

Butler in Action: The Base of Darlington Hall in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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ABSTRACT

*This paper probes into the life of Stevens, a butler in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), and explores the intricate social contrasts of post-war British society through his working-class experiences. This paper employs Raymond Williams's theory of the Marxist base and superstructure to investigate the protagonist's plight as a laborer in the sophisticated circle. This paper illustrates the prevailing economic and cultural dynamics of aristocratic society through a rigorous analysis of the reflective narrative of domestic help. It analyses Stevens as the working base and his high-profile employers as the superstructure embodying the societal, cultural, and political establishments. Scrutinizing Stevens's unwavering professionalism and dignity in upholding the standards of Darlington Hall, this paper examines his butlering ideology as part of an unacknowledged English culture, reflecting the deep social pyramid. It uncovers how Butler's significant role and his sacrifices in hosting international political meetings at Darlington Hall are implicitly labelled as a trivial task. As Stevens starts to change his professional philosophy, this paper explores his transformation from a workaholic to an individual with agency. Shedding light on the British social chasm through a base and superstructural framework, this paper reveals Butler's unconscious longing to resist the dominant ideology. It argues that Stevens transcends his subservient role through his reminiscences, commitments, and gradual personal progression, ultimately confronting the remnants of his future.*

Keywords: *Class, culture ideology, labor, professionalism, social hierarchy.*

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INTRODUCTION

The British Class Divide: Exploring Butlering Culture in *The Remains of the Day*

This paper elaborates on Kazuo Ishiguro's hero in the novel *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens, who spends his entire life satisfying the demands of his employers and striving for acceptance in the list of great butlers. His butlering job makes him a protagonist who embodies profound subservience within the British class hierarchy with a firm commitment to professional dignity, resulting in his nullified personal integrity. He works tirelessly to meet the expectations of both his old and new employers. Throughout the novel, Stevens desires to be a great butler and does not wish for anything more. The butler profession, passed down from his father's generation, is the only lucrative job for people like him who have lived under the roofs of grand halls, serving the British political aristocrats. Darlington Hall becomes his dignified workplace and a revered establishment that he serves with the utmost dedication and care. His schedule starts with the morning management of the Hall, includes an afternoon of staff management, and ends with a professional chat with Ms. Kenton, the head housemaid at Darlington. Service and management are his top priorities and his only forte. His dedication to his work overshadows his individual being within the grand setting he so dearly serves. The present scenario posits him in a situation where he gets a chance to leave his work and travel solely in the countryside. Farraday, Stevens's new American boss, has provided this rare opportunity to spend some quality time in the country. When the new employer suggests taking a break from work, he replies, "It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls" (Ishiguro, 1989, p.4). Steven's marginal existence throughout is the yearning to be a great butler, maintaining the standard of the house for distinguished politicians, literary figures, and renowned personalities. What remains of his life, segregating the house, is the novel *The Remains of the Day*. Subsequently, this paper focuses on how Stevens's identity as a butler encapsulates the complex dynamics of base and superstructure within the social, cultural, and political ladder of post-war British society.

As Raymond Williams (1977) suggests in his Marxist cultural analysis, Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* becomes "the determining base" (p.75) representing the working-class productive forces, and his employers become "the determined superstructure" (p.75) representing ideology, law, culture, and politics. Williams's analysis moves beyond the traditional Marxist claim presented in *A Preface to The Critique of Political Economy*, published in 1859, that the economic or the productive base conditions the ideological,

cultural, and political superstructure. He reframes the base not as a static force having only a linear connection, but as a social structure that is continually in a dialectic relation with its counterpart. Williams claims the base as “mode of production at a particular stage of its development” that is continuously shaped by “specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process” (Williams, 2018). Consequently, this approach allows the examination that Stevens’s labor is rooted in ongoing class relations and “that the base is the more important concept to look at if we are to understand the realities of cultural process” (Williams, 2018). Williams’s framework establishes culture and ideology as foregrounds driving the social hierarchy. Stevens’s glorification of dignity serves the hegemonic ideology of the British superstructure. However, these cultural and ideological drivers bestow space for resistance and transformation, as seen in Stevens’s gradual personal progression and emerging awareness of his subservience.

