

Heteroglossia In Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains Of The Day*

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Introduction

In this paper I intend to deal with Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989) from the point of view of novelistic dialogue or heteroglossia. Bakhtin's theory of intersecting voices in the novel can be considered a paradigm of freedom, especially the freedom of speech. The apparently single-languaged narrative incorporates different voices, world views and languages which point towards the freedom of speech, the plurality of voices.

Starting from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia I will examine the parodic stylization of incorporated languages in the novel, especially the butler's confession as a double-accented, double-style hybrid construction. I will argue that the novel is a parodic representation of Englishness, and will try to map character zones, showing how fragments of character speech are filtered through Stevens's speech which is in its turn appropriated by the author's voice.

Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia

Bakhtin argues that the novel is essentially double-voiced or heteroglot: beneath the single-languaged surface there is always speech diversity. A comic playing with languages, a story not from the author but from a narrator, posited author or character, character speech, character zones and various framing genres are instances in which languages are used in an indirect, distanced manner. This relativizing of linguistic consciousness is the basis of heteroglossia in the novel.¹ Heteroglossia is another's speech in another's language. This double-voiced discourse expresses the direct intention of the character who is speaking and the refracted intention of the author simultaneously.

¹ See Bakhtin, Mikhail, "Heteroglossia in the Novel," in C. Emerson and M. Holquist, eds., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982, 323.

There is a potential dialogue embedded in a comic, ironic or parodic discourse, the refracting discourse of the narrator, the refracting discourse in the language of a character and the discourse of an incorporated genre. This is a dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages.¹

Heteroglossia or other-languagedness has its origins in “the image of another’s language and outlook on the world, simultaneously represented and representing.”² Language becomes the image of language, the image of the direct word. Someone else’s language may be imitated, reworked or appropriated in the novel, however, it is not always clear where the direct authorial word ends and where a parodic or stylized playing with the characters’ language begins. Character zones or voice zones are not separated from authorial speech in any formally compositional or syntactic way.

In his theory of the novelistic dialogue Bakhtin underscores the connection between different languages and the corresponding belief-systems (verbal-ideological or socio-ideological, semantic-axiological conceptual systems as he calls them). Therefore he conceives of the novel as a genre which is on the border between the completed, dominant literary language and the extraliterary languages that know heteroglossia.³ He conceives of language in terms of its social roots or social embeddedness, emphasizing that heteroglossia is in fact social heteroglossia. In Bakhtin’s view novelistic discourse means a battle between points of view, value judgements and emphases that the characters introduce into the seemingly unitary language of the novel. The language of the novel is infected by “mutually contradictory intentions, and stratifications; words, sayings, expressions, definitions and epithets are scattered throughout it, infected with others’ intentions with which the author is to some extent at odds, and through which his own personal intentions are refracted.”⁴ The concluding remark of this passage is most important from the point of view of the social embeddedness of different languages: “We sense acutely the various distances between the author and the various aspects of his language, which smack of the social universes and belief systems of others.”

¹ Bakhtin, Mikhail, op.cit., 324-5.

² Bakhtin, Mikhail, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in David Lodge ed., *Modern Literary Theory*. London: Longman, 1984, 128.

³ Bakhtin, Mikhail, op.cit., 144.

⁴ See Bakhtin, Mikhail, “Heteroglossia in the Novel,” in C. Emerson and M. Holquist, eds., *The Dialogic Imagination*, 316.

According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia in the novel can be composed in several ways. In case of the comic novel, a multiplicity of languages and belief systems are incorporated in the novel, but these languages are kept within the limits of the literary language. Also, they are not consolidated into fixed storytellers but take an impersonal form. Various degrees of parodic stylization of incorporated languages predominate in the comic novel.

