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# AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FRAMING OF FICTION IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY* AND *NEVER LET ME GO*

**GÖRKEM MERCAN**

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## ABSTRACT

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MERCAN, GÖRKEM

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This thesis explores the fictional autobiographical frames in two novels by Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*. Both of these novels are framed as autobiographical accounts of their narrators; the first is a diary and the second is a memoir. While trying to understand how this quality informs character development in these novels, I trace how the narrative is situated within the referentiality-fictionality spectrum, as suggested by the critical discourse on autobiographical writing. As this variation between the "referential" and "fictional" in relation to the fictional universes of the novels is shaped around both the type of the autobiographical text and the plots of the novels, my analyses include criticism regarding the plot elements, the style of narration, and the form through which they are presented. I find that while in the *Remains of the Day*, Stevens's autobiographical endeavour opens him up to formerly unexplored affective possibilities and lead him to fictionalize a future, in *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy's narrative becomes more referential to her reality as explored in the novel, when compared to fictions she grew up creating with her group of friends.



**Keywords:** Kazuo Ishiguro, Fictional Autobiography, *The Remains of the Day*, *Never Let Me Go*, Referentiality, Fictionality

# ÖZET

## KAZUO ISHIGURO'NUN *GÜNDEN KALANLAR* VE *BENİ ASLA BIRAKMA* ADLI ROMANLARINDA KURMACANIN OTOBİYOGRAFİK ÇERÇEVESİ

MERCAN, GÖRKEM
İngiliz Edebiyatı ve Kültürel İncelemeler
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Bu tez Kazuo Ishiguro'nun *Günden Kalanlar* ve *Beni Asla Bırakma* adlı romanlarında görülen kurmaca otobiyografik çerçeveleri inceler. İki roman da anlatıcılarının otobiyografik söylemine ait olacak şekilde çerçevelenmiştir; *Günden Kalanlar* bir günlük*, Beni Asla Bırakma* ise bir anı yazısıdır. Bu özelliğin karakterlerin gelişimine nasıl etki ettiği incelenirken, anlatının otobiyografi üzerine incelemelerde görülen referanslılık-kurgusallık spektrumu içinde nasıl yer bulduğuna odaklanılmıştır. Romanların kurmaca evreninde "referanslılık" ve "kurgusallık" arasındaki çeşitlilik hem otobiyografik metnin türü hem de romanlardaki olay örgüsü üzerinden şekillendiği için, analiz hem olay örgüsü öğelerine hem anlatı biçemine hem de anlatının üzerinden sunulduğu forma odaklanır. *Günden Kalanlar* romanında ana karakter Stevens'ın otobiyografik uğraşının onu daha önce kafa yormadığı duygusal olasılıklara daha açık hâle getirdiği, geleceği kurgusal olarak planlamaya yönelttiği görülürken, *Beni Asla Bırakma* romanında, ana karakter Kathy'nin anlatısının romanda görüldüğü şekliyle gerçekliğine, büyürken arkadaşlarıyla yarattıkları kurmaca evrene kıyasla daha sıkı referanslarla bağlandığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kazuo Ishiguro, Kurmaca Otobiyografi, *Günden Kalanlar*, *Beni Asla Bırakma*, Referanslılık, Kurgusallık

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## INTRODUCTION

Kazuo Ishiguro's novels *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) are both texts which emphasize their fictional statuses as autobiographical accounts of their narrators. Although it is not clear in the novels whether these fictional autobiographies are written texts, they are both presented as belonging to the autobiographical discourse created by their narrator/characters. *The Remains of the Day* is a diary of five days after a "Prologue" part which grounds the narrated travels of Stevens, the head butler of Darlington Hall, and *Never Let Me Go* is a memoir by the former Hailsham student Kathy H..The texts clearly belong to the genre of the novel; however, their presentation as autobiographical accounts of their narrators creates an autobiographical frame, which qualifies the fiction in ways that emphasize considerations regarding issues specific to autobiographical narratives. This quality brings forth questions about the possible ways the autobiographical frames qualify the interpretations of these two novels.

In his influential book *The Rise of the English Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, Ian Watt recognizes the primacy of autobiographical discourse in terms of a break between earlier prose forms and 18$^{th}$ century novels. While trying to specify the characteristics of texts by innovative 18$^{th}$ century novelists, he recognizes six main points that can be beneficial in discussing this break. To paraphrase, these are mainly differences of understanding regarding realism and originality, particularity of experience, individualization of the characters, representations of time and space, and stylistic tendencies (Watt 13-30). Watt, while explaining the "literary techniques whereby the novel's imitation of human life follows the procedures adopted by philosophical realism in its attempt to ascertain and report the truth" (31), notes that the techniques by which a novel imitates human life resembles the questions the jury in a court of law expects to be answered in giving a truthful account of an event, a testimony, i.e. creating correspondence between the narrative and "the reality" as experienced. Watt explains,

> The narrative method whereby the novel embodies this circumstantial view of life may be called its formal realism . . . . Formal realism, in fact, is the narrative embodiment of a premise that [Daniel] Defoe and [Samuel] Richardson accepted very literally, but which is implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (32)

Watt, firstly, emphasizes that the "novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it" (11). Explaining the difference between the Middle Age conception of "realism" as contrary to its common usage, he points out that the term initially referred to "universals, classes and abstractions" (Watt 11) as opposed to its 18th century philosophical meaning which highlights reaching the truth through sense perception. With Descartes and Locke's philosophical treatises, the term comes to denote "the study of the particulars of experience by the individual investigator" (12) in schools of philosophical realism. Thus pointing out the importance of "particularity" and "individualism" for the novel form, Watt goes on to explain that this tradition brings together an emphasis on "originality," as opposed to the preceding literary forms:

> Previous literary forms had reflected the general tendency of their cultures to make conformity to traditional practice the major test of truth: the plots of classical and renaissance epic, for example, were based on past history or fable, and the merits of the author's treatment were judged largely according to a view of literary decorum derived from the accepted models in the genre. (13)

Hence, instead of following the traditions of literariness in presenting a narrative, 18th century novelists chose to "convey the impression of fidelity to human experience" (13). Noting that the narration is about "particular" experiences of individuals in specific circumstances, Watt calls attention to the difference between the novel form and earlier prose forms regarding individualism, consciousness of and in time, and the awareness of space as a physical environment. With respect to individualism, he explains that the character names suggest types in earlier fiction, which either symbolically point to the qualities of the characters or relate them to certain mythologies or histories. He compares this tendency with the use of a name and surname for characters in 18th century novels (such as Robinson Crusoe, Pamela

Andrews, Moll Flanders, Tom Jones and so on), which while further individualizing the characters, also gave them anonymity in that these names were not particularly remarkable and they could belong to anyone. Watt continues to explain that in accordance with the "individualism" of the novel form, the setting of time, following the philosophical currents, especially of John Locke, comes to emphasize the importance of memory for the characters instead of "the earlier literary tradition of using timeless stories to mirror the unchanging moral verities" (21). He points out that while relating the characters "to a larger perspective as historical process" (24), Daniel Defoe's text emphasizes temporality as the experience both in and of time:

> At his best, he [Defoe] convinces us completely that his narrative is occurring at a particular place and at a particular time, and our memory of his novels consists largely of these vividly realised moments in the lives of his characters, moments which are loosely strung together to form a convincing biographical perspective. We have a sense of personal identity subsisting through duration and yet being changed by the flow of experience. (24)

After pointing out the importance of the temporal setting as existence both marked and changed by time (as opposed to a timeless existence), Watt goes on to further differentiate earlier forms from the 18th century novel through the setting of space. He refers to the vague use of space in tragedies, comedies and romances, and says that Defoe distinctly visualizes the whole narrative as though it occurs in an actual physical environment (26). Finally explaining how all of the facets mentioned above contribute to "the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals" (27), Watt focuses on the issues of style, and explains how this endeavour creates different stylistic concerns than earlier emphasis on the adorned uses of language and rhetoric: "The implicit assumption of educated writers and critics was that an author's skill was shown [in earlier forms, before the 18th century], not in the closeness with which he made his words correspond to their objects, but in the literary sensitivity with which his style reflected the linguistic decorum appropriate to its subject" (28-29). He concludes: "It would appear, then, that the function of language is much more largely referential in the novel than in other literary forms; that the genre itself works by exhaustive presentation rather than by elegant concentration" (30). These differences, Watt suggests, delineates the novel in the 18th century in a way that differentiates it from earlier prose forms.

While mentioning the break in the meaning of the term "originality" in common use, Watt notes the Middle Age conception of the term as "having existed from the first", and explains that it comes to mean "underived, independent, first-hand" for the 18th century reader (14). Connectedly, he explains how Defoe, instead of following traditional plots of fable, mythology or romance, does something anew which comes to define a tendency in fiction after him:

> When Defoe, for example, began to write fiction he took little notice of the dominant critical theory of the day, which still inclined towards the use of traditional plots; instead, he merely allowed his narrative order to flow spontaneously from his own sense of what his protagonists might plausibly do next. In so doing Defoe initiated an important new tendency in fiction: his total subordination of the plot to the pattern of the autobiographical memoir is as defiant an assertion of the primacy of individual experience in the novel as Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* was in philosophy. (14-15)

In that sense, "the pattern of the autobiographical memoir" provides Defoe's work with the formal framework through which it demonstrates all of the distinctions mentioned above. The form allows an original representation of particularized individual experience written in realistic fashion with a consciousness of and in time, awareness regarding the physicality of space, and allows these to be expressed in a language that is not traditionally considered adorned. As the "subordination of the plot to the pattern of autobiographical memoir" becomes a tendency in fiction which is observable throughout the subsequent centuries in very influential works such as Samuel Johnson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to count only a few, it is important to understand how such simultaneous autobiographical framing, the autobiographical pattern which becomes an element of fiction while reading, works in specific contexts.

Etymologically, "autobiography" is a compound of the Ancient Greek words "autos," "bios," and "graphē", which can be literally translated as "self-life-writing." After pointing out that autobiography may seem to suggest a "more direct" relationship between the author and the text when compared to, for example, prose fiction, the editor of the 1980 essay collection *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney, notes that, in literary studies, critical writing directly on autobiography begins only in the second half of the 20th century. He accounts for this rather late

critical interest by suggesting that this conceptualization about a "more direct" relationship between the author and the text, and different conceptions of literariness may have been dissonant:

> There are various reasons why literary critics did not appropriate the autobiographical mode earlier than they did. First, there is the dual, paradoxical fact that autobiography is often something considerably less than literature and that it is always something rather more than literature. In some tangled, obscure, shifting, and ungraspable way it is, or stands in for, or memorializes, or replaces, or makes something else of someone's life. (Olney 24)

Indeed, the relationship between authors and the texts in which they write about their own lives, which Olney describes as a "tangled, obscure, shifting and ungraspable" relationship, creates difficulties in arriving at easy definitions of "autobiography" as a genre, and "autobiographical" as a quality regarding writing or reading. James Olney characterizes the history of critical thinking on autobiography through emphases put on different constituents of the word (autos, bios, graphē) at different times. He points to Georges Gusdorf's 1956 essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" as the beginning of a meta-discourse specifically on the genre, and characterizes the explorations about "how the act of autobiography is at once a discovery, a creation, and an imitation of the self" (Olney 19) through the movement by which the critics change the focus from "bios" to "autos". He summarizes the issues under exploration by the critical and theoretical thinking on autobiography as follows:

> Prior to the refocusing from *bios* to *autos* there had been a rather naive threefold assumption about the writing of an autobiography: first, that the *bios* of autobiography could only signify "the course of a lifetime" or at least a significant portion of a lifetime; second, that the autobiographer could narrate his life in a manner at least approaching an objective historical account and make of that internal subject a text existing in the external world; and third, that there was nothing problematical about the *autos*, no agonizing questions of identity, self-definition, self-existence, or self-deception—at least none the reader need attend to—and therefore the fact that the individual was himself narrating the story of himself had no troubling philosophical, psychological, literary, or historical implications. (Olney 20)

Thus, in changing the focus of study from "bios" to "autos", critics start to question the workings of memory and all the different aspects that may be associated with reflecting on the self in writing, and the reliability of such an endeavour.

Instead of focusing on the correspondence between life and the text, Georges Gusdorf analyses this relationship from the angle of a consciousness shaping the whole process. In his essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," he notes that recognizing the "singularity of each individual life" is a product of the "Western civilization," and is a rather late development in Western cultures[1]. He infers that an autobiography must come into existence because an individual deems his or her life story "worthy of men's remembrance" (Gusdorf 31) and associates this inference with certain motives he explores as a "revenge on history" (36). Firstly, an autobiography appeases the "anguished uneasiness of an aging man" (39) by providing the individuals with a means of evaluating whether their lives have been lived in vain. Secondly, it gives people a chance to redeem themselves; Gusdorf claims that "autobiography is first of all a task of personal salvation" (39). Thirdly, the assumption of an audience makes the writers feel a sense of reconciliation and provides them with some reassurance that their lives have not been lived in vain.

While Gusdorf grounds the endeavour of writing an autobiography on such psychological motives, he questions the reliability of writing about one's own life, especially about one's past experiences. However, his account differs from those questioning the possibility of correspondence between a life and the text as it explicates the bird's-eye view opportunities of writing an autobiography, and introduces all the implications associated with "reading" in the act of writing an autobiography: ". . . [A]utobiography is a second reading of experience, and it is truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it. In the immediate moment, the agitation of things ordinarily surrounds me too much for me to be able to see it in its entirety" (38). After pointing out the complicated relationship between an event and its recounting, he asserts that the relationship between memory and autobiography is also complicated because it is "distorted furthermore by the fact that the man who remembers his past has not been for a long time the same being" (38).

[1] Although works which would today be described as "autobiographical," date back to much earlier times (such as St. Augustine's *Confessions*), "autobiography" as a word which marks a genre was first used toward the end of the 18th century. Laura Marcus notes: "While the category of life-writing suggests a broad and inclusive approach to the study of literature and culture which we might associate with our contemporary moment, it was in fact deployed in the 18th century, alongside 'biography', whose usage can be dated from the 17th century. Prior to the use of autobiography as a term, critics and commentators might refer to 'self-biography' or 'the biography of a man written by himself.' This suggests that it was still perceived as unusual in secular contexts for a writer to turn his or her regard inward, though this was the guiding principle of many earlier spiritual and religious texts" (2).

He suggests that the importance of autobiography can be appreciated through its evaluation as an artistic form:

> The significance of autobiography should therefore be sought beyond truth and falsity, as those are conceived by simple common sense. It is unquestionably a document about a life, and the historian has a perfect right to check out its testimony and verify its accuracy. But it is also a work of art, and the literary devotee, for his part, will be aware of its stylistic harmony and the beauty of its images . . . : there is a truth affirmed beyond the fraudulent itinerary and chronology, a truth of the man, images of himself and of the world, reveries of a man of genius, who, for his own enchantment and that of his readers, realizes himself in the unreal. (43)

In this sense, while still taking into consideration the autobiographical forms' "referentiality" to "the reality," Gusdorf describes autobiography in terms of its fictional quality and puts emphasis on its artistic value in its evaluation.

Thus, the critical discourse about autobiography is shaped around a spectrum between "referentiality" and "fictionality." While some theorists argue that it is impossible for the text to be referential because of the "tropological substitution" (de Man 922) involved in representing the self, which leads to discussions of authorial obliteration, others try to specify the generic considerations that would go into "defining" autobiography.

Maybe the most prominent theorist exploring referentiality in autobiography is Philippe Lejeune. In the first chapter of his book *On Autobiography* (1989), he revisits a concept he laid out in a 1975 essay: "the autobiographical pact." Lejeune defines autobiography as: "Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (Lejeune 4). While claiming that memoirs and diaries are not autobiographies in the strict generic sense of the word (as the first is not necessarily the story of an individual life, and the latter is not retrospective in the strict sense of the word), Lejeune argues that the referentiality of the genre "autobiography" is guaranteed through the identity among the signature under the text, the name on the cover, the narrator and the protagonist. He claims that this "legal" designation sealed with the signature guarantees the referentiality of autobiography in a way which can be verified only when the signature belongs to the narrator who is also the protagonist. "Autobiography (narrative recounting the life of the author) supposes that there is

*identity of name* between the author (such as he figures, by his name, on the cover), the narrator of the story and the character who is being talked about" (12). He asserts:

> In printed texts, responsibility for all enunciation is assumed by a person who is in the habit of placing his *name* on the cover of the book, and on the flyleaf, above or below the title of the volume. The entire existence of the person we call the *author* is summed up by his name: the only mark in the text of an unquestionable world-beyond-the-text, referring to a real person, which requires that we thus attribute to him, in the final analysis, the responsibility for the production of the whole written text. (11)

Thus, Lejeune claims that the identity between the narrator, the protagonist and the name on the cover specifies autobiography as a genre. He begins this chapter by claiming that he approaches the issue from the reader's perspective, and tries to "distinguish some sort of order within a mass of published texts, whose common subject is that they recount someone's life" (3); however, it is important to notice that this descriptive attempt leads to a prescriptive definition by leaving out certain texts and proposing a legal definition through the signature. Zoltan Z. Varga mentions that this legal definition works only if the reader is "taught" to read in a specific way, and the element of the readers' trust regarding the author's claim should be a point of discussion:

> Texts sealed by an autobiographical pact contain a special protocol of reading, whose usage is taught, whose validity is guaranteed by literary and legal institutions which both readers and authors trust. A text functions as autobiographical when a reader understands and respects the author's claim that his/her text has to be read as a writing directly concerning his/her own life, when the author believes that his/her past deeds, thoughts or feeling will be judged, forgiven, punished or just listened to and remembered by any virtual community he/she thinks they belong to. (62-63)

Thus, the pact is only complete when the reader "trusts" in the authors' claims which are legalized by their signatures, and the validity of referentiality, which becomes an issue regarding the reader rather than the author, can be verified only in this way. Recognizing the significance of reader involvement in this process, Tonya Blowers argues:

> [W]e can read the autobiographies as a textual contract, reading the signature that is common to author, narrator and protagonist, knowing that it implies a specific mode of reading: autobiography, not fiction. But we can also read that signature as a flourish that applies to no person, no thing, no history, other than

> that which it creates for the complicit reader in the text. Thus, the reader holds on to a sense of 'the real' outside the text whilst simultaneously aware of the representative nature of reality within the text. (115)

In this way, Blowers develops the idea of "referentiality" in Lejeune's thinking as one that is valid only for the individual reader in question, not as a historically determined "reality" guaranteed by a legal contract offered by authors through their signatures with identity among the author, the narrator and the protagonist.

One year before the publication of the essay collection by Olney, Paul de Man published his famous essay "Autobiography as De-facement", which claims that "autobiography lends itself poorly to generic definition" mainly because "each specific instance seems to be an exception to the norm" (920). Unlike Olney, de Man does not account for the difficulty in generic definition through acknowledging a common-sense yet inexplicable relationship. De Man claims:

> The specular moment that is part of all understanding reveals the tropological structure that underlies all cognitions, including knowledge of self. The interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge—it does not—but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions. (922)

In shifting the focus of study from "autos" and "bios" to "graphē" (to that fact that an autobiography is, in any case, a text), de Man asserts that the particular hardship in generically characterizing autobiography does not stem from an elusive relationship between the author and the text. He suggests that autobiographical writing is subject to the exact same considerations as any text. Criticizing Lejeune's legal conceptualization, he asserts that the insistence on a political and legal connection between the author and the text creates a double motion, and further complicates the relationships among an author, a text and a reader: "The study of autobiography is caught in this double motion, the necessity to escape from the tropology of the subject and the equally inevitable reinscription of this necessity within a specular model of cognition" (de Man 923). Zoltan Z. Varga summarizes de Man's criticism of Lejeune's legal designation regarding the "signature" under the text in these words:

> According to De Man, the subject of an autobiographical contract who, by virtue of his/her transcendence from the chains of the textual substitutions, should guarantee the veracity and the authenticity of his/her textual

> representation becomes again the product of a textual, semiotic process. . . . The re-semiotization of the author's signature on the cover of an autobiography—which is carried out on the one hand by his/her own work, and on the other hand by the reader's semiotic work during the interpretation—undermines its transcendental position. (61)

Thus, de Man asserts, as autobiographies are necessarily textual, the arguments about authorial obliteration that are explored under the phrase "the death of the author" also apply to them, and the author's signature does not guarantee transcendence as it is also subject to the reader's interpretation.

