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10. Towards a Narratology of Age(ing): A Study of Narrative Time in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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Abstract

As part of the so-called postclassical narratologies, contextualist or thematical narratologies allow for the inclusion of gender, sexual identity, and ethnicity in the study of narratives, thereby successfully undermining 'classical' narratology's claim to universality. While many contextualist approaches like feminist, queer, and postcolonial narratology have already been firmly established, it is striking that there is, as of yet, still no approach that considers age(ing). Age(ing) is oftentimes overlooked as an (intersecting) category that completes considerations on identity (politics). Thus, as part of a postclassical, contextualist approach, I seek to link concepts of age studies and narratology to reveal that the 'classic' narrative category 'time' is not 'neutral' or 'universal' but has to be understood as a function of age(ing). Time is closely linked to ageing processes. Nevertheless, I aim to study its narrative realisation through a narratological lens and show that the apparent linearity of time and the life course has to be questioned. Informed by a revisionist view, I will present a study of narrative time in Kazuo Ishiguro's famous novel *The Remains of the Day*. A context-sensitive reading of the novel will offer new insights and reveal age(ing) as a major theme of the tex. I argue for an age(ing)-conscious approach to narrative theory in order to provide a more detailed study of narrative structures and continue to diversify narratology.

Keywords

Postclassical narratology, contextualist narratology, narrative time, age studies, Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*

Introduction

Since the introduction of feminist narratology, there have been various new trends in the field of narratology that look to uncover the inherent diversities within an area once believed to be incurably addicted to formalism and structuralism. In its so-called postclassical phase, David Herman finds that "research on narrative does not just expose the limits but also exploits the possibilities of the older, structuralist models" (2-3). While there are many exciting additions to the field of narratologies, like, for example, "Transgeneric and Transmedial Applications and Elaborations of Narratology", or "Postmodern and Poststructuralist Deconstructions of (classical) Narratology" (Nünning, "Narratology" 249-51), I wish to concentrate and expand on the so-called contextualist, thematic strand of narratology that includes for example feminist and queer narratology.

In the most basic sense, contextualist narratology refuses to uphold the meticulous borders structuralist, classical narratology has erected between textual properties and the context of textual production. Within contextualist narratologies there is a consensus that "narrative theory should not confine its attention to the texts themselves, but should also take account of their contexts" (Kindt and Müller 207), by developing from a "structuralist analysis to a functional study of literature" (207). As Herman suggests, the 'old' structuralist model and achievements are exploited and remodelled to put the analytical toolkit of narratology "to the service of context-sensitive interpretations of novels" (Nünning, "Surveying" 61). Contextualist narratology combines narrative theory and the interpretation of narrative texts (51). Roy Sommer, who sees contextualist narratology as belonging to the "so-called 'hyphenated' narratologies which combine structuralist and cognitive frameworks with context-sensitive approaches to fiction" (62), draws attention to the fact that "the hyphen in hyphenated narratologies always invites and requires mutual exchange" (71), thereby naming another strength of a contextualist approach to narratology. With opening its borders, narratology stands to gain the opportunity to create "lively dialogue and mutual exchange between various critical traditions interested in novels, stories, films and plays" (71). In this article, I want to draw attention to the possibility of a connection between age studies and narratology and argue for a narratology of age(ing). My aim is to study the narrative category 'time' with the Genettian system as well as Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope and show that narrative time is dependent on ageing in its realisation, thereby questioning the universality that classical, structuralist narratology attributes to it.

Age Studies

Even though age studies have been a highly productive field for the past forty plus years, Leni Marshall points out that almost every new contribution is hailed as groundbreaking and comments that after "[f]orty years of scholarship [...] we are just breaking ground – what rough territory this is!" (14). This is probably why Elizabeth Barry has labelled age studies as the 'poor cousin' of other identity politics (5). In turn, it seems hardly surprising that there has – as of now – not been a connection between age studies and narratology. In order to provide a solid base for a narratology of age(ing), I will introduce some of age studies' most prominent assumptions in the following.

