Morteza JAFARI
Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch
Department of English Language and Literature
Tabriz, Iran
jafarimorteza57@gmail.com

Naser MOTALLEBZADEH
Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch
Department of English Language and Literature
Tabriz, Iran
n.motallebzadeh@iaut.ac.ir

Naser DASHTPEYMA
Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch
Department of English Language and Literature
Tabriz, Iran
dashtpeyma_nasser@yahoo.com

UDK 821.111.09 Kazuo, I.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29162/ANAFORA.v9i1.5

Izvorni znanstveni članak
Original Research Article

Primljeno: 8. kolovoza 2020.
Received: 8 August 2020

Prihvaćeno: 13. ožujka 2022.
Accepted: 13 March 2022

"GENERATIVITY VERSUS STAGNATION": MIDLIFE CRISIS IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*

Abstract

This paper discusses midlife crisis as a driving force behind the thought and action of the protagonist of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. The whole novel contains a diary written by the English butler Stevens who relates his history of servitude at Darlington Hall and concludes with some revelations about the true nature of his past. Since the butler's account gives hints of his concern for the extent of his achievement in life, his reassessing act of delving into the past can be taken as an attempt to resolve his midlife crisis. Being the seventh stage of Erik Erikson's developmental psychology, a midlife crisis is primarily characterized by the binary "generativity versus stagnation" and the subject's struggle to decide on the meaning of life. Occurring between 40 and 65, midlife crisis is stimulated by the reconsideration of

social demands such as career and marriage. Applying this psychoanalytic approach to Stevens' experience of midlife crisis, the present research investigates the place of Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton, the former Stevens' employer and the latter his only love object, as embodiments of the social demands of career and marriage that the butler reviews in his midlife stage. Ultimately, this research discusses the butler's success in resolving his midlife crisis through considering the individuation process, namely self-awareness, self-actualization, and the caring power, which the protagonist goes through.

Keywords: Ishiguro, Erikson, midlife crisis, generativity, stagnation, individuation

Introduction

A reading of Ishiguro's novels reveals that all of them are characterized by the desire to recount the past. As Wojciech Drag points out, "All six novels in Ishiguro's output are narrated by characters who feel compelled to articulate what, until now, they have never really carefully examined—the turning points of their lives and the bearing they have had on their present" (25). Being a prime example of such a desire, Ishiguro's third novel *The Remains of the Day* recounts the story of Stevens, a butler who devoted a great deal of his life to serve Lord Darlington, one of Britain's most committed supporters of Nazi Germany. The novel can be called an account of the memory because of the fact that it is narrated by a first-person narrator and that the narrative is persistently communicated through looking back on the past. Deborah Guth supports the claim as she regards the storyline as "Ostensibly a trip down memory lane, […] an elegy for a gracious way of life that is no more and the narrative of a human life unweaving under one's eyes" (126). This article aims at seeing to what extent the novel can be read in the light of Erik Erikson's theory as the events are reviewed from the standpoint of an old-aged speaker, the past is continuously reevaluated, and the past is seen as the source of the present quandary.

The term "midlife crisis" refers to a developmental stage in Jungian and Eriksonian psychoanalysis in which individuals inevitably and irresistibly go through the archetypal experience of entering into middle-aged life when they review their possible accomplishment in life. Erikson's theory holds that an individual undergoes eight developmental stages, each of which describes a crucial psychosocial problem or crisis that the individual needs to face and cope with. Erikson structurally outlines the critical stages as follows: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity

versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair (Munley 314). It is in the stage "generativity versus stagnation" that midlife crisis generally appears, the one typically occurring between the ages of 40 and 65 when the subject may ask "Can I make my life count?" (Loue and Sajatovic 90) Thus, at this psychologically developmental stage, the subject looks for meaning made by his past activities.

Assuming Erikson's theory of midlife crisis in the stage "generativity versus stagnation" as the theoretical background, the present study investigates the psychological complexities of Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*. As the protagonist is obsessively involved with the apprehensive repercussions of his past decisions and struggles to give positive meanings to the professional career he chose in his youth, one can investigate how he is entangled in the binary of "generativity versus stagnation" in the decision over his professional achievements in life. Since Erikson's seventh stage of development is "a psychosocial crisis […] prompted by social demands such as marriage, parenthood, and career" (Loue and Sajatovic 387), it is possible to investigate how midlife crisis and the subject's attempts to overcome the stage are predetermined by social and historical contexts to which he belongs.

