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7

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## DANUBIANA

### PHILOLOGICA

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Roxana Patraş

# The Remains of the Day

Literature and Political Eloquence  
in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romania





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*For my beloved son, Toma*





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## Captatio

For many of us who have watched James Ivory's movie, *The Remains of the Day* is a story about unfulfilled love. A strong affection shared by Mr. Stevens and Miss Kenton — the former, Lord Darlington's dignified butler, the latter, a housekeeper employed at Darlington Hall — but that is rather slow at being expressed by it through words or otherwise. Compared to the other "submerged narratives" (for instance, the narrative of *dignity* and *greatness* based on the butler's "public self"),<sup>1</sup> the hidden narrative of love is the only one with a "storyline," which presumably made it more fit to filmic transposition.

However, as already demonstrated by focused research, Ishiguro's novel does not rest on the ineffable relationship between Stevens and Miss Kenton. It is Stevens' "sinful" memory — "sinful" because, in Schacter's terms,<sup>2</sup> it is highly "suggestible", "biased", and "misattributing"<sup>3</sup> — the one that ties the knot of unreliable narratives.<sup>4</sup> The fact that lately the novel has transgressed literary inquiries and brought forth a case study for

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Guth, *Submerged Narratives in Kazuo Ishiguro's "The Remains of the Day"*, in "Forum for Modern Language Studies", vol. XXXV, issue 2, 1999, pp. 126-137.

James M. Lang, *Public Memory, Private History: Kazuo Ishiguro's "Remains of the Day"*, *CLIO*, 29 (2), 2000, pp. 143-165.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Daniel L. Schacter et al., *The Seven Sins of Memory. Implications for the Self*, in "Annals New York Academy of Sciences", 1001, 2003, pp. 226-239.

<sup>3</sup> Lilian R. Furst, *Memory's Fragile Power in Kazuo Ishiguro's "Remains of the Day and W.G. Sebald's "Max Ferber"*, in "Contemporary Literature", vol. 48., no. 4, 2007, pp. 530-553.

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Wall, *The Remains of the Day and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration*, in "The Journal of Narrative Technique", vol. 24, no. 1, 1994, pp. 18-42.

research on ethical conduct in public service,<sup>5</sup> international relations<sup>6</sup> or historiography<sup>7</sup> constitutes enough ground to reexamine Stevens' situation. Is Ishiguro's butler serving only Lord Darlington's interests or, in *Bushido code's* fashion,<sup>8</sup> does he serve a higher ordering principle, named *World's History*, *World's Scene*, *World's Wheel* or even *Harmony of spheres*? If the second were pertinent, then should not the super-conformist butler be considered more of ring in the endless *chain reaction*,<sup>9</sup> more of a *trained witness* — thus extremely responsive in terms of perception — to various situations? If so, is the “Butterfly Effect”<sup>10</sup> also valid for Stevens' (re)actions?

Grounding my reading on the fact that Stevens feels more than he expresses through either words or gestures and taking into consideration his effort to better his discursive skills (according to his new master's tendency to “banter”), my take of Ishiguro's novel departs from a supposition of Stevens' *rhetoric responsiveness*. While the new American owner of Darlington Hall, Mr. Farraday, is definitely a “conversational” type who loves engaging himself in one-on-one discussions with matching interlocutors, Stevens is an old-fashioned communicator who has to adjust to the changes occurred in the interaction with his new master. Definitely, the laconic and retractile Lord Darlington is prone to use a *rhetoric of persuasion* (he has never

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Quill, *Ethical Conduct and Public Service. Loyalty Intelligently Bestowed*, in “American Review of Public Administration”, vol. 39, no. 3, 2009, pp. 215-224.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony F. Lang and James M. Lang, *Between Theory and History: “The Remains of the Day” in international relations classroom*, in “PS: Political Science and Politics”, vol. 31, no. 2, 1998, pp. 209-215.

