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A Study of the Remembering Narration in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

论石黑一雄《长日留痕》的回忆叙述

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A Study of the Remembering Narration in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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Abstract

Kazuo Ishiguro is among the most popular contemporary writers in England. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2017. *The Remains of the Day* is his third novel, which won the Booker Prize in 1989. In the form of memory, the novel recounts the protagonist's six-day journey to the west of England and his thirty years of career as a butler. Combining theories of cognitive psychology and narratology, the present thesis studies the narration strategies in the novel from the perspective of unreliable narration, fragmented narration and selective narration.

The first chapter discusses the unreliable narration. As a form of narration and also a way to construct the novel, the remembering narration creatively reconstructs the protagonist's past instead of faithfully reporting it. The protagonist's unreliable narration suggests its distortion of historical facts and contradicts the novel's norms. With the help of the unreliability, the protagonist Stevens tries to deceive himself, intending to rebuild his image of a reliable butler and reinstate the value of his career. The second chapter concerns the fragmented narration. According to cognitive psychology, the memories stored in human mind are a series of fragments which can be temporally distorted under the control of the consciousness. *The Remains of the Day* employs remembering narration to restore, organise and retrieve these memory

fragments. Stevens's recount of his six-day journey is cut into pieces by these fragments which take leaps from one point in time to another. Even though Stevens tries hard to conceal his love for Miss Kenton and his sense of guilt towards his father, the memory fragments concerning these two characters keep occurring during the remembering narration. This fragmented narration betrays Stevens's hidden emotional world and the heavily emotion-charged events Stevens does not want to face. The third chapter studies the selective remembering narration. Instead of going through an unconscious process of restoring and retrieving past events, the protagonist selects the memories that benefit him and omits the painful memories. In the case of Stevens, he subconsciously selects some details concerning Miss Kenton to remember while forgetting others. This selective remembering narration indicates Stevens's hidden love for Miss Kenton. Meanwhile, the selective forgetting about the Suez crisis reflects Stevens's reluctance to admit the decline of the British empire. The selective narration in the novel also reflects Stevens's struggle between self-deception and self-knowledge. Although this struggle takes root in the burden of the butler's wasted life, it still helps the protagonist face the truth of his life.

The present thesis holds that the remembering narration in *The Remains of the Day* is unreliable, fragmented and selective. These features do not only help structure the plot of the novel, but also reveals

Stevens's sense of loss, sense of guilt, and his repressed emotional world which he deliberately conceals. Through the remembering narration, the protagonist goes through a process from self-deception to self-knowledge. In the end of his journey, Stevens frankly admits the mistakes he has made in the past and finally gets up the courage to face the life ahead.

Key words: *The Remains of the Day*; remembering narration; unreliable narration; fragmented narration; selective narration

摘　要

石黑一雄是当代英国最富盛名的小说家之一，于2017年获诺贝尔文学奖。《长日留痕》是石黑一雄的第三部小说，于1989年获布克奖。小说以回忆的形式记录了步入中年的主人公史蒂文斯去往英格兰西部的六天行程以及他长达三十年的管家生涯。本论文结合认知心理学中的回忆理论以及叙事学相关理论，从不可靠叙述、碎片化叙述以及选择性叙述的角度主要探讨了《长日留痕》中的回忆叙述策略。

论文第一章论述回忆叙述策略中的不可靠叙述。回忆既是小说的叙述形式，也是作者结构情节的主要方式。回忆叙述创造性地重构而不是据实地报道以往的经历。史蒂文斯对往事的叙述表现出对历史事实的隐瞒与歪曲和对作品标准的背离，体现了回忆叙述的不可靠性。借助这一不可靠性，史蒂文斯试图欺骗自己，以重构其可靠管家的形象并重新确立其职业生涯的意义。论文第二章探讨回忆叙述策略的另一表现形式，即碎片化叙述。认知心理学认为，储存在人脑中的回忆并非流畅、不可割裂的信息流，而是一系列可随意识自由调节的片段。《长日留痕》以碎片的形式对回忆进行存储、组织以及复现，而这些碎片又在不同时间节点之间跳跃。史蒂文斯以一种碎片化、间接的方式再现给他带来剧烈情感冲击的事件。这种碎片化叙述揭露了小说主人公压抑的情感。论文第三章研究回忆叙述策略中的选择性叙述。回忆过程并非无意识地对一系列资料片段加以储存和提取，而是根据回

忆者的现实需求，挑选出对自己有利、有价值的信息进行存储与提取，并且选择性地遗忘或压抑对自己不利的记忆片段。史蒂文斯下意识地选择记忆与肯顿小姐有关的某些细节而遗忘其他，这种在记忆与遗忘之间下意识的选择揭示了史蒂文斯对肯顿小姐的爱慕之情。同时，对苏伊士危机的选择性遗忘体现了史蒂文斯刻意回避大不列颠帝国的衰落。选择性叙述也体现了史蒂文在自我欺骗与自我认知之间的挣扎。这种挣扎不仅反映了小说主公人因虚度年华而产生的巨大心里负担，也迫使史蒂文斯最终诚实面对其过往生活。

论文认为《长日留痕》回忆叙述策略中的不可靠叙述、碎片化叙述以及选择性叙述在结构小说的同时也揭露了主人公刻意隐藏的失落感、负罪感以及压抑的情感世界。通过回忆叙述，小说主人公最终从自我欺骗转向自我认知，承认过去犯下的错误，直面其余下的人生。

关键词：《长日留痕》；回忆叙述；不可靠叙述；碎片化叙述；选择性叙述

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Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro (1954-), born in Nagasaki, Japan, is now among the most famous writers in Britain. He has published seven novels by now, including *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, *The Unconsoled*, *Never let Me Go* and *The Buried Giant*. His novels have sold in their millions and been translated into multiple languages while over hundreds of journal articles and book chapters have written about his fictions. In the year of 2017, Kazuo Ishiguro won the Nobel Prize for Literature, which brought him international reputation.

In 1960, the five-year-old Ishiguro moved with his family to Britain, where his father, an oceanographer, began a one-year research project funded by the British government. What was originally intended to be a temporary visit became a permanent one, the Ishiguro family settled in Britain. Ishiguro and his two sisters enjoyed what he described as a typical middle-class English upbringing in Guildford, Surrey. After attending a local grammar school, Ishiguro enrolled in the University of Kent at Canterbury, studying English and Philosophy. Though he received a very typical southern England middle-class upbringing and education, Ishiguro still felt to be an outsider to England. He admits later in an interview that, "I think I grew with a certain distance on the society

around me, the British society around me" (qtd.in Swaim 92). At the same time, the very lack of knowledge about Japan forces Ishiguro into a position of thinking himself as "a kind of homeless writer" (qtd.in Oe 58). Being an outsider of both British and Japanese society, Ishiguro reexamines the notions of citizenship and nationality. To him, "this is the age of people losing their labels and having to find new ones" (Swaim 95). The "new label" Ishiguro finds for himself is the "international writer". As an "international writer", Ishiguro's works are abundant in themes, but "the themes of remembering and accommodating loss find a way to creep into each of his novels" (Drąg 1).

It is safe to say that memory is a major concern in Ishiguro's works, especially when it comes to his first three novels. Exploring the field of memory, Ishiguro tries to "capture the texture of memory" (Kelman 48). He finds out that "memory is this terribly treacherous terrain; the very ambiguities of memory go to feed self-deception" (qtd.in Swift 39). Thus, the unreliability of memory is often reflected in the narrations of Ishiguro's protagonists. In addition, the movement of memory also gives Ishiguro considerable freedom when structuring plots, for he does not "necessarily have to tell a story by going from one solid, well-built scene to the next". The protagonists can "have a fragment of a scene dovetailed into a scene that takes place thirty years later" (qtd.in Frumkes 193). As a result, most of Ishiguro's novels are not linear, the plots in those novels

are not structured chronologically for the most part, but progress relatively freely according to where the remembering process goes. Also, Ishiguro concludes that memory, or the remembering process, can be rather selective. The protagonists pick up certain past events while omitting the rest. What lies behind the selectivity of memory is the motivation of the narrator. As Ishiguro puts it, "Why he says certain things, why he brings up certain topics at certain moments, is not random. It is controlled by the things that he does not say. That is what motivates the narrative" (qtd.in Kelman 38). All these features of remembering narration: the unreliable narration, the fragmented narration, and the selective narration have found their way into *The Remains of the Day.*

The Remains of the Day, published in 1989, was Kazuo Ishiguro's third novel and brought him the Booker Prize for Fiction in the same year. This novel attracts much criticism and becomes Ishiguro's most well-known and best-loved work. Being translated into many languages, *The Remains of the Day* "has become something of a contemporary classic" (Sim 44). The story is told in the form of diary by Stevens, who is an elder butler in Darlington Hall. Stevens is travelling to the west of England under the permission of Darlington Hall's new American owner, Mr. Farraday, who even lends him an automobile. The butler intends to visit his old friend Miss Kenton, the former house keeper at Darlington Hall, who left twenty years ago to marry another man. Stevens claims that

his purpose is totally professional for he needs Miss Kenton's expertise to solve the problems caused by staff shortage back at Darlington hall. However, his real motive is romantic. While heading west towards Miss Kenton's living place, Stevens is at the same time travelling back to the past through his memory.

Stevens's memory mainly involves three persons whose influence on him cannot be underestimated: his father, Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton. Stevens's father is a former butler and also works at Darlington Hall latterly. Stevens believes that his father ranks with the greatest butlers at that time for he is "indeed the embodiment of 'dignity'"[1]. As for Lord Darlington, Stevens praises him highly as a "great gentleman" and serves him for many years. Miss Kenton is Stevens's colleague at Darlington Hall and she tries to build a close relationship with Stevens. But Stevens loses all of them: his father died when Stevens was fulfilling his duty as a butler; the "great gentleman", Lord Darlington, was widely regarded as a Nazi sympathizer and a traitor after the World War II; Miss Kenton left Darlington Hall to marry another man and moved to the west of the country. Towards the end of his travel, Stevens fails in bringing Miss Kenton back to Darlington Hall. Sitting on a bench on a seaside in Weymouth, Stevens finally gives in to tears and speaks to a stranger that whereas Darlington "made his own mistakes", he cannot even say that

[1] Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) 245. Further quotations from this edition will be identified by page numbers in the thesis.

about himself. Stevens confesses that "All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that" (243).

Set in the 1950s, this first-person narrated novel goes frequently back to the 1920s and 1930s. Although the geographical journey to the west takes up certain proportion of the novel, it is the butler's memory that dominates the narrative. Though studies on *The Remains of the Day* cover a wide range of approaches, this thesis will focus on the researches concerning the protagonist's memory.

