

La Inglaterra de Lord Darlington



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Palabras clave

primera guerra mundial; Pacto de Versalles; Neville Chamberlain; Herr Von Ribbentrop; Nuremberg rally

Una novela, cualquier novela, es histórica. Y lo es porque el autor/a ha creado su obra en un espacio y en un tiempo que puede ser el suyo propio o uno muy distante o inclusive una utopía/distopía. Por otra parte, la historia es real, es concreta y es material, siendo estas fuerzas las que mantienen el fluir, el curso y el ritmo del texto.

La historia interviene en la vida de los individuos, y una novela es un intento por conocer artísticamente las peculiaridades del momento presente, la individualidad de los personajes de la historia y sus relaciones con los acontecimientos que en un momento dado constituyen las fuerzas que impulsan el desarrollo de la narración.

La novela histórica surge en un período en el que la sociedad confronta un momento histórico definitivo, y la influencia que puede haber ejercido sobre segmentos de la sociedad o sobre toda ella. El carácter del protagonista emerge de los hechos mismos, a la vez que el carácter ilustra la historicidad de los acontecimientos. La novela histórica moderna reevalúa la interpretación de momentos pasados.

Lord Darlington es un hombre de edad mediana en la novela *The Remains of the Day* (*Lo que resta del día*) de Kazuo Ishiguro, propietario de Darlington Hall una elegante mansión victoriana en algún lugar del Condado de Oxford. Es un caballero inglés a la antigua usanza, cuyos intereses abarcan desde los intereses y actividades de su clase hasta los acontecimientos de la nueva Europa después de 1922 y aún después de la guerra que trajo mucha miseria a los aliados y a sus enemigos por igual. Siempre está controlado, ingenuo, amistoso, y abierto en su comunicación. La mansión es servida por un mayordomo, el señor Stevens, un ama de llaves, Miss Kenton, un asistente del mayordomo, el señor Stevens padre, y un equipo de sirvientes, criadas, y demás. Esta mansión es el escenario de la novela, salvo por unos pocos lugares en el suroeste de Inglaterra, varios años después que se hayan narrado los acontecimientos principales.



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En prólogo de una cincuenta páginas, Stevens se refiere brevemente a los miserables años de Lord Darlington entre 1953 y 1956, afirma que la mansión fue vendida en subasta pública a Mr Faraday, evalúa su posición con el nuevo propietario de la mansión, menciona su dificultad para acomodarse a las bromas del americano, las dificultades presentes para conseguir el personal adecuado para el desarrollo de las actividades propias de Darlington Hall, y formula algunas consideraciones de lo que hace un buen mayordomo.

Los viaje siempre han sido una buena disculpa para entretenerse en el pasado de los personajes de una novela, y el viaje en esta no es una excepción. Estimulado por su jefe americano, quien se se ha ofrecido a pagar los gastos de la gasolina, mientras viaja a los Estados Unidos, Stevens inicia un viaje de seis días por el suroeste de Inglaterra, y recuerda sus años con Lord Darlington. De hecho, en la primera página del texto se lee: PRÓLOGO: JULIO, 1956, *Darlington Hall*, un lapso de unos 32 años, entre 1923 y 1956. Aproximadamente, la primera parte abarca los años que desembocaron en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, vistos desde la perspectiva de los personajes de elevada condición en la novela, y la segunda las consecuencias de la misma, desde la perspectiva de gentes comunes que sufrieron las consecuencias, pero omitiendo referencias específicas a la guerra y la posguerra entre 1939 y 1956. La narración no se presenta en el orden cronológico de los acontecimientos, sino más bien en una combinación de analepsis y acontecimientos actuales en ambas partes; las analepsis son mayormente políticas, mientras los hechos actuales son una combinación de recuerdos personales y hechos históricos.

El narrador central es Stevens, habiéndose generado un gran debate sobre su personalidad profundamente enraizada con su idea dominante de

“dignidad”, un concepto que él considera pertinente para un buen mayordomo y su carrera, así como su perspectiva de los hechos que va narrando. La figura de Steven, así como la de Miss Kenton por la soberbia caracterización de ambos en la película del mismo nombre, representados por Anthony Hopkins y Emma Thompson. Este es un excelente ejemplo del *star system*.

Un aspecto crucial en la composición de una novela es quién narrará los eventos que constituyen la nuez de la narración. Aquí se halla uno de los más importantes atractivos de una novela, Stevens es el narrador intra-homodiegético narrador, es decir, alguien que es a la vez narrador y partícipe en los hechos narrados. Stevens, como mayordomo, está cerca de los hechos, pero a la vez carece de la responsabilidad en los sucesos. En ocasiones se restringe en ofrecer una perspectiva o una opinión propias sobre un hecho en el momento de su acontecer, mientras en otras oportunidades la expresa de una manera privada o informa a Lord Darlington obre una conversación que ha escuchado de los invitados. Solo mucho más tarde, aún años, reflexiona sobre las implicaciones que tuvo un hecho o, más importante, las evalúa por contraste con las de personas cuya opinión es muy diferente de la suya. El distanciamiento de Stevens de los hechos sugiere cierta objetividad cuando se consideran sus implicaciones históricas, aunque no siempre es así.

En efecto, después de un largo día de trabajo, Stevens se revela en la soledad de su apartamento, en donde, además, demuestra su devoción por el paisaje inglés con la lectura de libros de autores autorizados que conoce bien, o su afán por leer libros que mejoren su dominio de la lengua inglesa, o finalmente lee novelas sentimentales que oculta de los demás. Allí expresa su deseo de llegar a ser uno de los mejores en su profesión; tiene la lista de los mejores mayordomos de Inglaterra y desea imitarlos.

and ears ...for his lordship tos ay: 'O, that's all Right. You can say anything in front of Stevens, I can assure you'. (Remains, p. 77)

Desde 1920, Lord Darlington ha viajado con frecuencia a Alemania, preocupado por la situación política y económica de ese país, y desea ver cambios en las duras condiciones impuestas por el tratado de 1922. Piensa que la situación es

Disturbing, Stevens. Deeply disturbing. It does us a great discredit to treat a defeated foe like this. A complete break with the traditions of this country. (Remains, p. 74)

Ante los ojos de Stevens, Lord Darlington es una persona honorable, tímida, quizás heroica, de ideas honestas en política aunque mayormente equivocadas, de modo que él, Stevens, ahora después de la guerra está más que listo a desvanecer porque, en su parecer, son algo que no representan lo que en realidad fue Lord Darlington.