Another form of organizing heteroglossia in the novel is the use of a personified and concretely posited author or teller. The posited author is the carrier of a particular verbal-ideological linguistic belief system with a particular perspective on the world and particular value judgements. "Particular" here is defined against the direct discourse of the author and the "normal" literary language and narrative. The presence of a posited author or teller distanced from the real author has the effect of showing the object of representation as well as the expected literary horizon in a different light. Narrators or posited authors are valuable because of their limited and specific belief systems. Their speech is called *another's speech in another's language* (as compared to the potential direct discourse of the real author and a particular variant of the literary language, respectively).¹ In the case of a posited author there are two stories to be read: the narrator's and the author's story. The reader senses two levels at each moment in the narrative: the level of the narrator and that of the author. The author's language differs from the narrator's language but also of the literary language to which the story opposes itself. He makes use of the dialogue of languages.

The language used by characters is another form of incorporating heteroglossia in the novel. Each character's speech possesses its own belief system. The character speech refracts authorial intentions, introducing speech diversity and stratification in the authorial word. A character in a novel always has a zone of his own, a sphere of influence extending beyond the limits of his direct discourse. Within the character zone a dialogue is played out between the author and the characters.²

Finally, the incorporation of various genres is one of the fundamental forms of heteroglossia in the novel. The incorporated genres preserve their own structural integrity within the novel as well as their own linguistic and stylistic peculiarities. The linguistic unity of the novel is thus stratified.

¹ Bakhtin, Mikhail, op.cit., 313.

² Bakhtin, Mikhail, op.cit., 320.

After presenting Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia I will focus on the way heteroglossia is organized in Ishiguro's novel, *The Remains of the Day*.

The butler's confession

The ageing butler, Stevens, who has served in the stately home of Darlington Hall for over thirty years is both the main character and the narrator of Ishiguro's third novel. At the moment when he begins his narration (July 1956) he is employed by Mr Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the Hall after Lord Darlington's death. Stevens takes a trip to the West country, driving his new employer's Ford to Salisbury, then Taunton, Tavistock, Moscombe and finally Little Compton in Cornwall. Mr Farraday encourages him to take a holiday and since he has received a nostalgic letter from Miss Kenton, the former housekeeper at Darlington Hall, he decides to leave the house where he has spent most of his adult life and visit her in Cornwall. The alleged reason for the trip is to persuade Miss Kenton to return to Darlington as there is a staff shortage.

Stevens's visit to the West country is an occasion for him to ruminate the past, the great days in the 1920s and 30s when Lord Darlington organized unofficial meetings between influential politicians in the hope of changing the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty and the course of European politics after the First World War. The trip also gives Stevens an occasion to think about his own identity.

The butler's first person singular narration refracts and is refracted by other characters' speech and it is appropriated by the author's speech. The novel which is a blend between confession and travel literature, has Stevens as the personified and concretely posited author or rather, teller (the oral nature of the narrative taken into account). Stevens, the posited author is the carrier of a particular verbal-ideological linguistic belief system with a particular perspective on the world and particular value judgements. More precisely, his beliefs, world view and value judgements have their root in his English sense of self, his identity as a great butler (for this is how he would like to call himself.) There is the level of the narrator (Stevens's belief system filled with his objects, meanings and emotional expressions) and that of the author who speaks through Stevens's story. As Bakhtin says, we figure out the author's emphases that overlie the subject of the story and at the same

time we figure out the story itself and the figure of Stevens, the narrator revealed in the process of telling his story.¹

Hermione Lee praises the novel for its “extraordinary act of mimicry (...), an impeccably professional miming of the thoughts of an impeccable professional”.² The butler’s speech is part of his “attire”, part of the role he assumes, his gentlemanly behaviour based on dignity. This latter is a concept that he painstakingly tries to define, measuring against it all his acts, his whole identity:

And let me now posit this: ‘dignity’ has to do crucially with a butler’s ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits. Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation. For such persons, being a butler is like playing some pantomime role; a small push, a slight stumble, and the façade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath. The great butlers are great by the virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing. They wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone. It is, as I say, a matter of ‘dignity’.³

The mimicry of a butler’s speech (“butlerspeak”, as David Lodge calls it⁴) is indeed masterful in Ishiguro’s novel. What makes it even more distinctive is that it is the mime of a mime. As Lewis points out, Stevens impersonates a diction, register and style that is not his own:

The butler mimics a language above his station to create the impression of being the ‘gentlemen’s gentleman’. Yet despite his general fluency in the language of his superiors, there is something absurd about Stevens’ speech. He strives too hard to be formal and correct, especially in his vocabulary; (...) The strain is also there in the syntax, which is alternately stiff and slithery (...) Stevens (...) is speaking a

¹ Bakhtin, Mikhail, op.cit., 314.

