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Affect Poststructuralism and Repressed Emotion: The True Tragedy of *The Remains of The Day*

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ABSTRACT

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* has garnered much discussion by literary theorists. Studies have primarily concerned themselves with the main character Mr Stevens and how he interacts with the complex situations around him. A frequent question is of his reliability, as there are indications that he does not give correct interpretations of events. This essay uses poststructuralist affect theory to present a new interpretation of this unreliability as well as of Mr Stevens himself. Delving into the separation between affect and emotion, this analysis suggests that the protagonist, Mr Stevens, is emotionally repressed, unable to form affect into comprehensible emotions. Affect, meaning the preconscious elements and the reactions of the body, is separate from emotions, which are only formed when these sensations become cognitively understood. By investigating Mr Stevens's role as a butler, this study reveals his emotional repression and how it shapes his perception of events. As a result, he emerges as an unreliable narrator, experiencing the narrative through a distorted lens. This underlines the tragedy of Mr Stevens, as it shows how Mr Stevens's role as a butler and the society around him has limited his ability to experience emotion.

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Introduction

The chapter "Day Two - Morning" in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) ends with the following sentence: "For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph" (115). That is how the novel's protagonist and narrator, Mr Stevens, finishes his story about the day his father died. The sense of triumph he mentions comes from his ability to continue working despite his father's death. Mr Stevens believes being a great butler is about not letting personal feelings affect professional actions. He explains that a butler should fully inhabit their role at all times. They should not abandon it when something personally distressing occurs while on duty. On the night of his father's death, he believes he accomplishes this and therefore shows the "dignity" worthy of a great butler by triumphing over personal obstacles.

Dignity is the word Mr Stevens uses for this ability to hide and suppress his emotions, but what is illustrated here is not necessarily this ability. Consider this: Mr Stevens brings up the night of his father's death to exemplify how he can continue working during a period of emotional distress, but should he not then give insight into that emotional distress? It is possible that Ishiguro writes it this way because Mr Stevens assumes the person he is talking to understands that this event would be emotionally distressing. However, as will be explained later, that form of subtlety does not align with Mr Stevens's reflectiveness that Ishiguro depicts in the rest of the novel. Paradoxically, the only signs presented of him feeling any distress are from how he acts and how others treat him. People continuously ask Mr Stevens if he is all right or if he needs some rest. The reason I call this paradoxical is that the scene does not seem to indicate that Mr Stevens is a master at hiding his emotions but instead that he is unaware of them. He is clearly not able to hide them, as is shown by the fact others notice them. Despite this, he still retells this event to exemplify his own greatness as a butler, which means he does not understand this. Additionally, Mr Stevens, at one point, describes the serving room as a forest filled with dark figures showing how he, on an unconscious level, is affected by his father's death (Ishiguro 111). However, this is depicted as an external change illustrating how Mr Stevens is separated from his own emotions. This can be explained by Brian Massumi's poststructuralist theory of affect. Massumi's theory separates feelings into affect and emotion (27). He equates affect with bodily intensities, sensations in the body related to emotions but

not emotions themselves (25-27). In comparison, emotion is affect once qualified and defined as personal (28). That means that for affect to form into emotion, it must be consciously recognised (31). What Mr Stevens is incapable of, is recognising the affect and therefore forming emotion. However, others still notice his bodily reaction to the affect, which is why they ask him how he is doing. That is what the night of his father's death really shows us. There are instances in *The Remains of the Day* where Mr Stevens does suppress and conceal his emotion, but that night is not an example of it. It shows his inability to recognise affect and form emotion, which requires an entirely different analysis. It begs the reader to ask what thoughts and feelings Mr Stevens is actually experiencing, or rather what the novel implies on that matter.

Mr Stevens's narration, in *The Remains of the Day*, has been the subject of much discussion. Kathleen Wall, for example, investigates the ways in which Mr Stevens's narration is unreliable (18). She concludes that he is unreliable not only because of a discrepancy between the story and discourse (19-20). She finds this traditionally used definition lacking and explains that it is not through this that the reader primarily comes to suspect Mr Stevens (37-39). Mr Stevens's unreliability is instead shown through the discrepancy between the events he experiences and the conclusion he draws from them (25-26). Sareh Khosravi approaches the topic from a different perspective, looking at how Ishiguro tells the story of what could have been (23). She describes it as both explicit and implicit disnarration being present in the novel (23). Lisa Fluet also briefly discusses narration but primarily focuses on how the novel depicts class. She writes about how Mr Stevens's class belonging is that of an undefined "we" (266-268). She points out the irony of how Mr Stevens, by claiming things as "we can only...", tries to imply that he is representative of a whole generation of people despite himself being unable to form meaningful personal relationships with any individuals (266). Christine Berberich writes about his misguided judgment and how he always tries to justify his actions based on his values (140-142). For her, Mr Stevens wears a mask that he is carefully preserving and even when recounting the events he does not admit to the emotions he had (144-145). Finally, Öz Özge combines much previous research to discuss Stevens's morality (341). He claims that Mr Stevens's political passivity results from his role as a butler (342). He claims it inhibits Mr Stevens from participating as he cannot engage emotionally in discussion (350).