La preocupación de Lord Darlington es la difícil situación de Alemania en razón del Pacto de Versalles así como por el suicidio de su amigo el industrial Bremann, ahora en completa ruina, una mezcla de sentimentalismo y de pragmatismo. Con frecuencia, Darlington expresa con frecuencia su opinión sobre tales asuntos:

Wretched thing is, this treaty is making a liar out of me. I mean to say, I told him we wouldn't be enemies once it was all over. But can I look in the face and tell him that's turned out to be true?. (Remains, p. 76)

Y continúa así:

I was jolly tempted to him it's those wretched French. It's not the English way of carrying on, I wanted tos ay. But I can't do things like that. Musn't speak ill of our dear allies. (Remains, p. 76)

La ironía de la expresión es evidente por sí misma. Darlington comienza entonces una serie de entrevistas y contactos con muy diversas personas

Not only Britons and Germans, but also Belgians, French, Italians, Swiss; they were diplomats and political persons of high rank; distinguished clerymen; retired military gentlemen, writers and thinkers. (Remains, p. 78)

buscando modificaciones a los términos del tratado.

Debido a este sentimiento de decencia y solidaridad, así como de su amistad personal con Herr Bremann, se lanza a organizar una conferencia informal que tendría lugar en Darlington Hall durante la última semana de marzo de 1923, a la que asistirían importantes líderes de sus respectivos países. Su idea era que su conferencia fuera una especie de conferencia informal antes de la de Suiza en 1924, después de la conferencia de 1924 el año anterior convocada por el Primer Ministro británico, Sir David Lloyd George. La conferencia de Italia fue la de Lucarno, de la cual surgieron varios acuerdos entre Alemania y sus vecinos, cada una pactada individualmente, y con Inglaterra e Italia como garantes, pero fracasó en el intento por reducir los aspectos económicos del Pacto de Versalles. De hecho, entre 1922 y 1938 hubo varias conferencias sobre el tema de Alemania y el Tratado de Versalles, todos los cuales fueron erráticos y no alcanzaron conclusiones significativas. Hasta este punto, la historia avala el texto narrativo.

A los ojos de Stevens, Lord Darlington, por lo tanto, aparece como el campeón de la justicia, la decencia, de una larga tradición acariciada por los británicos y en consecuencia la conferencia tendrá la mayor importancia

What happens in this house after that may have considerable repercussions. (Remains, p. 65)

What happens within this house after that may have considerable repercussions. (Remains, p. 65)

Esta frase resume la elevada autoestima de Darlington, y proyecta una imagen del mundo exterior que tendrá severas consecuencias para él. Paso a paso va camino de la ideología Nazi, y realiza frecuentes visitas a Berlín, en donde es agasajado elegantemente por el régimen Nazi, entre 1934 y 1934.

La conferencia se convirtió en una realidad durante la última semana de un lluvioso marzo, como estaba programada. El número de invitados fue limitado a tan solo dieciocho, suficientemente famosos para mantener su nombres en reserva, excepto por el delegado francés, M. Dupont, el señor Lewis, el senador norteamericano por Pensilvania, la condesa alemana, y la "formidable Eleanor Austin, entonces radicada en Berlín". Parece haber aquí un anacronismo histórico puesto que la familia puesto que la familia Austin, mitad alemana, mitad americana, no se trasladó a Berlín sino hasta 1930.

La creciente presión por la conferencia afectó por igual a Stevens:

As the date grew nearer, the pressure on myself, though of and altogether more humble nature than those mounting on his lordship, were nevertheless not inconsequential. I was only too aware of the possibility that if any guest were to find his stay at Darlington Hall less than comfortable this might have repercussions of unimaginable largeness. (The Remains, p. 80)

A pesar de todos los esfuerzos de lord Darlington por hacer de su conferencia un hecho trascendental, a los ojos de Stevens, dado el salón dondese llevaron a cabo las discusiones, parece algo diferente:

In fact, to my eyes, the appearance of informality had been taken to a faintly ludicrous degree..., but such was the de-

termination on the part of some persons to maintain the appearance that this was nothing more than a social event. (The Remains, p. 95)

Durante siglos Inglaterra y Francia han tenido relaciones difíciles que se remontan a la conquista normanda de 1066 y sólo con la llegada de un rival común, Alemania, comenzaron los dos países un proceso de lento entendimiento y compromiso conjunto que se materializaría a finales del decenio de 1890 y comienzos del siglo 20. Si bien las relaciones de Inglaterra con Francia fueron difíciles, no ocurrió lo mismo con Alemania, y en la referente a Francia éstas fueron siempre conflictivas. Por esta razón, lord Darlington se mostró reacio a contar con un delegado francés en la conferencia. Mucha antes de se le ocurriera la idea de la conferencia, Lord Darlington, le comunicó sus inquietudes a su amigo alemán:

Look here we're enemies and will fight you with all I have got. But when this wretched business is over, we shan't have to be enemies any more and we'll have a drink together... And as far as I understood, I wasn't taking part in a vendetta against the German race. (Remains, p. 76)

Se escogió un delegado francés por Cardinal y lord Darlington:

"a certain extremely illustrious Frenchman- I will call him M. Dupont, to attend the conference on a very strict off the record basis. (Remains, p. 80)

fue el escogido por Cardinal y Darlington. El "home team" como lo designó Darlington, incluía a Lord Cardinal, dos miembros del Foreign Office quienes asistían muy informales, todos altamente preocupados por el delegado francés, M. Dupont. Y con toda la razón, de todos los países involucrados en la guerra, Francia era la más reacia a aceptar

el anfitrión pronuncia el discurso de apertura con la tradicional bienvenida, seguida de la intervención de Sir Cardinal muy dentro de las líneas de los temas esperados para las discusiones; luego un pastor pronuncia una breve oración. Cuando llegó el turno para la Condesa alemana, Stevens "was at this point obliged to leave the drawing room for an extended period" (Remains, p. 96). Habrá una segunda ocasión en que esté fuera del salón cuando la dama alemana está lista para intervenir; es a la noche siguiente durante la cena formal al cierre de la conferencia. Una vez más, Stevens está fuera por un período extenso, su padre está expirando. La película llena adecuadamente la presencia de la dama, ella pronuncia unas breves palabras paz con Inglaterra, de paz con Francia. En seguida canta el *lied Set Mir gegruüst* de Schubert. Terminada la cena, se servirá una copa de oporto y felicita a Stevens: "You and your team did very well". Nada más sobre ella, aunque al final de la recepción, con extrema gentileza, Lord Darlington le ofrece su brazo. Esta breve secuencia destaca la actitud masculina hacia el bello género. La dama alemana es la única mujer con alguna relevancia en el nivel político, una situación bastante injusta pues al fin de cuentas el tema central es Alemania, y ella es la única representante de esa nación.