<sup>7</sup> Maha Abdel Moneim Emara, *Kazuo Ishiguro's “The Remains of the Day”: A Historical Approach*, in “English Language and Literature Studies”, vol. 5, no. 4, 2015, pp. 8-20.

<sup>8</sup> John Rothfork, *Zen Comedy in Postcolonial Literature: Kazuo Ishiguro's “The Remains of the Day”*, in “Mosaic. An Interdisciplinary Critic Journal”, vol. 29, no. 1, 1996, pp. 79-102.

<sup>9</sup> Deborah Guth, *art. cit.*, p. 135. Emphasizing on Stevens' repeated elaborations on “greatness” and developing Arthur O. Lovejoy's concept, scholars have also called the novel's masterplot “The Great Chain of Being”. However, I believe that, as Judson and Rodden suggested, a metaphor of energy stresses better on Stevens' *reactiveness*.

<sup>10</sup> Maha Abdel Moneim Emara, *art. cit.*

been an “innate speaker,” confirms the butler),<sup>11</sup> while the outspoken Farraday favors *invitational rhetoric*, which is based on equality, an immanent value of all human beings, and self-determination.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, in one of his reflections, Stevens notices that recently, encouraged by their masters, his fellow-butlers developed an obsession for eloquence (clean English accent, impeccable grammar, use of wits, general knowledge etc.)<sup>13</sup> Even though quite critical on this precise point, Lord Darlington’s butler is doing pretty much the same thing himself. When Miss Kenton catches him “red-handed” — that is, reading “a sentimental love story” with ladies and gentlemen who express their mutual feelings in elegant sentences — Stevens explains that he does that only for the sake of having a good command of English,<sup>14</sup> for training himself in the art of eloquence required at serving at the table the great and noble people. Later on, the butler admits that reading these specimens of rhetoricized love used to procure him a certain “satisfaction”. In all likelihood, his attention seems to be able to grasp various rhetorical genres (either *deliberative* and *forensic* as in Lord Darlington’s 1923 Conference or *epideictic* as in the gallant novels Stevens reads surreptitiously in his room) and be impressed in a higher or lesser degree by various speech deliveries.

If not credited with the truth, the butler’s report on the political meetings held at Darlington Hall should be appreciated at least for the detailed account of ideas advanced therein and for its unfluctuating attention. In the last resort, the *quality of Stevens’ attention* (proven through his quasi-ubiquity within the premises of Darlington Hall and through his eagerness to attend the others) is what makes his witnessing an *aesthetic conduct*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, translated in Romanian by Radu Parascușescu, Polirom, Iași 2012, p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> Sonja K. Foss and Cindy K. Griffin, *Beyond Persuasion: a proposal for an invitational rhetoric*, in “Communication Monographs”, vol. 62, issue 1, 1995, pp. 2-18.

<sup>13</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>14</sup> *Ivi.*, pp. 185-190.

<sup>15</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Les célibataires de l’Art. Pour une esthétique sans mythes*, Gallimard, Paris 1996, pp. 146-152, 268-284, 342-344.

As far as Stevens' aesthetic conduct is concerned, one should notice that the novel opens by indicating this expressly. The English landscape, discovered just now by the old butler, adds a few notes to Stevens' previous definition of "greatness":

When I stood on that high ledge this morning and viewed the land before me, I distinctly felt that rare, yet unmistakable feeling – the feeling that one is in the presence of greatness. [...] And yet what precisely is this "greatness"? [...] I would say that it is the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint.<sup>16</sup>

Seemingly, "the *lack* of obvious drama and spectacle" contained in the English landscape should be associated with the obvious and oftentimes rhetoricized drama and spectacle the butler had witnessed in Lord Darlington's mansion. This correlation enables us to approach the scene of the 1923 Conference (debating the European situation of post-war Germany) from Ishiguro's novel as a sort of landscape, albeit one that is also displaying an "unseemly demonstrative" beauty. Nevertheless, what should draw one's attention is not the type of "Beauty" the witness observes, but something that Stevens calls the condition of "the objective viewer."<sup>17</sup> But to be more precise, we have to inquire into what may lead to such a condition and into what may determine the viewer's *objectivity*?

