

“Can’t You See We’re Eating?”  
—Looking at the Textual Dietetics in Ishiguro’s Butler Stories—

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*Form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor  
and the adequate satisfying of that appetite.*

*Kenneth Burke, Counter-Statement*

At the Kazuo Ishiguro conference held in Paris, March 2003<sup>1</sup>, Ishiguro spoke of his latest film script for James Ivory *The White Elephant*, a work he says is a product of the research previously done for the writing of *When We Were Orphans* (2000). Though he is more known for his novels, Ishiguro’s attempts at script writing go back to the 1980’s during which he produced two TV screenplays, *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* (1984) and *The Gourmet* (1987). Both works were broadcast on Channel 4, and while the script for *The Gourmet* was published in *Granta* in 1993, *Arthur J. Mason* still remains an unpublished manuscript. One might assume that for the Man-Booker Prize winner Ishiguro to find a publisher for an old manuscript is not as troublesome a task as it is for his character Mason, who has been rejected so many times from the publishers that he has lost interest in getting it published altogether. But for both of these “writers of fiction” the same reality principle applies: non-publication of a script means less accessibility and less recognition of the work. It is not difficult to see why *Arthur J. Mason* has largely been passed over in critical discussions of Ishiguro’s works despite its quite significant hypotextual relation to the much scrutinized *The Remains of the Day*.

If Stevens is the English butler looking back at his life at the end of the day, so too is Mason. Both butlers are quite proud of the services they have been able to offer their lordships, and yet uncertain about how to come to terms with their margins of error. Mason is the prototype of Stevens, and a variety of parallels in motif, setting, characterization can be seen. It is apparent that some sort of textual incorporation is in process, a kind of palimpsestuous rewriting of a story of which its result is a completely different work but with strong resonances of the underlying text. Metaphorically speaking there is a kind of textual eating going on, and the comparing of the two works is perhaps a process that can be called an analysis in textual dietetics. The (textual) eating as we shall see, is explored not only in between the works, but very much within *Arthur J. Mason*.

In this paper I would like to compare the two butler stories with a primary focus on *Arthur J. Mason*. While keeping in mind that this is not a novel but a screenplay made into a film, I would like to raise the following questions. If by mistake or by conscientious choice Stevens has in effect “written off” his feelings for Miss Kenton, is there anything that Mason has done/undone in terms of his private life? What is Mason abstaining from telling? What is

Mason's story? And from whose viewpoint is it told? If the two treasured memoirs of Mason's life, which happen to be his novel and his photos from the past, are read out loud/shown rather than written out in the form of a journal like Stevens, what do such sincere and at once "theatrical" props make us see? If the cue to the camera getting kicked out from a climactic scene is "Can't you see we're eating?" what does this say about eating and story telling? Is eating essentially an interruption for those who wish to tell their stories?

### *A Profile of Arthur J Mason: The Two Versions*

Before embarking on any textual analysis of *Arthur J Mason* or its relationship to *The Remains of the Day*, we must first address the issue of there being two versions, both which this article cannot proceed without. One is the film directed by Michael Whyte, the other the original screenplay by Ishiguro. Strictly speaking the film version is a different piece of work, a hypertext in a different medium in which there is a "film time" "film space" and "film reality" peculiar to its genre. However, perhaps especially since Ishiguro's script has not been published, we cannot make light of this film as it is the form in which the story actually came out and which Ishiguro apparently intended, as we shall see, as its medium of production.

How much then is the film version a work by Ishiguro? This question at once gives rise to a more fundamental question, is there an "author" for a film? The issue of authorship in dealing with a studio-produced film, claim David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, is one that needs to be considered from three different angles: the author as production worker, as personality, and as a group of films. In their argument the so-called production worker is the director, who would "at least have overt veto control at every stage of production" (Bordwell 37). Personality is another term for *politique des auteurs* ("the position of being for authors"), a way of seeing film as a product of various decisions that reflect the personality or preferences of that director (e.g. the Alfred Hitchcock flavor, the Michael Whyte flavor, etc.). The author as a group of films is the idea that the author is "no longer a person, but for the sake of analysis, a system of relations among several films bearing the same signature": that of "director, producer, screenwriter, or whatever" (Bordwell 38). None of these assumptions is definitive, not even after the vociferous debates in the 1960's and 70's over "director as auteur" led by Andrew Sarris and "screenwriter as auteur" piloted by Richard Corris. Even if Ishiguro is not *the* author of the film version per se, I would like to turn to both the script and the film in this article, in light of the view that for an analysis of say a play by Shakespeare or Pirandello or any work generically expected to be acted out, the script has been given due attention.