For those studying age, it has long been clear that age(ing) has to be understood as "the difference that time makes" (Kunow 295) rather than as an "essence, biological chronological or otherwise" (295). Roberta Maierhofer proposes a differentiation between "chronological age and the cultural stereotypes associated with [...] people [growing older]" (322). After all, we are "aged by culture" as Margaret Morganroth Gullette shows in her 2004 eponymous book. It is the stereotypes associated with

older age and the representation of aged bodies in western culture that inform society's opinion of the process of ageing. Gullette shows that we are confronted with narratives about ageing from early childhood onwards. In western societies, the prevalent narrative about ageing is one of decline. There is a far-reaching divide between young and old, two 'states' that are pitted against each other as binary oppositions. Kathleen Woodward finds that even though "[a]ge is a subtle continuum, [...] we organize this continuum into 'polar opposites'" (6). She further explains that age, as an important category in our society, is organized hierarchically (6): "In the West youth is the valued term, the point of reference for defining who is old" (6). In western culture youth is perceived as good whereas age is perceived as bad (7). However, we can also find the cultural narrative of decline juxtaposed with positive attributes that are oftentimes simultaneously associated with growing older; this poses another binary opposition within the category 'old age' itself. Gullette has termed the two narratives 'aging-as-decline' and the 'positive aging' narrative ("Against" 262). For Gullette, naming the prevalent narratives around ageing disrupts "the automatic assumption that we know what aging is without stories" (262). The decline-narrative is one of age studies' most productive theories that will be quietly present in my analysis.

Another important age studies fundamental is Robert Butler's notion of the life review. For Butler, the life review is a "naturally occurring, universal mental process characterized by the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences, and, particularly, the resurgence of unresolved conflicts" (350). The unresolved conflicts can then be "simultaneously and normally [...] surveyed and reintegrated" (350). Most commonly, the life review is observed in older people due to the "actual nearness of life's termination – and perhaps also because during retirement not only is time available for self-reflection, but the customary defensive operation provided by work has been removed" (351). As humanity is diverse and everyone has led different lives, the process of the life review can vary greatly. It can proceed silently, and people might not even be aware of it. However, Butler establishes a rule of thumb: "Speaking broadly, the more intense the unresolved life conflict, the more work remains to be accomplished toward reintegration. Although the process is active, not static, the content of one's life usually unfolds slowly; the process may not be completed prior to death" (352). The life review manifests itself quite differently; sometimes thoughts will arise at random and "may first be observed in stray and seemingly insignificant thoughts about oneself and one's life history. These thoughts may continue to emerge in brief intermittent spurts or become essentially continuous, and they may undergo constant reintegration and reorganization at various levels of awareness" (352).

Generally, Butler finds that

> [a]s the past marches in review, it is surveyed, observed, and reflected upon by the ego. Reconsideration of previous experiences and their meanings occurs often with concomitant revised or expanded understanding. Such reorganization of past experiences may provide a more valid picture, giving new and significant meanings to one's life. (353)

The Remains of the Day

We meet Stevens, our autodiegetic narrator, in July 1956 in Darlington Hall (the place of his employment), right after his new employer, American gentleman Mr Farraday, has suggested he take some time off and embark on a holiday while he, Farraday, is out of the country for several weeks. Stevens's narration is structured by internal focalization, and Sauerberg characterises it as a "brilliant dramatic monologue in prose" (7). We rely heavily on Stevens's subjective account; he is the centre of his story. Throughout, his narrative is interwoven with implicit and explicit self-characterisation and readers quickly realise that Stevens is an unreliable narrator (Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion* 257-61). At the core of *The Remains of the Day* is Stevens's attempt to retrospectively make sense of and find meaning in his life so far.

The Remains of the Day is arguably one of Ishiguro's most famous novels. There is no shortage of academic insights into the various themes that can be found in it. Thus, it has long been established that Stevens has an undeniable nostalgia for the former, glorious days at (and of) Darlington Hall (Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion* 260). In his memories, he relives the great years he spent working with Miss Kenton for Lord Darlington between the wars. We learn of the great conference of 1923, where the naïve and credulous Lord Darlington made it his mission to mediate between post-war France and Germany and encourages the strengthening of international bonds between Britain and Nazi Germany in the following years, culminating with a secret meeting of Herr Ribbentrop and the British Prime Minister in 1936. These events, however, are not the focus: "The focus of the novel is [...] not only the past events themselves but Stevens's reaction to them at the time and his retrospective sense-making" (262; my translation).[39] Stevens's frequent preoccupation with his memories and his continuous acts of remembrance can thus be productively framed as his life review and his story can be read as an active attempt at achieving integrity.

