



## Resistance/Acceptance of Inferiority, Invisibility and Marginalization in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* & Kazu Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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### Abstract

This paper highlights the problematics of the identity of the characters of Velutha and Ammu in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and in the character of Stevens in Kazu Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. It examines the process of rethinking identity and the concomitant desire for erasing it to escape skin-color, tradition, racial, religious and professional identities as well as the effect of being different upon the characters' lives and future prospects. It concludes by highlighting the greatness of Roy's characters who insist on being different even though they pay a dear price for their difference and on the tragic status of Ishiguro's Stevens who loses everything because his moral realization comes rather too late and because of his refusal to change.

**Key words:** Literature; Post-Colonialism; Identity; Race; Ethnicity; Marginalization; (Non)Conformity

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### INTRODUCTION

In his famous book *The Colonizer and The Colonized*, Albert Memmi presents two models of a colonized person who accepts/rejects their roles. Similarly, this

article contrasts two marginalized characters: Velutha and Ammu in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* who refuse their objectification/inferiority, embrace change and try to erase their identities to achieve happiness with the marginalized character of Kazu Ishiguro's Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* who accepts his role as marginalized and colonized (as shall be explained later), refuses change and insists on following the dictates of his strictly professional superego. It focuses on the process of rethinking religious, professional, and racial identities that takes place in the worlds of these novels within the selected characters. It further highlights the limitations of identity and the process of labeling that comes to play within such a context.

### 1. SELF-REALIZATION, RACISM & RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN ROY'S NOVEL

To begin with, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is concerned with identity in post-colonial India and deals with the effect of caste-system on the lives of Velutha and Ammu. According to Robert Ross, it describes "how a once-wealthy and prestigious family from the South Indian state of Kerala rushes headlong to destruction" (Ross, 1997) and maintains that it "dwells on the cruelty of separation" and "the social structure that leads to the mistreatment of the untouchable class" (Ross, 1998). Further, Dooley claims that Roy's novel "reflects the extraordinary fragility of life, the power of evil that lurks in human beings and in their institutions" in addition to "the ability of love to triumph in moments smashed but at the same time untouchable by evil" (Dooley).

Roy represents "the individual's groping towards self-realization" (Mukherjee, 1971, p.23). In the novel, Velutha struggles towards self-realization despite being held back by his religious identity as an Untouchable and

Ammu does the same and ends up having an affair with him as a way of escaping her situation. Indeed, Roy's novel is concerned with love as a main theme and with the problematics of identity, especially the destructive aspect of what is colonially and/or socially considered an inferior identity. It reflects the suffering of Velutha because of his 'inferior' caste and of Ammu due to her gender. It describes in a very bitter-sweet manner the agonizing journey of self-discovery that these characters have to go through simply because they choose to be different.

The identity-related issues in Roy's novel inevitably lead to a discussion of Racism. The use of 'colour' to determine inferiority is demonstrated in Yarwood's discussion of "[t]he colonists' 'identikit' picture of a proper man" which relied on the colour of a person's skin to determine his worth (Yarwood, 1982, p.14). Further, the British philosopher David Hume states that "I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men ... to be *naturally* inferior to the whites" (Yarwood, 1982, p.16, our italics). Hence, Velutha is doubly inferior because of his caste, and because he "was so black" (p.73). Evidently, white Indians look down upon black ones just like white British colonisers used to look at Indians of all colours.

According to Calvin Hall, "Race prejudice is often due to predicate thinking" (Hall, 1954, p.40). Hall explains that "predicate thinking" causes people to regard the black people negatively as "being bad and dirty" since "negroes are dark-skinned and because darkness is associated with wickedness and dirt" (Hall, 1954, p.40). Baby Kochamma wonders how Ammu could "*stand*" the "*particular smell*" of "*these Parvans?*" (p.78). Like a colonized individual, Velutha is destined "to drown in an anonymous collectivity ('They are this.' 'They are all the same.')" (Memmi, 1974, pp.85-86). Hence, all Parvans have a "particular" bad smell. Terry Eagleton, citing Hegel, maintains that "there comes a point ... at which 'pure' difference merely collapses back into 'pure' identity, united as they are in their utter indeterminacy" (Eagleton et al., 1990, p.36). In Velutha's case, his extremely black colour and being an untouchable collapse into a pure identity of being the ultimate inferior outsider.

