



Salvaging Consciousness from the Remains of the Day: A Sartrean Analysis Günden Kalanlar Arasından Bilinci Kurtarmak: Sartrecı Bir Analiz

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Abstract

The article attempts to delve into Sartre’s main concepts in existential school of thought and trace their relevance in British modern-day fiction, particularly, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day*. The novel’s protagonist stands as the individual whose tracing of the modern dynamics is inherent in the interplay of social position and individual autonomy. The analysis seeks to underline the junction between disciplines of philosophy and literature, and notably, through Steven’s journey, to offer an interdisciplinary reading of the individual’s strife with freedom and responsibility that is emblematic of the contemporary age. The existential journey of Stevens, a devoted butler whose unshakable commitment to duty, professionalism, and the allure of the concept of dignity leads him to the exploration of self-deceit and repression of his authentic self. The title of the novel, too, captures Stevens’ struggle with his shattered sense of self and the ruins of a life given up to conform to social norms. Sartrean existentialism reveals this repression of genuine feelings and subsequent experience of emptiness. As a man deeply identified with his role, Stevens is tailor-made for this attainment and exploration of self-realization, humankind’s north pole of authenticity, as Sartrean terms, against life’s facticity. The concepts of “bad faith”, “reflective awareness”, “pre-reflective awareness”, “being-in-itself” and “being-for-itself” as well as “being-for-others” will be utilized to further trace this awakening from the clutches, and modern-day chains shackled on individual life, the exploration of the conscious self and Stevens’ consequential reclamation of the remains of the day.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, Jean-Paul Sartre, existentialism, consciousness, philosophy, British postmodern fiction.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Sartre’in varoluşçu düşünce ekolündeki temel kavramlarını irdelemeyi ve bu kavramların günümüz İngiliz romanlarından Kazuo Ishiguro’nun *Günden Kalanlar* romanındaki karşılığının izini sürmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Romanın kahramanı, toplumsal konum ve bireysel özerklik arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkiye içkin modern dinamiklerin izini süren bir birey olarak karşımıza çıkar. Bu analiz, felsefe ve edebiyat disiplinleri arasındaki kesişim noktasının altını çizmeyi amaçlamakta ve özellikle Stevens’in serüveni aracılığıyla, bireyin özgürlük ve sorumlulukla mücadelesinin modern çağda simgeleşen disiplinler arası bir okumasını sunmaktadır. Görevine, profesyonelliğe ve saygınlık kavramının albenisine sarsılmaz bir bağlılık duyan sadık uşak Stevens’in varoluşsal yolculuğu, özünde kendini kandırdığı ve gerçek benliğini bastırdığı hayatının keşfini izler. Romanın adı da Stevens’in parçalanmaya yüz tutmuş benlik duygusuyla mücadelesini ve toplumsal normlara uymak için vazgeçtiği hayatının yıkıntılarını yansıtmaktadır. Sartrecı

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varoluşçuluk, gerçek duyguların bastırılmasını ve ardından gelen bu boşluk hissini açık etmektedir. Rolüyle derinlemesine özdeşleşmiş bir adam olarak Stevens, Sartreci terimlerle hayatın olgusallığına karşı, insanoğlunun kuzey kutbu olan kendini gerçekleştirme ve keşfetme süreci için biçilmiş kaftandır. “Kendini aldatma”, “düşünüm-öncesi bilinç”, “düşünümsel bilinç”, “kendinde-varlık” ve “kendi-için-varlık” ile “başkası-için-varlık” kavramları, analiz edilen uyanışın ve modern çağın bireyi prangalayan zincirlerinden kurtulmanın, bilincin keşfinin ve bunun sonucunda Stevens’in günün kalıntılarının yeniden kazanmasının detaylı bir şekilde takibi için kullanılacaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Günden Kalanlar*, Jean-Paul Sartre, varoluşçuluk, bilinç, felsefe, Postmodern İngiliz romanı.