This novel presents the British culture of butlers, valets, and the maid service system. Ishiguro shows a nation divided into sophisticated ladies and gentlemen who own the economy and political power, and the workers who produce labor facilities to maintain the grand houses and workplaces. The contribution of both classes maintains the Englishness of British social disparity, and Stevens’s role within this division invites a critical rendezvous with existing scholarly elucidations, especially those that inspect class, hierarchy, professionalism, servitude, culture, and ideology in *The Remains of the Day*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Current literature on *The Remains of the Day* explores themes of professionalism, dignity, social and cultural ladder, English butlering customs, conflicting loyalty, and Stevens’s role in the major conferences hosted in Darlington Hall, which foregrounded British pre-war political choices. This paper gives credit to the existing scholarship on the explored themes and adds novelty through how the profession of butlering reflects the British class divide, intertwining issues of labor, base/superstructure ideology, and identity.

Akbay (2022) explores the lofty idea of dignity and claims that Butler’s existence as the senior-most staff in a domestic house helps reflect high poise and values of an idyllic gentleman. Dignity is inherent for Stevens, and he gets it from his father, whose acquaintance with British households’ “high culture” (Jameson, 2018) hones him as a skilled and dedicated butler. On the contrary, Atkinson (1995) argues that Stevens and his father’s character are full

of flawed professional visions, causing a lack of agency. The servitude attitude of revering loyalty towards the powerful delays the possibility of working-class resistance, which Stevens realizes in his late life.

Atkinson (1995) further explores a nuanced professional ethic through opposing approaches presented by Butler's colleague, Miss Kenton. He comments that Miss Kenton's loyalty towards the two Jewish maids, Ruth and Sarah, showcases her direct moral responsibility towards the girls, and referring to them by their first names invokes her long, personal relationship with them. She defies the rules whenever needed and speaks in support of her two Jewish staff when Lord Darlington tries to fire them to satisfy the expectations of his Nazi allies. Contrastingly, Stevens turns a blind eye to what Kenton is trying to represent and submerges solely in the disciplinary acts. Her professional standpoint strengthens her working-class agency, allowing her free will and autonomy to leave the distinguished household and marry Mr. Benn to live a life without domination.

Tamaya (1992) elaborates on Stevens's relationship with his employers, which weaves the intricate British class system and comments, "Stevens's self-abnegation in the service of his master reverberates with larger implications about British politics, culture, and society" (pp.45-46). Stevens believes that his lordship's multifarious job of creating a bridge between the world's great nations is the mission that only Lord Darlington could carry out. Tamaya criticizes Lord Darlington's duplicity when it comes to supporting the German allies. Stevens's defensive stand on the master's contribution to English heritage and culture completely contrasts the hegemonic agent of the English hub who unapologetically "believes that the world should properly be divided into two classes: the strong and the weak, leaders and followers, masters and servants" (p.51). His adherence to Hitler's anti-Jewish campaign clarifies his beliefs on maintaining the hierarchy of the world between the powerful and the powerless, which is explicitly embedded in British culture and history.

Similarly, McPherson (1990) argues about Stevens's butler identity as someone who only sits by the window and observes. McPherson's view undermines Stevens's workaholic attitude, as he is not a static character but the head of the household management team. He builds up the standard of the hall at the expense of his own being, sacrificing his personal duty and life, but does not get any role in history-making as the Lord who hosts an international conference. Furthermore, Westerman (2004) comments on Stevens's concept of butlers serving for a greater national purpose as "Butlers produce and order the houses that take on the whole meaning of England" (p.161). Stevens is defined by the house and "sees and

writes Nation with a convenient blindness to class; at the same time, he displays an absolute obedience to class, through his meticulous participation in the hierarchy of the service system” (p.160). Westerman (2004) notes on “butlering” as a prominent part of English culture that heightens the structured social pyramid. Though Stevens considers himself and others like him as contributors to English society, helping to maintain the rich heritage of his country, they become the agents of social hierarchy and class division.

Wong (2005), in her paper Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* explores Stevens’s journey as a deeper introspective one. Her comment on Stevens’s “odious and cold” (p.499) reaction towards his personal life reflects the anguish of his unchallenged devotion to servitude. Though Stevens might have played a very insignificant and wrong role in promoting Lord Darlington’s actions supporting Nazi agendas, as Wong comments about his character, the portrayal of Butler in economically and socially divided English culture can be analyzed both sympathetically and critically. Stevens’s tendency to prioritize duty over personal fulfillment grapples with regret, repression, and gradually evolving with self-awareness. On the contrary, Alamri (2022) comments on Butler’s views regarding his master’s alliance with Germany and writes “...there is nothing ‘undignified’ in such attitude if the employer embodies what is noble, admirable, and wise, to bestow him the best of their energy and service” (p.36). Both critics scrutinize Stevens’s favoring of Lord Darlington’s political philosophy and agendas; however, the favoring in his nostalgia ultimately results in resentment, paving the way for his autonomy.