According to Ian M. L. Hunter, the writer of *Memory*, "memory, in its most comprehensive sense, refers to the effects of a person's past on his present. The person is modified, changed by what he does and experiences. And these persisting modifications affect what he does and experiences on later conditions; they enable him to accomplish much which would otherwise be impossible" (19). Given that memory is so important to human beings, it is not surprising that memory has long been a major topic in literature. Daniel L. Schacter even argues that all art relies on memory in a general sense since every work of art is affected by personal experiences. He further emphasizes: "some artists have made the exploration of memory a major subject of their work" (11). Kazuo Ishiguro is one of them. As a matter of fact, all Ishiguro's novels involve

some properties of memory, especially in *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day.*

Examining Stevens's remembering narration, Wojciech Drąg emphasis that: "the process of remembering relies on reconstruction rather than reproduction" (7). What the process of remembering tries to reconstruct is "a more coherent and familiar whole". Drąg further argues that the butler is trying to make the past events "fit the adopted convenient image" by the flittering and distorting power of memory. Thus, Drąg concludes that *The Remains of the Day* underscores memory's tangled, unreliable and essentially reconstructive nature (77). Taking a diasporic point of view, Ching-chih Wang considers Stevens as a "homeless stranger" whose value to the society is to become the reminder of a flawed collective memory. Wang states that Stevens is obsessed with professionalism and dignity to the extent that "he is destined to live in the community of strangers, manipulating his memory of the flawed past to conjure up what he has long been familiar with in the past but rejected in the vicissitudes of his present life" (131). Mike Petry examines the content of Stevens's memory and notes that "he wishes he had done differently, and this is what his memorised narrative is primarily about" (97). Petry also notices that the relationship between Stevens's present experiences and his memories of the past are interactive. The present triggers the past and the past in turn shapes and colours the present (107).

In an article-length study of various mechanisms of misremembering in Stevens's narration, Lilian Furst argues that the content of his recounted memories forms a consistent narrative of "biased self-justification". Furts concludes that the aim of Stevens's narrative is to provide a rationale for his debatable choices and to persuade himself and the reader that his actions have been tenable and worthwhile (549).

All the criticisms mentioned above concentrate on the content of Stevens's memory and how he manipulates or distorts past events. Also, the above-mentioned researches start questioning the reasons behind all these manipulations and distortions. But the relationship between the unreliability of memory and Stevens's unreliable narration still needs further explanation. On the other hand, in *Kazuo Ishiguro and Memory* Yugin Teo studies the function of memory and the effect of the remembering process. He suggests that through the process of forgetting, remembering and releasing, the rememberer is finally able to "break cycles of regret and retribution". In Teo's opinion, Stevens's memories are fragments of events that are experienced with significance in his mind. He thinks that the fragmented or broken way of remembering resists a linear recount of events but succeeds in presenting a more personal depiction (10). It is not surprising that the fragmented and disorderly quality of Stevens's narration leaves some gaps for the readers to fill up. Looking back on his past, Stevens structures his memory in respond to

certain "themes" rather than a chronological line. This thesis attempts to further explore Stevens's fragmented narration in the perspective of the mechanism of memory. As to the selective narration, Kathleen Wall has noticed the selectivity of Stevens's narration, she notes that: "we select events according to a meaning we have assigned them" (38). Her point is consistent with Bartlett's theory of memory as "effort after meaning". The present author believes that what lies under the selectivity of Stevens's narration is a strong egocentric bias. Stevens deliberately chooses the events which do not contradict his bias. Still, this aspect needs further studying.

As to the domestic studies on *The Remains of the Day*, there are 59 journal articles and 26 dissertations in the CNKI database. Among these studies, narrative strategies have been paid considerable attention. Examining the narration structure of the novel, Liu Lu regards Stevens's narration as a form of pilgrimage, through which the butler finds his spiritual homeland. Liu Chao employs classical theories in narratology, especially those on order and voice, to study the discourse of the novel. He concludes that Stevens's narration reflects the lives of the upper class and the decline of the British empire from the perspective of an ordinary man. Combining theories of narratology and stylistics, Li Kunpeng studies the linguistic features of unreliable narration and the function of these features. Li Yujuan also focuses on the unreliable narration of the

novel, she argues that Ishiguro employs unreliable narration to explore the theme of identity crisis. Examining the narrative strategies in the novel, Zhou Xiaohua argues that the unreliable narration reveals the protagonist's image as a hypocritical and stubborn butler. This image reflects the author's criticism on the characteristics of the British nation. Besides the image revealed by the narrative strategies, Yu Yanhong believes that Stevens's inner conflicts and his dilemma of facing the difference between ideal and reality are also demonstrated by the narrative strategies in the novel. Apart from the researches from the perspective of narrative strategies, critics also are aware of the theme of memory in the novel. Jiang Yi contends that Stevens's narration of the English scenery reconstructs the memory of the old empire, which also reconstructs the Englishness in the post-war context. As to Jin Wanfeng, the nostalgia embedded in the novel indicates its re-examining on the cultural tradition of England. This tradition ironically reflects the country's present dilemma.

This thesis focuses on the remembering narration from the perspective of memory itself and remembering narration strategies. Memory is not only a dominating theme in *The Remains of the Day*, but also influences the process of narration. Through examining three features of remembering narration: the unreliable narration, the fragmented narration and the selective narration, the present thesis

explores how these features help structure the novel and reveal the emotions hidden under the protagonist's narration.

The first chapter concentrates on the unreliable narration in the novel. Memory is fragile, ambiguous and unreliable. The process of remembering is an essentially unreliable mechanism, which creatively reconstructs rather than faithfully reports past experiences. As Wojciech Drąg puts it: "Its unreliability is a consequence of the complex role it hast to perform, which is to arrange the memory content in the form of a coherent self-narrative and thus to secure a stable identity" (5). Frederic C. Bartlett, the first Cambridge professor of experimental psychology, notes that the subjects of the remembering process consistently appear to reconstruct the original version. He further concludes that remembering is "an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organised past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form" (213). Here Bartlett attributes the fallaciousness of memory to its inherently reconstructive character, distinguishing between three major categories of memory distortions: "condensation, elaboration, and invention" (205). In the book *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, American psychologist Daniel L. Schacter extends Bartlett's classification and distinguishes between seven categories of the common error of remembering. He then organizes them

into two groups: "sins of omission" and "sins of commission" (4). The former category comprises errors that represent the failure to evoke a particular piece of information from the past, and include transience, absent-mindedness and blocking. The latter consists of errors of inaccurate remembering, such as misattribution, suggestibility, bias and persistence. Rooted in Bartlett's definition of remembering as an "imaginative reconstruction", Schacter further subdivides the notion of "sins of bias" into five varieties: consistency and change biases, which make the rememberer underestimate or overestimate the differences between their past and present; hindsight biases, whose function is to alter to perception of the past in the light of the current situation; egocentric biases, which account for memory's subjection to the dictates of the self; and stereotypical biases, as a result of which memory content is modified in order to fit in with certain preconceived schemata (139). In the seven categories of misremembering singled by Schacter, "sins of bias" is the most pertinent one to the mechanisms of memory at work in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day.* In addition, the "sin of persistence" also finds its way into Stevens's narration. Under the influence of the "sins of memory", the remembering narration of the first-person narrator, Stevens, turns out to be unreliable, fragmented and selective.

The unreliable narration of remembering is the most distinct feature of *The Remains of the Day.* The term "unreliable narrator" is first defined

by Wayne C. Booth in his study *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, being intended to explore the relationship between the "implied author" and the narrator. According to Booth, a narrator is "reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms) unreliable when does not" (158-159). Therefore, it is critical to clarify the definition of "implied author" before discussing unreliable narration. Booth notes that:

> The implied author is the author's second self. Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatized creates an implicit picture of an implied author who stands behind the scenes, whether as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the "real man"—whatever we may take him to be—who creates a superior version of himself as he creates his work. This second self is usually a highly refined and selected version, wiser, more sensitive, and more perspective than any real man could be (151).

By coining the implied author, Booth makes it different from the real author living in the real world. Unlike the real author, the implied author exists within the text and needs to be reconstructed through the close reading of the text. As a "second self" or "selected self", the implied author takes its root in the real author. Many years later, Booth discusses

the implied author again in his "Resurrection of the Implied Author: Why Bother?" (2005). He suggests that the implied author is "the sum of his (the real author) own choice" (75). Given that the implied author, who is the second self of the real author, embodies the norms of the work, an unreliable narrator is the one who goes against the norms. Or in Seymour Chatman's words: "Various factors in the text may indicate a gap between the norms of the implied author and those of the narrator: when the facts contradict the narrator's views, the latter is judged to be unreliable" (19).

James Phelan, Booth's student, further develops the unreliable narrator theory. Phelan argues that an important axis of unreliable narration is overlooked in Booth's theory, namely, the axis of knowledge and perception. Phelan holds that the narrator performs three major roles including "reporting, interpreting and sometimes evaluating". To be specific, Phelan defines the three axes of unreliability: "unreliable reporting occurs along the axis of characters, facts, and events; unreliable reading occurs along the axis of knowledge and perception; and unreliable regarding (or evaluating) occurs along the axis of ethics and evaluation" (89). But the unreliable remembering narration in *The Remains of the Day* presents some challenges to these traditional criteria of unreliability. In the novel, the discourse itself offers clues to narrator's unreliability. According to Kathleen Wall, "their verbal tics gives us some indication of preoccupations that render their narration problematic" (19).

Therefore, the unreliability in Stevens's narration does not only serves as a structural irony, but also "foreground certain elements of the narrator's psychology" (21).

Chapter two mainly discusses Stevens's fragmented narration. Besides being unreliable, the remembering narration of Stevens is fragmented, leaving many gaps to the reader. Memory is fragmentary in its very nature. According to Schacter, "When we encode an experience, connections between active neurons become stronger, and this specific pattern of brain activity constitutes the engram" (71). Here the term "engram" refers to the stored fragment of an episode. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens shuttles between the present and the past. The linear narration accounting his six-day travel to the west is chopped into pieces by his fragmented memories. The remembering narration here illustrates how memory is stored, organized, and retrieved in the form of fragments or engram. On the other hand, its unexpected leaps in time indicates Sevens is organizing his memory consistently with certain meaning, sense and emotions instead of the time-line. Apart from the fact that Stevens's narration is constructed in a fragmented way, it is also important to take a closer look at certain memory fragments that are persistent in the butler's narration. In *The Seven Sins of Memory*, Daniel L. Schacter considers "the sin of persistence" is the most debilitating one. He states that: "persistence involves remembering those things that you wish you could

forget. Sometimes, persistence is no more than a mild irritant." The main territory of persistence, according to Schacter, includes disappointment, regret, failure, sadness, and trauma. Thus, the sin of persistence of memory has a strong link with one's emotional life. Emotionally charged incidents are better remembered than non-emotional events. The emotional boost starts at the moment that a memory is born, when attention and elaboration strongly influence whether an experience will be subsequently remembered or forgotten (162-163). These persistent memory fragments take up larger proportion in Stevens's narration, and at the same time uncover his emotional world which the butler tries hard to repress.

The selective narration is another distinct trait, which is examined in chapter three. Adam Newton characterizes Stevens's selective narration by saying that he is able to "glide through his memories, alternately looking and looking away" (282). Selectivity of remembering is put forward by Schacter as one of the characteristic features of all egocentric memory biases. The selectivity of Stevens's memory can be detected in his glaring one-sided characterisation of Lord Darlington. At the same time, the choice between forgetting and remembering suggests what Stevens cares the most. In episodes involving Miss Kenton, some details have been forgotten while others are remembered rather accurately. This phenomenon reflects that Stevens unconsciously select the details which

carry more emotional weight to remember and then retell. Also, the butler's struggle between self-deception and self-knowledge is foregrounded by the selectivity of his narration. This struggle reflects the protagonist's emotional burden and his pain in facing the truth of his life.

