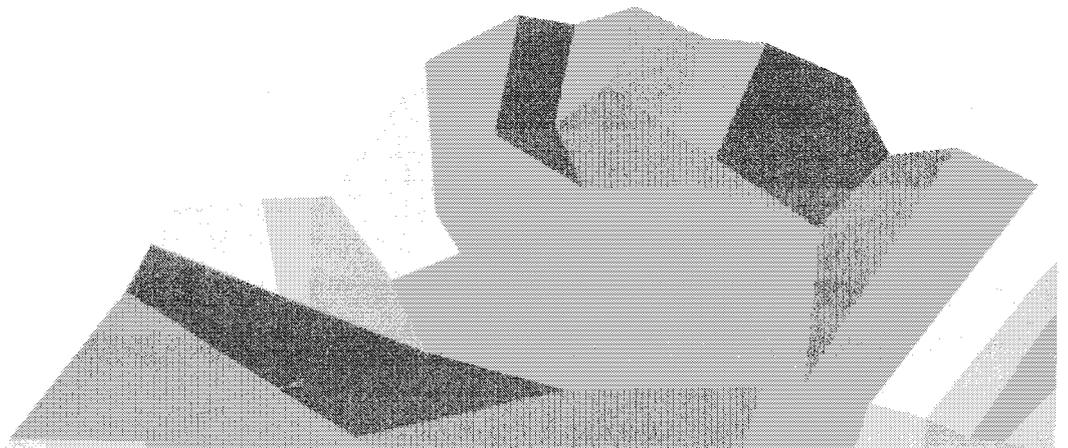


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Stevens's Journey Towards Dignity in Kazuo  
Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day

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## Abstract

This paper investigates what influence Stevens's profession and dignity has on his life. By analyzing the memories he recollects from his past, one sees that his behavior has caused him to behave immature and irresponsible towards the people around him. He is unable to do anything else than to serve his Lord. At such, the way he embodies his profession prevents him from coming of age as a man. He is unable to fulfill his obligations as a gentleman. Instead of maturing into manhood, he becomes naive to the things that happen around him and is unable to build any informal relationship to his father and Miss Kenton. As a result, he imprisons his own person.

The journey Stevens takes through the English countryside is seen as a quest to find his own identity as a man. The travel from Darlington Hall to Weymouth therefore represents a liminal period in his life where he can leave behind his identity as a butler, and find his own person that has been repressed beneath his role as a butler. By looking at how Stevens is able to distance himself from his role as a butler, and what impact the experiences he makes on the journey has on him, one analyzes to what extent Stevens is able to change the values and perspectives he upholds. Stevens's holiday through the English countryside causes him to drift in time and enables him to see the implications of his own values. By considering Stevens's journey in light of the historical events that takes place, the paper looks on what impact the end of the British Empire has for Stevens's profession and future. Stevens's trip becomes a life journey in the way that he is able to reflect over his previous years. By connecting Stevens's life at Darlington Hall to the holiday he undertakes, it is apparent that the experiences he makes on his journey enables him to come to terms with his past, and see the implications his previous choices has made for the outcome of his life.

Stevens's Journey Towards Dignity in Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day

The novel The Remains of the Day was written by Kazuo Ishiguro in 1989. The story takes place in 1956, and Stevens, the butler at Darlington Hall, is the main character. For Stevens, the most important thing has always been to become a great butler worthy of honor and dignity. Lord Darlington, the man he has served almost through his whole career, is now dead, but Stevens is offered to remain on the house serving a new employer, the newly rich American Mr. Farraday. He offers Stevens to borrow his car and take some days off. The book follows Stevens on his holiday for six days. As he drives through the English countryside, he starts recollecting memories from his working days under Lord Darlington. An important person that occupies his thoughts is Miss Kenton, a formerly employed housemaid who left Darlington Hall some years earlier to get married. The journey provides Stevens the opportunity to venture from the house he has worked in for over 30 years, to see the English countryside, and to meet Miss Kenton.

Stevens's embodiment of his profession prevents him from coming of age as a man. The journey from Darlington Hall to Weymouth therefore represents a liminal period in his life where he can leave behind his identity as a butler, and find the dignity he has searched for. Stevens's holiday through the English countryside causes him to drift in time and enables him to see the implications of his own values. This paper will examine how the trip becomes a life journey for Stevens by connecting Stevens's life at Darlington Hall to the holiday he undertakes.