Todas las otras mujeres están en rango inferior en la mansión, pasan desapercibidas carecen de nombre, con la excepción de Miss Kenton, prominente en sus funciones, y tiene una breve oportunidad de hablar en defensa de las dos jóvenes judías.

Lord Darlington parece tener un solo interés, el éxito de su conferencia y se mueve en esa dirección. De este modo, resulta impertinente su interés por el joven Cardinal, su ahijado, el hijo de David Cardinal, quien él mismo ha sugerido a Darlington y éste a Stevens que el joven, de 23 años, próximo a casarse debe ser instruido en "los hechos de la vida". El

episodio tiene lugar dos días antes del final de la conferencia, y Stevens buscará la ocasión de hablarle al joven de "las glorias de la naturaleza, los patos y las flores". El joven Cardinal tendrá su oportunidad de burla durante la última cena de la conferencia diciéndole a Stevens que prefiere los peces. Todo esto parece un contrapunto jocoso para el momento, el éxito de la conferencia, que resulta ser un fiasco, absolutamente inocua, resaltando una vez más el carácter de aficionados de la conferencia y algunos de sus participantes.

Stevens juega el papel doble de mayordomo siempre atento a sus deberes mientras a la vez escucha los discursos de los delgados cuando cada uno presenta sus puntos de vista. De esta manera, el texto depende de la soberbia capacidad de Stevens para recordar hechos, acontecimientos y palabras, en particular estas últimas. "It was always something of a memorable night to see that magnificent banquet hall employed to its full capacity and that night was no exception" (The Remains, p. 102). La cena casi acaba ya cuando se presenta una ronda de discursos. El primero en hablar es Lord Darlington, una mezcla de reminiscencias de su amigo alemán, una nota sobre la importancia de esta conferencia antes de la de Suiza al año siguiente, y un brindis por "la paz y la justicia en Europa". Dice Stevens: "the level of such noises... struck me as bordering the illmannered" (The Remains, p. 103).

Con el silencio que se expandió por el salón. M. Dupont se levantó para proponer un brindis por "el muy honorable y amable Lord Darlington" y procedió a hablar de las cosas importantes que se han discutido y prometé "... bring what modest influence I have to encourage certain changes of emphasis in French policy in accordance of what has been said here" (The Remains, p. 104). Parecería que se habría logrado al menos uno de los objetivos de la conferencia. No obstante, Mr. Lewis ofrece otro

"I'm very sorry, Sir, ... but I am unable to be of assistance on this matter". (The Remains, p. 205)

Frustración es la primera reacción a estas respuestas, seguida de un cuestionamiento a la situación de Inglaterra, y la responsabilidad de personas como Stevens para sostener una democracia liberal. Son gentes ignorantes y decisiones de importancia no deben recaer sobre ellas. Con seguridad, Stevens miente en sus respuestas puesto que está consciente de las magnitud de los problemas, pero teme comprometer las opiniones de su jefe. Pero la decepción de Darlington no es con Stevens, sino con el sistema

I ask you, Stevens. Here we are in the midst of a continuing crisis. I've seen it with my My own eyes when I went north with Mr Whittaker. People are suffering. Ordinary, decent Working people are suffering terribly. Germany and Italy have set their houses in order by Actng. And so have the wretched Bolsheviks in their own way. (The Remains, p. 108)

De hecho, Lord Darlington ha hecho una comparación inquietante: Inglaterra está avanzando muy lentamente; está perdiendo en posición frente a Alemania. En 1926, Alemania había conseguido préstamos de los Estados Unidos, lo que le permitiría pagar sus deudas de guerra con dinero de sus antiguos enemigos; había sido aceptada en la Liga de las Naciones; Berlín se había convertido en un centro intelectual y cultural de importancia, es una ciudad próspera, brillante, rica, tiene todo lo que puede desear una ciudad de los años treinta, tenía los juegos olímpicos de ese año, esos "malditos juegos", al decir de Lord Darlington. Pero el colapso de la República de Weimar había traído cambios substanciales con la elección de Hitler como Canciller.

En cuanto a Inglaterra, los años veintes fueron brillantes con profusión de grandes novelistas, poetas

y dramaturgos, pero la economía estaba rezagada; y aunque muy pocas personas pensaban entonces en una nueva guerra, existían signos alarmantes. En 1876 el poeta Mathew Arnold había publicado su famoso poema *Dover Beac*

The sea is calm tonight.
...the cliffs of England stand
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay

Pero unos versos más adelante

For he world, which seems
To lie before uslike a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful,, so new,
Has really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain

The cliffs would stand ever to protect England, but a new reality was emerging. Stanley Baldwin dijo en 1934:

When you think of the defence of England, you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover, you think of the Rhine. That's were our frontier lies. (Reproducido de Thomson, p. 161)

Parece que Stevens es un conductor poco diestro, y en tal condición no prepara el Ford adecuadamente, primero el motor se recalienta y después se queda sin gasolina. Estos dos incidentes en días consecutivos se convierten en oportunidades para confrontar personas pertenecientes a estratos sociales diferentes. En la primera oportunidad, le ayuda un hombre que resulta ser un todero que trabaja en una mansión decadente, demasiado grande para una sola persona. El individuo es mayordomo, valet, chofer y aseador. Para empezar, sorprende a Stevens con su habla informal. Al preguntar por "ese" Lord Darlington, se refiere a él como "tipo", y a Stevens lo llama un mayordomo "sobresaliente" y "un tipo anticuado". Correctamente afirma que ya no quedan muchos mayordomos de la vieja escue-

la. La palabra “ese” implica, como las otras dos, un tinte irónico; es él, son ellos quienes han llevado a Inglaterra a esa desastrosa guerra con Alemania.

La noche siguiente aparece una crítica similar, palabras diferentes, pero igualmente severas. El auto se ha quedado sin gasolina, y Stevens se ve obligado a pernoctar con una amable pareja, los Taylors, quienes le alquilan una habitación en una atmósfera amable, en donde “el aceite da una luz más cálida que la de la electricidad”.

