

## Space Defining the Individual in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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### Abstract

Space is an active component in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989). The novel concentrates on the life of the ageing butler Stevens. The narrative moves through ruminations on his previous master, Lord Darlington, and the post-war disintegration of British values. The profound ties between Stevens and Darlington Hall form the crux of the narrative to the extent that one's fate cannot be separated from the identity of the other. Darlington Hall evolves into a space which shapes not just world history but also the destiny of Stevens. This paper examines how *The Remains of the Day* is a narrative about Stevens' attempt to understand his past and to disentangle the mysteries of his being. It will argue on how space plays a vital role in defining the identity of characters and structuring narratives.

### Keywords

Kazuo Ishiguro, spatial criticism, identity, power, cognitive mapping, panopticon

### Introduction

Japanese-English novelist, short-story writer and a Nobel Laureate, Kazuo Ishiguro (1954-) is well known for his lyrical tales of regret permeated with delicate buoyancy. His novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) presents before the reader a unique character Stevens, the butler. The whole narrative revolves around the first person account of Stevens who reminisces about his existence as the head butler at Darlington Hall, and focuses on transformations, both historical and personal. The space of Darlington Hall dominates the ruminations of Stevens on his past life. It could be argued that the personal life story which Stevens narrates synchronises with the history of Darlington Hall. Beyond an attempt at historiographic metafiction focusing on the greater players like Lord Darlington, Ishiguro's narrative spotlights the butler, a figure on the fringes (Ekelund 70-71). The narrative draws the reader into the interiors of Stevens' psyche, as he attempts to comprehend his life history. It is a journey into the

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history of a character who baffles the reader with his stoicism and dedication to duty at the extent of sacrificing even the basic pleasures of life.

Stevens poses himself as an enigma to the reader precisely because of the first person narrative of the novel. There are no alternative perspectives to understand his behaviour other than devising a strategy at reading between the lines. That reveals the overarching influence of the space of Darlington Hall on the identity of Stevens. The stately manor is presented as an active space where, according to Stevens, events crucial to world history took place. From close observation of the narrative of Stevens, one can argue that his identity has also been constructed, demolished and reconstructed based on the changes in the space of Darlington Hall. The space becomes an active site and the master key to unlock the mysteries surrounding the principal character.

Given this background, the fundamental concern of this paper is the significance of space as a physical presence which affects identity. This is in the context of a vast and diverse scholarly criticism of *The Remains of the Day*. The novel has been interpreted from the perspectives of unreliable narration, social class and society, postcolonial critique, Japanese Samurai ideals, and British values. The extent of scholarly research which has engaged with Ishiguro's novel has to a large extent, exhaustively covered its preeminence as a text which critiques the ideologies of the British Empire. Meera Tamaya states:

In his recent and most acclaimed novel, *The Remains of the Day*, it is the dismantling of Britain's colonial empire, mentioned only as the date on which the narrative begins, which provides the determining historical context of the characters' attitudes and aspirations. The date is July 1956, when President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, thus heralding the end of Britain's long reign as the world's foremost colonial power. Not so coincidentally, on that particular day, the narrator/protagonist of the novel, Stevens, the quintessential English butler, sets out on a journey across England and, in the process, recovers the tragic truth of his past, a truth inextricably bound up with the history of his country. (45)

In a recent study of the novel, Elif Oztabak-Avci explores how the text engages with 'Englishness' and comments that *The Remains of the Day* "emerges clearly as a text attempting to deconstruct the master narrative of 'Englishness' which resurfaced in England at the time in which it was written" (52). Granting the varied scholarly research already directed at the novel, the focus of this paper will be on the novel's engagement with space. The aim of this approach is to highlight the need for a detailed critique of the text, using the less explored context of space. *The Remains of the Day* foregrounds the relevance of physical space in the narrative by linking key spaces like Darlington Hall to the identity of

the principal character – Stevens. An examination of the text based on the ideas of spatial theory unearths deep ties between Stevens and Darlington Hall. This bond cannot be ignored since it forms the crux of the narrative to the extent that the fate of one cannot be separated from the identity of the other.

