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Representation of the Interwar British Society in Kazuo Ishiguro's
The Remains of the Day

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Letter of Recommendation

Pragati Karkee has completed his thesis entitled “Representation of the Interwar British Society in *The Remains of the Day*,” under my supervision. He carried out his research from May 2023 to August 2023 and completed it successfully. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Representation of the Interwar British Society in *The Remains of the Day*,” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Pragati Karkee, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Representation of the Interwar British Society in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

Abstract

*This thesis analyzes the impact of dominant cultural practices in the interwar British society in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* by. In doing so, it examines the socio-economic landscape of the period, where fading aristocracy shapes the lives of its characters, including that of the protagonist Stevens. The research also studies the mysterious elements in the novel, such as the opulent but decaying Darlington Hall and the regretful recollections of the past that symbolize the touchable remnants of British society's past. Applying Raymond Williams's theoretical methodology called cultural materialism, this research explores how material conditions influence cultural values and behaviors. The protagonist Stevens, a dedicated butler, exemplifies the class-consciousness prevalent in the interwar Britain. His unwavering commitment to serving his aristocratic employer, Lord Darlington, reflects the material dependence of the working class on the ruling class people for employment and social status. The sacrifices he makes, including repressing personal desires, illuminate how the material constraints of the time shape individual choices and perpetuate the existing power structures.*

Keywords: dominant, culture, material, consciousness, power, aristocracy
marginalized section of the society, emergent, residual.

The Remains of the Day (1989) by Kazuo Ishiguro is the story that follows the life of Stevens, an English butler, who serves in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. The novel develops the issues of class, culture, dignity and decline of British aristocracy. In the interwar period the British society was characterized by strict class system, where social status and hierarchy played a significant role in the

Britishers lives. The upper class was characterized by the aristocracy and elitism of people like Darlington who held considerable power and influence. On the other hand, the lower class people struggled with social mobility and limited opportunity for advancement.

The Remains of the Day portrays the life of an English butler, Stevens who is deeply devoted to his profession and values and gives importance to dignity above all else. He serves his employer, Lord Darlington, with unwavering loyalty even when it involves making personal sacrifices. The novel explores how Stevens' adherence to his role as a butler prevents him from expressing his true emotions and desires, leading to sense of emotional detachment and regret.

Throughout the novel we witness the decline of the British aristocracy and the consequence of aristocrats' misguided choices during the interwar period particularly concerning Lord Darlington's involvement in politics and appeasement policies. Ishiguro's novel provides a poignant exploration of the interwar British society, revealing its complexities, class divisions and the emotional toll of unfulfilled lives. The readers gain insight into the struggle and limitation of individual within this rigid social structure from the point of view of Stevens

Furthermore, the decline of the British aristocracy is a backdrop to the character's lives. Lord Darlington's misguided political decisions reflect aristocracy's diminishing influence and relevance. His involvement in appeasement policies, driven by a desire to maintain order and peace result into devastating consequences. This decline mirrors the broader societal shifts occurring during the interwar period, as the aristocrats' power wanes changing economic and political realities.

Ishiguro, a distinguished British novelist of Japanese descent, has left an indelible mark on the literary world with his introspective and evocative works. Born on November 8, 1954, in Nagasaki, Japan, Ishiguro's family moved to England when he was just five years old. Ishiguro's writing is characterized by its elegant prose deep introspection, and exploration of complex human emotions. His most famous novel *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let me Go* exemplify his ability to develop into the inner broader society and philosophical issues.

The Remains of the Day is about the life of an English butler who works in a grand country house. The novel has affecting exploration of regret, unrequited love and passage of time. Stevens' introspective journey takes reader through the landscape of memory and self discovery, and the novel raises profound questions about the nature of duty, sacrifice and the search for ones identity. Ishiguro's story telling often centers on characters who are grappling with sense of displacement, both geographically and emotionally. His own experience of moving from Japan to England a child and the subsequent challenges of assimilation are echoed in the themes of identity and belonging that permeate his work. In recognition of his remarkable contribution to literature, Kazuo Ishiguro was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2017. The Nobel committee recommended his Nobel prizes for his "great emotional force" that has "uncovered abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world". This prestigious award further solidified his status as a literary personality.

Beyond his novels, Ishiguro has also ventured into other literary forms. He has written short stories and screenplays demonstrating his versatility and creativity as a writer. His body of work continues to resonate with reader across the globe,

inviting them to contemplate the intricacies of human experience and the profound mysteries of existence.

Ishiguro's literary legacy is a testament to his ability to illuminate the depth of the human soul. Through his eloquent prose and compelling narratives, he invites readers to embark on a journey of self-discovery, empathy, and reflection. His exploration of memory, identity, and the human condition has left an indelible impression on contemporary literature, enriching our understanding of what it means to be human.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the protagonist Stevens is encouraged to take a vacation by his employer Mr. Faraday, an American gentleman who believes that Stevens need a break from his duties. Stevens visits a former colleague at Darlington Hall. Miss Kenton, now Mrs. Beesley, resides in west England. Twenty years ago, Miss Kenton and he worked at Darlington Hall together, he as a butler, she as a maid, but she left her after marriage and now twenty years later, Stevens looks forward to bring her back to Darlington Hall to help with his increasing staff problems. Specifically, Stevens has had trouble since the end of the Second World War finding a large enough staff to handle the work at the estate. An act of parliament in England severely limited the power of aristocracy and ultimately began to break up these huge estates. Darlington Hall is one of the last few.

The book spans his one-week trip to visit Miss Kenton and involves a mainly stream of consciousness moral inventory of Stevens' life. It is as if he is creating a mental diary of his life over this trip, aiming to come to terms with his life choices and his ultimate direction. He first reflects upon what makes a butler a great one, something clearly he has aspirations to achieve. In his eyes, a 'great' butler is what the Hayes society describes as a man of distinguished household and a man of dignity. It

is dignity that most concerns Stevens and he believes it reflects a man who maintains his professionalism no matter what the circumstances. Much of the book then is dedicated to provide accounts of Stevens exhibiting this professionalism at the expense of his human feelings.