On the title page of Ishiguro's script are some official data about the work: the title (A PROFILE OF ARTHUR J. MASON), written by whom (Kazuo Ishiguro), genre ("A film for television"), the production company (SPECTRE/SKREBA) and director of the film (MICHAEL WHYTE), the date of transmission to Channel 4 (18th October 1984), the film festivals it participated in (Filmex [Los Angeles], Edinburgh, Chicago), and the award it received (Golden Plaque Best Short Film, Chicago Film Festival 1984). Such information underscores the film as its intended medium of production and perhaps somewhat undermines the independence of the script. The written story somehow becomes something marginal once the setting, stage

directions, etc. have been appropriated and the film made; the script is not the final form of the story.

With this problem of the generic intermediacy of scripts in mind, I would like to point out the fact that the film version of Ishiguro's work has another title: *THE AUGUST PASSAGE* in capital letters appears on the screen before the words *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* appear. Can a film, in its paratext, have two titles without one being the main, the other a sub? For in this case the titles are presented sequentially<sup>2</sup> as though one is the outer frame of the other story, and yet *The August Passage* is the title of a book ontologically possible only within the work *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason*.<sup>3</sup>

### Mason's Story

Both titles share one characteristic: the stories that respectively follow are Mason's (one is by him, the other about him). So what is Mason's story?

A novel written thirty-some years ago by Mason, at the time repeatedly rejected for publication, has recently come to be published and with quite success. A young journalist eager to make a film out of this event interviews him, and eventually succeeds in recording his emotional outpouring of both his personal life and career as a full-time butler.

The film begins with a butler dressing an older man, supposedly his lordship (later revealed as Sir Henry Reid<sup>4</sup>) who is "staring towards us with a stony vacancy which suggests imbecility, or perhaps premature senility"(1). The butler then reappears going busily about his daily task of serving breakfast, and then of taking a phone call; he then is soon introduced by a female voiceover specified in the script as being "a shade too intense to be convincingly professional"(2).

The man you are now watching was recently described by *The Sunday Times* as 'an unmistakably formidable figure.' His name is Arthur J. Mason, and he is the author of *The August Passage*, a massive and extraordinary novel completed all but thirty-six years ago, but published for the first time earlier this year.<sup>5</sup>

This voiceover introduces Mason as a novelist while showing him going about his duties as a butler. The voice belongs to the young female journalist Anna, addressed simply as "Miss" or "young lady" throughout the entire work. As the second page of the film script dictates,<sup>6</sup> the work proceeds in the form of her interviews with Mason at Sir Henry's residence. She finds the interview off to a shaky start: the more she tries to engage Mason to talk about his infatuation with his work having been ignored, the more devious and repetitious his polite become. Their dialog by no means improves when she mentions her rendering of the novel as being "Marxist," for his response is again a polite yet firm disagreement: "Well, Miss. . . . With all due respect." In a later scene he does not comply to her request to continue to read out loud from the book. He does not even hesitate to interrupt the interview when Sir Henry rings him. Least of all he does not say he will pursue his writing career, the reason being that Sir Henry simply needs his services. Sir Henry, upon being confronted by her ("Why do you need a full time employee?

What does he do anyway that you can't do for yourself?") that he is to blame for Mason's throwing away his potentials, lashes back with just as silly a logic: her failing to get a successful interview of Mason is because she is only asking Mason about his book in the kitchen and not Sir Henry himself about the heirlooms of the Reid family. Gradually however, Mason begins to talk. He allows Anna to come up to his private chamber, and out of his own accord shows pictures of a happier past with his wife and children, a period abruptly put to a halt by his wife leaving him when he gave up the publication of his book. Mason emphatically stresses that he has been happy as a butler, despite all "the utter misunderstanding of his position."

People imagine, as I suppose you do, that I'd rather do any sort of work than continue in my present position... It is an utter and complete misunderstanding of my occupation. I've long ceased to think of it as a job. It's, it's who I am, it's what I do, it's what I've always done and it's what I always intend to do. It is a responsible, dignified, thoroughly honorable occupation. (17-18)

What did or did not happen thirty-six years ago is quite irrelevant to me. One can't keep looking back over one's life implying hypothesis. I don't do that, and I have no regrets. (30)

The film soon ends with some footage of Mason dining by himself in the local village pub and then bicycling off into the night.

