Volume 3: 2010-2011 ISSN: 2041-6776

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Dominic Head has noted that some contemporary novels 'foreground their linguistic virtuosity ... not in the mode of exaggerated playfulness, but to reflect in complex ways upon experience — and so, paradoxically, to build a bridge back to reality through the very artfulness that announces the division between World and Book' (The State of the Novel [2008]).

Explore the relevance of this account of virtuosity for understanding the formal and thematic aims of two writers from the module.

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The artfulness that distinguishes book from reality invokes the tensions between form and theme. For Dominic Head, linguistic virtuosity is not simply a text's artful playfulness, but pertinent to the articulation of its thematic concerns, and therefore to its form. This notion of artfulness produces a paradox: the text foregrounds its language as an artificial construction and, in the process of showing us its construction, solicits us to re-engage with the reality of the experience that it articulates. However, simultaneously undercutting this process are the inherent limits of language itself. The authors' linguistic virtuosity, therefore, is rendering visible the role and limitations of language in constructing human experience to provide a bridge back to reality in order to reflect its thematic concerns. Thus, exploring this linguistic virtuosity in a text's formal and thematic aims demands a discussion of the ways in which it foregrounds language as the instrument with which we orchestrate experience.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* ((*Remains*) 2005, [1989]) and Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* ((*Written*) 1996, [1992]), appear antithetical in formal and thematic aims. *Remains*'s protagonist, Butler Stevens, is a self-deceiving, first-person narrator who uses language to contain emotion, whilst *Written*'s first-person narrator uses language to express emotions, reflecting the 'emotional perplexities of this age' (Art Objects, 39). Both novels employ contrasting stylistic techniques to reflect their contrasting thematic concerns. Nonetheless, these two authors are united by their shared focus on the first-person narrator's self-conscious construction of language to mediate their experience of emotion. Ishiguro aims to reflect upon the reality of 'human emotional experience' (Conversations, 177), which connects with Winterson's contention that 'art is about human emotion' (AO, 108). This essay will therefore assess Head's account of linguistic virtuosity in Ishiguro and Winterson's texts by focusing on their first-person narratives, as it is precisely their interiority that enables an exploration of the tensions between the role of language and the experience of emotions. It will argue that both narrators grapple with the limits of language in mediating their love, loss and desire. Through foregrounding the artifice of their language to demonstrate the overwhelming experience of emotions extending beyond language, these texts form a bridge back to reality.

Remains foregrounds the inadequacy of language to contain the overwhelming feeling of love through the discursive process with which Stevens strives to disguise his feelings for Miss Kenton. As Molly Westerman notes, Stevens is a split subject whose professional attempts to elide his emotions cause his narrative 'to split open at the level of the text' (158). An auto-diegetic narrator, Stevens participates in the narrative's events, but is also an 'extra-diegetic' constructer and interpreter of them (Genette, 245). This enables exploration of the linguistic process by which Stevens constructs both his "reality' and the experience of love he elides. The meta-fictional trope of Miss Kenton's letter features Stevens's manipulation of language. To camouflage the love underscoring his desire for her return, Stevens's narrative constructs its significance under the rubric of his 'professionalism viewpoint' (51), and the need for 'a fully satisfactory staff plan' (10). As he re-reads and reinforces the letter's professional import throughout the text, he admits the contrivance of his interpretations ('the letter does not make specific details' (50)). This emphasises the artifice of his language, and alerts us to the parapraxes splintering his sentences:

> It is of course, tragic that her marriage is now ending in failure. At this very moment, no doubt, she is pondering with regret decisions made in the far-off past that have now left her, deep in middle age, so &one and desolate. And it is easy to see how in such a frame of mind, the thought of returning to Darlington Hall would be a great comfort to her. Admittedly, she does not at any point in her letter state explicitly her desire to return; but that is the unmistakable message conveyed by the general nuance of many of the passages (50).

