

Excavation of Hushed Voices: A Spatio-temporal Imaginary Discourse on Socio-ethics in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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Received: 26.11.2023 • Accepted: 20.01.2024 • Published: 01.02.2024 • Final Version: 02.02.2024

Abstract: The concept of the ‘Great Chain of Being’, which influences the narrative style of the Renaissance Period of English Literature, depicts the hierarchical state of the old English Society. Suggestively, a society which is driven by class/status and its attendant structures of inequality, discrimination and oppression. Hence, literary narratives of this period revolve round the travails of Kings and nobles, while subjecting the common men to the background. Subsequently, the esoteric state of the society, which was usually captured from the third person point of view, helps to question the place of truth in these literary narratives, as they could be liken to glossary reports from spectators, devoid of participant’ direct contribution(s). Thus, this research deconstructs the old English style of narrative using Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel, *The Remains of the Day* because through this Asian-British narrative, there comes a direct feel of participant’s contribution, as he deconstructs the style of the old traditional English narratives in his novel. Consequently, with the application of the first-person point of view from a lower class in his novel, readers could grasp a different alternate perception and understanding of this society and individuals within the purview of socio-ethics, politics and development. In furtherance, this study gives a historicized spatial alternate or temporal reality of an Old English society system - a system anchored on classism, professionalism and superficial orderliness devoid of ‘social interactions’ and freedom, especially for the workmen or common men. Jacque Derrida’s deconstruction theory helps to critically explore the discourse, as data were collected through fictional, historical and analytical method based on qualitative critical approach. Ultimately, the research shows that binary oppositions can only complement each other rather than privileging one over the other, as perceptions, meanings and views are in fluidity.

Key words: Old English, Hierarchy, Professionalism, Ishiguro, American Lord

1. Introduction

Viewing the Old English society within the renaissance period of English literature, it could be perceived as a society that conspicuously thrived on hierarchy and class structures, where individuals are naturally classified based on family background, occupation and beliefs. The society could be seen as anti-individualism as people were less self-assertive due to fear of the royal power, status and influence. Consequently, majority of the Old English literary narratives dwell on leadership, power and spirituality, with much attention on the nobles as main characters. Every narration is patterned in line with the concept ‘Great Chain of Being’ also known as the Elizabethan Order.

Worthy of note is that the Great Chain of Being, according to Anthony Fletcher, is “a powerful visual metaphor for a divinely inspired universal hierarchy ranking all forms of higher and lower life; humans are represented by the male alone” (1995, 65). In another view, to Shirley Ann Rainey, “The Great Chain of Being, [then,] represented an imposition of medieval European political relations upon the natural world (web)”. So, as it is seen as a concept of convenience used for oppression and stigmatization, Widota Andrzej is of the opinion that “the application of morality based on the Great Chain of Being in politics and politically-biased media leads to the emergence of the language of oppression, where the Other is stigmatized just for being the Other” (2021, 88). Therefore, the

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hierarchical structure of the Great Chain of Being is made up of the common men, being at the lowest cadre, were classified and regarded as mere numbers despite their contribution towards the success of the nobles during this era. Admittedly, as the society revolves around the upper class, the writers also focus their narrative on this particular class by exploring issues of power struggle, kingdom politics, and the different experiences of the nobles.

The 'slaves' or workmen on whose efforts dispositions and self-sacrifices that the affairs of these kingdoms and societies thrive are silenced and rendered voiceless in many narratives. So, Ishiguro, while deconstructing this tradition of the old British writers, deliberately, projects a peculiar age in his narrative by reversing the narrative status quo, giving voice to the hushed voices whose contributions were not acknowledged or appreciated due to the much regard for class and social status in this particular age. As Ann Dobie will say that "whenever a group [or individual] seeks to reverse tradition hierarchies or destabilize privileged binaries, deconstruction becomes a valuable tool (2012, 158)". Hence, this paper explores the view of Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction based on the tenets of individualism in the novel. It also unravels the idea of dignity and professionalism, subject to the different interpretations of the different ages, and the disposition of individual personalities as influenced by the socio-cultural construct of individual's society.