What is lacking in previous research is an extensive examination of what Mr Stevens is thinking and feeling, not only what he claims to be. Multiple theorists discuss emotion but fail to distinguish between expressing and experiencing emotion. They cite his inability to form

relationships and his desire to hide his emotions. However, they do not thoroughly investigate what feelings Mr Stevens actually experiences.

An exploration into what Mr Stevens is experiencing beyond what he expresses is necessary because of the fact that his actions often appear illogical. He often describes feeling a certain way about something but then his actions contradicts it. There is, for example, a case where a visitor asks about Mr Stevens's former employer Lord Darlington. At this point in time, the public has branded Lord Darlington as a traitor to his country for trying to work with the Nazis. Specifically, Mr Stevens is asked if he used to work for Lord Darlington. Mr Stevens does not outright deny this but gives a misleading answer and explains that he does not want to discuss Lord Darlington (130-131). However, Mr Stevens immediately clarifies to the reader that this is not because he is ashamed of his previous employer (132). What is the situation? Are readers to assume that Mr Stevens is ashamed but scared to admit it, or that he does not know why he lied? Depending on the answers, the reader's interpretations of Mr Stevens as a character will change. If he is ashamed but does not want to admit it, he comes across as still wanting to hold up his old master's legacy, while if he genuinely does not understand his actions or what to feel, then he is simply misguided. It is the same case as in the first example, where we looked at the night of his father's death. His actions imply a feeling, but he denies having it. A possible explanation is that Mr Stevens lies in his narration, but Kathleen Wall explains why that is unlikely (36). Mr Stevens frequently reflects on his past and does not try to hide the contradictions in the story he presents (36). Considering this, I will offer a different interpretation of the inconsistencies in Mr Stevens's thoughts and actions.

I will present the interpretation that Mr Stevens frequently does not recognise his emotions - that the way he is depicted characterises him as unable to form them. Kathleen Wall argues that Mr Stevens is engaging in self-deception and compartmentalisation. He separates his thoughts and feelings (28). However, this still requires active deception on Mr Stevens's part, even if it is only to himself. In contrast, I argue that Mr Stevens is entirely passive towards his emotion and that it is this passivity that is the cause of his lack of emotion. It is, as explained by Massumi, to form emotion, you must actively interpret the initial bodily sensations, the affect.

Massumi's theory can be applied to literature to better understand a character's actions and feelings. Massumi himself does not analyse characters, only concerning himself with reader reactions. However, Joel P. Sodano takes what Massumi has written and explains how this dichotomy between affect and emotion appears within novels as well. He describes affect and emotion as the separation between emotion and the knowledge of emotion (76). He

describes how characters acting in irrational ways indicates this separation (71-72). They act based on the affect and, therefore, cannot motivate it through their thoughts or feelings (72-73). As shown from the examples, Mr Stevens fits perfectly with this description. Similarly to the protagonists Sodano discusses, he is compelled to act in ways he cannot explain (73). Being unable to understand feelings will be labelled as emotional repression. In other words, a character unable to form emotions out of affect is emotionally repressed.

Mr Stevens is emotionally repressed because the surrounding society has forced him to be. He has been limited not only in his ability to express emotions but in his ability to experience them. Because of this, I will argue that Mr Stevens should be viewed as a sympathetic character and not a deceptive and unreliable narrator. He is unreliable, but not because he lies to anyone, not even himself. He speaks his truth, but his truth is shaped by his inability to form and experience emotions.