In his experimental work *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1977), which opens with the note, "It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel," (Barthes, *Barthes* 1) even though the title suggests identity between the protagonist, the narrator, and the signature under the text; Barthes refers to his own memories while elaborating on certain themes from his theoretical thinking. Regarding autobiographical writing, he suggests:

> Once I produce, once I write, it is the Text itself which (fortunately) dispossesses me of my narrative continuity. The Text can recount nothing; it takes my body elsewhere, far from my imaginary person, toward a kind of memoryless speech which is already the speech of the People, of the non-subjective mass (or of the generalized subject), even if I am still separated from it by my way of writing. (3)

This autobiographical project which is even supported through a selection of photographs from Barthes's childhood, rather than attempting at proving the referentiality of the autobiographical text, works to the opposite effect. While commenting on his own portraits from his youth, Barthes writes: "You are the only one who can never see yourself except as an image: . . . for your own body, you are condemned to the repertoire of its images" (36). While, thus referring to the problem of self-reflexivity in autobiography; he extends this discourse also to the works produced by people about themselves:

> I do not say: "I am going to describe myself" but: "I am writing a text, and I call it R.B." . . . Do I not know that, *in the field of the subject, there is no referent?* The fact (whether biographical or textual) is abolished in the signifier, because it immediately coincides with it . . . . I myself am my own symbol, I am the story which happens to me: freewheeling in language, I have nothing to compare myself to; and in this movement, the pronoun of the imaginary, "*I*" is *im-pertinent*; the symbolic becomes literally immediate:

> essential danger for the life of the subject: to write on oneself may seem a pretentious idea; but it is also a simple idea: simple as the idea of suicide. (*Barthes* 56)

In this way, Barthes argues that in autobiographical writing, the signifier in the text coincides immediately with the signified, because the process of self-reflection makes the act of signification essentially a fictional one. The illusion of "the subject" is no longer tenable because of what de Man calls a "tropological substitution:" there is no referent for the sign, because the signified is the fiction created through recollection. Regarding this passage by Barthes, Paul John Eakin observes:

> "Freewheeling in language"—these are the words Barthes uses to describe the act of fashioning "R.B.," the act of writing Roland Barthes. Free, yes, but to what degree? How to appropriate the medium for himself? It becomes, in fact, one of the principal tasks of the book to define Barthes's language as distinctive, different from the language of the tribe and its "Doxa." The numerous passages on language (certainly the largest group of entries devoted to any single topic in the book), on the parts and figures of speech, on etymologies, on favorite terms and neologisms, constitute collectively a veritable primer of Barthes-speak. (8)

Eakin associates such desire to a distinctive language (separate from the language of "the doxa") with "an anxiety about the separation from others that the possession of such a language would necessarily entail" (9). Referring to other passages from Barthes's experimentation, Eakin relates this anxiety to the persona Barthes creates for himself—that of an "outsider"—and observes that being "cut off from the popularity of language is tantamount to castration" (10). Thus suggesting "the body" as a factor regarding individuality and singularity in writing, Eakin maintains: "The self or subject may lack a central core, but the body with its ability not only to desire insatiably but (as word) to "answer for everything" in discourse seems to go far toward filling the absent center of the subject" (12). In this way, Eakin observes, while Barthes vehemently argues for the erasure of the referent from the area of the subject while writing; there nevertheless remains an element of individuality which is manifest through his style, or what the style implies about the desires stemming from the corporeal existence of the writing subject.

In the light of all these points of view, it can be argued that theoretical thinking on autobiography is shaped around a discourse which negotiates "reference" with "fiction." Autobiographical texts exist in a spectrum that takes both referentiality and

fictionality into account. Rather than essentializing "autobiography" as being explained and pinpointed by either end of this spectrum, this thesis benefits from this tension between "fiction," and "reference" and tries to understand the effects of such framing on the development of narration in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*. In his essay "Fictions on the Self: The End of Autobiography" Michael Sprinker explores the autobiographical projects of Giambattista Vico, Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard and Sigmund Freud in terms of the textual echoes of psychological mechanisms such as denial, circumvention and discontinuity. He asserts:

> [T]he inquiry of the self into its own origin and history, is always circumscribed by the limiting conditions of writing, of the production of a text. . . . What [Sigmund Freud] discovers is that the self is always already in existence, that each dream, each slip of the tongue or lapse of memory, each flash of wit illuminates a prior discourse, a text elaborated long ago that governs all subsequent moments of textual making. But what he also discovers is that this master text, the unconscious, is perpetually changing—that each dream, each slip of the tongue, each witticism alters in some small way the configuration of the unconscious. . . . The writing of autobiography is a similar act of producing difference by repetition. (Sprinker 342)

Thus, Sprinker suggests that the consciousness shaping the textual existence of the self in the autobiography through its act of remembering, recollecting and uttering is a repetition, but this repetition is only possible through difference because it is not possible to have the exact same conditions that shape the memory that is recollected. Furthermore, the act of uttering is productive: it creates, in any case, a new experience; each individual uttering also changes the conditions it was shaped through, the master text, "the unconscious."

In my thesis, I try to understand how the condition Sprinker writes about, "difference in repetition" as it relates to the autobiographical discourse, works in fictional autobiographies, texts fictionally shaped by their narrator/characters. As the psychological process cannot be attributed to a fictional character, I argue that this rationale for autobiography is textually created through certain plays between referentiality and fiction in the narrative, rather than through the psychological processes relating to recollection and prolepsis, which Sprinker finds is the case for generic autobiographies. The fictionally autobiographical endeavour of the narrators of *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, as the critical discourse suggests, is

also shaped around a spectrum between referentiality and fiction. It references their pasts, and the referentiality which is qualified through fictionalizing the memory as it becomes a narrative, intersects with the character development in the novels. I argue that while in *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens starts to perceive different affective possibilities through his fictionalizing endeavour, in *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy's (and other clones') fictions about themselves become more referential to their reality as explored in the narrative universe of the novel. Thus, a rationale for autobiography, "difference in repetition," which Sprinker claims is brought about by a psychological process regarding utterances changing the "master-text," thus the conditions of future "utterings," presents itself through textuality, through plays between referentiality and fictionality which is manifest in character development. This variation between the "referential" and "fictional" as related to the fictional universes of the novels, is shaped around both the type of the autobiographical text (a diary in the first case, and a memoir in the second) and the plots of the novels, thus my analyses include criticism regarding the plot, the style of narration, and the form through which they are presented.

Kazuo Ishiguro's oeuvre is large in terms of novels narrated in autodiegetic mode. Most of his works are told by protagonist/narrators who convey information about their own lives. However, *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* are most clearly marked in terms of being fictionally autobiographical because the first is formally framed as a diary with days and time within a day explicitly stated, and the second features prominently Kathy's reminiscences of the past, with a storyline regarding the present having minimum space in the narrative, thus is very close to generic memoirs. In this sense, I think they provide the most suitable material for such a research.

In the first chapter of my thesis, I analyse the "theory of dignity" Stevens develops in relation to the (auto)biographical intertexts in *The Remains of the Day* and adheres to almost until the very end of his narration, in relation to a concept Edwing Goffman developed, which marks Stevens's characterization very prominently, that of "role distance." After analysing the effects of Stevens's theory of dignity in relation to this concept, I dwell on his narrative style in the second section, which feeds into his politics that I explore in the third section. Throughout the chapter I try to trace how Stevens's narration is situated within the referentiality-fictionality spectrum, as critical discourse on autobiographical writing suggests, and I finally try to see how "difference

in repetition" which is created through the play between referentiality and fictionality becomes manifest in Stevens's changing self-image, especially when compared to his initial characterization.

In the second chapter on *Never Let Me Go*, firstly, by analysing the stories students make up in order to make sense of their existence and their surroundings, in relation to Michel Foucault's understanding of surveillance and punishment, I try to understand the initial presentation of their life-worlds. In the second section of this chapter, I explore Hailsham's understanding of art and art criticism in line with biographical school of literary criticism, and in the third section, I compare this to Kathy's own autobiographical endeavour, which I explore in relation to Judith Butler's theorization of personal accounts. Again, throughout the chapter, I try to trace Kathy's narrative flow in terms of referentiality and fictionality, as discussed in critical accounts on autobiographical writing, and try to see how this flow informs her characterization.

## CHAPTER I

### *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*

Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 novel *The Remains of the Day* is narrated by Stevens, the head butler of Darlington Hall, an old English mansion. The novel is composed of a prologue section followed by Stevens's diary of five days in 1956, the sequence of days being disrupted only by one day between the fourth and the sixth. As the reader is made aware of in the "Prologue" section, this six-day journey Stevens undertakes from Darlington towards Little Compton is motivated by a former colleague's letter, the former housekeeper of the Hall, Miss Kenton. Stevens wants to enquire if Miss Kenton would like to return to her position as the housekeeper. He thinks that this would be convenient because there is a staff shortage in the Hall causing minor problems, when he infers from her letter "an unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington Hall," along with "distinct hints of her desire to return" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 10). As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear to the reader that Stevens and Miss Kenton (now Mrs. Benn) used to be romantically interested in one another; however, Stevens is very determined to present his impending enquiry as wholly professional in nature. He narrates that he was reminded of the letter only when Mr. Farraday, his new American employer, suggested that it is best if Stevens also takes some days off while he himself visits the USA for a period of five weeks. After Mr. Farraday notes that English servants get to see so little of their beautiful country, Stevens accepts Mr. Farraday's offer to "foot the bill for the gas" for his vintage Ford and prepares for a journey to explore "the substance of her [Miss Kenton's] wish to return to employment . . . at Darlington Hall" (10), which marks the beginning of a journey that takes him through Salisbury, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, and finally Weymouth.

An interesting quality of the novel in terms of generic classification is that its first-person narration is presented in the form of a diary; the sections are marked with a sequence of days and the time within a particular day. The only exception to this specific way of titling is the "Prologue", which establishes the context, and marks this

fictional diary as a literary work. In this sense, it is possible to say that *The Remains of the Day* is a fictional diary which is framed by the "Prologue" section as a novel. Thus, it is important to discuss the contribution of the autobiographical frame to the possible interpretations of the novel. The present chapter is concerned with exploring the significance of Stevens's autobiographical voice in the novel, trying to provide a framework for a clearer understanding of simultaneous autobiographical framing of narration in *The Remains of the Day*. Initially, I analyse a tendency which characterizes Stevens quite decisively, his inability to demonstrate "role distance," which is a concept sociologist Edwing Goffman developed. Then, I discuss Stevens's proclivity to use realistic discourse on the occasions when he misrepresents himself, by referring to Roland Barthes's concept of "the reality effect." Finally, I try to explain Stevens's investment in the status quo in relation to these tendencies regarding character and narrative style. Throughout my discussion, I try to understand how his autobiographical endeavour affects Stevens, as becomes manifest through character development.

Stevens is the only narrator of this fictional autobiography presented in *The Remains of the Day*; however, he is not the sole source of (auto)biographical anecdotes related in the text. His discourse is fed by a number of intertexts, accounts of (auto)biographical quality given by other characters in the novel, and the reader has access to these texts only through Stevens's narration. These intertexts are never directly quoted by Stevens except for a small number of sentences and a passage from Miss Kenton's letter. As these direct quotations may mark a more reliable part of the narrative, I think it is important to look at them first and then see Stevens's interpretation of them, which feeds into his motive in undertaking the journey narrated in the novel. Referring to Miss Kenton's letter, Stevens notes:

> She begins one sentence: "Although I have no idea how I shall usefully fill the remainder of my life ..." And again, elsewhere, she writes: "The rest of my life stretches out as an emptiness before me." For the most part, though, as I have said, the tone is one of nostalgia. (50)

What is very important to notice about this quotation is that whereas there is no direct access to the other parts of Miss Kenton's letter, the first two of the quoted sentences are frequently repeated in the text of *The Remains of the Day*; so, it is possible that these two are the only parts of her letter which can be interpreted in a way which

suggests a tone of nostalgia. Stevens's focus on these parts and his interpretation of the letter are clearly informed by his wishful thinking in terms of a desire to see Miss Kenton again.

Stevens's wishful thinking, in this sense, marks the selective memory of an unreliable narrator. It is clear that during the later instances in which he mentions the letter, he is not as convinced of how grounded his initial interpretation was on the text of Miss Kenton's letter. While Stevens openly admits to having read too much into the text, what he quotes the next time he mentions the letter is also remarkable because it is so far from being convincing as evidence of Miss Kenton's desire to return that it casts suspicion over "the nostalgic tone" of the first two quotations mentioned above:

> I may as well say here that having reread her letter again tonight, I am inclined to believe I may well have read more into certain of her lines than perhaps was wise. But I would still maintain there is more than a hint of nostalgic longing in certain parts of her letter, particularly when she writes such things as: "I was so fond of that view from the second-floor bedrooms overlooking the lawn with the downs visible in the distance." (189)

This sentence which Stevens directly quotes is so impersonal in tone that it may actually mean anything, and an immediate reading would be that it does not mean anything except for what it explicitly says. The implication of a "nostalgic longing" is clearly read into the sentence by Stevens. It is quite far-fetched to evaluate this sentence as implying a desire on the part of Miss Kenton to return to her former position, and this clearly marks Stevens as an unreliable narrator, when considered in parallel with his wishful thinking[2].

This difference between direct quotations and other anecdotes that are indirectly narrated, which fails to present the reader with a clear distinction, is not the only peculiarity of Stevens's narrative voice, especially taking into account his hyper-awareness of an audience, his recounting of dialogues between himself and other characters through minute details (which brings forth questions about memory and recollection), and his thoroughness in relating occasions which he could have easily avoided, occasions that make him look self-contradictory. These details emphasize a

[2] For a detailed discussion of narrative unreliability in *The Remains of the Day*, see Kathleen Wall's essay, "*The Remains of the Day* and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration" as an analysis of the novel through an overview of theories of unreliability in narration. See James Phelan and Mary Patricia Martin's article "'The Lessons of 'Weymouth:' Homodiegesis, Unreliability, Ethics and *The Remains of the Day*" for a thorough narratological analysis of the novel with respect to plot.

disregard in terms of generic contouring between an autobiography and a novel and even suggest generic expansiveness. It is clear that *The Remains of the Day* does not follow strict generic boundaries in terms of stylistic concerns which could clearly mark the text as a fictional autobiography or a novel, and it is important to note that it also does not heed a distinction between fact and fiction, a distinction which marks the early discourses of both autobiographical and literary theories. The novel may be treated as "historiographic metafiction," because many names and events suggest correspondence with history, and the text constitutes an alternative historical account. As the narrative unfolds, the reader is let into the knowledge that Stevens's former employer Lord Darlington was involved in Nazi propaganda through facilitating personal meetings between Nazi generals and British politicians. The text is replete with references corresponding to historical events; to count only a few, Lord Halifax (Edward Wood) the conservative British politician, Herr Ribbentrop (Jochaim von Ribbentrop) the Foreign Minister of Nazi Germany, and Sir Oswald Mosley the leader of British Union of Fascists (also known as "blackshirts") are among the names who frequent Darlington Hall. The text's historical references are again prominent when events such as the "Nuremberg Rally"[3] and "Versailles Treaty"[4] are mentioned. Stevens is even wary of mentioning some names because of their historical associations, and occasionally, he resorts to changing names, for example, while trying to be kind to two gentlemen, as "they are likely to be remembered in some circles" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 38). This merging of the fictional universe of the book with extratextual referents such as the names of historically prominent people, events and places is supported by the autobiographical framing of the novel, correspondence between fact and fiction being the main discussion marking the beginnings of theoretical thinking on autobiography.

Speaking of Stevens's hyper-awareness of an audience, it is important to note that his tone is conversational; expressions such as "like many of us" (3), "as you might expect" (4), "as you know" (6), "you will no doubt agree" (9) abound in his narrative. However, it is also consistently impersonal and elegant, the last two being revealed in the text as some desirable qualities in butlers, along with a certain "restraint". Stevens,

[3] The annual rally the Nazi Party in Germany used to hold.
[4] The peace treaty between Germany and Allied Powers signed at the end of the First World War, in 1919.

in a nationalist sentiment which is to be repeated in the text while he evaluates how the beauty of Great Britain's countryside differs from that of other countries, even makes a xenophobic statement and sides with those who make claims about butlers being exceptional to the English:

> It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race are capable of. Continentals—and by and large the Celts, as you will no doubt agree—are as a rule unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion, and are thus unable to maintain a professional demeanour other than in the least challenging of situations. (44)

Such thinking is only one example to the occasions in which Stevens critically reflects on his profession; the question "*what* is a great butler?" (32) is one he repeatedly tries to tackle throughout the text. In order to perfect his answer, he frequently returns to this question and his reflections that are supported by personal anecdotes and accounts of other professionals, make up a consistent theory.

### 1.1 STEVENS'S THEORY OF DIGNITY AND "ROLE DISTANCE"

The (auto)biographical intertexts of *The Remains of the Day* make up the foundation through which Stevens develops his theory of dignity, his vision regarding what greatness in his profession is comprised of. Stevens relates three anecdotes, one by his father William, and the others about him, to ruminate on the desirable qualities of a great butler. These (auto)biographical intertexts provide the solid ground through which Stevens can reason and envision his version of "greatness" in his profession, as they fictionally create the effect of referentiality. After noting that the story is an "apparently true one" (36), Stevens relates an anecdote his father frequently told, about a butler who went to India when his employer moved there, and encountered a tiger laying beneath the dining table, around which the guests and his employer were to be gathered:

> The butler had left the dining room quietly, . . . and proceeded calmly to the drawing room where his employer was taking tea with a number of visitors. There he attracted his employer's attention with a polite cough, then whispered

> in the latter's ear: "I'm very sorry, sir, but there appears to be a tiger in the dining room. Perhaps you will permit the twelve-bores to be used?"
> And according to legend, a few minutes later, the employer and his guests heard three gun shots. When the butler reappeared in the drawing room some time afterwards to refresh the teapots, the employer had inquired if all was well.
> "Perfectly fine, thank you, sir," had come the reply. "Dinner will be served at the usual time and I am pleased to say there will be no discernible traces left of the recent occurrence by that time." (37)

"The quality" which the butler in the above anecdote displays while having to deal with an unexpected situation that requires both agency and decorum, Stevens says was also observable in his father. After noting that his father's "telling and retelling" of this anecdote was his way of "reflecting critically on the profession he practised" (36), Stevens draws attention to two other anecdotes he "corroborated and believe[s] to be accurate" (43), this time about his father. The first anecdote featuring Stevens's father is about three gentlemen, two of them have had too much to drink. As William drives them home, they spontaneously decide on a journey through three villages when the names of these villages that they see on the local map remind them of the characters in a (fictional) "music hall act" named *Murphy, Saltman, and Brigid the Cat* (38). When they notice that they are not going in the exact same order these names appear in the title of the musical, they demand that William double down a significant part of the road to follow the correct order. At this point focusing their attention on William, they start insulting him. Having been very calm and cooperative all this time, it is only when these men start insulting his employer that William takes action:

> The rear door of the car opened and my father was observed to be standing there, a few steps back from the vehicle, gazing steadily into the interior. . . . [T]here was something so powerfully rebuking, and at the same time so unassailable about his figure looming over them that Mr Charles's two drunken companions seemed to cower back like small boys caught by the farmer in the act of stealing apples. (40)

When the two men enquire in an intimidated manner whether they are proceeding with their journey, William continues to only stand silently without giving a clue as to his intentions. Stevens emphasizes that the effect of this intervention is more connected to a quality about his father's mere presence rather than an action he takes: "The silence seemed to go on interminably, before either Mr Smith or Mr Jones found it in him to mutter: "'I suppose we were talking a little out of turn there. It won't happen again'"

(40). These (auto)biographical anecdotes, while they characterize Stevens's father and apparent role model, also provide the base material through which Stevens introduces his account of greatness in his profession.

The third anecdote he relates to the same effect, again, entails restraint and maintaining composure when faced with a situation with an emotional load; this time a more personal one. Stevens relates that his older brother, Leonard, was killed during the South African War, upon "a particularly infamous manoeuvre" the details of which he refrains from explaining, fearing that it would be only too familiar for the reader. The person in charge of the manoeuvre, whom Stevens calls merely "the General," again, in order to keep him anonymous, visits the mansion William formerly worked at for a couple of days during a house party. Even though his employer suggests that he may take some days off, considering the sensitivity of the issue, William rejects this, appreciating the importance of the business transaction which is to be discussed during this party for his employer. Stevens notes that the visit "would be no trifling affair" with "eighteen or so people expected" (42), and continues:

> [T]he gentleman had brought no valet, his usual man having fallen ill. . . . My father, appreciating his employer's position, volunteered immediately to take the General, and thus was obliged to suffer intimate proximity for four days with the man he detested. . . . Yet so well did my father hide his feelings, so professionally did he carry out his duties, that on his departure the General had actually complimented Mr John Silvers on the excellence of his butler and had left an unusually large tip in appreciation—which my father without hesitation asked his employer to donate to a charity. (42-43)

In all of the three anecdotes quoted above, the butlers in question follow decorum, display loyalty toward their employers, exercise restraint and maintain composure when faced with situations that arise emotion, and they hide their actual feelings. These desirable traits in butlers, which are important because they "have proved" efficient in "real-life" situations, in that their referents are real-life events in the universe of the novel, constitute the main material Stevens bases his answer to a question that appears repeatedly in the text: "what is a great butler?" The (auto)biographical information Stevens provides the reader with through these anecdotes constitute the referential ground through which he can create his vision regarding "greatness" in his profession.

Taking its cue from these anecdotes, Stevens's theory of dignity is developed in dialogue with The Hayes Society's letters in the (fictional) journal *A Quarterly for*

*the Gentleman's Gentleman* (32). The Hayes Society is an elite society of professionals which admits "butlers of 'only the very first rank'," and the prestige the Society is able to claim is derived from keeping the number of memberships very low, most of the time around ten, and never above thirty. In accordance with that, the criteria for membership is never publicly announced until a number of letters are published in *A Quarterly* putting pressure on the Society to announce its membership criteria. In response, The Hayes Society sends a letter to the journal, stating that "a prerequisite for membership [is] that 'an applicant be attached to a distinguished household'" (32). However, the word "distinguished" in the announcement is packed with certain intricacies; the society clarifies that they do not consider businessmen and the "newly rich" (33) as belonging to distinguished households. They say, "*true* ladies and gentlemen would not refrain long from acquiring the services of" butlers of excellent quality: "One had to be guided by the judgement of 'the true ladies and gentlemen', argued the Society, or else 'we may as well adopt the proprieties of Bolshevik Russia'" (33).