Con la noticia de que donde los Taylors se aloja un caballero distinguido, varias personas acuden a la vivienda, entre ellos el señor y la señora Smith, bastante comunicativos. Ella dice:

This may seem like a small, out of the way place we have here, sir.. But we gave more than our share (The Remains, p. 196)

El pasado gravita pesadamente sobre el pueblo, repitiendo las palabras de su esposa. Mr Harry Smith dice:

We’ve all got strong opinions here, and it’s our responsibility to get them heard. We’re out of the way, all right, a small village, we’re none of us getting younger, and the village is getting smaller. But the way I see it we owe it to the lads we lost from the village (Ibid. p. 199)

Incapaz de desvirtuar el rumor equivocado, Stevens se deja llevar por la situación, más aún sugiere haber estado cerca de los acontecimientos y de los “notables caballeros” en cuyas manos ha estado el destino de Europa. Las preguntas se suceden en la medida en que los concurrentes se dejan engañar por la calidad del caballero que tienen al frente:

It’s not just the cut of your clothes, nor is it even the fine way you’ve got of speaking.

There is something else that marks you as a gentleman (Ibid., p.194)

Por supuesto, Stevens no es un caballero, miente, se burla de estas gentes cuya dignidad ha herido. En poco tiempo, llegará un verdadero caballero, el doctor Carlisle, quien con pocas palabras se da cuenta de qué clase de persona es Stevens. Ha mentado sobre los caballeros que ha conocido, como Mr Churchill y Mr Eden, los líderes muy admirados por los Taylors, los Smith y los demás, pero ahora se le pide su opinión sobre la tendencia de esos años, 1956, hacia la descolonización. Mr Smith se dirige al doctor y le dice:

I was hoping the gentleman would have a few words to say about Your ideas on the Empire, Doctor,

Y luego a Stevens

Our Doctor here’s for all kind of little countries to go independent. I do not have the learning to prove him wrong, though I know he is (Ibid. p. 202)

Sin duda, después de muchos años de colonización, Inglaterra está perdiendo terreno, su prestigio está decayendo rápidamente, y ha llegado a su punto más bajo después del frustrado intento de reconquistar el Canal de Suez, perdido tras la nacionalización decretada por el presidente Nasser de Egipto.

Mientras se desarrollaban los acontecimientos que desembocarían en la guerra, otros también de señalada importancia tenían lugar. Se daban los movimientos nacionalistas en los países que constituían el Imperio británico. Irlanda e India habían indicado su deseo de retirarse del Imperio. Con grandes esfuerzos se logró un acuerdo que los mantendría en la Mancomunidad, una solución que duró pocos años después del fin de la guerra.

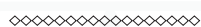
Sudetes ya eran hechos cumplidos en la Europa de entonces, mientras Italia había invadido Etiopía, y el Japón extendía su dominio sobre áreas del Asia continental. Solo un año después de la visita de Chamberlain a Hitler, la guerra se desataría con ferocidad inusitada.

De alguna manera, Lord Darlington expresó lo que mucha gente, grupos, organizaciones, y miembros del Parlamento consideraban la política correcta bajo las condiciones prevalecientes, la del *appeasement*, que era la política de Chamberlain hacia Hitler, y también hacia Mussolini y el Japón.

Mr. Williams, el delegado de los Estados Unidos a la conferencia de 1923, había dicho a los asistentes que "eran un montón de soñadores ingenuos". Darlington pudo haber sido uno de ellos, pero Eden y Chamberlain no lo eran, se equivocaron al suponer incorrectamente hacia dónde corrían las aguas.

Después de su confrontación con Miss Kenton, Stevens resume su condición de mayordomo, considera su posición como tal, lo que le produce pensamientos tristes, y entonces, como había ocurrido trece años antes, al finalizar la cena de la conferencia de 1923, tiene un momento de epifanía:

Within the very room I had just executed my duties, the most powerful gentlemen of Europe were conferring over the fate of our continent. Who would have doubt at that moment that I had indeed come as close to the great hub of things as any Butler could wish?



I can see few other explanations for that sense of triumph I came to uplift by that night (Ibid., 239)

La imagen de Lord Darlington permanece aún después de once años de terminada la guerra. Una y otra vez Stevens afirma que su señoría había sido una persona honesta, honesta y desinteresada,

percepción que fue compartida por los asistentes a la conferencia de 1923, incluidos los mismos alemanes. En razón de estas condiciones, cayó en las manos del más grande "tramposo" de todos, Herr von Ribbentrop, pero la sombra de su amistad con los alemanes, en particular sus visitas a Alemania prevaleció sobre cualesquiera otras. Después de la guerra, Darlington fue acusado de traición, y comenzó un proceso interminable de acusaciones que los periódicos y las audiencias antes los tribunales que producirían su ruina económica y su desgracia final. En una confesión de arrepentimiento, finalmente Stevens confiesa que Lord Darlington pudo haber estado equivocado. Es un atardecer lluvioso, se sienta junto a un anciano, de cara al mar. Por primera vez, Stevens se vuelve sentimental, confiesa algunos secretos y recuerda sus días en Darlington Hall, los acontecimientos, como de costumbre en sus propias palabras "el gran momento". Explota.

"Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at last he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he had made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose 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. (Ibid. p. 256)

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Lord Darlington's England



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Keywords

First World War W.W. I; Treaty of Versailles; Neville Chamberlain; Herr von Ribbentrop; Nuremberg rally

A novel, any novel is historical. This is so because the autor has created his/her novel in a space and a time which may be his/her own or one distant in time and space, and even a utopia/distopia. Now, history is real, is concrete and is material. These are forces that maintain a flow, a course and a rhythm.

History intervenes in the lives of individuals, and a novel is an attempt to know artistically the peculiarities of the present moment, the individuality of the characters in the story and their relationships with the events that at a given time constitute the forces that gear the development of the narration. In a sense, the modern historical novel reevaluates the interpretation of the past-

The historical novel stems from a moment when society confronts a decisive historical conflict and the influences it may have have exercised on segments of a society. The character of the protagonist emerges from the events themselves while at the same time the character illustrates the historicity of the events.

Lord Darlington is a middle-aged man in Kasuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, owner of Darlington Hall a stately late nineteenth century manor house somewhere in Oxfordshire. He is an old-fashioned English gentleman whose interests range from the traditions of his class to the events of the new Europe after 1922 and even after when the end of the war which brought much misery to allies and foes as well. He is always composed, self centered, naïve, friendly, generous and outspoken. The house is served by a butler, Mr Stevens, a housekeeper, Miss Kenton, an under-butler, Mr Stevens senior, and a crew of footmen, maids, etc. This house is the main scenario of the novel, except for a few places in the SouthWest of England years after the main events have been narrated.



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In a Prologue of some 50 pages, Stevens briefly refers to Lord Darlington's miserable days, 1953-1956, and states that the house was sold in a public auction to Mr Faraday, an American. Stevens ponders over his position with Mr Faraday, mentions his difficulties in getting used to the American's "battering", the current difficulties in securing proper staff for the mansion and some considerations on what being a good butler is.