Chapter One The Unreliable Remembering Narration

Memory is the major theme in *The Remains of the Day.* The process of remembering, according to Henke, "is a complex cognitive process which bears no direct relation to events experienced in the past", the individual's "inner story" is structured in response to present needs and "undergoes continual rewriting and editing". It entails "a continual 'self-creation' of the ego" (80). The protagonist, Stevens, looks constantly back on past events when travelling west. This remembering narration reflects the above-mentioned "rewriting and editing" in that Stevens uses his narration as a defence mechanism to hide and distort some unpleasant truth. In the meantime, the butler's remembering narration betrays his repression of his own emotions. Although the trip to the past does not always produce favourable outcomes for Stevens, it still controls his narration and brings a great deal of his inner world into light, which Stevens tries desperately to conceal. As Rebecca Karni notes, "unreliability is in fact fundamental to Ishiguro's fictional worlds, and particularly his Booker Prize-winning, third novel, *The Remains of the Day*" (76).

1.1 Stevens's Underreporting and Misreporting of Lord

Darlington

The main conflict of *The Remains of the Day* is the one between Stevens's public or professional self and his private personae, between professionalism and the expression of emotion. Wai-chew Sim believes that this conflict describes what might be called "a split or fractured subjectivity". In addition, she further explains that there is a strong tie between unreliable narration and the fractured subjectivity of Stevens (112). Even though the butler narrates in what Petry calls "repressed linguistic decorum", using many periphrases, euphemisms, paralipses, litotes and meiosis to hide his inner conflicts, his unreliable remembering narration reveals them. As Kathleen Wall concludes: "Indeed, Stevens' s narrative unreliability is a key means through which these conflicts, largely unresolved for him, are demonstrated" (18).

One of the most obvious features of the novel is the vast discrepancy between the time Stevens spends recounting his present automobile trip and the long time he takes to recall what happened in the past. Wall suggests that this discrepancy has already shown that the protagonist's narrative is actually a defence for the life he has lived. She explains that the imbalance of the amount of time spent narrating events of Stevens's present trip and those spent retelling reveals that the narrative is a re-examination and justification of his life as a butler and of the values that determined and constructed that life (31). Adam Parkes presents a

similar opinion by saying, "Stevens's entire narration might be characterized as a stumbling endeavour to salvage something valuable, or at least defensible, from a life that he suspects has been wasted" (29). Thus, it is safe to say that Stevens's unreliable remembering narration is naturally motivated. Facing the criticisms against his late master, Stevens feels the urge to defend Lord Darlington, whom he had been serving for nearly thirty years. By doing this, the butler is at the same time defending his career and the values giving shape to it.

Before going into details on Stevens's unreliable remembering narration, it is essential to examine the definition of unreliable narration, especially the classification of it. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), Wayne C. Booth notes that he has "called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (158). Booth examines the relationship between the norms of the work and the narrator' narration in the text. He then classifies the unreliability of narrator into two types: one is about the narrator's unreliability in the aspect of the fact in the story, and the other is on the narrator's unreliability with regards to the values.

Later his student James Phelan develops this statement for he thinks these two types are not enough to explain all circumstances. "If he is underreading, then the unreliability exists along neither the axis of ethics

nor the axis of events but along a different axis, one that Booth's work and its various supplements have not sufficiently noticed: the axis of knowledge and perception" (34). Therefore, he makes refinements of six sub-types along the three axes, which are misreporting and underreporting along the axis of facts/events, misregarding and underregarding along the axis of ethics/evaluation, and misreading and underreading along the axis of knowledge/perception. In addition, Phelan also emphasizes that "a given narrator can be unreliable in different ways at different points in his or her narration", and that "narrator exist along a wide spectrum from reliability to unreliability with some totally reliable on all axes, some totally unreliable on all, and some reliable on one or two axes and not on others" (96). In this chapter, the present thesis will focus on Stevens's underreporting and misreporting of Lord Darlington and his underreading of his own emotions.

The Remains of the Day demonstrates that Kazuo Ishiguro has taken care to reveal how people simultaneously deceive and protect themselves in the language they use. What the protagonist, Stevens, tries to deceive himself to believe is that his years serving at Darlington Hall have been well spent and that his career is remarkable for he works under the employment of a great gentleman. In Stevens's opinion, "a 'great' butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentle man—and through the

latter, to severing humanity" (117). In other words, whether Stevens is a great butler largely depends on whether Lord Darlington is a great gentle man. However, Stevens twice denies having been working for Lord Darlington. In "Day Two, Afternoon", when questioned by a chauffeur that "You mean you actually used to work for that Lord Darlington?" Stevens replies that "Oh no, I am employed by Mr John Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the house from the Darlington family" (122). A few pages later, Stevens recalls that he was confronted with a similar question before embarking on his journey. Mr and Mrs Wakefield are an American couple who possesses "a deep enthusiasm for English ways" (120). Mrs Wakefield asks in a low voice that "But tell me, Stevens, what was this Lord Darlington like? Presumably you must have worked for him" (123). Again, Stevens denies by saying, "I didn't, madam, no" (123). Once caught in this lie, Stevens lies again, rationalizing his betrayal with the claim that although his original explanation was "woefully inadequate", it was not "entirely devoid of truth." Stevens takes these denials as "white lies", which serve as "means of avoiding unpleasantness" (126). According to Phelan, when Stevens reports that he has denied working for Lord Darlington but defers telling the readers about Lord Darlington's disgrace, he is underreporting (95). Stevens tries to rationalize his lying about having been working for Lord Darlington, but he delays to unfold his lordship's anti-Semitic conduct. In

former pages, Stevens describes his master as a noble gentleman who shows a lot of sympathy even to his enemy. Commenting on a German general during the Great War, Lord Darlington says that: “He was a gentleman doing his job and I bore him no malice…when this wretched business is over, we shan’t have to be enemies anymore and we’ll have a drink together” (73). Because of Stevens’s reports, Lord Darlington takes on the image of a noble gentleman with the spirit of chivalry. However, the butler’s idealization of his late master fails to escape careful examination. Instead of cutting his master down to size in the eyes of the reader, Stevens idealizes Lord Darlington regardless of his familiarity with his superior’s patent faults (Shaffer 67). Stevens has the full knowledge of the reasons that he denies working for his master, but the butler chooses not to reveal these reasons immediately. In this case, Stevens tells the reader less than he knows.

This underreporting, in Shaffer’s perspective, is a representation of Stevens’s repression (68). Freud defines repression as a device protecting “the mental personality”, through which “forgotten memories” or “intolerable wishes” are “pushed out of consciousness” (21-22). In a word, the essence of repression “lies in turning something away and keeping it at a distance” form conscious scrutiny (Shaffer 68). At this point, Stevens is deliberately refusing to face what brings him pain and trying to put unwanted memories out of his consciousness. This act of

repression is literally presented in other scenes, such as when having run out of fuel, Stevens walks through some muddy fields on the third evening of his journey and dirties his trousers: "I deliberately refrained from shining my lamp on to my shoes and turn-ups for fear of further disappointment" (163). The anti-Semitic conduct can be seen as a stain in Lord Darlington's life, which is of the same essence in Stevens's. The butler's identity and sense of self-worth have largely based on the figure of Lord Darlington, the most part of his remembering narration takes the form of a justification of his former master (Drąg 64). Thus, the butler chooses to put it out of public gaze or of his own conscious scrutiny, which is symbolized by the lamp in the above-quoted sentence.

Even though Stevens continues to hold onto the notion of his master's nobility and essentially good will, the mounting evidence suggests the opposite. When the butler later reluctantly uncovers the reason for his denial, the mechanism of repression gives way to the mechanism of defence. In fact, the first half of Steven's diary contains a lot of references to Darlington in the tone of a vigorous defence. The butler dismisses the recent criticism of his lordship as "a great deal of nonsense," "utter nonsense," "foolish speculations," "utterly unfounded" allegations and "salacious nonsense" (63-145). The presence of these verbs indicates Stevens's self-presentation as a witness in the witness box, swearing to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth (Poree 83). As a

witness, Stevens shows his earnestness of commitment to the cause of salvaging his master's reputation, which is at the same time his own reputation (Drąg 64).

Speaking in the historical context, Lord Darlington was involved in the appeasement-politics of the Chamberlain government, and he was a temporary Nazi sympathiser whose country house was frequented by such doubtful figures as Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, and Joachim von Ribbentrop. When defending Lord Darlington, Stevens is defending himself. Stevens's defence of himself is dependent on the successful defence of his master, Lord Darlington. In respond to the criticism against Lord Darlington, Stevens reports: "There were many Jewish person on my staff throughout all my years with his lordship and let me say furthermore that they were never treated in any way differently on account of their race" (145). Here Stevens is eager to emphasize that the Jewish staff are treated equally in all the years he serves his master. Anti-Semitism cannot be seen just or great at any given time. So, Stevens rebuts the allegation severely at first. But the truth cannot be rejected. Stevens has to face the fact that Lord Darlington did dismiss Jewish employees just because of their being Jewish. The butler later recollects a conversation with his lord:

> Then he said: "I've been doing a great deal of thinking, Stevens. A great deal of thinking. And I've reached my conclusion. We

cannot have Jews on the staff here at Darlington Hall."

"Sir?"

"It's for the good of this house, Stevens. In the interests of the guests we have staying here. I've looked into this carefully, Stevens, and I'm letting you know my conclusion."

"Very well, sir." (146-47)

Obviously, the dismissed Jewish staffs are differently treated for the "safety and well-being" of Darlington's guests. If the Stevens's former delay of telling the truth can be interpreted as underreporting, then this defence brings about misreporting. According to Phelan, "Misreporting involves at least on the axis of facts/events. We said 'at least' here because misreporting is typically a consequence of the narrator's lack of knowledge or mistaken values" (51). However, Stevens's misreporting here neither results from his lack of knowledge of the event, nor a mistaken value. He does have a full knowledge of what happened and what the affair means for he notes: "I have remembered these remarks because they truly surprised me at that time" (146). Stevens's value also has not been mistaken. In fact, Stevens's "very instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal" (148). Stevens's unreliable narration is the consequence of his need to defend Lord Darlington, in other words, the need to defend himself.

The vehemence of Stevens's defence of Darlington's conduct during

that notorious affair, as well as the frequency with which he returns to it, indicate the degree of his unease about the issue. When Stevens revisits the memory of the scandal at the beginning of his diary entry of "Day Three, Evening," the tone of his report sounds more like a self-justification. Stevens opens the entry by referring the dismissal as an "entirely insignificant" and "extremely minor" incident (145). But the fact is, the "extremely minor" incident troubles Lord Darlington as well as Stevens. One year after the dismissal, Lord Darlington tries to find the Jewish maids and recompense them, admitting: "It was wrong, what occurred" (151). Lord Darlington is brave and honest enough to admit his wrong doing, whereas Stevens cannot. As David Gurewich suggests: "It is only through his master that Stevens manages to establish his own worth" (78). If Stevens denies the greatness of Lord Darlington, he denies his own career and worth.

The unreliability in reporting the above-mentioned affair is a representation of Stevens's self-defence mechanism, which is embedded in the remembering narration. Through his lifelong loyalty to Lord Darlington, Stevens has enslaved himself to a Nazi appeaser and thus has indirectly helped further Hitler's cause (Parkes 52). The reliable butler does whatever his master tells him to, while the unreliable narrator finds himself powerless defending his employer when facing the historical facts. Through this discrepancy, Stevens's burden of the past is

foregrounded.