These announcements which connect professional merit to an association with the aristocracy provoke further controversy among professionals, and finally the Society announces in another letter to the journal a more individual merit based, yet very vague criterion as the final determinant. Stevens quotes this factor from memory: "'the most crucial criterion is that the applicant be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position. No applicant will satisfy requirements, whatever his level of accomplishments otherwise, if seen to fall short in this respect.'" (33). After noting that he is not very enthusiastic about the "out-dated thinking" of The Hayes Society in terms of its approach towards businessmen and "the newly rich," Stevens states that he believes "this particular pronouncement [is] at least founded on a significant truth" (33). "If one looks at these persons we agree are 'great' butlers, if one looks at, say, Mr Marshall or Mr Lane, it does seem to me that the factor which distinguishes them from those butlers who are merely extremely competent is most closely captured by this word 'dignity'" (33). This leads to an account of what Stevens thinks "dignity" in this sense is comprised of:

> '[D]ignity' has to do crucially with 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 facade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath. 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 gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone. It is, as I say, a matter of 'dignity'. (43-44)

Stevens qualifies his theory of dignity on more than one occasion; however, such commitment to inhabiting a professional role, inhabiting it to the utmost and not revealing "the actor underneath" like a performer would when under emotional pressure is the persistent gist of his argument. This argument is peculiar in that, while Stevens certainly talks about performing a role, he contrasts it with a pantomime performer who will desert the role when antagonized by a "small push" or a "slight stumble," but resembles the performance to that of a "decent gentleman" who will not go against what his suit socially symbolizes, unless when alone. Regarding this far-fetched comparison, Ryan S. Trimm writes:

> It is Stevens's repeated comparison of the professional dignity of a butler to a suit of clothes that offers the most significant of the butler's unusual metaphors for service. A suit suggests there is a surface identity that one assumes. However, by putting on this surface identity, the suit creates a depth effect: other possible identities are concealed underneath. (149)

This class conscious approach certainly fails to do justice to a theatrical performer in that it is expected that somebody who is performing a role inhabits it much more committedly than somebody who is just "wearing" an article of clothing, which, according to Stevens, comes with a set of expected social behaviour. It is apparent that Stevens is speaking about some extreme form of mimesis, not determined by spatial or temporal frame, but only by the existence of an audience. Specifically, he is thinking of some sort of social behaviour created through interaction.

Although I will elaborate more on the implications of Stevens's thinking in terms of mimetic theory and specifically realism; firstly, I want to explore it in a sociological context which meets Stevens's characterization: "role theory." Stevens's absolute investment in his occupational role characterizes him quite decisively, and this quality constitutes the main ground from which his autobiographical endeavour

allows him to divert. In *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Michelle J. Hindin describes a role in the context of sociology in these words:

> A role can be defined as a social position, behavior associated with a social position, or a typical behavior. Some theorists have suggested that roles are expectations about how an individual ought to behave, while others consider how individuals actually behave in a given social position. Others have suggested that a role is a characteristic behavior or expected behavior, a part to be played, or a script for social conduct. (3959)

Role theory is a sociological paradigm which explores a wide range of social behaviour in terms of characteristic, expected, and performative senses; different approaches such as "functional," "symbolic interactionist," "structural," and "cognitive" types (Hindin 3960-61) highlight different descriptions of a role. Stevens's theory of dignity can be explored as an amalgamation of various descriptions of role in a loop: He prescribes that professional butlers who embody dignity perform all the time (except when alone) in a characteristic way, and in accordance with what they think is expected. In this way, two approaches to role, "expectations of how an individual ought to behave," and "how individuals actually behave" are seamlessly fused through Stevens's theory of dignity. His theory can thus be explored in terms of being an ultimate version of what sociologist Edwing Goffman describes as "role embracement:"

> Three matters seem to be involved [in role embracement]: an admitted or expressed attachment to the role; a demonstration of qualifications and capacities for performing it; an active *engagement* or spontaneous involvement in the role activity at hand . . . . Where these features are present, I will use the term *embracement*. To embrace a role is to disappear completely into the virtual self available in the situation, to be fully seen in terms of the image, and to confirm expressively one's acceptance of it. (94)

All these four elements of role embracement (attachment, demonstrations of being qualified, engagement and investment of attention in performing the role), Stevens discusses at different points in the novel. For example, at one point, in an apparent attempt to flatter Stevens while trying to ascertain whether he is romantically interested in her, Miss Kenton mentions a former acquaintance (whom she later marries), who had dreams of becoming a head butler, saying "some of his methods" were well beneath what is expected. As an answer, Stevens declares: "At these sorts of levels, Miss Kenton, the profession isn't for everybody. It is easy enough to have

lofty ambitions, but without certain qualities, a butler will simply not progress beyond a certain point" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 181-182). This is clearly a boasting of capability, "a demonstration of qualifications and capacities for performing" the role (Goffman 94). His critical engagement in trying to figure out the essential qualities in a "great butler" and his answer which entails performing all the time, except when alone, are clearly both an "admitted" and "expressed" attachment to the role. Stevens's narrative abounds with examples in which he is extremely eager to perform his occupational role in a seamless unison with his social existence; he embraces his role to the full.

Goffman qualifies his conceptualization of "role embracement" through what can be treated as a counterpart: "role distance," and, I think, it is a crucial concept to make sense of Stevens's behaviour, albeit through its lack. According to Goffman, when individuals adequately master a role, in order to prevent being reduced to a single facet of social existence, they show in a negational capacity that there are multiple selves available to them, though not exactly within the boundaries of the expected social role:

> The image of him that is generated for him by the routine entailed in his mere participation—his virtual self in the context—is an image from which he apparently withdraws by *actively* manipulating the situation. Whether this skittish behavior is intentional or unintentional, sincere or affected, correctly appreciated by others present or not, it does constitute a wedge between the individual and his role, between doing and being. This "effectively" expressed pointed separateness between the individual and his putative role I shall call *role distance*. A shorthand is involved here: the individual is actually denying not the role but the virtual self that is implied in the role for all accepting performers. (105)

Greg Smith suggests that, "[r]ole distance concerns these forms of 'effectively expressed pointed separateness' between the individual and his/her role and serve not to deny the role, but rather the self it implies" (95). Thus, Goffman argues, individuals, in order to prevent seamlessly identifying with their social role and being reduced to a single facet of existence, introduce other situationally irrelevant roles to create "a wedge" between what the role they actively participate in at a moment entails, and other roles they embody through other contexts. Regarding the sociological importance of role distance and the nuance it introduces in terms of role analysis, Ramón Vargas Maseda writes: "role distance from the point of view of the individuals

therefore entails a defensive action that goes, hand in hand with his [Goffman's] critique of society because of an underlying assumption that in social interaction and in social establishments the individual's multiple selves are reduced to a single conception" (161). Thus, it should be made clear that "role distance" does not mean that the individuals, by distancing themselves from the circumstantial role, are revealing their "actual" selves, or what they are like "underneath." Goffman notes, "when the individual withdraws from a situated self he does not draw into some psychological world that he creates himself but rather acts in the name of some other socially created identity" (107). Greg Smith explains this distinction in these words:

> Goffman suggests that what the individual does in taking role distance is not an expression of their essential self or uniqueness as a human being. Rather, the individual invokes another, situationally-irrelevant source of self-identification . . . such as the diffuse roles of 'man' and 'woman' in the case of sexual banter between surgeons and nurses during surgical operations. (105)

In this sense, role distance does not suggest an essential self which is different from the social self. It is a negational capacity, but the distance is between two different roles, not between a "profane" social self, and a self which exists through personal relationships which bring out "what the individual is really like." Through this idea, Goffman suggests a multiplicity of selves, not a binary between what is available for sociological analysis and what is free from it.

It is very interesting that in the above quotation Greg Smith uses the word "bantering" because in *The Remains of the Day*, it is exactly this same quality which Stevens steadily works on as he finds that he fails to display. Stevens's theory of dignity requires such role embracement that he is unable to demonstrate role distance, when his new employer Mr. Farraday's approach to their relationship necessitates it.

At the beginning of *The Remains of the Day*, when Stevens asks for permission to take some days off in accordance with Mr. Farraday's former suggestion, to embark on his journey towards Little Compton, Mr. Farraday immediately notices that Stevens's desire to undertake this journey is informed by his romantic interest in Miss Kenton, and exclaims in a joking tone: "'My, my, Stevens. A lady-friend. And at your age" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 14). This gives Stevens much distress; he notes that the tendency to "banter" must be an American way of dealing with employees, and that Lord Darlington would have never put an employee in such a situation. Mr. Farraday

goes on to build on what he noticed about Stevens's enquiry: "'I'd never have figured you for such a lady's man Stevens,' he went on. 'Keeps the spirit young, I guess.'" (14). Eventually, Mr. Farraday gives him permission; however, such interactions involving jokes in the form of small talk are another point of rumination for Stevens, a topic he recurrently turns to throughout the text: the issue of bantering.

Stevens finds that he is unable to respond spontaneously to people's joking remarks on several occasions as he has certain reservations; this is a point of reflection he takes seriously and works on through self-imposed exercises. He clearly states that he thinks this is an issue he is facing because his new employer is American: "[Mr. Farraday] was, I am sure, merely enjoying the sort of bantering which in the United States, no doubt, is a sign of a good, friendly understanding between employer and employee, indulged in as a kind of affectionate sport" (15). Ryan S. Trimm analyses Stevens's precarious position between employers by connecting this ambivalent position to the larger history of the service industry:

> [S]ervants signified an older world of economic relations, for their personal relations with employers stood in contrast to the stark alienation of the proletarian caught in the cash nexus. As Stevens's career runs from attendance to a titled lord to serving a retired American, his code of responsibility remains poised between fealty and the contractual. (151)

Such ambivalence is clear when Stevens attributes a professional significance to the issue by noting that "it may well be that in America, it is all part of what is considered good professional service that an employee provide entertaining banter" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 16). Instead of approaching these spontaneous jokes through introducing other possible selves from different contexts, Stevens tries to accommodate bantering as one of his professional services. He has two reservations when it comes to bantering: Firstly, he wonders "how would one know for sure that at any given moment a response of the bantering sort is truly what is expected?" (16). He clarifies his second concern by saying, "One need hardly dwell on the catastrophic possibility of uttering a bantering remark only to discover it wholly inappropriate" (16). Thus, it is clear that Stevens's concerns are mainly about his social role as a butler and what distancing himself from this role would bring. The first of his worries is about the possible reception of such interaction as stepping out of the boundaries of his role as a butler; he wants to fulfil the prescribed role by sticking to what is "expected" of him even in

case of informal talk. Secondly, he is afraid of venturing beyond the line while performing this informal role and saying something "wholly inappropriate;" thus, he is concerned about decorum.

The episodes in which Stevens ruminates on bantering give a clearer sense of how Stevens's theory of dignity translates into occasions when he is not strictly expected to perform the role of the butler. The first occasion Stevens narrates while relating his attempts at bantering is, again, between Mr. Farraday and himself:

> I did though on one occasion not long ago, pluck up the courage to attempt the required sort of reply. I was serving Mr Farraday morning coffee in the breakfast room when he had said to me:
> "I suppose it wasn't you making that crowing noise this morning, Stevens?"
> My employer was referring, I realized, to a pair of gypsies gathering unwanted iron who had passed by earlier making their customary calls. . . . I therefore set about thinking of some witty reply; some statement which would still be safely inoffensive in the event of my having misjudged the situation. After a moment or two, I said:
> "More like swallows than crows, I would have said, sir. From the migratory aspect." And I followed this with a suitably modest smile to indicate without ambiguity that I had made a witticism, since I did not wish Mr Farraday to restrain any spontaneous mirth he felt out of a misplaced respectfulness. (17)

It is important to notice that Stevens's answer is much studied; he does not want to step out of the expected role of the butler while introducing some other aspect of himself, a "situationally irrelevant" role that he feels is beyond what he developed within the limits of his role as a butler: "I could never be sure exactly what was required of me on these occasions. Perhaps I was expected to laugh heartily; or indeed, reciprocate with some remark of my own" (16). While Stevens tries to remain within the boundaries of his social role by finding an answer that would be "safely inoffensive," he also realizes that the issue is one of "spontaneous" quality. Thus, he tries to accommodate Mr. Farraday through a "suitably modest smile" in case he restrains himself out of respect for him. Erwing Goffman observes that interactions between a superordinate and subordinate involve many intricacies in terms of social and economic class relations, when analysed in terms of "role distance:"

> Should a subordinate exercise role distance, this is likely to be seen as a sign of his refusal to keep his place . . . or as rejection of authority, or as evidence of low morale. On the other hand, the manifestation of role distance on the part of the superordinate is likely to express a willingness to relax the *status quo*, and this the subordinate is likely to approve because of its potential profitability

> for him. . . . [T]he expression of role distance is likely to be the prerogative of the superordinate in an interaction. In fact, since informality on the part of the inferior is so suspect, a tacit division of labor may arise, whereby the inferior contributes respect for the status quo on behalf of both parties, while the superior contributes a glaze of sociability that all can enjoy. (114)

In the occasion between Stevens and Mr. Farraday, rather than a "refusal to keep his place," Stevens, exactly because he fears he will step beyond a boundary out of which he does not feel safe in terms of his occupational role, demonstrates so much concern about the status quo that the situation fades before it can arise. In their interaction, the expression of role distance remains "a prerogative of the superordinate," in line with Goffman's thinking. However, a facet that entails the "rejection of authority," which is implicitly expected from the subordinate does not exist; the possibility of role distance is not there as Stevens treats bantering as a part of what is expected from him professionally. While still "contribut[ing] respect for the status quo," he does not introduce any other role which would be "situationally irrelevant" in an interaction between a butler and his employer; he tries to master bantering professionally, his worry stems from trying to include it into his expected social role of a butler. While Mr. Farraday is indeed demonstrating "a willingness to relax the status quo," Stevens is very concerned with his interpretation of dignity, which entails great butlers "wear[ing] their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit." He does not abandon his "professional being," because he does not want to reveal "the actor underneath" except for when alone. Thus, the possibility of "a glaze of sociability that all can enjoy" is dampened before it can occur. Stevens's narration of this bantering remark continues thus:

> Mr Farraday, however, simply looked up at me and said: "I beg your pardon, Stevens?"
> Only then did it occur to me that, of course, my witticism would not be easily appreciated by someone who was not aware that it was gypsies who had passed by. I could not see, then, how I might press on with this bantering; in fact, I decided it best to call a halt to the matter and, pretending to remember something I had urgently to attend to, excused myself, leaving my employer looking rather bemused. (Ishiguro, *Remains* 17)

Stevens's answer is so studied that it requires the audience to have the exact information Stevens has, and to follow his train of thought. Moreover, he does not care to explain his point, which could have saved the situation; instead he feels that he has

failed in performing his role and chooses to desert the scene. It is clear that Stevens is more interested in inhabiting his social role as the butler "to the utmost" than in the success of this spontaneous social interaction which could have been easily saved with some explanation instead of excusing oneself.

Such lack of flexibility characterizes Stevens's social existence. The second occasion Stevens narrates about "bantering" takes place at the inn he stays at during the second night of his journey, in Taunton, Somerset. After having dinner in his room, Stevens feels restless and descends to the bar. There are five or six customers at the bar, and eventually, he notices that they want to talk to him to acknowledge his arrival at the town. One of the customers starts the conversation by asking Stevens whether he is staying at the inn. In an attempt at small talk, he comments: "'You won't get much of a sleep up there, sir. Not unless you're fond of the sound of old Bob' . . . 'banging away down here right the way into the night. And then you'll get woken by his missus shouting at him right from the crack of dawn" (138). Stevens narrates how their interaction continues by also relating his inner process:

> "Is that indeed so?" I said. And as I spoke, I was struck by the thought—the same thought as had struck me on numerous occasions of late in Mr Farraday's presence—that some sort of witty retort was required of me. . . . :
> "A local variation on the cock crow, no doubt." At first the silence continued, as though the local persons thought I intended to elaborate further. But then noticing the mirthful expression on my face, they broke into a laugh, though in a somewhat bemused fashion. (138)

This second occasion also requires a joking remark in the form of small talk, and Stevens, again, approaches the issue from the point of view of "add[ing] this skill to [his] professional armoury" (138). As he is focused on the issue of bantering from a professional point of view, he treats this as an opportunity to exercise his skill, albeit through a studied comeback. In this occasion, even though the customers find that his tone is a bit off as small talk, they accommodate Stevens by laughing along when they notice the "mirthful expression" on his face although Stevens notes that they were bemused. Stevens, later, admits that he "was slightly disappointed it had not been better received than it was" (138) and goes on to explain how he has been studying this skill:

> One programme I listen to is called *Twice a Week or More*, which is in fact broadcast three times each week, and basically comprises two persons making

> humorous comments on a variety of topics raised by readers' letters. I have been studying this programme because the witticisms performed on it are always in the best of taste and, to my mind, of a tone not at all out of keeping with the sort of bantering Mr Farraday might expect on my part. Taking my cue from this programme, I have devised a simple exercise which I try to perform at least once a day; whenever an odd moment presents itself, I attempt to formulate three witticisms based on my immediate surroundings at that moment. Or, as a variation on this same exercise, I may attempt to think of three witticisms based on the events of the past hour. (139)

It is clear that Stevens's theory of dignity, inhabiting the role of the butler to the utmost unless when alone, considering the fact that butlers live at the mansions where they work, leaves him such little personal space and time that he has to put in extra effort to master basic social skills, which he still treats in terms of professionalism and not in terms of performing through other selves he may have in different contexts. It is not that he is unable to comprehend what these social situations entail; for example, he appreciates the humour in the title of the radio program. What is more likely is that it is very rare for Stevens to find himself in situations that require social skills less studied than those of a butler.

This tension which leads Stevens to study his social skills is most prominent during what Stevens treats as the point his relationship with Miss Kenton "underwent such a change" (173). One day, when he is off-duty and reading a book, Miss Kenton enters Stevens's pantry; in his narration, Stevens cannot remember the exact reason why. When Stevens does not look up from his reading, Miss Kenton asks what he is reading, which Stevens answers by saying "[s]imply a book, Miss Kenton" (174). When he notices Miss Kenton advancing to see the title, Stevens closes the book and holds it close to his body, which intrigues Miss Kenton further. During their dialogue about the possible "raciness" and suspicious "respectability" of the volume (175), when Miss Kenton asks, "What on earth can it be you are so anxious to hide?" Stevens answers, "Miss Kenton, whether or not you discover the title of this volume is in itself not of the slightest importance to me. But as a matter of principle, I object to your appearing like this and invading my private moments" (175). The volume turns out to be what Miss Kenton defines as a "sentimental love story," and she notes that "it isn't anything so scandalous at all" (176). Although Stevens finally asks the reader, "Why should one not enjoy in a light-hearted sort of way stories of ladies and gentlemen who fall in love and express their feelings for each other, often in the most elegant phrases?"

(177) he also makes it clear that he "would not have wasted one moment on them" if it was not for professional benefits:

> The book was, true enough, what might be described as a "sentimental romance." . . . There was a simple reason for my having taken to perusing such works; it was an extremely efficient way to maintain and develop one's command of the English language. . . . This had been my own policy for some years, and I often tended to choose the sort of volume Miss Kenton had found me reading that evening simply because such works tend to be written in good English, with plenty of elegant dialogue of much practical value to me. (176)

Stevens's explanation falls in line with his general tendency to foreclose any possibility which entails emotional disclosure through an appeal to professional merit; however, it is also important to notice that, much in line with his ordeal with bantering, Stevens has to study basic social skills formally. He finds reading a novel which includes everyday conversations to be very beneficial, as he both because he lives where he works and because he is very invested in his role, lacks the means of participating in conversations in which he is not preoccupied with his role as a butler. His interpretation of "dignity" does not leave a space for exercising conversational skills through everyday social occasions in which he does not strictly perform his occupational role:

> The fact was, I had been 'off duty' at that moment Miss Kenton had come marching into my pantry. And of course, any butler who regards his vocation with pride, any butler who aspires at all to a 'dignity in keeping with his position', as the Hayes Society once put it, should never allow himself to be 'off duty' in the presence of others. . . . A butler of any quality must be seen to inhabit his role, utterly and fully; he cannot be seen casting it aside one moment simply to don it again the next as though it were nothing more than a pantomime costume. There is one situation and 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. (177-178)

Stevens's eagerness to subsume other social possibilities under the label of skills for his "professional armoury" shows how his theory of dignity translates into occasions in which he is not performing the role of the butler. This tendency to consider social skills which he did not need while working for Lord Darlington as elements of "professional armoury" may also be explored in terms of a fear of intimacy, as is apparent through Stevens's narration of their relationship with Miss Kenton. Stevens

is absolutely invested into performing the role of the butler unless when entirely alone, and this causes many problems in terms of the romantic interest the two professionals, Miss Kenton and Stevens, develop in time. Their relationship is important to dwell on because it shows another layer of how Stevens's investment in his interpretation of "dignity" affects his life.

Miss Kenton and Stevens meet when the former housekeeper and the under-butler of Darlington Hall decide to marry and leave the profession. Stevens emphasizes that he finds "such liaisons a serious threat to the order in a house," and notes that he has lost many employees due to similar circumstances (53). After the departure of these employees, Miss Kenton arrives with "unusually good references" (53-4), and around that time Stevens's father loses his job with the death of his former employer. He recruits both; Miss Kenton as the housekeeper and his father as the under-butler, and this difference in rank causes a problem at the beginning of Stevens's relationship with Miss Kenton. After working together for a while, when Miss Kenton tries to introduce a vase of flowers to Stevens's pantry, Stevens mentions what he noticed earlier, that Miss Kenton refers to his father by his first name, William. He asks her to call him by his surname through emphasizing that if she considers the situation, Miss Kenton will also see the "inappropriateness of someone such as [her]self talking 'down' to one such as [his] father" (56). This leads to something of a tiff between the two colleagues, which converts into a cold war between the two professionals. When Stevens reminds Miss Kenton that his father arrived at the house one week later than her, but his house knowledge was perfect almost from the very beginning, Miss Kenton answers: "I am sure Mr Stevens senior is very good at his job, but I assure you, Mr Stevens, I am very good at mine. I will remember to address your father by his full title in future. Now, if you would please excuse me" (57). In this conversation, Stevens refers to both Miss Kenton's young age and her lack of experience as professional disadvantages when compared to his father, even though it is clear that his request about his father is a personal one. As the narrative progresses, it turns out that it is actually William who is at a disadvantage because of his old age; he makes minor mistakes and Miss Kenton, worried that William is taking on much more responsibility than is fit for somebody of his age, notes these.