Journeys have always been a good excuse to delve into the past of the characters in a story, and this one is no exception. Prompted by his American boss, who has offered to "foot the gas bill", while still in the U.S., Stevens undertakes a six day trip in the U. K., and reviews his years with Lord Darlington, 1920-1956. In fact, the first page of the text presents a "PROLOGUE: JULY, 1956, *Darlington Hall*", a span of some 32 years, from 1923 to 1956. Roughly, the first part takes into account the years leading to W. W. II, as viewed from the perspective of the main highly-placed characters in the novel, and the second the consequences of the war as viewed from the perspective of ordinary folks who suffered those consequences, but skipping specific references to the war and post war years, between 1939 and 1956. The narration is not presented in the order of actual events, but rather by means of a combination of analepsis and current events in both parts, the analepsis are mostly political while the current events are a mixture of personal and historical events.

Stevens is the narrator and much debate has developed about his character so deeply embodied in his dominant idea of "dignity", a concept he considers pertinent to a good butler and to his career, as well as his perspective of the events he talks about. The figure of Stevens has been highlighted as well as that of Miss Kenton due to the superb characterizations played in the film by Anthony Hopkins and

Emma Thompson. This has been a good example of *the star system*.

A crucial aspect in the composition of a novel is who is it to narrate the events that constitute the kernel of the narrative. Much of the novel's appeal to readers is precisely found here. Stevens is the intra-homodiegetic narrator, i. e., one who is a character in the story as well the narrator. Stevens, being a butler, is close to the events, but at the same time he lacks responsibility for them. At times he refrains from telling his own perspective or judgement of the event in itself at the time it takes place, other times he expresses his views in a most private way or reports to Lord Darlington conversations of guests he has eavesdropped. Only much later on, even years after, he reflects on the implications the events had, and, more importantly, he evaluates them in contrast to the opinion of folks whose stance is very different. Stevens' detachment from the events would suggest a certain objectivity when considering the historical implications of what is being narrated, however this is not always so.

In fact, after a day of labour, Stevens reveals himself in the solitude of his apartment, where he shows his devotion for the English landscape through books by authoritative writers he knows well or his concern for reading books that will enhance his command of the language, and last he reads sentimental novels which he hides. There he expresses his desire to be one of the best in his profession, he has the list of the best butlers in England and wishes to imitate them. In fact, close to him he has one of the best, his own father. In terms of the type of novel, we could say that Stevens is a hero in search of his identity by be trusted because of his own characteristics, he is supposed to be dependable, reliable, and trustworthy. depending substantially on the model he has formed of the ideal butler, a man who can

It is some times said that butlers only exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is

actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. (p. 44)²

Despite these peculiarities, he is partly unreliable, so readers can not be sure of Stevens' true ideas or feelings; his relationships with other persons are difficult because of these assumed strong points. His inauthenticity is easily discovered in instances where he clearly shows he is lying as with Miss Kenton, Mr Cardinal, Mr Spencer or the people at various places while touring in the SouthWest of England.

In his most didactic book, *The Art of Fiction*, profesor David Lodge, himself a novelist, includes a chapter by the name of "The Unreliable Narrator" in which the character of Stevens is presented as a credible example of such a story teller. However this is not so. Says profesor Lodge "An unreliable narrator is almost a contradiction in terms, and could only occur in a very deviant, experimental text"³. The ability of the novelist here is to let us discover the true facet of Mr. Stevens as the story flows.

The stories of Lord Darlington and Mr. Stevens are tragic in a unique way, it's the tragedy of Worl War II. We see Lord Darlington in his desperate effort to contribute to alleviate Germany's circumstances after W.W.I and Stevens to be loyal to his master.

Lord Darlinton is wrong in almost every aspect of the many circumstances he confronts. Overtly, Stevens seems to share most of his Lordship's ideas or these are directly related to his own ones, some derived from Lordship's thought, other times he refuses to be specific since some problematic concepts could be subject of suspicious interpretations. But there are perhaps instances in which Stevens presents views

that have nothing to do with Darlington's. This has to do, for instance, years previously, with the episode of his brother's death. The man died during the Boer War. In reference to the episode and his fathers's reaction to it, he says:

...that is the notion that his son gave his life gloriously for King and country- was sullied by the fact that my brother had perished in a particularly infamous manouvre. Not only was it alleged that the manouvre had been a most un-British attack on civilian Boer settlements... (p. 41)

In this, there is, I think, a coincidence between Lord Darlington's concept of honour and Stevens' concept of dignity, except that in the first case it's political, national and in the latter it is private. Now the importance of the butler here is that Stevens prides himself at being in Darlington's confidence and therefore the reader must asume that statements attributed to Darlington are to be taken at face value.

However -and I say this with some pride and gratitude- Lord Darlington never made any efforts to conceal things from my own eyes and ears... for his lordship to say: 'Oh, thta-t's all right. You can say anything in front of Stevens. I can assure you'. (p. 77)

Lord Darlington has travelled much into Germany since 1920 and has become concerned with that country's economic and political situation and wishes to see a change in the harsh conditions imposed by the Treaty of 1922. He thinks that the situation is

"Disturbing, Stevens. Deeply disturbing. It does us great discredit to treat a defeated foe like this. A complete break with the traditions of this country". (p. 74)

To the eyes of Stevens, Lord Darlington is an honourable, shy person, heroic perhaps, with honourable t ideas on politics, ideas that were mostly wrong so



2 This and all references to the text are taken from t *The Remains of the Day*, (1989) Faber & Faber edition.

3 David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (1992), Penguin Books, pp. 154-157

that he, Stevens, now after the war, is all too ready to dispell for they, in his view, represent what his lordship was not.

Lord Darlington is concerned with the difficult situation that Germany is undergoing on account of the Treaty of Versailles but he is also touched by his friend's suicide, the industrialist Bremann, now in financial ruin. A mix of sentimentalism and misjudged pragmatism. Darlington expresses a number of times his views on such matters.