Stevens's story begins *in medias res* as he considers taking his current employer Mr Farraday up on his offer to lend him his Ford (with money for gas) for a holiday. Stevens narrates in the present tense. He is consequently positioned simultaneous to the action, which gives his narrative an intimate feel. However, as was established

[39] "Im Mittelpunkt des Romans stehen [...] nicht nur die vergangenen Ereignisse an sich, sondern Stevens' damalige Reaktion auf sie und seine retrospektiven Sinnstiftungen".

already, the premise of *The Remains of the Day* is Stevens's life review; thus, his story is frequently pierced with external[40] analepses as he remembers his past. Therefore, the narrative voice shifts between simultaneous and subsequent narration, which gives Stevens's narrative an ambivalent quality and an inherent tension. The fact that we deal with heterodiegetic external analepses underscores an interpretation of Stevens's reminiscence as life review. The events and his actions lie in the past and stay there; they have no direct effect on his present. Stevens's subconscious objective is to find meaning in and acceptance for his choices and – on a larger scale – for the person he has become. Through his past we get to know Stevens intimately. Since we do not only learn about how he has behaved and reacted once but are also witnesses to his retrospective interpretations, forming an informed opinion about Stevens is possible. Stevens is a meticulous person who attaches great importance to his work. In fact, his whole identity is his profession: Stevens is a butler (Westerman 160; see also Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion* 263-64).

His repetitive analysis of what a 'great' butler is and his thoughts on dignity – in Stevens's eyes a quality that makes a 'great' butler – exemplify his attempt to come to terms with and make sense of his own identity. While Stevens seems not to be actively aware of the meaning of his life review process, he does undertake it somewhat consciously and readily shares his process: "It would seem there is a whole dimension to the question 'what is a "great" butler?' I have hitherto not properly considered. It is, I must say, a rather unsettling experience to realize this about a matter so close to my heart, particularly one I have given much thought to over the years" (Ishiguro 119). The repetitive mode of Stevens's considerations of "what is a 'great' butler" (199) allow us to simultaneously feel that time has passed, and that time is passing at the moment, which is especially emphasised by his dual mode of narration. Even though the matter is "close to his heart" (119), Stevens is reluctant to identify himself as a 'great' butler. However, he does admit that "there are those who, perhaps out of misguided generosity, tend to" place Stevens alongside "the likes of the 'great' butlers of our generation, such as Mr Marshall or Mr Lane" (114). Only once, in a pivotal scene of the novel where his father had just died, and Stevens did not fail to attend to his duties as a butler since it was an important evening for Lord Darlington, does Stevens cautiously recognise himself as a butler who possesses the dignity he ascribes to the 'great' butlers of his generation (115).

In retrospect, Stevens shares that "[f]or all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph" (115). Here, the different temporal levels allow us to take part in Stevens's survey of a particular evening in 1923 through a scenic analepsis and his consequent reflection and

[40] Genette distinguishes between three kinds of anachronies: external, internal, and mixed. Here we find an external analepsis since the events Stevens reminisces about begin and end after his momentary now (Genette 355).

interpretation in the present of 1956. However, it has already been established elsewhere that Stevens's (life) review is characterised by his own faulty assessments of his past as well as his reluctance to admit to himself that his pursuit of professional perfection has overshadowed everything else and has led him to make questionable judgements in the past. Stevens's covert and unrecognised regrets are illustrated by his obsessive preoccupation with his past and his continuous need to justify himself. The narrative time in *The Remains of the Day* creates a space where the dual mode of narration, i.e. that time has passed, and that time is passing at the moment, can exist simultaneously. In addition, this tension between narrative time in the novel stands for the binary opposition of young and old Stevens creates by reliving his past and analysing his younger self while at the same time negating his own age identity and his old self in the (his) present.