Introduction

Carrying overtones of the day being often associated with consciousness, the title of Kazuo Ishiguro’s 1989 novel, “The Remains of the Day”, suggests that in an individual’s confrontation and reconciliation with the social order, and especially in the case of Stevens who is a sympathetic yet clumsy character, what remains is far less than the promise of wholeness and completeness. Despite holding a powerful position as the protagonist of the novel and the narrator of his own story, he is also someone who has to be content with the remnants; that is, the remains of a whole and a life sacrificed in service for the greater, in perfect dedication to his duty. Stevens’ existential quest for self-realization is illustrated as he ponders leading a potentially authentic life in light of his past dealings and relationships with Miss Kenton who is now Mrs. Benn. Stevens exhibits acts of self-deceit by repressing his true self in order to fulfill his duties and by conforming to social standards, leaving him feeling like an empty shell. This is made evident by his unwavering dedication to his profession as a butler and his understanding of professional responsibilities that are synonymous with his reference point of the concept, or rather, the false allure of dignity. Thus, through the usage of existentialist philosophy, notably that of Sartre’s, the analysis will expand on the way in which Stevens’ existential search for authenticity and self-awareness in contrast with the deception under the guise of commitment to a professional sense of duty unfolds, and in doing so, the origin of consciousness will be traced and scrutinized. Situating the freedom of the individual in the modern dynamics behind diverse contexts -social, cultural, intellectual, etc. sheds new light on the individual’s journey in the same vein of navigating through the contemporary world and salvaging what remains from the day, the reality which the individual inadvertently finds himself in.

In the preface to the *Transcendence of the Ego*, Kirkpatrick and Williams elaborate on Sartre’s claim that consciousness, acting as the universal “revealing intuition” of existence, is innately connected with the world; that is, consciousness cannot be isolated to contemplate itself in isolation because it is always a part of the reality that already exists (1991). This notion of consciousness considered as the all-encompassing and ever-expanding light supports the reclamation of the seemingly isolated parts as remnants. These remnants bequeathed to him, and the solace of being dignified, are as much as he himself can inherit and pass on to other generations. Yet there is a whole other side of potential he turns his back to; on the one hand, there is the social mask that has been pressed down upon the working class in its dealings with the upper class, on the other hand, there is the illusion, the foundation of which is validated with each social interaction, under a tyranny of disguises, all of which are reasons why he favors the life of servitude imposed upon him. He moves from the narration of the past to that of the present moment, with his ideals, and his identification as a dignified servant mentioned as a thing of the past. In terms of the narrative, his agency is now easier to track, as is the exploration of the things left unsaid, a motif in Ishiguro’s novels, along with the actions that fall outside the call of duty and are therefore discouraged. The course of his storytelling is very much similar to a birth of a new day, the remnants of which Stevens himself will be aware and alert to; what essentially will turn out to be a testament to his claiming of willpower.

The continuous conflict and debate around the connection between philosophy and literature have been going on since the time of Plato. These instigated controversies essentially, drive from the belief that the two branches are distinct from each other. While a historical perspective might just expose the evident, intertwined nature of both disciplines; the boundaries between the two are very unclear, and even tracing back to the origin of which came first turns into a classic chicken-and-egg conundrum. This interdependence

draws attention to the contrasting roles that philosophy and literature play in society. In *Philosophy of the Novel*, Stocker draws attention to this stating that when philosophical writing engages with themes present in literary texts and forms, it inevitably reflects on the essence of philosophy, what it encompasses, and its perception of writing (2018). Philosophy uses logical argumentation to seek out fundamental truths and principles, while literature employs creativity and storytelling to address ethical questions and the human condition. Richard Shusterman makes the assertion that “philosophy, as such, would apparently require no special literary formulation ... this very same dialogue strikingly offers Plato’s most vigorous critique of writing as a mode of philosophy” (2010, p. 9) and traces its ancient dynamics beyond the realm of discourse. In spite of Plato’s adoption of a critical outlook on literature, particularly poetry and drama, in his works such as *The Republic*, –claiming that because it appeals to feelings rather than reason, it can be misleading and morally corrupt, philosophy and literature share a symbiotic relationship; they both seek to expand the limits of human understanding and existence, regardless of how it’s accomplished in different manners. In this inquiry, the interdisciplinary framework of philosophy and literature offers a mutual, nuanced relationship where the former provides a viewpoint for the exploratory tracing of philosophical concepts through a narrative, while the latter provides critical and analytical tools for a thorough examination of literary works.