Indeed, being black is not Velutha's only problem. He is also an Untouchable and realizes that being so, holds him back from realizing his potential. Dooley claims that "Untouchables ... are the scapegoats of a society environmentally and culturally infected and broken at every level of its being" (Dooley). Truly, because of his inferior caste, Velutha is condemned to remain an invisible man who leaves "no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors" (p.216). He is doomed to remain an absence of presence. He works as a carpenter, but "if only he hadn't been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer" (p.75). Being a Paravan prevents him from reaching his full potential.

Velutha suffers from religious discrimination just like his grandfather, Kelan, who "converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Untouchability" only to discover that he "had jumped from the frying pan into the fire" (p.74), because he discovered, like many others, that "[t]hey were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests" (p.74). Christianity fails to eliminate racism within the Indian community as the caste-system is maintained within the introduced Christian religious discourse which is depicted as a religion only for white people like Father Mulligan.

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## 2. VELTHUA & AMMU – RESISTANCE AS SELF-ASSERTION

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Living in such a hostile environment and feeling rejected by society helps one understand why Velutha feels free in Nature, a place where he is free from racism. He feels "he belonged to it [river]. That it belonged to him. The water. The mud. The trees" (p.333). Nature becomes the proper realm for an invisible Untouchable man like Velutha. It becomes a superior substitute for religion and society that are depicted as domains of racism and destructive to 'sub-humans' like Velutha, and it shapes his superego thus making him *naturally* fall in love with Ammu and forget about all the *artificial* religio-cultural restrictions that prevent him from being with her. Further, when Ammu and Velutha fall in love, they "linked their fates, their futures (their Love, their Madness, their Hope, their Infinite Joy)" to the fate of a spider (p.339). This link reflects their feelings of insignificance and dehumanization, and their fear for the future of this relationship which could be crushed as easily as this spider.

Velutha wished to silence his brain and escape to another world where he is free to be with Ammu. "His mind, suddenly impossibly old, floated out of his body and hovered high above him in the air, from where it jabbered useless warnings" (p.285). He wanted to enjoy and live in the moment and freeze it if possible. What he really wanted was to "[s]leep and wake up in another world. *With the smell of her skin in the air that he breathed. Her body on his*" (pp.285-86). Dooley argues that Velutha's sexual affair with Ammu is "a double violation of social mores" because "she has forfeited the right to her own sexuality through her marriage and subsequent divorce, and because Velutha is a member of the Untouchable caste" (Dooley). Hence, Ammu loses her right for enjoying a sexual relationship with another man because she is divorced and violates the caste system by sleeping with an untouchable.

Ammu realizes that "History's fiends returned to claim them. To rewrap them in its old, scarred pelt and drag them back to where they really lived" (p.335). The "fiends"

will shatter the dream world Velutha has built for her and force them to face cruel reality. Making love to Velutha, is Ammu's act of self-assertion, and an act of mutiny against the social codes that slandered her upon her return to Ayemenem with "constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval" (p.43) for being a divorcee. To Velutha, however, being with Ammu was his act of rebellion against society's oppressive codes, values and religious beliefs. In the cruel world of reality "the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (p.177). He realizes that society will not approve of his relationship with Ammu, that he "could lose everything", and that "he was about to enter a tunnel whose only egress was his own annihilation" (p.333). The world of reality will not only shatter their dream world but will also punish them severely for their transgressions. It is "[a]s though they knew already that for each tremor of pleasure they would pay for with an equal measure of pain" and "that how far they went would be measured against how far they would be taken" (p.335).

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### 3. THE SOCIETY FIGHTS BACK

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The police attack reflects the racist upper hand of society that sentences to death anyone who commits such a transgression. The police do not feel "any kinship" even "biologically" that Velutha "was a fellow creature" because this connection "had been severed long ago" (p.309, our italics). Stephen Muecke stresses that "essentialism, or *geneticism*" make "social conditions, or whatever is going on" be "seen as the effect of people's genes, their essential racial difference" (Botsman, 1982, p.107). Further, Jean-Paul Sartre explains that the colonized is defined "as simple absences of qualities— animals, not humans" (Memmi, 1974, xxvi, our italics). Racism works as colonization; it strips the title of humanity away from people like Velutha who is considered biologically as a "sub-human" or an "animal".