Stevens's has, throughout his whole career, worked to achieve a dignity inspired by the Hayes Society. Stevens states that his father "comes close to being the personification itself" of what a great butler is, and argues further that great butlers "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 circumstances tear it off him in

the public gaze” (43-44). To manage to fulfill this role is what he feels gives his life meaning. To become the personification of a great butler is nearly impossible, and therefore, Stevens has always improvements to make in his work. The work is what he feels make him as a man noble and worthy of honor and respect. It is about a restraint he believes only the English race is capable of. There is no room to share a private life with others according to Stevens’s values: “There is [...] one situation only in which a butler who cares about his dignity may feel free to unburden himself of his role; that is to say, when he is entirely alone” (178). He feels he is making a contribution to make a better world. It is what gives his life value, but his devotion to his profession also creates problems for him.

Through Stevens’s recollections of different episodes from his past, the values he upholds in his life are revealed to the reader. To live after his definition of dignity embodies his whole life and nothing can come between it. The problem is that his profession and dignity becomes a place he can hide behind every time a difficult situation appears, making him passive as a person. By his definition, he is never allowed to show his own person in the presence of others. At the conference in 1923, he states that he came of age as a butler, but this development had not to do with becoming mature. He related the coming of age to avoiding human contact with Miss Kenton and not attending his dying father: “Indeed, my father’s face had gone a dull reddish colour, like no colour I had seen on a living being.” Although he understands the seriousness of the situation, and that his father is near to die, he chooses to attend the guests instead of his father: “ ‘This is most distressing. Nevertheless, I must now return downstairs’ ” (108). What Stevens relates to his coming of age makes him more a slave than a gentleman; as Trimm notes, “[n]arrative voice in its guise as mask is like Stevens’s English cloak of dignity, for it works as the face put on show, but not the thing itself - it is rather that which conceals through an act of seemingly open expression” (199) It is not Stevens’s own self one meets in the story, but a learned role he performs. Stevens tells about

how some butlers are forced to act like performing monkeys: “In one regrettable case [...] it had become an established sport in the house for guests to ring for the butler and put to him random questions [...] rather as one might to a Memory Man at the music Hall” (36). The irony is that Stevens fails to see himself in a performing role like this. He never allows himself to utter a statement unless he knows Lord Darlington is of the same opinion.

An episode that illustrates how Stevens is unable to give his own opinion on different matters is when the Jewish maids are to be dismissed. Stevens refuses to give his moral opinion on the matter to Miss Kenton. Because of his obligations to Lord Darlington and his principle about dignity, he is not allowed to build an informal working relationship with Miss Kenton. Not before a year has passed and Lord Darlington has admitted he made a mistake is Stevens ready to give his opinion to Miss Kenton, then agreeing to what Lord Darlington has admitted. Stevens states his reason for this as “[...] a butler who is forever attempting to formulate his own ‘strong opinions’ on his employer’s affairs is bound to lack one quality essential in all good professionals: namely loyalty” (210). The problem is that in order to be a good servant, he misses the possibility to have privacy; Fluet maintains that “[i]n [Miss Kenton’s] assessment, Stevens’s difficulty is not courage, but collegiality. He fails to share his distress about the state of his workplace with a co-worker, instead opting to preserve his own idealistic commitment to what he considers someone else’s superior knowledge about “the nature of Jewry” ” (270). Stevens refuses to see how this attitude makes him as a person immature and irresponsible. Agreeing with Lord Darlington’s orders becomes more important than opening one’s eyes to what apparently must be wrong. Neither is he capable of having a normal life beside work. The claim about having privacy when one is entirely alone is deceptive as it prevents him from a private social life. Since he always is obliged to be on duty he can never stop performing. Or as Miss Kenton points out to him: “Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?” (162). The question that becomes apparent

as the years pass by is, loyalty at what cost? He becomes so occupied making his “ [. . . ] own small contribution to the creation of a better world [...] to serve the great gentlemen of our times in whose hands civilization had been entrusted” (122), that he ignores how his own life passes by. Although Miss Kenton tries to confront him with this issue, he is always able to keep her at a distance. An example is when he ended their cocoa meetings because things “reached - an inappropriate footing” between them (178).

An utterance from the young Mr. Cardinal reveals the irrelevance of the way Stevens makes his choices: “I mean, all this we’ve been talking about. Treaties and boundaries and reparations and occupations. But Mother Nature just carries on her own sweet way. Funny to think of it like that, don’t you think?” (112). Considering this comment in relation to that Stevens father has just died, it is apparent how wrong Stevens’s priorities have been. He found it more important to serve the guests than to attend his father. On the other hand, it can also reveal the way Stevens avoids unpleasant situations. By distancing himself from human relations, he also avoids getting hurt. When his father, at the end of his life, tries to have an informal conversation with his son, Stevens refuses to respond appropriately to him: “ ‘I’m proud of you. A good son. I hope I’ve been a good father to you. I suppose I haven’t.’ ‘I am afraid we’re extremely busy now, but we can talk again in the morning.’ ” (101). Even when his father breaks the same dignity Stevens upholds by showing his son comfort, Stevens refuses to be bothered. Fluet makes a point about the way Stevens makes his choices:

“This habit of positioning oneself on the outside of love brings with it predictable charges of failing to select and elevate what’s important, failing to love enough, failing to be attentive or present as a son, mourner, or a lover-but it also exonerates one from the “evil” practice (in Zizek’s terms) of singling out certain objects as more deserving of attentive affection than others” (Fluet 266-67).