Wretched thing is, this treaty is making a liar out of me. I mean to say, I told him we wouldn't be enemies once it was all over. But how can I look in the face and tell him that's turned out to be true? (p. 76)

Then he goes on to say:

I was jolly tempted to tell him it's those wretched French. It's not the English way of carrying on, I wanted to say. But I one can't do things like that. Mustn't speak ill of our dear allies. (p. 79)

The irony of the expression is self-evident. Darlington then begins a series of interviews and contacts with different people,

not only Britons and Germans, but also Belgians, French, Italians, Swiss; they were diplomats and political persons of high rank; distinguished clergymen; retired military gentlemen, writers and thinkers. (p. 78)

From his sense of decency, and solidarity but as well from his personal friendship with Herr Bremann he goes on to organize an informal conference to be held at Darlington Hall in the last week of March 1923, to which important leaders from their own countries would come. His idea being that his conference would be some sort of a preliminary to the one in Switzerland in 1924, after the conference in Italy the previous year called for by the English

P. M. Sir David Lloyd George. The Italian Conference was that of Lucarno, which produced seven agreements on borders between Germany and her neighbours, each individually signed with England and Italy as guarantors but it failed in reducing the impact of the economic and military aspects of the Treaty of Versailles. In fact, conferences on the topic of Germany and the Treaty of Versailles were held at various times between 1922 and 1938, all of which proved to be erratic and inconclusive. So for the narrative text, history comes quite handy.

To the eyes of Stevens, Lord Darlington therefore appears as a champion of justice, of decency, of a long-sustained tradition cherished by the British people and therefore the conference will have the greatest importance

What happens within this house after that may have considerable repercussions. (p. 65)

says Lord Darlington, and Stevens assumes them thoroughly, and even repeats them to his fellow servants of the house:

History could well be made under this roof (p. 81)

Lord Darlington assumes the role of a providential leader and as such begins a series of invitations to famous people whose advice and help he expects will contribute to his endeavour. People such as John Maynard Keynes, G. Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells whose democratic ideas were always very clear were frequent visitors at Darlington Hall, but during the same period of time there were other visitors like Sir Oswald Mosley a former Conservative M. P. who retired from his party in 1930 to found his "New Party", and eventually was Britain's leading fascist in his British Union of Fascists, and Mrs Carolyn Barnett, both of them with clear links to Nazi ideology and, above all, with strong anti-semitic feelings whose influences on Darlington were a source

of very ambiguous attitudes in their host. Unsuccessfully, Stevens tries to dispell what he thinks has been erroneously perceived:

It is worth pointing out, furthermore, that his Lordship had by that time severed all links with the "blackshirts", having witnessed the true, ugly nature of that organizatio. (p. 159)

"By that time" Stevens suggests 1936 the year of the Nuremberg Rally, the great concentration of Nazis in that city to celebrate the German take over of the Rhineland in clear violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Other such violations were the annexation of Austria (*Anschluss*) and the development of a large navy, (including submarines, and one or two big surface ships, the Bismark), compulsory military service and a powerful air force.

Another well known person was John Maynard Keynes a most respected economist, member of groups in charge of chartering the economic reparations agreements for an end to the war. Later he resigned for he considered that the "Treaty of Versailles had been entirely evil" and that the "peacemakes were foolish, their only policy vindictiveness".⁴

And that was a time of a strong confrontation between Stevens and Miss Kenton. Two jewish girls in service were let go because of their origins. Miss Kenton opposed the idea of their dismissal while Stevens simply accepted Lord Darlington's decision. Years later, both men will have an exchange of words on this event intended to ease the guilt both have felt.

On his fourth day of the journey, Stevens is confronted by Mr Harry Smith because of his idea on dignity:



4 John Maynard Keynes, *The Economical Consequences of the Peace*.

Dignity isn't just something gentlemen have. Dignity's something every man has and woman in this country can strive for and get. (Remains, p. 195)

He meets a hearty approval. Then Mr Smith continues with his speech:

That's what we fought Hitler for, after all. The whole world would be a few masters and millions of slaves. And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to be had in being a slave. ... We won the right to be free citizens. And it's one of the privileges of being born English... (p. 196)

The problem with Mr Harry Smith is that, according to his country folks, he is boisterous. But here there is a lesson for Stevens, this is the dignity he has been looking for, not the one he reads in the texts that important butlers had written.

Once more, Stevens memories go back the spring conference of 1923, which will become, for good or bad, the pivot of the whole novel.

What happens within this house may have considerable repercussions (p. 65)

This quotation summarizes Darlington's high self esteem and projects an image to the outer world which will have serious consequences for him. He hasn't realized the Germany of 1923 whose pains he wanted to relieve is, after 1932, very different. This is Hitler's Germany. Step by step he is walking into the Nazi ideology and pays frequent visits to Berlin where he is gallantly welcomed by the Nazi regime, sometime between 1932 and 1934. Darlington has made a gigantic historical mistake.

The conference became real the last week of a rainy March as scheduled. Darlington's efforts were then geared to ensure a successful outcome of the conference. The number of guests was limited to only eighteen but not conspicuously enough as their names

then in my diary only a few hours afterwards' ... Are these words to use about an ally you stood shoulder to shoulder with a few years back?'. (p. 99)

Mr Lewis' opinions are to win the sympathies of the "home team to the conference"; in fact, he affirms that the United States

"... would always stand on the side of justice and didn't mind admitting mistakes had been made at Versailles". (p. 89)

yet on the other hand he admits the rights of the French and agrees on the honesty of M. Dupont:

"... hates the Germans. He hated them before the war and hates them now with a depth you gentlemen would find hard to understand. ... But tell me, gentlemen...you can hardly blame a Frenchman for hating Germans, can you? After all, a Frenchman has good cause to do so, hasn't he"? (p. 90)

Behind these expressions can be sensed the sort of idealism promoted by president William Wilson in his fourteen points, the settlement of differences between former allies, American, British and French. Nevertheless, Lord Darlington is not convinced by these words. The behaviour of the French "has become increasingly barbarous".

New arrivals in the afternoon include the Italian delegate, the German Countess and others who will total about eighteen. Stevens observes the comings and goings of the delegates and he affirms

The guests were never less than courteous to one another, but for all of that, a rather tense atmosphere, characterized largely by distrust, seemed to prevail at large. (*The Remains*, p. 92)

The narration continues with a double line, while on the one hand there is the political scope, there is as well one having to do with the private lives or incidents of some characters, namely, Lord Darlington, Stevens, Stevens Sr, Dupont, young Mr Cardinal. These events will pile up and conclude on the last night of the conference: Stevens Sr will die, Dupont will escape from many sessions of the conference on account of his swollen feet, Stevens and his fuss with Miss Kenton and his incapacity to understand her, Darlington with his concern for the outcome of his endeavour, Mr Lewis and his skepticism, and the unfair treatment of the fair sex. This assortment of various elements seemingly dispersed are essentially of a fictional character and reinforce in the reader the actual intention of the text, a novel, not a history book.