1.2 Stevens's Underreading of his own Emotions

In an interview, Ishiguro has clarified that the obsession driving Stevens's narrative in *The Remains of the Day* is the desire to control his life, the fear of losing control, and the consequence of which is the stifling of emotion. To be more specific, Stevens spares no effort to control those elements, especially sex and politics, which threaten his life with disorder. The denying episode analyzed above suggests the butler's mechanism of defence as well as his repression on political affairs. Now the present writer will focus on Stevens's repression on his emotion and his underreading of it.

After his father's first two examples—of a butler disposing of a tiger under the dining table, and of himself silently glowering impolite guests into submission—which are taken as illustrations of his father's greatness, Stevens reports the third example which is even more striking. In this example, elder Stevens not only accepts to serve a general, knowing that he is responsible for his elder son's death in the war, but also actually volunteers to act as his personal valet. The lesson Stevens has learned from these examples is that dignity "has to do crucially with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits" (42). Stevens believes that great butlers, "they wear their professionalism as a decent

gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone" (42-44). According to Brian Shaffer, the clothing metaphors that Stevens uses to describe his devotion to professional duty serves only to cloak his emotional and sexual repression (73). Lewis agrees with Shaffer in saying that "denial and displacement of his real feelings are essential if Stevens is to become a butler through and through" (84). It is this repression that gives rise to Stevens's underreading of his own emotion, which "occurs when the narrator's lack of knowledge, perceptiveness, or sophistication yields an insufficient interpretation of an event, character, or situation" (Phelan 52).

From Phelan's point of view, Booth's two axes of facts/events and of ethics/evaluation merely deal with the situation when the narrator realizes the facts but intentionally or unconsciously avoids revealing them to the readers. However, neither of these two kinds include the element of the narrator's own perception. In other words, the narrator may have no idea of the circumstance so that what he tells readers can be exactly the very thing that he intends to convey. In this case, the narrator, with no beguilement, still involves in what can be figured as unreliability. Therefore, underreading can be caused by the narrator's personality, or the author's characterization. The narrator's individuality possibly steers

the narration away from an authentic presentation of the event, character or situation.

It is clear that Stevens constantly censors and displaces what pains him and what brings him disorder. Indeed, Stevens is using and manipulating language for his own ends in order to hide and suppress meaning. The text itself also gives away Stevens's strategies. The young Mr Cardinal shouts at Stevens: "you never think to look at it for what it is" (223). Miss Kenton, surprised by Stevens's indifference about the two Jewish maids, asks, "Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to pretend" (154). With the help of these textual clues, Stevens's language of repression can be decoded almost immediately.

The butler's favourite expression is the phrase "a little tired" which represent a wide range of emotions in Stevens's narrative. In a conversation with Lord Darlington shortly after elder Stevens's death, Stevens reports:

> "Stevens, are you all right?"
>
> "Yes, sir. Perfectly."
>
> "You look as though you're crying."
>
> I laughed and taking out a handkerchief, quickly wiped my face.
>
> "I'm sorry, sir. The strains of a hard day." (105)

Here Stevens talks about the "strains of a hard day", which means that he

is tired. But actually, what the butler is feeling is far more than tiredness. When Stevens reports that he is tired, he is indeed saying he is “sad” or “distressed”.

Another similar incident is that when Reginald Cardinal talks to Stevens shortly after Miss Kenton has announced that she will leave Darlington Hall to live with her future husband in the west, Stevens reports:

> “I say, Stevens, are you all right there?”
>
> “Perfectly all right, thank you, sir,” I said with a small laugh.
>
> “Not feeling unwell, are you?”
>
> “A little tired perhaps, but I’m perfectly fine, thank you, sir.” (220)

Finally, When the butler breaks down into tears at the end of the novel on the pier at Weymouth, he excuses himself for crying and says: “I’m afraid the travel has tied me” (243). In the first example, Stevens loses his father, whom he regards as a model in professional life. However, the butler insufficiently interprets the sadness of bereavement as tiredness. Then in the second example, Stevens loses his love, Miss Kenton, but he also interprets sadness of losing the one he loves as tiredness. In the last example, when Stevens realizes that he has wasted his life and career, he again interprets the sadness resulted from the sense of waste as tiredness. Kathleen is right to note that “Stevens has attempted to avoid, in his life

as well as in his narrative, the voices and needs of the feeling self" (29). By using the word "tired" to cover up his emotions, Stevens resorts to his profession to veil his private personae. In other words, Stevens's professionalism is an excuse to shut out the messiness of life, namely, sex, marriage and personal interests (Shaffer 76).

Although James Phelan tends to classified these narrations into underreporting (96), the present thesis believes that these unreliable narrations are actually underreadings. Stevens holds that a great butler shows no emotional reactions to outside impacts, just like his father demonstrates no anger toward the general who has caused his own son' s death. As a consequence, the butler suppresses his feeling in all circumstances. This repression leads to his "lack of perceptiveness" on his own emotions. Similarly, Parkes believes that Stevens's narration shows the reader the heart and mind of ordinary character, who suffers because he lack deep insight into his life (43).

The most striking examples of emotional repression centre around the Stevens-Miss Kenton relationship. Stevens's fear of emotional impact is associated with his dislike of flowers in his pantry. When Miss Kenton joins the staff at Darlington Hall, she comes into Stevens' s pantry with a large vase of flowers intending to "brighten your [Stevens] parlour a little." However, Stevens views the flowers as "distractions", which he likes to "keep to a minimum" (52). Other attractive women are also

considered as distractions Stevens cannot bear. Miss Kenton observes that Stevens does not "like pretty girls on the staff," and then asks, "Might it be that our Mr. Stevens fears distractions? Can it be that our Mr. Stevens is flesh and blood after all and cannot fully trust himself" (156)?

The turning point in the Stevens-Miss Kenton relationship occurs in the 1930s, when Miss Kenton makes an "unmistakable sexual 'advance' at Stevens in his pantry" (Shaffer 72). Arriving with flowers, Miss Kenton asks to see the book Stevens is reading. Stevens reacts by "clutching" the book into his "person", holding the book against his chest, and insisting that Miss Kenton respect his "privacy" (166). While Miss Kenton believes the book is "something rather racy" and "shocking," and she will leave him to the "pleasures" of his book after he shows the book to her. Clearly, Miss Kenton is pushing Stevens, hoping that the butler will be honest to confess his interest in romantic affairs. When Miss Kenton finally pries the book from Stevens, he claims that he reads these romances strictly "to maintain and develop" his "command of the English language" (167). Stevens here responds to Miss Kenton's invasion of his private domain by declaring that their relationship has reached an "inappropriate footing" and be resolving to re-establish it "on a more proper basis" (169). Shaffer thinks that this sexual disengagement is actually repression and explains Stevens's monk-like existence (72). This monk-like way of living affects the butler's interpretation of his own

emotion. Miss Kenton's invasion does arouse an emotional reaction within Stevens, however, the butler takes this feeling of intimacy as a threat to his professional doctrine. Because of this undereading, Stevens closes off the possibility of a love story that Miss Kenton has tried so hard to open, "leading one to conclude that he himself is a closed book" (Parkes 47).

This closed off love story soon comes to an end when Miss Kenton starts taking days off, leaving Darlington Hall regularly. On discovering the housekeeper's constant leaving, Stevens says:

> I must admit, I found it hard to keep out of my mind the possibility of these mysterious outings of Miss Kenton was to meet a suitor. This was indeed a disturbing notion, for it was not hard to see that Miss Kenton's departure would constitute a professional loss of some magnitude, a loss Darlington Hall would have some difficulty recovering from. (171)

The butler uses his professional identity as a means of covering his obvious attraction to Miss Kenton. The "disturbing notion" is an understatement of Stevens's fear of losing Miss Kenton for good. Deborah Guth believes these ambiguous comments imply the presence of unexpressed emotion, which, to be precise, is the love Stevens neither sees nor feels (131). This repression, however, betrays the romantic nature in Stevens's relationship with Miss Kenton, which takes shape

slowly in the margins of Stevens's account. Stevens's unreliable remembering narration here acts as an ongoing act of repression, repeating in recall the same erasure of emotion that characterized the relationship itself, and cunningly allowing one aspect to emerge in order better to camouflage the other. By decoding Stevens's general reticence on strong emotions, the present thesis holds that the butler senses increasingly clearly that his private self is missing in the way he behaves towards Miss Kenton. Stevens wishes he had done differently, but what he has left are only memories and the remains of his day.

Chapter Two The Fragmented Remembering Narration

Scientists agree that the brain does not operate like a camera or a copying machine. In Daniel L. Schacter's words: "we do not store judgement-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold on to the meaning, sense and emotion these experiences provided us" (5). In the case of Stevens, he holds on to the meaning, sense and emotion provided by his memory, trying to reconstruct his identity as a great butler. On the other hand, past experiences are stored in the form of fragment in people's head. The cognitive psychologist Ulric Neisser proposes that only bits and pieces of incoming data are represented in memory. He further explains that these retained fragments of experience in turn provide a basis for reconstructing a past event, much as a palaeontologist is able to reconstruct a dinosaur from fragments of bone (285). In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens's remembering narration is fragmented. It illustrates the way in which memory is organized and retrieved. Meanwhile, the persistent memory fragments indicate Stevens's hidden emotional world.

2.1 Stevens's Temporal-distorted Narration

Similar to the repeated recurrence of the "mist", which indicates the foggy texture and unreliability of memory, there are also some implications which illustrate Stevens's fragmented way of narrating. When serving at table, Stevens likes to be "partially visible", he notes: "it did have the great merit of making my person only partially visible while I remained stationary" (73). This physical distance from events, as Yugin Teo concludes, only allows him to see fragments of things that are happening (29). In addition, Drąg sees Stevens's narration as "a memoir embedded within a diary" (70). The butler's diary of his automobile trip has been cut into fragments by his repetative revisit to the past. The past, on the other hand, is not revealed as a continuously linear account but is subject to temporal distortion, or in Genette's word "anachrony".

Stevens's narration constantly oscillates between the past and the present. The butler's present physical journey to the west of England serves as a "frame narration", which according to Gerald Prince, works as a frame providing scenes for other narrations (33). On the other hand, Stevens's time travel to the past can be seen as an embedded narration which is similar to what Genette calls metadiegetic narrative (25). Frame narration functions as an introductory or framework while embedded narration is the story or stories within it. This kind of structure can be called Russian dolls or Chinese boxes, like in *The Thousand and One*

Nights and *The Canterbury Tales*. In *The Remains of the Day,* however, the embedded narration seems to carry more weight than the frame narration. The embedded narration takes up a larger proportion in Stevens's narrative. As Nicola King puts it: "The imbalance of the amount of time spent narrating events of his present trip and those spent recounting the past reveals…that in part at least the narrative is an examination and justification of his life as Lord Darlington's butler and of the values that to a large degree determined and constructed that life" (119).