A "motoring trip" into the inside

Significantly, Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* begins with a journey, an archetypal undertaking which is traditionally a motivation for self-discovery and insight. Having received a letter from a former colleague, the housekeeper Miss Kenton, Stevens borrows his employer's car to initiate a "motoring trip" to the west of England with the aim of paying a visit to Miss Kenton. At first, the automobile journey "undertake[n] alone, in the comfort of Mr. Farraday's Ford" (4) is to be enjoyed in the beauty of the countryside of England; however, it practically turns out to be an expedition to self-examination and re-consideration of the past. Thus, the driving experience fades into a revisiting act of delving inside the self and memories which gradually creates an unlimited succession of associations, each of which shed light on an aspect of Stevens' life.

Stevens' recollections are mainly about his deceased master Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton, two important figures that form a great deal of his past. Considering the significant roles of Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton in the protagonist's life, Guth maintains "there are two hidden narratives, the one relating to

Stevens' public self as butler and to the class he serves, the other to what we may call his unseen love affair with Miss Kenton" (126). As the two dominant narratives of the butler's life, Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton respectively represent the "career" and the "marriage" sides of his life. In fact, the reconsideration of these two figures in his recollections in the midst of "a psychosocial crisis" indicate Stevens' struggles against his midlife crisis.

The achievements of Stevens in his relationships with Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton can be defined in terms of the binary "generativity versus stagnation." Stevens' job in Lord Darlington's household is to be decided in terms of being professionally productive or fruitless. Also, Stevens' romantic relationship with Miss Kenton, which is acknowledged to be his only romantic dependency, is to be reviewed as having any productivity. While the former indicates the protagonist's contribution to the society as a collective entity, the latter contains a more personal aspect of his life, suggesting his masculine potency and fertility. Thus, Stevens' review of the two dominant memories is a decision to regard his collective and personal actions in the past as generative or stagnant.

Stevens' journey into the inside is motivated by his employer's insistence on the adventure of driving off-road. Mr. Farraday, the American employer living in England, is not taken seriously at first because Stevens sees his suggestion as "another instance of an American gentleman's unfamiliarity with what was and what was not commonly done in England" (5). As an old Butler, Stevens is accustomed to being confined in English households merely carrying out his duties. Confronted with this suggestion of American liberalism, the conservative butler is perplexed how to answer: "I thus contented myself by saying simply: 'It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls'" (4-5). However, the butler has no choice but to find resistance futile and decides on taking the adventure.

Stevens' external and then internal adventures begin after that he is empowered and encouraged to be disentangled from servitude. His exploration of his own social roles begins when his master gives him the opportunity to feel important. Mr. Farraday insistently drives the butler out of "these very walls," giving him the needed self-esteem to review his social and personal contributions. Yet, it is noteworthy that the whole exploration of the past is "within these very walls." In fact, Stevens' identity and sense of the self are all determined by the conditions and situations existing at Darlington Hall.

The decision over "generativity versus stagnation" in Stevens' professional life is closely associated with the conditions at Darlington Hall. Soon after the invitation to adventure, Stevens reviews the extent of glory at Darlington Hall. He compares the old days of the Hall with the recent ones and concludes, "Recalling a time when I had had a staff of seventeen under me, and knowing how not so long ago a staff of twenty-eight had been employed here at Darlington Hall, the idea of devising a staff plan by which the same house would be run on a staff of four seemed, to say the least, daunting" (6). In fact, the days the butler compares are the ones before and after the time of the transference of proprietorship of the Hall from Lord Darlington to Mr. Farraday. These two epochs are so important for Stevens that he gets his identity and sense of self and achievement through them.

The prosperous days in the past are the things Stevens is proud of. The remembrance of those days is what leads to a feeling of achievement. Yet, the present state is admittedly far from the ideal and it is characterized by a sense of loss. From the very beginning, the butler decides on the binary of "generativity versus stagnation" in terms of a contrast between the past and the present. The contrast through remembrance makes the speaker-protagonist reflect on what is lost and what has been achieved. His preference for the past as generative is soon indicated through the title. The title, "conjur[ing] up the sense of transience and change" (Drag 36) and "draw[ing] a very clear dichotomy between the disappointing now and the idealised then" (Drag 36), sees the present as "the remains of the day," suggesting that he sees the past as glorious and ideal while the present as the residue of a lost grandeur. In fact, what is predominantly lost belongs to Lord Darlington's reign in the house while the present residue is dominated by Mr. Farraday.