For instance, during a great convention at Lord Darlington house in 1923, Stevens had to handle his dying father in an upstairs room all the while managing the guest of the convention. Ultimately, he forgoes his father to focus on the guest and ultimately misses his father's passing. Stevens looks back on this moment with pride. At the same time, he looks back on the fact that he resisted his attraction to Miss Kenton and stayed faithful to Lord Darlington even after she left. In his eyes, there is triumph in sacrifice for the sake of one's own employer. Even small anecdotes reveal this like Stevens fires two Jewish maids at the behest of Lord Darlington even though he does not agree with his employer's politics.

But the majority of the novel is dedicated to Steven and his relationship with Miss Kenton over the course of their twenty years at Darlington Hall. Miss Kenton arrived at a time when Stevens' father no longer could do the work required and must be stripped of his major duties. Stevens is offended. It is Miss Kenton who ultimately stays with Stevens' father as he lies dying. Upon Stevens father's death, Miss Kenton becomes almost substitute for Stevens as a person who seems like family, the only person who can provide him love. When the novel begins, then, she has been gone nearly twenty years, but Stevens seizes upon the fact that her marriage might be crumbling as a reason to visit her twenty years before.

However, Miss Kenton had given Stevens an opportunity to stop her marriage and take her for himself an opportunity he let go. Stevens find his car run aground in Moscombe and spends the nights with the Taylors. They have a dinner

there, where Stevens speaks of his past meetings with dignitaries never once revealing that he is in fact, a butler. When Dr Carlisle drives him back to his car the next day, the doctor pokes a hole in the façade and Stevens finally admits that he is in fact a butler at Darlington Hall with this revelation, Stevens finally makes the last part of his journey to meet Miss Kenton.

But when Stevens finally does meet her with full plans to bring her back to Darlington Hall and confesses his love, he finds that the spirit has gone out of her. She reveals that she is going back to her husband. Even though she may not love him, he has always been there for her Stevens realize he is too late and sends her off with best wishes and return to Darlington Hall to fulfill the ‘remains of the day’.

Ishiguro’s unique perspective of the world has led to many different opinions on his work. Some critics consider him postcolonial and immigrant, while others think of him as a world writer. The main reason for this, amongst many others is Ishiguro’s Japanese face and Japanese name. However, on the contrary, Ishiguro himself wishes to be an international author. In this regard, Ishiguro remarks:

I am a writer who wishes to write international novels. What is an ‘international’ novel? I believe it to be one, quite simply, that contains a vision of life that is of importance to people of varied backgrounds around the world. It may concern characters who jet across continents, but may just as easily be set firmly in one small locality. (4)

Here, Ishiguro expresses his wish of writing novels. For him, a novel has to contain the vision of life.

Stevens, the butler in *The Remains of the Day*, can be seen as a metaphor for everyday ordinary people. Hunwell, writes about Ishiguro as:

[S]omeone who leaves the big political decisions to somebody else. He says, I'm just going to do my best to serve this person, and by proxy I'll be contributing to society, but I myself will not make the big decisions. Many of us are in that position, whether we live in democracies or not. Most of us aren't where the big decisions are made. We do our jobs, and we take pride in them, and we hope that our little contribution is going to be used well.

(50)

Hunwell talks about the novelist's intention behind writing about political issues.

For him, we take pride on what we do. Gabriele Profita comments on the novel as:

The butler depicts his work environment, the perspective that let observe or perceive the development of European history, as everything took place and could be seen through that privileged place that for him was Darlington Hall.

During narration, he will always have a special care to define the special features of the house. (4)

In this quote, Profita focuses on how the protagonist portrays his work environment through which one can read the history of Europe.

Talking about the historiographic approach in *The Remains of the Day*, Maha Abdel Moneim Emara argues:

In Kazuo Ishiguro's (b. 1954) (1989) [Henceforth referred to as *The Remains*], fictional narrative and history are closely connected. This paper analyzes Ishiguro's *The Remains* in the light of the critical theories of postmodern historiography. It investigates the different narrative strategies Ishiguro utilizes to narrate historical events and dismantle objectivity mainly; backshadowing, intermixing of historical and personal incidents, and first-person unreliable narrator. Significantly, the study endeavors to expand on

James M. Lang's critical approach to Ishiguro's text and to develop the argument and line of thought in alternative directions. (4)

Emara's focus here is on the intersection of fact and fiction, that is, of history and fictional narrative. As stated, it mixes factual and fictional incidents.

Basically I have study the dominant discourse of cultural materialism and the space for the formation of dominant, residual and emergent values as its subject and the tool which someone to dominate to control and rule. A cultural materialist perspective provides a unique lens through which to analyze this work, focusing on the ways which socio-economic and cultural factors shape the characters' lives and interactions. This critique aims at delving into how cultural materialism enhances our understanding of the novel's central themes and characters.

Cultural materialism emphasizes the role of social classes and hierarchies in shaping individuals' identities and actions. In *The Remains of the Day*, the main character, Stevens, is a prime example of how class and duty interconnect. Stevens, a dedicated butler, embodies the subservience embedded his role, as his sense of self-worth is tied to his position and faithfulness. His interactions with other characters, such as Lord Darlington, highlight the extent to which class norms influence behavior. Cultural materialism thus exposes how the characters' identities are constrained by societal prospect in class distinction.

The novel is set in the interwar period and even at his most lack of experience, Steven is aware that his manager Lord Darlington is involved in questionable way supporting Germany, entering Nazis and even going so far as to get Stevens to release two Jewish maids on the grounds of their Judaism. Two Jewish maids release shows the dominant value in the text. Stevens does this without question, even though he clearly knows it is wrong and Miss. Kenton argues freely

against it. This unquestionable faithfulness to his boss is a character that Stevens formal style of speaking attempts at a kind of careful honesty, believing the pretence that Miss Kenton calls him out on his justification on grounds of a butler, but he is forced to face what he has done.