### **Spatial Criticism**

Spatial criticism attempts to deconstruct notions propagated by Enlightenment and Cartesian thought on the nature of space as a vapid entity offering little to the narrative of texts. It foregrounds the theoretical concepts of Michel Foucault (1926-84), Henry Lefebvre (1901-91), Frederic Jameson (1934-) and others to argue that space is an active component in a narrative. It postulates that space holds ties with the individual subject by shaping identity. Spatial criticism argues that “space itself is both a product, shaped through a diverse range of social processes and human interventions, and a force that, in turn, influences, directs and delimits possibilities of action and ways of human being in the world” (Wegner 181). Space is not simply a site where history gets enacted; it is the very essence of history and human existence (185). Foucault’s work examining discursive spaces also highlights the role of space in shaping identity. As he argues, “Space is the matrix in which knowledge and identities are produced, but also one of the products, and in turn an agent of production” (qtd. in West-Pavlov 153). Henry Lefebvre has examined space as a product and process of social production. Space, according to Lefebvre, carries numerous connotations. Firstly, space is instrumental in governing social actions. Secondly, it is a powerful political instrument and an entity which becomes part of all forms of social regulation (Butler 42). Lefebvre’s study of space points at it, “as neither simply a physical container of objects nor an infinite discursive field. It is both socially produced and an essential precondition for the reproduction of social relations” (Butler 42). With the work of Foucault and Lefebvre, more attention has been given to reading the relevance of space in literary works. Further examination of *The Remains of the Day* with attention to space, yields answers on the enigmas surrounding the character of Stevens.

### **Stevens and Darlington Hall**

The affinity that Darlington Hall shares with Stevens borders on obsession. Even when the story recounts the brief trip undertaken by Stevens to meet Miss Kenton, the space of Darlington Hall acts as a centre which anchors Stevens. Yugin Teo has examined this hold of Darlington Hall on Stevens’s life even while he is on a trip away from that space. As Teo comments:

Stevens’ need to stop and take stock betrays his deep attachment to Darlington Hall. Many years of service that Stevens has provided to Lord

Darlington have exacted a price, and Stevens' sheltered life in Darlington Hall means that he is cut off from the world around him. (27)

Throughout the narrative, Stevens contemplates the necessities of Darlington Hall and is disappointed by a drop in standards of the servants. He frets over the need for a housemaid like Miss Kenton to revive previous standards of the space which had represented the very pinnacle of British values. His behavior seems outlandish for an ageing bachelor, who should be exhibiting some semblances of intent at taking the initiative to secure the penultimate chance of courting the lady for whom he had a soft spot. On the contrary, Stevens seems to be unable to imagine a life beyond the space of Darlington Hall. Even the prospect of a reunion with Miss Kenton is plausible for him only because of the possibility of her return back to Darlington Hall. It is as if Stevens fears for his being which might disintegrate if he severs ties with the space where he has constructed his identity.

The concept of space as a fluid entity and how it is altered and in turn alters the lives of its characters is beautifully presented in *The Remains of the Day*. The stately manor house of Darlington Hall used to be a space which upheld English values and customs. According to Adam Parkes, "Darlington Hall... is a miniature version of England itself, and the hierarchical arrangement of social relations inside its walls reflects the state of English society at large" (55). Darlington Hall received frequent visits from those in power from all around the globe during pre and postwar years. Under the system introduced by Lord Darlington, the manor house transforms into a space which requires specific English norms to be enacted. Stevens' life as the head butler of Darlington Hall during this time has shaped his visions regarding his self. Meticulousness, mechanical precision, eloquent diction, a sense of duty, and such values associated with the British nobility percolate Darlington Hall and infect Stevens. Throughout the narrative, Lord Darlington is described as a meek employer who seldom exerts overt power over Stevens. He never insults or reproaches Stevens in person. Except for the event where Stevens is humiliated in the presence of Lord Darlington by Mr. Spencer, the almost benign nature of Lord Darlington as a noble employer is never tarnished (Ishiguro 205-206). This poses the pertinent question of why Stevens rigorously reconstructs his self to suit the duty of head butler even to the extent of rejecting his personal feelings.