By always standing on the outside he is excused from his moral duties as a son or a friend. His role allows him to remain a passive observer that not is expected to do anything else than to serve. Fluet argues further: “Stevens seems drawn to this alternative “we” by feelings “on the outside” of love [...]” (267). When Stevens talks about his profession he speaks about “our generation.” By relating more to the companions of his profession than himself as a person, it is apparent how he distances himself from every personal human contact. It is all about being part of the “idealistic generation” with the goal of becoming a great butler.

On three occasions, Miss Kenton brings flowers into Stevens’s pantry. This can work to illustrate how the roles are changed. Stevens is not able to behave as a gentleman to Miss Kenton or anyone else. This is highlighted by the way Miss Kenton takes on a gentleman’s role by bringing flowers to Stevens: “ ‘Mr Stevens, I thought these would brighten your parlour a little’ ” (54). She executes the simple task Stevens is unable to fulfill. Stevens refuses to receive the flowers, and this could imply that Miss Kenton’s act emasculates him and makes him feel feminized. His failure in behaving like a gentleman makes it impossible for him to build a friendly relationship to Miss Kenton. He never allows it to become more than informal exchanges. The fact that he reads a sentimental love story can also work to highlight this issue. Stevens chooses to read the sort of book he admits women find pleasure in reading. When Miss Kenton takes the book out from his grasp, his description of it reveals how he feels she is literally undressing him. One can draw a parallel to the way he compares his profession to a decent dress that in no circumstance can be taken off:

“She reached forward and began gently to release the volume from my grasp. I judged it best to look away while she did so, but with her person positioned so closely, this could only be achieved by my twisting my head away at a somewhat unnatural angle. Miss Kenton continued very gently to prise the book away, practically one finger at a time. The process seemed to take a very long time [...]” (176).

He feels uncomfortable because the book will reveal something about the true self that no one is allowed to explore. It is perhaps about something he unconsciously misses in his life. By releasing the book he feels that Miss Kenton undresses his role, and that his personality is to be found beneath it. His description of the episode reveals the humiliation he feels. The sentimental love story he reads therefore means more to him than to “[...] maintain and develop one’s command of the English language” (176). It is about Stevens’s own self that in no circumstances can be revealed. To do it would be to break the restraint he holds on to.

Since Stevens always needs to preserve his proper role as a butler, this desire leads him into situations where he is unable to present himself in a dignified way. This is revealed to the reader by the use of dramatic irony, which is when “the audience knows more about a character’s situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary to the character’s expectations, and thus ascribing a sharply different sense to some of the character’s own statements” (Baldick 130). By the use of this irony, the reader is made aware of Stevens’s vulnerability and true character. The implications Stevens is unable to see are revealed to the reader through his actions. The use of dramatic irony gives the reader an awareness of Stevens's weakness. He tries to hide behind his noble ways of acting, but his descriptions of his actions reveal more than what he wishes the reader to know. An example is when Miss Kenton wishes to ask him about the Chinamen that have been put on the wrong places. Instead of admitting to Miss Kenton that his father has made a mistake he says he finds her behavior childish: “Resolved not to waste further time on account of this childish affair, I contemplated departure via the French windows” (60). Stevens is unable to see how he is the one represented in a childish way by declaring that he considers avoiding Miss Kenton by climbing out of the window. The way he tries to escape from Miss Kenton through the French windows also works to illustrate how he always tries to escape from difficult and unpleasant situations he meets. He does never have the courage to face it, but tries instead to avoid it by

running away from it, just like he runs from his father, and Miss Kenton. The persons in his life who wants to come closer to him.