Sometime later Miss Kenton finds that an ornament that they refer to as "the Chinaman" is mistakenly placed outside Stevens's door, and she lets him know. As

they both know this is one of William's responsibilities, this conversation becomes a direct counterpart to their former argument about Miss Kenton's lack of experience. Understanding that the issue is actually about their former argument, and not wanting to admit that his father is being trusted with more than he can undertake at his age, Stevens feigns busywork. He eventually decides to rush out of the room at a pace in which Miss Kenton will not be able to catch up with him quickly, but she does and finally states: "Whatever your father was once, Mr Stevens, his powers are now greatly diminished. This is what these 'trivial errors' as you call them really signify and if you do not heed them, it will not be long before your father commits an error of major proportions" (62). It turns out that she is right because William, later, collapses while he is serving Lord Darlington and his guests in the garden; his employer actually requests from Stevens that his father will be trusted with much less, insinuating that he may also collapse "where an error might jeopardize the success of [the] forthcoming conference" which he thinks "may have considerable repercussions" in terms of "the whole course Europe is taking" (65).

Such petty arguments between Miss Kenton and Stevens, in time, turn into a relationship of mutual understanding and understated romantic interest. They develop a habit of meeting in the evenings at Miss Kenton's parlour to have cocoa while discussing the events of the day or future arrangements. Even though, at one point in his narration, Stevens describes these meetings with as romantic a phrase as "our cocoa evenings," (165) while introducing them, he, again, takes pains to emphasize their professional character:

> These [meetings] were, let me say, overwhelmingly professional in tone—though naturally we might discuss some informal topics from time to time. Our reason for instituting such meetings was simple: we had found that our respective lives were often so busy, several days could go by without our having an opportunity to exchange even the most basic of information. (155-156)

Thus, Stevens tries to provide a rationale for any occasion that might suggest a romantic interest between him and Miss Kenton, even though the whole premise of his narrative is their much-awaited meeting. As David James suggests, "The narrative mode of *The Remains of the Day* alternates between working with, and working against, the insecurities Stevens strives to conceal. By its idiom of reserve, the novel

paradoxically alerts us to all that lies beneath . . ." (57). Stevens's awareness of an audience is also clear in trying to provide a rationale, and his insistence on maintaining the ruse of professionalism, which is required by his theory of dignity, informs his narrative tendency to reveal in hiding.

Maybe the most prominent of their "cocoa evenings" is when Stevens finds himself having to import to Miss Kenton that Lord Darlington decided that no Jewish staff is to be employed in Darlington Hall and those who are currently employed are to be dismissed. In his narrative, Stevens introduces this issue by emphasizing the influence Mrs. Carolyn Barnet, a member of the "blackshirts" organization, had over Lord Darlington, stating that the current rumours about Lord Darlington's antisemitism and his association with the German Nazi Party must "originate from that brief, entirely insignificant few weeks in the early thirties when Mrs. Carolyn Barnet came to wield an unusual influence over his lordship" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 153). His explication, although it clearly shows Lord Darlington's association with fascism, demonstrates how Stevens constructs a discourse which while revealing some inside information about the history of this association, hides the significance of his narration. He downplays the importance of the event causing the rumours, which is his way of maintaining loyalty and decorum:

> [I]t was Mrs Barnet, as I recall, who took his lordship on those 'guided inspections' of the poorest areas of London's East End, during which his lordship visited the actual homes of many of the families suffering the desperate plight of those years. That is to say, Mrs Barnet, in all likelihood, made some sort of contribution to Lord Darlington's developing concern for the poor of our country and as such, her influence cannot be said to have been entirely negative. But she was too, of course, a member of Sir Oswald Mosley's 'blackshirts' organization, and the very little contact his lordship ever had with Sir Oswald occurred during those few weeks of that summer. And it was during those same weeks that those entirely untypical incidents took place at Darlington Hall which must, one supposes, have provided what flimsy basis exists for these absurd allegations. (154)

Stevens, by blaming Lord Darlington's developing antisemitism on Mrs. Barnet, and by clearly stating that these incidents were "untypical," while trying to emphasize "the bright side" of these incidents through inserting a reformulation of them expressed in terms of "Lord Darlington's developing concern for the poor of [the] country," in effect, tries to redeem Lord Darlington. His narrative, in this sense, functions also as an account which entails inside information about the occasions that gave rise to Lord

Darlington's current notoriety. In his book, in which he explores the servant characters in English fiction through centuries, Bruce Robbins maintains: "there was in fact [in the 18th century] a sudden and well-documented new anxiety on the part of the masters and mistresses about the damage that servant spies and informants could do. If they were groundless, the fears were nonetheless quite real" (108). This, he argues leads to the motif of the observant servant: employers "trembling in the face of servant observation" (109). Thus, servants as narrators have the power of exposing the masters/mistresses; however, it is also known that it is not really very easy to exercise this power:

> [R]eal opportunities to become party to their masters' secrets do not seem to have given servants even local leverage. On limited but suggestive evidence, a study of preindustrial English cases of defamation concludes that indeed "gossip gave women power," whether to injure reputations or to influence household decisions. But it also demonstrates that distinct "powerlessness" of female servants "even to use information to damage a rival's reputation," let alone that of a master or mistress. Power was not so easily rocked by anyone's verbal testimony. (108)

In Stevens's case the master is already exposed; however, due to his own connection to the household, and his sense of loyalty years of devoted work inspired in him, an ambivalence is present also in Stevens's narration. He cannot readily admit Lord Darlington's involvement in Nazi affairs; he repeatedly tells that Lord Darlington was a great figure, and he is very happy that he got to work under him. However, Stevens is also eager to dissociate himself from the blame people put on Lord Darlington. In this sense, although his autobiographical narrative works to redeem Lord Darlington (especially in the earlier parts of the book), being wary of his own association with the rumours, Stevens also does not neglect to redeem himself through explaining his thinking process in the form of a disclaimer:

> Indeed, the maids had been perfectly satisfactory employees and—I may as well say this since the Jewish issue has become so sensitive of late—my every instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal. Nevertheless, my duty in this instance was quite clear, and as I saw it, there was nothing to be gained at all in irresponsibly displaying such personal doubts. (Ishiguro, *Remains* 156)

As he clearly states in the quotation, Stevens treats this issue in terms of it being his duty; thus, he subsumes his ethical concerns under the rubric of a "personal doubt," by again emphasizing the significance of "displaying" professionalism as defined in his

own terms. However, as the two girls to be dismissed are maids under Miss Kenton's supervision, he finds himself in a situation where he needs to explain the issue to her. Stevens notes "It was a difficult task, but as such, one that demanded to be carried out with dignity," which translates into his "concise and businesslike" manner as he conveys Lord Darlington's decision to Miss Kenton (156). Their conversation goes thus:

> "I will speak to the two employees in my pantry tomorrow morning at ten thirty. I would be grateful then, Miss Kenton, if you would send them along.
> […]
> It was then that Miss Kenton said: "Mr Stevens, I cannot quite believe my ears. Ruth and Sarah have been members of my staff for over six years now. I trust them absolutely and indeed they trust me. They have served this house excellently."
> "I am sure that is so, Miss Kenton. However, we must not allow sentiment to creep into our judgement. Now really, I must bid you good night…"
> "Mr Stevens, I am outraged that you can sit there and utter what you have just done as though you were discussing orders for the larder. I simply cannot believe it. You are saying Ruth and Sarah are to be dismissed on the grounds that they are Jewish?" (156-157)

What Miss Kenton finds particularly outrageous is Stevens's succinct and matter-of-fact method of conveying the news about Lord Darlington's decision that two employees are to be fired because they are Jewish. The affective ties Miss Kenton established with her team over the years, and the feelings of trust she secured are at stake; however, Stevens's understanding of dignity requires him to inhabit his "professional being" to the utmost, and once he decides that this is a part of his duty, the ethical side of Lord Darlington's request becomes irrelevant; he won't even display sympathy. Regarding this part, Michel Terestchenko observes: "The episode thus suggests a union of a certain conception of ethics and the implementation of evil. The ethics in question is linked to a servile conception of "dignity" which alienates the subject from his own subjectivity" (86). Contrary to Stevens, Miss Kenton is very concerned about the ethical side of Lord Darlington's decision, and this concern precedes her professional concerns, at least in principle. Her apprehension does not only stem from a personal understanding of professionalism or how this decision would affect her relationship with the two employees; she emphasizes that this decision is not just: "'Does it not occur to you, Mr Stevens, that to dismiss Ruth and Sarah on these grounds would be simply—*wrong*? I will not stand for such things. I

will not work in a house in which such things can occur'" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 157). What Stevens names as "foibles and sentiments" following this dialogue is the possibility of distancing oneself from one's social role to a degree which allows a demonstration of ethical judgement.

Lord Darlington, later, changes his mind and asks Stevens if he can find the girls who were dismissed and "recompense them somehow" (159). Stevens lets Miss Kenton know about this by referring to Lord Darlington "declar[ing] so unequivocally" this whole event a "terrible misunderstanding" (161). When Stevens expresses his relief at the news about Lord Darlington's decision by saying "I recall you were as distressed by the episode as I was," (161) Miss Kenton objects to him by stating that she fails to understand him: "As I recall, you thought it was only right and proper that Ruth and Sarah be sent packing. You were positively cheerful about it" (162). Their dialogue continues thus:

> "Now really, Miss Kenton, that is quite incorrect and unfair. The whole matter caused me great concern, great concern indeed. It is hardly the sort of thing I like to see happen in this house."
> "Then why, Mr Stevens, did you not tell me so at the time?"
> I gave a laugh, but for a moment was rather at a loss for an answer. Before I could formulate one, Miss Kenton put down her sewing and said:
> "Do you realize, Mr Stevens, how much it would have meant to me if you had thought to share your feelings last year? You knew how upset I was when my girls were dismissed. Do you realize how much it would have helped me? Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?" (162)

It is clear from these lines that Miss Kenton can see through Stevens's insistence on a seamless execution of the role of the butler even during occasions that require affective agency, which is a tendency that precludes the possibility of solidarity among peers. All these occasions clearly demonstrate Stevens's investment in his theory of dignity, and the lack of flexibility it brings along in social situations.

## 1.2 STEVENS'S NARRATIVE STYLE

The above dialogue is also very telling in terms of Stevens's stylistic choice of impersonal language, specifically his use of the impersonal pronoun "one." This is a

tendency he adopts frequently in his narrative: "'Really, Miss Kenton…' I picked up the tray on which I had gathered together the used crockery. 'Naturally, one disapproved of the dismissals. One would have thought that quite self-evident'" (162). Regarding Stevens's tendency to render his discourse "objective" especially at moments of emotional intensity, David James writes:

> Memories, for Stevens, are more manageable when objectified as 'topics', repackaged and protected from being recalled as potentially more traumatic instances of self-doubt or regret. In effect, Stevens warms to his theme precisely when 'speaking in broad generalizations,' choosing self-erasing forms of articulation that promise a certain degree of emotional protection, insofar as his brightly intoned truisms forestall his descent into periods of graver contemplation. (57)

Thus, Stevens's proclivity to use the impersonal pronoun "one" is most apparent at moments that require agency at an affective level, at emotionally loaded moments. In these occasions he attempts to render his discourse "objective". In his essay "The Discourse of History," Roland Barthes explains this tendency to empty the subject, in terms of a "referential illusion." Barthes argues that when the discourse of history is rendered objective by the annulling of the speaking subject, there is constituted an illusively direct relationship between the referent and the signifier, bypassing the signified: "In 'objective' history, the 'real' is never anything but an unformulated signified, sheltered behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent. This situation defines what we might call the *reality effect*" (Barthes, "History" 139). Explaining the relevance of the empty subject in terms of "objectivity" of discourse, Barthes maintains:

> On the level of discourse, objectivity—or the lack of the signs of the "speaker"—thus appears as a special form of image-repertoire, the product of what we might call the *referential illusion*, since here the historian claims to let the referent speak for itself. This illusion is not proper to historical discourse: how many novelists—in the realistic period—imagine they are being "objective" because they suppress the signs of the *I* in discourse! (132)

The moments in which Stevens tries to annul his presence as the speaking subject in his narrative by resorting to an objective use of language through the impersonal pronoun mark instances of unease about both stepping outside of his studied role as a butler, and what he perceives as his own part in Lord Darlington's former actions. In the above example, even though he had not expressed disapproval of Lord

Darlington's antisemitism while firing the maids—as he treated it as a duty—he uses the adverb "naturally" to generalize an anti-racist sentiment in a way which includes also him, and repeats the impersonal pronoun twice, which adds to the reality effect. These stylistic choices help him stay in control of his discourse and deny emotional engagement with Miss Kenton's accusation regarding his pretension. His use of "objective language" works both to create the reality effect, and to stay within the limits of his social role when confronted in a way which may require role distance or affective agency.

Such stylistic tendencies in Stevens's narrative voice, which are informed by the content of his narration require a discussion of his functional roles in *The Remains of the Day* as the historian, the realist narrator and the autobiographer. A variety of voices is available to Stevens, and this range which is enabled by the autobiographical frame is, again, qualified by his "theory of dignity." Stevens does not want to step out of his role as the butler of Darlington Hall even during his trip to Little Compton. For example, when he tries to figure out if he needs a new suit for the journey, he appeals to the audience by saying "I hope you do not think me unduly vain with regard to this last matter; it is just that one never knows when one might be obliged to give out that one is from Darlington Hall, and it is important that one be attired at such times in a manner worthy of one's position" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 11). The use of the impersonal pronoun is again prominent in this sentence, and as the reader later learns, Stevens is actually self-conscious about revealing that he worked for Lord Darlington, explaining this reluctance in terms of having to endure people's false judgements about his former employer. David James connects Stevens's continuous attempts to control himself in line with his theory of dignity, to his style: "Aspects of self-control thus become a stylistic feature while revealing to us a habitual state of mind—the self-command that twists into self-constraint, the guardedness that Stevens cannot prevent his professional self from habitually retaining, carrying over to, and enfolding his private self at the close of day" (60). Thus, in his attempt to efface his self-consciousness about revealing that he worked for Lord Darlington, Stevens, again resorts to "objective language" in line with his inability to distance himself from his professional role, to cover an inner conflict that requires affective agency.

In the course of *The Remains of the Day*, there are two occasions when Stevens finds himself in a situation where he might have to disclose to third parties that he

worked for Lord Darlington. On the second day of his journey, when he has "just crossed the border into Dorset," Stevens senses a "heated smell emanating from the car engine" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 123). Having immediately stopped the car fearing that he has damaged his employer's Ford, he observes that the lane "wind[s] quite sharply twenty yards or so in front," and decides to drive a bit more to see if he can find someone to get help from (123-124). He narrates this occasion in these words:

> [T]he lane continued to wind for some distance, and the high hedges on either side of me also persisted, obscuring my vision so that though I passed several gates, some of which clearly yielded on to driveways, I was unable to glimpse the houses themselves. I continued for another half-mile or so, the disturbing smell now growing stronger by the moment, until at last I came out on to a stretch of open road. I could now see some distance before me, and indeed, ahead to my left there loomed a tall Victorian house with a substantial front lawn and what was clearly a driveway converted from an old carriage track. (124)

The above quote exemplifies how this whole episode is narrated through a realistic literary technique: Stevens draws clear cause and effect relationships, notes the distance in a unit of measure, he "objectively" relates his sense perceptions and describes these through specific details. In *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism*, Phillip J. Barrish explains that some of the techniques realist writers employ in creating "the odour of the real," are "solidity of specification," "point-of-view narration," "realist discourse" which entails "conveying an effect of objectivity, neutrality, transparency," the narrator acting like an "imperfect historian," and "direct quotation" (41-57). Barrish concludes that "it is part of literary realism's meaning as a genre that a story's actual status as "a make-believe" should not be admitted within the space of the story's narration" (55). The narrative technique Stevens employs in relating the rest of his ordeal with the car engine also points to realistic narration in that he continues to give specific details and situates these details in his helper's personal history. When Stevens drives through the open gates and approaches the back door of the house, he notes that the door is "'opened by a man dressed in his shirt sleeves, wearing no tie, but who, upon [his] asking for the chauffeur of the house, replie[s] cheerfully that [he] had 'hit the jackpot first time'" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 124). The chauffeur detects that the radiator lacks water, brings a jug of water from the

house, and begins to "chat amiably." Inferring from Stevens's interest in the maintenance of the house, the chauffeur understands that Stevens himself is also a butler, "one of them top-notch butlers. From one of them big posh houses" (125). Stevens's narration continues thus:

> He then asked me where it was I was employed, and when I told him he leant his head to one side with a quizzical look.
>
> "Darlington Hall," he said to himself. "Darlington Hall. Must be a really posh place, it rings a bell even to an idiot like yours truly. Darlington Hall. Hang on, you don't mean Darlington Hall, Lord Darlington's place?"
>
> "It was Lord Darlington's residence until his death three years ago," I informed him. "The house is now the residence of Mr John Farraday, an American gentleman."
>
> "You really must be top-notch working in a place like that. Can't be many like you left, eh?" Then his voice changed noticeably as he inquired: "You mean you actually used to work for that Lord Darlington?"
>
> He was eyeing me carefully again. I said: "Oh no, I am employed by Mr John Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the house from the Darlington family."
>
> "Oh, so you wouldn't have known that Lord Darlington. Just that I wondered what he was like. What sort of bloke he was." (126)

What is very remarkable about this part of the narration is that Stevens, even though he is writing an autobiography—a genre which arises expectations of self-representation—acts almost like a camera throughout the dialogue. He faithfully recounts what he is noticing, for example when he comments that the chauffeur's look is "quizzical," or when he notes how the chauffeur's voice changes as he asks about Lord Darlington. Except for these evaluative comments, the narration is composed of direct quotations. In his essay "From Aristotelian Mimesis to Bourgeois Realism" which surveys the histories of Realist movements and differentiates them from the concept of "mimesis" as a general principle of artistic imitation, Jan Bruck notes that "[I]n the later half of the 19$^{th}$ century, the formula 'truth to life' became a short-hand description of the realist aesthetics, 'life' being roughly synonymous with 'reality'" (198). Stevens faithfully enacts a realist aesthetics through his narrative technique in order to avoid commenting on his apparent lie during the course of this episode in narration. The reader is well aware that Stevens is lying, but the realistic narrative

allows him the space and time to avoid commenting on his lie. In this case, the realist narrative technique allows a disassociation between the focalizer and the narrator in a diary, a genre which supports little "dissonant self-narration"[5]. The "objective language" covers Stevens's lie at the level of the narrated event and delays the confrontation until Stevens activates his functional role as the autobiographer. Thus, different functional roles are supported by the autobiographical frame of the novel, which allows historical details, realistic narration and autobiographical disclosure.

In this sense, Stevens's realist technique in relating this episode allows the continuation of the plot, while emphasizing a question regarding the truthfulness of the autobiographer. Such breach of confidence is against realism's focus on "truth to life," on the level of the content—the reader clearly knows the narrator is lying—although it is enabled by a stylistic reproduction of the realist technique. Regarding this discrepancy between realism's aspirations to be truthful and what it stylistically enables, Varun Begley writes: "At the level of narrative, realism flatters the spectator's sense of de-historicized omniscience through orchestrated disclosures and revelations. Such narrative organization stifles ambiguity in favour of causal clarity and ideological restoration. Through the ensemble of these characteristics, it can be argued that realism achieves a powerful conservatism" (338). Begley's reasoning introduces Roland Barthes's arguments in his famous essay "The Reality Effect," in which he claims that the obsession of realist narration with "solidity of specification" and "conveying an effect of objectivity" as mentioned above, works to the effect of supporting the status quo. Barthes writes:

> [N]othing could indicate why we should halt the details of description here and not here; if it were not subject to an aesthetic or rhetorical choice, any 'view' would be inexhaustible by discourse . . . on the other hand by positing the referential as real, by pretending to follow it in a submissive fashion, realistic description avoids being reduced to fantasmatic activity (a precaution which was supposed necessary to the "objectivity" of the account) . . . . ("Reality" 145)

[5] In her book *Transparent Minds*, Dorrit Cohn refers to Proust's writing by emphasizing "the cognitive privilege of the narrating over the experiencing self" (151). She calls this type of autodiegesis "dissonant self-narration." Although diary is a genre which is written daily, without much difference of experience between the protagonist and the narrator, as Stevens narrates this part acting almost like a camera, there occurs a dissonance between what the reader knows the narrator has experienced and what the protagonist claims to have experienced.

Roland Barthes associates this "aesthetic or rhetorical choice" which at the same time "avoids being reduced to fantasmatic activity," by positing it as real, with a tendency to recreate the status quo. As the signifier feigns being directly connected to the referent instead of the signified, the discourse of realism, he argues, re-creates the representation as "reality:"

> Semiotically, the "concrete detail" is constituted by the direct collusion of a referent and a signifier; the signified is expelled from the sign, and with it, of course, the possibility of developing a form of the signified, i.e., narrative structure itself. . . . This is what we might call the *referential illusion*. The truth of this illusion is this: eliminated from the realist speech-act as a signified of denotation, the real returns it as a signified of connotation; for just when these details are reputed to denote the real directly, all that they do—without saying so—is signify it; Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: *we are the rea1*. . . . (147-148)

Thus "converting historical vertigo into semiotic mastery" realist narrators pass their own perception, which is necessarily informed by their own world-view, as reality, by using information that create the "reality effect," through "insignificant (though not incongruous) details that mimic the perceived meaninglessness and contingency of material reality" (Begley 339). By noting that "Roland Barthes saw realism, much as Brecht saw traditional theatre, as an elaborate ruse for the preservation of the status quo," Matthew Potolsky summarizes Barthes's thinking in these words:

> For Barthes, all literature is woven out of codes that seem to represent reality only because we never recognize their conventionality. . . . [The realist artist] weaves an elaborate tissue of clichés and commonplaces that produces an impression of reflection by way of convention alone. This tissue strikes us as realistic not because it accurately reflects the world but because it matches our expectations. . . . In principle, the codes of culture can go on infinitely, with one code leading by association to any number of other codes. Realism tries to 'jam' this play of connotation, to tie each code to a single referent. It is in this regard, profoundly conservative. (109-110)

Stevens's desire to empty the subject at moments of disclosure about having worked for Lord Darlington points to his desire to subsume these moments under the rubric of objective "material reality," but it also shows his investment in the status quo. On these occasions, he does not want to be challenged about what he perceives as his own part in Lord Darlington's actions, as he is quite self-conscious about these.