First, "the calmness" of the viewed object, "a sense of restraint" that makes it totally non-invasive — thus, if Foss and Griffin's term is kept, "invitational" — for the viewer's perception; second, the viewer's ability to perceive what distinguishes stylistically one terrain from another: while Darlington Hall's inner landscape is "persuasive," the English countryside's outer landscape is "invitational." Definitely, "the objective viewer" (read "objective witness" as well) does want to keep a *distance* between his/ her inner viewpoint and the object of his/ her attention. The higher the object's level of "problematicity," the

<sup>16</sup>Kasuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, Faber & Faber, London 1989, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

greater the “intellectual distance” between the two partners involved in a relationship.

Through rhetoric, *such distance* is constantly being negotiated<sup>18</sup> and, if additions to Meyer’s definitions can be accepted, the negotiation of distance probably addresses not only intersubjective exchanges, but also the commerce between the two involved subjects and their objective instantiations. From an audience-centered viewpoint, the success of a rhetorical delivery is an arch drawn from the unfailing perception of the witnessing “subject” to the perfect emission of the “objectified subject.” From a speaker-centered viewpoint instead, the “objectified” subject is the audience, while the speaker is the witnessing subject. Polarity changed, both speaker and audience are alternatively *witnesses* to the same micro-world created within a “rhetorical circle”<sup>19</sup> rounding up “devices” and “rhetorical situation.”<sup>20</sup> In the frame of *a rhetorical theory of situatedness*, “rhetoric” and “situation (context)” are not ontologically demarcated as distinct entities; they are integrated in a problematological model.

In practice, rhetoric cannot be easily separated from the context: it is both of the situation, but also a reflexive way to transcend it; it contributes to both structure and agency, is limiting but also potentially transformative. Therefore, it is difficult to account for it through a philosophy that relies on fixed, ontological categories when the contingency of the relationship must be reflected in the philosophy of rhetoric in context. Rhetoric is *of* a social relation but it also *makes* a social relation; the direction of influence can go either way.<sup>21</sup>

Likely to sound paradoxical in the frame of traditional dissociations among *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*, co-witnessing enables

<sup>18</sup> Michel Meyer, *Rhetoric and the Theory of Argument*, in “Revue Internationale de Philosophie”, no. 2, 1996, p. 334.

<sup>19</sup> Scott Consigny, *Rhetoric and Its Situations*, in “Philosophy and Rhetoric”, vol. 7, no. 3, 1974, pp. 175-186.

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd F. Bitzer, *The Rhetorical Situation*, in “Philosophy and Rhetoric”, vol. 1, no. 1, 1968, pp. 1-14.

<sup>21</sup> Nick Turnbull, *Political rhetoric and its relationship to context: a new theory of the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical and the political*, in “Critical Discourse Studies”, vol. 14, no. 2, 2017, pp. 115-131.

us to define the “rhetorical circle” as a complex and *situated* communicational dynamics<sup>22</sup> among encoder, decoder, text and reality.<sup>23</sup> While the concept of Real refers, in Lacan’s and Žižek’s thought, to both starting point and product, to both “positive fullness” and “*the remnants*, the excess which escapes symbolization,” the *rhetorical Reality* should also be acknowledged as such. Thence, the inherent “sublimity” of *the rhetorical moment* indicates that

*it cannot be approached too closely: if we get too near it, it loses its sublime features and becomes an ordinary vulgar object - it can persist only in an interspace, in an intermediate state, viewed from a certain perspective, half-seen. If we want to see it in the light of day, it changes into an everyday object, it dissipates itself, precisely because in itself it is nothing at all [emphasis added].*<sup>24</sup>

Needless to say, *the rhetorical moment* has both a temporal and a spatial dimension perceived by witnesses. While “wit” is, etymologically speaking, the natural capacity of all “witnesses” (Stevens included), “wit” also represents the orators’ most trained capacity. Being applied by all witnesses to sublime objects (such as *rhetorical Reality*), “wit” — through its treasure of stock phrases and its natural observance of reality — becomes a domain of shared rhetorical expertise.