Trimm (2005) states that understanding Darlington Hall and the servants requires a meticulous examination against the colonial or globalized context of Britain’s history in the 1920s and 1930s that reflects postwar and postimperial shifts, declining social hierarchies, the rise of the welfare state, and Britain’s loss of imperial power. Stevens’s life as a butler is challenged by global political transformation as his old master, Lord Darlington’s, nervous dealings with international delegates reflect the decline of the British aristocracy and the rise of new powers like America. The grandiosity of Darlington Hall has been transformed into a house of an American retiree, Mr. Farraday, who, in comparison to the Lord, seems flexible and provides the holiday opportunity to Stevens. Thus, the introspection of Stevens’s character and the understanding of his nostalgia greatly depend upon the historical and political background of the novel. From the exaggeration of dignity and professional duty to the post-imperialistic globalized world, this insignificant servant raises diverse discourses on British political and economic history.

The recent literature on Ishiguro's narrative sheds light on Stevens's role as a butler, elaborating on his relationship with his employers and focusing on social hierarchy, professionalism, and class. The current reviews focused on catastrophic costs of blemished vision, consequences of policymaking, ethos, and immediate results of activities. Butlers serve for national interest, and framed professionalism. Revolutionary working-class ideologies, as shown by Miss Kenton that completely contrast with Stevens's beliefs. International relations between the sophisticated Britishers and the world powers are one of the highlights presented in works of scholarly writing. Adding novelty to the present literature, this paper proposes to critically examine the novel by shifting the analytical focus from individual traits, professional dignity, and broad historical trends to the structural and dialectical relationship between the economic base and cultural-political superstructure. Williams's framework positions Stevens not merely as a dignified or flawed individual but as a constituent of the working-class "base" whose labor materially sustains the aristocratic and political "superstructure," thereby revealing the interdependence and tensions between labor and power. This paper emphasizes the dynamic and complex interplay within and between base and superstructure, including how culture, ideology, and lived social relations incessantly shape and reshape one another. Focusing on the dialectic relationship, this paper analyses Stevens's role in revealing the socio-cultural mechanisms sustaining class divisions and bestowing a point of departure from existing stances, illuminating further exploration regarding ideological resistance, class dynamics, and labor relations.

Theoretical Framework

This paper analyses Butler's goal to be a splendid professional as the working-class unconscious ideology of satisfying the demands of the superstructure, employing a qualitative and interpretive approach. This paper closely reads Stevens's nostalgic narrative and traces textual evidence to apply Raymond Williams's Base and Superstructure theory, examining the butler's role as a working-class figure and revealing class dynamics, labor relations, and social hierarchies.

Marxist cultural theory defines working-class "productive forces" as the base, and the ideology, culture, and politics are categorized as the superstructural forces. Marx's base and superstructure framework explains that in society, people naturally enter specific production relationships based on the development of material productive forces. These relationships "constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness"

(Marx, Preface, 1993). He views that the ideological systems like law, politics, religion, and culture reflect and support the economic base. Marx (1993) claims that at a certain stage of development, “the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production” and the relation between the structures starts to tussle, resulting in their own “fetters”. This becomes the beginning of a social revolution. Therefore, Marx asserts that “The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure” (Preface, 1993). Thus, the relationship between the base and superstructure resides in interdependence, whether by reflecting or contrasting each other, and forms a social consciousness.

Raymond Williams expands Marx’s view on the base and superstructure and provides a cultural meaning to the dialectical relation between the structures. He moves beyond materialistic and economic determination and argues that only the base does not drive the superstructure, but advocates a dynamic interplay where the superstructure, especially culture, can influence the base. Williams (2018) certainly prioritizes base as an important concept to look at and vouches for “the relationship between the base and the superstructure is not supposed to be direct, nor simply operationally subject to lags and complications and indirectness, but that of its nature it is not direct reproduction” (p.1339). He argues that giving the base certain unchanging qualities and then expecting the superstructure to always follow or reflect those exactly becomes a flawed analysis. He proposes the revaluation of both the structures “towards the setting of limits and the exertion of pressure, and away from a predicted, prefigured and controlled content” (p.39). For Williams, culture becomes a material practice integral to both structures. He presents similar views on ideology that are not confined to the superstructure, as it plays an active role in shaping social consciousness. William draws on the hegemonic ideology introduced by Antonio Gramsci, referring to its operation across base and superstructure, embedding dominant ideologies in cultural practices. He confirms that hegemony is not to be understood as the mere tool of manipulation but is “organized and lived” (p.1342) in real social and cultural “practices and expectations” (p.1343). Hegemony for Williams is more than an abstract concept that drives both base and superstructure. He takes it as a compilation of meanings and values that help in the constitution of “a sense of reality for most people in the society” (p.1343). Therefore, Williams emphasizes a reciprocal, fluid relationship between the base and superstructure constituted by hegemonic ideology, where class, culture, and ideology become material practices that both reflect and influence economic conditions.