There is enough of dramatic irony in the book to create a strong forward thrust to the plot. Long before Stevens realizes the readers know that he has come to love Miss Kenton. We are also aware as much through our historical viewpoint as through the narrative itself, that Stevens' admiration of Lord Darlington anti-Semitic politics is morally wrong. So there is relief when Stevens arrives at his epiphany. We forgive him so painful is the sense that his whole life has been strum and that he has wasted his opportunities for love, for meaning and for self actualization. It is at this point that the notion of the banter or small light talk becomes central. His new American employer Mr. Faraday whose lack of awareness of the elite class distinction that made up Stevens world provide mild kind of hopefulness, perhaps a route toward warmth and responsibility. *The Remains of the Day* ends on hopeful note.

Cultural materialism is collected of two terms, culture and materialism. Culture is a set of shared beliefs and values accepted and followed by a group of people. The religion, customs, practices and social behavior of a particular nation or people make culture. Similarly, materialism is the physical theory that physical matter is the only reality and that psychological states such as emotions, reason, thought and desire will eventually be explained as physical functions. In this context, cultural materialism is a theory which states that the environment, resources, technology and other material things are the major influences on cultural change.

Cultural Materialism tries to explain the organization of cultural, ideology and symbols in terms of physical infrastructure, structure, superstructure framework. Cultural Materialists believe that society evolves through trial and error basis. If something does not benefit society's productivity and reproductive ability, or causes production or reproduction to exceed acceptable limits, it will disappear from society altogether. Therefore, law, government, religion, family values, etc. must be beneficial to society or they will cease to exist within society. It ignores society's opinion in favor of observation of phenomenon via scientific method.

In the recent years, cultural materialism has emerged from the analysis of literature, art, and other cultural elements, which has been accepted by some critics, especially in England, since the early 1980s. Its principles come from Western Marxist traditions and Raymond Williams elaborates on the most important points in his later writings, particularly in *Materialism and Culture* (1980) and *Culture* (1981). Here the orthodox Marxist model of the economic basis was challenged and replaced by a more revolutionary model in which cultural itself was viewed as both material and productive processes. Cultural materialist approaches to literature emphasize the social and economic contexts in which it is produced and consumed. They are also interested in how the meanings of writings and acting reshaped in social institutions. Critics who have written extensively on cultural materialist include, besides Williams, Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, as its chief members.

Williams, a prominent critic on Culture and Society defines culture as, “the establishment of procedures for verification and falsification, which are rarely addressed within the social sciences” (137). He further takes culture as an inseparable part of the society. He further writes, culture as, “an essential hypothesis

in the development of the idea of culture that is the art of a period of closely and necessarily related to the generally prevalent way of life” (130). Cultural materialism is the outcome of societal changes and behaviors that largely depends on the possession of materials, or material well-beings.

Cultural Materialism is an important and direct strategy by which many problems of modern world can be accurately addressed. It may be most profitably addressed, to provide the context that confers significance upon facts. Similarly, in words of Jonathan Dollimore, cultural materialism:

. . . explicitly provides grounds on which the propositions it generates can be falsified. In response to these objections, one may note that the alternatives are some other theoretical framework, with different premises, which would nonetheless incur the same structural difficulty, is no theoretical framework at all. (302)

As discussed by Dollimore in this quote, the alternative provided by the materialism seems to have fallen by default, into the second option. A number of competing positions within logical empiricism itself is the premises and framework supported by the study.

A cultural materialist reading of the novel underscores how economic factors dictate characters’ choices. The looming shadow of World War II and its economic aftermath shape Lord Darlington’s actions, ultimately leading him astray. The economic vulnerability of the time forces him into decisions that challenge his moral compass, showcasing how external forces can disrupt individual values and ethical considerations. This perspective sheds light on the fragility of identity in the face of economic pressures and historical events.

A cultural materialist critique of *The Remains of the Day* reveals the intricate interplay between socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and individual identities. The characters' lives are intricately woven into the fabric of their society, with class, cultural capital and economic pressures, shaping their choices and motivations. Through this lens, the novel's exploration of duty, memory, and personal identity gains depth and nuance, offering readers a more profound understanding of the complex tapestry woven by Ishiguro. Ultimately, a cultural materialist perspective enriches our appreciation of the novel's themes and characters, showcasing the power of socio-economic and cultural contexts in literary analysis.

I have divided my research into three tentative sections. The first section delves into the general idea about my research in which carries the issues and synopsis of the theory as well. In this way I have mentioned some challenges of socio-economic, class, cultural issues and dominant people in order to establish the identity in the society. This issue appears in *The Remains of the Day*, through the characters like Stevens and others that help to dig out the problem in to my research.

Moreover, my research brings into the conversation the most contested terms in cultural materialism debate of the dominant, residual and emergent value in order to establish the class, socio-economic and cultural value discussed by the indebted body of foundational arguments posited by the cultural materialist theorists such as Raymond William, Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore. These critics contested the relationship between class and culture value in the form of cultural materialist desire. So I have used the sub division of the cultural materialism issues which helps to understand the core issues cultural materialism debate while analyzing the any literary text from these perspectives.

The second section interrogates the evidences of domination over the social and economic and the third word people in different in *The Remains of the Day*. In such a way I have mentioned how the voices of the characters express the serious concern for forming stable sense of identity and subjectivity from the freedom of paradox, slavery and myths are considered in the novel. Stevens, miss Kenton, and other characters are living into the injustice of socio-economic domination also portrays into this section in the literary text *The Remains of the Day*.