The stories within the frame narration tend to be emotionally denser, or in Kamine's words: "the past, not the present, is what weighs most heavily on Stevens's mind" (21). Thus, the embedded narration often stops the progression of the frame narration with fragmentary memories. In the novel, Stevens occasionally stops himself from going too deep into his memory by saying: "But I see I am becoming preoccupied with these memories and this is perhaps a little foolish" (67), or "But I see I have become somewhat lost in these old memories. This had never been my intention, but then it is probably no bad thing if in doing so I have at least avoided becoming unduly preoccupied with the events of this evening" (159). Stevens's constant leaps between the present and past combining with his fragmented memory contribute to his fragmented remembering narration.

The automobile trip intended to bring Miss Kenton back to Darlington Hall is Stevens's first time in many years to set foot out of the house. Living in the shadow of Darlington Hall, Stevens is safe to be "an observer, standing on the periphery" (Teo 27). Driving farther from the house, Stevens founds his surroundings has become "unrecognizable", and he has the feeling similar to those who sail in a ship and lose sight of the land, which is an unease mixed with exhilaration. When leaving Darlington Hall, Stevens opens himself up to the illumination of public scrutiny. His character changes from being that of an observer to one who is being observed. The automobile trip gives the butler the opportunity through which, "Stevens can realize the extent to which he has been deluding himself regarding the significance of his work at Darlington Hall and the real implications of the work Lord Darlington had done in trying to 'ensure that peace will continue to prevail in Europe'" (Teo 29). The safe land on which Stevens dwell for nearly thirty years is now out of his sight, he puts himself in a sea of uncertainty and questioning. Thus, the frame narration concerning his physical trip is constantly interrupted by his revisit back to the past.

Stevens's narration can be divided into eight unequally long sections. Besides a prologue before his actual trip begins, he writes into his diary at the following places and times:

Prologue—July 1956, Darlington Hall

Day One—Evening, Salisbury;

Day Two—Morning, Salisbury;

Day Two—Afternoon, Mortimer's Pond, Dorset;

Day Three—Morning, Taunton, Somerset;

Day Three—Evening, Moscombe, near Tavistock, Devon;

Day Four—Afternoon, Little Compton, Cornwall;

Day Six—Evening, Weymouth.

The time span of Stevens's narration covers nearly thirty years, and the narrative jumbles chronology and memories (Petry 107). The temporal distortion of Steven's narration is mirrored by the overall structure of the novel. The chapters of the novel are not in tune with the days of Stevens's journey: there are two entries for the second and third day but no entry for the fifth. In the first two entries, Stevens opens by recounting his experiences during the day. But in the third, the butler begins by inquiring "What is a 'great' butler" (113)? In "Day Three, Morning, Tauton, Somerset", Stevens goes back to his usual opening but in the next chapter, the butler returns "a moment to the question of his lordship's attitude to Jewish person" (145), which is previously recounted in the "Day Two" chapters. What is most obvious about the frame narration's irregularity is the absence of entry to the fifth day, when Stevens and Miss Kenton finally meet. Instead of immediately recounting his reunion with Miss Kenton after all those years, Stevens choses to narrate the meeting on the

beach in Weymouth two days later. After reading the final episode, the reader finds out that Stevens fails in bringing Miss Kenton back to Darlington Hall with him. Thus, the gap created by the absence of the entry to the fifth day can be explained by Stevens's emotional pain of losing his final chance. To put in his own words, Stevens's dreams are now literally "forever irredeemable" (179). Besides the irregularity shown above, the frame narration, namely, Stevens's automobile trip, is often interrupted by his revisit to the past.

While the narration from the prologue to the first pages of chapter one can be seen as coherent section, the frame narration pauses when Steven begins his discussion about "greatness". The stories embedded in his discussion are concerning his father. Being "apparently true" to Stevens (36), the first story is about a butler's killing of a tiger without flinching. The second one concerns old Stevens's silent protesting two guests who insult his master. In the last story, old Stevens volunteers to serve a General who leads a military action during which Stevens's brother gets killed. These episodes illustrate the "greatness" and "dignity" Stevens holds fast to and are relatively coherent compared to the next episode about his father. Gerard Genette has defined this kind of flash back as analepsis, which is "any evocation after the fact of event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment" (40). To be more specific, these episodes can be classified into what

Genette calls "heterodiegetic internal analepses", which deal with a character recently introduced whose antecedents the narrator wants to shed light on, or deal with a character who has been out of sight for some time and whose recent past the readers must catch up with (50). Stevens uses these analepses to illustrate his ideal image of a great butler. This type of temporal coinciding, according to Genette, does not entail real narrative interference. Therefore, the temporal distortion here produces a fixed image of elder Stevens, whose influence on Stevens can also be seen constant through his narration.

Coming back from the questioning of the meaning of "greatness", Stevens continues to narrate his journey. But before long, the frame narration is interrupted by his memory triggered by Miss Kenton's letter. In the letter, Miss Kenton mentions that she will never forget seeing Stevens father walking back and forth in front of the summerhouse as if he is hoping to find some precious jewel (50). But rather than explaining the scene mentioned in the letter immediately and directly, Stevens jumps back much earlier to narrates the conversation between himself and Miss Kenton, during which Miss Kenton tries to put some flowers in his room. This temporal distortion is coined by Genette as "completing analepses", which comprises the retrospective section that fill in, after the event, an earlier gap in the narrative. Genette believes, these earlier gaps can be breaks in the temporal continuity (51). This interference on the temporal

continuity reflects Stevens's reluctancy to revisit his memory of his aging father, whose image is at that time not in accordance with a great butler. And then, Stevens goes on telling that two weeks after the conversation, Miss Kenton complains about old Stevens's mistakes at work. Miss Kenton detects that a dust-pan is left on the floor, some pieces of silver bears remains of polish and a Chinaman is misplaced. All these mistakes result from old Stevens's decline in professional ability. In the quarrel with Stevens, Miss Kenton goes on saying: "Whatever your father was once, Mr. Stevens, his powers are now greatly diminished. This is what these 'trivial errors' as you call them really signify and if you do not heed them, it will not be long before your father commits an error of major proportions" (59). These remarks remind Stevens of the conversation between him and his master two months later. In the conversation, Lord Darlington makes similar comments on old Stevens's errors and hopes Stevens deliver the order to reduce his father's workload. Before meeting his father, Stevens recounts the embarrassing episode in which his father falls before guests:

> It was in the vicinity of these steps that my father fell, scattering the load on his tray - teapot, cups, saucers, sandwiches, cakes - across the area of grass at the top of the steps. By the time I had received the alarm and gone out, his lordship and his guests had laid my father on his side, a cushion and a rug from the

> summerhouse serving as pillow and blanket. My father was unconscious and his face looked an oddly grey colour. (63)

This "great embarrassment" happens about a week before Stevens's conversation with Lord Darlington. Soon after the delivering of the order, Stevens finds his father walking around the place where he fell, trying to find the "precious jewel". Unlike the first three episodes about his father, old Stevens's fall in front of the summerhouse is narrated in the form of fragment. Stevens does not dive into this episode directly, but instead, he first revisits a much safer memory concerning his interaction with Miss Kenton. Then comes a troubling memory fragment about Stevens's conversation with Lord Darlington. Finally, Stevens has to face the truth that his father's power is "greatly diminished" and recounts the scene in which his father falls when serving guests.

Stevens once regarded his father as an embodiment of the "greatness" and "dignity" of a butler and quoted three stories to convey his admiration for his father. He admits in the novel that: "Yet it is my firm conviction that at the peak of his career at Loughborough House, my father was indeed the embodiment of 'dignity'" (34). But the fall episode marks the turning point that his father no longer holds the ability to fulfil his duty. What old Stevens was trying to find on the lawn before the summerhouse is his lost dignity as a once great butler. Although this memory fragment remains persistent in Stevens's mind, it is wrapped by

other relevant memory fragments. The fragmented narration Stevens uses here contributes to his effort to suppress his unease about the diminishment of his father's ability.

On the other hand, Stevens attempts to hide his own sense of guilty, which he protects on to Miss Kenton. Stevens states that: "No doubt, she was feeling a certain sense of guilt as the two of us watched from our window my father's figure down below" (67). But the "sense of guilt" is his own, which he tries to hide but finally unveils through his remembering narration. As Shaffer concludes, "Stevens can talk about himself only when he talks about others; when he talks about himself directly, he is compelled to lie" (81). This sense of guilt has become such a heavy burden in Stevens's mind that he quickly retreats form this memory by saying "But I see I am becoming preoccupied with these memories and this is perhaps a little foolish" (67). Then Stevens recounts that in the day's journey, he pulled over his automobile, letting a hen cross his path "in the most leisurely manner." The owner of the hen thanked Stevens for stopping, which lifted his spirit. "The simple kindness" Stevens has been thanked for and has been offered in return manifests a kind of human warmth. Then suddenly, Stevens jumps back to his memory: "But I feel I should return just a moment to the matter of my father; for it strikes me I may have given the impression earlier that I treated him rather bluntly over his declining abilities" (69-70). But again,

Stevens does not dive into memories directly concerning his father, he tries to explain the "full context of those days" first.

The international conference held at Darlington Hall is regarded as a "turning point" in his career by Stevens. Lord Darlington held the conference hoping to revise the harshest terms of the Versailles treaty. Stevens recounts the friendship between his master and Herr Karl-Heinz Bremann and Lord Darlington's preparation for the conference. After all these explanation, the "memorable March of 1923" finally merges. Within a few pages, Stevens uses "there is another memory" (71), "I can remember one morning" (75) to jump from one point in time to another. Around the conference in 1923, fragments of memory are organized, forming the "context of those days". It is at first unknown to the reader that the night when the conference was held is the very night on which Stevens's father died. Instead, all the painful episodes about old Stevens are told in the form of fragments. Moreover, the central scenes—his father's fall on the lawn and the dying scene are covered by some other relevant but less emotionally charged memory fragments. The fragmentation of remembering narration is not only illustrated by the frequent switch from the frame narration to the embedded narration, but also is manifested by the fragmented embedded narration itself. These memory fragments of Stevens resemble what Virginia Woolf calls "ripples on the surface of the text", which mark the place where

something had sunk (79). Stevens lets his sense of guilt and sense of lost for his father sink into the sea of his memory. But the ripples of the troubling past, though in the form of fragments, merges to the surface, marking Stevens's hidden private emotional world.

2.2 Stevens's Memory-Oriented Narration

In an interview, Kazuo Ishiguro once noted that: "I realized that as a novelist, you did not necessarily have to tell a story by going from one solid, well-built scene to the next. You could actually mimic the way memory runs through someone's mind. You can have a fragment of a scene dovetailed into a scene that takes places thirty years later" (Frumkes 193).

Memory goes through one's mind in the form of fragment, or engram. According to Daniel L. Schacter, retrieving a memory is like reconstructing a dinosaur from fragments of bone (69). He further explains that for the palaeontologist, the bone pieces of a dinosaur and the dinosaur that is ultimately constructed by combining those bone pieces are not the same thing. Thus, similarly, for the rememberer, the engram and the memory are not the same thing.

Besides the engram, another important component is the retrieval cue. A retrieval cue combines with the engram to produce a subjective

experience that is called memory. In this theory, the retrieval cue and the engram work together in the remembering process. When people encode an experience, connections between active neurons become stronger, constituting the engram. Later, as people try to remember the experience, a retrieval cue will induce another pattern of activity in the brain. If this pattern is similar enough to a previously encoded pattern, remembering will occur. Schacter then concludes that through this process, the rememberer converts the fragmentary remains of experience into the autobiographical narratives that endure over time and constitute the stories of one's life (70-71).