Remarkably, Stevens' sense of self is closely associated with the masters and the place he serves: "our professional duty is not to our own foibles and sentiments, but to the wishes of our employer" (100). For Stevens, "generativity" is epitomized in Lord Darlington's nostalgic days while "stagnation" is associated with Mr. Farraday's ownership of Darlington Hall. The remembrance of Lord Darlington's days brings the protagonist a sense of achievement in his midlife reconsideration of his life, while the events in Mr. Farraday's household are at times the causes of some errors for the butler such that he acknowledges "Errors such as these which have occurred over the last few months have been, naturally enough, injurious to one's self-respect" (95). As the butler believes that "these

small errors of recent months have derived from nothing more sinister than a faulty staff plan" (5), he tries to rearrange the present based on the ethics of the past. In this decision, Miss Kenton finds a crucial role as Stevens begins the travel with the intention of bringing her to Darlington Hall. For him, the restoration of Miss Kenton is significantly the restoration of a lost grandeur which acts as a barometer for his achievements in midlife crisis. Thus, Stevens' "motoring trip" is done with the aim of bringing the past "generativity" to the present "stagnation."

Stevens' attempt to empower the present through the generative ethics of the past is significantly to be achieved through a female character who is his only romantic memory. The reunion with a reproductive entity is a complement for the sense of achievement and the "generativity" that Stevens tries to bring to the present. Though Stevens claims his relationship with Miss Kenton is "overwhelmingly professional in tone" (98), he proves to be highly obsessed with a frustrated love for her. This is best exemplified in an obsessive memory that has preoccupied Stevens for a long time. Seeing persistently himself standing next to a closed door, Stevens reviews his confrontation with Miss. Kenton following her date with a suitor with the result of the decision to marry him, the one that is not characterized with any hint of full satisfaction:

> One memory in particular has preoccupied me all morning—or rather, a fragment of a memory, a moment that has for some reason remained with me vividly through the years. It is a recollection of standing alone in the back corridor before the closed door of Miss Kenton's parlour; I was not actually facing the door, but standing with my person half turned towards it, transfixed by indecision as to whether or not I should knock; for at that moment, as I recall, I had been struck by the conviction that behind that very door, just a few yards from me, Miss Kenton was in fact crying. As I say, this moment has remained firmly embedded in my mind, as has the memory of the peculiar sensation I felt rising within me as I stood there like that. (143)

Stevens remembers the fact of Miss. Kenton meeting a suitor as "indeed a disturbing notion, for it was not hard to see that Miss Kenton's departure would constitute a professional loss of some magnitude, a loss Darlington Hall would have some difficulty recovering from" (115). While he interprets Miss. Kenton's marriage in terms of professional demands, the real narrative is Stevens' fiasco

in winning the hand of his only romantic object. In his midlife crisis, Stevens experiences fixation on the scene of the closed door because the relatively seemingly insignificant matters in the past have now seriously become important in the eyes of the butler: "there was surely nothing to indicate at the time that such evidently small incidents would render whole dreams forever irredeemable" (121). This compulsive contrast between the past and the present is in fact a review of the past and the decision on its fruitfulness from a midlife standpoint.

In his midlife crisis, Stevens finds some previously insignificant issues to be presently extremely important. His present state at Darlington Hall and his past loss of chance for Miss. Kenton are both frustrating for Stevens bristling him with a sense of "stagnation." Having received the letter from Miss Kenton by which Stevens thinks she indicates an unhappy marriage; the butler believes he has found the opportunity to turn "stagnation" into "generativity" in both the matters. In fact, he thinks the reunion of Darlington Hall and Miss Kenton results in an achievement which brings him satisfaction. This reunion, he seemingly unconsciously believes, is the key to overcome the midlife crisis stage, that is, achieving satisfactory prosperity in career through bringing Miss Kenton to Darlington Hall and finding another chance to succeed in marriage by taking advantage of Miss Kenton's self-assumed marital failure.

Stevens's affliction with the feelings of loss, remorse and anxiety indicates that he suffers from shortcomings of accomplishments in life. His "motoring trip" is in fact a time travel back into youthfulness with the aim of exerting changes on the present lifestyle through compensating past failures and false decisions. In fact, his assumed tactic against the crisis is the compensation of the time when he was "transfixed by indecision" (143). Though his remorse of the past comprises such important issues in midlife crisis as career and marriage, the butler struggles not to surrender but to surpass the feeling of "stagnation."

