



ANALYSIS OF THE POETICS IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S THE REMAINS OF THE DAY

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Abstract: This article analyzes the poetics of memory, self-deception, and social influence in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. The work shows not only through the inner psychological journey of the main character - Butler named Stevens, but also through poetic means how society's influence and class norms were formed in his life views. The article highlights Stevens's style of speech, the structure of time and space, symbols, landscapes, and self-awareness through key images, fragmentarity of memory, and reflections of social pressure in consciousness. The metaphor "remnants of the day" in the work expresses the experiences and regrets that occur at the last stage of life.

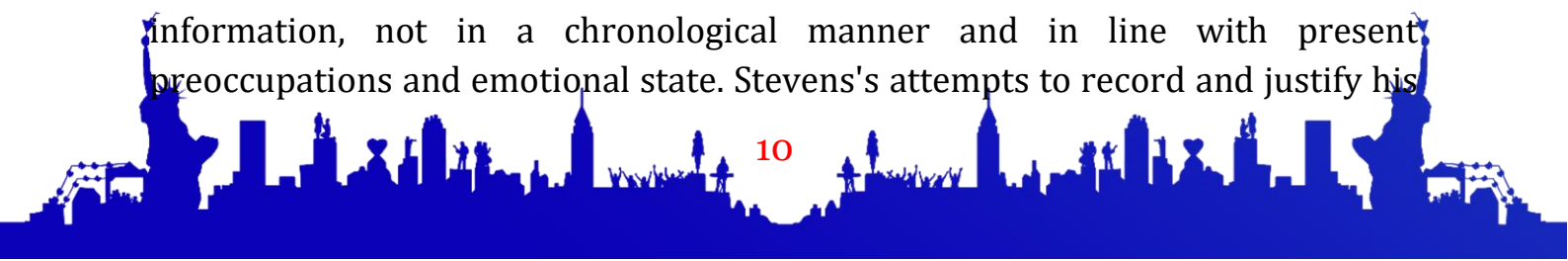
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Introduction

Structural Poetics: Juxtaposition and the Journey Motif

In *The Remains of the Day*, the structural choices are indistinguishable from its thematic depth and emotional resonance. The novel, framed as the diary of English butler Stevens on his motor trip in 1956, employs a non-chronological structure and makes the physical journey a rich metaphor, creating a subtle interweaving of past and present that somehow draws a parallel with the inner life of the central figure and the evolving social hierarchy of England. The most conspicuous structural feature of *The Remains of the Day* is the constant alternation between Stevens's immediate experience on his motoring holiday and his extended recollections of events from his long working life at Darlington Hall, largely between the two wars. This non-linear narrative is not a mere stylistic fashion, but a purposeful structural poetics that demonstrates the same memory process.

Memory, as Stevens's narrative depicts, is not a linear, chronological past, but a fragmented, associative past. Individuals and objects in the present remind him of specific, and often seemingly unrelated, details of the past. A conversation about dignity in a pub, for instance, may lead to a lengthy reflection on some particular episode involving Lord Darlington or Stevens's father. This is a mirror of human memory, in which present stimuli act as cues for accessing stored information, not in a chronological manner and in line with present preoccupations and emotional state. Stevens's attempts to record and justify his