The second time Stevens lies about having worked for Lord Darlington is during a dialogue between him and Mr. Farraday's guest, Mrs. Wakefield. Mr. Farraday leads the Wakefields through what seems to Stevens like an "unnecessarily extensive tour of the premises," (Ishiguro, *Remains* 128) letting them know about the antique details of the architecture of the house, "pointing out details on corn icings and window frames, and describing with some flourish 'what the English lords used to do' in each room" (129). Mrs. Wakefield is impressed, but as Mr. Farraday will later disclose, not as much as he would have liked her to be. When the tour ends, Mrs. Wakefield continues to inspect the house by herself. When Stevens passes nearby, she turns to him and says:

> "Oh, Stevens, perhaps you're the one to tell me. This arch here looks seventeenth century, but isn't it the case that it was built quite recently? Perhaps during Lord Darlington's time?"
> "It is possible, madam."
> […]
> Then, lowering her voice, Mrs Wakefield had said: "But tell me, Stevens, what was this Lord Darlington like? Presumably you must have worked for him."
> "I didn't, madam, no."
> "Oh, I thought you did. I wonder why I thought that." (129-130)

Having failed to impress his visitors as much as he would have liked to, and stating that he "look[ed] pretty much a fool" when Mrs. Wakefield contradicted him about Stevens having "serv[ed] a real English lord" (130), Mr. Farraday confronts Stevens about his lie. The discrepancy between the kinds of importance Stevens and Mr. Farraday attribute to the English mansion, or being associated with it is clear in their dialogue:

> "I mean to say, Stevens, this is a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. 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?"
> "I venture to say you do, sir."
> [...]
> "But dammit, Stevens, why did you tell her such a tale?"
> I considered the situation for a moment, then said: "I'm very sorry, sir. But it is to do with the ways of this country."
> "What are you talking about, man?"
> "I mean to say, sir, that it is not customary in England for an employee to discuss his past employers." (131)

For Stevens, then, being English comes with a set of characteristics that are rather spiritual in tone. For example, when he speaks about the beauty of the English landscape, he explains it through the country being called Great Britain: "And yet what precisely is this 'greatness'? Just where, or in what, does it lie? . . . I would say that it is the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint" (29). He compares these clearly projected set of traits which draws a parallel with what Stevens finds valuable in butlers, with the sights offered by America and Africa, finding them inferior on the account of their "unseemly demonstrativeness" (29). Mr. Farraday, on the other hand, treats the whole issue of "Englishness" as an eccentric addition to his inventory; he brags about what old English lords used to do in which room to the effect of impressing his visitors through the notion that he can afford buying what is unique: an old English mansion which comes with a history. The values Stevens painstakingly tries to outline and specify in relation to "Englishness" throughout the novel, and his investment in these—dignity, restraint, decorum, loyalty, composure—then, have already become commodities that can be bought and sold after two world wars, and Stevens's painstaking attempts at specifying what dignity, as an attribute specific to English butlers, is can be associated with such anxiety. After, again, narrating Lord Darlington's confrontation with him as objectively as possible, Stevens finally reflects on his dubious behaviour:

> [I]t seems to me that my odd conduct can be very plausibly explained in terms of my wish to avoid any possibility of hearing any further such nonsense concerning his lordship; that is to say, I have chosen to tell white lies in both instances as the simplest means of avoiding unpleasantness. This does seem a very plausible explanation the more I think about it; for it is true, nothing vexes me more these days than to hear this sort of nonsense being repeated. (132-133)

Stevens notes that "when one has so much else to think about, it is easy not to give such matters a great deal of attention," but what is also possible is that the multiplicity of voices available to Stevens thanks to the autobiographical discourse, allows him to reflect on the tensions of his behaviour caused by various professional and personal concerns. While he performs as the butler, his theory of dignity requires that he exist in a seamless unity with his social role which necessitates decorum, loyalty, composure, and even though he critically reflects on what it means to be a great butler,

he cannot think this through any other role available to him as he treats "role distance" to be contradictory to his interpretation of "dignity." The autobiographical frame, on the other hand, allows him to perform as a historian, a realist narrator and an autobiographer, which provides him with the versatility to think through different possibilities, allowing him a space to reflect critically on the tensions of his professionalism. Amit Marcus connects Stevens's increasing awareness of his own inner processes to his physical distance from Darlington Hall, and his job there: "The six days of narration during a ride through England are Stevens's first break from his incessant labor; . . . it is the first time that he is free for introspection and retrospection. The physical and mental alteration produced by the departure from Darlington Hall reinforces the narrating character's longing for change" (Marcus 138). Although it is not possible to decide whether keeping a diary has been a habit for Stevens, I argue that Stevens's increasing self-awareness is also caused by his autobiographical endeavour. For example, while trying to make sense of his "white lies," Stevens notes "[t]his does seem a very plausible explanation the more I think about it," and this sentence testifies to the possibility that he did not reflect on his behaviour in the time between the event and its retelling. As he comments on how his relationship with Miss Kenton deteriorated due to his constant appeals to professionalism as he himself outlined, Stevens even reflects on his functional role as the autobiographer:

> But then, I suppose, when with the benefit of hindsight one begins to search one's past for such 'turning points', one is apt to start seeing them everywhere. Not only my decision in respect of our evening meetings, but also that episode in my pantry, if one felt so inclined, could be seen as such a 'turning point.' What would have transpired, one may ask, had one responded slightly differently that evening she came in with her vase of flowers? (Ishiguro, *Remains* 185)

In his essay "Self-Making and World-Making," Jerome Bruner explains this tendency in autobiographical writing to mark certain "turning points" through recollection in stylistic terms; he argues that in marking what is important about the life narrative, the narrator also gains agency to direct the readers' experience by highlighting what is important:

> There is one feature of Western autobiography that needs special mention. It relates to what I shall call the highlighting or "marking" of turning points. By "turning points" I mean those episodes in which, as if to underline the power

> of the agent's intentional states, the narrator attributes a crucial change or stance in the protagonist's story to a belief, a conviction, a thought.
> [...] I see the construction of narrative "turning points" as a device further to distinguish what is ordinary and expectable (i.e., folk psychological) from that which is idiosyncratic and quintessentially agentive. (31-32)

Bruner notes that turning points "represent a way in which people free themselves in their self-consciousness from their history, their banal destiny, their conventionality. In doing so, they mark off the narrator's consciousness from the protagonist's . . . . Turning points are steps toward narratorial consciousness" (32). Stevens's reflection about his functional role as the autobiographer also happens at a moment where the text allows "dissonant self-narration," when the narrator's thinking differs considerably from the protagonist's. In relating two episodes between him and Miss Kenton as turning points, Stevens mentions how he opposed continuing with their "cocoa evenings," after an occasion in which Miss Kenton says she is overly tired and has been wishing for her bed (Ishiguro, *Remains* 183). The second one is about Miss Kenton's aunt's death. When Miss Kenton receives the news of her aunt's death, she asks for some time alone. After Stevens leaves the room, he notices that he forgot to give his condolences; however, fearing that she might be crying, he does not re-enter. At the evening of the same day, after an attempt to initiate conversation, he finds himself lecturing Miss Kenton about how to deal with the new maids and pointing out certain shortcomings of their services and her supervision (187-188). Presenting these moments as "turning points" in their relationship, Stevens reasons:

> In any case, while it is all very well to talk of 'turning points', one can surely only recognize such moments in retrospect. Naturally, when one looks back to such instances today, they may indeed take the appearance of being crucial, precious moments in one's life; but of course, at the time, this was not the impression one had. Rather, it was as though one had available a never-ending number of days, months, years in which to sort out the vagaries of one's relationship with Miss Kenton; an infinite number of further opportunities in which to remedy the effect of this or that misunderstanding. There was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such evidently small incidents would render whole dreams forever irredeemable. (188-189)

This reflection on recollection is the first occasion Stevens expresses regret about his former behaviour and admits to having a romantic interest in and dreams about Miss Kenton. Thus, these two occasions which Stevens labels as "turning points" and expresses regret about, as Jerome Bruner notes, separates the narrator's consciousness

from the protagonist's. Consequently, it can be argued that Stevens gains critical agency over his past, on occasions which he could not see through any other lens than that of his occupational role, through his autobiographical endeavour. Amit Marcus argues that such a change in Steven's reflections on himself and what he chooses to disclose is, also, supported through his understanding of an audience, the tensions brought about by having a "virtual narratee:"

> The narratee represents the potential for other interpretations of the story, and in order to comprehend them, the narrator has to distance himself from his ordinary ways of thought. This distancing is achieved by changing his perspective, through introspection, from that of the static and reserved self to a self-for-another and, through retrospection, from the present to the past. Stevens's oscillation from one point of view to another . . . subverts the consistency, coherence, and clarity of the story by introducing elements of confusion and internal contradictions. (Marcus 141)

Arguably, the "virtual narratee," in Stevens's case, when specified in these terms is the audience of an autobiography; because, unless the narrative mode is autodiegetic and the narrative is about the self it is not plausible to mention "introspection," and not possible to speak of internal contradictions regarding the self. Thus, Stevens's autobiographical endeavour, which allows him to act as a narrator, an historian and an autobiographer, instead of seamlessly identifying with his occupation, provides him the otherwise non-existent distance to reflect critically on the personal tensions that shape his life.

### 1.3 STEVENS'S POLITICS AND THE STATUS QUO

To return to the topic of Stevens misrepresenting himself on occasions, the third time he finds himself in a situation which may require disclosing information concerning his employment under Lord Darlington occurs while he, unexpectedly, has to stay at Mrs. and Mr. Taylor's house upon not noticing that the Ford is out of gas. On the third day of his journey, while looking for an inn at Tavistock, Stevens finds out that there is an agricultural fair in town, and he cannot secure a place to stay. Upon the suggestion of the landlady of an inn he tried to stay at, he drives toward a roadside inn, but he cannot find it. He tries to drive to the next town; however, the car runs out of gas before he is able to arrive. Leaving the Ford at the roadside, he starts walking towards a village when he encounters Mr. Taylor. Mr. Taylor lets him know that there are no inns at the village, but he and his wife would be happy to accommodate Stevens

for the night. He accepts the offer and proposes "remuneration for their hospitality," but "they will not hear of it" (Ishiguro, *Remains* 168). When they start having supper, there comes a visitor, George Andrews who "just happened to be walking by" (191). Immediately taking Stevens for an aristocrat, George Andrews says that it is rare that "the likes of" Stevens comes to their village and "they are all very pleased [he] could stop by" (191). Stevens notes, "[t]he way he said this seemed to suggest the whole village was aware of my 'mishap' and subsequent arrival at this cottage. In fact, as I was soon to discover, this was very close to being the case . . ." (193). In this fashion, a couple more people arrive at the Taylors' house to meet Stevens.

The conversation soon takes a turn towards how Stevens is different from another "gent" who used to live in Moscombe: Mr. Lindsay. The villagers discuss how Stevens's Ford puts Mr. Lindsay's car "in the shade," and how Stevens is modest like a "real" gentleman whereas Mr. Lindsay [t]hought he was so much better than [them], and he took [them] all for fools (193). After they decide that there is something distinct which marks Stevens as a gentleman, Mr. Morgan asks Stevens what this quality might be. Stevens's answer is modest in tone but makes a big impact: "'It is hardly for me to pronounce upon qualities I may or may not possess. However, as far as this particular question is concerned, one would suspect that the quality being referred to might be most usefully termed 'dignity'" (195). Stevens observes that his answer "cause[s] much satisfaction" (195); but it also encourages Harry Smith to express his opinion that "[d]ignity is not just something for gentlemen" to have, it is something everyone in the country can strive for:

> That's what we fought Hitler for, after all. If Hitler had had things his way, we'd just be slaves now. The whole world would be a few masters and millions upon millions of slaves. And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to be had in being a slave. That's what we fought for and that's what we won. 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 free and 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, if you'll excuse me, sir. (195-196)

Stevens notes to the reader that they were at "cross purposes" and answers Harry Smith by simply saying that he is correct. When later they ask Stevens if he had much to do with politics, he answers them by saying "not directly as such" (196). One of the visitors, having heard about a Mr. Stevens as a member of the parliament on the radio,

asks him whether this could be him. Stevens continues to narrate how his answer causes a chain of misunderstandings when he says, "In fact, I tended to concern myself with international affairs more than domestic ones. Foreign policy, that is to say" (197). Noticing that his listeners are in awe, Stevens immediately adds, "'I never held any high office, mind you. Any influence I exerted was in a strictly unofficial capacity'" (197), and continues:

> In fact, all in all, I suppose I have been very fortunate, I would be the first to admit that. It has been my good fortune, after all, to have consorted not just with Mr Churchill, but with many other great leaders and men of influence — from America and from Europe. And when you think that it was my good fortune to have had their ear on many great issues of the day, yes, when I think back, I do feel a certain gratitude. It's a great privilege, after all, to have been given a part to play, however small, on the world's stage. (197-198)

Stevens's conceptualization of his effect on the "world's stage" in misrepresenting himself echoes a former explanation he makes to the reader regarding how different generations of butlers conceptualize the world. Comparing it with the former generation's understanding of the world as a ladder, on which they rise towards families with a higher place in aristocracy, Stevens proposes that his generation sees the world as a wheel:

> To us, then, the world was a wheel, revolving with these great houses at the hub, their mighty decisions emanating out to all else, rich and poor, who revolved around them. It was the aspiration of all those of us with professional ambition to work our way as close to this hub as we were each of us capable. For we were, as I say, an idealistic generation for whom the question was not simply one of how well one practised 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. (122)

This tendency to believe that great world affairs revolve around the diplomatic endeavours of the English elite such as Lord Darlington, and that he is doing his part regarding these world affairs by serving the elite indeed marks Stevens's work ethics and his politics. After the First World War, Lord Darlington is exceedingly concerned that the Versailles treaty is stifling the German people; he says, "[i]t is unbecoming to go on hating an enemy like this once a conflict is over. Once you've got a man on the canvas, that ought to be the end of it. You don't then proceed to kick him (91)" while

comparing French policy after WWI with the English one. This speech is made during a big gathering at Darlington Hall, an official meeting among officials who will attend a conference in Switzerland during which amendments to the Versailles Treaty will be discussed. Both Lord Darlington and Stevens treat this 1923 gathering at Darlington Hall as an occasion that will affect world politics, and this occasion which requires Stevens to demonstrate his professionalism to an utmost degree, again, conflicts with an occasion which requires personal affective capacity.

During this gathering, after much preparation, Stevens's father falls ill before the dinner. Their short talk while William is on his death bed begins by William questioning if everything is under control downstairs and ends with him telling Stevens "'I'm proud of you. A good son. I hope I've been a good father to you. I suppose I haven't'" (101). Stevens descends the stairs and starts serving right and left, as the German countess will later point out, looking like three men (112); however, at one point Lord Darlington attracts his attention and asks if he is well by saying: "'You look as though you're crying'" (110). Stevens explains this to be caused by "the strains of a hard day," (110), and continues with his work. In narrating, he reflects on this occasion in these words:

> Let me make clear that when I say the conference of 1923, and that night in particular, constituted a turning point in my professional development, I am speaking very much in terms of my own more humble standards. Even so, if you consider the pressures contingent on me that night, you may not think I delude myself unduly if I go so far as to suggest that I did perhaps display, in the face of everything, at least in some degree a "dignity" worthy of someone like Mr Marshall—or come to that, my father. Indeed, why should I deny it? For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph. (114-115)

This sequence of events is the first time Stevens speaks about expressing or, at least, betraying emotion while serving, having told in effect that he cried. This is a detail he might have omitted, for it is at odds with his theory of dignity, but this detail makes a crucial contribution to his later point that he actually displayed dignity by continuing to serve under such emotionally straining conditions. Such work ethics is supported through his understanding of contributing to world-peace, serving humanity by serving Lord Darlington, and this rationale is a legitimization of his strict theory of dignity in that such a role in great affairs of the world-stage requires such discipline.

To return to the discussion of democracy at Moscombe, Stevens noting his role on the "world's stage," encourages Harry Smith further. He explains his own interpretation regarding what having a role on the world's stage means:

> The way I see it, England's a democracy, and we in this village have suffered as much as anyone fighting to keep it that way. Now it's up to us to exercise our rights, every one of us. Some fine young lads from this village gave their lives to give us that privilege, and the way I see it, each one of us here now owes it to them to play our part. We've all got strong opinions here, and it's our responsibility to get them heard. (198)

In these lines it is apparent that, Harry Smith's nationalist sentiment is mixed with the democratic. His vision of the "world's stage" is defined by an understanding of representative democracy as verging on participatory. Stevens later comments on how his understanding differs from that of Harry Smith: "There is, after all, a real limit to how much ordinary people can learn and know, and to demand that each and everyone of them contribute 'strong opinions' to the great debates of the nation cannot, surely, be wise" (204). Such thinking reminds him of an occasion with Lord Darlington and his friends, in which Lord Darlington's friend Mr. Spenser asks him a series of questions regarding world politics and economy adorned with terminology:

> We need your help on a certain matter we've been debating. Tell me, do you suppose the debt situation regarding America is a significant factor in the present low levels of trade? Or do you suppose this is a red herring and that the abandonment of the gold standard is at the root of the matter?
> I was naturally a little surprised by this, but then quickly saw the situation for what it was; that is to say, it was clearly expected that I be baffled by the question. Indeed, in the moment or so that it took for me to perceive this and compose a suitable response, I may even have given the outward impression of struggling with the question, for I saw all the gentlemen in the room exchange mirthful smiles.
> "I'm very sorry, sir," I said, "but I am unable to be of assistance on this matter." (205)

On this occasion, Stevens's class-conscious role embracement requires him to merely complement the scene and not question his deployment in this vulgar demonstration of elitism. Stevens's professionalism does not admit versatility and critical thinking regarding his social role, which results in a sort of defeatism expressed in apathy in terms of participatory politics:

> One is simply accepting an inescapable truth: that the likes of you and I will never be in a position to comprehend the great affairs of today's world, and our best course will always be to put our trust in an employer we judge to be wise and honourable, and to devote our energies to the task of serving him to the best of our ability. . . . What is there 'undignified', what is there at all culpable in such an attitude? How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish? . . . . It is hardly my fault if his lordship's life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste—and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account. (211)

Thus, Stevens's strict policy of professionalism which does not allow him any "role distance," and his investment in the status quo causes him to bar himself from emerging as a political subject. It is clear from his narration that his autobiographical discourse is not free from him trying to redeem Lord Darlington, but the occasions in which he tries to dissociate himself from Lord Darlington's actions and notoriety is marked by a wish to redeem himself and his autobiographical endeavour expands his inventory in terms of dealing with such resentment.

The fifth day in Stevens's narration on which he meets Miss Kenton is skipped. The reader learns about it through Stevens's narration on the sixth day, while he is waiting for the lights to be turned on at the pier of the Weymouth port, upon being informed by an official about the scenery. Through this narration, the reader learns that during their conversation with Miss Kenton about her letter, when Stevens reminds Miss Kenton about specifically where she says "'the rest of my life stretches out like an emptiness before me'" (248) in her letter, Miss Kenton assures Stevens that her life does not stretch out empty before her; she is not ill-treated, and she is happy. Miss Kenton adds: "[O]f course, there aren't occasions now and . . . when you think to yourself: 'What a terrible mistake I've made with my life.' . . . I get to thinking about a life I may have had with you, Mr Stevens. . . . After all, there's no turning back the clock now" (251). This passage marks the end of the narrative line which started with Stevens admitting to have a romantic interest for Miss Kenton, but is not the last of the disclosures in which Stevens admits regret.

At the pier's side, a man sits next to Stevens. Stevens learns that he is also a butler, retired long ago. In a sort of monologue to which his audience only contributes by nodding at this point, Stevens reveals that he thinks he gave his best to Lord Darlington and does not have much else to give. (255). He refers to his mistakes which he told was minor in the beginning of his narration and reveals that he cannot amend

them however hard he tries. Afterwards, to the surprise of the man sitting next to him, he starts crying and says:

> Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. . . . He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. . . . I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that? (255-256)

At this point, Stevens's well-wrought and rehearsed theory of dignity whose boundaries and context were quite clear until this point is conflated with an everyday sense of the word. Stevens refers to his former endeavour which required him to perform only and seamlessly his occupational role as the butler to be one which did not leave him any space for personal mistakes, which indicates his regret about him deprioritising everything that would fall into the category of "private." Stevens's regret slowly turns into a future plan:

> It occurs to me, furthermore, that bantering is hardly an unreasonable duty for an employer to expect a professional to perform. . . . Perhaps, then, when I return to Darlington Hall tomorrow . . . I will begin practising with renewed effort. I should hope, then, that by the time of my employer's return, I shall be in a position to pleasantly surprise him. (258)

In this quotation, Stevens still refers to bantering as a duty, something that would "pleasantly surprise" Mr. Farraday; so, he still tries to master this social skill professionally. However, when he questions if bantering is the "key to human warmth," (258) the reader understands that his priorities have changed, he is much more open to affective possibilities in life.

Thus, in the light of the discussions above, it is possible to say that Stevens's autobiographical endeavour, which leads him to perform through multiple voices, when thought in juxtaposition with his habitual insistence on a strict occupational role embracement lets him have critical distance to the events he narrated, and he eventually finds it in himself to resolve to make changes regarding affective possibilities in life. In this way, it is possible to say that his narrative directs him closer to "fictional" possibilities, when compared to his existence at the beginning of the novel, which was developed in strict "referentiality" to his occupational role. Thus, the

autobiographical frame which enables the play between referentiality and fictionality, introduces the change in Stevens's characterization, and renders his narration more open to fictional possibilities.