The best example in *The Remains of the Day* which illustrates the relationship between memory fragment and retrieval cue is the "silver polish" episode in "Day Three, Morning, Taunton, Somerset". Resting himself in Taunton, Stevens sees a signpost pointing out several nearby destinations and one of them is the village of Mursden. Stevens addresses to his narratee: "Perhaps 'Mursden' will ring a bell for you, as it did for me upon my first spotting it on the road atlas yesterday" (133). Stevens later explains that Mursden was where the firm of Giffen and Co. was once situated which produced Giffen's dark candles of polish. Going deeper into his memory, Stevens states that the Giffen's has made a significant change in his profession by pushing "the polishing of silver to the position of central importance it still by and large maintains today"

(133). Through the retrieval cue, the polishing of silver, two fragments of Stevens's memory have been awakened. Stevens is very proud of the polishing of silver at Darlington Hall, he notes:

> "I am glad to be able to recall numerous occasions when the silver at Darlington Hall had a pleasing impact upon observers. For instance, I recall Lady Astor remarking, not without a certain bitterness, that our silver 'was probably unrivalled'. I recall also watching Mr. George Bernard Shaw, the renowned playwright, at dinner one evening, examining closely the dessert spoon before him, holding it up to the light and comparing its surface to that of a nearby platter, quite oblivious to the company around him." (134-35)

But the most remarkable instance is the "unofficial meeting" between Lord Halifax and the German Ambassador Herr Ribbentrop, which Stevens recalls with "most satisfaction". During that night, Lord Halifax was constantly expressing his doubts about the meeting while Lord Darlington tried in vain to reassure him. At one point, Stevens overheard Lord Halifax sating: "My goodness, Darlington, the silver in this house is a delight" (135). Several days later, Darlington himself remarked to Stevens: "By the way, Stevens, Lord Halifax was jolly impressed with the silver the other night. Put him into a quite different frame of mind altogether" (135). But what Lord Halifax was really worried about is

nothing but the nature of that unofficial meeting. The German Ambassador, Herr Ribbentrop, was Hitler's pawn whose work was to deceive England. The working relationship between Lord Darlington and Herr Ribbentrop is the evidence indicating that Darlington himself was a Nazi sympathizer. The retrieval cue here serves as a safer entry to a dangerously troubling fragment of Stevens's memory, which focuses on a minor detail rather than the dishonourable nature of it. Also, the polishing of silver illustrates the role Stevens plays in the political and historical life of the age. Magnifying the significance of the polished silver, Stevens concludes that:

> But what I am saying is that it is these sorts of instances which over time come to symbolize an irrefutable fact; namely that one has had the privilege of practising one's profession at the very fulcrum of great affairs. And one has a right, perhaps, to feel a satisfaction those content to serve mediocre employers will never know - the satisfaction of being able to say with some reason that one's efforts, in however modest a way, comprise a contribution to the course of history. (139)

Stevens believes through perfectly polishing the silver at Darlington Hall, which is an example of fulfilling his duty as a butler, he has made his contribution to the course of history. As Kazuo Ishiguro once noted in an interview, Stevens is a metaphor of mediocre people. Ishiguro thinks:

"And most of us felt, we don't really get into position where we run things. What we do is we just kind of do our little jobs, we just get on with our small lives and hope for the best…We hope that somebody up there, upstairs uses our little contribution in a good way. In other words, we're rather like butlers" (Swaim 101). Through this episode, Stevens presents himself as a symbol of the relationship between the common folk and the power center. Stevens does his best to serve the one upstairs and hope for the best, but Darlington's misjudgement brings Stevens's effort into vain.

Another memory fragment triggered by the same retrieval cue is about Stevens's service for Mr. Farraday many years later. Stevens recalls that: "A number of small errors have surfaced of late, including that incident last April relating to the silver" (139). In the incident, Mr. Farraday "simply picked up the fork, examined it for a brief second, touching the prongs with a fingertip, then turned his attention to the morning headlines. The whole gesture had been carried out in an absent-minded sort of way, but of course, I had spotted the occurrence and had advanced swiftly to remove the offending item" (139). Although Mr. Farraday does not actually say anything about the silver, Stevens still sees that incident as a "genuine embarrassment", which can only be solved by the return of Miss Kenton. Ironically, the same retrieval cue brings about two opposite fragments of memory in terms of the feelings

Stevens attaches to them: one is a "most satisfaction", the other is a "genuine embarrassment". These two-juxtaposed fragmentary memories magnify the changes happening to Stevens, namely, the decline of his profession. The discrepancy between the magnified then and the diminished now increases Stevens's dependence on the past and his alienation from the present.

In Stevens's memory, there are certain fragments endures the passage of time and surfaces from time to time. Such kind of recurrent of memory fragments is called the "obsessive remembering" by Furst. The unexpected leaps and disorderly quality of Stevens's narration result from his ongoing "oscillation between transience and persistence" (538). Of course, memory is transient, but some memory fragment is persistent. In *The Seven Sins of Memory*, Daniel L. Schacter considers "the sin of persistence" is the most debilitating one. He states that: "persistence involves remembering those things that you wish you could forget. Sometimes, persistence is no more than a mild irritant." The main territory of persistence, according to Schacter, includes disappointment, regret, failure, sadness, and trauma. Thus, the sin of persistence of memory has a strong relationship with one's emotional life. Emotionally charged incidents are better remembered than non-motional events. Schacter believes the emotional boost starts at the moment that a memory is born, when attention and elaboration strongly influence whether an

experience will be subsequently remembered or forgotten (162-163). In the novel, several fragments of memory persist in Stevens's mind, one of them is the scene in which Stevens stands in front of the door to Miss Kenton's room. With a "hindsight", Stevens takes this memory fragment as a "turning point" in his relationship with Miss Kenton. This fragment first emerges after Miss Kenton receiving a news of her aunt's death. Stevens recalls:

> I could well imagine the blow the news would be to her, her aunt having been, to all intents and purposes, like a mother to her, and I paused out in the corridor, wondering if I should go back, knock and make good my omission. But then it occurred to me that if I were to do so, I might easily intrude upon her private grief.
>
> Indeed, it was not impossible that Miss Kenton, at that very moment, and only a few feet from me, was actually crying. The thought provoked a strange feeling to rise within me, causing me to stand there hovering in the corridor for some moments. But eventually I judged it best to await another opportunity to express my sympathy and went on my way. (176)

Failing to offer his condolence, Stevens just stands outside of Miss Kenton's room. But the sadness of Miss Kenton somehow gets its way into Stevens's heart for he concludes even from a few feet away that Miss Kenton was actually crying then. This memory fragments stays vividly in

Stevens mind. Many pages later, he returns to it:

> a fragment of a memory, a moment that has for some reason remained with me vividly through the years. It is a recollection of standing alone in the back corridor before the closed door of Miss Kenton's parlour; I was not actually facing the door, but standing with my person half turned towards it, transfixed by indecision as to whether or not I should knock; for at that moment, as I recall, I had been struck by the conviction that behind that very door, just a few yards from me, Miss Kenton was in fact crying. (212)

This time, Stevens describes the scene with more details. This memory fragment does not become blur with the course of time, on the contrary, it gains vividness every time being remembered. The butler goes to considerable lengths to emphasize the exclusively "professional" nature of his relationship with Miss Kenton. But what enables the reader to glean a deeper attachment than Stevens intends to acknowledge is the very "persistence and vividness" of his memories of her, rather than their content (Furst 549). In most part of his narration, Stevens tries to hide his feeling towards Miss Kenton. But through Stevens's remembering narration, his love for Miss Kenton subtly rises to the surface.

Stevens himself has pointed to a "chain of events" which changes his relationship with Miss Kenton. The first case of this kind involves Miss Kenton playfully wrestling his romantic book, which is followed by

the incident in which Kenton tells him about her seeing another man. The third recounts that, on finding her tiredness, Stevens cancels their cocoa meetings. The fourth recalls how he is unable to offer his sympathy on the death of Miss Kenton's aunt. Deborah Guth believes that the first incident is connected to Miss Kenton's sudden interest in another man and the third becomes a fit of Stevens's jealousy. The forth incident is not mainly about how he should have behaved to Kenton's aunt's death but about the opportunity he has missed. The vividness of the fourth scene indicates how emotionally charged memory fragment persist. Stevens loses his opportunity to console Miss Kenton and redeem their relationship. In Guth's words, Stevens alienates Miss Kenton and pushes her into the arms of a man she does not love (132-133). Thus, this persistent memory fragment is charged with Stevens's sadness and regret.

Another remarkable aspect of this episode is Stevens's uncertainty about the actual circumstance in which this episode happens. According to Schacter, "the emotionally arousing object draws attention automatically, leaving few resources to help encode the rest of the scene. Experiments have shown that people usually remember well the central focus of an emotionally arousing incident, at the expense of poor memory for peripheral details" (164). Stevens assigns the "crying episode" to an occasion then corrects his memory by distributing it to another. The very uncertainty here suggests where Stevens's emotional focus lies thus

revealing his hidden feeling towards Miss Kenton.

Another persistent memory fragment involves the scene in which Stevens's father goes back to the place where he fell, hoping to find some precious jewel he had dropped. As Guth concludes, this scene is a mirror image of the above-mentioned episode concerning Miss Kenton. In fact, it is Miss Kenton who brings out this fragment of memory in her letter. Stevens narrates: "Then she goes on to add: 'If this is a painful memory, forgive me. But I will never forget that time we both watched your father walking back and forth in front of the summerhouse, looking down at the ground as though he hoped to find some precious jewel he had dropped there'" (50). The scene described in Miss Kenton's words actually happened thirty years ago, but it remains vividly in Stevens's memory. Stevens recalls the very detail of the scene to the extend which he can still tell the color of the light in it and Miss Kenton's exact remarks on it:

> Indeed, it must have occurred on just one of those summer evenings she mentions, for I can recall distinctly climbing to the second landing and seeing before me a series of orange shafts from the sunset breaking the gloom of the corridor where each bedroom door stood ajar. And as I made my way past those bedrooms, I had seen through a doorway Miss Kenton's figure, silhouetted against a window, turn and call softly: "Mr Stevens, if you have a moment." As I entered, Miss Kenton had turned back to the window. Down

> below, the shadows of the poplars were falling across the lawn. To the right of our view, the lawn sloped up a gentle embankment to where the summerhouse stood, and it was there my father's figure could be seen, pacing slowly with an air of preoccupation—indeed, as Miss Kenton puts it so well, "as though he hoped to find some precious jewel he had dropped there." (50)

In Stevens's mind, his father has long been the embodiment of the dignity which a great butler should possess. But as Old Stevens grows old, he becomes incapable of fulfilling a butler's duty. Since Old Stevens has been employed at Darlington Hall, Stevens tries in many ways to protect his father. When Miss Kenton calls his father "William", Stevens takes it as an offense to his father and has a quarrel with her; When Miss Kenton detects Old Stevens's errors at work, Stevens finds it hard to credit such errors to his father. But after Old Stevens fell while serving the guests, Lord Darlington makes Stevens to tell his father that his workload should be reduced considering the incoming important meetings at Darlington Hall. Soon after this encounter, Stevens revisit his memory concerning his father's searching for lost jewel:

> The shadows of the poplar trees had fallen across much of the lawn, but the sun was still lighting up the far corner where the grass sloped up to the Summerhouse. My father could be seen standing by those four stone steps, deep in thought. A breeze was

> slightly disturbing his hair. Then, as we watched, he walked very slowly up the steps. At the top, he turned and came back down, a little faster. Turning once more, my father became still again for several seconds, contemplating the steps before him. Eventually, he climbed them a second time, very deliberately. This time he continued on across the grass until he had almost reached the summerhouse, then turned and came walking slowly back, his eyes never leaving the ground. (67)

The color of daylight, the sun's position to the central scene, the very act of old Stevens's moment, and even the disturbing breeze are presented as a fresh print in Stevens's narration. Once again, some irrelevant details are not encoded in Stevens memory for he admits: "I cannot remember just what purpose had taken me up on to the top floor of the house to where the row of guest bedrooms line the corridor" (67). What haunts Stevens for nearly thirty years is the strongly emotionally charged scene concerning his aging father. Stevens projects his own feeling onto Miss Kenton by saying: "No doubt, she was feeling a certain sense of guilt as the two of us watched from our window my father's figure down below" (67). But through the persistence of this memory fragment, the reader can tell that Stevens's sense of guilt is attached to this episode. Also, like his father, when Stevens tries to find out what has gone wrong between him and Miss Kenton with the help of hindsight, he is too returning to the

place where he fell and tried to find his own lost jewel.