The police "were exorcizing fear" (p.309) that such transgressions against society, caste, and tradition were possible and could spread through society and disrupt its dominant structures of power. "They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak" (p.309). Anderson stresses that "racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history" (Anderson, 1991, p.149). Racism becomes a successful ideology that masks itself as natural in the Indian society. The police attack demonstrates their racist discrimination between the Touchable/Untouchable, the White Indian/Black Indian which they take for granted as natural.

The police left Velutha "folded on the floor" (p.310) like a closed book/case. Velutha's death proves that "[i]

n this world, no center can hold, and transformation, while perhaps possible, is a fragile possibility indeed" (Dooley). He was "abandoned by God and History, by Marx, by Man, by Woman and ... by Children" (p.310). Even his father, Vellya Paapen, "offered to kill his son with his own bare hands. To destroy what he had created" (p.78) as if Velutha is a monster or a freak of nature – another instance that demonstrates how racist ideology masks itself as natural and is taken, therefore, for granted.

Velutha is abandoned by all people who refuse to acknowledge his humanity and his right for happiness. Eventually, he is abandoned by God who is absent, indifferent, or dead in the modern world of the novel and is abandoned by Marx and his theories about unmasking ideologies, class struggle and the working class. In addition, Velutha, the scapegoat and the example to others who dare violate the Love Laws, is betrayed by the kids who love him like Jesus Christ, the scapegoat, who was betrayed by St. Peter, and crucified to atone for the sins of humanity. Finally, he is abandoned by history since he is doomed to remain an absence of presence.

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### 4. DIFFERENCE AS GREATNESS IN ROY'S NOVEL

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Ammu achieves greatness because she is different, and "[t]o be great" according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is to be misunderstood" (Emerson in Perkins, p.398). To Emerson, doing what you want regardless of what people think "may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness" (Emerson in Perkins, p.396). Ammu's greatness comes from doing something which is not easy because, as Emerson explains, "[f]or nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure" (Emerson in Perkins, 397, our italics). Hence, society attacks Ammu and renders her a "*Veshya*" (p.8), a fallen woman, yet she remains great and admired to the end for having "[t]he infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber" (p.44), and everyone "sensed somehow that she lived in the penumbral shadows between two worlds, just beyond the grasp of their power" (p.44).

Like Ammu, Velutha insists on being himself regardless of the dictates of society and religion. He is whipped by society's displeasure and loses his life yet remains a great God of Small Things, a God of Loss, but a god, nevertheless. His greatness is emphasized when he is compared to Caesar (p.83). It is also emphasized by the reference to Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in Chacko's soliloquy (p.38). Indeed, Velutha is quite similar to Gatsby in terms of their great love which singles them out in their societies, their tragic murders because of their love for a single woman, and their great expectations from life which were shattered.

## 5. STEVENS & THE COLONIZED'S MENTALITY

Unlike the defiant and admirable Velutha and Ammu, Kazuo Ishiguro's Stevens is totally submissive and against change. One might wonder how Stevens, an *English* butler, is contrasted to Roy's *Indian* Ammu and Velutha. Randall Bass, explains that Stevens is an "Ideal Colonial Subject", and that the novel's focus on "the code of service and servitude is as an individualized model for the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized". Further, he claims that according to a certain critic, the interaction between the upper class (Lord Darlington) and the lower class (Stevens) "duplicates very precisely England's relationship to its colonies" and that "Stevens' private tragedy is precipitated by what Albert Memmi ... terms the cruel 'hoax' by which the colonizer or master ensures that the servant exists 'only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, i.e. be transformed into a pure colonized'" (MLS 3 in Bass). Furthermore, Carla Guttmann mentions the "120,000 Egyptians who died in forced labor while digging the Suez Canal in 1854" and claims that "the Egyptians realized the high price they paid due to colonialism, so too does Mr. Stevens confront the sacrifices that he has made by succumbing to the system of hierarchy within English tradition." In addition, she suggests, "[t]he awakening to the meaning of his life allows Stevens to receive some retribution for his suffering, although the traces of colonialism and imperialism cannot, for Stevens nor for the Egyptians, be fully erased" (Guttmann). Clearly, Guttmann is establishing a link between Stevens, a colonized English butler, and the Egyptians – a matter that indicates that class as an ideology overlaps with racial, and therefore, colonial ideology.