Sartrean Analysis of *The Remains of the Day*

Beginning with an overview of the social and historical context surrounding post-war England where the old owner and servitude shifts with the new owner of the Darlington Hall is significant in that it sheds light into the dynamics of the old and new as well as acting as propellants that ignites Stevens’ state of existential dilemma. American gentleman, Mr. Farraday, comes to settle at Darlington Hall, a country estate, which was previously owned by Lord Darlington who during the interwar years, carries an established name in British society and has a big impact on international diplomacy. His presence, however, later turns out to be controversial due to his support for the Nazi regime in Germany. In “Myth and Mimetic Failure in ‘*The Remains of the Day*’” Monika Gehlawat traces the symptom of this deep-seated existential dilemma, the experience of alienation, and expands on its reflections on the recurring face of the theme of illusion:

The larger social implications of Stevens’s investment in myth extend not only to other individuals who are likewise alienated but also to the particular context of the novel’s setting. The historical backdrop of World War II, the rise of fascism and Hitler’s political influence go beyond demonstrating Lord Darlington’s (and consequently Stevens’s) complicity with the Nazis and the Holocaust. Specifically, this context reflects the totalitarian impulse that sustains Stevens’s objectification of the great butler as well as the far-reaching dangers of this submission to myth. (2013, p. 517)

Thus, the backdrop draws attention to the underlying authoritarian hints that support Stevens’s idealized portrayal of the classic butler and puts emphasis on the grave consequences associated with such blind commitment to what could essentially be called, a myth: “[t]he postmodern ironies of *Remains* are based on the concentration on an individual epistemology that can upset ‘myth’ only in the form of individual delusion and regret” (Ekelund, 2005, p. 6). Along with this illusory ideology, the prevailing social standards and ideals of a time span covering the early to mid-twentieth century are wrapped by the flashbacks of Stevens’ narration and are rather nostalgic in nature. Driven by his idealism and dignity, Stevens finds that he is forced to leave the people he loves, such as his father and Miss Kenton, and voluntarily adopts a sense of community symbolized by the pronoun ‘we’ into which he willingly disappears; a community that includes not only a generation of servants, but also a class that appropriates his labor and emotional bonds (Fluet, 2007, pp. 266-267). The experience of alienation and its further tracing is found to possess social reverberations of Stevens’ original sense of belonging. The ways in which Stevens’ behaviors, choices, viewpoint, eventual existential crises, and narrative come to unveil are heavily influenced by these social structures, cultural norms, and standards present at the time.

Continuing with a background on existentialism and Sartrean philosophy, the key existentialist concepts such as freedom, subjectivity, absurdity and their relation to the novel, notably, the character of Stevens are significant in that they are the very tools for the threading of the existential quest of the protagonist. There takes place the transformation into a state of being he is conscious and responsible for the life he leads, knowing and accepting his place in the world, and the unknown that lay beyond. In *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, Iris Murdoch bridges the gap between the psychosocial background and the development of the existential line of thought in post-war Europe that was in ruins, asserting that mankind had now survived from an indefinite imprisonment, and everything had to be rebuilt. Many who believed that they could create a better society out of all this chaos and suffering found inspiration in Sartre's thought because of the possibility it offered. The new religion and way to salvation was existentialism (1999). At the core of Sartre's philosophy is the belief that "existence precedes essence", thus, subjectivity is the main point of reference for the modern individual. In his *Existentialism is a Humanism*, he talks of "two kinds of existentialists: on one hand, the Christians, among whom I would include Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both professed Catholics; and, on the other, the atheistic existentialists, among whom we should place Heidegger, as well as the French existentialists and myself" (2007, p. 20). This concept of existentialism as a humanism needs to be expounded on in that it is "more than that metaphysical and psychological theory ... Existentialism is the ethical theory that we ought to treat this structure of human existence as intrinsically valuable and as the foundation of all other values" (Webber, 2018, p. 11). In this regard, within the historical background of the philosophical movement, its connection and relevance to the novel, the particular outcome to be reached utilizing this framework in Ishiguro's novel is elucidated through an interdisciplinary probing into the depths of the protagonist's psyche and shedding light on his awakening to his subjectivity, agency and the reclamation of the remains of the day.

