

Presentation of stevens in the remains of the day



Stevens believes that to be a great butler, one must maintain their professional facade at all times in order to remain dignified (or at least, the ability to maintain a professional facade regardless of one's circumstances is Stevens' definition of dignity). This results in him obsessing over his physical appearance and causes him to suppress his feelings. However, as the novel progresses, Stevens' suppression of his feelings has caused him emotional distress as he is unable to be with the woman he loves. Moreover, it is established early on in the novel that Stevens is an unreliable narrator and this causes us, as readers, to further understand Stevens' true desire in life. Stevens' obsessiveness with being a great butler is evident from the way he attempts to maintain his professional facade in order to remain dignified and is highlighted through Ishiguro's use of diction and metaphors. Stevens states that he is "in the possession of a number of splendid suits". The word "splendid" shows us that Stevens is trying to emphasize the fact that he owns suits that are of extremely high quality and very impressive. The fact that Stevens is trying to impress the reader regarding the quality of his suits shows us that he places too much value on his outward appearance and that through association with his well-dressed appearance, the reader would believe that was professional in nature. Therefore, this shows that Stevens attempts to be well-dressed at all times in order to maintain his professional facade. Moreover, the fact that he "do(es) not possess any suitable travelling clothes" shows that his whole life revolves around his occupation. In this case, travelling clothes are a symbol of relaxation, as one normally goes on holiday to relax. The fact that Stevens has no travelling clothes whatsoever proves that he does not go on holidays to relax and that he

spends his days tending to his master. The word “not” is an absolute term and is used to further reinforce the fact that Stevens constantly has on a professional facade and can never really separate from it as his whole life revolves around being a butler. In Stevens’ eyes, this essentially brings him one step closer to becoming a great butler as he believes that a great butler is one who is not only devoted but loyal to his master. In his bid to become a great butler, Stevens suppresses his own internal emotions even though it causes him emotional distress. He believes that even though a suit is “clearly too small” for him, it is “ideal in terms of tone”. On a superficial level, it is evident that Stevens is obsessed with his appearance. Even though he could have donned a more comfortable suit, he instead chooses to wear a tight one that causes him physical discomfort as he believes that being well-dressed is essential in portraying his professionalism. However, on a metaphorical level, the tight suit represents Stevens’ suppression of his internal feelings. Ishiguro’s use of visual imagery is particularly effective here as a tight suit brings across the image of restriction and constraint, in the sense that one’s body is suppressed in tight clothing. The idea of restriction and constraint is effective in showing us how Stevens suppresses his internal feeling, just like how one’s body feels restricted in tight clothing. Therefore, the physical discomfort one feels in tight clothing is representative of the emotional discomfort Stevens feels by repressing his feelings. It is also crucial to note that just as how Stevens is planning to wear this tight suit in order to have a more professional appearance, his suppression of his internal feelings is also intended to portray his professionalism. Hence, Stevens’ desire to be a great butler has caused him

to suppress his internal feelings and to be wary of his appearance in order to keep up his professional facade.

Stevens' suppression his internal emotions and the emotional distress it has caused him in the long term is highlighted through his own contradictions as well as through Ishiguro's use of diction. Considering Stevens' ambition of always addressing other people correctly and properly, it is somewhat self-contradictory of him to refer to "Miss Kenton" by her maiden name instead of her married name Mrs Benn. For example, in one of his recollections, he declares his disturbance when Miss Kenton addresses his father by his first name, William, instead of Mr Stevens. He believed that it was "inappropriate(ness) of someone your (her) age" to address his father in that manner. Ishiguro's use of diction is extremely effective here as the word "inappropriate" suggests that Stevens views Miss Kenton's behaviour as highly unprofessional. Therefore, this highlights Stevens' obsession of addressing people correctly, which can largely be attributed to him wanting to remain professional at all times. The fact that he drops his professional facade and addresses Miss Kenton by her maiden name already hints to the reader that Miss Kenton plays a special role in Stevens' life. Stevens refers to Miss Kenton by her maiden name in order to avoid the otherwise constant reminder of her marriage in his narration, which the name Mrs Benn would have caused. Therefore, this shows us that Stevens is unwilling to accept the fact that Miss Kenton is already married as that means he would be unable to truly profess his love to her and could potentially be lonely for the rest of his life. Thus, since Stevens was unable to declare his love to Miss Kenton due to his obsession with maintaining a professional image, he desires to