Turning back to Stevens’ presupposed “wit,” one can legitimately ask how deeply he understands the “sublime” nature of surrounding Reality, be that defined in rhetorical terms or not. Reflecting on the common people’s cognitive limits in thinking about “fundamental matters,”<sup>25</sup> Ishiguro’s character has harbored indeed not only hypotheses of unreliability, *mauvaise foi*, “alienated consciousness,”<sup>26</sup> but also suspicions of sheer fatu-

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Donna Gorrell, *The Rhetorical Situation Again: Linked Components in a Venn Diagram*, in “Philosophy and Rhetoric”, vol. 30., no. 4, 1997, pp. 395-412.

<sup>24</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Verso, London 2008, p. 192.

<sup>25</sup> Kasuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, Romanian translation, *ed. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>26</sup> Michel Terestchenko, *Servility and Destructiveness in Kazuo Ishiguro's "The Remains of the Day"*, in “Partial Answers Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas”, vol. 5, issue 1, 2007, pp. 77-89.



ousness. Still, drawing on Stevens' witnessing as being typical for all witnesses involved in a rhetorical moment, one may further inquire how deep a witness' perception goes into such Reality. Is this sort of perception altered by the processes of symbolical arrangement occurred ante-speech (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio*) or post-speech (*evocation, transcription, editing, fragmentation, erasure*)?

For those who, up to this point, find the demonstration a bit extravagant, a clarification on para-textual matters will probably shed light on the whole idea. Ishiguro's extremely expressive title is not only an anchoring device attached to a book dealing with a *niche* topic. Insufficiency in discerning the core reality of "rhetoric remains" led me to ask what could possibly be the farthest reach of a piece of research, which is devoted, after all, to a pair of marginal interests: 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian literature and political eloquence. A hermeneutic of mutual interaction? A play on ancient tensions between aesthetic and epistemic rhetoric? A raw sketch of political biography? A historiographical account? A positivist analysis of discourse? A hardcore structuralist exercise? A deconstructivist sophistry? A materialist and dialectical approach? A fanciful captivation of a foreigner's eye? A risk of bringing into the open an outdated debate? A self-reprobatation of past critical failures? Something mixing, thus destroying, all virtual ways of touching the heated lava caught within "the deaf volcano of Loss" (*le volcan sourd de la perte*)?<sup>27</sup>

All piled-up questions represent, in fact, already abandoned ways of conversing with my object of study. While developing a feeling that analyzing *the isle of the rhetorical moment* is indeed a "game that must be lost,"<sup>28</sup> Ishiguro's novel eventually offered me a key: not only making sense of *the remains of the day*, but also fully taking advantage of what is left of it.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Schlanger, *Présence des oeuvres perdues*, Herman Éditeurs, Paris 2010, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game That Must Be Lost*, Yale UP 2000.

“The evening,” acknowledges Lord Darlington’s butler, “is the best part of the day.” It provides one with an all-encompassing perspective and with a feeling that, in spite of frustrated curiosity, things should better freeze somewhere. And this seems to be also valid for books that, in order to be drawn to an end, need to be stopped from wandering around. “Completed objects,” says the French essayist Alain, “put an end to rambling imagination,” whose natural course is toward concrete creation: the normal movement of a man who wants to imagine a hut is to build it; this is the simplest way to make it show up.<sup>29</sup> I must admit that a late revelation concerning the rhetorical reality’s opacity to analysis has been the best part of this book’s long day. Nevertheless, opacity and resistance to curiosity strengthened my feeling that not only “(lost) works” can be made present,<sup>30</sup> but also lost rhetorical realities.