In this section, the researcher analyzes how the protagonist Stevens along with other characters in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, offers a rich landscape for cultural materialist analysis as it delves into the interplay between individual lives and the larger socio-economic and politico-cultural contexts in interwar England. By examining the material conditions, social structures, and power dynamics present in the novel, a cultural materialist perspective provides insights into how characters' lives are shaped and constrained by broader historical and social forces. This analysis aims to explore the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques from this critical perspective.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro depicts the society, class and economic conditions of a butler at Darlington Hall. Ishiguro portrays the first person retrospective narrative as Stevens travels to the west through the English Countryside and he presents directly the past experiences along with present reflection. In fact, Stevens often directly refers to his present situation and experience during his road trip to Cornwall.

Stevens' true journey has a figuratively similar value in the trip his mind makes to the past. Zuzana Fonioková realizes that Stevens' memories are aimed at changing the past life, "one more acceptable to himself than his real life-story" (89).

Remarkably, Stevens' recounts his life in a way that conceals the "terrible mistake[s]" things his life and cares about his life. In order to achieve this goal, he omits some details of what happened and what he did in his life and stresses some other events, as mentioned earlier with reference to Strauss' idea that the writer of history should be selective; as selectivity precludes objectivity. Ishiguro comments on his narrator: "[Stevens] ends up saying the sorts of things he does because somewhere deep down he knows which things he has to avoid ... Why he says certain things, why he brings up certain topics at certain moments, is not random. It's controlled by the things he doesn't say. That's what motivates the narrative" (Shaffer 8). In fact, it is not primarily the pronounced that makes up the story of Stevens' life, but the withheld facts that the reader finds between lines. "The apparent-told-version appears as a result of what the narrator hides" (Fionioková 90). In this way, Stevens emphasizes his former employer Darlington's qualities as a noble gentleman and the butler's role in various dealings, and refuses to deal with Lord Darlington has proved, though well meant, support of the Nazi regime.

Stevens, represents the perfect manservant who eliminates all traces of his own personality as well as all individual dreams in the service of his master. The English butler is the dream servant who becomes, according to Meera Tamaya, "the human robot with the "correct" accent, the "correct "manners" (47). Stevens embodies the typical Englishness of the butlers.

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is used, have only manservant. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race are capable of . . . when we think a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman.

According to the British class system, every individual is expected to act out the role assigned to him/her at birth. One crucial element is the rigorous submission of the private self to the demands of the public persona. In Stevens' case, he is not only the son of a butler, but consciously strives to live up to the ideal of service achieved by his father. He narrates with great pride, a particular incident in his father's life which highlights the famed British self-restraint. Steven's father is told by his master that a general who has been responsible for the unfair death of a large number of young men during the Boer war is expected for lunch. Among the victims was Steven's brother, thus the master who knows about this tragedy offers Steven's father a day off. However, the dutiful butler decides to carry on his duties and run the house party. Not only does he refuse but even volunteers to act as valet to the general, thus suffering "the intimate proximity for four days with the man he detests" (42-43). Tamaya also observes that the irony of this self-abasement is that neither Stevens nor his father question the worthiness of their sacrifices: "This blindness foreshadows Stevens' own colossal obtuseness as to his master's true moral stature" (49).

At the heart of the novel, Darlington Hall stands as a symbol of aristocracy and privilege, embodying the grand estates that were emblematic of interwar British society. The detailed description of the hall is architecture, extensive grounds, and luxury interiors reflect the fading era of prosperity and power. The hall that is isolated from the outside world mirrors the insularity of British upper class, disconnected from tumultuous changes sweeping through Europe.

The cultural value and expectation of interpersonal communication are evident in Steven's reflection on bantering with his employer. Bantering, a form of light-hearted, playful conversation, is depicted as nuanced social practice that requires a specific kind of participation. The protagonist, a butler grapples with understanding

the appropriate response to his employer's banter. This illustrates the complex interplay between individual behavior and societal norms within the context of the British class system.

In the interwar period, British society was marked by class distinction and hierarchies. The text highlights the potential challenges faced by individuals like the protagonist, who was navigating the expectation of his role within their social structures. The protagonist's uncertainty about how to respond to banter reflects his awareness of the hierarchical relationship between an employer and an employee. The idea that bantering might be seen as unprofessional or presumptuous underscores the rigid boundaries that governed social interactions in British society during that era. The protagonist notes that "in these changing times, to adapt one's work to take in duties not traditionally within one's realm" is acceptable, suggesting a shift in societal expectations (16). However, bantering is portrayed as a practice that defies adaptation due to its nuanced nature. This highlights the tension between evolving social dynamic and entrenched cultural practices.

The cleanliness of the room, well made beds and availability of cold water may reflect the standard of hygienic and comfort within that society. "There were twin beds and a pair of good-sized windows overlooking the street. On inquiring where the bathroom was, the women told me in a timid voice that although it was the door facing mine, there would be no hot water until after supper" (27). These material aspects reflect the availability of resources and amenities that contributes to daily life. The women's mentioning of delayed hot water until after the supper speaks to resources management and communal routines, highlighting the intertwining of material constraints and cultural practices. Meanwhile, the view of the bakery, "chemist's shop, and a barber's" across the street unveils the fabric with distinct

economic functions and specialization (27). This hints at a complex web of economic interactions and potentially social hierarchies inherent to urban life. The appearance of “a round-backed bridge” (27) leading to rural surroundings introduces a contrast between the urban and the rural spaces. This juxtaposition suggests different ways of life, economic and social structures. The materiality of the bridge and its transition reflects not only physical connectivity but also cultural and economic transitions.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the relationship between Breman and Darlington Hall serves as microcosm of the post war British society and its interaction with cultural shifts occurring that period .The juxtaposition of their interactions, the context of post-world War II Britain and evolving cultural dynamics within the narrative can be analyzed through the perspective of cultural materialism. Set against the backdrop of a changing world order and the decline of the British aristocracy, Bremann’s first visit to Darlington Hall very shortly after the war while still in his office reflects the broader societal changes that occurred after the war. His initial visits, marked by closed friendship with Lord Darlington, symbolize the remnants of the old world order and hierarchical norms that were prevalent during the interwar period. The uniform worn by Bremann represents a sense of authority and hierarchy that was associated with the interwar aristocracy.