### **Darlington Hall Representing Greatness and Dignity**

The dignity and greatness in serving as a butler indicate the need to uphold British values. His philosophy of dignity is constructed on debates with his fellow butlers during their gatherings at the servants' hall in Darlington Hall. According to Stevens, "We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman" (Ishiguro 44). This attitude highlights not

just a British view of life but also the extent to which Stevens would argue for the need to regard spaces associated with British values as great or ideal. A sense of awe permeates the narrative voice of Stevens on occasions when he is elaborating on British values and dignity. But, even when Stevens attempts at achieving an objective definition of dignity or greatness, the spatial presence of Darlington Hall affects his judgments. Stevens persistently attempts to uphold the dignity associated with a space like Darlington Hall. This results in his docile performance negating the possibilities of ever stepping into the role of a son or a lover (Trimm 146).

Stevens elaborates on the best households being those that are at the centre of world affairs and politics. Butlers who are employed at such houses are acquainted with the elite customs and hence achieve greatness through the growing reputation of the household. Stevens says that “debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country” (Ishiguro 121). For Stevens, Darlington Hall is a locus of power where influential men dabble in politics. Stevens fosters the belief that he is becoming a part of British greatness by serving Lord Darlington. The contribution he assumes to make is one of an aide of those in power by running the space – Darlington Hall – where greatness is being produced (Tamaya 50). This sense of admiration for Darlington Hall as a space of power which requires extreme subservience affects his actions and personal decisions throughout the narrative. Darlington Hall acts as a debut space which directs the existence of a worshiper of rigid British values and a willing servant like Stevens. It becomes a space of powerful surveillance and repression which negates the scope for personal feelings and a private life for Stevens.

### **Darlington Hall and the Modern Penitentiary**

Darlington Hall can be paralleled to a space of rigid conditioning like the modern penitentiary. Michel Foucault, in his study of modern prisons has elaborated on four principles which define the spatial confinement of individuals inside a penitentiary. The first principle is that of the ‘enclosure’ or the setting up of ‘boundaries’ within the institution. These boundaries serve as spaces to inculcate disciplinary monotony. The second principle is that of ‘partitioning,’ which provides clear-cut instructions on the placement of inmates inside the space. The third principle is that of ‘functioning sites’ which maintain the monotonous activities necessary for the full functioning of the space including work, exercise, and sleep. It has to be observed that the functioning sites are extremely Spartan in their outlook. The fourth and final principle is that of ‘rank’ which helps sustain a hierarchical structure in the space and inculcates discipline and subservience among the inmates (Brown 23). All these principles rob the inmates of individuality and privacy. Constant scrutiny reduces the inmates to docile subjects. Stevens’ actions point to the repressed state of living under scrutiny in

a space like Darlington Hall which is similar in its functionality to that of a penitentiary.

The space of Darlington Hall has impinged on the psyche of Stevens to such an extent that it holds little scope for private emotions or feelings. Mechanical duty to the space is required of by the conditioned and docile Stevens who responds according to the demands of the space. The conference organised by Lord Darlington in 1923 at Darlington Hall is highlighted by Stevens as an occasion where he could exhibit traits of an almost “great” butler (Marcus 139). But it was also one of severe personal tragedies, as Stevens’ father passed away while he is engaged in running errands as head butler. Not even once does Stevens relay the information about his father nearing death to his master. Stevens prioritises the image of the great butler in the centre of great affairs of a distinguished household.

Stevens caters to the guests of the 1923 conference, responds to their queries and requests while Miss Kenton and Mrs. Mortimer mourn the demise of his father. It can be argued that, to an extent, Stevens is helpless and has to perform the scheduled tasks without protest. This feature is common to all repressive spaces where subjects are conditioned and docile. But what makes his narration appalling is his comment on the whole ordeal:

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 to suggest that I did perhaps display, in the face of everything, at least in some modest degree a ‘dignity.’ (Ishiguro 115)

Stevens has been altered by the highly mechanical, power-centric space of Darlington Hall to the extent of losing his identity as an emotional being. He represents an automaton in the space of Darlington Hall, living to serve with no questions of authority. Stevens’ life inside the repressive space of Darlington Hall can thus be compared to the docile lives of prisoners who are conditioned to have a skewed vision of fear and freedom. Darlington Hall turns out to be the space where Stevens’ existence becomes conditioned and altered to the extent of destroying his growth as an independent, emotional being.

