoanalytic theory. The fundamental concept underlying

psychoanalytic studies is that the conscious state of any given human being may either be present or absent at any given moment, and that the initial state of any mental being is that of unconsciousness.

The whole story of the butler Stevens can be seen as a clumsy attempt to save something valuable or at least defensible from a life he thinks has been wasted because his life of dedicated service to Lord Darlington was not worth the person he served. In other words, the story of the butler Stevens is a clumsy attempt to save something good, or at least something that can be defended. Taking this situation into account, it's possible that the real meat of the book is Steven's attempt to put his past together and make it fit with his present. The fact that it is a very plausible interpretation lends credence to this claim. The author of the story merely uses the journey he takes from Darlington Hall to the West Country to dramatize a more significant journey that the protagonist makes on the level of consciousness. Ishiguro reaffirms this point by situating all of the significant action in the past and revealing it solely through the recollections and conjectures of the reflecting narrator. Ishiguro continues the covert assault on dramatic content that is also visibly present in his other works in this way. This can be seen in all of his writings.

The random and illogical way that things happen in the book makes it easy to understand this attack in particular. This is a trick to get the reader's attention away from what's going on in the narrator's mind, which is the journey Stevens thinks he's on, the detours he takes to hide the fact that he's really on a different path, and the stops, starts, and hesitations he uses to show the reader he's lying, even though he himself is still fooled. To be more specific, the story of the mind is the primary focus of the book, which tells its tale. The lines that follow illustrate very clearly the state of mind that Stevens was in when he was depicting the various scenarios.

"In the summer of 1956, Stevens, an ageing butler, has embarked on a six-day motoring trip through the West Country. But this holiday is disturbed by the memories of his past service to the late Lord Darlington, and most of all by the painful recollections of his friendship with the housekeeper, Miss Kenton. For the first time in his life, Stevens is forced to wonder if all his actions were for the best after all ... A sad and humorous love story, and a witty meditation on the democratic responsibilities of the ordinary man" (Ishiguro, p.2).

It is generally accepted to take the concept of unconscious mentality into account in terms of its role in relation to the mind-body theories presented in William James' *The Principle of Psychology*. According to James, mind stuff theories are theories that regard normal mental states as compounds that can be numerically analysed. These theories are implicit in James's definition of mind-stuff theories.

"Unconsciousness may be perceived as entirely composed of, or at least as including some ideas that were not originally conscious but that could become conscious" (Sears, 1943).

When taking into account the amount of pressure that human beings put on themselves as a direct result of their illusions, there needs to be a barrier or "defence mechanism" that can protect an individual from the strain that they put on themselves. A defence mechanism, to put it more succinctly, is a kind of unconscious mechanism that assists individuals in overcoming their stress and anxiety. Although Freud was the one who first proposed this idea, his daughter, Anna Freud, was the one who developed it further. In her 1936 book *"The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense,"* she outlines a variety of internal defence mechanisms for the ego. This particular fact can be connected to the life of Stevens, whose journey into the past is not only a journey into Stevens' own past, but also a journey into the past of England. Investigating the "facts" of the past of England is not the only thing that needs to be done in this regard.

The Remains of the Day, like the other novels, shows a larger interest in the relationship between personal identity and national consciousness, as well as the relationship between individual and collective memory, and how these relationships are shown in the form of a historical narrative. This book also addresses a specific worry about how English history and literature have pictured or made up the past of Ishiguro's home country. This is a concern that is voiced throughout the novel. Ishiguro finds a way to express both his interest in universal human themes and his engagement with equally pressing, though more local, problems of English politics and English literary form in this novel, which suggests that this literary and historical tradition has been a major vehicle of a national consciousness. In this sense, the novel itself implies that this literary and historical tradition has been a major vehicle of national consciousness.

Freud's model of the human mind shows how the id, the ego, and the super-ego all work together. Each of these levels influences the other two. An individual's most fundamental aspirations are often referred to as their id. The id is the driving force behind every desire that a living being has. The super-ego is the opposite of the id in that it is the

repository of all the events that occur in the outside world, including feelings of guilt and theories that are socially constructed. Because it is nothing more than reality itself and serves as a balancing link between the id and the super-ego, the ego gives off the impression of being the most important of the three apparatuses. In a society in which one's social standing was determined solely by one's birth family, Stevens, a loyal butler, devoted his entire life to serving Lord Darlington. The rigidity of the stratification caused people at higher levels to put more distance between themselves and those at lower levels. It was ingrained in the mind of Stevens that they were made to serve the Englishman, and this very state of mind was enough for them to serve, even if it meant relegating their personal life to the backseat. The position of a butler, to be completely honest, was not a privileged position at that time. We can deduce that Stevens took pleasure in his role as a butler from the following sentences:

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race are capable of.... In a word, 'dignity' is beyond such persons. We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman" (Ishiguro, p.32-33).

The significant aspect of the novel is that the primary source of interest is not what happens, but what the narrator says and why he says. There is a sense of an inherent verbal release in the novel. Stevens speaks like a man who has waited a long time for an opportunity to express himself. Now that he has his chance, Stevens hardly indulges in an uncontrolled, decorous, restrained. Stevens very well appears to be a methodical when he speaks as when he performs his duties as a butler. His language is pure "butler-speak," as David Lodge has called it- a language that in itself "has no literary merit whatsoever [...] completely lacking in wit, sensuousness and originality." Stevens holds our attention, however, because his language repeatedly confesses its own shortcomings as a means of telling his story. The very way of telling his story is greatly structured within his workings of the mind.