The proceedings at the beginning of the conference seem very much traditional with the host opening the meeting with the usual welcome, followed by Sir Cardinal very much in the line of the expected themes for discussion, a pastor says a few words, but when it comes to the German Countess, Stevens "was at this point obliged to leave the drawing room for an extended period" (p. 96). There will be a second time when Stevens is out of the room while the German lady is ready to intervene; it's the following night, at the formal dinner closing the conference. Again Stevens is out for an extended period, his father is dying. The film fills in an adequate way the lady's presence: she pronounces a few words to the effect that Germany wants peace, peace with France and peace with England. Then she goes on to sing a beautiful *lied* by Schubert, *Set Mir gegrüsst*. She serves herself some port and compliments Stevens: "You and your team did also very well". So much for her, though at the end of the dinner, Lord Darlington with extreme gentility will offer her his arm. These brief sequences highlight the conflicting character of the males towards the fairer sex. The German lady is the only woman with certain relevance at the political

level, a very unfair situation for, after all, the central theme of the novel is Germany, and she is the only representative of that country.

All the other women pertain to the lower level in the house, go unnoticed and have no names, except for Miss Kenton who is prominent in her duties and has only the brief opportunity to speak on behalf of the two Jewish girls

There seems to be a general lack of humour in the novel, except for Mr Faraday's bantering which puzzles Stevens. In this line there is a refreshing moment for the reader as the theme of the "glories of nature" interrupts the flow of the narration. The sequence

Takes place two days before the end of the conference and then at the formal dinner of the last day. Mr Cardinal himself has asked to instruct young Cardinal "on the glories of nature. The young man is twenty-four years old as is to marry in a few weeks. In turn, Lord Darlington passes the task to Stevens who will seek an opportunity to carry on the mission, for which he is not prepared. Both Lord Darlington and Stevens are confessed bachelors whose inexperience on this matter is astonishing. Words seem to escape from Stevens' mouth who stammers and leaves Cardinal laughing. In turn Cardinal will play the ball back the last night of the conference advising Stevens that he prefers "fish" to "bees and flowers". All of this seems to be a counterpoint to the moment, the success of the conference, which turns out to be absolutely innocuous and irrelevant, proving once more the unofficial character of the conference and its participants.

Stevens, in fact, plays both as the butler always attentive to his duties while at the same time listens to the various discourses as the delegates take turns to present each one's opinion. In this way, the text depends on his superb takes place two days before the official end of the conference and then at the formal dinner

on its last day. Mr Cardinal himself has asked Lord Darlington to instruct young Cardinal "on the glories of nature". The young man is twenty-three years old, and is to marry in a few weeks. In turn, Lord Darlington passes the task to Stevens, who will seek an opportunity to carry on the mission for which he is not prepared. Both Lord Darlington and Stevens are confessed bachelors whose inexperience in these matters is astonishing. Words seem to escape from Stevens' mouth, he stammers and leaves Cardinal incapable to remember events, facts and words, particularly these ones. "It was always something of a memorable sight to see that magnificent banquet hall employed to its full capacity and that evening was no exception" (p. 102). The formal dinner is about to conclude when a round of discourses took place. Lord Darlington was the first to begin his speech, a mix of reminiscences of his German friend, a note on the importance of this conference before the one next year in Switzerland and a toast to "peace and justice in Europe". Says Stevens "the level of such noises... struck me as bordering on the ill-mannered" (p. 103).

With a hush that fell over the room M Dupont rose up to propose a toast for "the most honorable and kind Lord Darlington", and proceeded to speak of the important things discussed and pledges he will "bring what modest influence I have to encourage certain changes of emphasis in French policy in accordance of what has been said here" (p. 104). It would seem then that to a degree one of the aims of the conference had been achieved.

However, a counterpoint was introduced by Mr Lewis, when he bluntly said that "you are just a bunch of naive dreamers", like the good host "a gentleman... A classic English gentleman... Decent, honest, well-meaning" (p. 106).

Once more Lord Darlington addresses the audience to reiterate that all deserve "to enjoy a happy and

acting. And so have the wretched Bolsheviks in their own way, I suppose. (Remains, p. 108)

Lord Darlington has made in fact a disturbing comparison: England is going slowly, it's losing ground when compared with Germany. In 1926 Germany had secured loans from the United States that will allow her to pay war debts with the money of her former enemies; she has been accepted to the League of Nations, Berlin has become an intellectual centre of great importance, it's brilliant, prosperous, it has all that a city in the thirties could wish. It also had the Olympic Games of 1936, those "wretched games" as Lord Darlington put it. But the collapse of the Weimer Republic has brought about a substantial change with the election of Hitler as Chancellor in 1931.

As for England the twenties are also brilliant, with great novelists, poets and playwrights, but the economy is lagging behind and even though very few people were thinking on a new war, there are ominous signs. In 1867, Mathew Arnold had written in his famous poem *Dover Beach*

The sea is calm tonight
 ... the cliffs of England stand
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

But a few lines down

For the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Has really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain

The cliffs would stand as ever to protect England, but a new reality was emerging. P. M. Baldwin said in 1934:

When you think of the defence of England,
 you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Do-

ver, you think of the Rhine. That's where our frontier lies. (as quoted in Thomson, p. 161)

It seems Stevens is an unskilled car driver and as such he fails to duly prepare the Ford, first the car overheats and then runs out of petrol. These incidents on two consecutive days become chances for Stevens to confront people belonging to a different social status. Firstly, he is assisted by a man who happens to be a handyman in a decayed house too big for a single person. The man is butler, valet, chauffeur and general cleaner. The dialogue between the two is interesting, to begin with, the man surprises Stevens with his informal speech. In inquiring for "that" Lord Darlington he refers to him as a "bloke", and Stevens is a "top-notch butler", also "a real posh geezer". He correctly indicates that not many butlers of the old school have remained. The word "that" of the man embodies an ironical tone, it's him, it's them who have led England to a disastrous war against Germany.

A similar criticism appears the following night, different words but equally critical. The car is out of petrol, so Stevens is forced to lodge with a nice couple, the Taylors who rent him a room in a "cozy" atmosphere where "oil gives a warmer light" than that of electricity (p. 190).