Stevens's naivety is illustrated in the way he devotedly and blindly follows Lord Darlington in everything he does. Without question, Stevens becomes like his father whom he sees as the personification of dignity. It does not matter that his father's favorite story about the butler and the tiger must be a fairytale. When his role model, his father, is no better than himself, Darlington Hall becomes a prison for Stevens. The role he claims to have in being a gentleman becomes thinner and thinner as his cowardice is being revealed. Meera argues: "[Stevens] repudiates all personal relationships [...] and eschews all personal comforts and pleasures, choosing to live in a small, damp, dark, austere room like a monk, because he finds fulfillment, or so he claims, in devotedly serving Lord Darlington the way a novice would serve a god" (49-50). Stevens refuses to see how he becomes more and more a slave under Lord Darlington. He claims his own importance: "[t]he butler's pantry, as far as I am concerned, is a crucial office, the heart of the house's operations, not unlike a general's headquarters during a battle" (173), but refuses to see how he does not have any freedom. By not having a personality, he is depressing his human character. "Unable to show emotion and unwilling to think for himself, Stevens has subordinated his personal life to his sense of duty, thereby avoiding responsibility and direct human connection" (Del 167). Stevens is unable to see the responsibility expected of him as a mature man. He only fulfills the duties his profession gives him.

Stevens also lets go of his last chance of being informal to Miss Kenton. He had the chance to go into her room and comfort her while she was crying, an act that could have changed their relationship. She had just made fun of Stevens because he had no other to say than to greet her after she has accepted the proposal from another man. Stevens refuses again to respond to Miss Kenton's effort in making human contact to him. She did not reach in to

him, and now she is crying, most likely because she regrets having accepted the proposal. Stevens and Miss Kenton both set the directions for the rest of their lives this evening. Miss Kenton leaves Darlington Hall and marries another man. Stevens avoids Miss Kenton's attempt, and chooses instead to continue working for Lord Darlington, despite the fact that Mr. Cardinal has just uttered the true state of affairs concerning Lord Darlington and his relationship to Hitler. Afterwards, Stevens is again proud of himself, feeling that he has reached a higher standard in his profession: "At first, my mood was – I do not mind admitting it – somewhat downcast. But then, [...] a curious thing began to take place; that is to say, a deep feeling of triumph started to well up within me" (238). He has triumphed over his feelings again. But what has he achieved in life by making tonight's choice? He comes closer to becoming the personification of a great butler, but behind his role is only a life of emptiness.

Because of his embodiment of the profession, Stevens fails to see the problem with his behavior. He does not realize that he both loses his father and Miss Kenton by keeping them distant. By leaving his faith ultimately in the hands of Lord Darlington, he fails to take responsibility for his own life. The profession becomes a hiding place where the only thing expected of him is to remain passive.

1956 marks a turning point in Stevens's life. He has been able to uphold his definition of dignity as long as the British Empire has remained intact. This is about to change, and Stevens's values are therefore becoming outdated: "*The Remains of the Day* is anchored temporally in 1956, the year of the Suez crisis, a landmark in the dissolution of the British Empire and in Great Britain's decline as a major colonial power. It is surely not by chance that the era of *great* butlers coincides with the dominance of *Great* Britain" (Furst 550). Great changes are taking place in England, changes that will ruin Stevens's vision of the country's greatness. Even if "Darlington Hall and the fate of the family function synecdochically in the

novel as a representation of the loss of aristocratic power and influence” (Medalie 53), Stevens has not been aware of these changes. Although the aristocratic power is coming to an end, Stevens is still able to carry out the same duties he has performed for over 30 years to his new employer.

Mr. Farraday is a new chapter in Stevens’s life, and comes to represent the new ways after the fall of the Empire. Although Mr. Farraday wishes Stevens to act like a real English butler, he also expects to have a friendly relationship to Stevens. This is a new role Stevens never has been expected to perform before. At such, Mr. Farraday comes to symbolize the issue Stevens has worked the most to avoid, namely human contact, because it works against his highest priority in life, dignity. The dilemma is therefore that he is unable to fulfill Mr. Farraday’s wishes: “I cannot escape the feeling that Mr. Farraday is not satisfied with my responses to his various banterings” (18). It is the first task Stevens is unable to achieve. It cannot be learned or fulfilled without denying his dignity. McCombe makes a point about this by comparing the issue about bantering with the request from Lord Darlington in “revealing the facts of life” to the young Mr. Cardinal: “Because the latter request originates from a man Stevens serves so willingly, the absurdity of his attempt to “educate” his social superior never alarms him, whereas the simple attempt to banter suggests a dangerous social freedom, a classic trope of Americanness, a breach of the social restraint that he craves” (McCombe 86). The difficulty Stevens has in fulfilling this task reveals how much Stevens has repressed his own character. He becomes for example ashamed when Mr. Farraday suggests, in a friendly manner, that he perhaps is interested in Miss Kenton. He feels personally threatened because something about his privacy could be discovered in this remark.