In the 'now', Stevens shares that

> over the past few months, I have been responsible for a series of small errors in the carrying out of my duties. I should say that these errors have all been without exception quite trivial in themselves. Nevertheless, I think you will understand that to one not accustomed to committing such errors, this development was rather disturbing, and I did in fact begin to entertain all sorts of alarmist theories as to their cause. (5)

Stevens's memories revolve around the times in his youth where he feels that he has come into his own as a butler or portrayed 'greatness' in his work. As we have seen, Stevens's identity is closely connected to his work and professional perfection. Therefore, it is no surprise that he finds the recurring errors in his work alarming. He is unable to integrate and accept his 'faulty self' and actively avoids identifying his age(ing) as a possible cause. Stevens's inability to accept his age(ing) can be interpreted as related to a prevailing decline narrative: Stevens connects growing old to decline and the loss of one's professional ability since he has, as a young man, witnessed just this happen to his father. Stevens places his father among the butlers he considers as 'great' (34-45). Through flashbacks to his father's earlier days in the profession, Stevens allows further glimpses into what makes a 'great' butler in his eyes. It seems as though Stevens has inherited the love for professionalism and his attitude towards work from his father. The flashbacks to his father's prime mirror the tension that is created between Stevens's simultaneous and his subsequent narration since there are also analepses to Mr Stevens Sr's last days and his subsequent death.

In *Aging and Its Discontents*, Kathleen Woodward introduces the mirror stage of old age. Woodward analyses the psychological phenomenon that as we age, "we increasingly separate what we take to be our real selves from our bodies. We say that our real selves – that is, our youthful selves – are hidden inside our bodies. Our bodies are old, we are not. Old age is thus understood as a state in which the body is in opposition to the self. We are alienated from our bodies" (62). While Woodward

discusses this phenomenon in reference to the actual mirror image of old people, who do not seem to identify their inner selves with their older bodies (an observation that Butler has also included in his theorising of the life review), the concept of the mirror image of old age will be used metaphorically in the following analysis to study Stevens and his father. At the centre will be the assumption that Stevens, in the 'now', fails to see the similarities of his present situation to that of his father in 1923. Multiple analepses take us back to a conference held in Darlington Hall in 1923, a time in Stevens's career that he feels "constituted a turning point in [his] professional development" (Ishiguro 114).

Stevens shares that around a year earlier, in 1922, his father had started working as an under-butler at Darlington Hall. Interestingly, Stevens had started his career working as a footman under the supervision of his father and his father ends his career working as an under-butler to Stevens. Unconsciously, Stevens always associates their relationship with work, and their paths seem to cross only when sharing the same workplace. By the time of the conference a year later, Stevens's father is 72 years old and has been steadily growing weaker. This has greatly affected his ability to provide the services of an under-butler to his employer's satisfaction. However, even though Stevens shares various little incidents where Miss Kenton has drawn his attention to the shortcomings of his father, he dismisses them as quite trivial in nature.

It is only when his father falls in front of Lord Darlington and two guests that Stevens is forced to admit to his father's growing fragility. This realisation is brought about by a conversation with Lord Darlington, who urges Stevens to not dismiss the "larger significance" (63) of the situation and orders Stevens to lighten his father's "burden" (64). Mr Stevens Sr is reluctant to accept that his employer finds his work no longer satisfactory; when Stevens addresses his (perceived) shortcomings, Mr Stevens Sr blames his fall on some "crooked" (69) steps; he is unwilling to face the loss of his abilities and accept the decline that he (and his surroundings) associate with it. After all, his professional dignity is how he defines himself, always putting work before personal matters. He has worked in the profession all his adult life, and it seems that he has great difficulty separating himself from his work. In one scene of the novel (that is actually narrated to us as a scene), Stevens and Miss Kenton observe Mr Stevens Sr as he tries to climb the steps again without falling.