As the story unfolds, Bremann’s deterioration mirrors the decay of the British aristocracy and its values. His declining physical appearance is noticeable in this sentence as “His clothes became increasingly impoverished, his frame thinner; a haunted look appeared in his eyes” reflects the erosion of power and privilege that the aristocracy experienced in the post-war era (74). This deterioration can be interpreted as a representation of the broader societal shift towards egalitarianism and the challenging of established hierarchies.

Furthermore, Bremann's moments of detachment during his later visits symbolize the growing disillusionment and disconnect that aristocracy faced with changing world. The inability to engage with his surroundings and Lord Darlington's presence mirrors the inability of the British elite to adapt to the shifting social and cultural landscape. Lord Darlington's assurance that Herr Bremann's condition is not due to illness underscores the narrative exploration of the emotional toll inflicted by the war and its aftermath on individuals and society.

The Remains of the Day offers insight into the intersection of power, politics, and societal values during the aftermath of World War I. Lord Darlington's ambitious plan to host an "unofficial" international conference" at Darlington Hall to revise the harsh terms of the "Versailles treaty" unveils the aristocracy's role in shaping global affairs while reflecting the socio-political shifts (78). The aristocracy, exemplified by Lord Darlington, clings to its traditional power and seeks to influence international diplomacy through gatherings of influential gentlemen. This reflects a cultural resistance to change, attempting to maintain authority despite the changing socio-political landscape. The desire to revise the Versailles treaty highlights the aristocracy's belief that their influence can transcend national boundaries and impact geopolitical aspects.

The conference's significance lies not only in its aim to revise treaty but also in the nature of its 'unofficial' nature. This underscores the subtly and exclusivity of aristocratic power, operating behind the scenes to achieve goals that challenge official diplomatic channels. The "unofficial" conference signifies an attempt to bypass established political structures and influence through informal means, revealing interconnected of socio-political power and personal relationship.

The reference to “official international conference” that produced “confusion and bitterness” reflects a broader critique of political inefficiency and disarray (78). This can be understood as a cultural commentary on the disillusionment and frustration following the war, where traditional governance and diplomacy failed to address complex issues. Lord Darlington’s effort can be seen as aristocratic response to this failure, attempting to restore order and influence through personal connection and gathering. The presence of Prime Minister Mr. Lloyd George’s call for a conference in Italy further emphasizes the interplay of political leadership and aristocratic endeavors. Lord Darlington’s initial intention to ensure satisfactory outcome to this event underscores the aristocracy’s desire to influence official diplomatic proceedings indirectly. This speak to the aristocracy’s strategic manipulation of political discourse and decision-making, highlighting the cultural practice that maintain their privileged status.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the novelist Ishiguro offers glimpse into the intricate dynamics of power, manipulation and cultural bias within the context of Darlington Hall. A cultural materialist analysis of this excerpt reveals the underlying societal structures and ideologies that shape the characters actions and perception. “The Bedroom doors of Darlington Hall are certain thickness” physical barriers that prevent complete exchanges (99). This spatial constraint becomes a metaphor for the limited understanding of the events. The narrator’s limited perspective, promoting a critical examination of the information presented.

The American gentleman’s viewpoint reveals manipulation orchestrated by Lord Darlington and others during the conference. This manipulation reflects power struggles and political agendas that shape decisions. The deliberate late invitation of M. Dupont underscores exclusionary tactics, suggestion an attempt to marginalize his

input. This aligns with cultural materialist analysis that seeks to uncover power structures affect discourse and decision making process.

Furthermore, Lord Darlington's private discussion delegates highlight a hierarchy of importance and influence. The exclusivity of these conversations exposes social hierarchies that impact decision making within the conference. From a cultural materialist lens, such private interaction can be seen as manifestations of social class and power dynamics at play. Ishiguro's states:

The American gentleman was putting forward the view that m. Dupont was being manipulated by his lordship and other participants at the conference; that M. Dupont had been deliberately invite late to enable the others to discuss important topic in his absence ; that . . . inviting M. Dupont. Then Mr. Lewis began to report certain remarks his lordship and others had made at dinner on that first evening after his arrival. (99)

The derogatory remarks made by Lord Darlington and others towards Americans reveal cultural biases, Words like "barbarous" and "despicable" reflect ethnocentric attitudes that position certain cultures as superior to others (99). This reflects a cultural materialist concern with dominant cultural norms perpetuate inequality and reinforce oppressive ideologies.

The diary by Mr. Lewis serves as an archival record of these biased remarks. Cultural materialism emphasizes the important of artifacts like diaries, texts, and records in uncovering historical and cultural ideologies. Such records provide insights into prevailing attitudes and values, aiding in the examination of how these attitude shape characters behaviors.

The evolving perception of great butler and Hayes Society criteria for membership can be illuminate through the perspective of economic forces and

societal shifts. The concept of a “distinguish household” and its connection to greatness mirrors the influence of economic structures and changing class dynamics (119). Historically, the role of butler was deeply connected with the upper level of society, where wealth and power concentrated. As the economy evolved, the distribution of wealth access to education changed, leading to a broader middle class and alerting social hierarchies. This shifts influence the parameters of what constitutes a “distinguished household” (119). While the Hayes Society’s criteria initially echoed traditional markers of social status, the modern economy diversification and mobility necessitate a redefined understanding of distinction.