Distortion of the Past

Stevens proves to be afflicted with the complications coming from midlife crisis, but it is noteworthy that this diagnosis is concluded through reading between the lines as the butler shows to be hiding his true motives and intentions. As it was pointed out, professionalism is a veneer that conceals butler's romanticism. This means that the reader in the process of reading the novel has to wrestle with an unreliable narrator-protagonist who is not honest even with himself.

Thus, for the most part of the novel, confronted with this psychologically complicated narrator-protagonist, one needs to look for his genuine psychological drives through the signs he leaves behind.

In his midlife stage, Stevens is clearly concerned with compensating his former shortcomings. What is at stake is his failure in the sixth stage in Eriksonian developmental psychology, namely "intimacy versus isolation." This stage holds that "The capacity to be involved in an intimate, loving relationship requires a sufficient sense of self and sufficient trust to be willing to reveal oneself truthfully to another person" (Steinberg et. al 438). The fact that Stevens suffers from the state of being "transfixed by indecision" in his treatment of Miss Kenton shows his failure in completing the psychological task of resolving the struggle of "intimacy versus isolation." Remarkably, this stage happens during young adulthood, that is, between the ages of 18 to 40, and the strength that develops from its resolution is love (Steinberg et. al 438). Stevens' memories indicate that his inability and indecision to achieve love in his young adulthood at Darlington Hall is the result of a disintegrated sense of self.

This shortcoming in Stevens' personality is frequently not confronted by the protagonist himself in his review of the past. The idea of professionalism, which when remembered infuses the butler with the posture of commitment, dedication, and dignity, is in fact a defense mechanism to preclude anxiety arising from an unacceptable conduct in the past. Being a mechanism of the unconscious mind as repressed feelings are not under the voluntary control of a given person, defense mechanism manipulates, denies, or alters reality in order to shield one against feelings of anxiety and undesirable impulses to ultimately maintain their self-esteem or self-schema (Tan 40). Defense mechanism may appear in different forms including denial, displacement, sublimation, projection, and rationalization, each of which is characterized by evasion of confrontation with a painful reality (White 101-02). In the case of Stevens, defense mechanisms of denial and rationalization are predominantly at work in preventing him from coming across the fact of his romantic inclination for Miss Kenton as well as his frustration to approach her as a result of a disintegrated self.

In a significant deal of narration, Stevens denies the fact of being unable to express his love to Miss Kenton by rationalizing the relationship through explaining away the painful experience of frustration with the justification of professionalism. However, the real reason is his insufficient sense of self which

precludes him from resolving the struggle of "intimacy versus isolation." This Eriksonian sixth stage envisages a rapport between self and the other as winning "intimacy" over "isolation" involves "having genuine concern for the other person's needs and being willing to set aside one's own needs at times. People who cannot develop the capacity for intimacy are vulnerable to social isolation" (Steinberg et. al 438). As his recurrent memory of the door reveals, the hesitant Stevens is unable to express his concern for Miss Kenton's feelings "at that moment crying" (5), an indication of his frustration in resolving the sixth stage which shows itself in the social isolation that continues to be a dominant trait right into his midlife years. At the time of the narration of the novel, Stevens describes his whole life confined "within these very walls," remembering the past merely in his service at Darlington Hall. He shows resistance against his master's insistence on leaving the "walls" for a short period and remarkably the only motivation that makes him leave is the opportunity to compensate former misconducts.

Though Stevens initiates his journey to the West Country on the pretext of bringing Darlington Hall back into its heyday, the real reason is his attempt to give wholeness to his disintegrated self. This midlife decision is key to what Carl Jung terms individuation, a process of self-actualization and self-awareness by which one discovers meaning and purpose in life and actualizing who he or she really is and capable of becoming (Seaward 102). However, as Stevens' real intention is concealed by his defense mechanisms, one needs to discover his compensatory journey through the signs or clues he leaves behind. As Amit Marcus points out, "the reader oscillates between clues that reinforce Stevens's version by making it cogent and reasonable, and clues that undermine it" (134). A conspicuous sign is the way the butler refers to his former female colleague. He insists on calling her "Miss Kenton" rather than "Mrs. Benn," though she has long been married. Stevens does so by the justification that he refers to her in the way she has long been in his mind. Pointing out such a referral, Wojciech Drag argues that "His admission that in his "mind" she has always remained "Miss Kenton" is an indication of his refusal to acknowledge the change in the former housekeeper's status. By the same token, Stevens reveals his inability to accept the loss of Miss Kenton as a romantic figure in his life" (Drag 46). In fact, Stevens' way of referral is a sign of his defense mechanism of denial, which itself provides broader information about his intention of initiating the journey.