The essay will start by introducing affect theory, as before I can argue for Mr Stevens's emotional repression the basic concepts need to be established and explained. Once this is done, I will identify and classify emotional repression within *The Remains of the Day*. I will also discuss how this differs from when Mr Stevens is suppressing emotions, as emotional suppression also occurs in the novel. After this, I will investigate why Mr Stevens is emotionally repressed and how the world around him shaped his reaction to affect. Finally the essay will turn its focus to describing Mr Stevens's unreliability. By integrating affect theory, I will show that Mr Stevens is an unreliable narrator because he is emotionally repressed. This differs from other interpretations where Mr Stevens is viewed as intentionally deceitful or as a subject of weak or selective memory. He appears unreliable because he perceives events differently from what a reader would suspect. Through these parts, the main point will be to emphasise that Mr Stevens is emotionally repressed, that his environment causes it and that it has negatively affected his life.

Affect and Literature

There has always been importance placed on emotion within literature studies, but the idea of it having its own field of study is a recent development that only occurred within the last few decades (Hogan 1-2 & 14). In the introduction to his book *Literature and Emotion*, Patrick Colm Hogan explains how the new field arose partially by accident but also claims that it was inevitable (14-15). He explains this further when writing, "[p]ut simply, we care about

feelings" (14). He means there has always been interest in how literary works evoke and represent feelings. Therefore, it was only a matter of time before a dedicated study of the subject arose (14).

When applied to literature, affect theory can refer to multiple areas of study. Some study the reader's emotional response, while others engage with the perceived emotions of characters (Hogan 9-10). Additionally, multiple branches of affect theory have emerged. The one relevant to the current argument is what Hogan calls affect poststructuralism (30).

Affect poststructuralists are interested in how emotions have a precognitive element (Hogan 30). They believe a gap exists between an initial bodily response and the cognitive ability to understand that response (30). Brian Massumi explores this gap in his critical work within affect poststructuralism, *Parables for the Virtual*. He introduces the concept of intensity, a state of possibilities before an emotion is formed (31). The first bodily response to an event is not directly linked to a specific emotion and can be the same for emotions typically considered opposites (24). Massumi writes: "It is also the beginning of selection: the incipience of mutually exclusive pathways of action and expression, all but one of which will be inhibited, prevented from actualising themselves completely" (30), which means, in more straightforward terms, that out of the unquantifiable intensity of feeling, only one set of emotions will form. In order to explain it further, intensity exists as a realm of potential where the outcome, the emotional reaction to an event, is still uncertain (30). It is first when cognition enters the process that the initial sensation can form into an emotion. Massumi explains the dynamic between intensity and emotion when he writes, "It is intensity owned and recognised" (28). Before we move on, it is essential to note that I have referred to intensity this far, as that is what Massumi initially calls the concept. Later, however, he continues by equating intensity to affect (27). Equating affect and intensity creates a distinction between affect and emotion that is not traditionally made (27).

Affect poststructuralism can be applied when discussing reader reactions or the characters in the story world. Massumi notably writes about reader reaction, not character emotion. However, I will be far from the first to apply his theory to characters within a novel, and it is worth investigating how other theorists have done this in the past. Sodano describes how it is possible to narrate and reveal the affect by showing characters' actions before attributing emotions to them. Often it is described as an unknowable force that first leads a character to act (71). Sodano clarifies that the feeling does not come from outside oneself (73). It is not a strange force compelling the characters but rather that the knowledge of the feeling is separated from the feeling itself (70). They act based on the affect. The first feeling is the

sense of the emotion forming but it is not yet the emotion itself (72-73). Only through reasoning and interpreting that initial sensation is the emotion formed (69). Sodano describes, that because of this, emotion can even take a character by surprise (68). He links the surprise to affect when writing: "When the protagonists of these novels describe the quite unexpected feeling of falling in love, they touch not the thing itself but only its virtuality, for it figures as both real and inexpressible, felt long before it can be named and undoubtedly different in the naming than in the feeling" (68). Here Sodano echoes Massumi in that he suggests that the affect is real but abstract (30). It cannot be put into words: It can only be felt (30).

For my argument, the most crucial element of poststructuralist affect theory is the distinction between affect and emotion. Affect is all the pre-cognitive sensations and emotions form when the person or character reflects upon those sensations (31-32). Sodano explains that the best way to identify when a character has been unable to form an emotion is by looking at events where they cannot explain their actions (Sodano 75-77). The reason for this is because they are acting based on affect. The following section focuses on identifying instances like these and distinguishing them from instances where someone only ignores their emotions.