From whose viewpoint is this profile of Mason given? On one level this is a documentary of a living writer produced by fictional journalists; on another level, a fictional documentary produced by the non-fictional Michael Whyte and his staff. There is only one cameraman who plays the role of a nameless fictional character (of the cameraman) while at the same time is the actual mechanic staff recording what has been enacted by Bernard Hepton, Charles Gray, Cherie Lunghi, etc. These two levels overlap each other in a way as to silence some sort of consensus between the makers and the viewers of the film regarding the cameraman's marginal role. This is made explicit in a scene where Anna, so upset at having her interview interrupted as Mason is wanted by Sir Henry to serve more tea, barges in on the guests and causes a coup de théâtre. Having been ushered back into the kitchen, she is criticized by Mason for not behaving in a "civil manner" and for making a scene in front of Sir Henry's guests. Mason shakes his finger at the camera and says, "And I don't think it is very good manners to take that into the drawing room." *That* must refer to the camera, or by that Anna's cameraman, or in effect those fictional viewers who are on a same level of reality with Anna and capable of coming across a copy of *The August Passage* in a bookshop. But it is also us that are shut out, for Anna's cameraman is also Nick Knowland, whose name appears not in the casting but as a cameraman right before the names of the producer and director. The "outer play" is filmed by a cameraman with a name, the "inner" one by a character whom Ishiguro does not name.

If the cameraman is a character *and* a cameraman, what point-of-view does that give him? Could he be called a marginal narrator? He is a perfectly silent character, but is nevertheless

some kind of narrator for every aspect of the story is presented through his camera. The cameraman is “intradiegetic” in that as a character he does not know more than the other characters, “extradiegetic” in that as the actual technician he is “above” the narrated story, “homodiegetic” in that he is one of the primary participants in the play (not only does the journalist need the cameraman to take the necessary scenes for her film, Mason more than recognizes his presence), “heterodiegetic” in that as the technician his job is not to affect the course of events but to observe and record. One might even consider him as Anna’s conspiratorial double for though with a will of his own he is ideally a recording mechanism of what Anna sees for herself. When he/it gets kicked out, Anna’s storytelling must come to a halt.

I would like to reconsider the question of Mason’s story, this time not in terms of the plot of the work *Arthur J. Mason*, but in terms of Mason’s private rendering of his past. Through Anna’s impatient questioning the issue of whether Mason sees the publication of *The August Passage* as “(too) late” is persistently put before him “But it must have been infuriating,” she says. “To know that a book of such quality . . . was just gathering dust in the drawer” (4). Mason simply parrots the reply he has already given her: “It was not a matter I gave much thought to over the course of those years”(4). Such tactful, butler-like disregard for anything too personal is perhaps only too explicit a hint: either the opposite is true (he *has* thought much about it), or inhibitions about dwelling on an afflictive train of events (i.e. succession of rejections from the publishers followed by a divorce), has redirected his thoughts elsewhere. For the doing of what had led his wife to believe in (the completion of his book) had directly led to the un-doing of his marriage.

Mason’s tongue loosens as he allows Anna and the cameraman to enter his small, dark bedroom starkly furnished in a part of the house without central heating. As a butler, minimizing the running cost of the house is a sacrifice he willingly accepts as part of the profession. Anna notices and asks about a half-completed plastic model kit on his desk; in another part of the room there turns out to be a collection of vintage model cars lined against a shelf. “Oh I like to make these models. To pass the time, you know. I like to [make] them properly. . . . I become quite absorbed, putting all the little parts together”(20–21), Mason says. Moreover, in response to Anna’s question of whether he does not see “something a little odd” about spending his evenings up in his room when Sir Henry and his guests are downstairs, Mason replies: “Oh no, that’s perfectly alright. There’s a bell just outside this door. If Sir Henry wants anything, he’ll ring”(21).