In the process of narration, Stevens frequently deceives himself, and subsequently the reader, to the point that he at times subverts truths. In addition to his evasion of truth about Miss Kenton, Stevens is also in an illusory world about his former master at Darlington Hall. Stevens has actually idealized his days at Lord Darlington's Hall, a fact that gradually becomes apparent in the course of narration. For him, Lord Darlington is a paradigm of decency and honesty, a true lord who is described in the novel as "[a] classic English gentleman. Decent, honest, well-meaning" (70). Nevertheless, Lord Darlington has some dark aspects that are frequently denied by Stevens. His relations with Oswald Mosley's "blackshirts," a right-wing British extremist organization, Caroline Barnet, an anti-Semite, and Nazi diplomats are all denied by the butler as "absurd allegations" (97). The defense mechanism of denial is exerted by the unconscious mind due to the fact that Stevens' sense of self and identity is nourished by the masters he serves. In fact, in his midlife stage, the butler, whose whole life is dedicated to servitude, looks for achievement in profession and as a result he has no way but to idolize and idealize Lord Darlington.

In his detainment within the walls of Darlington Hall under the command of Mr. Farraday, Stevens undergoes the stage of midlife crisis, and, in his reviews of his achievements, he mingles the past with illusory idealism. He represents Lord Darlington as a paragon of humanism and a man of "great moral stature" who struggles to safeguard "an end to injustice and suffering" in the wake of the Great War (50). He also refers to the eminent people visiting Darlington Hall to give further credibility to the Lord's conducts: "Powerful and famous gentlemen became regular visitors to the house—including, I remember, figures such as Lord Daniels, Professor Maynard Keynes, and Mr. H. G. Wells, the renowned author, as well as others who, because they came 'off the record', I should not name here" (50). In his reviews, the butler remembers how Lord Darlington uttered nice words on freedom and democracy: "We're always the last, Stevens. Always the last to be clinging on to outmoded systems. But sooner or later, we'll need to face up to the facts. Democracy is something for a bygone era. The world's far too complicated a place now for universal suffrage and such like" (135). All such associations of Lord Darlington with the luminaries and words of grandeur are actually a solace for the possible lack of achievement in the butler's midlife crisis. Remarkably, this assessment of achievement is done through the lord since in the words of Kathleen Wall, Stevens's "sense of his own worth has been precariously constructed upon Darlington's" (28).

As Stevens' claims about his relations with Miss Kenton turn out to be far from his real motives, his idealization of Lord Darlington gradually fades into the dark realities that surround him. In the course of his journey, Stevens begins to reconsider the nature of his Lord's political engagement during the inter-war era and ultimately to revisit the course and meaning of his own life and being. Kathleen Wall points out that the key to understanding the realities at Darlington Hall is "to apply our own knowledge to the historical events to which Stevens refers, and thereby to evaluate for ourselves the effectiveness of Lord Darlington's career" (28). For instance, Lord Darlington's fervent belief in the discriminating and vicious nature of the Treaty of Versailles for the peace of Europe appears to the reader to be historically true. However, the lord's belief in a commanding and operative oligarchy to disentangle the problems of the depression is extremely suspected to the point that readers are invited to think about honesty in the lord's humanism: "Germany and Italy have set their houses in order by acting. . . . Look at Germany and Italy, Stevens. See what strong leadership can do if it's allowed to act" (198). At this point, as indicated by the reader's knowledge of history, Darlington's association with fascism is taken to be a sign of the lord's ineffective and inhuman career. Remarkably, Stevens himself gradually proves to be "aware of the historical outcome, an awareness he later articulates on several occasions when he acknowledges matter-of-factly that his Lordship's efforts were 'misguided'" (Wall 28-29).

The idealistic nature of Stevens' diary gradually fades into a confessional narrative through which the butler comes across the realities of his master's life and career. Since self-actualization and self-awareness are unavoidable components of individuation which itself plays a key role in resolving midlife crisis, Stevens has no choice but to face the realities of those who decide on his identity and sense of self. As a result, Stevens discloses Lord Darlington's relationship with the pre-war fascist Mosley, recounts the story of the lord's discharge of two Jewish maids because of racial prejudices and refers to his emergent affection with Nazi leaders, particularly Herr Ribbentrop (92). This leads to the fact that Lord Darlington becomes finally a justifier of German and Italian Fascism. Thus, the previously idolized master is toppled down, and "[f]or all his grandiose pronouncements, it appears, Lord Darlington is at best a political naïve let loose in the dangerous arena of pre-war politics […] an amateur and pawn in the German dictator's hands, helping to lead his country to the brink of a terrible war without even seeing it" (Deborah 127). The acknowledgement of Lord Dar-

lington's naivety is actually a confession of Stevens' own naïve way of leading his life, a confession that has the personal advantage of self-awareness in the course of resolving a midlife crisis as well as the social and collective advantage of contributing to the later generation.