Sartre's main concepts from *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*¹ such as bad faith (self-illusion and denying the fundamental and inherent freedom by taking on social roles, or valuing the external expectation over that of the internal) in contrast with authenticity (human freedom to be attained against facticity –unchangeable circumstances, birth, past actions), etc, are relevant in this claim. Michel Terestchenko (2007) traces Stevens as a character who is emblematic of Sartre's famous concept, "bad faith" in "the way in which an individual alienates his or her freedom for the benefit of his or her social function. Stevens plays this part perfectly, especially since his self-alienation is raised to the degree of a virtue" (p. 78). He maintains that Stevens' case is more dangerous than a servant-master dynamic might suggest as "he emerges as a servile and obedient person, all the more ready to follow destructive orders because he has elevated renunciation of the self, absence from his true self, ideologically, to the rank of virtue" (p. 87). Freedom, in the Sartrean sense, is mentioned as the first condition of action; human beings are fated to be free, innately inside their own project of freedom and navigating responsibilities that arise from the choices they make, the essential side to human existence. These concepts are relevant for this existential psychoanalysis, a tracing of Stevens' unconscious to conscious choices, where the foundations of authenticity are being laid.

Building on this claim, Stevens' exploration as an existential protagonist follows with the analysis of the instances in the novel where he exhibits unwavering dedication to his role as a butler, as well as his complete identification with his professional duty and his adherence to it. For Ishiguro, Stevens displays this through "suppression of emotion,' his use of 'memory' to 'trip' himself up or to 'hide' from himself and his past" (Shaffer, 1998, p. 64). The examples from the novel illustrating his dedication, and the impact they have in the formation of his sense of self are significant in that they will then be utilized as a groundwork for the character's indulgence in self-deception within this social place and role assigned to him through his family. Relatedly, Rob Atkinson traces the modern-day reflections under the tragic outcomes of having flawed professional visions and claims that a close reading of the novel "reveals a mediating, tragic vision of professionalism, somewhere between the perfectionist and the nihilistic. It is a professionalism that accepts the imperfection-indeed, the imperfectibility-of both individuals and institutions without rejecting the possibility of virtuous professional lives and cultures" (1995, p. 180). At the beginning of the novel,

¹ The following explanations are from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*.

Stevens begins with the following internal inquires: “this whole question is very akin to the question that has caused much debate in our profession over the years: what is a ‘great’ butler?” His rather intellectual exploration of the concept follows suit analytically as he states “you will notice I say ‘what’ rather than ‘who’ is a great butler” (Ishiguro, 1999, p. 29) and ponders further for the definition for this puzzling question, which then continues with the recurrent mentions of the concept of “dignity” (1999, 33) that take shape in different depths and meanings of the word. Upon finding himself “off duty”, Stevens recounts his experience when Miss Kenton barges into his space, critiquing that no butler should allow themselves to be “off duty” when others are involved. Continuing to state that:

A butler of any quality must be seen to inhabit his role, utterly and fully; he cannot be seen casting it aside one moment simply to don it again the next as though it were nothing more than a pantomime costume. There is one situation and one situation only in which a butler who cares about his dignity may feel free to unburden himself of his role; that is to say, when he is entirely alone. You will appreciate then that in the event of Miss Kenton bursting in at a time when I had presumed, not unreasonably, that I was to be alone, it came to be a crucial matter of principle, a matter indeed of dignity, that I did not appear in anything less than my full and proper role. (Ishiguro, 1999, p. 178)

These instances in the novel where Stevens suppresses his authentic self and compromises his authenticity for the sake of duty lead to the point of anagnorisis and catharsis where he skins down with a sense of hollowness. The following assertion traces Stevens’ catharsis in reference to his strict code of professionalism: “his memory, directed at forgetting, forces him to conceal and deny his emotional personality. The fundamental oversight is that Stevens’ narration rests on his fragile memory, despite some of its blocking and backshadowing potential. In compensation, however, for the first time, he narrates his true feelings and emotions as a catharsis of his repressed life” (Süt Güngör, 2023, p. 65). Through the course of events, he comes to realize the shell of protection he has built around himself and living his life true to his emotions and desires. By pledging himself to the security and validation of greater authority, that of his masters, he is left with a sense of self-deception and the loss of dignity and integrity, the very thing he has consciously sought.