Emotional Repression and Suppression in *The Remains of the Day*

If a distinction between ignoring emotions and being unable to form them is going to be drawn, there needs to be a vocabulary to describe the two separate phenomena. Neither Massumi nor Sodano offers such a vocabulary. This is not surprising since Massumi takes his analysis in a very different direction after the initial theory. He focuses on reader response rather than character analysis. He is also concerned about where affect is formed it is not entirely of body or mind but in a realm between the two (34-35). Sodano also analyses character emotions, but the characters he is examining do not have as complex a relationship to emotion as Mr Stevens does. Therefore, he never needs a more specific vocabulary. Mr Stevens is complicated because, as Christine Berberich points out, he values being able to hide his emotions (140). What that means is that even when he does experience emotions, he will not express them. As already stated, that is different from his inability to form emotion. The two require separate words to describe them.

For the sake of my argument, the term used will be emotional suppression and emotional repression. Mr Stevens hiding under a facade will be labelled emotional suppression.

When I refer to a facade in this instance, I mean the demeanour Mr Steven keeps to remain a dignified butler in his mind. I will use the term emotional repression when indicating Mr Stevens's inability to form emotion out of affect.

In order to further understand the distinction between emotional suppression and repression, different examples from *The Remains of the Day* will be examined. The first one will act as an example of Mr Stevens's emotional suppression. Mr Steven's employer, Lord Darlington, asks him to fire two Jewish staff members. Mr Stevens proceeds to do this without hesitation. However, despite Mr Stevens's outwardly compliance and calm demeanour, he explains to the reader (however he is writing to) how he was distraught by this incident (155-156). What is happening is that Mr Stevens is hiding his true emotions about the incident because he believes his duty is to follow commands without questioning them. It becomes clear how capable Mr Stevens is at hiding emotion this way through a later interaction with the housekeeper Miss Kenton. She tells him, "As I recall you thought it was only right and proper that Ruth and Sarah be sent packing" (162). In fact, Miss Kenton was distraught by his unemotional reaction and refused to speak for him for weeks which shows how convinced she was by his act. Mr Stevens, on the other hand, insists that he was also horrified by Lord Darlington's decision but did not think it was his role to express his opinion. Mr Stevens expresses the same thought directly to the reader when he remarks, "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" (156). This line shows that Mr Stevens did indeed have an emotional reaction to the event but chose to ignore it. Supposing this had been an instance of emotional repression, Mr Stevens might have described an unusual heaviness to his step or some other bodily reaction to hearing this, but he would not have been able to describe his emotion directly. Instead, it is clear that he has fully formed his emotion, but to keep his mask as a butler, he does not express it.

Before moving on to the next example, the possibility of Mr Stevens lying about what he felt and what he is feeling must be addressed. For example, in the previously described event, how do we know Mr Stevens did feel distraught about firing the maids? Certain critics, including Christine Berberich, believe he is lying to a certain extent. Berberich argues that his narration is at least defensive (142). Kathleen Wall presents a good counterargument, however. She points out that Mr Stevens is willing to reflect on events, which does not align with his being deceptive (36). She believes that *The Remains of the Day* presents Mr Stevens as trying but incapable of presenting a truthful version of events (37). The matter of Mr Stevens's unintentional unreliability will be returned to later, but for now, Wall's argument will be

deemed a sufficient explanation. I will explain how Mr Stevens's unreliability is a symptom of his emotional repression, which is precisely why the concepts must be exemplified and understood.

Before moving on to emotional repression, however, one more example of emotional suppression will be investigated. This second example is far more straightforward, and there is no apparent reason why Mr Stevens would lie, even ignoring the previous discussion. The situation is as follows: Mr Stevens is talking to his new employer about managing the house. This passage stands out in the conversation: "Although I did my best not to, something of my scepticism must have betrayed itself" (7). What Mr Stevens refers to is his scepticism about running Darlington Hall with a staff of only four people. Additionally, the way Mr Stevens explain it shows he is aware of his scepticism. He is aware of it but ignores it because of his sense of duty. He even admits that he was trying to hide it the best he could. Scepticism may not necessarily be an individual emotion but is a form of emotional response. Scepticism is an excellent example of how emotion and the awareness of emotion co-exist, as it would be difficult to link a bodily reaction to scepticism specifically. Only when Mr Stevens reflects on the feeling can he precisely understand it. Since Mr Stevens reflects on the emotion, understands it, and then admits to hiding it to continue his work, it perfectly fits our definition of emotional suppression.

When it comes to emotional repression, this state is, by definition, harder to identify as no emotion is described directly in the text. Instead, the moments are only possible to identify through descriptions of bodily reactions and unmotivated behaviour by a character, as the underlying affect causes these. For examples of emotional repression, we need to turn to events where Mr Stevens is experiencing a change but cannot explain it or when he does something not justified by logic or emotion.