Collective Voice

In the process of coming across the true aspects of his personality, Stevens finds new concerns. When enmeshed in his bragging fancies of his servitude, Stevens sees "dignity" in being surrendered to the lord's demands: "great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing. They wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit … It is, as I say, a matter of 'dignity'" (29). However, in the course of coming across the dark realities he has ignored for long, Stevens envisages a very different role for butlers: "Let us establish this quite clearly: a butler's duty is to provide good service. It is not to meddle in the great affairs of the nation […] This may seem obvious, but then one can immediately think of too many instances of butlers who, for a time anyway, thought quite differently" (136). In his transition from an absolutely submissive butler to the one who thinks "quite differently," Stevens comes to criticize the very idealism with which he has long been involved: "Indeed, Mr. Harry Smith's words tonight remind me very much of the sort of misguided idealism which beset significant sections of our generation throughout the twenties and thirties" (136). In addition to the significantly self-conscious reference to the question of "misguided idealism," the noteworthy issue in Stevens' comment is his concern for the "generation," a concern that is central to midlife crisis.

In the Eriksonian seventh stage, the binary of "generativity versus stagnation" significantly contains the subject's social concern. Generativity stands in the opposite side of emotional stagnation in both its personal and social forms and thus "Erikson and other, referred to generativity as an individual's ability to look beyond himself or herself and to care for others as well as have concern for future generations" (Loue and Sajatovic 387). This social concern means that "[t]he primary focus of this stage is to assist younger generations in developing and leading productive and fulfilling lives" (387). As Widick et al. point out, "The virtue of this stage is 'care,' an evolutionary strength that allows man to overcome his ambivalence and actively nurture that which has been created–

children, places, ideas, institutions" (9). Thus, the process of resolving personal ambivalence leads to the stage of caring for others. In Stevens' diary, the social concern shows itself in the frequent reference to the contemporary generation:

> There are certain members of our profession who would have it that it ultimately makes little difference what sort of employer one serves; who believe that the sort of idealism prevalent amongst our generation–namely the notion that we butlers should aspire to serve those great gentlemen who further the cause of humanity–is just high-flown talk with no grounding in reality. (94)

As this excerpt points out, Stevens' voice represents a collective concern, considering the public, rather than personal, involvement with idealism. While the beginning of the diary represents the butler predominantly obsessed with a personal approach to life, the timespan following his self-awareness in the "motoring trip" becomes characterized by a caring stance towards his generation. In this transition, he is no longer a self-deluded character obsessed with his master's grandeur; rather, he is now a disillusioned, self-sufficient man who has become audacious enough to question the collective idealism from which his generation suffers. Thus, the diary, though sometimes still hiding some aspects of the protagonist's life, finds an illuminating role through politicizing and historicizing the narrative.

Throughout the narrative, Stevens is entangled in the binary of personal versus collective values. This binary is actually a reflection of the binary existing in midlife crisis when the subject reviews the personal gains to finally conclude the extent of his or her contribution to collective values. In the beginning, Stevens' defense mechanism denies the unfavorable aspects of his servitude in Lord Darlington's Hall because certifying the truth may mean that all his professional efforts led to detrimental ends. In fact, this evasion of truth is founded on the assumption that "Stevens disclaims any element in his life that would question his self-image as always and utterly devoted to the well-being of humanity" (Marcus 133). Stevens' defense mechanism denies the truths to keep the positive self-image of the butler and to finally create the spurious satisfaction of doing good to humanity by serving an eminent lord. However, the butler seems to be growing dissatisfied with the self-deluding nature of his diary and he now finds contribution to collective values as a way to achieve personal satisfaction.

Given his diary a politicizing and historicizing aspect, the butler considers the "misguided idealism" prevalent among the "generation throughout the twenties and thirties." The timespan he refers to contains the years before and after the first World War when Lord Darlington is busy justifying the ethics of fascism. At this time, the butler informs, the lord had established an unofficial international conference whose aim was to "discuss the means by which the harshest terms of the Versailles treaty could be revised" (51). A great deal of Stevens' attempts to justify the ways of his lord to humanity appear in his forty-page account of the conference; however, it gradually becomes clear that "the efforts to clear Darlington's name lead Stevens further into the moral quagmire in which his master had sunk, until he realizes that no further attempts at justification are possible" (Marcus 139). It is at this point of "moral quagmire" that he comes across the idea of "misguided idealism" to which he may have long contributed and from which he thinks he and his "generation" need to escape.