Neighbours pop up on the news that a distinguished gentleman is at the Taylors. Mr and Mrs Smith are outspoken, she says:

This may seem like a small, out of the way
 place we have here, sir. ... But we gave
 more than our share. (p. 196)

The past hangs heavily upon the town, as if repeating his wife's words, Mr Harry Smith says

We've all got strong opinions here, and it's
 our responsibility to get them heard. We're
 out of the way, all right, small village, we're
 none of us getting younger, and the village is

getting smaller. But the way I see it we owe it to the lads we lost from this village. (p. 199)

Unable to dispell the wrong information, Stevens goes along with the situation and further suggests he has been close to the events and the "great gentleman" in whose hands the destiny of Europe had been. Questions come as the folks, more and more, become fooled by the quality of the gentleman in front of them:

It's not just the cut of your clothes, nor is it even the fine way you've got of speaking. There is something else that marks you as a gentleman. (p. 194)

Off course, Stevens is no gentleman, he lies, he makes fun of these people whose mdignity he has shattered. A true gentleman is to arrive shortly, Dr Carslile, who after a few questions realizes what kind of a man Stevens is. He has lied about the "gentlemen he has met, like Mr Churchill and Mr Eden" the leaders much admired by the Taylors and the Smiths, and the Does, and many like them, but now he's asked to opine on the decolonizing trend of the time, 1956. Mr Smith turns to the doctor and says

I was hoping the gentleman would have a few words to say about your ideas on the Empire, Doctor, and then to Stevens

Our Doctor here's for all kind of little countries to go independent. I do not have the learning to prove him wrong, though I know he is. (p. 202)

Indeed after years of colonizing, England is losing ground, her prestige is falling rapidly and has come to its lowest point after the frustrated attempt at regaining control over the Suez Canal, lost after being nationalized by the new regime of President Nasser.

While the events leading to W. W. II were unfolding, other equally important events were taking place. The nationalist movements in the various na-

tions that constituted the British Empire. Ireland and India had indicated a wish to withdraw from te Empire, and despite various efforts an agreement was reached to maintain them in the Commonwealth, a solution which lasted to a few years after the end of the war.

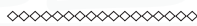
On the fourth day of Ms Stevens' expedition the two plot lines of the novel converge. It's about 1937, Stevens remembers two events that took place on the same day, one was of a private nature and the other one historical; both involving consequences for Miss Kenton and Stevens, and the second for England and Europe as a whole. MrCardinal, now not so young and more perceptive, has come to the house and asks for accommodations for the night, he is welcomed as usual, but with much concern for Lord Darlington. This unplanned encounter brings about some disruptions as it is Miss Kenton's night off and she's unhappy for she has to prepare lodging for Mr Cardinal. Her plans include an answer to a marriage proposal by Mr Benn, a step she's not prepared to give, and hopes that Stevens will give her an excuse for declining it. He ignores her, or pretends to. He is attentive to the visitors, the P. M., the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the German Ambassador, Her von Ribbentrop. With his usual

Events of great importance are unfolding upstairs and I can hadly stop to exchange pleasantries with you. I would suggest you retire for the night. (p. 237)

he dismisses Miss Kenton who has come to him in search of the right word from him.

Lord Darlington and Cardinal have had a rather heated encounter because the two men disagree on the theme of the meeting, visits of the King to Germany and another one by Mr Chamberlain. But Stevens and Cardinal also disagree:

"His lordship has been trying to persuade the Prime Minister himself to accept an invitation to visit Her Hitler". (p. 234)



"I cannot see what is there to object to that, sir. His lordship has always striven to aid better understanding between nations". (p. 235)



"At this very moment, unless I am much mistaken, at this very moment, his lordship is discussing the idea of His Majesty himself visiting Herr Hitler. It's hardly a secret our new king has always been an enthusiast for the Nazis". (p. 236)

Stevens is correct in judging his Lordship as a peacemaker, with good intentions and naïve as usual, but Cardinal sees otherwise:

His Lordship is a dear, dear man. But the fact is, he is out of his depth. He is being manoeuvred. The Nazis are manoeuvring him like a pawn. Have you noticed this, Stevens? Have you noticed this is what has been happening for the last three or four years at least? (p. 233)

Edward was King of England for a little less than a year, between January 1937 and December of the same year, during which time he visited areas of the country where he found much poverty, he was very popular. The mood of the nation was not for war, the Parliament, the Labour Party were both against preparation for war, and there were many groups organized to oppose war. In a sense, Darlington just represents what many people felt was the correct way to lead the country. As Duke of York Edward and his wife visited Germany a year later. Chamberlain would visit Her Hitler twice between 1937 and 1938. During his last visit to Hitler, on September 28, they reached an agreement which the English P. M. considered would bring peace to Europe. The annexation of Austria, *anschluss*, and the invasion of

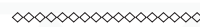
the Sudeten were accomplished facts by then in Europe, meanwhile Italy had overrun Ethiopia and Japan was extending its domain over areas of continental Asia. The war broke with ferocity only a year later after Mr Chamberlain's visit to Hitler.

In a way, Darlington voiced what many people, groups, organizations, members of Parliament considered the right policy under the circumstances, that of appeasement, which was Mr Chamberlain's policy towards Hitler, and towards Mussolini and Japan as well.

Mr Lewis, the American delegate to the 1923 conference, had told his audience "you are just a bunch of naïve dreamers". Darlington may have been one of them but Baldwin, Eden, Chamberlain were not, they failed in assuming incorrectly, where the waters were running to.

After the exchanges with Miss Kenton, Stevens resumes his position as butler, and ponders over his position, one that produces grim thoughts and then, as had similarly occurred thirteen years before, at the end of the last dinner of the 1923 Conference, he has a moment of joy:

Within the very room where I had just executed my duties, the most powerful gentlemen of Europe were conferring over the fate of our continent. Who would have doubt at that moment that I had indeed come as close to the great hub of things as any butler could wish?



I can see few other explanations for that sense of triumph I came to be uplifted by that night. (p. 239)

The image of Lord Darlington remains with Stevens for even eleven years after the war ended. Time and again, Stevens proclaims his Lordship to have been an honest, decent and well meaning person,

something that is accepted both by all participants in the 1923 Conference including the Germans themselves. Due to his noble qualities, he fell into the hands of the greatest “trickster” of all, Herr von Ribbentrop, but the shadow of his friendship with the Germans, particularly his frequent visits to that country remained strong. After the war Lord Darlington is charged with treason and begins a process of endless conflicts and allegations with newspapers and court hearings which bring about his financial ruin and final disgrace. In a confessional and repentant mood, Stevens finally concedes that his lordship may have been wrong. It’s early evening and rainy. He sits next an old man on a bench watching the sea. For once, Stevens becomes sentimental, confesses some secrets, and recalls his days at Darlington Hall, the events, as usual in his own words “of great moment”. He bursts out

Lord Darlington wasn’t a bad man. He wasn’t a bad man at all. And at last he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he had 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. (p. 256)

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