This justification for Miss Kenton's professional return obviates the 'general nuance' of his love for her (50). lust as Stevens reads into the letter's 'unmistakable message', the passage self-consciously solicits the reader to interpret its underlying import (50). Evaluatives ('of course', no doubt (50)) underscore the contrivance of Stevens's rationale which becomes increasingly conspicuous when the anticipatory constituent (this very moment') suddenly invites us into his interior focalization. His narrative renders visible an unfolding, projected fantasy of Miss Kenton's suffering. This fantasy's rolling clauses, compelled by commas and the conjunctive, betray Stevens's immersion in Miss Kenton's image. The fantasy's present-tense dramatic immediacy, its melodramatic adjectives ('desolate', 'tragic'), and the pathos of the far-off past' (50), expose Stevens's romanticised impression of Kiss Kenton as vulnerable, undermining his professional guise. Moreover, in rehearsing Miss Kenton's own interior perspective, Stevens seems to vicariously impress his own nostalgia upon her viewpoint. In doing so, he connects them in his imagination and exposes his dependence on her. The histrionic tone of this account (Miss Kenton's tragedy and Stevens's deliverance), hints at the sentimental, chivalrous attitude that underscores his staff-plan "rescue''. What this passage exemplifies, then, is the splits in Stevens's tightly constructed professional discourse as love informs his language. More broadly, it reflects *Remains*'s thematic concern with exposing language's inadequacy in repressing emotions.

Written also foregrounds love as a linguistically irrepressible, transcendental experience. It employs two chief stylistic devices for this project: the ungendered narrator's 'universal' voice and the trope of cliché. As Ute Kauer notes, *Written* 'deconstruct[s] cliches about love' in its quest for a precise 'expression for a very individual sensation' (45). Kauer oversimplifies this thematic concern in foreclosing the narrator's gender (50). Rather, as Louise Humphries argues, the narrator's ungendered persona is important: it is a stylistic strategy for expressing love's universal experience (16). This narrative voice, then, crucially becomes at once individual and universal. An application of Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia and monologism is useful (1934). For Bakhtin, language is intrinsically 'heteroglossic': 'each

word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life' ([1934/35] 1981, 293). Language is therefore inherently multi-voiced. Populated by pre-existing meanings and intentions, its multivocality negates the notion of a single, 'monologic' expression (271). In this way, the very universality of language renders it a form of cliche, as each iterated word is long-inhabited and rendered familiar through repetition. This drowns out the single, precise expression of emotion which *Written*'s narrator's universal voice seeks.

This is exemplified as the narrator repeatedly falls back on cliche, reflecting the heteroglossia of love's expression, whilst simultaneously mourning that 'it's the clichés that cause the trouble' (10, 155). They appear recurrently: the words 'I love you' (9), the familiar script of adultery (13), the 'public display' of marriage (16), mythological figures ('Cupid' (48)), love poets (Shakespeare, Petrarch, Donne, Keats), romantic stereotypes ('Victorian heroine' (49), 'Pre-Raphaelite heroine' (99), 'Sir Launcelot' (159)), pastoral idylls ('lover reminds you of a tree' (29)), and *Written*'s own cliched plot of lost love. Through the perpetuation of cliches alongside the metaphor of them as an armchair upon which 'millions of bottoms have sat before' (10), the universal narrator conveys the multivocal, heteroglossic condition of love's expression. It is precisely this nourishment of cliché, juxtaposed with their paradoxical quest for a singular expression that conveys the ineffability of love's individual experience. More broadly, just as the narrator derives its subversive power through difference, the precise expression of love gains its power from its innate elusiveness. Thus, in both Ishiguro and Winterson's texts, the experience of love extends beyond language.

Both narrators also grapple with language to overcome the trauma of loss. *Remains*'s formal structure is inextricably linked with its theme of Stevens's encroaching knowledge of loss, the '*Remains* of [his] day' (256). This works to forestall his discursive attempts to repress it.' As David lames has shown, Ishiguro's 'structural use throughout of associative memories...impact on the arc of the novel's narrative', pressing Stevens from reminiscence to self-examination and finally to regret' (62). Amit Marcus explains that, for Stevens, each effort to repress a 'hidden area' compels it to manifest unconsciously, through his language (130). In this way, as Stevens's memories progress, we become privy to the ways in which loss perpetually exceeds his discursive attempts to repress it.

Ishiguro formally introduces a double-motif to further this thematic concern, the reccurring memories of Stevens's absent father figure. Here Stevens displaces his trauma through a process of transvaluation, replacing the loss of his biological father with more pleasing memories of his metonymic, "surrogate", father Lord Darlington. The chinaman episode is illustrative, where, perturbed by the memory of Miss Kenton confronting his father's errors, Stevens forecloses pain by defining them 'trivial slips' (59). However, this repression engenders further incidents of his father's errors, now fortified by Kenton's prophetic remark that Stevens 'must realise their larger significance': his father's 'powers are greatly diminished' (62). A clear signal to death, the knowledge of loss threatens Stevens. Thus, again, he forestalls loss by carefully restating and then transposing that remark onto the consoling impression of "father", Lord Darlington. Stevens's account of his father's death functions similarly: Stevens frames the death with the impression of successfully attending to Lord Darlington: the moment in my career when I truly came of age as a butler' (110).