In line with this fall, or rise, as it can be stated from a relative and alternate point of view, the tracing of Stevens’ existential angst and his search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world is evidenced by further internal conflicts and dilemmas faced by Stevens throughout the narrative. The existentialist threads in Stevens’ journey and character evolution are investigated through an examination of Ishiguro’s use of narrative devices, laying the groundwork for the tracing of existentialism throughout the novel. The ultimate and consequential assertion of individuality in Stevens’ case echoes Nietzsche’s call to “will to power”. This is particularly conspicuous in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, where he speaks under the guise of Zarathustra: “Wherever I found a living thing, there found I Will to Power; and even in the will of the servant found I the will to be master. That to the stronger the weaker shall serve—thereto persuadeth he his will who would be master over a still weaker one. That delight alone he is unwilling to forego” (2006, p. 124). Both Sartre’s notion of human freedom and Nietzsche’s “will to power” point to an innate need to make oneself known. According to Nietzsche, all entities—including those in service—aspire to power and dominance. In a similar vein, Sartre supports his claim that despite the limitations imposed upon them, people always exercise their freedom of choice. The two philosophies emphasize the ever-present demand for individual sovereignty and self-control.

Furthermore, the concept of “existence precedes essence” as well as the interplay between Sartrean concepts of “being-for-itself” and “being-in-itself” will be traced within the framework of Steven’s claiming of autonomy. Steven Crowell in his article “Sartre’s Existentialism and the Nature of Consciousness” states that “human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of human being is suspended in his freedom” (*BN*, p. 60). The existential slogan that “existence precedes essence” derives from the nature of consciousness as freedom. Selfhood is thus nothing substantial but is, as Sartre noted in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, “performance” (p. 94) (2012, p. 244). Emphasizing human freedom before any

kind of fixed identity or essence, the concept offers insight into Stevens' identification as a butler and his further realization of things beyond the scope of his work as the narrative goes on. This is consistent with Sartre's theory that the fact of our existence occurs before any set notion of who we are. Stevens' journey, in this framework, illustrates how he goes from being constrained by social norms to developing into an autonomous individual whose identity is molded by his freedom to make his own decisions. Stevens' journey of self-realization with particular emphasis on his reflections on his past actions, relationships, and evolving sense of self-awareness offers significant insights to this reading through a Sartrean lens.

From the moment of starting out into the journey, as the narrative recounts the ticks of the clock of time, some mention of regret and sorrow seep into the words. Becoming aware of the consequences of his previous actions and choices on his current circumstances, Stevens laments the vast array of opportunities lost to his past consciousness: "Miss Kenton; an infinite number of further opportunities in which to remedy the effect of this or that misunderstanding. There was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such evidently small incidents would render whole dreams forever irredeemable" (Ishiguro, 1999, p. 188). Moments of introspection as well as the protagonist's pivotal interactions with Miss Kenton act as a catalyst for the discovery of this authenticity, and their influence on Stevens' perception of himself. According to Sartre, reflective awareness is conscious introspection where the "I" (as consciousness) stands out as the one who is identified as having the experiences whereas pre-reflective awareness is a more immanent experience of consciousness before reflection, the "I" is not existent and does not identify itself with the experiences (Crowell 2012, p. 236). At the beginning of the novel, Stevens displays a pre-reflective awareness, fully immersing himself in his role as a servant and putting the ideals of service and loyalty above all else. He embodies his role as the one who serves and accordingly performs his duties and actions without a conscious discernment and the self-introspective "I" reflecting on them. With respect to the figurative reading of the remnants of the day in the introduction, he comes out of this state when he starts being active and agent, instead of perceiving himself as an object operating in an unconscious state. As the story unfolds, Stevens begins to experience instances of reflective awareness as he reflects on his past experiences and engages with other characters, particularly Miss Kenton. Increasingly aware of the decisions inconsistent with himself and his latent self-deceit, the transition discloses Stevens' intricate process of consciousness and self-awareness. In one of these encounters, looking back, the two characters converse as follows: "Do you realize, Mr Stevens, how much it would have meant to me if you had thought to share your feelings last year? You knew how upset I was when my girls were dismissed. Do you realize how much it would have helped me? Why, Mr Stevens, *why, why, why do you always have to pretend?*" (Ishiguro, 1999, 162, emphasis added). Afterward, Miss Kenton laments the isolation she experienced when she was working with Stevens and discloses that she suffered from emotional disconnection. On a deeper level, this disconnection points to Stevens' social mask and the element of pretense inherent in the nature of his actions.