In Stevens's mind, the night when he rejected Miss Kenton's advances is inextricably connected with his memory of one of Lord Darlington's most important conferences, which brought together several high-class people. It is typical of Stevens that he brushes off Miss Kenton by insisting that he must attend to his duties because "events of global significance are taking place in this house at this very moment" (Ishiguro, p-218). This vividly highlights the fact that Steven's commitment to professional duties repeatedly serves as an excuse for evading the deeper emotional issues of his life. This very well indicated that he has ingrained the idea of service towards his master in his mind.

The nature of this evasion also prepares us for the second significant change of perspective on Stevens's part- a change that concerns his attitude toward his employer. Stevens, as we have noted, is utterly devoted to Lord Darlington, and refuses to doubt him even when young Cardinal states quite plainly that he has become the "pawn" of the Nazis (p-222). To this statement Stevens blatantly remarks, "I'm sorry, sir, but I have to say that I have every trust in his lordship's good judgement" (p-225). By the closing scene on Weymouth pier, this trust has evaporated, taking with it both Stevens's idealized image of Lord Darlington and his own self-respect:

"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. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one. 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 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? (Ishiguro, 243).

From these lines, it seems like Stevens realises that by being loyal to Lord Darlington without question, he has doomed himself to a fate that is even worse than his master's, because he has become a pawn of a pawn by living a life of pretend. This is because Stevens has given Lord Darlington his unquestioning devotion to Lord Darlington. During this moment of partial self-recognition, Stevens is forced to accept the fact that the idea of dignity, which he has built his entire life around, is completely without substance. The novel's Butler-narration of Stevens establishes Stevens as a figure representative of the Everyman. Steven's constant reordering of the past in the very act of recalling it, as well as his Prufrockian rationalisations and self-deceptions, merely confirm his extraordinary ordinariness. What are, in the end, utterly normal ways of thinking and feeling are given expressive shape by the various contours and dimensions of the narrative, as well as its obsessions, repetitions, and ironic reversals. What the book reveals to us are the emotions

and thoughts of a character who is completely unremarkable and who suffers because he does not have profound insight into his own life.

The pretext for Stevens's inquiry into the meaning of dignity is his attempt to answer the question, "what is a great butler?" (Ishiguro, p-31). In order to find out the answer of this very question, Stevens turns to the fictitious Hayes Society, which asserts in the pages of the *Quarterly for the Gentleman's Gentleman* that a butler of "the very first rank" is distinguished by a "dignity in keeping with his position" (Ishiguro, p-33). Stevens contends that dignity may be acquired "over many years of self-training and the careful absorbing of experience" (Ishiguro, p- 33). We also find how Stevens explains that dignity "has to do crucially with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits" in the following lines:

Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation. For such person, being a butler is like playing some pantomime 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 inability 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 decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone" (Ishiguro, pp-42-43).

Ishiguro has claimed, somewhat misleadingly, that Stevens, as the "perfect butler," is a metaphor "for someone who is trying to actually erase the emotional part of him that may be dangerous and that could really hurt him in his professional area." A very minute observation of the novel indicates otherwise. Stevens's preoccupation with professional dignity, which is reflected in his efforts to maintain a controlled and reserved narratorial demeanour, serves to repress personal feeling. The novel thus reflects the emotional and psychological cost of a dignified style for a man who is consumed by his professional role.

IV. CONCLUSION

Overall, *The Remains of the Day* has the potential to be interpreted as the first-person retrospective account of an ageing narrator. This interpretation is certainly plausible. The lucid and tightly controlled narrative, which is remarkable for its deftness and a beguiling simplicity of surface that expresses subtly interwoven themes of pain and loss, is however what first grabs the reader's attention. The title of the book is a complete secret, and that much is clear. On one level, "the remains of the day" refers to what is left of Stevens's life: the final years, where the reflections are supposed to be the best of all, because it is then that one is able to put one's feet up and look back with satisfaction at a life that has been well spent. On another level, "the remains of the day" refers to what is left of the day. This again points to another of the title's implications: what is meant by "day" is the glorious past, when Lord Darlington's fame was at its height and Stevens himself was at the peak of his professional career. But Stevens' life has a sneaky irony that makes us think about interpretations that aren't quite as grand. When Stevens tells us that he has had glorious days or that his days have been well spent, our level of scepticism rises. We could look at the "remains" of Stevens' day and see them as the ruins or the corpse of his previous life, but we could also take them to mean what survives or endures from his previous life. The entirety of Stevens's narration could be seen as a bumbling attempt to salvage something valuable, or at the very least defensible, from a life that he believes has been wasted. The novel is notable due to the captivating narration of the mind, which is grippingly adorned with psychoanalytical ramifications. The novel is shown to be an all-encompassing whole by the vivid portrayal of the thoughts going through Stevens minds, which also justifies the research problem and the hypothesis. This demonstrates how good the novel is.

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