Williams's Base/Superstructure framework helps in analyzing how Stevens's professional life and personal regrets are driven by and contribute to the sustainability of the English culture and class hierarchy in *The Remains of the Day*. It creates a space for examining Butler's deferred realization, highlighting his unconscious ideology to serve the hegemonic superstructure that undermines the working-class agency. Williams's (1997) "proposition of base and superstructure, with its figurative element, with its suggestion of a fixed and definite spatial relationship" (p.75) allows access to draw out the tension and relation between Stevens and the dominant social order, disclosing how his attempts in cloaking the exploitative cultural and political agents finally make him comprehend and transcend the class distinctions in the British political setting of the 1920s-1950s.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyses Stevens as a representative of the working-class labor force whose professional ethos and personal experiences both sustain and are shaped by the aristocratic and political superstructure. The interpretation traces Stevens's nostalgic journey of self-reflection, highlighting his untiring professionalism, English social hierarchy, and gradual recognition of the ideological frameworks that have controlled his agency. It uncovers how Stevens exemplifies both the continuity and the tensions within class relations, cultural identity, and ideological change. This section begins with an exploration of Stevens's nostalgic narrative events, followed by an examination of his servitude as the sustaining base of Darlington Hall. Next, it analyzes Stevens's association with aristocracy and the ideological implications of his labor relations. The section then discusses the interconnected and dynamic relationship between the economic base and moral superstructure as theorized by Raymond Williams. Except for the first section that heavily adheres to the life events of Stevens, the following sections amalgamate textual evidence with Williams's Marxist theoretical support.

The Butler Beyond Alienation and Nostalgic Narrator

Stevens resonates with his central themes of nostalgia within a certain historical time frame. The nostalgic narrator takes the readers to his world where he explores his belief system and relationship with his father, colleagues, and strangers that he meets along the way. Stevens's journey happens in isolation. Throughout, he dignifies himself, believing that everything he did was for a greater whole. However, the ground reality is that he represents a certain class in British society. He belongs to the production department to serve the rich and superior. His

work defines him, and, in the process, he forgets to work for his inner being. This research reveals that Stevens's role offers prospects for analyzing Ishiguro's novel through the Marxist lens of class, base, and superstructure, as conceptualized by Raymond Williams.

Stevens embarks on a leisurely journey that takes him to his past and reflects on his future. In his nostalgia and at present, he is the representative of a dedicated working-class base whose unprecedented devotion and labor have helped constitute the powerful cultural and political entity represented by Lord Darlington and the American boss. The contributions made by the working class in post-war British society highlight the prevalent class dynamics, cultural, economic, and social hierarchy. Sustaining social order, the butler gradually moves towards a postponed epiphany of working-class revolutionary ideology and plans his future, learning lessons from his past.

Maintaining flawless professional etiquette is a supreme quality that English Butlers like Stevens and his colleagues must possess. Their utmost priority revolves around maintaining "distinguished households" (Ishiguro, 1989) for their masters, whose dealings in politics and business helped form a cultural entity in the post-war British settings. At the beginning of the novel, Stevens's new American employer, who seems quite liberal, banters him, saying, "You fellows, you're always locked up in these big Houses helping out, how do you ever get to see around this beautiful country of yours?" (Ishiguro, 1989) and offers to take a few days' vacation during his business visit to America. The helping out butlers and maids have minimal real-life exposure outside their professional lives. The Butler is in shock, as this kind of offer has never appeared in his lifetime, certainly not under Lord Darlington's ownership. This professional offer has shaken him in such a way that he realizes it has been a long time since he last entered the real world, leaving the hall behind. Nevertheless, the dignified hero defends himself, opining that they are the ones who have visited most of England's places as they worked in houses around the country, "where the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered" (Ishiguro, 1989). Even though the offer was tempting to him, he prioritizes work and employment ethics over all personal matters.