Indeed, *The Remains of the Day* projects the problematic of identity in post-war/post-imperial England, and, more particularly, the impact of the imperialist hegemonic ideology, tradition, dictates of class formation, and racism on the lives of its characters. It has remarkable implications of our assumptions about identity, including theories of the self, the ways dominant ideology and the dictates of class-formation and societal institutions are equally implicated in the construction of identity and damage of selfhood. According to Jonathan Rutherford, "[i]dentity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural, and economic relations we live within... Making our identities can only be understood within the context of this articulation in the intersection of our everyday lives with the economic, [social], and political relations of subordination and domination" (Rutherford, 1990, pp.19-20). The question of identity is inseparably interlinked with the patterns and ways we choose for communication. Through our reaction/interaction, subordination, internalization, and/or resistance to societal, cultural norms and their agencies, the complex structuring of our identities is created. In this way,

identity is a question of either coercive or voluntary self-positioning against our surroundings. Stuart Hall states: "[I]dentities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1954, p.225). In their turn, Morley and Robins claim that identity can be identified as "responsive and reactive to the controlling stimulus of communications" (Morley et al., 1990, p.356). In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro dramatizes such notions of identity, disrupts the validity of conformist identity, and then calls into question the so-called "true identity," pointing to a reconsideration of the self in his/her quest for self-realization.

Stevens, the protagonist, undergoes a painful process that leads to self-realization. The threads of Stevens' problematic identity start with his entrapment in a professional position and his absolute submission to its dictates in the affluent imperialist setting of Darlington Hall, where he is positioned for over thirty five years so that his identity as a butler is constructed in and through a chain of power relations that ultimately lead him to lose his subjectivity. Mr. Farraday's encouragement to take a break indicates his protest of the latter's objectifying entrapment in Darlington Hall. He denounces Stevens: "I don't expect you to be *locked up* here in this house all the time ... take the car and drive off somewhere for ... a break" (pp.3-4, our italics). Stevens' response to this offer indicates his passive internalization of the professional context that has determined his identity as one of confinement and immobility. To him, Darlington Hall is a source of comfort and satisfaction. The suggestion does not bring any sense of happiness or freedom to Stevens who maintains: "Although we did not see a great deal of the country in the sense of touring the country-side ... did actually 'see' more of England than most, placed as we were in houses where the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered" (p.4). Obviously, he accepts his limitation to the confines of professional duties.

Yet, Stevens complicates this passive position further by imbuing it with self-delusion as he emphasizes: "It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls" (p.4). Self-deception is what creates barriers to his self-awareness as a prisoner of professionalism. He does not realize that he has imprisoned himself all these years, as suggested by "within these very walls". Such a self-deceptive recognition of his entrapment in Darlington Hall, however, might function as a subconscious attempt/form of coping or self-defense. He wants to avoid the pain and anxiety of sacrificing himself, personal emotions, and independence to the robot-like professional status. To Maslow, self-deception is essential for psychological stability that helps people soothe the frustrations of life. He claims that we deny reality and practice self-deception because "we tend to be afraid of any knowledge that would cause us to despise ourselves or to make us feel inferior, weak, worthless, evil, shameful"



(Maslow, 1962, p.57). It is such a psychological equilibrium through which Stevens attempts to attune himself to the permanent self-delusion and denial that his dwelling in Darlington Hall is a residence in a place that “resembles a prison cell,” as Miss Kenton comments (p.174).

However, Stevens’ self-deception enacts his fixation and skepticism. Fixed identities are characterized by distinctive attributes such as the incapability of behavioral modification, self deception and the reluctance to change which are closely related constructs of identity. Caldwell suggests: “Self deception is a denial of the duty owed to the self when it causes an individual to avoid confronting the need to modify one’s behavior” (Caldwell, 2010, p.397). Being so constructed by self-deception and so traditionally defined, Stevens announces, “Now naturally, like many of us, I have a reluctance to change too much of the old ways” (p.7).

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## 6. STEVENS’ SUPEREGO & FATHERLY AUTHORITY

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In fact, to Stevens, any desire for change is considered as if it is coming from the Devil himself, and must therefore, be immediately dismissed. His superego is not driven by religious feelings but by professional dictates and was constructed in childhood by the influence of his formidable (fearsome) father. To Freud, the superego is early furnished as a representation of the parental authority on the human psyche that remains deeply seated in an individual’s self. He claims that it “contains the double-bind demand of ‘you ought to be like the father’ and that it “retains this character of the father” (Freud, 1964, p.172). The influence of parental authority on the child’s superego is particularly interesting in this memoir as it escalates between ellipses and excess of detail, and between the said and the unsaid. As Macphee remarkably states: “What the narrator considers significant or revealing is usually not so, while what goes unmentioned or is quickly dismissed often provides the most penetrating insights into Stevens’s disconsolate condition” (Macphee, 2011, p.195).