> My father could be seen standing by those four stone steps, deep in thought [...]. Then, as we watched, he walked very slowly up the steps. At the top, he turned and came back down, a little faster. Turning once more, my father became still again for several seconds, contemplating the steps before him. Eventually, he climbed them a second time, very deliberately. This time he continued on across the grass until he had almost reached the summerhouse, then turned and came walking slowly back, his eyes never leaving the ground. In fact, I can describe his manner at that moment no better than the way Miss Kenton puts it in her letter; it was indeed "as though he hoped to find some precious jewel he had dropped there". (70)

Stevens's father's determination to prove to himself that he is still capable and has not lost his abilities shows that he has not accepted his own ageing and 'decline'. However, the scene has a tragic air since Stevens is not able to understand his father and has to rely on Miss Kenton to situate and contextualise what they observe. Her description is loaded with metaphorical meaning as the "precious jewel he had dropped" (70) can be interpreted as Mr Stevens Sr's youth which he connects to a lost professional perfection (one that he hopes to find again on the steps).

Due to the temporal structure of *The Remains of the Day*, a subtle shift from the analepsis to the present is observable as Stevens chooses to share Miss Kenton's description of the situation she has offered just recently in her letter. The fact that Stevens himself shies away from an assessment is telling of his own reluctance to accept that he (in his view) has also lost his own precious jewel. Despite the active reflection on his past, Stevens avoids any confrontation with growing older and old age because of the implication he ascribes to this 'condition'. He interrupts his own reminiscence before engaging with the subject matter, calling his memories and his preoccupation with them "perhaps a little foolish" (70). Similar to a mirror image of old age, Stevens is unable to connect his present situation to his father's situation 33 years prior. In not recognising his own image, Steven negates his age identity and fails to accept his ageing self. Using similar vocabulary to admit to his own (in his view) declining abilities (5, 255), Stevens is scared to truly see himself in the mirror and recognise his image. For him, his ageing self and his (professional) decline are alarming because he has never witnessed an acceptance of ageing processes and an aged self. Therefore, Stevens is not yet ready to face the disintegrative experience of old age, which is why he avoids his own mirror image. It is because of the tension the analepses create that Stevens's view on ageing and older age can be carved out. The metaphorical mirror image of old age represented through his father is enhanced through the nested analepses that allow glimpses of Mr Stevens Sr's younger self. The binary opposition between youth and age that is prevalent in Stevens's view is strengthened as we see it mirrored through the temporal levels of the novel.

It has been established above that Stevens's repetitive telling during his life review highlights topics that have not yet been (re-)integrated. Stevens repeatedly calls attention to the trivial mistakes that have crept into his work as well as narrating the beginning of the decline of his father's abilities repetitively (58, 61). This repetitive narration, then, signals Stevens's preoccupation with the subject and the importance it carries. However, when focusing on the frequency of Stevens's narration, it is telling that the actual process of his own ageing as well as of his father's ageing is omitted entirely. Stevens never indicates the duration of his father's life path that ultimately leads him to Darlington Hall. And while Stevens's process can be deduced by way of the dates he shares, he does not speak about the time between 1936 (the year Miss Kenton left Darlington Hall) and 1956 (a time three years after Lord

Darlington's death). The sense of decline that Mr Stevens attributes to ageing is reinforced since we know through repeated incidental remarks (6, 132, 145, 247) that the time after the war was not a happy one for Lord Darlington (and by way of this for Stevens) and saw the demise of the reputation of Stevens's employer and the great days he associates with Darlington Hall. These indefinite ellipses create a vagueness in conjunction with the passing of time (and the inevitable ageing), which not only strengthens the binary opposition Stevens creates between young and old but also draws attention to Stevens's avoidance of an acceptance of the process of growing older and the implication it carries for him.