The principal of ‘dignity’ and its link with greatness also reflects economic aspects. Dignity in the context of butler’s role traditionally aligned with maintaining decorum and upholding the reputation of the household (119). However, as labor laws, workers rights and societal norms shifted, dignity took on new dimensions. The concept of dignity expanded to include fair treatment, autonomy, and respect within the workplace, reshaping the butler’s role and its perceived greatness. The tension between tradition and progress evident in the speaker can attributed to economic and social changes. The “unthinking snobbery” reflects the desire to moved beyond outdated class-based hierarchies and embrace a more inclusive understanding of greatness (119). This shift aligns with an economy that value diverse skills, experiences, and contribution.

Furthermore, the connection between a “distinguished household” and greatness raise question about economic accessibility. The modern economy’s emphasis on mobility and opportunities challenges the exclusivity of the past (119). A deeper meaning of distinguished could encompass qualities beyond inherited status, focusing on contributions to society, intellectual achievements or ethical

leadership. This redefinition aligns with an economy that rewards motivation, knowledge and positive impact.

The evolving perception of a 'great' butler and Hayes Society's criteria reflect the complex interplay between economic changes, societal values and class dynamics. The expanding understanding of dignity and the reevaluation of a distinguished household illustrate the ways in which economic forces shape cultural norms. As economic transform, so too do notion of greatness, dignity, and distinction, forging a path towards more inclusive and representative understanding of excellence.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield, an American couple who has been settled in England- somewhere in Ken, represent the cultural exchange between two nations. Their visit to Darlington Hall, an English estate, serves as an exploration of cultural values and material conditions. The fact that they have common acquaintances with Mr. Farraday amidst Boston society signifies a shared elite status, highlighting the role of socioeconomic positioning in shaping interaction. The detail tour of the house showcases the material splendor of the English estate. Mr. Farraday's enthusiasm for showcasing his acquisition reflects his appreciation for the material wealth associated with the property. Cultural materialism emphasizes how accumulation of material possession can symbolize status and power, and this is evident in Mr. Farraday desire to display the grandeur of the house to his American guest.

The dialogue during the tour, which involves Mr. Farraday describing historical English traditions and details of the house, reflects an appreciation for cultural heritage. This interest is rooted in a desire to connect with and display knowledge of English ways. The exchange of cultural knowledge and the

enthusiasm for exploring historical practices align with cultural materialism's focus on the interplay between culture and material conditions.

The Remains of the Day illustrates the dynamic interaction between material conditions, socioeconomic contexts, and cultural practices. Through the visit of American couple to the English estate, we witness how cultural values, heritage and knowledge are influenced by the material wealth and historical traditions associated with the location. The exploration of these themes aligns with the principles of cultural materialism, which seeks to understand through the lens of material circumstances and societal structures.

In *The Remains of the Day*, "I lodged last night in an inn named the coach and Horse a little way outside *Taunton Somerset*. This being thatch-roofed cottage" symbolizing a microcosm of the broader society (137). The inn's thatch-roofed cottage and its location outside the town of Taunton, Somerset, suggest a connection to traditional and rustic elements. This setting can be seen as reflection of the local culture, emphasizing a close tie to land and rural practices. The inn serves as a meeting place for both locals and outsiders, creating a space for interaction between different cultural elements.

The protagonist's interaction with the landlord highlights economic aspect of cultural materialism. The landlord's role is providing accommodation and food represents a transactional exchange of goods and services. The protagonist's choice to dine in the room rather than join the local in the bar demonstrates a desire for privacy and perhaps a sense of detachment from the community. This could be seen as manifestation of the individual's economic agency and his inclination to navigate the cultural landscape according to personal performance.

As the protagonist descends to the bar later in the evening, he encounters a group of local customers. These individuals are likely agricultural workers, suggesting a connection to the dominant economic activity in the region. Their presence reflects the communal aspect of cultural materialism, where people gather to share experiences, stories and cultural practices. The protagonist's presence disrupts the group's dynamics, leading to sense of curiosity and perturbation. (137).

Furthermore, the protagonist's contemplation on whether his witticism could have been offensive demonstrates the complex nature of communication within society with specific etiquette and norms. This presents a case cultural materialism's focus on how cultural practices, including language and communication, are influenced by broader economic, historical and social factor.

The protagonist "continued to proceed swiftly out of the room, returning without undue delay bearing a satisfactory fork" highlights the expectation of efficiency and attention to detail within his role (148). This could reflect the societal emphasis on professionalism and performance of one's duties, shaped by economic and cultural expectations. The act of returning quickly with a replacement of fork underscores the importance of maintaining a seamless façade in household operations, influenced by the need to adhere to social norms and appearances.

The protagonist's consideration of Mr. Farraday's potential reaction exposes the complexities of interpersonal dynamics within the hierarchical structure. The fear of embarrassment and the potential interpretation of surreptitious action reveal the protagonist's awareness of power imbalances. This can be understood as a reflection of the broader social norms that dictate the behaviors of individuals within their hierarchical roles, influenced by the need to maintain appearances and respect for authority (148-149).

The notion of 'staff shortage' as a possible reason for errors ties into the economic landscape of the time (149). Economic factors, such as labor shortage, can impact the functioning of institutions and affect the performance of employees. This emphasizes the connection between economic condition and the challenges faced by individuals in fulfilling their responsibilities, reflecting how a broader economic influences shape daily interaction and decision.

Stevens thoughts on "Miss Kenton were indeed to return to Darlington Hall", offers insights into the emotional and personal dimensions of the characters (149). The speculation about her desire to return reflects the interaction of professional aspirations and personal motivations. The protagonist's internal debate illustrates how individual hopes and societal expectations are intertwined, demonstrating how personal decisions are influenced by broader cultural context and the longing for stability and familiar roles.

In Lord Darlington's case, "I feel I should perhaps return a moment to the question of his lordship's attitude to Jewish persons," could be analyzed within the context of the economic and political climate of the early 1930s (153). This period was marked by economic hardships stemming from great depression, a global economic crisis that left many people disillusioned and searching for solutions to widespread suffering. At such times of uncertainty, individual and societies stability and solution of their problems.