1.1. Deconstruction

Thus, Derrida's Deconstruction, a post-modernist theory, challenges Western metaphysics (fixed meaning) by destabilizing or deconstructing the hierarchical oppositions in showing their logocentric (meanings tied to words) reliance upon the center or presence (reality), which reflects the idealist desire to control the play of signifiers by making them subject to signified. So, in *Studying Literature* "deconstruction is a term that Derrida developed from Heidegger, and though represented and explain in various ways, typically combines the meanings of 'destruct' and 'construct': one attacks the structure of a literary or philosophical argument in order to construct new understandings and insights (2010, 221)". Opinions, views or meanings on subjects are not definite or fix; rather, they are subjected to the interpretations and understanding of an independent reader. It is further observed that:

deconstruction involves one inescapable implication for the process of INTERPRETATION- literary or otherwise. This is that the interpretation of a TEXT can never arrive at a final or complete meaning for a text.... Thus for Derrida the meaning of a text is always unfolding just ahead of the interpreter, unrolling in front of his or her like a never ending carpet whose final edge never reveals itself (2010, 172).

However, to Derrida, for readers to make personal interpretation or meaning on any presence, they have to appreciate the absence, which he mostly referred as the opposite. He explains that presence and opposite depend on each other for their meanings, as presence can be understood in terms of its opposite. Here, he attacks the Western system of 'binary oppositions', - dualisms, stressing that dualisms are never equivalent, they are always hierarchically ranked by giving examples of how presence is privileged over absence, good over evil, light over dark, man over woman and so on. But in reality, it is the existence of these oppositions that gives the presence meaning, therefore, absence should rather be privileged over presence.

Subsequently, he argues that Saussure, like Aristotle, Plato and Rousseau privileged speech because of its self-presence; that it is not just the speech alone that is privileged but presence is privileged over absence. So voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity, as writing, on the contrary lacks the idea of self-presence. However, in Deconstruction, he then posits that "writing in the sense of traces exists always already before perception and its presence alone is what we understand as speech. Trace is writing in general and it serves as the foundation of speech" (Krishnaswamy 2005, 32). Thus Derrida reverses the speech/writing hierarchy and privileges writing.

Admittedly, in Deconstruction, Derrida problematizes all habits of thought in all disciplines by demonstrating how impossible it is to draw a clear line between reality and representation, that "language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first.... [but] In languages there are only differences without positive (fixed) terms (Krishnaswamy 2005, 31 & 32)". Here, he opposes Saussure's view on language of not just an objective reality but mental concepts. To Derrida, language does not refer to mental concepts but self, as there are no final transcendental signified due to the unstable nature of signifiers. So, in an attempt

to capture the signified, one keeps moving from signifier to another; what is assumed as the signified are traces of signifiers. As a result, Saussure's combination of signifier and the signified which refers to a mental concept is not absolute or stable.

Derrida points that in everything (word, text, context, whatever) the opposite of it is always already there as a trace. Hence it is the actions of the absence that makes the presence to thrive or been appreciated, that man will be doing a great justice by giving equal preference to both. "Because we recognize a word by its difference from other words, it continues to have traces of those that it is not. A word that is present signals what is absent" (2005, 157). This ongoing play of meanings is what he called *differance*. According Dobie,

Differance asserts that knowledge comes from dissimilarity and absence, making it dynamic and contextual. When these ideals are applied to a text, the concept of *differance* makes it impossible to think about that work in isolation. The meaning of any given text will be derived from its interrelatedness with other texts in an ongoing process that gives it a series of possible meanings and readings. (2012, 157)

Thus, Ishiguro's deconstruction of a particular age in the English history as seen in literary texts of the age suffices as he reverses the narrative style, while deviating from the narrative pattern of his predecessors. His level of deconstructions can also be perceived from multiple perspectives. First, the existence of the workmen, the inferior, undesirable 'other' or hushed voices gives meaning and attention to the nobles. So, their co-existence defines each other since the absence of one would render the other invalid. Secondly, the arrival of Lord Farraday, the American, helps the protagonist, Stevens, to define and assess Lord Darlington and the English society through the American, the 'other' or opposition he could understand the personality of his late English Lord. Lastly, in the novel, meaning is in flux as things are understood differently with regards to the societal age. Hence, interpretations become personal and individually based.