² Lee, Hermione, “Quiet Desolation,” *New Republic* 22 January 1990: 38, quoted by Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 93.

³ Ishiguro, Kazuo, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber& Faber, 1989), 43. Abbreviated in the following as *RD*.

⁴ Lodge, David, “*The Unreliable Narrator*,” in *The Art of Fiction*. (New York, Viking: 1992), 155, quoted by Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 94.

displaced language, a discourse that is not his own. Patterns of speech innate in Lord Darlington have to be acquired by Stevens, and continually reinforced.¹

The displaced language spoken by Stevens often leads to confusion: his identity is mistaken several times. The chauffeur at Mortimer's Pond mistakes him for a gentleman: "Couldn't make you out for a while, see, 'cause you talk almost like a gentleman." (*RD*, 119) The village people Stevens meets at Moscombe also think he is a gentleman. Mr Farraday half-jokingly asks him whether he is the "real thing": "I mean to say, Stevens, this *is* a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You are the real thing, aren't you?" (*RD*, 124)

Displacement of language and displacement of identity are central issues in the novel. Denial and displacement of his real feelings are the price Stevens has to pay in order to raise to the professional heights epitomized by his father. Dignity he achieves, passing through extremely trying circumstances, but he does so at the expense of his personal feelings. He displaces private obligations (refuses to attend to his dying father and misses several opportunities to show empathy towards Miss Kenton), persuading himself that these are merely distractions from his public duty. "The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost"², announces Stevens. Dignity in his view consists of never abandoning the professional being he inhabits. Lewis raises the question of how authentic the butler is and comes to the conclusion that Stevens is always conscious of himself as a butler and therefore never natural and spontaneous in his vocation. "If he was a genuine, faithful butler he wouldn't be 'acting' at all. He would simply *be* a butler."³

Although Steven is most proud of having been in the service of Lord Darlington, and therefore closer to "the great hub of things", he simply denies it later on when it transpires that his commitment has unpleasant ideological consequences. He deceives others and himself and even admits telling "white lies" as the "simplest means of avoiding unpleasantness" (*RD*, 126).

¹ Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 94. (*RI*, 42-43).

² Lewis, Barry, *op.cit.*, 85.

Galen Strawson¹ calls the butler's speech "plonking but catching, sub-Jeevesian, PC Plod Witness Box English." This rather confusing phrase needs some explanation. Strawson suggests that Stevens's speech is heavy, moving slowly ("plonking" and plodding), but easy to remember ("catching"). He compares the butler's speech to that of P.G.Wodehouse's butler, Jeeves (implying that it is inferior to it) and refers to the confessional character of the narration (epitomized by the "Witness Box"). Lewis interprets this latter as a reference to the difficulty of speech: "Like a constable in court, Stevens cannot talk with ease because his mouth is full of words."² The "PC English" is somewhat confusing here as I do not think we can apply the coloniser/colonised paradigm to the relationship between Lord Darlington and Stevens. Lewis remarks that this paradigm can be mapped on to the class imbalance existing between them and makes reference to postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry³, more precisely, his idea that colonisers desire the mimicry of the colonised to feel comfortable with an 'other' who is almost the same, but not quite. Lewis contends that Stevens speaks English as though it would be a foreign language and argues that the reason for this is that he has to pretend to be complicit with the class he serves. Another reason mentioned by Lewis is the butler's attempt to maintain a self-space in which all the traces of a personal life have been extinguished.