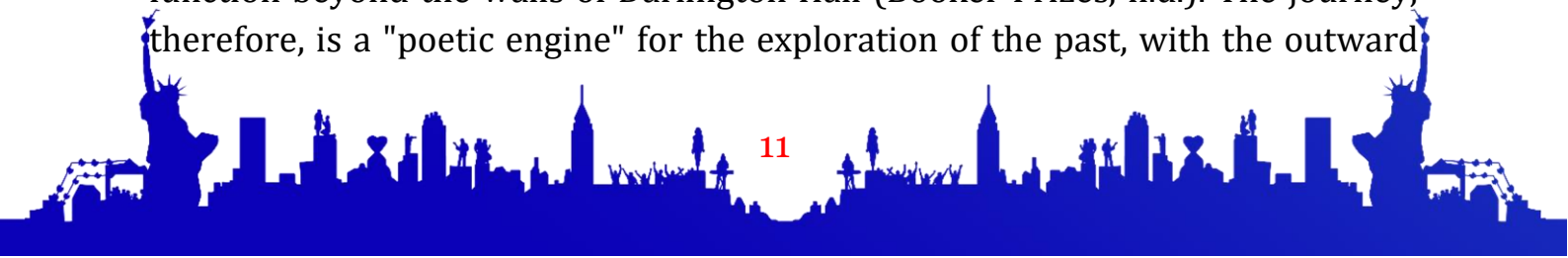




past actions in his narrative highlight the selective and potentially unreliable nature of memory, particularly when employed in constructing a desired self-portrait (Arcak, n.d.; Memon, 2024).

The tension between past ideals and events and present realities creates a profound poetic resonance. Stevens recalls the grandeur and perceived significance of Darlington Hall during its political the golden age, which contrasts sharply with its decreased state in 1956 when it was taken over by an American. Similarly, Stevens's unbending adherence to a rigorous code of professional propriety, forged in the class-divided society of the past, comes to appear anachronistic or even tragically misplaced in the more informal, post-war world. The implicit contrast throughout serves to underscore themes of loss – the loss of a way of life, the loss of youth, and most movingly, the loss of potential human connection, and above all with Miss Kenton. The past, as it is strained through Stevens's nostalgic and not uncommonly self-deceiving eye, is contrasted with a present that reveals the fallout and constraints of the decisions he has made in the past, establishing an effect of pathos and illustrating the inexorable forward march of change (IISTE.org, n.d.). The literal road trip Stevens makes through the English countryside stands meaningfully alongside the metaphorical inner trip through his memory. The shifting landscape outside the car window perhaps mirrors Stevens' inner life and the broader socio-political evolution of England. As he drives through idyllic village after idyllic village, through undulating countryside, there is a sense of both an old-fashioned England disappearing, and the demise of the aristocratic world that Stevens served as well as the emptying of his own inner emotional life by repression. The "greatness" Stevens recognizes in the English landscape - its subtlety and wholesome absence of overt drama - literally overlaps with his ideal of restrained dignity, and resonates with a yet-to-be-formed perhaps even unconscious, identification with national character that favors repression over expression (Reddit, 2020).

Moreover, encounters along the route—with villagers, with customers in pubs, or with fellow travellers—act as catalysts, stirring up specific memories and forcing Stevens, however indirectly, to confront aspects of his past that he has suppressed or misconstrued for decades. Such interactions, often marked by Stevens's social awkwardness and inability to engage in genuine "banter," act to highlight the limitedness of his formally constructed identity and professional function beyond the walls of Darlington Hall (Booker Prizes, n.d.). The journey, therefore, is a "poetic engine" for the exploration of the past, with the outward





journey through space prompting inward regressions through time. The road trip provides a framework within which it becomes possible to recover and examine those moments of crisis, such as the dismissal of the Jewish maids or the pivotal interviews with Miss Kenton, that bring to the surface the repressed emotional landscape of Stevens's life (DiVA portal, n.d.)

In brief, Ishiguro uses a non-chronological narrative structure, as well as the allegorical motoring trip in *The Remains of the Day*, to create a complex, multi-layered exploration of memory, identity and human experience in a historical time and place. The juxtaposition of past and present is continuously accomplished through the physical journey, providing a subtle presentation of a man who is coming to terms with the "remains" of his day, as well as the regrets and missed opportunities he hides behind his impeccable professional competence.

Imagery and Symbolism: The Poetic Landscape of Memory and Class
In Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, imagery and symbols are tightly woven into the fabric of the text, which creates a poetic landscape that reflects upon memory and class, and the dusk of a particular English age. With the central symbol of Darlington Hall, the lyrical depictions of the English countryside, and the repetitive symbolic objects and instances, Ishiguro travels through the inner life of his protagonist, Stevens, and the general socio-historical transformations of the mid-20th century.