This is Mason, somewhat oddly content in his loneliness to the point where Anna’s question about his being a recluse is taken as a reproving comment on his professionalism. That the hours to himself are not spent on writing anymore becomes clear, as we gradually learn, that he had stopped writing altogether when his wife Mary left him. As he narrates his story, some black and white photos are shown to Anna for her viewers’ benefit: one of a much younger Mason and his wife, another of a country house, several of his children, and one of a table laid out as if for a feast. Mason’s oral reverie then touches upon the memory of how it had been his wife, a servant working in the same household as himself, who had been “very keen” that he finish the book, waking him at five in the morning, making sure he worked on it two hours every morning, two hours every night. His future success as a novelist was to be “a ticket to a new life,” making

possible their dream of “something a little better, a house of our own, some privacy”(25). Such hopes were being nurtured at a time when people were talking of a new post-war egalitarianism which Mary had begun to base her visions of their future. “The sort of employment we’d had before the war” was to be in her opinion “old-fashioned—very undignified”(25). This was all the more reason for them to aspire to become something more dignified than servants.<sup>7</sup> Was there to be any reward for their perseverance?

The day I finally finished it, I remember Mary coming in with a turkey, and this bottle of wine. Now this was 1948—things like that weren’t at all easy to get hold of—but she’d seen to it all right. And that night we celebrated—celebrated the completing of my book.

The timing of this feast, taken or “frozen” in its pre-digested state, is perhaps just where happy recollections of the past come to a halt. The manuscript specifies the details of this meal as thus:

B&W photograph, circa 1948; YOUNG ARTHUR standing behind a kitchen table, holding proudly to his chest with both hands a large bound folder. His air is triumphant. Before him on the table is a celebratory meal not yet begun. (24)<sup>8</sup>

What might a snapshot of a meal “not yet begun” signify? It not only accentuates the freezing of that transient pre-meal excitement of what is yet to come, but captures the height of happiness in a state of unsatisfied hunger.

According to Sarah Sceats, “[t]ime that stands still is story time, carnival time, larger-than-life time, an occasion for unsettling . . . innocent New World certainties, and setting in motion a train of events in which all have to revise their ideas” (178). Although the focus of Sceats’ argument is *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter, her ideas on social/communicative eating (i.e. the eating together) is useful here. Sceats contends that Carter achieves politicization of social eating in her novel by “encouragement of solidarity” through meal scenes that lead to subversive action, or by seeing social eating as “associated with some sort of perspectival shift in time and space” (175). The carnivalesque aspect of Carter’s novel, Sceats continues, is very much in accord with Bakhtin’s carnival in that there is “association with popular culture, the subversion or reversal of the expected, overblown bodily function and above all the play of an inclusive, ‘profoundly universal laughter’”(179).

By the term politicization of social eating, Sceats seems to be referring to the relationship of eating to society as a whole, and is attempting to look at the social function of eating and how it effects one’s conception of community.<sup>9</sup> Now in *Arthur J. Mason*, there is a curious lack of social eating, in the sense that any attempt to dine in company result in either a regulated silence or a complete debacle. At the breakfast table sits a senile and completely unresponsive Lord Reid, and Sir Henry reading the newspaper. There is no communication between the two, perhaps because Lord Reid is mysteriously, physically incapable of showing any sort of response. Mason, as he serves is silent except for an occasional thank you, sir. The second meal scene is the one Anna barges in on as Sir Henry is having tea with his guests, which ends as I

have already mentioned in an embarrassing moment for all involved. The third is a dinner scene in which Anna and the camera, though again without permission, enters the dining room as Sir Henry is having guests. Anna asks Mason to serve some more of the food to a lady guest so that they could film their ideal footage. This request immediately becomes the cause of a ridiculous hurly-burly, with Sir Henry crying out “Can’t you see we’re eating?”, with Mason spilling the food on the lady’s dress, and Lord Reid fainting and sliding off his chair. Following this fiasco is the last meal scene, particular in that it takes place outside the Reid household, at the local pub Mason frequents to eat by himself. Here he regularly encounters “new people,” young people who come and go, and could care less about how (supposedly) powerful Sir Henry is in local matters. Other than to order his food Mason hardly speaks, and through a voiceover narration informs the viewers that he prefers to leave before the place is filled with people. It is the absence (rather than the presence) of social eating that politicizes different issues through “encouragement of solidarity”: the quiet breakfast underscores a safe, domestic routine; the intrusions of Anna and the camera unite the others in their discomfort; Mason’s criticism against “new people” earmark his affinity with the older folks in the village. The pros and cons of class hierarchy, pursuit of artistic quality, sociability towards what seems non-relatable are potentially unsettling factors: for, as Sceats has claimed, they may set in motion a train of events in which all would have to “shift” or revise their ideas.