The butler's behaviour and linguistic behaviour centre around the ideal of unobtrusiveness required by his profession. He is a self-repressed, subdued temperament, his speech characterised by "the inarticulateness of irrelevant wordiness".⁴ As Lewis formulates it,

Stevens's euphemisms and circumlocutions form a 'linguistic mask'. This mask hides his feelings, and his inward self behind the façade of the fastidious valet. It is a false face he has fashioned over many years, but it is far from perfect. A great deal of the pathos of the novel lies in the reader's recognition of the clumsy skull beneath the capable skin.⁵

¹ Strawson, Galen, "Tragically disciplined and dignified," *TLS* 19-25 May 1989: 535.

² Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 94.

³ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 125-33.

⁴ Strawson, Galen, op.cit., 535.

⁵ Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 95.

Although Stevens's speech is indeed dominated by euphemisms and circumlocutions, we must not forget that besides the "gentlemanly talk" there is also another voice (part of the butler's speech) which comes close to the real author's speech. As the quotation shows, the discrepancy between the posited author's speech and that of the real author is diminished, refraction of authorial speech is at its lowest degree, in other words, Stevens is portrayed with sympathy, quoted with reverence instead of irony:

But what is the sense in forever speculating what might have happened had such and such a moment turned out differently? One could presumably drive oneself to distraction in this way. In any case, while it is all very well to talk of 'turning points', one can surely only recognize such moments in retrospect. Naturally, when one looks back to such instances today, they may indeed take the appearance of being crucial, precious moments in one's life; but of course, at the time, this was not the impression one had. (*RD*, 179.)

Hiding and revealing

Ishiguro's novel is ingenious in its play with the complex mechanism of hiding and revealing. Although we can argue that it is a parodic stylization of the butler's speech, we cannot say that it is a comic novel, rather, it is a masterly blend of the comic (parodic) and the tragical. As Strawson points out, the tragedy in this novel lies in the butler's failure of communication. *The Remains of the Day*: "records the accumulating costs of silence; the way denial spreads its effects, establishing complex diversionary circuitry in the mind. It examines the action of blocked regret - the dangerous loyalty of this emotion as it struggles with the devices of self-deception, and steadily retrieves and corrects the memories that give the truth, whether or not they can be understood."¹

Stevens obstinately refuses to acknowledge Miss Kenton's love for him and his own love for her. Similarly, he is unwilling (or unable) to acknowledge that he has spent his life serving a master whose work turned out to be without value. He hides his real intentions and wishes even from himself. He is an "innocent masterpiece of self-repression"².

¹ Strawson, Galen, *op.cit.*, 535.

² Strawson, Galen, *op.cit.*, 535.

His manner of speech, the circuitous, eloquent sentences serve his method of “brilliant inconsequentiality”¹. Let us take an example from the Prologue. Stevens’s fuss about staff shortage hides the real reason why he decides to drive to the West Country: namely, to visit Miss Kenton and resume their relationship. As Lewis sums up, “the butler’s kerfuffle about the inadequate staff-plan is a smoke-screen.”² The passage runs as follows:

You may be amazed that such an obvious shortcoming to a staff plan should have continued to escape my notice, but then you will agree that such is often the way with matters one has given abiding thought to over a period of time; one is not struck by the truth until prompted quite accidentally by some external event. So it was in this instance; that is to say, my receiving the letter from Miss Kenton, containing as it did, along with its long, rather unrevealing passages, an unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington Hall, and - I am quite sure of this - distinct hints of her desire to return here, obliged me to see my staff plan afresh. Only then did it strike me that there was indeed a role that a further staff member could crucially play here; that it was, in fact, this very shortage that had been at the heart of all my recent troubles. And the more I considered it, the more obvious it became that Miss Kenton, with her great affection for this house, with her exemplary professionalism - the sort almost impossible to find nowadays - was just the factor needed to enable me to complete a fully satisfactory staff plan for Darlington Hall. (*RD*, 9-10)

I consider this passage a relevant example of the dynamics of hiding and revealing in the novel. There are three stages in this process, revelation alternating with concealment:

revelation	Stevens understands the hidden meaning of Miss Kenton’s letter
concealment	Stevens hides this meaning, even from himself, deliberately “screening” the emotional message, placing it behind the veil of professional matters
revelation	Stevens’s reading of Miss Kenton’s letter epitomizes our reading of Stevens’s narration - peeping behind the “long, rather unrevealing passages” we may glimpse the “distinct hints” of the butler’s being

Hiding and revealing works therefore on the level of the butler’s speech but also on the level of the author’s speech. In Bakhtinian terms,

¹ Galen Strawson’s term.

² Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 95.

the intention of the real author is refracted as it passes through the posited author's (the butler's) speech, or, in other words, the author appropriates the narrator's speech. Thus the narration becomes ironic and subtly metafictional. The references to cognitive action enumerated by Stevens ("obliged me to see", "only then did it strike me", "the more I considered it, the more obvious it became") mark the stages in the process of convincing himself, moments in the self-deluding act.

Stevens's statement, "one is not struck by the truth until prompted quite accidentally by some external event" is a typical double-accented, double style hybrid construction. The division of voices takes place within the limits of a single sentence. This syntactic unit is used by Stevens to prove his point, to delude his listeners (and himself), but it is also used by the author to refer to the butler's epiphany, his illumination concerning the mistakes he has made during his life. The sentence gains this accent in light of the whole narrative and we can say therefore that it is at the intersection of two languages, two belief systems.

Stevens is an unreliable narrator. His frequent excuses and self-justifications ("But let me say immediately", "But let me make immediately clear", "But let me explain further") clearly indicate his acts of delusion and self-delusion. His rhetorical question in the middle of an explanation ("why should I hide it?") is another example of hybrid construction as it points beyond his rhetoricized speech, acquiring an ironic overtone. Ruminating on Miss Kenton's letter Stevens admits that he may have misunderstood the housekeeper's intentions and comments on the very process of self-delusion:

In fact, one has to accept the possibility that one may have previously - perhaps through wishful thinking of a professional kind - exaggerated what evidence there was regarding such a desire [of returning to Darlington Hall] on her part. (*RD*, 140)

We may consider the "wishful thinking of a professional kind" construction one of the key metaphors of the novel, one of the most ingenious hybrid constructions: the narrator emphasizes (as he does throughout his confession) the professional aspect as opposed to the personal one while the author adds an ironic accent, transforming the term into a synonym of "perfect (professional) self-deceit".

The mechanism of hiding and revealing in *The Remains of the Day* has to be viewed in the context of the butler's sense of identity, the oscillation between dignity and displacement. Stevens's narration which

is mostly concerned with his construction of identity centres around the concept of professional dignity.

According to the Hayes Society (a fictitious professional organization), a great butler must serve in a “distinguished household” and inhabit his profession with dignity. Stevens redefines this criterion by stressing the moral worth of the employer. “A ‘great’ butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman - and through the latter, to serving humanity.” (*RD*, 117). Stevens sustains the self-delusion that he has dedicated his life to the service of a worthy master, even though there are signs proving the contrary. It is only after a series of encounters with various people during his journey and finally with Miss Kenton that he suddenly realizes that he has wasted his life by blindly trusting his master:

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 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? (*RD*, 243.)

He must painfully realize that “loyalty is undignified without self-examination and self-respect”¹.

Parody of Englishness?

It is sometimes said that that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of... In a word, ‘dignity’ is beyond such persons. We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman. (*RD*, 43.)

¹ Lewis, Barry, *op.cit.*, 98.

This xenophobic statement which tries to define the essence of Englishness gains an ironic accent if we think about the alleged greatness and dignity achieved by Stevens, that is, the displacement of his self-conception. Lewis contends that "...the car trip he takes to the West Country is also a journey into his English sense of self."¹ *The Remains of the Day* is a parody of Englishness defined in narrow terms. The author's ironic appropriation of the butler's speech shows Englishness to be a mere fiction, a myth.