Chapter Three The Selective Remembering Narration

According to Bartlett's theory of memory as "effort after meaning", memory is prone to reconstruct past events to create certain kinds of meaning instead of simply recounting them. Under the influence of present needs, the remembering narration is vulnerable to distortion and unreliability. Meanwhile, memory is stored in people's mind in forms of fragments, and some of these fragments are more emotionally charged than others, thus being more persistent. The remembering narration in *The Remains of the Day* illustrates these persistent memory fragments and is structured on the basis of the frequent switch between the fragments of the past and the present. The above-mentioned unreliability and fragmentation of remembering narration deals with how the narrator narrates. One the other hand, the selective narration is about what the narrator choses to narrate. Memory can be very selective. What Stevens narrates in his diary is not random. Like Ono in *The Artist of the Floating World*, Stevens "selectively filters his past" (Shaffer 43), choosing to remember certain events or details while forget others. This oscillation between remembering and forgetting constructs the butler's narration, which also reveals his struggle between self-deception and self-knowledge.

3.1 Stevens's Selection of Remembering and Forgetting

In an essay entitled "The Literary Representation of Memory", Birgit Nuemann opines: "Numerous texts portray how individuals and groups remember their past and how they construct identities on the basis of the recollected memories. They are concerned with the mnemonic presence of the past in the present, and they illuminate the manifold functions that memories fulfill for the constitution of identity. Such texts highlight that our memories are highly selective, and that the rendering of memories potentially tell us more about the rememberer's present—his or her desire and denial, than about the actual past events" (333). Moreover, Shaffer characterizes memory's role as: "psychological mystery-voyages into the protagonists' problematic or compromised past". In portraying these voyages, Ishiguro also demonstrates memory's "strategems, its selectivity, its obsessional quality, its refinements, its expedience and use" (Shaffer 595). Besides the unreliability and fragmentation of remembering, Ishiguro also lets the selectivity of memory get into *The Remains of the Day.*

The selectivity of memory is put forward by Schacter as one of the features of memory's biases. According to Schacter, "we are likely to give more credence to our own recollections of events than to those of others when our memories readily spring to mind and are accompanied by vivid,

compelling details. We have direct access to these qualities of our own recollections in a way that we never do for the memories of others, which can lead us to dig in and insist on the unique validity of our own view of the world." Schacter calls this insistence "egocentric bias" and then adds that: "Egocentric biases in memory reflect the important role that 'the self' plays in organizing and regulating mental life" (150). But "the self" who remembers is not a neutral observer, "individuals in our society are motivated to think highly of themselves and often hold unrealistically flattering opinions of their abilities and achievements…people are commonly subject to 'positive illusions' characterized by inflated estimates of self-worth" (151). The role "the self" plays in encoding and retrieval, according to Schacter, creates fertile ground for memory biases that allow people to remember past experiences in a self-enhancing light (151). In this light of self-enhancing, Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* intends to convey an image of a professionally successful life by recalling his little triumphs when he managed to live up to his ideal of "dignity in keeping with his position" (33). Therefore, Stevens's searches in his memory, choosing the memory fragments which enhance his self-image to narrate.

A revealing instance of Stevens's egocentric memory bias is his narration of an important "off-the-record" political meeting at Darlington Hall, after which the Foreign Secretary complimented the condition of the

silverware, which was Stevens's duty. Stevens believes proudly that "the state of the silver had made a small but significant contribution towards the easing of relations between Lord Halifax and Herr Ribbentrop that evening" (135). The silverware is trivial in itself, but Stevens, under the influence of egocentric bias, regards it as a significant factor which contributes a great deal to the success of the informal meeting. The butler selects this episode to demonstrate his "greatness", thus creating a "positive illusion" which enhances his current self-assessment.

On the other hand, although he does not directly and explicitly refer to himself as a "great butler", Stevens's descriptions of his service for Darlington fulfil the criteria that he sets out for "greatness". Stevens claims that: "Indeed, the more one considers it, the more obvious it seems: association with a truly distinguished household is a prerequisite of 'greatness'. A 'great' butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman—and through the latter, to serving humanity" (117). To Stevens, his "greatness" is largely dependent upon the "greatness" of his master, therefore, the butler's descriptions of Lord Darlington are also under the influence of egocentric bias. As Wojciech Drąg puts it: "the selectivity of Stevens's memory is evident in his glaringly one-sided characterization of Lord Darlington" (76). The butler portrays his late master by remembering a number of situations, all of which present him

as a sensitive, benevolent and noble aristocrat. Stevens recounts that after the Great War, Lord Darlington "made the first of a number of trips to Berlin". Stevens has a vivid memory of the profound effect the trip had on his master and narrates that: "A heavy air of preoccupation hung over him for days after his return, and I recall once, in reply to my inquiring how he had enjoyed his trip, his remarking: 'Disturbing, Stevens. Deeply disturbing. It does us great discredit to treat a defeated foe like this. A complete break with the traditions of this country'" (71). On a different occasion, the butler remembers that when talking about Herr Bremann, who was once in the German army, Lord Darlington's voice was "as calm and, gentle as usual, somehow resounding with intensity around those great walls" (71). Lord Darlington regards his once enemy Herr Bremann as a gentleman and believes that he fought the war to preserve justice in this world, and when the war was over, he and his enemy would have a drink together (71). The Treaty of Versailles, in Lord Darlington's eyes, has made a liar out of him to the extent that he does not know how to face his German enemies (73). The disturbance and unease of Lord Darlington result from his holding fast to "the tradition of this country", namely, the "gentleman's code". Deborah Guth argues that Lord Darlington sees international affairs as an extension of sports day at school, he treats war like a cricket match in which "fair play" and "good form" are all, denounces the Treaty of Versailles as "unbecoming" and despises the

French for being too harsh on Germany (127). In Stevens's remembering narration, Lord Darlington is presented as a humanist whose goal is to "preserve justice" in the world. The butler's agenda, according to Drąg, "is to exonerate his own passivity and political disengagement by align himself with an exemplary master, in whose better judgment he could put unconditional trust" (76). In the last episode of the novel, when talking with a stranger on the beach in Weymouth, Stevens admits that: "You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile" (243).

Another bias of memory coined by Daniel Schacter is the stereotypical bias, which occurs "when a stereotype diverges from reality in a specific instance" and can generate "inaccurate judgements and unwarranted behavior" (153). Schacter views stereotypes as "energy-saving" devices that simplify the task of comprehending social worlds for it is easier to fall back on stereotypical generalizations (153). That is to say people employ stereotypes to reduce the amount of cognitive effort. But the result is the stereotypical bias which affects what people chose to recall. Theoretically speaking, the egocentric bias is more related to one's self-evaluation whereas the stereotypical bias has more to do with the judgement on others. But in the case of Stevens, these two biases mingle together to produce a selective remembering of Lord Darlington.

What the butler puts on his master is not only his trust, but also the value of his own career. Therefore, when defending his late master, Stevens is also defending himself. This is where the self-enhancing effect of egocentric bias comes in. On the other hand, the stereotypical bias can also be seen as a congruity bias in that people select or register their memories in the remembering process that comply with particular preconceived paradigms. In the presentation of Lord Darlington, Stevens's remembering narration filters the past and foregrounds the situations which fit the adopted convenient image, namely Darlington's noble image. However, even though Stevens tries his best to preserve the paradigm he sets for Lord Darlington, certain facts fail to conform to this paradigm and therefore need to be readjusted. Stevens glosses over Darlington's involvement with the Nazis and attribute it to his master's misguided idealism.

Another paradigm Stevens tries to preserve is that of his father. Stevens has long believed that his father "was indeed the embodiment of 'dignity'" (34). Revisiting his memory, the butler chooses three episodes to demonstrate elder Stevens's greatness. Through these three stories, Stevens establish his father as a capable butler who even can serve the man who causes his own son's death. The notion of "dignity" passed down from his father to Stevens is "not to show any emotion, in fact not to feel; not to respond, never to question ones' employer, not to have an

opinion" (Guth 130).

As a narrator, Stevens deliberately selects some events from his memory to serve his purpose. But on some other occasions, the butler unconsciously choses some details to narrate while forgetting others. This unconscious selectivity of remembering narration is in accordance with "the sin of persistence" suggested by Schacter, which has been discussed in chapter two. Stevens attributes many of his actions to professional reasons, the most obvious one being his trip to visit Miss Kenton. Stevens emphasizes that: "And indeed, it was then that I felt a new resolve not to be daunted in respect to the one professional task I have entrusted myself with on this trip; that is to say, regarding Miss Kenton and our present staffing problems" (26). But in an episode concerning Miss Kenton, Stevens narrates that: "I cannot remember just what purpose had taken me up on to the top floor of the house to where the row of guest bedrooms line the corridor. But as I think I have said already, I can recall vividly the way the last of the daylight was coming through each open doorway and falling across the corridor in orange shafts. And as I walked on past those unused bedrooms, Miss Kenton's figure, a silhouette against a window within one of them, had called to me" (66). It is doubtless that Stevens was at work when he walked on the top floor of the house, but the professional reason bringing him there had been forgotten. What persisted in the butler's memory is the silhouette of Miss Kenton. This

unconsciously selective narration reveals Stevens's long hidden feelings for Miss Kenton. Therefore, if the deliberate selectivity of the butler's narration can be seen as a deconstructing process leading to self-knowledge, this unconscious selectivity in his narrative can be viewed as a window through which the reader has a glimpse of the protagonist's inner world.

It is also noteworthy that the novel is set in the same month and year, July, 1956, as the crisis. The Suez crisis refers to the diplomatic standoff that led to a joint operation by Britain and France to seize control of the Suez Canal after it was nationalized by Egypt. But the mission was eventually aborted, which subsequently dogged the reputation of the then prime minister, Anthony Eden. Anna Marie Smith has asserted that the symbolic meaning of the Suez crisis for Britain can be compared to that of "Vietnam" for the Americans (Smith 11).