Owing to Butler's contribution, his role at Darlington Hall conceals all other aspects of his existence. Whether under the sophisticated British owner or the representative of the new superpower America, the butler does not move out of his professional role. Stevens believes he is in the process of being one of the greatest butlers that England has ever seen. He is occupied with the thoughts of managing the hall as he says, "Various other questions concerning arrangements here in the house during my absence will need to be settled" (Ishiguro, 1989).

“Dignity” (p.33) becomes his foremost concern when managing his duties. Ishiguro (1989) writes, “The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost” (p.42), and are encircled with the “embodiment of dignity” (p.35). Stevens’s father represents the epitome of excellence in the service business. He has worked in so many affluent households that he “waited a table every day for the last 54 years” (p.68). The greatest tragedy befalls Steven’s life when he must handle the grand informal international conference of 1939. Stevens finds himself “extremely busy” (p.82), and amid such a hectic schedule, “Darlington Hall was filled with people of all nationalities” (p.92). When Mrs. Kenton informs him about his father’s death caused by a stroke, he says, “I know my father would have wished me to carry on just now” (p.111). This statement and choice of action display his dignity and loyalty philosophy as the working-class ideological consciousness, which limits his personal agency, blocking the way for his autonomy. Further, it enhances the dominant cultural ideology of the Lord to fully achieve the laborer’s devotion. Raymond Williams (1977) in his book *Marxism and Literature* quotes Friedrich Engels’s views on ideology as a process articulated by the so-called thinker done consciously but with a “false consciousness” (p.65). This concept aligns with Stevens’s “dignity” ideology, as Williams further quotes about the thinker’s “real motive impelling him to remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence, he imagines false or apparent motives. Because it is a process of thought, he derives both its form and its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors” (p.65). Stevens’s professional dedication, even in the most desperate times, exemplifies his working-class ideology that Butlers have no personal lives. His deliberate choice of serving the political guests, repressing his emotional turmoil on his father’s demise, suggests the lack of agency driven by a service mentality, deepening the establishment of class and social pyramid.

In his time under Lord Darlington, Stevens had a goal to receive the title of “top-notch butlers” (Ishiguro, 1989, p.125), and he gained that recognition as he successfully handled the greatest meeting in British History. His professional views surpass all personal boundaries. Through his experiences at the great events at Darlington, his storeroom becomes “a crucial office, the heart of the house is operations, not unlike a general’s headquarters during a battle” (p.173). Thus, he opines, any butler would never be “off-duty” (p.178) in any situation; at least when other people are present. Stevens, even when all duties are completed, has a work-related meeting with Mrs. Kenton. Under Lord Darlington, every evening after-work discussion gave him insights into what lay ahead for the next day. “Butler’s duty is to provide good service”

(p.209) and keep the house running smoothly. Stevens harnesses excellence by devoting himself “to providing the best possible service to those great gentlemen in whose hands the destiny of civilization truly lies” (p.209). Here, the laborers become active agents of the class system. Normative concept criticizes the dominant culture’s hegemonic ideology; however, Williams (2018) argues that the base is equally responsible for upholding the hierarchy. He states that if the ideology were only the product of the ruling class or a part of the dominant culture, then “it would be—and one would be glad—a very much easier thing to overthrow” (p.1343). Subsequently, the deep-rooted working-class ideology on Stevens’s part entraps him within the very structures he begins to question, beyond his nostalgia.

Stevens’s Servitude Sustaining Darlington Hall

Impeccable work ethic and disciplinary reverence towards his employers’ construct Stevens’s role as a base of the British social hierarchy. His character opens a discussion on the concept of a “determining base” and a “determined superstructure” (p.75) in the formation of a society, as mentioned in Raymond Williams’s essay *Base and Superstructure* published in 1977. Marx (1859) argued that base influences superstructure, meaning the economic foundation drives the cultural aspects. Lord Darlington would never have been able to sustain the grandiosity of the Hall and service to its VIPs without the house management team led by Stevens. The Butler gets praise from Mr. Cardinal, the youngest guest at the conference, who states, “But we could still have chaps like you taking messages back and forth, bringing tea, that sort of thing. Otherwise, how could we ever get anything done? Can you imagine it Stevens?” (Ishiguro, 1989). Williams (2018) values the working-class agents like Stevens and states that “the base is the more important concept to look at if we are to understand the realities of cultural process” (p.1339). Stevens, as a base, reflects the real social context of English culture in the novel. His base ideology not only sustains the aristocracy, but also becomes a victim of ideology, as his values are designed by the context and culture of his working-class attributes and generation. Throughout his nostalgia, he takes the professional creed as natural and common-sense phenomena for butlers that resist questioning the social and cultural gap and frames base values as naturally right for laborers or dominant social roles commonly superior for the superstructure.