The rise of nationalist and fascist movements across Europe during this era is significant. These movements often relied on fostering a sense of unity and a shared identity, often centered on a personal ethnicity or nationality. Such ideologies can lead to scapegoating of minority groups, including Jewish individuals, as way to channel societal frustrations. In this context, Lord Darlington's change in attitude

towards Jewish individuals might have been influenced by a broader societal shift towards nationalism and the idea of a homogeneous identity.

Mrs. Carolyn Barnet's association with the "Black shirts Organization", which held anti-Semitic views, likely plays a pivotal role in influencing Lord Darlington's perspective (154). The appeal of nationalist ideologies and the sense of belonging they provided might have attracted individuals like Mrs. Barnet. Her influence on Lord Darlington could be seen as an embodiment of these ideological undercurrents. As an intelligent and charismatic figure, she might have been persuasive in promoting the 'blackshirt' beliefs and reinforcing Lord Darlington's susceptibility to such views.

Cultural materialism also considers how power dynamics and social hierarchies influence attitudes and behaviors. Lord Darlington, as a member of the British aristocracy, was likely part of a social stratum that historically held privileged positions and exerted influence over society. The fear of losing influence, coupled with economic uncertainties, could have driven individuals like him to seek stability in nationalistic and exclusionary ideologies.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the conversation between Stevens, the butler, and his employer presents a strong case of cultural conflict. The employer's assertion that "we cannot have Jews on the staff here at Darlington Hall", immediately introduces the issue of cultural identity and exclusion (155). This statement reflects the discriminatory norms of the time, emphasizing the role of cultural beliefs and values. The employer's concern for the "interest of the guests" suggests that maintaining a particular image and reputation aligns with the material interests of the estate (155). Here, cultural materialism highlights how cultural practices are shaped by economic considerations and social hierarchy.

The power dynamics are evident as the employer makes a unilateral decision, using his authority to determine the composition of the staff. He justifies his decision by claiming to have “looked into this carefully” and asserting that it is “in our best interest” (155). This reflects the exercise of power to legitimize and enforce cultural norms. Cultural materialism emphasizes how power influences the shaping of cultural practices, and in this case, the employer’s authority directly impacts the fate of the Jewish staff members. The mention of the Jewish staff members brings class and identity into focus. Stevens’ acknowledgement that two staff members fall into the category in question underscores how socioeconomic status and cultural identity intersect. The employer’s instruction to “let them go” further reinforces the class distinctions within the household. Cultural materialism suggests that cultural beliefs can be used to justify class-based decisions. Economic considerations also play a role, although they are not explicitly discussed. The employer’s emphasis on “safety and well-being of my guest” indicates a concern for the financial success of the estate (155). Cultural materialism recognizes how economic factors influence cultural decision and practices. The potential impact on the bottom line underscores how material conditions are intertwined with cultural expression.

Stevens’ internal conflict adds depth to analysis. Despite his reservations about dismissing the Jewish housemaids, he recognizes his duty and suppresses his personal doubts. This internal struggle exemplifies the tension between individual beliefs and societal norms. Cultural Materialism underscores how personal experiences and emotion are influenced by cultural and economic context.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Miss Kenton expresses her dissatisfaction with her life at Darlington Hall. Her considerations of leaving Darlington Hall reflect her internal struggle between personal desires and societal norms. Her comment, “Had I

been anyone worthy of any respect at all”, exposes the hierarchy and expectations that shape her self-worth (161). The restrictive norms of the time push individuals to define their identity and value based on their social status, limiting their agency.

Miss Kenton’s predicament also highlights the economic aspect of cultural materialism. She mentions her lack of family and her reliance on her aunt, which emphasize the economic vulnerability of unmarried women during that era. Her fear of being alone and unsupported propels her to prioritize economic security over personal fulfillment. The constraints of her economic situation limit her freedom to make choices solely based on her desires. Furthermore, Stevens’ perspective is molded by his role as butler, emphasizing the class distinctions. His response to Miss Kenton’s confession is marked by his emotional restraint, mirroring the societal expectation of maintaining professionalism and suppressing personal emotions. His fixation on Lord Darlington’s viewpoint and his duty to the household emphasizes how the structural dynamics of the class system influence individuals’ behaviors and actions.

The mention of Lord Darlington’s involvement introduces the theme of politics and power. Lord Darlington’s regret over a “terrible misunderstanding” (161) hints at larger political events, potentially related to World War II and its aftermath. His dismissal of Miss Kenton’s concerns echoes the hierarchical nature of power, where those in authority control narratives and interpretations, reinforcing their dominance over subordinates.

Cultural Materialism, a theoretical approach developed by Raymond Williams, focuses on the relationship between material conditions, cultural beliefs, and social practices. The tension arising from discussions of war and freedom reflects the material conditions of post-war unease. Mr. Harry Smith’s shift from inhabitation to

speaking freely illustrates how his actions are influenced by the changing social dynamics. Cultural materialism recognizes that material circumstance in this case, the aftermath of war, influence social interactions, shaping the characters of behaviors and expression.

That's what we fought Hitler for, after all. If Hitler had had things his way, we'd just be slaves now. The whole world would be a few masters and millions upon millions of slaves. And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to what we won. We won . . . , and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me sir. (196)

The above remarks capture a post-World war II context, where the character reflect on the significance of fighting against Hitler's regime. The memory of the war and its violence shapes their perspective on freedom and dignity. This can be through the cultural materialism as a response to the material conditions of time. The war brought about immense suffering, loss and upheaval, which lead to heightened appreciation for the values of freedom and self determination. The characters strong stance against slavery and the notion of masters and slaves reflects a cultural response rooted their historical context. The horrors of Hitler's totalitarian regime, which imposed brutal control over people's lives, generated a collective aversion to such oppression. Cultural materialism would highlight how the material experience of living through war influenced the character's cultural belief and values, emphasizing importance of autonomy and dignity.