These repressive strategies prove further insufficient as his faith in Lord Darlington's reputation fractures, thus he rejects his acquaintance when talking to Mrs. Wakefield and the batman (126, 195), later admitting, 'Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided' (201). As loss overwhelms Stevens's once comforting impression of his "surrogate" father; the double-motif becomes fully realised. Indeed, at the text's conclusion, it is able to come full circle. The imagery of Stevens's unspoken tears, to which his company alert us despite his narrative's attempts to elide them, is pivotal in linking the double-motif. This imagery self-consciously

recalls and, strikingly, parallels the tears that he shed at his own father's death (110), which features to foreground the persistent breakdown of his repressive efforts. In this way, *Remains*'s formal structure of associated memories utilises repetition to explicate Stevens's discursive attempts, and ultimate failures, to restrain his experience of loss. The experience of emotion proves irrepressible and overwhelms his language.

Written's form also foregrounds the limits of language in overcoming loss. Its retrospective narration renders Louise a fiction constructed by the narrator in a discursive attempt to reclaim her, which is exemplified by the middle-section. Here, as Cath Stowers notes, the narrator employs travel tropes in the form of bodily explorations and places them within the formal structure of a medical text-book (149). In suggesting, however, that this 'love-poem' successfully reclaims Louise (149), Stowers's lesbian reading forecloses *Written*s more complex thematic concern with ontological experiences. Rather, this section consists of linguistic attempts and failures to materialise the body; the experience of loss penetrates the narrator's language, like cancer penetrates Louise:

> 1. THE SKIN IS COMPOSED OF TWO MAIN PARTS: THE DERMIS AND THE EPIDERMIS.
> Odd to think that the piece of you I know best is already dead. The cells on the surface of your skin are thin and flat without blood vessels or nerve endings. [...] Your sepulchral body, offered to me in the past tense, protects your soft centre from the intrusions of the outside world. I am one such intrusion, stroking you with necrophiliac obsession, loving the shell laid out before me. (123)

The language here articulates the tensions between reclaiming and losing Louise's body. Just as the skin is 'composed of two main parts' (50), this section is composed of two discourses: poetry and science. Thus, in claiming the skin is 'already dead' (50), this metaphor forestalls the potential of these two discourses, suggesting that language is, itself, inanimate. The language therefore embodies a superficial journey across Louise's surface, reclaiming only her shell. Accordingly, the self-descriptions permeating this middle-section ('necrophiliac', 'archaeologist of tombs (119), a 'worm' (137)), cite images of death that undermine the narrator's language with the essence of loss. The meta-lingual reference to Louise 'in the past tense' embedded in the present-tense reaffirms language's limitations (50). Thus, we see a self-conscious foregrounding of the passage's own 'embalm[ment]' of Louise that renders her a lifeless 'photograph' imprinted within the text (119). The medical facts introducing each passage further deny a poetic recovery of Louise: capitalized as headings, the typography bestows authority to scientific discourses and ruptures the poem with reminders of losing Louise to cancer. More broadly, this middle-section dismembers Louise's body into present-tense "components" that interrupt the story's narration. Much less the liberating, 'fluid multiplicity' that Stowers suggests (99), the narrative's progression is suspended here in order to expose language's immobilising effect on its subject. Like *Remains*, *Written* is a text that foregrounds the inadequacy of language in overcoming loss. The narrator, despite showing some awareness of linguistic artifice, is ultimately unable to bring Louise back, perpetually returning to the invocation of loss.

Both texts also explore the limitations that language places on their narrators' subjectivities when it becomes the medium with which they construct their desires. In *Remains*, Stevens manifests his desire as a Butler 'serving humanity' (117) through a self-effacing discourse on 'dignity". As Meera Tamaya notes, to realise this ideal, Stevens's language becomes 'self-a bnegati[ng] in the service of his master' (47). While Tamaya's post-colonial analogy misconstrues *Remains*'s thematic concern with human experience, her emphasis on language's "colonising" effect on Stevens's identity is pertinent. Stevens himself

echoes this disseminating "dignity' [as] crucially.„a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits' (43). Thus defined, this self-abnegating, discursively realised desire underscores the corrosive consequences of his language. Ishiguro calls attention to the self-abnegation underpinning Stevens's self-definition: he uses the abstract pronoun one over 'I', assuming the collective persona of the English 'we' that he desires (29), while effacing him in the process. Similarly, he defines 'a great Butler'„.as a "what" rather than "who"' (29). The relative pronoun reveals Stevens's objectification of himself. This foregrounds the caustic effect of realising desire through a discursively produced, and therefore intrinsically limited, self-definition.