## CHAPTER 2

## *NEVER LET ME GO*

> If the identity we say we are cannot possibly capture us and marks immediately an excess and opacity that falls outside the categories of identity, then any effort ‘‘to give an account of oneself ‘‘ will have to fail in order to approach being true. As we ask to know the other, or ask that the other say, finally or definitively, who he or she is, it will be important not to expect an answer that will ever satisfy. By not pursuing satisfaction and by letting the question remain open, even enduring, we let the other live, since life might be understood as precisely that which exceeds any account we may try to give of it. If letting the other live is part of any ethical definition of recognition, then this version of recognition will be based less on knowledge than on an apprehension of epistemic limits.
>
> —*Giving an Account of Oneself,* Judith Butler—

Kazuo Ishiguro’s 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* is a fictional memoir about the students of an apparently prestigious English boarding school, narrated by Kathy H., one of the students. Hailsham students who would normally be in a very advantageous position are gradually revealed to be in a very dire and gloomy condition; they are clones copied from human beings, for the sole purpose of obligatorily donating their vital organs, in another sense, to be coercively murdered by the state regulations. The narrator, Kathy H., is one of the three protagonists of the novel. At the beginning of her narration, which takes place in late 1990s England, she clearly states that she is a “carer” but what this job entails is left ambiguous. She tells how in her third year as a carer, one of her donors, after hearing that she is from Hailsham, wants to know all about her years at this prestigious boarding school, and Kathy reveals that this is the reason why she grew into a habit of reminiscing more and more about her school days. Through a long process in the narrative, the reader is let into the knowledge that Kathy, Ruth and Tommy are copied from human beings (referred to as “normals” in the novel), along with all Hailsham students and those from other such schools, in accordance with a state program thanks to which “normals” are able to cure terminal illnesses through organ transplantations. In the present chapter, I try to analyse the

stories students create and stick to in order to make sense of their lives in the enclosed space of Hailsham by explicating how such investment in "fictionalizing" characterizes Kathy and her friends initially. After comparing her autobiographical endeavour to the biographical approach the Hailsham administration takes towards art, I explore how Kathy's own autobiographical discourse diverts from this understanding, and I try to understand how the narrative flow between fictionality and referentiality, which affects Kathy's characterization, is manifest in her narrative style.

Hailsham is a co-ed boarding school; the first part of the novel is concerned with the friendship dynamics among Kathy, Ruth and Tommy, as well as their relationships with the other students and the guardians, which entail group dynamics. Issues that help the reader characterize the students and their situations are narrated, such as how they did not enter the woods surrounding the school, Tommy's anger tantrums, their relation to the students' artworks, and their friendship dynamics. In this first section, the atmosphere around the "donations" is rather foggy and alluded to but not openly discussed. The second part of the novel takes place in the Cottages, where the clones live for some limited time before they are ready to start their training as carers. In this part Ruth and Tommy are a long-established couple and the reader is introduced to the idea of "possibles", people from whom the clones might be copied, and the "deferrals", a theory about an opportunity that is only granted to a couple who prove that they are in love, to have some years to themselves before the donations start. This part ends with Kathy leaving for her training to be a carer. In the third part, the reader sees Kathy becoming a carer for Ruth after her first donation. Upon Ruth's suggestion that they should go to see a boat ashore on some marshy ground in North Wales, where Tommy's donation centre also happens to be, the three meet and Ruth apologizes for keeping Kathy and Tommy apart all these years; she suggests that it was them who should have been together and they have a chance at a deferral. The theory around the deferrals is that, the couple would be able to prove that they are in love through their artworks collected during their Hailsham years or those created later which reveal "what [they] were like inside" (Ishiguro, *Never* 173). The Madame, who regularly visited Hailsham to choose the best artworks for her "gallery" should know the rest of the story. Some time after their trip to see the boat, Ruth "completes"[6] on

[6] "To complete" is for a clone to die after or during donations. Nathan Snaza argues that this figurative usage points to an understanding of clone lives as "incomplete" until they give everything to humans:

her second donation, and Kathy becomes the carer of Tommy. They understand that the idea of deferrals is an unlikely one, yet they still go to see the Madame. At this point Hailsham is closed after what Miss Emily, who is also at the Madame's house, calls "the Morningdale scandal" (Ishiguro, *Never* 253) and she explains that there is no deferral and that there never has been, although she knows about the rumours. The narration ends before Kathy starts donating.

A particular aspect of possible political systems that might be observed in the novel makes its political atmosphere very resistant to the naturalizing and universalizing tendencies of ideological manipulation, which aims to hide the relationship of domination under the guise of "necessity", through certain dichotomies such as "stronger/weaker", "active/passive" or any other essentializing variation. The clones and the "normals" are genetically the same, there are no clear distinctions[7] between the dominant and marginal groups in terms of age, sex or race. In this sense, the novel lays bare the purely contingent dynamics of political domination, the divergent, nonlinear and time-varying relationships between the oppressor and the oppressed. However, despite how educated the clones are in liberal arts and some sciences[8], they hardly ever object to their oppression, and dissidence among the clones is non-existent.

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"The donors must give themselves completely to the normals, without remainder. As long as they live, and have yet to give everything, they are incomplete" (224). He associates the ability "to give" with an involvement of "will", which, he proposes, cannot be the case because the clones do not have a say in this. After he notes the Western tradition of considering the "telos" of education as "becoming human" exemplified by both Rousseau and Schiller, he reads Hailsham's mission as creating a memory in the clones which "en-soul"s them enough to make organ-recipients feel that the clones are capable of giving. Although I appreciate his reading of Hailsham's mission as creating a doubly "manufactured consent" for the purposes of "normals," I'd rather argue that "to complete" refers to the political teleology behind the clones program as conceived by the state, instead of a general ontology of the clone-normal relationships. That the state considers the purpose of a clone's life fulfilled by dying after a donation, I think, points to a difference of understanding regarding the clones between Hailsham and the state, rather than exposing Hailsham as a direct tool of the state, which acts as the agent of imbuing the clones with the ability to "give", so appeases the consciences of the "normals." On another note, I also think it is very telling that the clone deaths should be denoted through a euphemism, as this figure of speech can be regarded as a model for the whole of the clone-"normal" interactions in the novel; the knowledge transfer between the two groups is through avoiding many of the harder and darker aspects of their relationships. The narratives the clones create among themselves also parallel the concept of "euphemism", they very rarely face what actually is going on, especially the darker issues are dealt with through narratives that displace them, however vital they may be.

[7] The only clear distinction between the two groups is regarding their reproductive capacity, the clones cannot reproduce through sexual intercourse, they are infertile. But this is not a variation which is exclusive to clones, when older people or people with problems about fertility are taken into consideration.

[8] Especially in the passages where Tommy accidentally gets a cut on his elbow, and is duped by his friends into believing that he might "slip it out" if he doesn't keep his arm straight, the reader

Initially, in this chapter, I explore the conditions which make this conformity a possibility, especially scrutinizing Hailsham's position both as an Ideological State Apparatus, and as an element of the "capillary functioning" of the state power[9]. I aim to demonstrate that the stories the students constantly create in order to make sense and almost intentionally not make sense of their surroundings and their position in these work against their own interests. Their situation is aggravated by the school guardians who leave the narrational gaps and ambiguities in those stories mostly unattended and keep silent, which essentially work to leave the clones in the dark regarding their conditions and their futures, as Miss Emily, the headmistress of the school, later explains through their purpose of "sheltering" the clones (Ishiguro, *Never* 263). Through an analysis of how this narrative quality, which is reinforced by the guardians by leaving the clones in the dark, works to the effect of suspension of possible dissidence on the part of the Hailsham students, I try to show how this enclosed space entails not only surveillance by the guardians, but also peer-surveillance; both types contributing to the clones' self-surveillance. With this analysis, I am to understand the initial conditions which characterizes Kathy as the narrator. After focusing on the stories surrounding the woods, students' approach to Tommy's anger tantrums, and his initial lack of interest in creating artworks, I will try to connect these analyses to the Hailsham administration's understanding of art and its implications regarding "biographical criticism." Comparing their understanding of art and biographical criticism to Judith Butler's understanding of the subject's

understands that they are not educated in all sciences, particularly not in Anatomy (Ishiguro, *Never* 84-85). This idea goes far enough to become a joke among the students entailing the possibility of any organ slipping out.

[9] In this sense, I will be benefiting from the discourses of both Ideological Criticism and Geneological Criticism, although these two have historically been regarded almost as contradictory, even by Michel Foucault himself (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 118.; Allsobrook 43-48). The contradiction is, as Foucault explains, in Ideological Criticism what is purportedly "ideological" stands in opposition to what is considered to be "true," instead of "seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" as the Geneological position regarding truth entails (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 118). A second contradiction, as Christopher Allsobrook explains, is regarding the position of the critic, who in schools of Ideological Criticism seems to be free from one of the main functions of ideology, "false-consciousness." I will be following the position Allsobrook suggests in his Ph.D. dissertation, that the two schools can be seen as complementary, because both investigate the ways individuals work against their own interests, and Geneological Criticism's position which problematizes also the critic's stand-ground finds its correspondence in Ideological Criticism, as the critics would necessarily be conditioned through their own historical situations, not be in a universally valid position free from "false-consciousness." So, ideological criticism can address not only "ideological captivity" but also "aspectival captivity," a limited perspective, which Geneological Criticism works against (Allsobrook 198-230).

"opaqueness" to itself, which she puts forth in her *Giving an Account of Oneself*, I will try to explore Kathy's narrative voice and her autobiographical endeavour in terms of self-knowledge and "the subject" being opaque to itself.

## 2.1 STUDENTS' STORIES AND SURVEILLANCE

Throughout *Never Let Me Go* students make up several stories in order to make sense of their position in Hailsham as well as in the larger world in a more general sense. They attempt to predict a future in the outer-world as they try to understand their future possibilities through what they experience during their lives in the enclosed space of Hailsham, although their understanding is ever qualified with the half-knowledge that they will be donating their vital organs when they get out of school. That the ideas feeding into these stories may seem very simple and almost infantile is partly caused by the ages of the protagonists, however it is also caused by a general quality in the text, that the issues are very rarely dealt with head-on. Usually, they are displaced with narratives that have little or no actual relevance to the situation, and this quality is supported through the group dynamics that proliferate in a boarding school. In this sense, these stories are mostly created in a way that keeps the suspense regarding the students' futures alive, and they create a buffer zone between the students and their state-regulated destinations through ambiguity. The stories I will analyse through this framework are those around the woods, and Tommy's anger tantrums in relation to The Gallery.

The stories around the woods unfold in Kathy's narration while she is telling of a game played among the students; this is a make-believe game going on among the girl group Ruth leads and of which Kathy is a member. According to this game, there is a conspiracy going on to kidnap one of their guardians, Miss Geraldine, and the members of this secret group are to guard her against the conspirators. The details of the conspiracy are never clearly set, they keep changing in accordance with the events that happen during the week; however, the woods around which various stories proliferate always plays a part in these conspiracies. Kathy mentions two rumours about the woods. The first one is about a boy whose body is found dead in the woods, "tied to a tree with the hands and feet chopped off", when he runs beyond the Hailsham boundaries after an argument with his friends (Ishiguro, *Never* 50). The other one is about a girl whose ghost now wanders among the trees because she climbed over the

fence that surrounds Hailsham, out of curiosity. Their guardians tell them that these stories are nonsense; however, the senior students claim that when they get older, they will also be introduced to "the ghastly truth" (50). Kathy notes how fearsome the woods were to the students with an anecdote:

> I remember one night, when we were furious with Marge K.—she'd done something really embarrassing to us during the day—we chose to punish her by hauling her out of bed, holding her face against the window pane and ordering her to look up at the woods. At first she kept her eyes screwed shut, but we twisted her arms and forced open her eyelids until she saw the distant outline against the moonlit sky, and that was enough to ensure for her a sobbing night of terror. (50-51)

Later in the narration, the "really embarrassing" thing Marge K. did turns out to be her asking their guardian, Miss Emily, if she has ever smoked, after Miss Emily lectures them about the dangers of smoking, following a rounders match. Miss Emily admits to having smoked but warns the students in saying: "'You've been told about it. You're students. You're… *special*. So keeping yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that's much more important for each of you than it is for me'" (68). The discrepancy between the students and the guardians they look up to regarding the importance of keeping healthy is explained through a euphemism, that the students are "special", which may mean many different things in different contexts. The students may be "special" because they are younger, because they study in a prestigious school so they are to set examples, because they are in a boarding school so they may influence one another much more easily, or because as they are to donate their vital organs, they have to keep them in the best possible condition. The use of this euphemism, and the guardians' general air of unease regarding the "donations", their general will to keep things ambiguous aggravate the number of explanations this euphemistic approach may refer to, and acts as a reinforcement in terms of the proliferation of further stories. The students are affected by this atmosphere to the level that they create their own preventive measures against anything that may factually disrupt these stories which act like a buffer between their actual position in the world and their positions in Hailsham's liberal humanist education policy. In his *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault explores modern penal mechanisms by analysing their change over time, and explains the punitive power "disciplinary techniques" create in these words:

> At the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a small penal mechanism. It enjoys a kind of judicial privilege with its own laws, its specific offences, its particular forms of judgement. The disciplines established an "infra-penality"; they partitioned an area that the laws had left empty; they defined and repressed a mass of behaviour that the relative indifference of the great systems of punishment had allowed to escape. (*Discipline* 177-178)

The peer-punishment the students see fit for Marge K., forcing her to look out of the window to the woods, for threatening the buffer zone between their positions in the outer world and in Hailsham, in this sense, functions on two different levels. Firstly, she is forced to look at this place which swarms with danger of ghosts and cut limbs in the stories that are notorious among the students. Secondly, she is coerced into looking outside of the school boundaries, symbolically to the future that awaits her if she is so eager to dispel the air of suspense that they create with these stories. The poetic justice students seek requires the policing of their stories that entail both guarding the guardians and guarding themselves from what may lie outside of the school boundaries. In this sense, while they are sparing themselves of an "embarrassment" regarding being different from their guardians and the people outside of the school, they also guarantee the continuation of the story through the terror the woods stirs in Marge K.:

> So why had we stayed silent that day? I suppose it was because even at that age—we were nine or ten—we knew just enough to make us wary of that whole territory. It's hard now to remember just how much we knew by then. We certainly knew—though not in any deep sense—that we were different from our guardians, and also from the normal people outside; we perhaps even knew that a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us. But we didn't really know what that meant. (Ishiguro, *Never* 69)

The reality of the donations that await them, in this way, is guaranteed not to disturb their everyday life in the school, it remains a possibility outside of the woods, through such peer-surveillance. In this sense, the boundaries the school administration and the state set for this institution is protected by the students for whom the boundaries were set in the first place. The guardians insist that these stories are "nonsense;" however, the euphemism used by Miss Lucy allows the proliferation of many possible scenarios in accordance with the general air of unease around the reason why the students are

kept in an enclosed space. The disciplinary system of Hailsham[10] thrives on divesting responsibility on the students by keeping things ambiguous, and the students create their own penal system and story-telling rituals in accordance with this disciplinary system. Instead of dispelling these stories with information about their actual position in the world, the school, in line with the liberal humanist education model it follows, chooses to "shelter" the students who, in liberal humanism, are thought to have a core value that should and can be developed regardless of their political position and the social construction shaped in accordance with the state politics.

The second instance I will analyse in terms of surveillance is the students' approach to Tommy's anger tantrums, which leads to his self-surveillance. As they know Tommy is prone to anger tantrums, the ritual among the boys is that when they play football (at which Tommy excels), they do not pick him for one of the teams until he is the only one standing, and this leads to a spectacular anger tantrum. This is a ritualized joke among Hailsham students:

> [W]hen Tommy was left standing alone, and the boys all began sniggering, I heard Ruth say: "It's coming. Hold it. Seven seconds. Seven, six, five…"
> She never got there. Tommy burst into thunderous bellowing, and the boys, now laughing openly, started to run off towards the South Playing Field. Tommy took a few strides after them—it was hard to say whether his instinct was to give angry chase or if he was panicked at being left behind. In any case he soon stopped and stood there, glaring after them, his face scarlet. Then he began to scream and shout, a nonsensical jumble of swear words and insults. (9)

One of the students, Hannah, explains why Tommy is chosen as a victim for this ritualized joke referring to the knowledge among the students that his creative work is not as good as the others'. The students' artworks are evaluated by the guardians and the ones that are deemed good enough, the story goes, are gathered for the Madame's gallery. As they are talking about Tommy's anger tantrums, Ruth says, "If he learnt to keep his cool, they'd leave him alone" (10). Hannah explains Tommy's victimization through his lack of interest in doing creative work: "'They'd still keep on at him,'

[10] In her article, in which she reads the clones' subjectivity development in line with colonial subjectivity by emphasizing the collective means of identity development in the first part of the novel and how it is criticized, Ji Eun Lee emphasizes the word play in the name of Hailsham: "The clones' emulation of human-like individual dreams and cultivation in Hail-sham [is] to hail sham: to "salute, greet," or "welcome" the colonizer's culture, which pretends to be something good" (285).

Hannah said. 'Graham K.'s temper's just as bad, but that only makes them all the more careful with him. The reason they go for Tommy's because he's a layabout'" (10). This quotation reveals a disciplinary dynamic that is at work in Hailsham; his being surrounded by peers requires Tommy to survey himself about his anger tantrums. Whatever the cause may be, he is expected by his peers to know how to behave and keep in control when he is the victim of a ritualized joke, a punitive revenge for his inability to be, or lack of interest in being as creative, by his peers. For example, when Kathy carefully brings up the cruelty of such bullying, Ruth's answer focuses on Tommy's behaviour rather than that of other students. The continuation of such hesitation to bring up the cruelty of bullying is also supported through boarding school dynamics. Kathy says:

> I didn't say much; I just summed up what had been happening to him and said it wasn't really very fair. When I'd finished, there was a funny sort of silence hanging in the dark, and I realised everyone was waiting for Ruth's response—which was usually what happened whenever something a bit awkward came up. I kept waiting, then I heard a sigh from Ruth's side of the room, and she said:
> "You've got a point, Kathy. It's not nice. But if he wants it to stop, he's got to change his own attitude. He didn't have a thing for the Spring Exchange. And has he got anything for next month? I bet he hasn't." (Ishiguro, *Never* 15)

Thus, his obliviousness in terms of an endeavour that is championed by their guardians leads other students to "correct" Tommy through their own measures, which is expected to lead to his self-surveillance. Michel Foucault explains the corrective effect of disciplinary power in these words:

> [T]he art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. . . . [I]t refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the "nature" of individuals. It introduces, through this "value-giving" measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. . . . The perpetual penality that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalises*. (*Discipline* 182-183)

The disciplinary power of examination through the artwork creates a hierarchy among the students regarding the reason behind their education in an enclosed space. Kathy explains this dynamic by saying, "The Tommy business was typical. A lot of the time, how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at 'creating'" (Ishiguro, *Never* 16). In this sense, the examination of their artworks and some of their works being taken for the gallery, which they interpret to be a reward-mechanism, creates the hierarchy between the students according to which Tommy is to be corrected. Later in the narration when Kathy notices the change in Tommy, she asks him about it. Tommy first tries to brush it off as "maturing" over time, then he reveals the real reason is that he is not as worried about not being as creatively successful as his peers, because their guardian, Miss Lucy, explained to him that he does not have to be. Kathy narrates how Tommy quotes Miss Lucy first indirectly, then directly:

> It was wrong for anyone, whether they were students or guardians, to punish him for it, or put pressure on him in any way. It simply wasn't his fault. And when Tommy had protested it was all very well Miss Lucy saying this, but everyone did think it was his fault, she'd given a sigh and looked out of her window. Then she'd said:
> "It may not help you much. But just you remember this. There's at least one person here at Hailsham who believes otherwise. At least one person who believes you're a very good student, as good as any she's ever come across, never mind how creative you are." (27-28)

The real reason behind Tommy's "maturation" turns out to be his symbolic exemption from one of the subtle ways of examination in the school. When Miss Lucy later changes her mind and lets Tommy know that she might have been wrong in what she said about his perceived lack of creativity, Tommy is again worried but as he is older his worry does not manifest through anger tantrums.

The theory around the Madame's Gallery is another story the students develop, one that is connected to their artwork, and its echoes reach far beyond their Hailsham years. When explaining the rumours about the gallery, Kathy notes that she must be "pretty typical in not being able to remember how or when [she] first heard about it", although she knows that it certainly was not from one of the guardians (50). Regarding the narrative existence of the gallery, and the guardians' approach toward the rumours, Kathy says:

> But did we really believe in the Gallery? Today, I'm not sure. As I've said, we never mentioned it to the guardians and looking back, it seems to me this was a rule we imposed on ourselves, as much as anything the guardians had decided. There's an instance I can remember from when we were about eleven. . . . We were sitting up on our desks, and I can't remember exactly what we were talking about, but Mr. Roger, as usual, was making us laugh and laugh. Then Carole H. had said, through her giggles: "You might even get it picked for the Gallery!" She immediately put her hand over her mouth with an "oops!" and the atmosphere remained light-hearted; but we all knew, Mr. Roger included, that she'd made a mistake. . . . Mr. Roger smiled indulgently, as though to say: "Let it pass, we'll pretend you never said that," and we carried on as before. (32)

The half-knowledge that the Hailsham administration continuously provides the students with causes the students to create enduring stories and depend on them for an understanding of the world around them. They know that their "creativity" as conceived by the Hailsham administration has critical importance, and it should be demonstrated exactly in the way they see fit for its examination, through the artworks. They understand that their artworks have something to do with "the donations," and this translates into students regarding the creative endeavour as of vital importance. For example, Kathy and Tommy's conversation about Miss Lucy symbolically exempting Tommy from the need to be creative ends in this note:

> "There's something else," he [Tommy] went on. "Something else she said I can't quite figure out. I was going to ask you about it. She said we weren't being taught enough, something like that."
> "Taught enough? You mean she thinks we should be studying even harder than we are?"
> "No, I don't think she meant that. What she was talking about was, you know, about us. What's going to happen to *us* one day. Donations and all that."
> "But we *have* been taught about all that," I said. "I wonder what she meant. Does she think there are things we haven't been told yet?" (29)

The relationship between creativity and "[w]hat's going to happen to [them] one day," the donations, is very vague although it is an element of the mysterious atmosphere until almost the end of *Never Let Me Go*. The students are left completely on their own devices to figure out this connection. Kathy's immediate response to Miss Lucy's suggestion about them not being "taught enough" is to say that they have been taught; but later in her narrative, she admits that they were lacking certain information, and "the donations" were an element from the future they had not really processed: "[W]e perhaps even knew that a long way down the line there were donations waiting for us.