1.2. Individualism

So, individualism, another major aspect in the modernist/postmodernist period of English literature, which is concerned about personal interpretations of meanings, becomes a formidable concept in this paper or discourse as meanings are evaluated within the purview of self-autonomy. According to Ahlin Marceta (web), individualism is:

A version of oneself characterized by the complete realization of one's innermost desires, dispositions, and deeply entrenched wishes, and by a liberal mindset, in the Ancient Roman sense of the term, respect for people whatever they think and whoever they are, a distrust of power, faith in human progress, and the acknowledgement of inescapable ethical and material conflict within society (6).

It is a concept that regards self as a complete entity devoid of any form of view or interpretation within the self. To Charles Taylor (1991), "before individualism, people were often locked into a given place, a role and station that was properly theirs and from which it was almost unthinkable to deviate (14)" So the upsurge of individualism has given people a right to "choose for themselves their own pattern of life, to decide in conscience what convictions to espouse, to determine the shape of their lives in a whole host of ways that their ancestors couldn't control". (John 1971, 45)

The epiphany that comes with individualism help people to start make personal choices about life, career and all that concern them, without private or public intimidation or harassment. Andrew J. Spencer posits that "Individualism led to the breakdown of the sense of order in the cosmos, which led to disenchantment. That disenchantment, in turn, contributes to the primacy of instrumental reasoning" (blog). Individual begins to think for themselves while focusing on their personal lives as their primary and a single constituency. According Conceição Soares (web),

Individualists see people dealing primarily with individual reality; every individual human being is an end in him/herself...individualism is called individualism not because it exhorts the individual to seek life apart from others, but because it asserts that the individual, and not the group, is the primary constituent of society (4).

No authority should dictate people's personal affairs as it is their right to fail or succeed. Every individual is responsible for their action as none will be sacrificed for the other. Aravind Babu Chilukuri asserts that for the individualists, "no individual should be sacrificed for the sake of another; this is the reason why they consider the individual as the unit of achievement" (web). Conceicao then concludes that "in all forms of individualism, the emphasis is on the importance of the self, and especially the notion of self-development with no restraint or help from without" (6).

It becomes valid through Individualism, for people to have and sustain personal views and opinions especially in the deals about themselves. It is then their right as they take permission from nobody before expressing or asserting their thoughts and feelings. This is Ishiguro's projection as he deconstructs the old tradition of English narratives through the individualistic assertive nature in the novel, *the Remains of the Day*.

2. Discourse

The novel centers on the protagonist, Stevens, a butler in Lord Darlington's Hall who is one of the distinguished aristocrats in England, in whose house, some of the world leaders and stakeholders usually converge to discuss and make critical decisions on global affairs and activities. Through the self-assertive personality of the protagonist this study depicts concept of deconstruction and individualism within a socio-cultural sphere of professionalism and ethics in the 1920s to late 30s England. Consequently, Stevens' reminiscence of his long-held experiences as a butler helps to properly explore the peculiarity of personal opinions as he divulges his views and stance on his professional ethics and traditions.

So, despite being in the least category of individuals in Lord Darlington's Hall, his sense of self-contentment and self-respect helps him to uphold his personal opinions on certain issues as he dispenses his duties without emotional interference or social distractions. His practical approach and understanding of every moment and surrounding helps the writer to interrogate and appreciate the individual essence of ingenuity, shred from all forms of superficialities. As a professional butler, he is acquainted with the ethics and supposed expectations of his profession rather than trivialities, and Ishiguro, through this medium, addresses individual in the society irrespective of class, profession and creed.