From the time of being enlightened about the nature of his servitude, Stevens' personal diary turns into a kind of "mirror for butlers" to warn fellow butlers against absolutely submissive servitude. By historicizing the account of his profession in the political background of the 1920s and 1930s, the butler confesses how his ignorant, submissive service at Darlington Hall contributed to the collapse of the very "humanity" his lord was proudly struggling for. In fact, Stevens politicizes the diary by uncovering the account of Lord Darlington's meetings with British and Nazi politicians and by confessing the stigma of political treason that was attached to his lord during and after the Second World War. The acknowledgment of Darlington's infamous life is a great blow to the butler's sense of self, but he can at least be proud of the fact that he has been audacious enough to admit his fruitless career to finally warn his generation, thus satisfying his social concern in midlife crisis.

Stevens' account can thus be seen as a struggle to settle the conflict between personal concerns and the collective ones, a trial from which he appears to have come out somehow successful. Though the narrator continues to be somehow unreliable at different stage of narration, it is clear that "Stevens is at least partially aware of his motives and of the consequences of his behavior" (Wall 34). Following Stevens' incredulity towards Darlington's justice as a result of the lord's decision to dismiss the Jewish maids, an event that he acknowledges "every instinct opposed the idea of dismissal" (99), the narrative finds a collective concern as the butler begins dissociating himself from his employer's val-

ues. Remarkably, the motivation for Stevens' confession of Darlington's discriminatory decision is the responsibility he feels for the other, that is, the very "care for others" that is an indispensable component of "generativity." This concern indicates that the butler has been successful in resolving his midlife crisis in his internal exploration. This comes to its acme when Stevens in a straightforward discussion with a stranger resists his defense mechanism and assumes responsibility for his own actions:

> Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I *trusted*. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that? (164-165)

It was possible for Stevens to project his failings on Lord Darlington to vindicate himself and keep his self-image, but he comes to be accepting his own ignorance. This self-awareness which can lead to self-actualization is a sign of his success in achieving individuation in his midlife crisis. Thus, Stevens's narrative has a "therapeutic purpose" that can be taken as a way to achieve the "talking cure" (Drag 52). In the closing lines of the novel, Stevens grows so self-aware of his psychological need to delve into the past that he in a metafiction fashion clearly discusses the pros and cons of reviewing one's former conducts:

> what can we ever gain in forever looking back and blaming ourselves if our lives have not turned out quite as we might have wished? The hard reality is, surely that for the likes of you and I there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world what employ our services. What is the point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took? Surely it is enough that the likes of you and I at least try to make our small contribution count for something true and worthy. And if some of us are prepared to sacrifice much in life in order to pursue such aspirations, surely that is in itself, whatever the outcome, cause for pride and contentment. (165)

Stevens' success in achieving a degree of self-awareness about his place in the world is the source of "pride and contentment," regardless of "whatever the outcome" would be. His failure to bring Miss Kenton back to Darlington Hall and ultimately marry her is something that he comes across. He learns Miss Kenton has come to love her husband as, in her words, "[y]ou spend so much time with someone, you find you get used to him" (161), and that the two "are looking forward to the grandchild" (160). Though Stevens does not realize the dream of reuniting with Miss Kenton, he achieves self-awareness in some aspects of his life. After coming back to Darlington Hall, Stevens decides to "be in a position to pleasantly surprise" Mr. Farraday by performing his favorite "bantering" approach (166), which the butler finds distressing in the beginning of the novel, but "which in the United States, no doubt, is a sign of a good, friendly understanding between employer and employee" (11). Though this decision to succumb to his new employer's manners can be taken as an indication of a new form of excessively submissive servitude, it can be taken as his ability to surpass the old ways and to hobnob with a well-meaning employer who is liberal enough to let his butler resolve his midlife crisis.