The best example of Mr Stevens experiencing an unexplainable change comes from a meeting between himself and Miss Kenton. Through this example, we can start unravelling the meaning of emotional repression. In the scene, Miss Kenton unexpectedly confronts Mr Stevens in his room while alone reading a book. The conversation quickly becomes an argument as Mr Stevens does not want to show what he is reading. Miss Kenton steps forward to reach for the book, and what happens afterwards Mr Steven describes the following way: "Then she was standing before me, and suddenly the atmosphere underwent a peculiar change - almost as though the two of us had been thrust onto some other plane of being altogether" (175). Unlike the example with emotional suppression, Mr Stevens admits to being incapable of explaining the situation, "I am afraid it is not easy to describe clearly what I mean here"

(175). He never links the bodily sensation that he experiences to an emotion. He only describes an external change which he does not, as Massumi names it, "own and recognise" (28). He does not acknowledge it as an emotion; therefore, an emotion is never formed. Mr Stevens is experiencing the same thing that Massumi refers to when he describes it as a virtual moment. In a virtual moment, the feeling of anger, love, and fear are all the same because the outcome is yet to be determined (24). Nevertheless, there is no outcome. Mr Stevens cannot form the affect intensities into a realised emotion. This moment shows the same thing Sodano described, how the moment of the feeling and the understanding of it are separated (68). This separation, this lack of ability to shape the possibilities into something actualised, is what I define as suffering from emotional repression. Mr Stevens is not suppressing any emotion towards Miss Kenton because he never has a chance to. The feeling never moves past the stage of affect.

The other way to identify emotional repression is to look at instances where a character is taking actions that do not match their thinking. Examples of these instances can also be found in *The Remains of the Day*. These show emotional repression because it shows the gap between emotion and knowledge of emotion, between affect and emotion. One of these examples regards Mr Stevens's romantic feelings for Miss Kenton. It begins at the very first line of the book, which reads: "It seems increasingly likely that I really will undertake the expedition that has preoccupied my imagination now for some days" (3). Here Mr Stevens is surprised by his own decision as he did not think he would take the offer to leave for a few days. Mr Stevens has never left the Darlington Hall since he started working there as far as the reader can see. When he is offered by his new employer to go on a trip he therefore thinks it a kind gesture but dismisses it. He only starts considering it when he receives a letter from Miss Kenton. Suddenly, he is compelled to go but does not understand why. He tries to explain it by saying that having Miss Kenton back on the staff would help resolve the current issues, but not even Mr Stevens himself believes this as enough justification as he realises he had not even inquired if it would be possible to hire another staff member (13-14).

It becomes increasingly apparent to the reader that Mr Stevens's desire for Miss Kenton to return is not about a staffing plan or any professional interests but instead that he is in love with her. He just does not know it himself. His feelings are shown in several ways including the previously described event in Mr Stevens's room. There is also the matter of the letter itself, which Stevens continuously returns to, and how he talks with and thinks about Miss Kenton in general. When thinking about the letter, he seems to need to tell the reader and himself continually that his reading of the letter, showing Miss Kenton's nostalgia for Darlington Hall, is correct. When first receiving it, he is convinced Miss Kenton wants to return to Darlington

Hall. He explains that it contains "an unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington, and I am quite sure this - distinct hints of her desire to return here" (10). Towards the end of the novel, however, he begins to understand his mistake when reflecting on the letter, thinking, "I am inclined to believe I may have well read more into certain of her lines than was perhaps wise" (189). Mr Stevens admits that his previous behaviour was unreasonable but does not know why he acted that way. He is unaware of the affect of love that motivated him.

Mr Stevens does not lie about the reason for wanting to see Miss Kenton - he does not secretly know why he is going there. He strongly desires to see her as a reaction to the affect. Although more subtly expressed, it resembles an event in Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1741) that Sodano uses as an example. Pamela decides to return to Mr B based on a "strange impulse" (Sodano 71). This impulse Sodano means comes from the event of love becoming but is not love (73). It can be said to be the affect of love, the potential of love. It cannot, however, be classified as love itself because it is not yet recognised. Returning to Ishiguro's novel, it does not have to be explicitly stated that Mr Stevens loves Miss Kenton for the text to indicate he has the emotion. I do claim, however, that he does not feel it because he does not describe any feelings indicating love when discussing Miss Kenton, not even associated ones. He never entertains the idea that what he is feeling could be love. The only indication of his feelings comes from his actions, which can be explained as caused by the affect.