First, it is the issue of dignity. In the text, an old remarkable organization of butlers, Hayes Society, pays so much attention on certain criteria in admitting members as an organization which believes its strength of survival over the years is anchored on keeping membership low. So, the notable criterial are "an applicant be attached to a distinguished household...the most crucial criterion is that the applicant be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position" (1999, 32-33). These criteria according to the protagonist revolve around Mr. Marshall Charleville's house and Mr. Lane of Bridewood. Their accent and command of language could be seen as standard for butlers in the Hayes Society. However, these criterial are no longer obtainable in the protagonist's age; even his friend, Graham, believes that dignity is "something like a woman's beauty and it was pointless to attempt to analyze it" (1999, 34), stressing on the elegance and decorative appearance which are quite superficial. But Stevens counters his opinion as he says:

My main objection to Mr. Graham's analogy was the implication that this 'dignity' was something one possessed or did not by a fluke of nature; and if one did not self-evidently have it, to strive after it would be as futile as an ugly woman trying to make herself beautiful.... I believe strongly that 'dignity' is something one can meaningfully strive for throughout one's career. Those 'great' butlers like Mr. Marshall who have it, I am sure, acquired it over the many years of self-training and careful absorbing of experiences (1999, 34).

Hence, reflecting generally on individual's disposition towards dignity, the novelist addresses the socio-ethical nuances of the primordial society the text is based. Looking at the 1920 England, the text interrogates a society that focuses much importance on the superficial manifestations of hierarchical order and class devoid of any atom of its true essence or nature in the individuals thereby, making majority to live with a fake purported or alleged originality of the presence. Discordant of every trail of this spatio-temporal societal view on dignity, the writer believes it is based on self or character which is internal, rather than the outward or make-believe attributes. Also, that dignity can be acquired

irrespective of individual's class or background as much attention is given to self-discipline. Again he asserts that:

The obsessions with eloquence and general knowledge would appear to be ones that emerged with our generation, properly in the wake of Mr. Marshall, when lesser men trying to emulate his greatness mistook the superficial for the essence. It with the trimmings; goodness knows how much too preoccupied energy has gone into the practicing of accent and command of language, how many hours spent studying encyclopedias and volumes of 'Test Your Knowledge', when the time should have been spent mastering the basic fundamentals (1999, 35).

The idea of dignity becomes so superficial leaving the core to concentrate on the periphery as the older generation were more preoccupied with the unrealistic form of 'dignity' -a 'dignity' that is anchored on class rather than the true attitudinal disposition of individuals. This reflection of the older generation of butlers in this particular English society shows they were less ambitious as they are much concern with the level of their Lord's wealth than being bothered about character. In their canny nature, dignity could then be seen as how well a Lord can package himself than what he contributes to his society's development. According the narrator,

Where our elders might have been concerned with whether or not an employer was titled, or otherwise from one of the old families, we tended to concern ourselves much more with the *moral* status of an employer...what I mean is that we were ambitious...to serve gentlemen who were, so to speak, furthering the progress of humanity.... For instance, to serve a gentleman such as Mr. George Ketteridge, who however humble his beginnings, has made an undeniable contribution to further well-being of the empire, than any gentleman, however aristocratic his origin, who idled away his time in clubs or on golf courses (1999, 120).

So, dignity becomes a thing of personal character rather than inherited family's wealth or name like in the past. To the writer, in addressing different societies and individuals, proper evaluation should be done in assessing personal characters, irrespective of their social status or age, in order to achieve progress in individual societies. Consequently, this expectation takes a form of individual's contributions by making everyone to contribute adequately to society's development within their class and capacity. Hence, devoid of every form of classism, the younger generation learn to see themselves as relevant in the scheme of things, just like their Lords, as they believe in their individual peculiar or unique contributions. Again, the narrator asserts:

Butlers of my father's generation, I would say, tended to see the world in terms of ladder – the houses of royalty, dukes and the lords from the oldest families placed at the tops, those of 'new money' lower down and so on, until one reach a point below which the hierarchy was determined simply by wealth- or the lack of it.... For our generation, I believe it is accurate to say, view the world not as a ladder, but more as a wheel (1999, 121).