While Stevens 'spends' more time in his past, his movement and consequent 'log entries' on the road anchor him (and us) in the present and illustrate the inevitable passing of time and the related process of growing older. The chronological aspect of ageing is embedded in Stevens's journey. Stevens's movement on the road also underscores the interpretation of his narrative as life review. It attaches the anachronical process of retrospective sense and meaning making to time by providing a chronological frame. Metaphorically, Stevens does not only embark "on a leisurely holiday" (cover text) but on a journey that will "take him deep [...] into his past" (cover text). Being on the road implies action and change. While Stevens admits to his slow progression (71-72) and shares his recurring troubles with his car (170, 189), a progress is made, nonetheless. The road brings about meetings that are otherwise unlikely to happen. Thus, on his journey, Stevens is confronted with encounters that surprise (and overwhelm) him. The next section concentrates on three encounters in particular, which function as metaphorical mirrors since they reflect Stevens's age either through an assessment of Stevens or, in Miss Kenton's case, through her own ageing process.

At the very beginning of his trip, Stevens meets a white-haired man on a roadside sitting on a large stone (25). He waves Stevens over to have a chat and asks him how "fit" his legs are (25). Stevens is taken aback by this address, but the man continues that

> [y]ou got to have a good pair of legs and a good pair of lungs to go up there [a footpath presumably going up a hill]. Me, I haven't got neither, so I stay down here. But if I was in better shape, I'd be sitting up there. There's a nice little spot up there, a bench and everything. [...] I can see you're in a good shape for your age, sir. I'd say you could make your way up there, no trouble. [...] I'm telling you, sir, you'll be sorry if you don't take a walk up there. And you never know. A couple of years and it might be too late. [...] Better go on up while you still can. (25)

Stevens takes immediate offence with this assessment. While he reflects later that the man might have "meant this in a humorous sort of way; that is to say, he intended it as a bantering remark" (26), in the moment Stevens feels the need to demonstrate his abilities and is determined to walk the footpath which "was quite strenuous [...] though [he] can say it failed to cause [him] any real difficulty" (26). We

realise how important it is for Stevens to be in control of his abilities and how offended he is when they are questioned. The white-haired man connects age to decline and impending inability, and Stevens is adamant to prove (to himself) that he is neither declining nor on the verge of inability. Stevens's reluctance to accept his ageing self, which has already been established, is especially noticeable when considering this encounter. Incidentally, if we return for a moment to the beginning of his journey, we realise that Mr Farraday urges Stevens to take a holiday not only because he [Farraday] will not be at Darlington Hall but because "[y]ou [Stevens] look like you could make good use of a break. [...] I [Farraday] really think you should take a break" (3-4). However, instead of connecting his employer's offer to himself and to the various trivial errors Stevens informs us about, he quickly finds a more suitable reason to embark on the suggested journey: a meeting with Miss Kenton (14). Due to the chance meeting on the road, we are able to view the circumstances of Stevens's journey in a different light because his reaction to his ageing can be interpreted as evasive and as Stevens turning a blind eye to how time has affected his abilities.

Contrary to his other encounters, the meeting with Miss Kenton is the only one Stevens plans. After all, he embarks on his motoring trip with the intention of bringing Miss Kenton 'home' to Darlington Hall. For Stevens, Miss Kenton is connected to happier days on the one hand but also lost opportunities on the other hand. Their relationship is the underlying focus of the novel although it is overshadowed by Stevens's emphasis on his professional development and achievements. As Stevens's story unfolds, we understand that he and Miss Kenton were in love. However, Stevens was unable to admit these feelings to himself (or perhaps even understand them) and consequently failed to prioritise his personal life and the possibility of a future with Miss Kenton over his work (Atkinson 212). Stevens sees the nostalgia he himself feels in Miss Kenton, too: when first reading her letter, Stevens is certain it holds "an unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington Hall, and – I am quite sure of this – distinct hints of her desire to return here" (Ishiguro 10). Similar to his father, Miss Kenton can be read as a mirror image to Stevens.