Stevens seems to reduce Englishness to a formula, a bunch of essential features such as dignity, emotional restraint, love of hierarchy and a respect for the country's history. He is proud of his professionalism, his "careful" and "wise" way of acting. He keeps referring to Mr Farraday, his new employer as an "American gentleman", obviously implying how far he falls from the concept of an English gentleman: "...an American gentleman's unfamiliarity with what was and what was not commonly done in England" (RD 6) also, "...he is, after all, an American gentleman and his ways are often very different." The direct quotation of Mr Farraday's words also underlines his otherness, as conceived by Stevens: "...Mr Farraday, after a moment's reflection, made his request of me; that I do my best to draw up a staff plan - 'some sort of servants' rota' as he put it..." (RD 7).

Stevens proudly delimits himself of others, "those who lacked a fundamental understanding of the profession" (RD 31), drawing the opposition between 'true ladies and gentlemen' and businessmen on the other hand.

Stevens discusses the greatness of the English landscape with considerable pride:

I would say that it is the very *lack* of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land know of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it. In comparison, the sorts of sights offered in such places as Africa or America, though undoubtedly very exciting, strike the objective viewer as inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness. (RD 29)

The reference to the objective viewer proves to be ironic, the author quotes the narrator ironically. As Lewis points out, "the objective viewer appealed to here is anything but: he is English, white, associated

¹ Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 78.

with the upper class, a nationalist and imperialist prone to bouts of self-glorifying hyperbole - in short, he is Steven himself.”¹

The greatness of this landscape lies in its being reserved, demure. Similarly, emotional restraint as well as dignity distinguish a great butler. However, if the viewer’s objectivity is questioned, the greatness of the landscape - and, proceeding with the analogy, the greatness of the butler - becomes highly relative, questionable. The author subverts the narrator’s concept of dignity. Stevens’s very identity is questioned.

As Francis King² points out, English is the only literature in which butlers play a major role. He argues that Ishiguro’s Stevens is a fiction based not so much on life as it was once lived in English stately homes, as on other fictions - on Lane in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, on Barrie’s Admirable Crichton, on Ivy Compton-Burnett’s *Bullivant in Manservant and Maidservant* and, above all, on Wodehouse’s Jeeves:

The fiction here is of the servant who in all respects, except those of wealth, education and birth, can be regarded as the equal and even the superior of his master; who is the possessor of an innate dignity which that master often lacks; and who, unlike his foreign counterparts, never loses his sangfroid in even the most unnerving of situations.

This is the case of incorporated genres, one of the most fundamental forms for incorporating heteroglossia in the novel. The domestic service farce brings its own language into the novel stratifying its linguistic unity.

Certain critics analyse Ishiguro’s novel from the perspective of the subtle overlap between the representation of English and Japanese identity, focusing on the dialogue between different cultures. Anthony Thwaite sustains that “There are distinct Japanese characteristics (such as indirectness) in Ishiguro’s work however much he may disclaim them.”³ The melancholic pitch of Ishiguro’s prose, the formality of the dialogue, the concern with issues of service and duty seem to indicate an oriental sensibility. Anthony Thwaite and Hermione Lee⁴ compare the butler to

¹ Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 80.

² King, Francis, “A Stately Procession of One.” *The Spectator* 27 May 1989: 31.

³ Thwaite, Anthony, “In Service,” *London Review of Books* 18 May 1989: 17 quoted by Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 10.

⁴ Lee, Hermione, “Quiet Desolation,” *New Republic* 22 January 1990: 38, quoted by Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 93.

the heroic Japanese *ronin*: *The Tale of the Forty-seven Ronin* celebrates the loyalty and selflessness of a group of samurai.

In his study on the aesthetics of multiculturalism Szigeti L. László¹ considers Ishiguro's novel a multiculturalist text. He argues that the novel which is characterised by the behaviour and manner of speech of the British upper class does not contain any Far Eastern references, still, instances of the typically English *understatement* are no longer naturally English but rather resemble the even more extreme Japanese self-covering. Szigeti's main point is that the presence of foreign words in the body of the text pointing towards otherness is only one possible feature of the multiculturalist text. The narrative style, patterns of thought and "sensibilities" may also be proofs or signs of the confluence of cultures. He claims that hidden or implied culture-specific meanings and references are the most relevant features of the authentically multiculturalist text, Ishiguro's novel included.