### **The Panopticon and Repressive Surveillance in Darlington Hall**

Michel Foucault’s exploration of spaces exerts a gaze of authority over the subjects and can be further scrutinised with relation to Darlington hall. According to Foucault, such spaces function effectively by conditioning the subjects to principles of surveillance. Without the presence of a gaze of authority, docile subjects self-police themselves. Foucault examines the power exerted over its inmates by the modern penitentiary through his concept of the panopticon (Barry 43). He appropriates the principles of the panopticon – a high watchtower located at the centre of a modern penitentiary – from Jeremy Bentham (1748-

1832). From this vantage point, all the prison cells can be easily observed and prisoners are under constant surveillance. The panopticon also generates the unconscious reaction of self-policing even without the presence of a guard in the watchtower. For Foucault, the panopticon is “a model for modern societal organization of bodies and spaces” (Tally Jr. 158).

A prerequisite of any modern penitentiary is the need to prioritise “the spatial demands of facilitating the inspection principle” (Hirst 172). Through inspection and constant surveillance, according to Hirst, the modern penitentiary is putting into practice a strategy to manipulate the daily lives of the inmates by controlling their behaviour (172). Stevens’ behaviour inside the space of Darlington Hall is akin to the conduct of an inmate practicing self-policing on himself. His rejection of emotions inside private spaces of Darlington Hall and beyond the physical presence of the watcher in power – Lord Darlington – is an obvious evidence of the space being repressive.

Throughout the reflections of Stevens, the moments are few when readers are introduced to his private life at Darlington Hall. In an episode narrated immediately after Miss Kenton’s appointment, Stevens exhibits reluctance bordering on discomfort when she attempts to redecorate his private parlour. The effort to brighten up the space brings sacrilege closer to Stevens who considers Darlington Hall as a sacred space (Guth 135). His identity as a stoic, dignified servant inside the space of Darlington Hall is called into question by Miss Kenton’s act. A private parlour which merits little examination from the gaze of the master holds no space of freedom for Stevens. Stevens chides Miss Kenton for her act of encroachment on a space which according to him is not one dedicated to recreation or relaxation (Ishiguro 55). He subtly questions Miss Kenton’s act which might prove distracting for his work as butler. He steers the subject away to official matters. As a kind of punishment for her transgression of the space, he reminds her of the flaws in her skills she might have to rectify soon to feel well adjusted into the space of Darlington Hall. His pep talk can be compared to one given to new inmates by veterans in a penitentiary. Stevens says:

Miss Kenton, if you are under the impression you have already at your age perfected yourself, you will never rise to heights you are no doubt capable of. I might point out, for instance, you are still often unsure of what goes where and which item is which. (Ishiguro 57)

The subtle professional insult meted out here is to be analysed as a warning by the conditioned Stevens not to alter even the space dedicated to recreation. The episode ends with Stevens’ remark which affirms this hypothesis: “After this encounter, Miss Kenton did not attempt to introduce further flowers into my pantry, and in general, I was pleased to observe, she went about settling in impressively” (57).

### **Space Defining norms and the Identity of Stevens**

The idea of space is predominant in this episode where a metaphoric duel is staged between the one cocooned inside the space and the other attempting to alter the space. Phillip E. Wegner examines the space as a site of conflict for individuals. According to him, space “is conceived not only as the site of politics, conflict and struggle, but also the very thing being fought over” (185). This episode underlines the power exerted by a repressive space like Darlington Hall over its inmates. It highlights how the space conditions its inmates to be compatible to its philosophies to the extent of utilising them as cohabiters who would fight to maintain its structure. The space defines the individuality of Stevens unconsciously. Arguments pertaining to Stevens as a workaholic, stoic, or Spartan individual can be countered with the argument of the decisive factor which has shaped such an existence for him.