Indeed, one can hardly miss Stevens’ subtle fear of his father’s bullying figure. In his narration of Father’s defense of Mr. Silver against the insults made by his drunken guests, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, Stevens explains that Father stopped the two guests’ “heinous insinuation against his employer” by his “imposing physical force” (p.40) and “unassailable ... figure” (p.40). Stevens asserts: “I can well imagine how he must have looked that day, framed by the doorway of the vehicle, his dark, severe presence” (p.40) should have silenced the unruly Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones to mutter “I suppose we were talking a little out of turn there. It won’t happen again” (p.40). Fear of the overbearing father underlines Stevens’ comment and his references to this incident.

Father is perceived as a fearsome guy with whom Stevens needs to maintain obedience, silence, and submission. The very details in which Stevens’ relationship with his father is described signal such traits on Stevens’ part. In the early phase of their relationship, Stevens appears as a mere passive recipient of the internalizing dictates Father repeatedly preaches with regard to the ideal English butler. It is clear from the beginning that Stevens absorbs the ideals of professional dignity including unquestioned service/loyalty to the employer, suppression of personal emotions, and devout care of the employer’s private time, serenity, or interest from his father.

Stevens explains that he early absorbs the concept of dignity in childhood through his father’s repeated anecdote of the English butler facing a tiger in India which to Stevens, made his father “thus distinguished” and through which he “may... convey [his] idea of what ‘dignity’ is”. He would listen to it as “a child, and then later... as a footman under his supervision” (p.36). Stevens’ process of acquiring dignity is well enacted in early childhood by his father. Father loads Stevens with the burden of the strict requirements appropriate to a great butler, and so fixes the rigid pattern of his professional life that he conceptualizes dignity “to do crucially with a butler’s ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits” (p.43), “not be shaken out by external events” (p.43), be they emotional, personal, “surprising, alarming or vexing” (pp.43-44). Again, Father, as mentioned before, out of being an intimidating figure and imposing presence, sets in motion the rigid and impassive pattern of life Stevens should live.

In following this pattern to professionally advance himself, Stevens turns out to be so repugnantly professional that he cannot even find time to soothe his father on deathbed during the 1923 international conference in Darlington Hall. Miss Kenton reproves him for his impassivity towards the dying father: “You had better come and see him ... or else you may deeply regret it later” (p.108). Stevens has, in fact, lost the natural personal feeling towards his father for professional duty. Instead of standing by his father at this very critical moment of his life, he prefers to fetch a doctor to help M. Dupont, the French deputy, who suffers from swollen feet” so as not to let his father down (p.111). Stevens’ reaction invokes Freud’s assessment of the superego as a manifestation of fatherly authority, “the double bind demand of ‘you ought to be like the father’” (Freud, 1964, p.172). At this very situation, Stevens tries to duplicate his father, during his service at Loughborough House, who concealed his personal feelings toward the General, who was responsible for killing Leonard, Stevens’ brother, in the Southern African War (p.43). Father’s emotional suppression is understood by Stevens as “the personification ... of dignity” (p.43), an example to be seriously followed.

Indeed, Stevens recollects this situation as an enacting factor in his quest for fulfilling the requirements of professional dignity by imitating his father who becomes “the personification itself, of what the Hayes Society terms ‘dignity’” (p.43). Stevens’ acting like father, and then as a deadly professional butler enables us to understand the sense of excitement/pride and the “large sense of triumph” he retrospectively feels while recollecting his emotional suppression and dedication on the day of his father’s death at Darlington Hall because he “did perhaps display... a dignity worthy of someone like Mr Marshall- *o r ... my father*” (pp.114-115, our italics). For Stevens, the fact that his father is remarkable for suppressing personal feelings for professionalism fosters in his mind the urgent demand, and in his heart the later retrospective thrill, that he should duplicate him on that day. Stevens and his father are both men whose senses of professional impassivity and professionalism make them equal to the great English butler, Mr. Marshall.