have a second chance to express his love towards her. Additionally, Stevens' love towards Miss Kenton is further highlighted through Ishiguro's use of diction. "Shortly after" Miss Kenton's departure, Stevens is said to "often glance through Volume III of Mrs Symons's work" in order to "gain some sense of the sort of place Miss Kenton had gone to live her married life". The word "shortly" shows that Stevens' feelings towards Miss Kenton are so strong that despite her only being gone for a brief period of time, he is already starting to miss her. This highlights the sheer magnitude of Stevens' love towards Miss Kenton due to his need to always have some element of her, be it in person or in memory, present in his life. Moreover, the fact that he "often" glances through these encyclopedias serves to highlight the frequency in which Stevens seeks to remember Miss Kenton and drives home the point that Stevens has this constant need to have Miss Kenton in his life, highlighting his feelings of affection towards her. Moreover, since Stevens tries to gain "some sense of the sort of place Miss Kenton had gone to live her married life", we can see that Stevens is projecting his own love towards Miss Kenton onto her marriage. He is trying to imagine what Miss Kenton's married life is like as he is imagining what being married to Miss Kenton would feel like and how they could have lived the rest of their life together. He is essentially trying to derive some sense of joy through his imagination as he wonders what being married to his love would feel like. Since Stevens lost the opportunity to profess his love towards Miss Kenton before she left, his imagination acts as a substitute for what could have been. This highlights Stevens' desire to be with Miss Kenton and therefore highlights his love towards her. Therefore, Stevens' suppression of his internal emotions has

caused him emotional distress as he is unable to be with the woman he loves.

Additionally, Ishiguro establishes Stevens as an unreliable narrator in order for the readers to evaluate Stevens view of events critically and more importantly, to understand Stevens' true desires in life. Through Stevens' use of prolepsis, it is evident that he wishes for the reader to perceive him favourably. When Stevens says " I hope you do not think me unduly vain", he anticipates that the reader would regard his obsession with his appearance as vanity and hence, he wishes to prevent the reader from associating this negative trait with himself. Therefore, this shows us that Stevens is defensive over his actions that may be perceived negatively by others and diminishes his reliability as a narrator. Moreover, Stevens often contradicts himself throughout the passage. Here, Stevens that one must be " dressed in a manner worthy of his position" as he may be " obliged to give out" that he was from Darlington Hall. Ishiguro's use of diction is particularly effective here as the word " worthy" shows that Stevens believes that he needs to be well dressed to justify the fact that he was working in such a distinguished household. The fact that Stevens feels that he needs to be dressed in a certain manner in order to justify his occupation shows that he believes that working for Lord Darlington is a privilege due to the latter's high social status. Moreover, the phrase " Lord Darlington himself" shows that Stevens has a high amount of respect for his master and regards him as an extremely important individual. This is due to the fact that Stevens did not expect a man of Lord Darlington's social status to pass down his expensive suits to his employee (a butler) and was therefore pleased that a man of

such importance had given him some of his possessions. The word “ himself” is used to highlight Stevens’ pride in the fact that his master, someone who he was meant to serve, would even consider passing down his possessions to him. Hence, since Stevens is proud of owning some of his master’s suits, albeit it being an old suit, it is evident that he respects Lord Darlington and cherishes whatever kind gestures his master shows towards him. By extent, Stevens would be proud of the fact that he works in such a distinguished household. However, despite Steven’s saying that he’s proud of working for such a distinguished household, he refuses to admit that he used to work for Lord Darlington. For example, Stevens denies working for Lord Darlington by stating, “ Oh no, I am employed by Mr John Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the house from the Darlington family.” The interjection “ oh no” shows us that Stevens was alarmed or concerned of being associated with Lord Darlington. This vehement denial is a stark contrast to Stevens’ previous loyalty and respect to Lord Darlington and therefore highlights Stevens’ contradictory behaviour. Stevens denies working for Lord Darlington as he is trying to prevent a conversation from occurring, which would most certainly result in the person judging Lord Darlington for his morally questionable anti-semitic actions. This is because if Stevens accepted that serving Lord Darlington was the opposite of “ serving humanity”, he would have to admit that all of his life was wasted on serving the wrong man. Moreover, by refusing to admit that Lord Darlington was an immoral man and avoiding conversations which would portray Lord Darlington as immoral, he could keep up the pretence that he was serving a gentleman, which would enable him to maintain the feeling of importance he had being a butler in a distinguished house. By establishing the unreliability

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of Stevens as a narrator, Ishiguro enables us to further understand Stevens' internal struggle. Stevens often chooses to omit or lie about information that would seemingly imply that he had lost his professionalism (or dignity, by his definition), and would prevent him from being viewed as a "great butler". Therefore, it is evident that Stevens is a man who values his professional image and occupation above all else and that he would even be unreliable in order to further enhance his image towards the reader.

Essentially, Ishiguro establishes Stevens as an unreliable narrator in order to let the reader gain insight to Stevens' character and what he truly values in life as well as to enable the reader to think critically of Stevens' narration of events instead of merely taking them at face value. In conclusion, this novel serves to highlight Stevens' obsessiveness of becoming a great butler. Even though he managed to maintain his professional image and served his master well, Stevens' suppression of his feelings causes him emotional distress. Moreover, it is established early that Stevens is an unreliable narrator and this causes us, as readers, to further understand Stevens' true desire in life and to critically evaluate his narrative.