Evidently, in the novel, the societal hierarchical structure seems restrictive as it is predicated on class system, which comes in the form of ladder structure. Hence, the younger generation did not find this tradition enviable as they are willing to participate in every activity that will help the society. This, however, informed their choices of lords because not every Lord lives up to his title and responsibilities as some are living on inheritance or 'old money' without being interested or making useful contribution to the world's affairs. So, it becomes a personal responsibility for them, to strive to contribute and be informed about world's development. To Stevens again:

For we were, as I say, an idealistic generation for whom the question was not simply one of how well one practiced one's skills, but to *what end* one did so; each of us harboured the desire to make our own small contribution to the creation of a better world, and saw that, as professionals, the surest means of doing so would be to serve the great gentlemen of our times in whose hands civilization had been entrusted (1999, 122).

Again, Ishiguro, through Stevens' individualistic disposition and ambition, a mere butler, he deconstructs as well interrogates the sloppiness of some nobles for being redundant and nonchalant

about their contributions towards creating a better world, despite the privileges and opportunities available to them. The projection of the character, Butler Steven, is deliberate and precedential as his personae exude patriotism and leadership by thinking of making his own contribution towards creating a better world irrespective of his class. Thus, their generation view the world not from the perspective of ladder but as wheel, joint effort and been less redundant. Due to his level of involvement, he could discern that:

Rather, debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country. What occurs under the public gaze with so much pomp and ceremony is often the conclusion, or mere ratification, of what has taken place over week or month within the walls of such houses. To us, then, the world was a wheel, revolving with these great houses at the hub.... It was the aspiration of all those of us with professional ambition to work our way as close to this hub (1999, 122).

However, for these butlers, who strive to be involved in creating a better world, by changing the narrative, they are as well developing themselves, which makes them distinguished, as they grow to becoming outstanding in their profession. So, their interest in serving lords with moral status reflects on them as they could get influenced by their lord's disposition. Here, the novel highlights the personal benefits attached to altruism, while cautioning those who with little or no interest towards their societal development. It is of a note that not all butlers accept the new tradition as some are adamant or skeptical about it. He asserts that there are certain members of his generation who believe that:

The sort of idealism prevalent amongst our generation – namely the notion that we butlers should aspire to serve those great gentlemen who further the cause of humanity – is just high-flown talk with no grounding in reality. It is of course noticeable that the individuals who express such skepticism invariably are to be the most mediocre of our profession – those who know the lack the ability to progress (1999, 147).

Going forward, dignity becomes an anchor for proficiency, effectiveness eventually success in every aspect of man's endeavor. This again the author relates to being professional, having sense of duty and respect for career. That to be professional, it is not about the title but been disciplined enough not to lower the expected standard. Also, proper attention should be given to ethics, employers' satisfaction and effective dispensation of assignments than good command of English. However, he is not disregarding the language as it is important for professionals or employers; even the recruits should not mistake language fluency for standard or professional competence. According to him:

I do not know if you will agree – that in so far as our generation is concerned, there has been too much stress placed on the professional desirability of good accent and command of language; that is to say, these elements have been stressed sometimes at the cost of more important professional qualities. For all that, it has never been my position that good accent and command of language are not attractive attributes, and I have always considered it my duty to develop them as best I could (1999, 176-7).

Admittedly, professionalism is another aspect the author gives much attention. Now, with regards to professional values, he stresses that it still revolve around individual dignity. The ability for individuals to uphold their professional ethics, be it at the public or private, makes one a professional. It should not be for public display alone, just to gain respect or regard but should be embedded in the character. So, being professional eschews every serenade of pretense or incompetence, as they adhere strictly to their professional roles irrespective of the happenstances within their immediate environment. However, all these revolve around individual's dignity. Again he posits:

Dignity has to do crucially within 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. For such persons, being a butler is like playing some pantomime role; a small push, a slight stumble, and the faced will drop off and reveal the actor underneath (1999, 43).