In the passage using the cultural materialism, reveals the intricate interplay between historical events, material conditions, and cultural beliefs. The characters focus on freedom dignity and citizenship is a response to the experience of World

War II and socio-political context of the tome. The privileges associated with being born English are intertwined with economic and social structures that enable political participation and expression. Applying cultural materialism, we gain insight into how these factors shape the characters perspectives and action in the aftermath of significant historical event.

How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish? Throughout the years I served him, it was he and he alone who weighed up evidence and judged it best to proceed in the way he did, while I simply confined myself, quite properly, to affairs within my own professional realm. And as far as I am concerned, I carried . . . and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account. (211)

The speaker grapples with the notion of personal accountability in light of Lord Darlington's misguided action over time. The speaker argues that they were solely responsible for their own professional responsibilities and that Lord Darlington's decisions were his own. The passage emphasizes the speaker's conviction that they fulfilled their duties to high standard and should not be held responsible for Lord Darlington's regrets. In cultural materialist interpretation, the regret or shame that the speaker denies feeling might be defense mechanism to protect their status and identity in a society that values adherence to professional duties. This response could be influenced by the need to maintain a positive self-image, which is shaped by the broader cultural context.

My own table is on the village square side of the room and I have thus spent much of the past hour watching the rain falling on the square, and upon the Ford and one or two other vehicles stationed outside. The rain has steadied

some-what, but . . . Miss Kenton is presently residing is some fifteen minutes' walk away, which implies I have at least another forty minutes to wait. (216)

It reflects the interplay of cultural norms, environmental factors and socio-economic conditions. The village square location and rain illustrate the environment impact, limiting travel and confining the protagonist indoors. The presence of vehicles like Ford hints at technological level of setting. The protagonist's adherence to the set meeting time with Miss. Kenton showcases the cultural value of punctuality and communication, influenced by societal expectations. The act of waiting while drinking tea signifies a leisure activity associated with certain social classes. This hints at the hierarchy present in the society where leisure pursuits are guided by socio-economic status.

To sum up, this research explores the issue of representation of interwar British society through the perspective of cultural materialism and representation. Set in the 1920s-1930s, the novel takes readers on a reflective journey with Stevens, a loyal butler, as he visits a former colleague. The narrative delves into the complexities of class, power, and identity within the backdrop of a changing society.

Cultural materialism, a critical theory, emphasizes the influence of material conditions and socio-economic factors on culture and representation. Through an analysis of *The Remains of the Day*, we can gain a deep understanding of the socio-economic and political context of interwar Britain and how these factors influenced culture and representation.

Darlington Hall, the setting of much of the novel, stands as a microcosm of interwar British society. Its opulence, grandeur, and sprawling estate are symbolic of the affluence and privilege enjoyed by the upper class during this era. The hall's

lavishness is not just a representation of material wealth; it is also a reflection of the entrenched class hierarchy of the time. This opulence contrasts sharply with the economic hardships experienced by many in the aftermath of World War I and during the Great Depression.

Stevens, the novel's protagonist embodies the quintessential butler archetype. His unwavering dedication to duty, extreme professionalism, and emotional restraint epitomize the stoicism and propriety expected from the British upper class. However, beneath his impeccable exterior, Stevens' character also reveals the insecurities and challenges faced by a class in decline. His unwavering commitment to maintaining decorum and order within Darlington Hall highlights how the material conditions of interwar Britain influenced the behaviors and identities of its citizens, particularly those in service to the aristocracy.

Miss Kenton, the housekeeper at Darlington Hall, serves as another vital representation of the time. Her character exposes the limitations placed upon women in the workplace and society as a whole. Miss Kenton's yearning for companionship and her regret over lost opportunities illustrate the gender inequalities prevalent in the interwar period. Her character highlights how the material conditions of the time impacted individuals differently based on their gender.

Furthermore, the novel delves deeply into the political landscape of interwar Britain. It touches upon the policy of appeasement and its consequences, reflecting the socio-economic factors that led to this policy and, ultimately, World War II. Lord Darlington, the former employer of Stevens, represents a class that wields significant influence over political decisions. His misguided attempts at diplomacy with Nazi Germany underscore the dangerous interplay between the aristocracy and international politics during this period.

The novel also subtly alludes to the broader global context of the time. It hints at the impact of colonialism and imperialism on British society, as well as the changing dynamics of the British Empire. These allusions emphasize how the material conditions of the interwar period influenced Britain's position on the world stage and the challenges it faced in adapting to a changing global order.

Symbolism plays a significant role in Ishiguro's narrative, adding layers to the representation of interwar British society. The recurring motif of *The Remains of the Day* serves as a powerful symbol. It symbolizes the lingering regrets and unspoken emotions of individuals like Stevens who were constrained by the societal norms of the time. It signifies the remnants of a bygone era and the difficulty of acknowledging and reconciling with the past.

Stevens physical journey to visit Miss Kenton becomes a metaphorical exploration of his own emotional journey and, by extension, the societal transformation he witnesses. This journey serves as a representation of the British upper class's struggle to adapt to changing circumstances and let go of the illusions of grandeur.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro masterfully weaves the material conditions and representation to assess the interwar British society. Through meticulous character development, rich symbolism, and a nuanced narrative, Ishiguro provides a textured portrayal of a society in transition. The novel offers insights into the material conditions, power dynamics, and cultural representations of the time, shedding light on the complexities and contradictions of interwar British society. It serves as a profound commentary on the interplay between culture, history, and the individual experience within a society on the brink of transformation. Through the perspective of cultural materialism and representation this research find, Ishiguro

invites readers to explore the intricate web of influences that shaped interwar British society and thus to reflect on the enduring legacy of that period.

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