One can in some ways state that Stevens lives in the past. When Mr. Farraday suggest he should take some days off to see the country, he responds that: “It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls” (4), illustrating his

incapability of seeing a broader perspective as long as he stays in the house. Stevens has not had the chance to develop a broader perspective on the rest of the world. The only input he has had has been from Lord Darlington and his visitors. The memories he recollects during his holiday are from thirty years back in time, and “[h]is use of an outdated 1930s guidebook for a trip in the 1950s develops the idea that this is a trip he should have made twenty years earlier,” (Baron 5) and works to illustrate the fact that Stevens’s values are outdated.

Darlington Hall is in fact a dead house. The hope for his trip, in getting Miss Kenton back to the house so things can become the way they were before, is also obsolete. “[...] I cannot see why the option of her returning to Darlington Hall and seeing out her working years there should not offer a very genuine consolation to a life that has come to be so dominated by a sense of waste” (51). His wish is quite outdated since Miss Kenton has been married for over twenty years: “His journey back to see Miss Kenton therefore takes the unconscious form of a desire to turn back the hands of time, to rewrite history: so Stevens spends his holiday driving towards Miss Kenton in the unspoken hope that she may come back into his life” (Davis 60). The problem is that there is no opportunity to bring history back. Stevens has spoiled his best years inside Darlington Hall, and there is no one who can bring him his years back.

The way Stevens claims to admire his previous working years at Darlington Hall, comes in conflict with his current role, when he denies to have worked for Lord Darlington. The value of his role as a butler is dependent on his past at Darlington Hall, and when he denies to have worked there he also denies his own significance. The reason that Mr. Farraday wants to employ him is because of his earlier work experience: ““And you’re a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You’re the real thing, aren’t you? That’s what I wanted, isn’t that what I have”” (131). Without it he is only “mock,” and not worthy anything to anyone. Davis argues further that Stevens’s “[...] own life loses all

traces of “greatness” as he reveals how, in seeking meaning only in self-subordination, he sacrifices his own growth as a human being” (59).

The division from the house offers a chance to divide from his role as a butler. At such, the journey represents a liminal period in Stevens’s life where he can go “beyond all previous boundaries” (24), the phrases and codes that have held him to his sense of dignity. Liminality is defined as “a blurry boundary zone between two established and clear spatial areas, and a liminal moment is a blurry boundary period between two segments of time” ([http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit\\_terms\\_L.html](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_L.html)). As far as Stevens is concerned, it marks a period in his life where he can step outside his ordinary life, and come to terms with himself and his own needs. It offers a chance to leave his past behind, and instead look forward. He has nearly spent his whole career inside Darlington Hall and has not moved beyond previous boundaries before. The drive through the English countryside will reveal to him the changes that have happened in England.

On Stevens’s first stop, a man recommends him to go on top of the foothill to see the best view in England. This view represents the England Stevens has been familiar with inside Darlington Hall. It is an illustration of the old life and values which he is about to leave behind. He is still not far away from Darlington Hall and he relates the great nature he sees to being a great butler: “It is with such men as it is with the English landscape seen at its best as I did this morning: when one encounters them, one simply *knows* one is in the presence of greatness” (45). As Stevens moves further away the great view disappears, and he gets lost several times. As he explores new places he has never visited before, he is also entering into places in his own life that has been repressed during his working years. He encounters a different England with different values than what he has been familiar with inside of Darlington Hall. Stevens has not been aware of these changes as long as he has stayed inside

Darlington Hall. The journey is therefore a discovery of the new England, but also of his own private, repressed person.

On Stevens's next stop, he feels human warmth from a stranger: "I must say, something about this small encounter had put me in very good spirits; the simple kindness I had been thanked for, and the simple kindness I had been offered in return, caused me somehow to feel exceedingly uplifted about the whole enterprise facing me over these coming days." (72-73). This is Stevens's first cue on his way to explore a new form of dignity. He recognizes something real in this encounter. Someone has showed care without being obliged to do it. The woman treats him as a normal person, and Stevens is able to receive the human warmth she offers. Now he has no one who requires him to stand in the shadow and observe. He is allowed to receive the human warmth, and even respond to it. It is his first step towards leaving his role as a butler and coming in contact with his hidden self. For the first time in many years, there are not people around him who expect him to act like a servant. He is finally being seen as a normal person and treated thereafter. It is a new kind of freedom for Stevens's concern. Even if he is not fully aware of it, he is not imprisoned of the expectations and boundaries he has lived under at Darlington Hall for over thirty years of time.