Darlington Hall is the novel's commanding central symbol for the glory and the eventual decline of the English aristocracy and the class-oriented social hierarchy to which Stevens has entrusted his life in service. Its imposing structure and expansive grounds initially represent a sphere of fixity, tradition, and supposed "greatness" (Vincent). Stevens's identity is wrapped up in the house; it is the universe in which he has striven to achieve professional perfection and a sense of function (Vincent).

The interior of Darlington Hall are sites of memory and tangible reflections of Stevens's meticulous devotion, more often than not to the degree of obsession. The constant polishing of the silver, for instance, is not only a domestic task but a ritual that underscores Stevens's unwavering commitment to maintaining the facade of dignity and order even when the foundations of that order begin to collapse (Inverarity). These details, irrelevant as they may otherwise be, assume significance, representing the lofty standards Stevens sets for himself and his staff in allegiance to his conception of a "great" house and master. According to one scholarly interpretation, Stevens's preoccupation with





the physical care of the house, including the silver, can be interpreted as an attempt to exercise control and demonstrate worth within the narrow framework of his social role (Inverarity). Nevertheless, the novel also quietly depicts the possibility that Darlington Hall, along with its owner (Lord Darlington) and an entire aristocratic system, may partake in ethical compromise.

The house's eventual sale to an American, Mr. Farraday, stands as a metaphor referring to an evolution in world power and the irrelevance of the old English establishment (Drag, as cited in ResearchGate). The glory the house has lost, combined with the fact it now employs on a reduced scale, echoes the reduced state of the house compared to the world it represented (ResearchGate). The decline is not only physical but also symbolic of Lord Darlington's lost reputation and the compromised ideals Stevens served so obediently.

The descriptions of the English countryside that punctuate Stevens's journey through the West Country offer a contrasting, and largely idealized, vision that is inseparable from notions of Englishness. Stevens himself frequently compliments the subdued, subtle beauty of the countryside, linking it to a supposed inherent "greatness" that he also sees in the ideal butler (LitCharts). This idealization of the landscape helps to reinforce a nostalgic and perhaps insular view of England, one that undergirds the very social hierarchy that is undergoing radical change. The landscape is made into a character in itself, reflecting Stevens's inner life and his attempts to come to terms with his past and the present (LitCharts).

The use of light and weather is particularly poetic in evoking mood, nostalgia, and the theme of diminishing time and opportunity. The theme of the "remains of the day," often associated with the late afternoon light, is central to this. This imagery evokes a sense of there being beauty in the dying light, but also one that is heavy with the melancholy of time past and opportunities lost. The journey itself takes place in the "evening" of Stevens's life and career, and the changing light is comparable to his reflecting on a receding past (Kelly Browne Fernández). Weather, too, can represent emotional states or foreshadow events, assisting in the establishment of the novel's overall elegiac mood (Bartleby). The gentle, even elegiac, beauty of the English landscape, illuminated by the soft light of evening, provides a poignant backdrop for Stevens's introspective sojourn and his growing acknowledgment of the "remains" of his own life.