Ishiguro embodies Williams’s base structure in Stevens’s character as he is the “real social existence of man” (Williams, 1977). Traditional Marxist propositions consider the base as the “static” (Williams, 2018) force, but Williams (2018) considers it as “a mode of production at a particular stage of its development” (p.1339). Thus, it is an ongoing process that

contributes to the cultural and economic development of any society. Stevens and other helpers in the novel are seen in the continuous action as “productive forces” (p.1340). Their butlering status provides a static concept in their professional life; however, they act as a driving force, “men in real social and economic relationships, containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process” (p.1339). Stevens’s character is dynamic, revealing the tensions and contradictions inherent in the base. Stevens is not static because his role is embedded in ongoing social contradictions and is capable of producing and reproducing real life and society itself.

The dialectical labor relations between Stevens and his employers can be argued in Williams’s (2018) terms; Stevens is like a “piano-maker” and his employers are the “pianist” (p.1340). The great conference of 1923 in Darlington Hall became a historical event only because of the hard work and extreme professionalism that Stevens and his team showed. Procrastinating his mourning on his father’s death, he acted as a dedicated base who, in the process of great historical moments, could not afford distractions. Consequently, when we talk of Stevens and his colleagues as the “primary productive forces” (p.1340), undoubtedly, they are creating steps for the influential superstructure to be defined as a determined establishment, however, at the same time they are contributing to “the broader historical emphasis of men producing themselves, themselves and their history” and “to the primary production of society itself” (p.1340). The relations of these two establishments exist as per the production of labor that also encompasses the production of society.

Stevens’s Association with Aristocracy

Darlington Hall becomes the embodiment of superstructural forces where the proprietors curate cultural and ideological hegemony, undermining the aid of maids and butlers. They enjoy, as Williams (2018) puts, “most attention” (p.1338) and have acquired a concept of entirety “within which all cultural and ideological activities could be placed” (p.1338). Lord Darlington and the American gentleman, Mr. Farraday, are the cultural, political, and ideological representatives enlisting themselves as the superstructural establishments in British society. They use humiliation as a cultural tool to hegemonize the subordinate class. The novel provides “instances of a Butler being displayed as a kind of performing monkey at a house party” (Ishiguro, 1989) where eminent guests ringed up to put them through a “random question” (p.37). The house helps face various kinds of domination from the ultra-rich society. The British employer’s recognition of Stevens’s work and trust in him in front of the international guests completely contrasts with his view regarding his father’s service. Warning

him that “What happens within this house after that may have considerable repercussions” (p.65). M. Dupont, the French diplomat, who is the center of attraction in the international conference hosted by Lord Darlington, constantly “snapping the fingers” (p.95) at the house helpers, shows direct subjugation of the dominant class. The American boss also shows a subtle side of domination with his “bantering” (Ishiguro, 1989, p.139) and his discontentment when Stevens gives a reply. This cultural dominance through humiliation justifies Williams’s (1977) views on culture that “in

the strongest sense a ‘culture’, but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes” (p.110). These instances present in the novel clearly state that association with the aristocracy meant being entitled to cultural hegemony for the working class, and their labor being rendered with nullified value.

Miss Kenton, now Mrs Benn, with whom Stevens meets on his vacation, in hopes of hiring her back as the head housemaid at present-day Darlington, had realized the ideological suppression from the agents of the superstructure much earlier than Stevens. When two Jewish maids working under Miss Kenton were forcibly fired from the job due to Darlington’s alliance with Herr Hitler, she spoke against the decision that “to dismiss Ruth and Sarah on these grounds would simply be—wrong?” (p.157). She fulfills her duty no less than Stevens; however, her professional being is steered by the quality of her work and morality, not her loyalty or dignity. She invokes proletariat charms in the novel as Marx (2020) opines, “the proletariat is the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live” (p.33). Her choice to resist Lord Darlington’s discriminatory policies and ultimately to leave Darlington Hall to pursue a life beyond servitude signals a conscious rejection of the oppressive class system. Kenton’s actions not only highlight the presence of resistance within the working class but also reveal the possibility of asserting agency against deep-rooted ideologies of loyalty and subservience that bind characters like Stevens.