One crucial question demands an answer before moving on to the next section. Why does the difference between emotional repression and emotional suppression matter? To answer this, I will present an overview of what they are. Emotional suppression is a conscious action done by an individual in order not to show emotion. It is a way to handle emotions by choosing not to act upon them. Emotional repression is not a choice at all. The affect, as Masumi puts it, is asocial (30). That means it is formed outside of oneself, away from consciousness (30). Emotional repression is thus forced upon Mr Stevens and prohibits him from having a choice as he cannot understand his own emotion. The structure he lives in has made him unable to process emotion. The tragedy of *The Remains of the Day* is not that Mr Stevens is a man who makes all the wrong choices. The tragedy is that he is being forced into a mould he cannot escape. When I use the word tragedy here I do believe it echoes some of the ideas from the classical tragedies. It shows the potential of what could have been for our "hero" but how he cannot have it (Poole) Yet as explained by Adrian Poole tragedy in the past was reserved for only certain people and was not something for the common man. As a servant Mr Stevens would never be the subject of a Greek tragedy. Today tragedy is often used when

describing disastrous news stories and when discussing historical events (Poole). *The Remains of the Day* becomes a sort of middleground between the classical use and the more common day one. It focuses on the tragedy of one life but not of someone remarkable and through it shows how the tragedy is not limited to only Mr Stevens as he is a victim to a larger "tragic" system. How this system operates, and the more specific consequences it has on him will be the focus of the next section.

Class Belonging and the Restricting of Emotion

Mr Stevens is emotionally repressed because society made him to be. As explained, emotional repression is an inability to interpret affect and form emotion. There must be some effort applied in order to form an emotion. Mr Stevens does not believe he should have emotions, so he never tries to form them. This unwillingness to form emotion is then what, over time, has led to his incapability to do so. To put it in simple terms, he lacks the necessary experience.

Mr Stevens values dignity above all else and associates dignity with being a perfect servant capable of suppressing his emotion. Berberich writes, "Stevens's life is based not on seven, but three pillars of wisdom, dignity, repression of emotion and unquestioning loyalty and he subjects himself to a strict regime, in order to attain perfection in all three of them" (143). Berberich uses emotional repression synonymously with emotional suppression rather than as a separate concept relating to affect. However, her point is still valuable as it is clear that Mr Stevens resents having emotions. This resentment can be seen in how he discusses the romance between servants of Darlington Hall. He remarks, "Of course, one has to expect such things to occur amongst maids and footmen, and a good butler should always take this into account in his planning; but such marrying amongst more senior employees can have an extremely disruptive effect on work" (53). He makes it very clear that he would never let himself be romantically involved with anyone because it would interfere with work, and he is judgemental towards the servants who do. Mr Stevens also makes clear that he does not believe it is his duty to question his employer but rather to be an extension that exists to serve. He outright refutes the idea that he should have done anything in his life differently. This becomes clear in the following excerpt: "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 that we find wise and honourable"

(232). What this shows is how, even towards the end of the novel, Mr Stevens fully believes in his own inferiority. He believes he is part of a class meant only to serve.

The expectation put on Mr Stevens as an English butler is not only that he will be professional but that he will sacrifice his individuality for his professionalism. Lisa Fluet explains how he resists committing to any form of personal relationship by instead linking himself to a not clearly defined "we" (266). The "we" stands in for his imagined generation of butlers like himself (266-267). Fluet points out the irony in the fact that Mr Stevens believes himself able to speak for a whole generation while being entirely disconnected from the people around him (268). He expresses a belief that Fluet describes as a professional class consciousness where the idea is that everyone has their role to follow, which they should not step out of (272-273). Mr Stevens is shown to work better with less personal connection involved. His collegial relationship with Miss Kenton becomes increasingly anti-social as they continue working together (273).

Mr Stevens's values may not reflect the collective "we" he is talking about, but he is also not the originator of these values. He is inspired by other great butlers or at least his view of them. The foremost of these is his father, whom he sees as an example of a great butler. This is evident from the fact that it is his father's story that he uses to first introduce the idea of dignity (Ishiguro 36). Fluet describes his relationship with Miss Kenton as paradoxical, but I would say the one with his father is even more so (272). Stevens looks up to his father, yet he has no real relationship with him. When his father is dying, part of what makes Stevens continue is that he is convinced that is what his father would want him to do as well as what he would have done.