This shift in *Arthur J. Mason*, however, is not as complete as a carnivalesque topsy-turvy. Aside from the commotions that Anna and the camera cause there is another carnivalesque scene, but that, too, is not subversive enough. I am referring again to that celebratory meal photo. The irony is that there is actually nothing extraordinary about two servants standing next to a gorgeous meal about to begin. That is what they do, they wait on others, and wait for their own dinner time to come. Oddly enough, as a consequence, a picture of servants about to enjoy an extraordinary meal is subversive in nature, for it requires a kind of emptying and appropriating of the master’s seat. Such subversion however is avoided, not because the photo shows them before a meal, but because the servants and the master are mutually complicit in the distance between them. Mason, however much he is prompted by Anna to leave his service and just write instead, only expresses more stoic devotion to being Sir Henry’s sole full-time employee. “I feel it is an honor and a privilege to work for a gentleman like Sir Henry, I feel the work is no less worthy an activity than that of writing books—or that of making television broadcasts. . . . I fully intend to continue giving my service. . . . I am perfectly happy here”(30–31). Sir Henry shows no signs of letting him go either, and fends off Anna’s question “what does he[Mason] do anyway that you can’t do for yourself” by asking her in return if Mason has told her of his wish to leave, which of course is not the case. The celebratory meal for Mason and his wife did mark an unsettling shift from naive anticipation of a brighter future (a new world) to continual rejection from the publishers, thus demanding that Mary completely revise her plans. Mary leaves both her work and husband, even taking the children with her. The photo of the celebratory meal had marked the beginning of a train of events that led to her divorce. But how subversive are the actions of Mason himself? Each time a carnivalesque element would creep into his life as in the four meal scenes, it had been his duty to bring order to the scene.

## The Two Butlers

If *The Remains of the Day* presumably germinated to a certain extent from *Arthur J. Mason*, what might be some of the comparable characteristics between Mason and Stevens? Obviously in terms of profession they are both butlers. Both find themselves in situations where they feel they must, for themselves as well as for their apparently prejudiced audience, clarify the dignity of their profession. Somewhere in the conscious or subconscious of both butlers is their intense desire for things *not* to have happened the way they did. I would like to suggest that they are arguably a hyper-hypo textual relation, a kind of palimpsestuous kin.

Both butlers happen to be writers, if differing in genre. Mason has written a piece of fiction, Stevens a less clear cut piece of writing in terms of its being faithful to facts<sup>10</sup>. The defining feature of "the butler's personality," as Lawrence Graver points about Stevens, is a "pattern of simultaneous admission of truth and denial, revelation and concealment" (3). Much of these qualities can be perceived in Mason as well, particularly in his responses to Anna's persistent questioning of how frustrating it must have been to wait so long for the publication of his book. In terms of linguistic features, Stevens, as Caroline Patey points out, has a tendency for "periphrasis and litotes," or circumlocution to the point where it is "difficult to imagine a wider gap between a signifier and its reference" (e.g. Stevens trying to explain the facts of life to young Reginald) (Patey 148) and understatements by which an affirmative is expressed by double negatives (e.g. "not unconsiderable" "not unperturbed" [Patey 148]). Mason, though he too can be devious in his responses is not as adept as Stevens, and Mason's discursive understatements are more in the style of repetitions of words that unsettle his peace of mind (e.g. "She began to blame the book, she began to blame me" [26], "I am perfectly happy here, I am perfectly happy with the way things have turned out" [31]).

Stevens refers to a past full of "turning points," or decisions which "set things on an inevitable course toward what actually happened" even though one was "perhaps not entirely aware of the full implications" of what one was doing (RD 175). He openly admits ("and why should I not admit this") his regret for not having "reinstated" the evening meetings with Miss Kenton, for having refused her attempts to "introduce flowers" to his pantry. Moreover, he is uncomfortable at recalling that he did not offer his condolences but instead criticized her as being remiss in her professional duties on the day she received news of her Aunt's death. Such supposedly open admission of a desire for an undoing of the past is expressed through phrases such as "had I relented" "what would have transpired" without his quite finishing the second half of his train of thought. The difference, or the content of what would have hopefully happened is endlessly deferred. Neither is Mason so eager to retrace the circumstances that prompted him to complete his book. For even if Anna's premature skills as an interviewer may have something to do with it, it is Mason's hesitance to respond to her questions that characterizes the beginning part of the interview.