Stevens’s association with the aristocracy is not limited only to Lord Darlington. The grand house itself is the symbol of the superstructure in British society. While Stevens has a room that could hardly be spotted in the grand hall, Darlington dined in a room “which is ideal for accommodating up to a dozen” (Ishiguro, 1989). It is blessed with the visits of high-profile politicians, international delegates, prominent world leaders, and renowned literary figures. To name a few, Stevens remembers visits from “Lord Daniels, Mr. John Maynard Keynes and Mr. HG Wells, the renowned author” (p.77) and many

other distinguished guests. The presence of celebrated and powerful personalities in the hall makes it an aristocratic space for cultural and political discussions.

During the international conference of 1923, Stevens gets the chance to interact with the agents of the superstructure as Lord Darlington appoints him as the main Butler in charge of facilitating and managing the necessities of distinguished guests. "Darlington Hall was filled with people of all nationalities" (Ishiguro, 1989). Butlers aimed to serve the highest-ranked houses of the British class system, "the houses of royalty, dukes and the lords from the oldest families" (p.121). Stevens believes that prominent decisions and discussions are not held in the "public chambers" but "debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country" (p.121). He defends his profession as butlers are making their "own small contribution to the creation of a better world" (p.122) by serving the representatives of the superstructure "in whose hands civilization had been entrusted" (p.122). In his reminiscences, he constantly sides with his great employer, giving him the stature of a prodigious human being working for mankind, even though he knew that the lord's alignment with Germany was an unscrupulous association. "The man in the street can't be expected to know enough about politics, economics" (p.209), and it is because of people like the lord who work along with "the British Prime Minister, the foreign secretary and the German ambassador" (p.232), culture and civilization take new heights. Thus, he feels honored to be a part of the grand meeting, even though he knew that his contributions to the political and cultural establishments were unrecognized by the superstructural agents.

However, recovering from his nostalgia, Stevens begins to realize that his association with the upper classes needs some revolutionary reply that transcends the dignity of his profession. Stevens starts to contemplate that a very few numbers of years remain to live his personal life as he has served Darlington Hall throughout his youth and is still serving his new employer in his old age. He realizes that he does not "have a great deal more left to give" (Ishiguro, 1989) and regrets that he can't even assert "I made my own mistakes" (p.256). In his transformation from a suppressed and dignified butler to an autonomous individual, he confirms that "I should cease looking back so much, that I should adopt a more positive outlook and try to make the best of what remains of my day" (p.256). Stevens confirms that the practice of bantering utilized by the American superstructure is the new oppressive tool that "is hardly an unreasonable duty for an employer to expect a professional to perform" (p.258). His transformed version, which came out of years of subjugation, is finally prepared "to pleasantly surprise" (p.258) Mr. Farraday with his witty reply against British class domination that butlers

like him, his father, Miss Kenton, and others alike have been repressing for ages. Stevens's realization marks a transformation with greater agency and a new outlook on a possible future aspiration for the upcoming generation of butlers that bestows them a recognized space in society.

The Interconnected Relation of the Structures

Williams, in the book *Marxism and Literature* (1977), argues that the economic base and moral superstructure are in dynamic relation, driving each other's social production, ideologies, and cultural beings. The moral superstructure consists of "legal and political forms" that indicate "existing real relations of production" (Williams, 1977). Lord Darlington, his high-profile guests, and the American boss, all these characters in Ishiguro's narrative, are based upon the "legal and political forms" (p.76). These characters are the representatives of a class that are affirmed mostly as the "reflection" (Williams, 2018) and "the imitation or the reproduction of the reality of the base" (p.1338). However, they are in a dynamic and complex relationship with the base. Similarly, the base is not a static object but "a more varied" (Williams, 1977) process involving productive activities and social relationships. It contains contradictions and variations, making it always full of vim and vigor. Stevens, too, seems a static being in his nostalgia, but ultimately begins to contradict his dignified views of professionalism. In their nature and as social establishments, these two structures are closely related, yet they exist as distinct structural notions.

Williams curbs the formation of base and superstructures and proposes the necessity to redefine and reassess the actual process of cultural production in society. He criticizes that the capitalist society devalues the generative forces and overvalues a superficial layer determined by power. They are in dire need of reevaluation. The base should be redefined "away from the notion of a fixed economic or technological abstraction, and towards the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships" (Williams, 2018). Consequently, there is an essential need to reassess the superstructure "towards a related range of cultural practices, and away from a reflected, reproduced, or specifically dependent content" (p.1339). This revaluation takes away the sole economic or material quality of the base, providing a cultural attribute, and detaches the existence of the superstructure as a dependent establishment. Therefore, Stevens and the employer's role in society are to be reassessed for the cultural treatment of both agents.

