

An Analysis of the Remains of the Day from the Perspective of Trauma Theory

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ABSTRACT. Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the world's most famous contemporary writers. His representative piece, *The Remains of the Day*, winning the Man Booker Prize for Literature in 1989. This passage, from the perspective of Trauma Theory, tries to analyze Stevens' trauma of family affection and love, which shows that Ishiguro's concern about human living condition and helps the injured to establish the hope for trauma treatment.

KEYWORDS: *The remains of the day; Trauma theory, Trauma of family affection; Trauma of love*

1. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro, a Japanese-born British novelist, is one of the most outstanding British contemporary writers. He has been ranked 32nd in the list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945". *The Remains of the Day* can be regarded as the most outstanding one, with typical time setting between two World Wars and a representative protagonist Stevens, which all contribute to the winning of the Man Booker Prize in 1989.

2. Trauma Theory

Trauma initially derives from a Greek word "trauma" or "wound", which means an injury inflicted on a body. Broadly speaking, trauma refers to physical or psychological damage resulting from an external agent such as a catastrophic event, disaster, accident or rape. Hence, trauma can be defined as a direct physical damage caused by external forces, as well as a psychological damage caused by a strong emotional response.

A traumatic event is an event that is or may be a cause of trauma, which could cause emotional, psychological, physical injury or harm. A traumatic event involves one experience, or repeating events with the sense of being overwhelmed that can be delayed by weeks, years, or even decades as the person struggles to cope with the immediate circumstances, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences, often overlooked even by mental health professionals.

The basic way to cure trauma is the recovery of the victim's ability and the establishment of new relationships. Overcoming trauma, people will become stronger, more positive and determined, and meanwhile they will have more tolerance towards life. People will know how to understand life, cherish life, thus, the future life of them will be more effective and beneficial.

3. Aspects of Trauma

3.1 Trauma of Family Affection

When mentioned about past days, Stevens referred to his father. Readers can see that the relationship between he and his father is unnatural, there is no personal relationship between them, it is only a kind of working relationship. When his father retired, Stevens considered his excellence of occupation, he decided to let him work in Darlington Hall. But once when his father fell because of old age at work, Stevens, Standing in the housekeeper's point of view, said to his father in a very official way, that his father in this physical condition to continue the work is likely to affect the entire work of the house, even for the whole life. What's more, he always call his father in the third person, the tone is very cold and never to reveal his personal feelings. And this kind of attitude is nothing new to his father. It seems that both sides are accustomed to this way of communication. In fact, they were lack of communication, even those short talk only about work which they must exchange

information to each other, the words between them without any intimacy and warmth, indifference. They even felt embarrassed about each other.

Stevens' indifference and ignorance to his father was due to the trauma of his childhood. People who subject to trauma during their childhood, they will suffer the most and last the longest. Stevens' childhood suffered from family trauma, that is, the role of parents is incomplete, partially missing. These sufferings twisted his life.

Stevens did not mention his mother in his memory, suggesting that his mother did not care enough about him and had little impact. What his father gave him not the love of affection but unconscious spiritual effect. He was proud to tell the story of his father. The the experience and trauma of his father can pass on him subconsciously. One story was that there was a general, who led to his brother's death, to his father's master's house to visit. Because of strong occupation spirit, although his father hate this general, he still voluntarily to serve the people, and got high praise. His father chose to got this false achievement at the expense of humanity. This kind of inhibition of emotion is terribly abnormal. But Stevenson felt that his father had the "dignity" of a great housekeeper, and had a great virtue, and thus enjoyed.

Death is the most extreme traumatic experience. His father had a abnormal performance with the death of his brother. His father did not vent this expressions out and injury a lot. This trauma also left wounds to Stevens and make him deeply believe that work is everything, no other personal space. This also led to him that when his father was close to death, he is still keep calm downstairs to serve the guests, did not see his father for the last sight. Using the theory of Freud, his father's strong superego influences Stevens unconsciously. He admired and feared the powerful image of his father, and devoted his life to imitate. Stevens respects and loves his father in his deep heart, he once accused Miss Kenton because she call his father "William". When his father talked to him for the last time and said, "I'm proud of you. A good son. I hope I have been a good father to you." The only time his father showed his true feelings to him, he left for work. Although they love each other, but did not reveal any joy and warmth between them.

3.2 Trauma of Love

Stevens' childhood trauma will inevitably affect his love and career, making it a tragedy. He and Miss Kenton known and attracted to each other during work gradually. Kenton was a lively, kind-hearted woman, responsible for work and have a strong admiration for Stevens. To some extent, Miss Kenton was a beam of sunshine in his suppressed life. Miss Kenton repeatedly said that his room is too dark for him and brought some flowers but was rejected by him. The flowers symbolize that Miss Kenton brought a positive influence to his life, his refusal means he stick to his principles, not open his heart, to some extent, indicates that they cannot get together. They have differences in principle, separate is inevitable.

Although Stevens loved Miss Kenton, but he restrained his feelings and never expressed. When Miss Kenton decided to marry someone else, Stevens still remained his feelings. Not to urge Miss Kenton from leaving leaves a huge wound in his heart, causing him to live a lonely life. Miss Kenton's unhappy marriage let him more regret. Stevens' trauma of love last for a long time in his memory. A scene will never fade away, that is he holding the dish stood in the dark corridor, a few yards away, the other side of the door, Miss Kenton is crying, but he did not open the door, and insisted to go back to work. The scene makes people very sad. In order to concentrate on his work, he sacrificed his love and gave up his personal happiness.

At the beginning of the novel, Stevens mentioned Kenton's letter, he saw it for many times, between the lines, reveals his deep thoughts of Miss Kenton. Although Miss Kenton already married, but from past till now, he has been referred to her as Miss Kenton, this seems to that he have not been to accept the fact that she got married. Stevens traveled to the west, trying to fix his error committed against Miss Kenton's at past. He thought Miss Kenton can back to Darlington Hall, but Kenton decided to return to her family, he admitted that "my heart is broken". This is the only time he expressed his true feelings. Stevens is not married of his whole life. He completely repressed his feelings. He thought that love, family life is a luxury for the housekeeper. He is looking forward to the love but it is more important to pursuit his housekeeper's "dignity", he resists emotional temptation, give up the right to have love, family and enjoy life, give up the most beautiful side of human nature.

4. Conclusion

In the novel, Stevens devoted his whole life to pursuit professional dignity blindly, he even repressed his true feelings in his deep heart, abandoned ordinary needs as a normal person. These showed that he buried individual traumatic experiences in the depths of his heart. Father's indifference, brother's death and the lack of family care reflects that Stevens suffered a lot in his family life. With humor and sentimental writing style, writer tries to

criticize the problem of losing one's identity, disharmony of family relationship and how war influence badly on the general population, express his sympathy to trauma population.

Stevens employs writing to reveal pains and pour out personal trauma so as to relieve pains and healed his trauma to some extent through "being listened". At the end of the novel, Stevens realized that all the past events like the mist passing, he should give himself an opportunity for a fresh start. This passage can also help readers to refresh their mind, vent their pain, and to rethink the meaning of their life.

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