Here is where Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope unfolds its full metaphorical potential: Stevens's journey can be read as a chronotope of the road. In contrast, Darlington Hall can be identified as a chronotope resembling that of the Flaubertian-style small towns, where "a day is just a day, and a life is just a life" (Bakhtin 20). Time stands still and is circular. While the memories of his father are – albeit relived on the road – inseparable from Darlington Hall and therefore stuck in the corresponding point of time without a chance of development, Miss Kenton did leave and – literally and figuratively – move on. Even though Stevens's and her shared journey began at Darlington Hall, it transcends this point in time and thus carries an air of possible change within it. This is exemplified by the way Stevens's interpretation of Miss Kenton's letter changes while he is on the road. The further

he is from Darlington Hall, the more uncertain Stevens grows if Miss Kenton's letter actually contained nostalgic longing and the wish to return to her former place of work (Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion* 260). When actually meeting Miss Kenton, Stevens acknowledges that

> [s]he had, naturally, aged somewhat, but to my eyes at least, she seemed to have done so very gracefully. Her figure remained slim, her posture as upright as ever. [...] Of course, with the bleak light falling on her face, I could hardly help but notice the lines that had appeared here and there. But by and large the Miss Kenton I saw before me looked surprisingly similar to the person who had inhabited my memory over these years. (Ishiguro 244)

This description is significant on multiple levels. Firstly, it marks the first time Stevens actively admits to any kind of process of growing older since he has thus far failed to accept (or even admit to) his own ageing and his age identity. Secondly, instead of associating something "sinister" (5) with Miss Kenton's aged body, Stevens is still able to recognise her as 'his' Miss Kenton. For Stevens, her ageing is not connected to decline. Here, Stevens is able to regard ageing and the aged body as natural processes. During the conversation, Mr Stevens learns that Miss Kenton, although having regrets about the past, leads an overall satisfactory life. However, even though Stevens does not articulate it, it becomes clear that they both mourn the possibility of a life together. This is especially noticeable by the repeatedly shared insight that "[a]fter all, there's no turning back the clock now. One can't be forever dwelling on what might have been" (251).

Nevertheless, when parting, both look forward to the future, Miss Kenton to one where she will soon meet her first grandchild and Mr Stevens to one of "work, work and more work" (249) back at Darlington Hall. The meeting with Miss Kenton is a turning point for Stevens since he can, after having acknowledged her ageing, finally approximate his own age identity. On his last day away, before returning to Darlington Hall, Stevens allows himself the realisation that he gave his best to Lord Darlington.

> I gave him the very best I had to give, and now – well – I find I do not have a great deal more left to give. [...] Since my new employer Mr Farraday arrived, I've tried very hard, very hard indeed, to provide the sort of service I would like him to have. I've tried and tried, but whatever I do I find I am far from reaching the standards I once set myself. More and more errors are appearing in my work. Quite trivial in themselves – at least so far. But they're of the sort I would never have made before, and I know what they signify. Goodness knows, I've tried and tried, but it's no use. I've given what I had to give. I gave it all to Lord Darlington. (255)

Stevens's realisation is brought about by the last chance meeting on the road. While sitting on a bench awaiting the switching on of some pier lights, Stevens has a "curious" (253) discussion with a man sitting next to him. This man functions as a last mirror, one that enables Stevens to break through and admit to himself the passing of time. During the conversation Stevens seems to accept the consequences of his

own ageing and recognise his image. The man he meets had previously been a butler in a small house but has been retired for three years now. He is in his late sixties and tells Stevens about his various ailments (253). It is because of their professional connection that Stevens begins sharing about his time at Darlington Hall, which climaxes in the recognition of his current situation. His interlocutor goes on to freely give advice and his assessment of Stevens's situation:

> if you ask me, your attitude's all wrong, see? Don't keep looking back all the time, you're bound to get depressed. And all right, you can't do your job as well as you used to. But it's the same for all of us, see? We've all got to put our feet up at some point. Look at me. Been happy as a lark since the day I retired. All right, so neither of us are exactly in our first flush of youth, but you've got to keep looking forward. (256)

Stevens does not take offence in being analysed this way and being viewed as a peer by his acquaintance, he quietly accepts the assessment without commentary or active resistance. He recognises himself and agrees with the man that he should "cease looking back so much [and] adopt a positive outlook and try to make the best of what remains of my day" (256). Stevens concludes that when he returns to Darlington Hall tomorrow, he will "begin practicing [bantering] with renewed effort. I should hope, then, that by the time of my employer's return, I shall be in a position to pleasantly surprise him" (258).