Ishiguro, however, plays ironically with Stevens’ triumph-based identification with his father. Its subtleties are effectively alluded to in a scene where Stevens’ father appears to be feeling true remorse for making Stevens like him, namely, a robot-like butler. Having recognized that he has been consumed by forty five years of deadly professional service, where “[t]he only times ...[He] could be found in his room were first thing in the morning and last thing at night” (p.67), and is now insignificant, seriously ill, lying on death bed in a very small and stark room, like “a prison cell” (p.67) without being well recognized by his employer, Lord Darlington, Stevens’ father regrets rearing his son to be his replica: “I hope I have been a good father to you. I suppose I haven’t” (p.101). Such a regretful statement makes apparent the meaning of Lord Darlington’s objectifying view of his employees, in general, and Stevens’ father, in particular, when he announces to Stevens that: “There’s no question of your father leaving us...Your father’s days of dependability are now passing” (p.65). Opportunism and objectification have been central to Lord Darlington’s view of his servants. Despite his dedicated professionalism in his early service, Stevens’ father is seen as a disposable object whose worth is only appreciated in terms of functionality. In addition, Lord Darlington’s order to Stevens affirms the marginal status of Stevens’ father as a human being and reinforces the myth of professional dignity he early introduces to his son— a point that makes his remorse of making Stevens his replica genuine.

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## 7. STEVENS’ IDENTITY & CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

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However, Ishiguro complicates his dramatization of identity by suggesting that it is shaped by multiple intersections of power such as ideology, and class.

According to Marx, people’s identity, “their doings, their chains, and their limitations are products of their consciousness” (Marx & Engels et al., 1947, p.47). Central to Marxist view of “consciousness” is that it develops a hierarchical system that outlines role obligations, patterned behaviors, and modes of life that define individuals by giving them certain concepts, beliefs, and then actions. Accordingly, the gentry or upper class people are at the top of the societal class structure, where they act as authority and naturally intellectual leading figures, whereas the working class people reside below them to act as subordinate and dependent. Marx deems:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas ... he individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness ... in a country where ... ourgeoisie are contending for mastery ... proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an ‘eternal law. (Marx & Engels et al., 1947, p.64)

Stevens’ conceptualization of class consciousness correlates with such a Marxist view. Stevens cannot be free from the dominance of the ruling class ideology in his society. Instead, he accepts his subordinate role to serve its interests and internalizes its false views of the world as if they were an “eternal law.”

In fact, Stevens’ identity signifies within a network of obligations to the inherited assumptions that designate the bourgeoisie as naturally superior to the common/working class people as well as the best intellectual guardians of civilization and humanity. For Stevens, Lord Darlington is the unquestioned master whom he sees as having a natural right and intellectual faculties to exercise absolute authority to decide the future of common people. His pride of serving Lord Darlington underlines such an imaginary belief: “For we ... harboured the desire to make our own small contribution to the creation of a better world, and saw that ... [T]he surest means of doing so would be to serve the greatest gentlemen of our times in whose hands - civilization had been entrusted” (p.122).<sup>1</sup> He boastfully continues: “I myself moved ... from employer to employer ... being aware that these situations were incapable of bringing me lasting satisfaction—before being rewarded at last with the opportunity to serve Lord Darlington” (p.122). Here, Stevens’ utterances are very disturbing for they suggest that the authoritative advantage of gentry to rule

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, Darlington Hall serves as a miniature of UN Security Council. The type of meetings in the Hall reflect the serious meetings that take place within the United Nations during times of war conflict. The reference to the Suez Canal war which is discussed within the walls of Darlington Hall is a case in point. Stevens’ role within the walls of Darlington Hall where the fate of non-European countries is being decided becomes similar to the role of third world countries that are dependent on the European World for their livelihood and their future. Stevens reference to the noble mission of colonial England and its agents as one of “furthering the progress of humanity” (120) makes him more like a subordinate person who accepts his role as a colonized and believes in the benefits of colonization and in its “noble mission” which Conrad refers to in *Heart of Darkness* and which supposedly attempts at “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” (Conrad, 15).

or to be served is no more than a reference to an “essential” truth. Stevens’ recognition of the class hierarchy as a category is a natural societal phenomenon in which gentry and working class are defined appositionally in veiling terms that produce intellectual and power differences between them as natural ones. The keywords in Stevens’ mindset is that he naturally perceives himself as a subordinate man whose small participation in the creation of “a better world” (p.122) can only be enacted by serving gentry as suggested by “[T]he surest means of doing so...” (p.122).