But we didn't really know what that meant. If we were keen to avoid certain topics, it was probably more because it embarrassed us" (69). Regarding this point, Kelly Rich observes: "By encouraging their creative development, Hailsham gives their students a sizable superstructure of meaning-making values, practices, and places, either to forestall or repress their knowledge of their infrastructural purpose" (635). Thus, story-making through dynamics that entail such lack of information becomes a crucial part of Hailsham students' life-worlds; their displacing approach toward their surroundings is a part of their formative years, and as such becomes a habit.

The instance when students finally ask one of their guardians for clear information about the Gallery is shaped around what Kathy refers to as the "tokens controversy" (Ishiguro, *Never* 38). Hailsham has two systems in place for the clones to acquire some belongings: the Exchanges and the Sales. In the first occasion, on the designated day, the students exchange their artworks among themselves. Emily Horton writes about the Exchanges and their relation to the crucial importance of creativity in the novel, in terms of peer relationships:

> [T]he Exchanges represent for Kathy a mode of interpersonal support and reciprocity, as the students provide for each other the very possessions they will come to regard as treasures. Hanging up paintings around their beds, and rewarding particularly honoured work with desk exhibition, the students profess their respect for each other precisely through their creativity. At the same time, the counter-side to this argument, as soon becomes apparent, is that the Exchanges' meritocratic economy makes certain that for some students, like Tommy, a failure of artistry means exclusion. (13-14)

While the exchanges thus become a means of displaying their creativity and lead to peer evaluation in a social sense, the Sales represent different dynamics of marking their identities for the students as adolescents. Before the Sales, goods from the "outer-world" arrive at Hailsham, and the students can "buy" certain needs or wants from among the goods on sale with their tokens. Kathy mentions the Sales in these words:

> Looking back now, it's funny to think we got so worked up, because usually the Sales were a big disappointment. There'd be nothing remotely special and we'd spend our tokens just renewing stuff that was wearing out or broken with more of the same. But the point was, I suppose, we'd all of us in the past found something at a Sale, something that had become special: a jacket, a watch, a pair of craft scissors never used but kept proudly next to a bed. (Ishiguro, *Never* 41)

Thus, the Sales become the students' only safe connection to the outer-world, the goods that arrive are cherished because they are both not made by a student, so are foreign and attractive, and can be a part of their precious collections, so they become a way of marking their individual identities in adolescence. The "tokens controversy" is also caused by a need to have more tokens in the Sales: a senior year student asks Miss Emily if they can be compensated with some tokens in exchange for their artworks that the Madame takes for her gallery. Kathy notes that some of their work being chosen for the gallery seemed to them a big honour during their years in lower classes at Hailsham; but as the time passed, they grew ambivalent about it (38). Eventually a student, Roy J., sees Miss Emily about the issue, and, to the other students' surprise, instead of being told off, he ensures that they will be compensated with "tokens, but not many because it [is] a 'most distinguished honour' to have work selected by Madame" (39). In the afternoon of the same day, as all the students are very excited about this announcement, their guardian Miss Lucy decides to skip the course which entails play-reading and lets them have their conversation. A student, Polly, "out of the blue," decides to ask their guardian why the Madame takes their "things" anyway (40). Kathy narrates this incident in these words:

> I remember feeling furious at Polly for so stupidly breaking the unwritten rule, but at the same time, being terribly excited about what answer Miss Lucy might give. And clearly I wasn't the only one with these mixed emotions: virtually everybody shot daggers at Polly, before turning eagerly to Miss Lucy—which was, I suppose, pretty unfair on poor Polly. After what seemed a very long while, Miss Lucy said:
> "All I can tell you today is that it's for a good reason. A very important reason. But if I tried to explain it to you now, I don't think you'd understand. One day, I hope, it'll be explained to you."
> We didn't press her. The atmosphere around the table had become one of deep embarrassment, and curious as we were to hear more, we wanted most for the talk to get away from this dodgy territory. (40)

Thus, the students' curiosity around this "vital" issue is dampened through a politics of ambiguity, and a pedagogy which functions through the students' internalized shame about being different from their guardians and the people living outside Hailsham is at work.

Continuation of such story-making habits is supported by boarding-school dynamics, where students commonly form groups, and in the clones' case the only people they can socialize with are students like themselves, other than the guardians

and occasional workers who bring in the needed goods to Hailsham. This condition increases the pressure of having to get along well with their peers. On one occasion, Kathy wants Ruth to teach her how to play chess, as Ruth has a history of pretending to be an expert at this game. When Kathy finally gets hold of a chess set at a Sale, Ruth acts like she is busy for a couple of days, then she tries to pass a variation on draughts as chess while she feigns teaching the game (53). Kathy plays along for a while, but when Ruth keeps making up new rules in order to win, she storms off in a way that makes it clear that she knows Ruth is lying. This leads her to be immediately expelled from the Secret Guard, the group they had formed to protect Miss Geraldine from the conspirators. Some time later, she finds herself sitting beside another former member of the group who was also expelled, Moira; Kathy narrates their conversation by reflecting on her own emotions:

> "It's so stupid, this whole secret guard thing. How can they still believe in something like that? It's like they're still in the Infants."
> Even today, I'm puzzled by the sheer force of the emotion that overtook me when I heard Moira say this. I turned to her, completely furious: "What do you know about it? You just don't know anything, because you've been out of it for ages now! If you knew everything we'd found out, you wouldn't dare say anything so daft!"
> "Don't talk rubbish." Moira was never one to back down easily. "It's just another of Ruth's made-up things, that's all."
> "Then how come I've personally heard them talking about it? Talking about how they're going to take Miss Geraldine to the woods in the milk van? How come I heard them planning it myself, nothing to do with Ruth or anyone else?" (54-55)

Even when she is expelled from the group in retaliation for calling Ruth out on her lie about knowing how to play chess, Kathy keeps her loyalty to their story-making processes, both because of issues regarding the need to belong to a group, and because the other choice, not believing in these stories, means facing up to a reality they do not have actual information about. Kathy reflects on this occasion while she narrates the event as a well experienced carer by that time:

> Even now, if I'm driving on a long grey road and my thoughts have nowhere special to go, I might find myself turning all of this over. Why was I so hostile to Moira B. that day when she was, really, a natural ally? What it was, I suppose, is that Moira was suggesting she and I cross some line together, and I wasn't prepared for that yet. I think I sensed how beyond that line, there was

> something harder and darker and I didn't want that. Not for me, not for any of us. (55)

At this point, Kathy is able to both see beyond the group dynamics of belonging that proliferate in a boarding school environment and reflect on the buffer zone that they created with these stories. Moira's attempt to be more realistic about their make-believe game translates into being also more realistic about all the other possibilities for Kathy, and she chooses to continue the story and pledge loyalty to their group, instead of participating in this intervention.

## 2.2 THE ARTWORKS AND BIOGRAPHICAL CRITICISM

To return to the question of the students' artworks, it turns out later when Tommy and Kathy go to see the Madame to try their luck for "deferrals" toward the end of the novel, their artworks are chosen as a means of examination regarding the question whether the clones program should be more "humane" in any way. It is an exploration regarding the question whether the clones have "souls" at all, which the liberal humanist school administration considers would be a point of leverage they could use against the state politics. During Kathy and Tommy's talk with the Madame toward the end of the novel, Madame says,

> "Let's answer the simplest one, and perhaps it will answer all the rest. Why did we take your artwork? . . . You said an interesting thing earlier, Tommy. . . . You said it was because your art would reveal what you were like. What you were like inside. . . . Well, you weren't far wrong about that. We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it *to prove you had souls at all*." (255)

Such association between the artwork, be it poems, drawings or paintings (16-17) and the artist's "soul," and such confidence in the critic's ability to read what is unique about artists and their experiences through the artwork clearly points to biographical schools of literary criticism which "sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work" (Guerin et al. 51). Biographical approaches associate the artwork with life stories about the creators and the historical texts that give information about the times in which they lived. According to this approach, all art is autobiographical in the sense that the artists are reflecting their own lives in their art, and the idea is that these reflections can be discovered and recovered by the critics. A rather recent defender of this school of criticism, Jackson J. Benson, after pointing to a biographical anecdote

about John Steinbeck's life, regarding how he once wanted to attend a class in medical school at Stanford to dissect a cadaver in order to "learn about human beings" (107), maintains:

> The Stanford story shows too how biography provides an important clue to the philosophy that informs an author's work, for Steinbeck, unlike most of us, tended to see life from a biological perspective. . . . It also shows how a misinterpretation namely, that Steinbeck's work is essentially sentimental can be etched in stone as doctrine by those who have paid attention only to the text, as seen through their own preconceptions and values. They have judged without giving up themselves to participate in something other than what they are.
>
> This recognition of "otherness" that there is an author who is different in personality and background from the reader appears to be a simple-minded proposition. Yet as a basic prerequisite to the understanding and evaluation of a literary text it is often ignored even by the most sophisticated literary critics. The exploration of otherness is what literary biography and biographical criticism can do best, discovering an author as a unique individual, a discovery that puts a burden on us to reach out to recognize that uniqueness before we can fully comprehend an author's writings. (107-108)

It is important to notice that Benson relates biographical criticism to the idea of "discovering an author as a unique individual," and associates this school with critics "pariticipat[ing] in something other than what they are," in that, as being ethically concerned with "otherness." At this point it is important to mention the cluster of ideas that can be explored under the heading "the death of the author," which counters exactly this tendency to associate the text with the author's life in a way that hopes to recover the authorial intention. Although Benson claims that recovering "the author" through essentially textual historical knowledge is an act of recognizing the otherness of the author, Reader-Response Theory maintains that this recovery is essentially a projection. It claims that as every reading is necessarily a reconstruction, what can be known about a text is essentially the audience's interpretation. Roland Barthes further claims that this historically recovered author is a notion that stifles different interpretations, thus such approaches claim authority on the variety of possible interpretations:

> Once the Author is distanced, the claim to "decipher" a text becomes entirely futile. To assign an Author to a text is to impose a brake on it, to furnish it with a final signified, to close writing. This conception is quite suited to criticism, which then undertakes the important task of discovering the Author (or his hypotases: society, history, the psyche, freedom) beneath the work: once the

> Author is found, the text is "explained," the critic has won; hence, it is hardly surprising that historically the Author's empire has been the Critic's as well. ("Author" 53)

It is important to understand this discussion in literary criticism in terms of its implications in the framework of *Never Let Me Go*, and what "recovering 'the soul' through the artwork" as the Hailsham administration's approach to art implies in this text.

In one of the Sales, Kathy buys a cassette tape by Judy Bridgewater, and she grows very fond of track number three: "Never Let Me Go." As the billiards room is very crowded, and the art room is noisy, the only place she can listen to this track by herself is their dorm (Ishiguro, *Never* 70). She also mentions that she has turned the cover inside out because it portrays Bridgewater smoking a cigarette. In her narrative, Kathy relates the story she has created about this song, which stems from her interpretation of a part of the lyrics:

> What was so special about this song? Well, the thing was, I didn't used to listen properly to the words; I just waited for that bit that went: "Baby, baby, never let me go…" And what I'd imagine was a woman who'd been told she couldn't have babies, who'd really, really wanted them all her life. Then there's a sort of miracle and she has a baby, and she holds this baby very close to her and walks around singing: "Baby, never let me go…" partly because she's so happy, but also because she's so afraid something will happen, that the baby will get ill or be taken away from her. Even at the time, I realised this couldn't be right, that this interpretation didn't fit with the rest of the lyrics. But that wasn't an issue with me. (70)

On one occasion when Kathy listens to this song and starts dancing around the room, holding her imaginary baby (a pillow) to her breast, to her surprise, she finds "[her]self staring at Madame framed in the doorway" (71). Kathy narrates her reaction and thinking process in these words:

> I froze in shock. Then within a second or two, I began to feel a new kind of alarm, because I could see there was something strange about the situation. . . . She was out in the corridor, standing very still, her head angled to one side to give her a view of what I was doing inside. And the odd thing was she was crying. It might even have been one of her sobs that had come through the song to jerk me out of my dream. . . . [S]he just went on standing out there, sobbing and sobbing, staring at me through the doorway with that same look in her eyes she always had when she looked at us, like she was seeing something that gave her the creeps. Except this time there was something else, something extra in that look I couldn't fathom. (71)

When Kathy tells Tommy about the occasion, Tommy interprets it in these words:

> "Madame's probably not a bad person, even though she's creepy. So when she saw you dancing like that, holding your baby, she thought it was really tragic, how you couldn't have babies. That's why she started crying."
> "But Tommy," I pointed out, "how could she have known the song had anything to do with people having babies? How could she have known the pillow I was holding was supposed to be a baby? That was only in my head."
> Tommy thought about this, then said only half jokingly: "Maybe Madame can read minds. She's strange. Maybe she can see right inside you. It wouldn't surprise me." (72-73)

Toward the end of the novel, Kathy and Tommy go to see Madame at her house. During their conversation, Kathy gathers the courage to ask her about this occasion, about why she was crying. She also mentions Tommy's interpretation as fun trivia. Madame answers her in these words:

> "That's most interesting. But I was no more a mind-reader then than today. I was weeping for an altogether different reason. When I watched you dancing that day, I saw something else. I saw a new world coming rapidly. More scientific, efficient, yes. More cures for the old sicknesses. Very good. But a harsh, cruel world. And I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it and pleading, never to let her go. That is what I saw. It wasn't really you, what you were doing, I know that. But I saw you and it broke my heart. And I've never forgotten." (266-267)

It is important to notice that all three "readers" of both the song and the dance have their own interpretations and these are quite different. While Kathy creates a story about a woman who miraculously gives birth and cherishes her baby, through her half-reading of the lyrics and dances accordingly, Madame has an entirely different interpretation of the dance. Each party brings to the song and the dance some information from their own life-worlds, through their own concerns. As Madame is more knowledgeable about the clones project and is trying to provide the clones with "humane" possibilities, she has her own questions and approaches the issue through this sensibility. Tommy, on the other hand, at first assumes that the Madame knows Kathy's interpretation, and when he is reminded that this would be "mind-reading," this fantastic explanation is also jokingly plausible to him. As biographical schools of criticism try to recover the intention behind the artwork (in this case both the lyrics and the dance), they would associate the lyrics with Bridgewater's (or the

songwriter's) life, and the dance with Kathy's life, while interpreting. But they would hardly be able to have a sense of the story Kathy had in mind while doing her dance, and what it meant for her. Thus, Kathy's criticism regarding Tommy's interpretation, "mind-reading," is a canonical branch of criticism directed at biographical readings.

In this sense, Hailsham's attempt to read what is unique about the clones from their artworks is criticized in the text of *Never Let Me Go* as mind-reading. Much like Tommy, and the other interpreters of the song and the dance, the Hailsham administration and other possible interpreters of the artworks would necessarily bring in their own concerns from their own life-worlds, and to essentialize these interpretations as the clones' "souls" would necessarily entail reader projection. "The soul" as a reconstruction of what is unique and essential in the clones would necessarily be an interpretation; thus, this critical approach which can historically be associated with Humanism (there is something in human experience that will create some sort of common ground for an understanding of the motives of an "other") is a poor and even undermining candidate for leverage in terms of the clones' right to live. The endeavour itself, the attempt to decide on another being's right to live is immanent in this mechanism, which can also be associated with Humanism as an approach which favours human beings when compared to other species, in myriad political senses.

Thus, in the course of *Never Let Me Go*, "the soul" turns out to be an "empty signifier" in Ernesto Laclau's sense (Laclau 69-73). Ji Eun Lee observes:

> When Tommy brings to Madame his paintings in order to claim that he has his own inner self, however, she explains that it no longer matters whether they have inner souls or not, because it does not make any difference in their status as clones—the presumably inferior group designed for the benefit of human beings. (283)

I argue that, as "the soul" is a concept whose existence can never be proved, it works merely as an "empty signifier" around which the general public, the state and the school administration will take a position. When later, the Morningdale scandal about a scientist who wants to enhance clone characteristics in a way that will make them superior to humans breaks out, the public favour for clone schools decreases and schools such as Hailsham are forced to close because of financial restraints. Thus, "the soul" is merely an attempted point of leverage for the Humanist project of Hailsham, and, in effect, functions as a means of examination in the novel. Michel Foucault's

explanation regarding the visibility/invisibility dynamics between the examiner and the examined is very relevant when considered in terms of human/clone differentiation through the concept of "soul" in *Never Let Me Go*:

> Disciplinary power . . . is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. (*Discipline* 187)

With the examination of their artworks through an understanding of biographical criticism, which expects that the students exhibit their souls in their artworks, clones are forced into a visibility regarding something "normals" do not have to prove at any level in terms of their right to live. Through an expectation of exhibiting this empty signifier, the students find themselves in a hierarchy during their Hailsham years; the liberal humanist tradition leads them to develop an ethics entirely dissonant with their political situation. This ethics creates a dissonance with the political situation that they are in, which also guarantees that they will stay obedient after their Hailsham years, as the responsibility is conferred upon the disciplined individual rather than on the discourse of a particular disciplinary model. The irrelevance of the liberal humanist educational model with the political situation of the clones in the case of *Never Let Me Go*, in this sense, positively factors in the proliferation of the story-telling habits of the clones. The ambiguities not attended by the guardians and their non-explanations support a political hierarchy whose impermeableness is guaranteed through the ethics the students develop in Hailsham. Louis Althusser's definitions of ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses are very apt to describe Hailsham's position and how the disciplinary system that materializes through its liberal humanist education policy affects the clones' lives:

> While discussing the Ideological State Apparatuses and their practices, I said that each of them was the realization of an ideology (the unity of these different regional ideologies—religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc.—being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology). I now return to this thesis: an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.

> Having said this, let me move straight on and see what happens to the 'individuals' who live in ideology, i.e. in a determinate (religious, ethical, etc.) representation of the world whose imaginary distortion depends on their imaginary relation to their conditions of existence; in other words, in the last instance, to the relations of production and to class relations (ideology = an imaginary relation to real relations). I shall say that this imaginary relation is itself endowed with a material existence. (125-126)

The students have no unmediated access to their conditions of existence, as human beings also do not; however, Hailsham students are expected to prove their human value through exhibiting their "souls", which is a quality conceived as the condition of their subjecthood. In this sense, the novel exposes liberal humanism as another ideology, which Louis Althusser defines as the "imaginary" relationship between the individuals and their real conditions of existence.