As we have seen, the divulging of Mason's past occurs mostly in the form of a spontaneous, oral complementing of photos, and yet they are not the only relics of his past that push Mason to tell (or show) his story. The other theatrical "prop" is of course his novel *The August Passage* from which Mason reads out loud a selected passage.<sup>11</sup> As I have mentioned earlier, there is a scene in which he refuses to read any further from his novel. The one passage he is reading



concerns a Catherine and her husband whose conversation suggests that their disagreement is not altogether unrelated to that between Mary and Mason. This passage is structurally a part of a novel-within-a-film-within-a-film, and such additional stylistic layers of fiction effect in muddling just how much the autobiographical aspect (nonfiction within fiction) has been incorporated into his novel (fiction within fiction). Moreover, Mason is given a “real” audience (as opposed to one purely of his imagination) to extrapolate and defend his views, whereas Stevens can only assume the presence of a “you” and write, at most cry in front of a stranger at the journey’s end. Did Stevens, like Mason, write with the intention of getting his work published? For the vague “you” in *The Remains of the Day* (e.g. “As you might expect, I did not take Mr. Farraday’s suggestion at all seriously” “I undertook for myself a number of duties which you may consider most broad-minded of a butler to do” “You may be amazed that such an obvious shortcoming to a staff plan should have continued to escape my notice, but then you will agree that such is often the way with matters”) raises questions as to who Stevens is addressing. Is the intended “you” the readers of Stevens’s published work? Is he aware, like Mason, that he is writing a novel? Did Stevens also choose the title of his text? Answers to such questions do not lie within the text, and perhaps the questions themselves are paratextual in nature.

*A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* is first and foremost an unpublished screenplay that has been made into a film. One of the central props in the story is Mason’s novel, central not only in that its publication is the reason for the making of this documentary, but also in that the book is at the core of a textual, structural onion. The novel is enveloped first by a layer of fictional reality created by Mason, then by a fictional reality peopled by those who seek to produce a documentary of this just-discovered author, then by the viewers who for that very reason are one layer “outside” of the show, and then by a non-fictional reality created to which Michael Whyte and his staff belong. The camera shows us that Mason’s book is thick and has a red cover; it also makes accessible the content of this book by recording Mason reading a passage out loud. The core of the textual onion, unlike Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, is not a blank (for we have this one passage), but nevertheless it is still far from presenting itself in its entirety. Yet the profile of Mason, carefully directed so that the viewers only get a glimpse of his facial features at the beginning of the film, does come to be revealed from multi-angles. Bearing in mind that the term *profile* means among other things 1. facial outline from the side and 2. short verbal description of a person, we can see that both aspects are effectively incorporated into the profiling of Mason. If the verbal descriptions of Mason’s profile are Ishiguro’s script and Mason’s book, Anna’s film and Mason’s photos of his past offer the physical profile.

What are some of the textual dietetics displayed between the two butler stories by Ishiguro? Or what aspects of *Arthur J. Mason* have been appropriated into *The Remains of the Day*? Mason and Stevens are comparable in many ways, and the much discussed idiosyncrasies of Stevens seem to apply to Mason as well. It has been said of Stevens that he “is neither hero nor villain. He has been unprotestingly obedient throughout his life, and he now finds himself . . . struggling to give voice to his feelings” (Kamine 22). Others claim that in Stevens’s story there is “a pattern

of . . . admission and denial, revelation and concealment”(Graver 3). Moreover, while one has turned to writing, the other has turned away from writing to deal with a past both are not entirely happy with.

However, the differences are all the more interesting. Mason’s book is in the third person; the autobiographical aspect, if any, is more disguised or hardly there. Mason’s past is revealed not through a written monologue but through an oral dialogue in which the other person can always be identified (and not just left as a “you”). Furthermore there is the camera that can show the audience things Mason will not describe or admit about himself (e.g. his “bemused frown”). There are also photographs used to unfold a past in a more straightforward way, as if to enhance the reliability of his story.