In his obsession with the superiority of gentry, Stevens truly remains the prisoner and then the agent of enacting its power. As Foucault argues: “Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain . . . Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization . . . Individuals are the vehicles of power, not [only] its points of application” (Foucault, 1980, p.98). Stevens’ view that the question of deciding the nation’s great affairs as something specific to true gentlemen is very telling of the role he plays in naturalizing and empowering the superiority of gentry. In response to Harry Smith’s view of people’s righteousness to form opinions of high political affairs, Stevens asserts: “Let us establish this quite clearly: a butler’s duty is to provide good service. It is not to meddle in the great affairs of the nation. The fact is such great affairs will always be beyond the understanding of those such as you and me” (p.209). As such, Stevens does not simply become the recipient of gentry’s natural authority, but the agent who enacts its power thus leaving him entrapped within a traditional role that cannot be changed and which leads him to deem any thought of going against the ruling class Satanic. Hence, Stevens’ superego is shaped by both professionalism and by his belief in Class Distinction which explains his feelings of guilt when the country Doctor exposes him as a butler not as a gentleman as peasants initially mistake him to be. Stevens announces: “I must confess, my overwhelming feeling on hearing this was one of relief. ‘I am ... the butler of Darlington Hall ... It was not my intention to deceive anyone’” (p.218). The word “confess” reveals his guilt, and the “relief” he feels upon the confession exposes the satisfaction of his superego.

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## 8. STEVENS’ CONFORMITY, GUILT, & SELF-SACRIFICE

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In fact, Stevens’ obsession against change which classifies as a sin in his world permeates this novel. When Miss Kenton comes into his pantry “bearing a vase of flowers ‘to brighten things up’” (p.173), Stevens responds:

I had never allowed the situation ... he butler’s pantry ... is ... not unlike a general’s headquarters during the battle and it is imperative that all things in it are ordered- and left ordered — in

precisely the way I wish them ... [I]t is surely obvious that the butler’s pantry must be the one place in the house where privacy and solitude are guaranteed. (pp.173-174)

Stevens’ reaction is not only a blind devotion to strictly abide by professional duty and refusing change of any kind, but rather a demonstration of self-deception. This exaggerated fuss in the name of professionalism places him in the realm of being a flat/naive character whose professionalism becomes a shield that covers his lack of social interpersonal skills.

In fact, the pantry scene together with Stevens’ recollection of the relationship with Miss Kenton also reveals the extent to which Stevens destroys his entity as a full character of personal and emotional feelings. As extreme conformity toward professionally-held beliefs grows in Stevens, he sacrifices himself emotionally so that towards the end of the novel he regrets the loss of his only potential love, namely, Miss Kenton: “Why should I not admit it? ... [M]y heart was breaking ... It is too late to turn back the clock” (p.252). Ishiguro calls into question the significance of re-evaluating the traditionally and professionally accepted principles of English society by dramatizing the emotional consequences of the decision to comply with these principles.

The ardent effort Stevens displays to stop Miss Kenton’s first sign of emotional and sexual interest in him, or to deny his desire/love for her emphasizes the professional and traditional doctrines that create demands which make the circumstances of developing a love relation impossible. Miss Kenton attempts to take a chance on Stevens’ conduct of what seems to be mind sex to exhibit her sexual and emotional interest in him while he was reading “a sentimental romance” (p.176) from a book which he regards as a source of gaining “enjoyment” (p.177).

At this precious private moment of Stevens’ engrossment in reading the book, Miss Kenton attempts to tempt him by approaching him; “very gently” releasing the book from his hands, “practically one finger at a time” (p.176), and seductively whispering: “[I]t isn’t anything so scandalous at all. Simply a sentimental love story” (p.176). Stevens fervently resists such a temptation when he confirms that he “judged it best to look away while she did so” yet due to her proximity, he could only look away by “twisting” his “head away at a somewhat unnatural angle” and then “showing Miss Kenton out ... quite firmly” (p.176). Stevens’ failure to emotionally/sexually respond to Miss Kenton reflects Freud’s conceptualization of guilt as a conflict between the ego and the superego (Freud, 1964, p.61, 132). To resolve it, Stevens suppresses his instinctual impulses in compliance with the demands of superego that dictate him to conceal his personal feelings.