Hence, to be a professional is to be real in dispensing the expected duties, while confidently inhabiting the professional roles. Not be swayed by frivolities or any form of emotional distraction. It is also to be in charge of one's emotion which goes with respect for self and the job. This further goes

to depict the level self-discipline individuals should inculcate in their different professions. Although the author centers his narrative on the butler profession, which could be categorized amongst the least of professions at that particular age, he explores the idea of sense of duty and job satisfaction. Again, he reveals that self-contentment and good morals help in being outstanding professional. This is what usually reflects on the outside, thereby, projecting individual as being distinguished and great. Again, he asserts:

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 decent gentlemen will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstances 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 is entirely alone. It is as I say, a matter of dignity (1999, 44).

So, coordinating of oneself plays a vital role in being a great professional. Therefore, interrogating the disposition of many individuals in this old English society, they undermine the role of good character, while chasing after affluence and class. It however reflects the true state of society generally as good morals and great virtues are constantly being sacrifice for class and ego.

However, Steven's ability to decipher and become expressive enough to explore the state of the old English society, by making certain comparison about his career experiences and history, is due to the present and influence of an opposition -the presence and disposition of Mr. Farraday, his new American Lord in novel, which appears quite opposite to that of his previous English Lord, Mr. Darlington. This reflects an important aspect of deconstruction that "presence can only be defined and understood in terms of its opposite (Dobie 2012, 221)". Again, Ishiguro depicts the drive behind individual's personality, by showing how the social construct of individual unique societies can influence and reflects on individual's characters and personalities.

Navigating through these personalities, the author reveals the ingenuity of different personalities, as informed and influenced by the cultural norms and ethics which breed the sociological disposition and expectations of every society. The binary placement of the both Lords, in Steven story, intimate readers about the ontological certainties of these two major societies - English and American, as represented by the different characters in the novel. While the former seems cold and repressed, the later appears flamboyant and sociable. To Stevens, Lord Darlington is consciously reserved as he carefully goes about his reputation and class, but Lord Farraday is preoccupied with being happy personally, irrespective of class or people's view. According to Stevens:

The study doors are those that face one as one comes down the great staircase. There is outside the study today a glass cabinet displaying various of Mr. Farraday's ornaments, but throughout Lord Darlington's days, there stood at that spot a bookshelf containing many volumes of the encyclopedia, including a complete set of the *Britannica* (1999, 63).

Evidently, despite the volumes of encyclopedia and Britannica in Lord Darlington's bookshelf, his level of social interaction appears quite repressed as he is being timidly reserved since he could only use the study as an opportunity to have quick interactions with Stevens. He is shy and lacks the gut, as expected of a man of his class in the society, who would directly have a conversation with his staff rather than sneaking around his study to interact with his employee. So, the study does not actually serve its purpose, as it is used as a façade, in which other activities are done. Stevens again reveals that:

it was a ploy of Lord Darlington's to stand at this shelf studying the spines of the encyclopedia as I came down staircase, and to increase the effect of an accidental meeting, he would actually pull out a volume and pretend to be engrossed as I completed my descent. Then, as I passed him, he would say: Oh, Stevens, there is something I meant to say to you.... He would often stand by the window and make a show of consulting the encyclopedia throughout our conversation (1999, 63).

The conservativeness of Lord Darlington's attitude, which vividly reflects the nature of the English, affects Stevens' relationship with Mr. Farraday at the beginning of the novel as he could not comprehend the level of informalities of his new American Lord in his dealings with the domestic staff. He finds it awkward and unethical of Mr. Farraday for being very direct in having conversations

with him, a mere employee. In this new phase of his career, Stevens struggles to get along while always self-evaluating himself after every conversation or encounter with Mr. Farraday. He finds it embarrassing, seeing how free an employer could be with an employee. He laments:

embarrassing as those moments were for me, I would not wish to imply that I in any way blame Mr. Farraday, who is in no sense an unkind person; he was, I am sure, merely enjoying the sort of bantering which in United State, no doubt, is a sign of good, friendly understanding between employer and employee, indulging in as a kind of affectionate sport.... I remain rather unsure as to how I should respond. In fact, during my first days under Mr. Farraday, I was once or twice astonished by some of the things he would say to me (1999, 15).