Paul Rabinow has talked about the various “norms” of human behaviour which are affected by the spaces in which they unfold (10-11). The spatial aspect of an architectural or geographical structure can influence patterns of behaviour (Wegner 185). Subjects who are easily conditioned to spaces prove to be well adjusted while those proving incompatible are either eliminated from the space or transport themselves beyond the space concerned. This act of shifting from a space requires a spirit of defiance and noncompliance to the “norms” set by the space concerned. Miss Kenton gets assimilated into the space of Darlington Hall where Lord Darlington, the master of the house, exhibits pro-Nazi sentiments by ordering Stevens to dismiss two members of the staff for being Jewish (Robbins 233).

The episode can be treated as a test of conformity to the norms of the space dominated by powers with their own agendas. The space requires absolute compliance to its norms which is understandable to the well-adjusted Stevens. Miss Kenton exhibits a spark of non-conformity towards the unjust order issued to maintain the space according to the whims of those in power. She argues with Stevens over the injustice and the extent of discrimination in dismissing honest workmates for their racial background. The space of Darlington Hall does not accommodate inmates who challenge the norms which can be altered according to the impulses of those in power. Miss Kenton’s rebelliousness is short lived, as she decides to be subservient rather than uproot herself from a space comfortable for her. On being asked by Stevens for not adhering to her decision to leave Darlington Hall, Miss Kenton points at the sense of security the space provides for her even at the cost of sacrifice to her individuality. Miss Kenton’s sense of insecurity outside the space of Darlington Hall gets reflected in her assessment of her act of cowardice.



### Stevens Altering the Space of Darlington Hall

The dismissal of the Jewish housemaids also spotlights the lack of stability inherent in the idea of space. Henry Lefebvre has conceptualised space as deeply historical and as a fluid entity:

One of the greatest temptations produced by the enlightenment conceptualization of space as a static construct is that we think of it as a refined thing rather than an open-ended, conflicted and contradictory *process*, a process in which we as agents continuously intervene. (Wegner 182)

It can be further added that the fluid nature of space alters the individual actions of its inhabitants periodically. This change might be the result of historical events which alter the norms of the space in question. In the episode involving the dismissal of the Jewish maids, Lord Darlington's anti-Semitism undergoes a radical reversal. The master renews the norms and assigns the compliant inmate in Stevens to seek out the dismissed maids, if possible (Ishiguro 159). The change in norms is conveyed to Miss Kenton by Stevens. She is confounded by Stevens' instant transformation in compliance to changing the norms of the space of Darlington hall. She says, "As I recall, you thought it was only right and proper that Ruth and Sarah be sent packing. You were positively cheerful about it" (Ishiguro 162). This unsettles Stevens' logic concerning subservience to the space of Darlington Hall. He tries to evade the criticism, saying, "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" (Ishiguro 162). Stevens' response can be analysed as the expression of an inmate who is well adjusted to a space and who can rapidly alter his preferences to changes in the space involved. Stevens is demonstrating the behaviour of a docile, conditioned subject who has sacrificed his identity to the whims of the repressive space. This episode is crucial to the whole narrative. After the confrontation with Miss Kenton, Stevens' identity as a docile subject begins to change.

Stevens' reflections in the latter half of *The Remains of the Day* presents instances where he attempts to actively modify the space which has repressed his emotions and feelings. Stevens himself ruminates upon this change in his attitude. As he says, "But as to what really caused such changes, just what particular chain of events was really responsible, I have never quite been able to decide" (Ishiguro 173). Stevens points at the episode where Miss Kenton barges into his parlour to find him reading a romantic novel as the crucial turning point of this change (Ishiguro 173). Stevens, in his ruminations, points out in the manner of a docile subject conditioned to the space of Darlington Hall the norms attached to a butler's parlour, as the following excerpt suggests:

The butler's pantry, as far as I am concerned, is a crucial office, the heart of the house's operations, not unlike a general's headquarters during a battle, and it is imperative that all things in it are ordered – and left ordered – in precisely the way I wish them to be. (Ishiguro 173-74)

Miss Kenton rightfully equates Stevens' supposedly private space to a prison cell. She says, "Really, Mr Stevens, this room resembles a prison cell. All one needs is a small bed in the corner and one could well imagine condemned men spending their last hours here" (174). This statement asserts the extent to which Stevens has been conditioned by the space of Darlington Hall.