Mr Stevens has internalised the values that the ideal butler is supposed to have and has never known anything else (Özge 342-342). He does not know how to interpret affect because, as he sees it, he should not try to interpret it. In his mind, the affect he senses should be ignored. He should not let it be realised as emotions. It is not only that he thinks he should not be allowed to express emotions. He also believes that he should not have them. Mr Stevens's duty is a shield against having to deal with emotions, but it is not something he puts up. When looking back at the event from the present, Stevens acknowledges the "sad associations" of his father's death. However, even then, he cannot recognise the tragedy of it but instead focuses on his own perseverance when faced with adversity. The emotional repression still hurts Mr Stevens as he cannot simply grieve his father.

The Unintentional Unreliability of Repressed Emotion

Mr Stevens has been identified as an unreliable narrator by numerous critics. However, there is yet to be an exact consensus on how unreliable he is or in which way. Unreliable narrators appear in many different variations. As Özge explains, stating that Mr Stevens is an unreliable narrator is not sufficient (342). His reason for being unreliable must be questioned (342). Similarly, Kathleen Wall argues that unreliability is a question of degree (22). She means there is always some subjectivity to a story (22). It is not as simple as an unreliable narrator or not. However, before delving deeper into the nuances, let us first examine the typical identifications of unreliable narrators.

As explained by narratology, a narrator is unreliable when their description of events is suspected not necessarily to align with reality for various reasons (Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning 120-21). A reader is often made to question a narrator's reliability if the narrator has limited knowledge about events or has a biased view of the situation (120). As a person remembering his past, Mr Stevens explicitly states on multiple occasions that he has trouble remembering exactly how things happened. This can for example be seen when he is unsure how Miss Kenton expressed herself on one occasion. Just as Mr Stevens has finished a retelling, he remarks, "But now that I think further about it, I'm not sure Miss Kenton spoke quite so boldly that day" (Ishiguro 62). Here Mr Stevens is acknowledging his own unreliability, which makes the readers question his credibility (Nünning & Nünning 121). If he is misremembering this, what is to say he is also not misremembering other things? The reader cannot be sure that his version of events is correct.

Another reason why readers could deem a narrator unreliable is if they detect a discrepancy between the story and discourse (Nünning & Nünning 121). That means when an account from the narrator is shown to be contradictory to the actual events (121). As previously shown, the evening when Mr Stevens's father dies can be seen as an example of this. The evening in question depicts how Mr Stevens pushes on and continues working even after he has heard the horrific news. It is one of the most significant events he has ever worked at, and he cannot abandon his duty. If you interpret the scene based on Mr Stevens's own account, he seems to be able to handle the situation well. He appears to be in control. However, that idea starts to crumble when the reaction of other characters are accounted for. The critical moment in the series of events comes as Mr Stevens approaches Lord Darlington. Lord Darlington turns to him and asks if he is all right before he says, "[y]ou look as though you are crying" (Ishiguro 110). Mr Stevens insists he is perfectly well and offers no explanation to the reader. The reader

is not allowed any actual insight into Mr Stevens's emotions, nor does he ever himself describe crying during the evening. There is a discrepancy between the event as Mr Stevens presents it and the one the reader can piece together from other characters' reactions. The subjective view has tainted Mr Stevens's memory of the event, and it cannot be seen as reliable. The reader is not sure exactly what the reality is but is sure Mr Stevens has not presented an authentic version of the events. Once again, this will make them question Mr Stevens's overall reliability.

Finally, unreliable narration can be discovered through signs within the narration itself. The narrator does not outright contradict themselves but the way they phrase themselves shows a level of uncertainty (Nünning 121). Christine Berberich brings up good examples of how Mr Stevens does this. She explains that when Mr Stevens uses phrases such as "let me make this clear" or "why should I hide it", that may come across to the reader as a form of deflection. Similarly, Kathleen Wall mentions his frequent use of "one" instead of "I" (22). Wall means this subtly indicates that Mr Stevens believes himself to be speaking for a group of people instead of only presenting his opinion (23). The result is that Mr Stevens suggests conclusions that are not always logical and shows a bias that could affect his narration. Once again, he claims to be speaking for a collective, as Fleut explained, and this time it adds to his unreliability (266-268).