His road is going to lead Stevens back to Darlington Hall, a place where time stands still and moves in circles. Stevens has acknowledged his own age identity and has, in a way, faced himself and accepted his ageing during his time on the road, thereby participating in the metaphorical change it brings. In moving forward, Stevens holds onto his idea of professional perfection that is instilled in the standstill times of Darlington Hall. Even though this might seem like Stevens did not learn anything in the end, an interpretation in light of Gullette's progress-narrative allows the ending of *The Remains of the Day* to be framed in a more positive light: Stevens's life goes on with a newfound acceptance of himself. Even though he still wants to achieve professional perfection, Stevens's story ends with a nod to his future and not a return to his past.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope allows the anchoring of Stevens in time and thus enables us to carry out a metaphorical interpretation of his ageing process throughout *The Remains of the Day*. Since the chronotope of the road suggests movement, something we inherently connect to time, Stevens's past is connected to his present. His anachronical analepses are embedded in a linear, chronological movement of time. This fact is highlighted by Stevens's log entries while he is on the road. They structure the novel as they function as chapter headings. They allow us to trace Stevens's specific location at a concrete time. Compared to Stevens's usually rather vague time specifications (Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion* 260), his meticulous noting of events is significant. It illustrates the movement of time in a more concrete

way than the chronotope of the road. We witness time passing and are allowed to follow it linearly and chronologically. Stevens's rare simultaneous (in a Genettian sense) comments and the fact that he also reflects on his very recent past highlight the tension between experiencing I and narrating I (260). With the different temporal levels of the novel, a feeling of time that is passing and standing still go hand in hand. Anachronical as well as chronological temporal processes exist at the same time.

Thus far, the tension this creates has been the primary focus and it has been interpreted in light of a binary opposition between youth and age. However, the fact that Stevens is reflecting (and ageing) as he writes, therefore showing active (if possibly unconscious) participation in his life review, has yet to be addressed. Stevens partakes in life's process and (tries to) understand it backwards while living it forward (Woodward 12). This is in line with Woodward's notion of psychic time: "In psychic time we move backward and forward between the future and the past. We project ourselves into the future [...], and we bring our identifications from the past with us" (12) while, of course, always being present.

When considering the findings discussed above, we see that age(ing) is represented through the choices for narrative time. More so, in line with the focus of this article, we recognise that an interpretation of the categories in connection to age studies allows us to question the basic properties of the category 'time'. Instead of viewing it as a neutral, ageless category, we see that the form narrative time takes is dependent on age(ing). While the Genettian system allows us to sketch how time unfolds in a novel, it does not account for its dependence of contextual influences (in this case age(ing)). It is because of Stevens's life review process that narrative time in *The Remains of the Day* is presented as a circular movement rather than a linear flow. While the road stands for time's linearity, we have seen that this inherent understanding of time is frequently interrupted by Stevens's reminiscence actualised through the analepses in the narrative. His individual experience of (psychic) time cancels out physical time's inherent linearity. Therefore, narrative time cannot be understood as a universalist feature but its realisation in *The Remains of the Day* has to be interpreted in light of its dependence on age(ing). Thus, narrative time has to be understood as a function of age(ing) rather than as an ageless entity.

Conclusion

In *The Remains of the Day*, narrative time is made up of a juxtaposition that is prompted by Stevens's life review, on the one hand, and his active movement forward on the other: "the chronological account and the present tense of the car ride contrast with the anachronic processes of consciousness of the narrator" (Nünning,

Von historischer Fiktion 260; my translation).[41] Since Stevens is preoccupied with the reintegration of particularly hard memories from his past, the analepses are external to highlight the distance to his momentary position. They also give Stevens's story the harsh distinction between his young and his old self. Interestingly, however, the contrasting time of the road lessens the severeness of the binaries since it incorporates 'all' temporalities within it. Since the life review is often triggered by the uncertainty of the imminent future, it requires temporal levels; thus, narrative time in *The Remains of the Day* serves to this contextual requirement. The analysis has shown how age(ing) unfolds in the novel, and we can clearly see that an interpretation of it as a determining factor is fruitful. Therefore, a treatment of narrative time as a function of age(ing) offers new insights to narratology and justifies the call for the need of a narratology of age(ing).

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