Later on, when the car runs out of water, he explores what kind of impact the fall of the Empire has for the countryside, noticing that the large country houses stand empty: "Truth is, the Colonel's trying to sell the place off. He ain't got much use for a house this size now" (125). This is an important experience for Stevens, because it illustrates how time has moved on, without Stevens being aware of it. Stevens is in fact lucky to have kept his job: " 'You really must be top-notch working in a place like that. Can't be many like you left, eh?' " (126), says the batman, illustrating the fact that Stevens's profession is outdated. The dignity Stevens has believed in is dependent on the British Empire that is about to fade away. At such, it ruins his profession. Trimm argues that this change remarks an identity problem because

Darlington Hall's identity, which is the identity Stevens has embodied, is dependent on a colonial network. (185). When the colonel's loses their colonies, the British Empire has no foundation. When it disappears, few can afford to own a large country house with a staff. The values of the British Empire are therefore the factor that has held Stevens's profession going. This exemplifies the identity problem Stevens must face on the journey. If his profession is outdated, then his definition of dignity is also outdated. He therefore needs to find his own identity, which is independent of a house or a generation. The journey will make Stevens see these implications and realize the need of finding a dignity that is independent of his profession. His values are outdated, and should he avoid becoming a souvenir from a bygone time he needs to find a new dignity.

When Stevens comes to the first pub, he tries to make a witticism. The men at the pub do not understand it, which works to demonstrate the difference between them and Stevens: "I had been rather pleased with my witticism when it had first come into my head, and I must confess I was slightly disappointed it had not been better received than it was" (138).

Experiences as these are necessary if Stevens shall be able to understand the dilemma he lives in concerning his past. Furst argues: "For his ideal springs from memories of the past [...]" Stevens still upholds the dated locutions of twenty to thirty years earlier, using words that have become obsolete and that he strings together in long, formal sentences now redolent of an unmistakable pretentiousness: "motoring," "touring," "consorted," "retiring." (541-42). The fact that he lives in the past is again apparent. It works to make the people he meets believe he is a gentleman. But the appearance of a gentleman is only an act of play, like it always has been. He is still able to hide behind his suit and his fine way of talking.

The journey is a quest to find a new dignity: " 'For the first time in many a year, I'm able to take my time and I must say, it's rather an enjoyable experience' "(71-2). Stevens is given the chance to reflect over his previous years. He has not been given the time to do this

before. To make up his mind on different things has not been necessary because he has left it in the hands of Lord Darlington. The fact that Stevens, on his journey, is willing to reflect over his values values, makes the quest possible in the way that it opens up the possibility for him to change: “The quest begins with an initiator who is in need of something or someone import [...] A long and substantial journey follows, on which the quester may journey alone or with companions” ([www2.iath.virginia.edu/ach-allc.99/proceedings/barrette.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/ach-allc.99/proceedings/barrette.html)).

Stevens’s description of his first minutes behind the wheel works to display that this travel is more than just an ordinary holiday: “I have heard people describe the moment, when setting sail in a ship, when one finally loses sight of the land. I imagine the experience of unease mixed with exhilaration often described in connection with this moment is very similar to what I felt in the Ford as the surroundings grew strange around me” (24). Stevens needs to find an identity that is independent of his past and his profession. The journey is a quest because it takes him away from his familiar environment and to new places he has never been before, where he is faced with trials that make him grow in mind and that change him as a person personally: “The quester usually faces some difficulty during the course of the journey either before the destination is reached or after the object is obtained” ([www2.iath.virginia.edu/ach-allc.99/proceedings/barrette.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/ach-allc.99/proceedings/barrette.html)). He is being confronted with the values he upholds. For each place Stevens stops by on the journey there are hints given about the complicated state Stevens is in, due to the dignity he upholds - the dilemma he is captured in.

When Stevens arrives at Moscombe, his definition of dignity is being confronted by Mr Harry Smith who sees democracy as the best solution: “We won the right to be free citizens. And it’s one of the privileges of being born English that no matter who you are, no matter if you’re rich or poor, [...] you’re born so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That’s what dignity’s really about [...]”

(196). Harry Smith's utterance opposes Stevens's values about dignity. Stevens has always been reliant of a Lord who knew what to do in every situation. To see himself as an independent person with the possibility to vote is impossible. According to Stevens the normal man is not able to take the right decisions: "There is, after all, a real limit to how much ordinary people can learn and know" (204). He states that one must leave it in the hand of the great men that work on the hub of the world. This opinion reflects the dignity Stevens is imprisoned in, and it works to maintain his person as no more than a servant. Winsworth argues that this view has to do with the complicated state Stevens is in: "What we witness here is the false self in action, working to protect the true self from discovery, paradoxically because the situation that Harry Smith describes mirrors the compliant state in which Stevens finds himself" (262). He is still not able to see what the dignity does to his personal life. It makes it impossible to have an own identity.