At one point during the conversation at the Taylor residence, the villagers discover the fact that Stevens "knows" Mr. Eden (191), but the Suez crisis fails to find its way into the butler's narration. As Rushdie observes, the crisis is not mentioned explicitly at all in the novel, "even though the Suez debacle marked the end of a certain kind of Britain whose passing is a subject of the novel" (53). It is revealing to compare the absence of references to Suez crisis in *The Remains of the Day* to the absence of mentioning of the atomic bomb in *A Pale View of Hills*, which

is Ishiguro's first novel. Both novels are "about people whose lives have a hole in the center—lives whose meaning is defined by events that do not occur" (Coates 5). In other words, both novels are set in periods when historically important events have occurred but are not mentioned. Concerning the butler's discussion of England's greatness at the opening of his journey, the present thesis holds that Stevens intentionally chooses to "forget" the crisis, which symbolizes the decline of the once great empire.

3.2 Stevens' s Struggle Between Self-deception and Self-knowledge

In his narration, Stevens digs into his memory to choose the episodes which help to strengthen his own understandings, even when these understandings go against the public ones. The selectivity of remembering narration is in accordance with Bartlett's theory of memory as "effort after meaning". As Kathleen Wall puts it: "we select events according to a meaning we have assigned them. In order to prevent tediousness, or simply to get from A to B, we avoid paradox, confusion, difference, conflict. Thus, while we tell in order to know, the process in some ways conspires against our knowing" (38-39).

In the case of Stevens, the butler selects events concerning his father and his master, which are in tune with the image Stevens has attributed to

them. Stevens quotes several events trying to prove that his father was a butler of greatness. But the old Stevens's decline in butlerian ability is inevitable, whose fall is narrated by Stevens in an indirect and fragmented way. On the other hand, Stevens wants to maintain his master's nobility, but the fact is Lord Darlington was a Nazi sympathizer. Stevens cannot change how the public judge his late employer, therefore, the butler has to admit that Lord Darlington "has made his own mistakes". Even though Stevens attempts to enhance his understanding, the process of his selective narration works just the opposite, for it deconstructs what the butler believes to be true. Through this process, Stevens experiences an inner journey from self-deception to self-knowledge.

Concerning the deconstruction in *The Remains of the Day*, Deborah Guth once noted: "Surrounded, in the world of postmodernist literature, by the often savage play of iconoclasm and the grotesqueries of aesthetic self-derision—a rough and tumble world of endlessly self-deconstructing form—this novel rides the crest through its quietly understated inflections and its apparent serenity of form. In fact, the text's own subversive strategies mimic the reticence and decorum of a world which it disembowels almost without touching, like the façade of an old building which is left intact even as the house behind it is destroyed" (136). This deconstruction process in the novel is put forward by the selectivity of Stevens's remembering narration. The most striking example of this

deconstruction can be found in the different interpretation between Stevens and the villagers concerning the concept of "dignity".

From Stevens's perspective, "dignity" is a keep feature in the "greatness" of a butler. He quotes lines from the Hayes Society, stating that: "the most crucial criterion is that the applicant be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position. No applicant will satisfy requirements, whatever his level of accomplishments otherwise, if seen to fall short in this respect" (33). However, Stevens gives no clear definition of "dignity" at first, instead the butler selects three events concerning his father to illustrate the deeds representing the concept of dignity. Through these events, Stevens makes clear that "dignity" has something to do with not showing one's emotion or being impersonal in one's position. And he also believes that "dignity" is something one can meaningfully strive for throughout one's career (33). Later in his narration, Stevens concludes that: "'dignity' has to do crucially with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits. Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation. For such persons, being a butler is like playing some pantomime role; a small push, a slight stumble, and the facade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath. The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing. They

wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone. It is, as I say, a matter of 'dignity'" (42-44). In Stevens's opinion, "dignity" is equal to the professional self's dominant over the personal self.

This decorum controls the butler's behavior to the extent which is being questioned fiercely by Miss Kenton: "Why, Mr. Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to pretend" (154)? When discussing the definition of "dignity" with the villagers, Stevens's own concept of it has been challenged. Mr. Harry Smith, one of the villagers, states that: "Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity's something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get" (186). Mr. Harry Smith's opinion here is consistent with that of Stevens, but he later adds that: "And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to be had in being a slave. That's what we fought for and that's what we won. We won the right to be free citizens. And it's one of the privileges of being born English that no matter who you are, no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free and you're born so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me, sir" (186). This statement makes it clear that "dignity" takes its roots in being a free

individual and participating freely in the nation's political life. However, Stevens considers this idea to be "far too idealistic, far too theoretical, to deserve respect" (194). The butler believes that: "There is, after all, a real limit to how much ordinary people can learn and know, and to demand that each and every one of them contribute 'strong opinions' to the great debates of the nation cannot, surely, be wise. It is, in any case, absurd that anyone should presume to define a person's 'dignity' in these terms" (194).

Facing this conceptual challenge, Stevens intentionally selects an event intending to illustrate "rather well the real limits of whatever truth may be contained in Mr. Harry Smith's views" (194). Back on one midnight in the 1930s, Stevens was brought by Lord Darlington to a group of gentlemen who were "deep in conversation over weighty issues" (195). Stevens soon realized that he was expected to be baffled by the gentlemen's questions. Consequently, he answered all the questions concerning political issues in a parrot-like way: "I am unable to be of assistance on this matter" (195). Hearing his response, the gentlemen stated that: "we still persist with the notion that this nation's decisions be left in the hands of our good man here and to the few million others like him. Is it any wonder, saddled as we are with our present parliamentary system, that we are unable to find any solution to our many difficulties? Why, you may as well ask a committee of the mothers' union to organize

a war campaign" (196). Even though Lord Darlington himself felt sorry for putting Stevens into this humiliating scene, the butler viewed it as "a slightly uncomfortable situation" (196). This event is chosen to indicate the villagers' limitation in understanding "dignity" and enforce Stevens's own understanding of the word. However, in this episode Stevens served as a clown entertaining the gentlemen and according to the villagers, there is no dignity of being a slave.

The inconsistency between Stevens definition and his illustration helps to deconstruct his notion of "dignity". Resulted from egocentric and stereotypical bias, Stevens selects events to enhance the images of his father and his master and his understanding of certain concepts. This process can lead to a self-deception which prevents him from getting the real knowledge of his past. But when facing present challenges, including the questioning towards his master's deeds and the different notion about dignity presented by the after-war villagers, Stevens selects events which actually go against his conception. This deconstruction process leads to a kind of self-knowledge in a sense.

By comparing *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*, Drąg concludes that Stevens is confronted with situations which push him towards facing the sources of his present predicament with a degree of self-criticism (78). Though with the help of memory, Stevens tries to reconstruct his wasted life, which leads to his self-deception, there

are certain points trigger the butler's self-knowledge. Several incidents on the road, such as Mrs. Benn's (Miss Kenton) declaration that she does not want to return to Darlington hall, steer the butler's narrative towards introspection and temporarily shake him out of the pretense of self-confidence or self-deception which he projects at the start. With the benefit of hindsight, Stevens makes certain previously overlooked connections between incidents and searches for turning points: seeming trivial events which have "render[ed] whole dreams forever irredeemable" (179). Although Stevens's remembering narration continues to explain and justify his actions, it does offer the butler the chance to advance his self-knowledge. This remembering narration, according to Drąg, "becomes the site of an ongoing struggle between the desire to understand the reasons for his personal and professional defeat and the desire to deny that he has, indeed, suffered a defeat" (79).

In the end of the novel, Stevens finally gets the whole picture of his life: "Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made

my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself —what dignity is there in that" (243)? This closing confession that he was not even the agent of his own mistakes is the combination of the circumstances and of having relived his life by narrating it over the preceding days. Barry Lewis believes that this confession is an illumination for Stevens, "a recognition that he has wasted his life by blindly trusting his superior" (98). Through the struggle between self-deception and self-knowledge, the butler finally faces his personal and professional defeat. More importantly, Stevens realizes that dignity is not just a matter of putting unconditional trust on someone else, "but of feeling congruent with the self in whatever place one happens to be. It is therefore the contrary of displacement, where the self is insecure when removed from its moorings" (99).

Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the remembering narration from the perspective remembering narration strategies. Memory is not only a dominating theme in *The Remains of the Day*, but also helping to structure the plots and influence the process of narration. The present writer tries to examine the three features of remembering narration: unreliable narration, fragmented narration and selective narration. All these features have a deep root in the mechanism of memory and are reflected in Stevens's narration.

Memory is fragile, ambiguous and unreliable. The process of remembering is an essentially unreliable mechanism, which creatively reconstructs rather than faithfully reproduces past experiences. The remembering narration in the novel reveals Stevens as an unreliable narrator, quite opposite to the reliable butler. This very discrepancy between the two roles Stevens performs betrays his loss and his fear of that loss. The "loss" Stevens experiences does not only include the lost love of Miss Kenton, but also, his wasted career. One the story level, Stevens presents what seems to be an objective recount of the past, while on the discourse level, he manipulates his language and the ways in which the past is presented. The remembering narration provides a context for the mechanism of repression and defence to occur. The

mechanism of repression does not only result in Stevens's underreporting of his late master, but also lead to the butler's underreading of his own emotions. On the other hand, the mechanism of defence gives rise to Stevens's misreporting of Lord Darlington. Through this unreliable narration, the protagonist's effort to reconstruct a meaningful life can be detected.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens's remembering narration is fragmented. It illustrates the way in which memory is stored and organized. This fragmented narration is not coherent in terms of temporal sequence. Through temporal distortion, Stevens frequently jumps back from the present to the past and takes leaps among his memories. The chronological order no longer controls the sequence of the butler's narration. Instead, Stevens revisits his past and present experiences responding to his emotional need and purpose. Meanwhile, the fragmented narration indicates Stevens's hidden emotional world by repeating certain persistent memory fragments, especially those concerning his father and Miss Kenton. These persistent fragments keep haunting the butler thus betraying his sense of guilt towards his father and his repressed attraction to Miss Kenton.

The selective remembering narration is demonstrated by Stevens's choice between remembering and forgetting. In his narration, Stevens remembers certain details, especially those concerning Miss Kenton, but

he forgets some others relating to his work. This subconscious selectivity indicates that the butler's firm devotion to professionalism serves as a pretext to avoid showing his true emotion. On the other hand, the absence of mentioning the Suez crisis helps reveal Stevens's denial of admitting the decline of the British empire. The butler's choice between remembering and forgetting also indicates his struggle between self-deception and self-knowledge. Stevens makes the most of his remembering narration, attempting to deceive himself that he efforts have been put into good use, but the historical facts soon catch up, pushing him towards self-knowledge. Through this struggle, the burden of a wasted life leads the protagonist to a painful confession near the end of the novel. Stevens finally faces the truth of his life with some honesty.

The present author argues that through remembering, Stevens reveals himself as an elderly man who has wasted most part of his life possessing only "the remains of the day". The mechanisms of defence and repression embedded in the process of remembering, combining with the reconstructive and selective nature of memory demonstrates that Stevens painfully faces his wasted past and finally learns to be honest to the truth of his life.

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