In encountering and delving into the matters in depth and revealing their buried feelings for one another, Miss Kenton cracks another dimension of authenticity in Stevens' consciousness when she touches on the hollowness of situations in her everyday life. She mentions that she is often filled with an immediate sense of regret and she questions whether she has made terrible mistakes with her life, yet how she soon recovers catching sight of her new reality, husband and child. After pausing for a while, Stevens internally voices: "it took me a moment or two to fully digest these words of Miss Kenton. Moreover, as you might appreciate, their implications were such as to provoke a certain degree of sorrow within me. Indeed –why should I not admit it?– at that moment, my heart was breaking" (1999, p. 251). These situations challenge his rigid commitment to professional norms and force him to contemplate the sacrifices he has made for the sake of his duty. Stevens gradually confronts his own ideals and goals, accepts that there may be a life beyond servitude, and realizes his power to forge his own path in life. Amidst the concluding remarks, Stevens reveals the present outlook and viewpoint he adopts towards life, it remains to be seen whether it is merely a consolation, deluding himself and renouncing the power of choice once again, or is it an integration where he takes responsibility of his previous actions:

After all, what can we ever gain in forever looking back and blaming ourselves if our lives have not turned out quite as we might have wished? The hard reality is, surely that for the likes of you and I there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world what employ our services. What is the point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took? Surely it is enough that the likes of you and I at least try to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy. And if some of us are prepared to sacrifice much in life in order to pursue such aspirations, surely that is in itself, whatever the outcome, cause for pride and contentment. (1999, p. 256)

Beyond Stevens' justification of his decisions in life and the social constrictions he encounters, it is clear that he thinks that dwelling on the past and holding oneself responsible for life's setbacks is fruitless as it won't alter the present or the future. For the people who share the same servant position as him, Stevens acknowledges the harsh truth that their lives are mostly dictated by the choices made by their employers, the "great gentlemen of this world." He stresses a personal ethics of duty and professionalism and argues that it serves the purpose of trying to make a meaningful contribution within one's limited area of influence rather than obsessing over what could have been done differently. Therefore, in the process of self-exploration and autonomy, Ishiguro's account of Stevens' journey reveals the potential for transformation of both pre-reflective insight and reflective introspection.

Another significant concept of Sartre's in this exploration is "*le regard*". "The look" is essentially the occasion where one is seen by another person and objectified by that individual. There, a tension arises between the individual's sense of self and the other's perception of the individual himself: "The Look", for Sartre, demonstrates how the self gains thematic awareness of the body, forming a public and self-conscious sense of how the body appears to others and, furthermore, illustrates affective and social aspects of embodied being" (Dolezal 2012, p. 9). Within this slippery slope involving the interplay of subjectivity and objectivity, Sartre suggests embodying both viewpoints. Being-for-others, then, (how we exist in relation to others) is introduced in this context as the net, or rather as Sartre puts it "the reef of solipsism". He then explores the concept that mediates between the gaze within the context of consciousness and intersubjectivity and concludes that others are significant in the relations through which one can improve one's own self-perception and behavior. In a similar vein, in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Kauffman states that "Toward the end of *L'être et le néant* Sartre argues that it is man's basic wish to fuse his openness and freedom with the impermeability of things, to achieve a state of being in which the *en-soi* [being-in-itself] and *pour-soi* [being-for-itself] are synthesized" (1975, p. 52). It is Stevens' encounter with the outside world and his conversations with Miss Kenton that serve as the call for gaining self-consciousness.