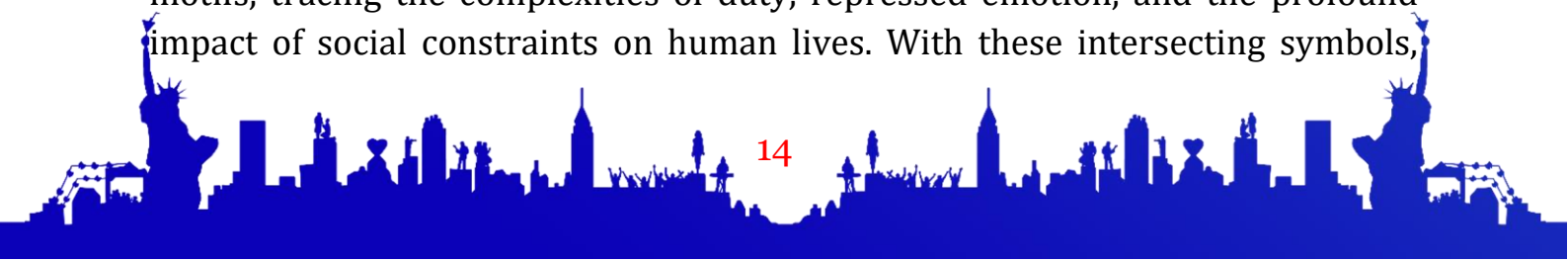


Besides the larger symbols of house and landscape, Ishiguro employs smaller, recurring images and moments as poetic motifs that reveal greater depths of character and theme. The silver polishing, as outlined above, is also more than a chore; it is a testament to Stevens's fastidious dedication to his work and his allegiance to a rigorous code of conduct that seems to override personal feeling (Inverarity). It is a physical manifestation of his commitment to maintaining the appearance of perfection. Stevens's few references to reading romance novels, seemingly a minor detail, may be interpreted as a discreet metaphor for his repressed longings and his vicarious access to emotional lives unavailable in his own strictly disciplined life.

This quiet, private activity implies a desire for connection and emotional life denied by his professional function. Although not fully explored in the provided search results, this data gives an understanding of Stevens's hidden characteristics, suggesting a contradiction between his outward demeanour and his internal, perhaps unaware, passion (EBSCO Research Starters refers to his internal struggle with feelings). Some of the dialogue exchanges, particularly with Miss Kenton, are charged with unspoken meaning and are motifs of miscommunication imposed by social conventions and Stevens's emotional restraint.

Their inability to freely declare their feelings for each other, often masked by the proprieties of professional relationship or concealed behind a veil of ostensibly practical discussion, operates to highlight the human cost of the strict social stratification and of Stevens's own unwavering commitment to his butler profession (ResearchGate, "Loss In Kazuo Ishiguro's Novel The Remains Of The Day"). These near-confessions or missed opportunities function to underscore the tragedy of their relationship and the profundity of their loss to a commitment of perceived obligation rather than personal joy. The absence of dialogue, by extension, then, comes to represent the emotional chasm wrought by their environment and their own internal defenses.

Ishiguro's masterful use of imagery and symbolism in *The Remains of the Day* transforms the novel's physical world into a rich tapestry of meaning. Darlington Hall symbolizes the social and historical environment, its condition mirroring the fate of the English aristocracy. The English countryside provides an idyllic backdrop that reinforces themes of national identity and the passage of time. Finally, recurring objects and the dynamics of dialogue are also moving motifs, tracing the complexities of duty, repressed emotion, and the profound impact of social constraints on human lives. With these intersecting symbols,





Ishiguro composes a richly evocative and insightful examination of memory, class, and the "remains" of a life lived in unyielding, but maybe ill-fated, duty.

Conclusion

Kazuo Ishiguro's book is far more than a simple narrative; it is a skillfully crafted poetic analysis of the way in which individual memory is largely determined and constricted by social influences. The essay has illustrated how Stevens' unique narrative voice, defined by its formal register, intrinsic unreliability, and intentional understatements and ellipses, behaves as a multilayered "social armor", revelations of being lived in the narrow confines of professional propriety and repressed feelings. In addition, structurally the poetics of the novel, particularly the non-chronological sequencing of past and present and the metaphor of a journey, examined the discontinuous nature of memory, while underscoring the inevitable passage of time and social change.

The review of the key symbols and imagery, from Darlington Hall's crumbling grandeur to the idealized English pastoral and repeating motifs such as polishing silver, demonstrates how imagery and symbolism convey the novel's themes of class, duty, loss, and the end of the age. Last, the pervasive elegiac tone, woven throughout the language and narrative form, snares the overwhelming feeling of sadness, nostalgia, and regret that marks Stevens's glance backward over a life shaped by implacable loyalty and lost personal opportunity. The Remains of the Day, in Ishiguro's masterful deployment of these poetic devices, is a compelling and moving testimony to the complex dynamic between individual consciousness and the crushing force of social influence, revealing the poignant "remains" of a life and a world undergoing transformation.

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