The text's conclusion intensifies this dilemma. Having understood the 'misguided' essence of his faith in 'dignity' (256), Stevens pursues a redemptive, enthusiasm for 'human warmth' (258). Here, Ishiguro reintroduces the theme of desire to reinforce the intrinsic role and limits of language in its construction:

> The hard reality is [.,.] there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world who employ our services. What is the point in worrying oneself too much about what one could or could not have done to control the course one's life took? (257).

The dramatic irony is clear, as this subtle recycling of previous, monolithic discourses subverts Stevens's narrative progression towards an ostensibly enlightened sense of self at the '*Remains* of [his] day' (256). The resigned tone recalls and reinstalls the subservient rhetoric Stevens has shown throughout, namely while denying Lord Darlington's Nazi affiliations ('our professional duty is not to our own foibles' (157)). The 'hub' image recapitulates the 'wheel of 'greatness' upon which Stevens constructed his self-effacing desire to buttress the empire' (120). The perpetual 'one' is reinforced by the possessive adjective 'our', restating his desire for a collective 'what'. By bestowing this concluding episode with the same linguistic features present throughout the narrative, Ishiguro demonstrates the impossibility of Stevens constructing new desires on the same linguistic foundations.

Furthering this notion, Ishiguro presents the telling discourse of bantering as the source with which Stevens would construct his new desire. Stevens now invokes this more auspicious discourse, initially dismissed in the prologue, as the language of 'human warmth' (258). Though a clear gesture of hope (James, 65), Ishiguro also carefully problematises Stevens's optimism. He reminds us that bantering will please Mr. Farraday, and therefore reinstall Stevens's self-effacement; this new language becomes a new trick for his master (Tamaya, 55). Furthermore, the notion of bantering is itself important: it denotes trickery, and therefore will in fact forestall the intimate 'human warmth' Stevens desires (Shaffer, 173). Though Stevens attempts to utilise a fresh discourse for a more enfranchising desire, it *Remains* constructed from the linguistic systems that he is mired in. In foregrounding the tropes of "dignity" and "bantering" as the two self-effacing discourses through which Stevens constructs his desires, Ishiguro alerts us to the corrosive effects of language. Thus, *Remains* exposes the limitations that language places on the subject's realisation of desire.

Written's narrator also struggles with these limits in attempts to realise their desire for Louise. For Antje Lendenmeyer, the narrator's language reaffirms 'Louise's integrity as a 'whole person" (54), through 'the utopian concept of a mutual_redrawing' of her identity (57). Utopian indeed, the narrator's desire for recreating Louise also ensnares her, rendering language more problematic than Lendenmeyer suggests. *Written* self-reflexively elides Louise's agency within the text, rendering her entire identity a linguistic construction and, therefore, a discursive object of the narrator's desire. Thus, Winterson validates yet problematises the potential of language to realise Louise. Working with Winterson's own

contention that poetry is superior, a 'heightened language' (AO, 37), *Written*t narrator reaffirms and recreates Louise through a multitude of metaphors that vivify yet, nonetheless, arrest her as art. As a 'musical instrument' (129), Louise's sweetness and euphony is evocative, but she *Remains* an object to be played. Her value and beauty, as 'all the treasures of Egypt' (146), similarly finds her an exoticised Other. Featured in the present-tense, these metaphors also render Louise a temporally suspended construct embedded within the narrator's past-tense discourse.

Just as Stevens does, *Written*'s narrator grasps awareness of their misguided discourse, questioning, 'Did I invent her?' (189). Yet, like *Remains*, *Written* too presses upon the role and limits of language in constructing desire as the narrator similarly finds itself submerged within the self-effacing nature of this discourse: 'I wanted you to possess me' (52), 'she flooded me' (163). This obsessive desire, realised through language, threatens both subject and object. *Written* concludes with this dilemma: encourage us to individually re-engage with the world through an understanding of the linguistic foundations upon which we construct it.

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