It is true that others exist and their perception can be a trap for the individual, the mere focalization of which could be unnerving, as Sartre himself famously put it in his play *No Exit*: "Hell is—other people!" (1944, p. 26), but it collaterally proves to be so for the individual, taking the shape of the trap of solipsism. Sartre's solution is the embodiment of both dynamics, being the object and the subject. This is supported by Haddour in the collection of essays titled *Reading Sartre: On Phenomenology and Existentialism*:

It is not in some 'hiding-place', Sartre writes, 'that we will discover our 'selves; it is on the road, in the town, in the midst of the crowd, a thing among things, a man among men' (IHP: 5) ... According to Sartre, we discover ourselves not through introspection but by looking outside; 'everything is finally outside', he asserts, 'everything, even including ourselves. Outside, in the world, among others'. (2011, p. 73)

This is exactly what ends up unfolding for Stevens, for along the ride with retrospective flashbacks belonging to his past, he takes a trip where comes to confront it. As he leaves his "hiding place" of Darlington Hall, the fragments of his self return to him in the form of memories and realizations as he travels. The farther he goes, the more he reconnects with the familiar, conscious voice of his narrative and traces the distant memories that now feel foreign to him. Collaterally, Scherzinger refers to this trip to Miss Kenton as "a form

of ‘passage’ – it is a pilgrimage; a rite of passage. The country lanes that Stevens travels along are described as tunnels and conduits that vividly recall the corridors of Darlington; ... they become the physical structures down which Stevens must pass as he moves toward self-knowledge, however qualified” (2004, p. 2). As he passes through these landmarks he reflects on them. This dynamic exposes how the external experience frames his internal processes. Pursuing this line of thought, Stevens looks back at the possibilities of the past and admits that he has wondered what might have taken place had he not been so resolute on the nature of their evening encounters with Miss Kenton, conceding: “I was perhaps not entirely aware of the full implications of what I was doing. Indeed, it might even be said that this small decision of mine constituted something of a key turning point; that that decision set things on an inevitable course towards what eventually happened” (Ishiguro, 1999, 127). Thus, the embodiment of both self-introspection for Stevens, along with his conversations with Lord Darlington, his current master Mr. Farraday, and Miss Kenton reveal an aspect of his consciousness, acting as mirrors offer the required kind of information, the former coming from the self, and the latter attained intersubjectively for his evolution.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis explores in detail the existential odyssey of the main character, Stevens, against the backdrop of post-World War II Britain. Stevens’ progressive experience of a metamorphosis follows as he identifies himself as the butler with an unshakable commitment to his duties and in complete compliance with social traditions. Stevens evolves during Ishiguro’s story from a man bound by duty to a person who struggles with the intricacies of autonomy and self-awareness. This exploration stresses Stevens’ transition from a state of pre-reflective awareness, in which he is deeply involved in his role, to a state of reflective awareness, in which he questions the legitimacy of his decisions and goals. Towards the end of the novel Stevens comes to utter the following words that reveal the true transformation of what comes to be and talks of Lord Darlington, a man whose reputation is ruined on the political account of him being a sympathizer of the Nazi. He recounts in retrospect that he trusted Lord Darlington because he was brave enough to choose his own path, however mistaken it may have been: [a]s for myself” he continues “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?” (Ishiguro, 1999, p. 256) Through his attained mask and the life that has been decided for him, the identity he inhabits unconsciously is one that he exercises “bad faith” in the sense that he is attached to his role as a servant, a butler who is after impeccability. In this vein, he forsakes the nature of his individuality, his wishes and desires that propel him to live his life and exist freely in accordance with his choices. The realization he comes to have about his inauthenticity fosters the courage for the sincerity of his self-inquiry, that for a considerable amount of his life, he believed that his consciousness was a mere shadow hiding behind another robust identity, a figure of authority, renouncing all power of free will and autonomy. A Sartrean reading of Ishiguro’s character Stevens offers a window where one can observe the master-slave, subject-object relationship and delve into the servanthood and what resonances it has for the modern-day individual, where the discourse around economics and social class seeps so insidiously into one’s personal life. It holds ever more significance, then, to pursue the modern dynamics and reclaim one’s individual freedom and autonomy from the clutches of the remains of the day.

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