As stated before, Stevens's dignity is attached to his role as a butler and he cannot be a free man as long as he holds on to it. As his values are being confronted along the journey, he recollects memories from his past at Darlington Hall. Trimm states that "[...] Stevens's journal entries usually begin with an account of his travels and "discoveries"-outlooks, hidden lakes, cathedrals-incidents that begin the indirect chain of associations spurring the butler to trek deeper and deeper into his self-obscured past in an attempt to gain greater perspective (188). As Stevens moves away from the house he becomes less certain about his previous statements. An example is the letter from Miss Kenton. When he is at Darlington Hall, he states "there is no possibility I am merely imagining the presence of these hints on her part" (10), and is confident that Miss Kenton has a wish to return to Darlington Hall. As the days pass, he has problems finding this wish in her letter. MacPhee argues: "The past is massaged and adjusted to return a picture that will justify [...] the experience of the present [...] the past has to be relentlessly remade over and over again" (194).

The journey away from Darlington Hall makes him uncertain about his previously stated values. The fact that Stevens is ashamed to have worked for Lord Darlington reveals this. One can draw a parallel with the new and unknown areas he is to explore on the journey to his inward journey. As he travels, the reader is aware of new sides of Stevens's character that had been hidden. This is especially apparent when he meets Miss Kenton, the person whom in the first place was the reason for his travel. When he is in Moscombe, he states that the meeting with Miss Kenton will only be an informal one: "There is, of course, no reason at all to suppose our meeting will be anything but cordial. In fact, I would expect our interview – aside from a few informal exchanges [...] to be largely professional in character" (189), but after they have talked for a while Stevens shows a new side of himself where he is personal towards her. This is a remarkable change, as he has never shown her comfort before. Even when he heard her cry at Darlington Hall after having accepted the proposal, he did not have the nerve to go and comfort her: "[A]t that very moment, and only a few feet from me, was actually crying. The thought provoked a strange feeling to rise within me, causing me to stand there hovering in the corridor for some moments" (186). Throughout the journey, he believes he wears his dignity and restraint in the same way he has done at Darlington Hall, but that is not the case when he meets Miss Kenton: "After a little while, what little awkwardness as existed during the initial minutes of our meeting had dissipated completely, and our conversation took a more personal turn"(245). Stevens is in fact changing without noticing it.

When he meets Miss Kenton he is not preoccupied with his role as a butler, and is therefore able to distance himself from it. He allows himself to show concern for her by asking how her marriage has been: "I simply wondered if you were being ill-treated in some way. Forgive me, but as I say, it is something that has worried me for some time" (250). The meeting with Miss Kenton also opens his eyes for the implications in the way he has treated her. Miss Kenton admits her feelings for him: "And you get to thinking about [...] a *better* life

you might have had. For instance, I get to thinking about a life I might have had with you, Mr Stevens” (251). He realizes what he has missed in his life by distancing himself from her.

“[T]heir implications were such as to provoke a certain degree of sorrow within me. Indeed – why should I not admit it? – at that moment, my heart was breaking” (252). Although he does not say this to Miss Kenton, Stevens is, for the first time, able to reveal a personal thought.

Until now, Miss Kenton has been the reason for Stevens’s journey, but this changes when he chooses to tell about this meeting as something that happened in the past: “It is now fully two days since my meeting with Miss Kenton [...]” (244). This implies that Stevens recognize the meeting as something he wants to leave behind, together with the rest of the memories he has collected during the journey. Miss Kenton will not after all belong to his future, and therefore it is better to leave this meeting behind – the meeting was about ending a chapter that belonged to his past. The significance of the trip is not after all Miss Kenton, but what happens to Stevens two days after. In that way, Miss Kenton is only one of the pieces Stevens has needed on the journey in order to find himself and his true identity as a man – in that way, the real quest of the journey becomes apparent to Stevens after the meeting with Miss Kenton.

Stevens travels to Weymouth, the final destination of his journey, and also the place where his quest will be fulfilled. Two days have passed without the reader knowing what has happened. Stevens has been in Weymouth the last couple of days, and feels ready to retell the meeting with Miss Kenton. He sits at the pier, waiting for the lights to turn on. The pier lights are a metaphor for Stevens's awakening, because it is shortly after they have been turned on that Stevens comes to a realization of his own life. He is able to recognize himself for the one he truly is. The pieces from his journey fall into its right order: “The pier is like a metaphor of *débrayage*, Stevens is no longer quite in England and his English identity as a butler but is projected out of it, no longer solded with his simulacrum, but able to see himself as distinct

from it” (Doyle 75). It is here Stevens is able to let go of the dignity he so tightly has held on to. He is finally able to see the implications with his life.