As the novel progresses, Stevens begins to learn the act of sociality and expressiveness from Lord Farraday - how to be informal with his employer by being interactive, which he still refers to as 'bantering'. As a beginner, Stevens is always confused about what and how to respond to his employer in order not to sound offensive. In some cases, Lord Farraday could make witty statement on things like his response about Mr Morgan's visit with his wife, and Stevens could not comprehend. To Stevens, the response is confusing and he puts, "for a moment or two, I had not an idea what my employer was saying. Then I realized he was making some sort of joke.... (1999, 15). In another scenario, Lord Farraday wittingly ask him about the morning noise from some gypsies, who were gathering irons, he asks "it wasn't you making that crowing noise this morning Stevens?" (1999, 17); again, Stevens is confused about his response and he recalls:

...I had that same morning been giving thought to the dilemma of whether or not I was expected to reciprocate my employer's bantering, and had been seriously worried at how he might be viewing my repeated failure to respond to such openings. I therefore set about thinking of some witty reply; some statement which would still be safely inoffensive in the event of my having misjudging the situation (1999, 17).

Stevens, like a well caged and tamed animal, finds it difficult to flow or comprehend the concept of 'freedom', as he is only used been spoken to, given order and directives, like his former boss. He keeps fumbling and struggling within himself in order not to be misinterpreted or misjudged. Mr. Farraday, on the other hand, keeps exhibiting his American nature towards Stevens, as he finally advised him to take a trip. That he has the right to see the world, been perpetually locked up in the house because he is a butler is not ideal. According him:

I'm serious, Stevens. I really think you should take a break. I'll foot the bill for the gas. You fellows, you're always locked up in these big houses helping out, how do you ever get to see around these beautiful country of yours? it's wrong that a man can't get to see around his own country, take my advice, get out of the house for a few days (1999, 4).

Evidently, Ishiguro deconstructs the society's standard or tradition, especially on the relationship between an employer with his/her employee, highlighting the advantages to breaking down unhealthy boundaries, as the trip helps Stevens to develop his voice to narrate the story. The author also stresses on the place of cultural influence on individual, because for an outstanding butler, as Stevens, to feel inadequate and incompetent before his American Lord, further suggests that competency and proficiency are subject to cultural views and interpretations. Thus, there is no fix meaning to anything, discourse or opinion, as meanings are dependent on the social values of an age. However, in viewing the different personalities of Lords Darlington and Farraday, it becomes obvious that the socio-cultural disposition of every society usually influences as well reflects on the personalities. Culture, then, serves as the base or intuitiveness of human innovations and ingenuity, as it the bedrock of individual's idea and way of life.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is seen that meanings, traditions and perceptions are not fix, as they vary in every society. So, humans' views or interpretations are transient, as meanings and priorities are subject to age and time. In the novel, the idea of 'dignity', 'professionalism' and 'personality' are relative, since they appreciated differently due to the cultural disposition of particular age and the sociological nuances of any society. However, Ishiguro, while exploring the English society, is also addressing the

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world generally on how self-discipline and individual dignity can propel the standard and development of a given society. Where every citizen contributes accordingly irrespective of their status or class, as everyone is important. Apparently in the text, using a butler, a character from the lower class as the protagonist is deliberate, as he deconstructs the old English narrative where protagonists are usually of noble characters or men of valor. So, despite belonging to the lowest of all the classes or status in Lord Darlington's Hall, he is conscious of his role and contribution towards the society's development. He is passionate, as he tries to make laudable imprint in his profession. Again, the level of confidence and contentment in dispensing his duties, questions the state of commitment of the upper class towards development in the society.

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