Conclusion

Written in the genre of a diary, Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* can be taken as an account of its protagonist's involvement with midlife crisis. Being predominantly obsessed with the binary of "generativity versus stagnation" regarding Stevens' achievements in life, the narrative can be broadly divided into two sections: the first one recounts the protagonist's idealization of his former employer, and the second one contains the protagonist's deconstruction of the same employer. In both approaches to his former lord, Stevens seeks out his own sense of "pride and contentment" in an attempt to associate his life with generativity. His glorification and justification of his lord is in fact closely associated with glorifying and justifying his past life and achievements in it. On the other hand, the act of uncovering the truths behind the formerly glorifying façade is an attempt to surpass self-delusion to finally achieve a grander satisfaction in life. While the glorification in the first section creates a sense of contentment, the butler comes to see it as spuriously constructed, and as a result decides to achieve a more genuine type of achievement. This leads to a serious revision of his interpretation of the past by politicizing and historicizing it. This means that his narrative moves from a personal concern to a collective one. Since the

second type of contentment, by being grounded in self-awareness and self-actualization, is practically implemented, it becomes a means of the resolution of midlife crisis. Though Stevens acknowledges the stagnant aspects of his life, he is ultimately a generative figure by being able to produce a confessional, informative narrative that shows concerns for fellow butlers and citizens.

Works Cited

Drąg, Wojciech. *Revisiting Loss: Memory, Trauma and Nostalgia in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Guth, Deborah. "Submerged Narratives in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2. Apr. 1999, pp. 126–37.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*. Faber and Faber, 2009.

Loue, Sana, and Martha Sajatovic. *Encyclopedia of Aging and Public Health*. Springer Science and Business Media, 2008.

Marcus, Amit. "Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*: The Discourse of Self-Deception." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 4, no.1, 2006, pp. 129-50.

Munley, Patrick H. "Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development and Vocational Behavior." *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1975, pp. 314–19.

Seaward, Brian Luke. *Managing Stress*. Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2017.

Steinberg, Laurence et al. *Life-span Development: Infancy through Adulthood*. Cengage Learning, 2010.

Tan, Siang-Yang. *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective*. Baker Academic, 2011.

Wall, Kathleen. "*The Remains of the Day* and its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration." *Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 24, no.1, 1994, pp. 18-42.

White, Hayden. *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*. JHU Press, 2000.

Widick, Carole, et.al. "Erik Erikson and Psychosocial Development." *New Directions for Student Services*, vol. 1978, no. 4, 1978, pp. 1-17.

„GENERATIVNOST NASUPROT STAGNACIJI": KRIZA SREDNJIH GODINA U ROMANU *NA KRAJU DANA* KAZUA ISHIGURA

Sažetak

Morteza JAFARI
Islamsko sveučilište u Azadu, Ogranak u Tabrizu
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost
Tabriz, Iran
jafarimorteza57@gmail.com

Naser MOTALLEBZADEH
Islamsko sveučilište u Azadu, Ogranak u Tabrizu
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost
Tabriz, Iran
n.motallebzadeh@iaut.ac.ir

Naser DASHTPEYMA
Islamsko sveučilište u Azadu, Ogranak u Tabrizu
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost
Tabriz, Iran
dashtpeyma_nasser@yahoo.com

Rad analizira krizu srednjih godina kao pokretačku silu misli i djelovanja protagonista romana *Na kraju dana* Kazua Ishigura. Roman tvore dnevnički zapisi engleskoga batlera Stevensa o vlastitoj povijesti ropstva u Darlington Hallu te otkrićima o pravoj prirodi te prošlosti. Budući da batlerova priča upućuje na dvojbe spram životnih postignuća, njegov povratak u prošlost moguće je shvatiti kao pokušaj prevladavanja krize srednjih godina. Kao sedmu fazu razvojne psihologije prema Eriku Eriksonu, krizu srednjih godina ponajviše karakteriziraju binarni odnos „generativnost nasuprot stagnaciji" i subjektova nastojanja da dokuči smisao života. Aktivna između 40. i 65. godine života, kriza srednjih godina potaknuta je preispitivanjem društvenih zahtjeva poput, primjerice, karijere i braka. Sagledavanjem Stevensova iskustva krize srednjih godina kroz navedeni psihoanalitički pristup, rad istražuje položaj lorda Darlingtona, Stevensova nekadašnjeg poslodavca, i jedinog ljubavnog interesa, gospođice Kenton, kao utjelovljenja društvenih zahtjeva karijere i braka koje batler preispituje. U konačnici, rad go-

vori o batlerovu prevladavanju krize srednjih godina kroz razmatranje protagonistova procesa individuacije, odnosno samosvijesti, samoaktualizacije i moći brižnosti.

Ključne riječi: Kazuo Ishiguro, Erik Erikson, kriza srednjih godina, generativnost, stagnacija, individuacija