Although Ishiguro's main character is the most English stock character, he is more than just a domestic servant. He has a metaphorical role. As Ishiguro explained, "I chose the figure deliberately because that's what I think I am, and I think most of us are: we're just butlers."² The most we can do is to use our small talents to serve higher interests.

Character zones

The butler's confession, his personal history told during his car trip to the West Country is not a homogeneous narrative. It is diversified and made heteroglot through the direct speeches of other characters as well as fragments of these characters' speech encroaching on the narrator's voice.

The butler portrays himself as a highly serious, determined person who always acts with dignity. Variations of a recurrent phrase support the image constructed of himself: "dignity in keeping with his position", dignity under "extremely trying" circumstances. Although these are not the exact words used by his father, himself an exemplary butler, we may argue that they belong to his character zone, his ideological belief-system. The three anecdotes about his determined and dignified father form a myth that becomes the core of Stevens's identity. The father's identity as a butler is also based on a fiction, his favourite tale of a butler

¹ Szigeti L. László, "A multikulturalizmus esztétikája," *Helikon. Irodalomtudományi szemle* 4 (2002): 395-421.

² Cleo, Nicholas, (ed.) "The Butler in Us All," *Bookseller* 14 April 1989: 1327.

in India who managed to serve dinner on time although he had to shoot a tiger in the dining room. The character zone of the butler in India encroaches on the voice of Stevens's father which in its turn encroaches on Stevens's voice.

The narrator's interactions with Miss Kenton, the housekeeper at Darlington Hall are almost always rendered by direct speech. Similarly, Reginald Cardinal's speech (the young journalist who reveals that Lord Darlington has been manipulated by the Germans) is also reproduced in the form of direct speech. This is significant since they are characters who subvert Stevens's world, dispel the image he carefully constructs about himself. Lewis claims that Miss Kenton is "the only person in the book who is able to pierce the butler's shield of dignity"¹. Indeed, she is the one who pronounces the word 'pretend' in connection with Stevens's behaviour, asking in a rage, "Why, Mr Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?" (RD, 154.) However, I would add that Cardinal's emphatic questions work to the same effect: "Tell me Stevens, don't you care at all? Aren't you curious? Good God, man, something very crucial is going on in this house. Aren't you at all curious?" (RI, 222.)

The village people's speech whom Stevens meets at Moscombe serves as a parodic counterpoint to the butler's gentlemanly talk. We can witness the formation of stylistic hybrids as the village people, in their effort to emulate each other in gaining Stevens's attention, insert words into their speech which belong to another language. These words are italicized:

'Excuse me, sir,' said Mr Harry Smith, 'but my point was a slightly different one. For the likes of yourself, it's always been easy to exert your influence. You can count the most powerful in the land as your friends. But the likes of us here, sir, we can go year in year out and never lay eyes on a real gentleman - other than maybe Dr Carlisle. He's a first-class doctor, but with all respect, he does not have *connections* as such. (RD, 190)

'I wonder what could have happened to Dr Carlisle,' Mrs Smith said 'I'm sure the gentleman could just about use some *educated* talk now.' (RD, 190)

¹ Lewis, Barry, op.cit., 95.

Finally I would like to show how character zones tend to overlap in Stevens's confession. As the butler reconstructs his dialogues with Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton, there are gaps in his memory which make the reproduction of speech uncertain. There is a sentence that "hovers" between Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton's character zone as Stevens does not remember its proper place: "These errors may be trivial in themselves, Stevens, but you must yourself realize their larger significance." (*RD*, 62). This linguistic unit becomes reified in the narrator's speech, moreover, it is appropriated by the author's voice, turning into an ironic comment on the narrator's act of self-delusion.

Conclusion

Tracing the various forms of heteroglossia in a novel involves a thorough stylistic analysis. My aim in this paper was only to show a few examples of the parodic stylization of incorporated languages, the creation of double-style, double-accented hybrid constructions through the subtle mechanism of hiding and revealing employed by Ishiguro.