If Mason’s story is less twisted, it is not all smooth. The photo of a happy meal in effect marked the beginning of a breakup in his marriage; in more than one meal scene, having guests amounted to miscommunication, emotional outbreaks, confusion. Mason goes to the pub not to socialize but to eat his kidney pie and head right home. It is such lack of social eating that characterizes this work, and yet in *The Remains of the Day* Stevens’s life evolves around preparing for important dinners, practicing bantering with his employer as he serves breakfast, eating one’s heart out over memories of cocoa sessions that were not reinstated. Lord Darlington’s guests throwing questions at Stevens just to highlight that he his working class even has a distinct ring of class cannibalism. The richness of social eating in Stevens’s story in contrast to Mason’s needs yet to be explored.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> An international conference entitled “Narrative detours in the fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro” was held at Paris IV-Sorbonne (20 March) and Paris UFM Institute (21 March). Ishiguro himself was there to talk about *When We Were Orphans* the first night, and attended the research presentations the second day.

<sup>2</sup> It would be an exaggeration to claim there are three titles to this work, but in the marginal cut before the film begins Skreba has dropped the miniscule article, making it *Profile of Arthur J Mason*.

<sup>3</sup> Common sense tells us there is something wrong with the logic of a smaller entity framing something larger than itself. Perhaps the first title is “given” by the fictional journalist in the story, whereas the second one is a dutiful recognition of Ishiguro’s title by the actual film staff headed by Michael Whyte. Such possibility does not rule out the question of reversibility of these particular titles, reversible not in terms of word order or reflections of the title words in a mirror, but in the sense of a reversible textile, as something having two finished useable sides. This leads to the question of the two stories being somehow “inside out”.

<sup>4</sup> In the script, the name is Sir *James Reid*.

<sup>5</sup> In the script the following sentence is also inserted: “His work has been described by *The Washington Post* as “staggering,” and by *The Guardian* as “containing something close to genius.” This repetition of (mock) stereotypicalization of book reviews is an all too-well known feature of “realistic” discourse, which is just as much an obvious referential force as that of historical place names that effectively ground a work in London society. Cf. Lilian Furst, “The Game of the Name,” *All is True* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 96. Also, in the script the number of years Mason’s books remained unpublished is thirty-eight years.

<sup>6</sup> “The whole of what follows should actually LOOK like a documentary film (a la ‘The South Bank

Show' or 'Omnibus') with the 'interview' scenes and other footage shot in the style typical of such programmes"(second sheet of manuscript, no page number given).

<sup>7</sup> One of the climactic scenes in the story is where Mason reiterates how serving Sir Henry has been a "responsible, dignified, thoroughly honorable occupation"(18).

<sup>8</sup> Although the photo used in the film shows his wife standing next to him, the production is otherwise quite faithful.

<sup>9</sup> Some of the questions she raises are: "how . . . do food and eating relate to the identity or cohesion of a certain group and the links between the group and its society? How are food and eating instrumental in the formation of identity in a particular society and what role do they play in socialization? What is the cultural place of ritual or social implication of cooking?" (155)

<sup>10</sup> "Stevens is the sort of narrator who exists only to be seen through. . . . He's completely transparent, one of the most dependable 'unreliable' narrators ever imagined." See Terrence Rafferty, "The Lesson of the Master," *New Yorker*, 15 January 1990, 102-4.

<sup>11</sup> "When he came to the bridge he looked back to the house standing there in the spring sunshine. It looked perfectly unforbidding, almost cozy. A house like that, how could a house like that be the prison Catherine had spoken of the night before. A house like that, so English and comfortable could be transformed from prison to haven without a single brick being touched, without the slightest alteration to its windows and doors. One had only to see it from the bridge caught in the early splendors of the spring. 'We can't stay here forever,' Catherine had said. 'We can't stay here in this prison. We'll just rot and become dry as aged vegetables.' 'Where should we go then?' he had asked, knowing this was but idle talk. 'America,' Catherine had said. 'Things are different in America. There's opportunities there for the likes of us.' America, the land of opportunity. But not for the likes of them, she was wrong about that. For they would take England with them in their blood, in their very hearts. They would transport with them where ever they went, those drizzly mornings, those dusty attics, the airless heat of the kitchen, the spotless sterility of their daily toil. 'America?' he had replied. 'What difference would it make? It's our fate to be English through and through. Until England changes, nothing will ever change for the likes of us, not even if we went to the North Pole. 'England change?' she had remarked looking at him, 'What ever do you mean?'" This is my transcription from the film; the passage is not in Ishiguro's script. In a sense this is a marginal example of intertextuality. Although the quoted passage actually exists (i.e. can be typed out as shown above), it cannot be traced back to its original book which exists only within the film.

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