Stevens is by the ocean, and there is no longer anything that can literally block his view or prevent him from seeing clearly. At the outset of the journey he was getting lost because of a mist or fog, and there were things in his life that prevented him from seeing himself for the one he truly was. Now all these hindrances have been taken away and he has a new vision of himself and his own life.

The quest is fulfilled through the talk he has with the man on the pier, after the lights have been switched on. Stevens is ready to let go of the dignity he for over 30 years has held on to. He feels comfortable with the man on the pier and comes to achieve a greater awareness with the implicated state he has lived his life. ““The fact is [...] 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”” (255). His statement about “removing one’s clothing in public” now becomes a reality. In the meeting with the man he literally takes his clothes off. He even cries in the presence of the other man. Instead of hiding behind his codes and phrases, he is now ready to recognize the implications with the way he has handled things through his career. He holds nothing back but tells the man openheartedly about his worries and concerns. For the first time, he admits his own vulnerability. He recognizes his own mistakes: “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?” (256).

Stevens lets go of the highest and most important statement he has had in his life: dignity. After recollecting various memories from his past he is now ready to let go of his past. Although he regrets the way he has handled things, the man on the pier helps him to gain new hope. Instead of dwelling with his past he is able to look forward and realize that the issue with bantering can give him a better relation to Mr. Farraday. By letting go of the strong

attachment he has had to Darlington Hall, he is able to see the implications of the way he has followed Lord Darlington blindly. He cannot excuse himself anymore, but admits to have made mistakes. The key to finding a new dignity is to understand what bantering is about: “After all, when one thinks about it, it is not such a foolish thing to indulge in – particularly if it is the case that in bantering lies the key to human warmth” (258). He realizes that the people on the pier who are strangers to each other are able to build human warmth by the use of witticism. This is what he has missed by holding on to his sense of dignity.

MacPhee argues that although Stevens has experienced new things on the journey, does it not mean that Stevens will change:

“But even though Stevens acknowledges Darlington’s disgrace, he continues to affirm at the novel’s end that “there is little choice other than to leave our fate ultimately in the hands of those great gentleman.” His distancing of his own experience of identification thus leads him to abnegate his responsibility even to envisage the consequences of that identification.” (198).

Even if Stevens utters this statement there are many issues that work to demonstrate the opposite. Stevens has recognized what the problem in his life is. This is the foundation he has based his life on, and now he has rejected it. Further, he has discovered the human warmth he has missed in life, and uttered that this is something he wants to strive after. The man on the pier is able to bring him new hope despite his worries about getting old. Stevens's willingness to do something about his problem speaks for that a change will take place in his life. In addition, he has also realized what he has lost by behaving the way he has done. He could have had a life with Miss Kenton, but he ruined it with the way he closed his eyes for the obvious. Before this journey he would dwell with his past and the things that happened several years ago. Now he has developed a step further and is able to leave his previous experiences behind and look forward. Before the journey he stated that “[t]his business of

bantering is not a duty I feel I can ever discharge with enthusiasm, [...] bantering is of another dimension altogether” (16). Stevens has now arrived a different vision of this issue. This speaks stronger for the idea that Stevens will continue this development, and not turn to his old habits. Mr. Farraday wishes to have a more informal relation to him where he can use witticism. Had it been Lord Darlington, this change would not have been accepted, but the fall of the Empire has changed people's vision.

A journey always has a return, and the important thing is what experiences the traveler returns with, and what he does with them. Experiences always have an effect on the traveler, and therefore it is impossible to erase the experiences made. They create new visions in the traveler's life. For Stevens's concern it is about taking a new road in life, and start to live differently. The reader cannot know for sure what Stevens's outcome when he returns will be, but the change that is apparent in his behavior at the end of his journey makes him more reliable as a narrator. From being a person that was unable to take responsibility, he has shown development. He has allowed himself to show vulnerability and human sides. The title of the book implies that Stevens needs to make changes in his life if he shall be able to take advantage of the remains of his days.

Stevens's embodiment of his profession has kept him from having a normal privacy in his life. The principle about dignity has been the foundation for all his values and has made it impossible for him to have a normal life beside his profession. It has also become a hiding place that has prevented him from behaving as a mature man. The journey offered by his new employer represents a liminal period in his life where he can venture from his past and realize the implications with the choices he has made. By traveling through the English countryside he realizes how the impact the fall of the Empire has had, and how his values have become outdated because of these changing times. The journey also becomes a quest of finding a new dignity that is independent of the values of the British Empire. The final destination of the

journey enables him to fully grasp his discoveries on the trip and see how his life needs a new direction.

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