What differs from critic to critic is not as much how but why Mr Stevens is unreliable, and that is also where Massumi's theory allows us to draw new conclusions. As mentioned above Wall and Berberich both look at the way Mr Steven phrases himself. The difference is the conclusion they draw. Berberich believes Mr Stevens is more actively deceptive and wants to hide his true self in his narration (141-142). Wall sees it entirely differently. Mr Stevens, she explains, is not an unreflective man (36). He goes back and re-evaluates previous conclusions, which separates him from many other unreliable narrators (36). Because of this, she postulates that Mr Stevens, although inadequate at it, does try to present the most truthful version of his life that he can (37). I agree with Wall's reading, but she leaves one question unanswered. She writes, "Yet Ishiguro leaves us uneasily wondering how responsible Stevens is for communicating his grief to us by reporting that others observed his feeling" (27). Here she also discusses the events on the night of his father's death and makes an interesting point. If Mr Stevens did not want to let us see that he is fallible, why does he include the evidence that he is? When discussing the evening, Berberich writes: "[d]espite almost superhuman efforts, his carefully preserved mask cracks on two occasions" (145). Berberich sees it as Mr Stevens wearing a mask hiding his emotion. However, if Mr Stevens cares so much about preserving his mask, why are we allowed to see the cracks in it? Within the story, Mr Stevens is the one

responsible both for describing his internal thoughts and for relaying what was said by Lord Darlington. The clues we get for the contradictions are therefore also given to us by Mr Stevens, why would he let us see this? My answer is that Mr Stevens is unaware of his story contradicting itself at all. He is not describing his emotions because his emotional repression means he is unaware of them. He includes Lord Darlington's comments because he remembers Lord Darlington making them, even though he does not understand why he would make them. Mr Stevens is not only truthful but naively so.

It is by integrating affect poststructuralism with aspects of narratology that it is possible to find the reason for Mr Stevens's reasons for unreliability. As Massumi describes, an emotion only becomes an emotion when recognised by the subject (28). When Mr Stevens is crying, he is experiencing the bodily reaction to the affect without ever feeling direct sadness or any emotion that would lead to tears. Massumi explains how this is possible: "perhaps the snowman researchers could not find the cognition they were looking for because they were looking in the wrong place, in the 'mind', rather than in the body they were monitoring" (29). In the citation, Massumi describes the body as being independent of the mind. Massumi is explaining more subtle bodily reactions, but I believe what Ishiguro depicts is the same thing, only unintentionally and on a heightened level. It is, as Sodano describes the phenomenon, a reaction to the becoming of sadness but not to the emotion itself (68). Mr Stevens's body reacts, but Stevens himself is unaware. This is what Massumi is referring to when he explains the possibility for the body to react to the affect independently of the mind (30) From the present Stevens's perspective, it is not that he wishes to hide what happened but instead that he does not remember himself crying as it was never part of his cognitive process. As in previous examples, the emotion and the knowledge of it are separated. Mr Stevens is unreliable because his emotions are unreliable.

Mr Stevens is unreliable but not out of any fault of his own. He is unreliable to himself as he cannot comprehend the affect he is feeling and realise it as an emotion. The fact that he does not express sadness at his father's death does not make him a monster, as Özge mentions other critics have suggested (341). Instead, on the contrary, it makes Stevens sympathetic as he is a victim of his social class and status (Özge 343). He has been bereaved of the opportunity to experience the emotions that are rightfully his.

Conclusion

Mr Stevens is a man incapable of forming emotion from affect. He cannot recognise and understand the bodily sensations he is experiencing as a defined emotion. If asked to express his feelings about something, he cannot do it as he has not formed the words for them, not even to himself. Despite this, his actions reflect his feelings formed in the body but not the mind. He acts based on affect without understanding it. He goes to see Miss Kenton based on it - he lies about Lord Darlington based on it, and he cries about his father's death based on it.

Mr Stevens is unreliable, but he does not lie in his narration. He recalls events as truthfully as possible but is limited by his inability to recognise affect and form it into emotion. The inconsistency in his story does not come from the fact that he has lied; if he were lying, he could have easily excluded the pieces showing the inconsistency. His actions appear irrational because he is unaware of the reason behind them. Mr Stevens is compelled, not by an outside force but by his body, by the affect, to take actions that do not align with his thoughts or emotion. They are actions caused by the affect.

Mr Stevens can only retell his life from his perspective, which his society has limited. He is not supposed to reveal emotions, and he is not allowed to express his thoughts. He chooses to suppress his emotions because of a misplaced sense of value, but his position as a butler forces him into emotional repression. By not being allowed to express emotions for so long, he has lost the ability to experience them. Mr Stevens should not be seen as the villain of this story. He exemplifies how a man can be crushed under societal weight to a degree where he no longer controls his own emotions.

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