Unwilling to consider that his behavior has been prompted by a guilt-oriented denial of his real self as an emotional and sexual being, he strives to convince himself



that it has in fact been due to his commitment to the professional principle of dignity. Stevens explains:

[T]here was an important principle at issue ... at that moment Miss Kenton had come marching into my pantry... [A]ny 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. (pp.177-78)

Stevens' denial of his real self for the superego, i.e. in this case, Hayes Society's regulations, that he is not willing to confront is particularly evident in the essence of Miss Kenton's conclusion as she vociferates: "Why, Mr Stevens... do you always have to pretend?" (p.162). By choosing to live an unnatural life, more robotic than human, Stevens is indeed pretending.

In this scene, Stevens compares his room to "a general's headquarters during the battle" (pp.173-74) with him of course being the general, and he maintains that "Miss Kenton had come marching into my pantry" i.e. walking like a soldier. This description renders the temptation scene as a battle between Stevens' id which is seduced by Miss Kenton's touch and his superego which compel him to twist his "head away at a somewhat unnatural angle" (p.176). The unnatural angle of the head is symbolic of Stevens' unnatural reaction to the seduction of Miss Kenton. He holds his front like a general would, and defeats the invader/intruder, Miss Kenton—an action that reveals the strength of his professional superego that is shaped by the Hayes Society which trains him, again like a soldier, to unplug his human feelings. Miss Kenton functions like the forbidden fruit which Stevens is tempted to eat but his superego proves to be stronger than her temptation. Stevens' reluctance to change and admit Miss Kenton into his personal life causes him to lose his only chance of happiness—a loss that later he regrets when he realizes that at the end of the day, what remains is basically nothing.

During the journey which Mr. Farraday urges him to take, Stevens goes down memory lane and starts looking back at the events that shaped his present self. This process of rethinking his identity makes him remember the chance to know/experience love that he had with Miss Kenton. Suddenly, after all these years, Stevens realizes that he is getting too old, and that he needs to have a life with Miss Kenton and stop living/wasting his life as a robot. Consequently, he starts driving towards Miss Kenton's house only to discover that she has moved on with her life. He has squandered his life and lost the sense of satisfaction he once enjoyed at Darlington Hall. In other words, Stevens, like a tragic hero, though he is unworthy of the title, has lost everything.

With this huge sense of loss in mind, one can reconsider Mr. Farraday's offer for Stevens to leave Darlington Hall in a new light. Mr. Farraday can be considered like Satan who brings change, or corruption as Stevens might regard it, to the paradise-like atmosphere of

Darlington Hall. Leaving Darlington Hall was equivalent to the Great Fall of Adam from paradise. Stevens loses everything. He leaves from Darlington Hall only physically. Psychologically, he remains stuck within the walls of Darlington Hall. During the journey, Stevens can't stop thinking about the events that happened in Darlington Hall or his service to his lord. This goes to show that Stevens is still acting as a robot and is unable to appreciate the surrounding nature or to escape from the web of Darlington Hall. His mind has been molded over the years in such a way that his servitude to his lords is absolute and is always running in the background as malicious software.

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## CONCLUSION

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In conclusion, Velutha clearly suffers from racism because of his skin color and because of the caste-system which renders him an invisible Untouchable sub-human. He is murdered for violating the Love Laws. Nevertheless, he dies having really lived and enjoyed himself with Ammu who refuses being marginalized because of her gender and fights against society's dictates. In contrast, Stevens tries to find dignity and significance for his insignificant life through his service to Lord Darlington and his small contribution to help in the progress of the empire. At the end of the day, what remains for Stevens are his memories and his false sense of importance which he derived from his service to the empirical agents as a colonized who accepts being so. According to Conrad's Marlow, realization is "a moral victory", even if it comes too late (Conrad, 2002, p.107). Hence, Stevens' frustrated attempt at reshaping his identity and making sense of his life can be considered a moral victory. However, unlike Velutha who defies the dominant structures of power in order to assert his individuality and fight for his love, Stevens is helped/pushed by the structures of power embodied in Mr. Farraday to assert his individuality and be independent, but he fails to do so because he has become used to his servitude, and he fails to begin a new existence after all these years. He loses the chance to experience love with Miss Kenton and will eventually die without having lived.

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