Stevens' subservience to the space exhibits for the first time in the narrative a conscious attempt at rebellion. He has introduced something trivial like a romance novel into the space which is dedicated to meticulous work to serve those in power and to satisfy the gaze. The act of not hiding the book from Miss Kenton also points at the desperation in Stevens to redefine his identity and simultaneously the space of Darlington Hall. It can be read as a conscious attempt to reclaim the lost emotional identity of Stevens from the repressive space he has inhabited for so long and with almost slavish dedication. Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow have answers to this state of active rebellion against the notion of a space as a fixed entity. According to them, "if social and cultural spaces, including the body, are indeed the product of human actions, then there is the possibility of our reconstructing human spaces, and hence human being-in-the world as well" (Wegner 185). Stevens' act, even when it proves to be a bit late, is one which might be the result of a realisation of the human capacity to alter spaces and to redefine their existence. Before the episode is narrated, Stevens ruminates on the persistence to alter space made by another inmate whom he had regarded as well adjusted to the space of Darlington Hall – Miss Kenton. He says, "I know for a fact she tried to introduce flowers to my pantry on at least three occasions over the years" (Ishiguro 173). This episode, along with the episode involving Miss Kenton's chastising Stevens for his 'pretending' can be regarded as an act at non-conformity from Stevens. They function as catalysts for Stevens to make an attempt to alter the space which has forced him to repress his emotions and hence to slowly reclaim it along with his identity. This can be seen as an attempt at coming to terms with one's existence after a protracted period of docile subservience.

### **Stevens' Journey and Cognitive Mapping**

*The Remains of the Day* presents an exciting narrative constructed around travel well beyond the categorisation of personal life history. Stevens' journey to meet Miss Kenton after twenty years can be categorised under the title of discourse space in the narrative. Discourse space holds the terrain traversed which is given ample description by Stevens. This is in contrast to the story space. Story space

is “the immediate spatial environment containing an action episode more globally, also the range or amplitude of environments across all episodes” (552). Based on the parameters of story space, in the context of *The Remains of the Day*, it is dominated by Darlington Hall. This conflict in spaces can be read as an attempt at reconfiguring the space by Stevens to, simultaneously, redefine his identity. Cognitive mapping, according to Frederic Jameson, is “a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some heightened sense of its place in the global system” (Wegner 188). The travel away from Darlington Hall and its spatial domain enables Stevens, to an extent, to fulfill the primary condition for cognitive mapping. This condition being “cognitive mapping... comes to require the coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality” (Jameson 52). Through this, the subject is able to reconfigure the sense of space s/he is occupying. It “would allow the individual subject to locate itself and to represent a seemingly unrepresentable social totality in the postmodern world system” (Tally Jr. 155). It becomes a journey simultaneously away from and towards his true self which had been repressed for long; an act of expanding the self from its confines (Wong 57).

The undertaking to travel made by Stevens after a dramatic change has occurred in the repressive space of Darlington Hall. The old British values of dignity, greatness, and a sense of being under the scrutiny of power disintegrate with the change of ownership of the space from Lord Darlington to Mr Farraday, an American. Stevens elaborates on the changes brought about in the space of Darlington Hall with the arrival of Mr Farraday. A majority of the space which had influenced the psyche of Stevens remains under cover and unused. The banquet hall which received visitors of power has changed its purpose. As Stevens would elaborate, with a degree of melancholic nostalgia:

Today, the old banqueting hall no longer contains a table and that spacious room, with its high and magnificent ceiling, serves Mr Farraday well as a sort of gallery. But in his lordship's day, the room was regularly required. (Ishiguro 75)

The grandeur of the space which required Stevens to follow certain norms has lost its old significance and is no longer the same. This can also be read as an acknowledgement of the sorrow associated with the gradual decline and fall of the British Empire, its values, and the physical spaces which it represented. As Yugin Teo remarks:

The act of collective mourning in Britain of its colonial history carries with it a link to the mourning of the fall of the aristocracy by those who were of the landed gentry for several generations.... The country house

and stately home is not only a symbol of the wealth and power of the Empire, but is also a symbol of order and protection within its walls. (58)

Teo further states that “Stevens has lived all his life within such walls, and the decline of the status of the country house signifies the inevitable decline of Stevens’s occupation” (58). A change of space, thus, alters the approach of Stevens towards his life and subsequently forces him to reevaluate his identity.