## 2.3 KATHY'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Hailsham's approach to art and biographical criticism in the novel (that works of art are autobiographical, and the intention of the artist is to be recovered) is rivalled by another fictionally autobiographical endeavour in the novel: Kathy's memoir writing. Kathy's narrative voice suggests a much different approach to writing and autobiography which can be explored through Judith Butler's arguments in her *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

In her book, Butler explores personal ethical responsibility in relation to the social scene of law and justice as their grounds of origin, and builds upon Theodor Adorno's thinking regarding situations "when claims of collectivity turn out *not* to be collective, when claims of abstract universality turn out *not* to be universal" (8). Comparing Friedrich Nietzsche's account of the subject's development of ethical responsibility to Michel Foucault's, by claiming that in first the system of justice is based on revenge, while in the second it is inventive and not self-berating (18), she reasons that giving an account of oneself is to maintain a critical relationship to the set of norms that shapes the intelligible modes of subjectivation:

> There is no making of oneself (poiesis) outside of a mode of subjectivation (assujettisement) and, hence, no self-making outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take. The practice of critique then exposes the limits of the historical scheme of things, the epistemological and ontological horizon within which subjects come to be at all. To make

> oneself in such a way that one exposes those limits is precisely to engage in an aesthetics of the self that maintains a critical relation to existing norms. (17)

Such analysis is very relevant to Kathy's narration in that she is trying to tell her life story in an environment whose norms regarding subjectivation she has internalized, and through an almost absolute lack of knowledge regarding her origins. The clones find themselves looking for their "possibles," for example, when they are in need of explanation regarding their psychologies. At one occasion, when Kathy tries to explain her sexual desire to herself, she finds herself flicking through porn magazines to see if her "possible" might be featured in one of them. Tommy spies on her during one of these explorations, and he later figures out why she was flicking through the magazine at a fast pace. Kathy acknowledges that she was looking for her "possible" in these words:

> "All right, Tommy. I'll tell you. It may not make any more sense after you've heard it, but you can hear it anyway. It's just that sometimes, every now and again, I get these really strong feelings when I want to have sex. . . . I don't know what it is, and afterwards, when it's passed over, it's just scary. . . ." I stopped, but when Tommy didn't say anything, I went on: "So I thought if I find her picture, in one of those magazines, it'll at least explain it." (Ishiguro, *Never* 179)

Thus, the clones try to base what they want to understand about themselves on their own stories and theories about life, which makes them even more disadvantageous than "normals" in terms of life-narratives. Kathy's autobiographical writing is based on such precarious ground and it continues under these conditions as she is not allowed to have relationships with people other than those essential to her job as a carer. When this precarity is thought in conjunction with their Hailsham years during which they created myriad stories to make sense of their lives, Judith Butler's reasoning regarding subjects giving accounts of themselves lacking knowledge about their origins is very relevant:

> The norm does not produce the subject as its necessary effect, nor is the subject fully free to disregard the norm that inaugurates its reflexivity; one invariably struggles with conditions of one's own life that one could not have chosen. If there is an operation of agency or, indeed, freedom in this struggle, it takes place in the context of an enabling and limiting field of constraint. (19)

Butler calls this essential lack of knowledge regarding one's origins and the condition regarding the "early and primal" relationships that "make" one before the "account," the subject's opacity to itself:

> The opacity of the subject may be a consequence of its being conceived as a relational being, one whose early and primary relations are not always available to conscious knowledge. Moments of unknowingness about oneself tend to emerge in the context of relations to others, suggesting that these relations call upon primary forms of relationality that are not always available to explicit and reflective thematization. If we are formed in the context of relations that become partially irrecoverable to us, then that opacity seems built into our formation and follows from our status as beings who are formed in relations of dependency. (Butler 20)

The clones' stories and their boarding school history create exactly such an environment, their unknowingness about themselves "emerge" in their connection to other clones and the world, in ways that are not "available to explicit and reflective thematization." Kathy bases her life on her history at Hailsham, and the students' displacing stories are essentially her starting point in her narrative. Kathy reflects on her autobiographical discourse's narrative grounding in these words: "What I really wanted, I suppose, was to get straight to all the things that happened between me and Tommy and Ruth after we grew up and left Hailsham. But I realise now just how much of what occurred later came out of our time at Hailsham . . . ." (Ishiguro, *Never* 37). Judith Butler concludes that such opacity leads to an ethics:

> Can a new sense of ethics emerge from such inevitable ethical failure? I suggest that it can, and that it would be spawned by a certain willingness to acknowledge the limits of acknowledgment itself. When we claim to know and to present ourselves, we will fail in some ways that are nevertheless essential to who we are. We cannot reasonably expect anything different from others in return. . . . This can, by the way, constitute a disposition of humility and generosity alike: I will need to be forgiven for what I cannot have fully known, and I will be under a similar obligation to offer forgiveness to others, who are also constituted in partial opacity to themselves. (42)

Such humility is observable in Kathy's narrative, both in content and form. There is an episode from their childhood when Ruth acts like the pencil case she has is a gift from Miss Geraldine, although Kathy knows that she most probably "reserved [it] with one of the monitors before the Sale opened" (Ishiguro, *Never* 58). When the girls gather around Ruth in admiration of the pencil-case, she answers their questions about

how she acquired it by implying that it is a gift: "'Let's just agree. Let's *agree* I got it in the Sale.' Then she gave us all a knowing smile" (56). Kathy narrates Ruth's repetitive references to the alleged favours by Miss Geraldine in these words:

> There was a certain smile, a certain voice Ruth would use—sometimes accompanied by a finger to the lips or a hand raised stage-whisper style—whenever she wanted to hint about some little mark of favour Miss Geraldine had shown her: Miss Geraldine had allowed Ruth to play a music tape in the billiards room before four o'clock on a weekday; Miss Geraldine had ordered silence on a fields walk, but when Ruth had drawn up beside her, she'd started to talk to her, then let the rest of the group talk. It was always stuff like that, and never explicitly claimed, just implied by her smile and "let's say no more" expression. (56-57)

Determined to expose her this time, Kathy first tries to actually reach the Sale registry, then decides to bluff by telling her that she was casually looking at the registry, and she was very intrigued by what she saw: "'[I]t was quite interesting really. You can see all the things people have bought'" (59). Initially, Ruth tries to keep calm, but eventually she gives in:

> Then I glanced at Ruth and got a real shock. I don't know what I'd expected; for all my fantasies of the past month, I'd never really considered what it would be like in a real situation like the one unfolding at that moment. Now I saw how upset Ruth was; how for once she was at a complete loss for words, and had turned away on the verge of tears. . . . So what if she'd fibbed a little about her pencil case? Didn't we all dream from time to time about one guardian or other bending the rules and doing something special for us? . . . I now felt awful, and I was confused. (59)

While she essentially asks Ruth to give an account of herself regarding her lie on this occasion, being confused and feeling bad lead Kathy to develop humility regarding Ruth being at a "loss for words." Even though Ruth's lie creates a group dynamic in which Kathy is at a disadvantage, she develops empathy and is baffled at her own plans to expose Ruth.

Such humility is also observable stylistically, while Kathy gives an account of herself through her autobiographical writing. Ji Eun Lee notes:

> The retrospective aspect of her [Kathy's] narrative figures prominently, as she uses retrospective hedges such as "I can remember" to reflect her awareness of time and the structure of her narrative. She frequently moves back and forth in time in order to ponder the limited information she had at certain points. Each chapter opens with her self-awareness of her narrative structure . . . . (278-279)

Thus, Kathy is very clear that she narrates through precarious knowledge of both herself and her surroundings: her narrative is ever qualified with disclaimers regarding remembering, recounting, fictionalizing and mythologizing their youth. In this sense, it can be said that her narrative style differs from Stevens's considerably. As Stevens is self-conscious about Lord Darlington's notoriety and his own perceived involvement in Lord Darlington's political affairs, he rather tries to orchestrate his assumed audience's reaction to his narrative. As I have cited, Stevens's conversational tone is marked by phrases such as "like many of us" (3), "as you might expect" (4), "as you know" (6), "you will no doubt agree," (9) and all of these phrases point to bandwagon fallacies: Stevens tries to manipulate the audience's wish to belong to a larger opinion group he himself envisions. On the other hand, it is very clear that Kathy knows very little about her audience. Her narrative is frequently qualified through this lack of knowledge, she repeatedly uses the phrase "I don't know how it was where you were" (Ishiguro, *Never* 13; 67; 94), and other phrases to the same effect. This precarity regarding not knowing her audience and her origins while going through other dilemmas of remembering and recounting in her autobiographical discourse is also manifest in terms of her rather late revelation that the students whose lives she recounts are clones. The word "clone" appears in *Never Let Me Go* only twice, and none used by Kathy. She does not reveal that they were copied from human beings to obligatorily donate their organs before she relates all the stories about Hailsham, thus presenting lots of information for possible empathy by the audience; she reveals this only after her affective ties with her assumed audience is secured.

Although Kathy does not know much about the audience of her narrative as *Never Let Me Go*, there is an audience she knows of when she starts reminiscing about her Hailsham years, which she notes at the beginning of the novel. The "donor" she has cared for in her third year insistently wants her to narrate her years at the prestigious school. Kathy reflects on this topic in these words:

> Sometimes he'd make me say things over and over; things I'd told him only the day before, he'd ask about like I'd never told him. "Did you have a sports pavilion?" "Which guardian was your special favourite?" At first I thought this was just the drugs, but then I realised his mind was clear enough. What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to remember Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood. He knew he was close to completing and so that's what he was doing: getting me to describe things to him, so they'd

> really sink in, so that maybe during those sleepless nights, with the drugs and the pain and the exhaustion, the line would blur between what were my memories and what were his. (5)

Regarding this point, Ji Eun Lee writes: "the novel itself is an oral means of transmitting her memories of Hailsham to another clone who did not have such good memories to sustain his life" (279). This is one of the rationales for Kathy's autobiographical endeavour, and autobiographical discourse is particularly apt for such boundary blurring between parties. Judith Butler notes:

> Although we are compelled to give an account of our various selves, the structural conditions of that account will turn out to make a full such giving impossible. The singular body to which a narrative refers cannot be captured by a full narration, not only because the body has a formative history that remains irrecoverable by reflection, but because primary relations are formative in ways that produce a necessary opacity in our understanding of ourselves. An account of oneself is always given to another, whether conjured or existing, and this other establishes the scene of address as a more primary ethical relation than a reflexive effort to give an account of oneself. (20-21)

In this sense, Kathy is interpellated into the scene of address by a clone less fortunate than herself, who will probably donate for the last time and is in pain. Thus, Kathy's narrative points to the intrinsic alterity in her autobiographical discourse: the whole story of *Never Let Me Go*, initially, stems from her memories recalled as an answer to the wish of the donor she is caring for to internalize her story as his own. The account she gives of herself is qualified through humility and is essentially tied to another. Autobiographical discourse is discussed through a spectrum between referentiality and fiction as it creates a space that is qualified by both extratextual referents and textual signifiers, and thus, it is particularly apt for such an endeavour.

Towards the end of the novel, after visiting Madame, Kathy and Tommy learn that there are no deferrals. On their way back to the donation centre, Tommy relapses into an anger tantrum, and the former students create another story around this. Kathy suggests that Tommy's anger tantrums, which they could not make sense of during their Hailsham years, may have been a manifestation of an inner knowing regarding their positions in the outer world. Tommy's response keeps the suspense alive:

> Tommy thought about this, then shook his head. "Don't think so, Kath. No, it was always just me. Me being an idiot. That's all it ever was." Then after a moment, he did a small laugh and said: "But that's a funny idea. Maybe I did

> know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn't." (Ishiguro, *Never* 270)

The above quotation is remarkable because both Kathy and Tommy search for an "inner" quality that will set Tommy apart. Instead of focusing on what they now know—that there are no deferrals, and the state unquestionably wills their death—they dwell on a differentiation, a hierarchy regarding the "nature" of the individual. Emily Horton writes:

> [S]o connected are the clones by their exempted condition, their joint 'traumatology' as it were, that the horror of the novel lies expressly in their conformism, which by blinding them to political otherness as a form of empowerment immures them to oppression. Entranced by Hailsham's deceptive fantasy of empathetic "deferral," they misconceive solidarity's value, consigning this to private rather than public relations. (16-17)

In this sense, the novel also explores how the impermeable stasis among the political classes in the novel which is created during Hailsham's appropriated mission of sheltering the clones from the dangers that the "outer-world" have for them, extends beyond their Hailsham years.

The liberal humanist education model conditions the students to protect their buffer zone of stories during their school years and instils in them an ethics that divest responsibility on the individual, which keeps them from diverting from this ethics during their years after school. Their will to conform continues throughout their years in the cottages and their years of donating. Such analysis also demonstrates how Geneological Criticism can work together with Ideological Criticism: the disciplinary methods utilized by the school instils in the clones a proclivity to depend on story-telling as a buffer zone, and a genealogy of this quality exposes it to be counter-productive for their political position. On the other hand, an ideological approach to Hailsham exposes its attempt to actually be a buffer zone between the clones and the state power which wills their death. However, their liberal humanist education policy which examines the clones through an expected exhibition of having a soul and chooses this quality as a possible reason that will lead to gradual public recognition of the clones' right to live actually subjects the clones to the state power and precludes the possibility of resistance. Kelly Rich writes: "The cultural attachments [Hailsham] offers are merely palliative, delivered in advance of the wounds administered by the state. Though privately funded, it nevertheless aids in maintaining and training its

students to become healthy, willing organ donors, feeding them back into the larger system" (635). For example, when Kathy remembers how the Madame went into a state of contemplation expressed through a voiced monologue when the students act in a way which does not conform to Hailsham standards of civility (for example, when they fight over an item at the Sales) this tension between Hailsham and the state, as well as Hailsham's inner tension about sheltering the clones but also preparing them for organ harvest by the state is clear. Hailsham has a lonely mission of proving the value of clones' lives to the state, and for this mission it focuses on humanistic qualities as possible leverage for public recognition:

> There was a real sense of feeling bad that we had, in some collective way, let down Miss Emily, but try as we might, we couldn't really follow these lectures. It was partly her language. "Unworthy of privilege" and "misuse of opportunity": these were two regular phrases Ruth and I came up with when we were reminiscing in her room at the centre in Dover. . . . Sometimes she'd be going on very intensely then come to a sudden stop with something like: "What is it? What is it? What can it be that thwarts us?" . . . She might then resume with a gentle sigh—a signal that we were going to be forgiven—or just as easily explode out of her silence with: "But I will not be coerced! Oh no! And neither will Hailsham!" (Ishiguro, *Never* 42-43)

Regardless of this "buffer" position, the speculative possibility of resistance the students might follow if they were informed about their position in the larger world is marked through its non-existence as a result of the disciplinary power Hailsham exerts upon the students. Michel Foucault argues that the disciplines work through a minute calculation and constant politicization of the detail; however, in the framework of *Never Let Me Go*, they also work through an intentional ambiguity supported by the Ideological State Apparatus, which leads the students towards making their own stories and policing them, as these stories are intertwined with what they come to know as their lives. The ethics they develop inside the boundaries of Hailsham as a result of the disciplinary systems that proliferate in the boarding school is dissonant with their political position; it proves counter-productive for a speculative possibility of resistance. As a result, even after they realize that the state categorically wills their death, they choose to focus on an imaginary relationship concerning the "nature" of the individual, instead of focusing on the evident qualities of their relationship with the state: their subjection which is common to them all.

Regarding how Kathy's narrative tone changes as she gets nearer the end of her narration, Ji Eun Lee observes:

> Kathy's narrative in part 3 belies the collective retrospective construction of subjectivity evident earlier in the novel. . . . Her narrative becomes like a chronological report of past events and other characters' behaviors, neither reflecting her deep understanding of a certain moment nor giving us any clue as to her profound meditation on her past dreams, wishes, and perspectives. In other words, Kathy's narrative becomes empty of her self. (Lee 284)

Lee connects this change in narrative style to the diminishing of the collective retrospection which characterized Kathy's earlier narration. I argue that this change in narrative style is also caused by her narrative becoming more referential to her reality. Following the clones' trip to Norfolk, in which they try to get a glimpse of whom Chrissie and Rodney (older clones living in the same cottage) thought might be Ruth's possible, comes the most impactful episode in terms of the clones disclosing their perception of reality. Following much speculation on their "dream futures," when Ruth understands that the woman working in an office is not her possible, she says:

> We all know it. We're modelled from trash. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren't psychos. That's what we come from. We all know it, so why don't we say it? . . . If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from. (Ishiguro, *Never* 164)

This moment of disclosure, a step out of their fictionalizing endeavour, when combined with Kathy and Tommy's later disillusionment about "the deferrals" shape Kathy's narrative in a way which is much more referential to her reality than the fictions they worked hard to keep alive. As Kathy loses friends, future possibilities, and narrative material, for she gets nearer to her current time in the memoir, the reality of her life takes over the rather gleeful tone of narration in the beginning when she narrated their Hailsham years. In her very last paragraph, after she drives to Norfolk, and then to some road she cannot recognize from before, Kathy says: "That was the only time, as I stood there . . . that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing, because this was Norfolk after all, and it was only a couple of weeks since I'd lost him" (282). She fantasizes about Tommy walking towards her and getting nearer, but she does not let herself continue with this fantasy. This passage is clearly in parallel with her later

narrative tendency in not allowing herself to “fictionalize” and remain “referential” to her life as narrated in the fictional universe of the novel.

## CONCLUSION

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* are attempts at creating coherent narratives out of their life experiences by the narrators. To refer to Michael Sprinker's point mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, as autobiographical accounts, they create "difference by repetition," "difference" because such repetition also creates a change in the "master text," not "the unconscious" as suggested for generic autobiographies but the textual development of the characters in the case of fictional autobiographies. Regarding the creation of a narrative out of one's own life experiences, Judith Butler notes:

> . . . I cannot be present to a temporality that precedes my own capacity for self-reflection, and whatever story about myself that I might give has to take this constitutive incommensurability into consideration. . . . I am always recuperating, reconstructing, and I am left to fictionalize and fabulate origins I cannot know. In the making of the story, I create myself in new form, instituting a narrative ''I'' that is superadded to the ''I'' whose past life I seek to tell. The narrative ''I'' effectively adds to the story every time it tries to speak, since the ''I'' appears again as the narrative perspective, and this addition cannot be fully narrated at the moment in which it provides the perspectival anchor for the narration in question. (39-40)

As such, both Stevens and Kathy give their accounts of situations that have developed out of their control; their formative relations are irrecoverable by a personal account, and their narratives change them but this change cannot be deemed a controlled "re-building," since the "I" that narrates provides the narrative perspective, and the addition by narration cannot be fully accounted for at the time of narration.

While commenting on Ishiguro's oeuvre, Kelly Rich notes: "Stevens provides the closest analogue to Kathy, as their sheer mobility across the English countryside sits at odds with their situated roles in Darlington Hall and Hailsham" (638). Indeed, both narrators comment on a settled life from a mobile perspective; they are physically moving but their narratives also create a movement, a re-shaping of the past. Thus, I think it is important to look at the final scenes of the novels to have a better grasp regarding the effects of their autobiographical endeavours on the narrators. In the final

passages of both novels, the narrators are looking at the English countryside. In line with the critical discourse on autobiography, these moments are both referential in that the geographical space is clearly set and the narrators are referring to their lives, and fictional in that what they see, of course, depends on their own mental state; it is a projection, a fiction.

In the final scene of *The Remains of the Day*, after his nervous breakdown while speaking to a retired butler who tells him that "the evening's the best part of the day" (256) through an analogy of day/youth and evening/old age, sitting next to the pier of Weymouth port Stevens starts observing people:

> A few minutes ago, incidentally, shortly after the lights came on, I did turn on my bench a moment to study more closely these throngs of people laughing and chatting behind me. . . . There is a group of six or seven people gathered just a little way behind me who have aroused my curiosity a little. I naturally assumed at first that they were a group of friends out together for the evening. But as I listened to their exchanges, it became apparent they were strangers who had just happened upon one another here on this spot behind me. . . . As I watch them now, they are laughing together merrily. It is curious how people can build such warmth among themselves so swiftly. It is possible these particular persons are simply united by the anticipation of the evening ahead. (Ishiguro, *Remains* 257)

Clearly, in these lines, Stevens is projecting his own anticipation of "the evening ahead," his old age, on the people he observes. According to him, they come together easily, and "build warmth" swiftly because they are all waiting for the evening ahead. Especially when we think of the analogy between the evening and old age by Stevens's visitor by the pier, these lines testify to Stevens being much more open to affective possibilities in life, he is indeed looking for social intimacy. Thus, it is possible to say that his narrative endeavour, which provided him with critical agency over his past, a multiplicity of available voices and distance from his occupational role, opens Stevens to other possibilities. Instead of a mental schema that is directly referential to his occupational role, he is now anticipating possibilities in that he is fictionalizing his future.

Kathy, on the other hand, is in a much more desolate situation; she is about to start "donating," after losing friends and things that make up most of the affective ties she developed throughout her life. A couple of weeks after she hears that Tommy has

"completed," she drives to Norfolk, the lost and found corner of England in their stories. Her narrative continues thus:

> I found I was standing before acres of ploughed earth. There was a fence keeping me from stepping into the field, . . . . All along the fence, especially along the lower line of wire, all sorts of rubbish had caught and tangled. . . . That was the only time, as I stood there, looking at that strange rubbish, feeling the wind coming across those empty fields, that I started to imagine just a little fantasy thing, because this was Norfolk after all, and it was only a couple of weeks since I'd lost him. . . .I half-closed my eyes and imagined this was the spot where everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it, and if I waited long enough, a tiny figure would appear on the horizon across the field, and gradually get larger until I'd see it was Tommy, and he'd wave, maybe even call. The fantasy never got beyond that—I didn't let it . . . . (Ishiguro, *Never* 281-282)

This is the same Norfolk, they (mostly) had so much fun during their field trip to find Ruth's possible; but now it is a desolate place full of rubbish, there is a fence between Ruth and her fantasy of finding again everything she had lost since childhood. She allows herself to fantasize about Tommy approaching her, for a little while, but she does not let herself continue with that fantasy. What she recounts is directly referential, she speaks about the rubbish flapping in the wind, her narrative is flat and matter of fact. Thus, arguably, her narrative endeavour brings Kathy closer to her reality in the novel; their fantasy world which they built up since childhood is lost, and the immanence of the donations is now a factor to be reckoned with. She does not let herself fictionalize; she tries to remain strictly referential to her life.

It is also important to mention both Stevens's and Kathy's narrative directions in the spectrum between "referential" and "fictional" are supported by the type of the autobiographical text they are narrating. As Stevens is narrating in diary form, he gets to comment on his daily encounters, and develop a sense of future out of these. Kathy, on the other hand, is looking at the past from where she stands at the end of her narrative, thus is focused on the past. In addition to that, the "Prologue" section in *The Remains of the Day* allows a distinction between how the novel approaches autobiography and Stevens's own approach. The ironic distance the reader can take regarding Stevens's unreliability is enabled through the hints the "implied author" provides the reader with at the beginning of the text. Stevens's attempts to remain strictly referential to reality as he perceives it is exposed by the implied author, creating

an ironic distance for the reader. However, as the novel progresses, this distance is closed; thus the narrator and the implied author are more aligned in terms of fictionalizing. In the case of *Never Let Me Go*, on the other hand, it is impossible to make a distinction between the text's approach to autobiography and the narrator's, because the whole text of the novel is structured as an autobiographical account, there is no sectional markers in the text that would support disparate approaches in terms of autobiographical discourse.

For further study, the concepts I tried to suggest are relevant for autobiographical discourse such as "role distance," "reality effect," "the subject's opacity to itself," I think, would be fruitful to explore in other contexts regarding both fictional and generic autobiographies. Especially, seeing the relevance of such thinking to generic autobiographies where the information about the narrators' lives does not come strictly from the text in which they write about their own lives would be interesting. Judith Butler's theorization in her *Giving an Account of Oneself* is also very relevant to autobiographical discourse, especially regarding discussions of ethical and political responsibility. In addition to that, autodiegetic narration is a repeated tendency for Kazuo Ishiguro's narrators. Seeing the relevance of the discussions above for works such as *An Artist of the Floating World*, *When We Were Orphans*, and *A Pale View of the Hills* in which first-person narrator/protagonists tell the story, would be very interesting. For example, in *An Artist of the Floating World*, the narrator Masuji Ono tries to reconcile his self-consciousness, feelings of guilt and memories of his perceived prominence in a movement that led Japan to disaster with the later generations' investment in American cultural/political elements. When this dilemma is considered in conjunction with his former conviction of Japanese nationalist ideas, the text provides ample material to explore through Judith Butler's theorization of humility regarding subjects giving accounts of themselves.

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