The cardinal structure and the cultural superstructure in the novel are intertwined with each other. Nevertheless, as Williams (1977) suggests, rather than "the bare projection of 'a

base' and 'a superstructure'" (p.80), Butler and the employers are to be analyzed in ways "they cannot be distinguished for purposes of analysis, but the decisive sense that these are not separate 'areas' or 'elements' but the whole, specific activities and products of real men" (p.80). Both base and superstructure work "within a totality" (p. 98). As Williams (1977) forwards the concept that the "'production and reproduction of real life', now commonly described as 'the base', with art part or its 'superstructure'" (p.91), Stevens's role in Darlington Hall can be evaluated in terms of life and projection of life in art, culture and political being of his powerful masters.

Stevens's character embodies the relation and nature of the working-class proletariat standpoint in a British society where multiple level of classes exists. The laborer class that Stevens signifies is the ultimate force of production, and as Marx in his preface to the book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) writes, "men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production", people living in society, be it proletariat or the bourgeois, are bonded in the material productive forces. These forces identify with the base structure of the society, which Marx refers to as "The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness". Ishiguro presents the working class as the "'mode of production of material life" that gives essence to the general process of social, political and intellectual life" namely helping in the development of the superstructure. Marx (1859) in the preface argues that there are shifts in "the economic foundation". Stevens demonstrates a change in his character as his butlering ideologies transform from glorifying the sophisticated Lord Darlington to planning a witty reply to the bantering of his American employer. Hence, as Marx (1859) points out, this transformation of the base will "lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure" after realizing, as Stevens does in the novel, "the ideological forms" of distinction where "men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out". As a base in Marxist cultural analysis, Butler, in continuous action, has finally halted and attempts to gain recognition for the remaining days of his life. Here, Stevens's individual resistance against his professional loyalty begins to sprout. He certainly does not fight with the system as Marx proposed, but implicitly asserts the Marxist social transformation by halting himself from entrenched reverence towards the superstructure.

This paper uncovers that it is the underlying depiction of the working class's ideological role in maintaining the influential social and political system. While the butler remained in continuous action, he also remained restrained at the base level of the social hierarchy, resulting in a deficiency in his agency and the reduced appreciation of laborers. His contributions are matters of real necessity in building a balanced society, but are invisible to the superstructure. Starting from the Butlers' proficiency, ideological hegemony, and English social hierarchy to a subtle defiance against the cultural domination and formulation of the protagonist's agency, this paper scrutinizes Stevens's life as a dedicated base working continuously for the superstructure, highlighting a self-reflective transformation throughout his remaining days.

CONCLUSION

This paper infers the intricate and intertwined dynamics of class, labor, and social hierarchy exemplified by the character Stevens in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. His role as a Butler and his professional association with the aristocracy and powerful magnates of society have been scrutinized through the Marxist perspective, using Raymond Williams's concepts of Base and Superstructure. This theoretical analysis reveals how Stevens's undying professionalism and devotedness represent the working-class labor ideology in sustaining the grand cultural and political giants of British society. Ishiguro's narrative has been examined through the relation of these two structures, which showcase the complicated yet inevitable relation of extensive socio-economic and cultural divisions that persisted in post-war British society.

This paper concludes that Stevens transforms from a workaholic butler to an individual with growing agency. Ishiguro shows Steven's late-life reflections marked by ambiguity, tinged with regret and a degree of passivity. Stevens's self-reflective treatment accentuates the complex ideological entrapment and personal consciousness within rigid class structures. Furthermore, Ishiguro's wistful narration, use of irony, and Stevens's often unreliable narration complicate a generic reading of his character as either fully loyal or fully resistant; instead, it presents a layered psychological portrait that embodies the tensions within the base and superstructure dialectic as Williams proposed. This paper contributes to a critical comprehension of Ishiguro's nuanced storytelling, inviting a reflection on how memory, regret, and personal subjectivity intersect with wider social hierarchies and ideological formation. This approach enhances the comprehension of English class disparity, foregrounding the interdependence of base/superstructure in shaping social consciousness. Therefore, the interplay of Ishiguro's narration

and the characters' predicament shows how Stevens's story transcends economic relations and probes into the lived experience of class and cultural ideology.

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