The disintegration of British values and their replacement with American ideals are particularly evident in this literary narrative. This is most obvious in Stevens’ attempt at learning the craft of bantering for the sake of his new employer, something unimaginable during the time of Lord Darlington. But the effort required in this case for Stevens is one of radically reframing his identity; an identity he had constructed in tune with the space of Darlington Hall for a protracted period of docile servitude. David James examines this struggle to adapt for Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*. According to him,

These conflicts and instabilities also reveal Stevens’ underlying vulnerability. His reluctance to abandon discursive properties, even deliberately in the case of convivial banter, is altogether ingrained – integrally part of his physiological make-up. (James 64)

But this shock at a change of space based on a change of culture is also crucial in Stevens’ realisation of the power in him to alter a space which he had imagined to be fixed.

Stevens’ decision to travel is made with the sole purpose to meet with Miss Kenton and to possibly invite her back into the changed space of Darlington Hall. His attempt highlights his intention to reclaim his emotional life and is an act of reconfiguring one’s being which had been relegated to docile subservience to a space and its powerful gaze. Beyond the gaze of Darlington hall, Stevens starts to reconfigure his past. He begins to puzzle out the purpose behind his actions of self-denial and to understand the looming presence of Darlington Hall as the dominant factor which has shaped his identity. For Wojciech Drag, this trip undertaken by Stevens is a result of a protracted period of painful, solitary rumination with focus on his past life. As Drag says,

The decision to leave the walls of Darlington Hall for the first time in many years can be interpreted as a displaced expression of Stevens’ frustration with his inner conflicts. (53)

The further he moves away from the life of slavish dedication to the space of Darlington Hall, the more he attempts to reconstruct his existence. This act of cognitive mapping reaches its climax when Stevens meets with Miss Kenton, now

Mrs. Benn. Stevens' desire to bring back Miss Kenton on his assumption that she is on the verge of separation with her husband proves wrong. As she returns back home, Miss Kenton ruminates on "a different life, a better life you might have had. For instance, I get to think about a life I might have had with you, Mr Stevens" (Ishiguro 251). Stevens' response to Miss Kenton's words is an interior monologue that reads: "[I]heir implications were such as to provoke a certain degree of sorrow within me. Indeed – why should I not admit it? – at that moment, my heart was breaking" (251-252). His deplorable state is one which has befallen a docile subject who prioritised the norms of a space over his personal needs.

### **Conclusion**

This essay aims at mapping the space of Darlington Hall and leads to the conclusion that the trip made by Stevens becomes a conscious endeavour from docility to evaluate its debilitating effects on his identity. It is Stevens engaging in an act of breaking out of the space both material and psychological. It is an act of rebellion against a life of subservience and numb routine; a final, desperate attempt at understanding and redefining his self and his world (Shaffer 82-83). Stevens is able to ultimately review the decisions he made to uphold the whims of Lord Darlington and his British values. He articulates his thoughts in a manner counterbalancing his earlier reticence. In a melancholic moment towards the end of the novel, the utterly devastated Stevens discerns the meaninglessness of his past existence. Stevens' outcries are not just against Lord Darlington but also against the space which elicited acts of unquestioning subservience from him. Throughout the narrative of *The Remains of the Day*, we can observe that Lord Darlington imposes little to no influence over the personal decisions made by Stevens. It is the space of Darlington Hall, a manor house with its set of British norms on dignity and greatness, which exerts its influence on the private life of Stevens.

Stevens presents himself as a subject utterly devastated by the results of compliance to the norms of a repressive space. But his very act of open confession beyond the space of Darlington Hall can be regarded as an attempt to finally reclaim his identity. Stevens' act of cognitive mapping through his travel and retrospection away from the space of Darlington Hall helps him prioritise what he had neglected in life – human feelings and emotions. This can be taken as a realignment of norms for Stevens who has understood through his attempt at cognitive mapping that spaces, even those permeated by British values like Darlington hall, are fluid. Stevens realises that spaces can exert their influence on the identity of a person, but the crucial part being that humans can also simultaneously alter their spaces and reclaim them to suit their intentions.

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