As for the rest, if “simulators” of rhetorical sites are still difficult to create,<sup>31</sup> if neither the orator nor his/ her audience can be credited as reliable witnesses to the one and the same rhetorical reality, and if interpreters (such as myself) are at the farthest end of the chain reaction,<sup>32</sup> then all we are left with is sensible imagination. Indeed, as shown by recent research, McLuhan’s concept of “sensorium” will probably be instrumented in the field of rhetoric too.<sup>33</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Binney Gunnison pointed at the fact that all faults of eloquence (inability to shift swiftly the point of view, artificiality of shown emotions, mechanical appeals) can and should be *cured* with literature, more

<sup>29</sup> Alain, *Un sistem al artelor frumoase*, Meridiane, Bucharest 1969, p. 22, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Judith Schlanger, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> One project is Richard Graff’s *Visualising Ancient Greek Rhetoric*, [http://ivlab.cs.umn.edu/project\\_virtclassics.php](http://ivlab.cs.umn.edu/project_virtclassics.php). See also, Richard Graff, Arthur R. Walzer, Janet Atwill (eds.), *The Viability of the Rhetorical Tradition*, Sunny Press, New York 2005.

<sup>32</sup> L.S. Judson and D.E. Rodden, *The Fundamentals of Speaker-Audience Relationship*, in “Quarterly Journal of Speech”, vol. 20, issue 3, 1934, pp. 351-364.

<sup>33</sup> Debra Hawhee, *Rhetoric’s Sensorium*, in “Quarterly Journal of Speech”, vol. 101, no. 1, 2015, pp. 2-17.

precisely with “the literature of imagination.”<sup>34</sup> In this respect, oratory that has internalized literary experiences and practices should be considered — keeping Gunnison’s medical view and adding one more footnote to Gracián’s *desengañó* and to Meyer’s *problematology* — a sort of “vaccinated rhetoric.” Turning back to Alain’s definitions, this sounds as a case of imagination that has not stopped at the right time; a case of rambling imagination that has not found its object yet. All wits left aside now, I am sure that an undeceived and problematized study of how literature and political eloquence worked together within the complex ecology of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian culture would make this book worthwhile reading.

Perhaps I should close this introductory part by revealing the inherent contradictions and difficulties of the present endeavor. The processes of *framing*, *describing*, *commenting* and finally *delivering into English* a marginal, historicized and specialized matter such as the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian rhetorical tradition met with a score of obstacles. I will mention but a few, maybe the most obvious of them all. As the volatile 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian language (switching from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet is not even close to being the most dramatic change that occurred in our language!) obviously needed English translation and paraphrase, this often implied taking tough decisions on meanings. As not all speeches delivered by the commented orators could be referred to their literary experiences, the choice of the most fit illustrations (in terms of genres, works and quotes) did not follow the *exempla* generally commented on by Romanian historiography, literary history or rhetoric. Names and dates that might be extremely familiar to a Romanian reader needed supplementary, sometimes tiresome, contextualization. Last but not least, I had to ponder on issues of readership interests and solve them in terms of co-adapting foreign theory to localized realities (which, I must admit, increased the incumbent risks of research).

<sup>34</sup> Binney Gunnison, *Imagination in Oratory*, in “Quarterly Journal of Speech”, vol. 1, issue 2, 1915, pp. 144-153.

Naturally, one may ask why I referred exclusively to the literary works of political orators, and how this choice of Mihail Kogălniceanu/ B.P. Hasdeu, Petre P. Carp, Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea, and Take Ionescu was made. The truth is that, among so many others,<sup>35</sup> I considered these of ‘fellows the most appropriate for drawing a nice curve from revolutionary seeking for “glory” (around 1850-1860) to dissident corrosive “melancholy” (around 1890). Moreover, my idea of “presentifying” the lost rhetorical reality could catch a finer lining only by pointing the four virtual ways of accessing what is beyond a text that is obviously suffused with blanks or gaps, a *text troué*,<sup>36</sup> in Anne Übersfeld well-known phrase: *glory, memory, energy, and melancholy*.

In contrast to Ishiguro’s world from *The Remains of the Day*, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian society did not have a high level of political literacy. Echoes of what Stevens calls “dignity” and “greatness” make themselves heard in the public sphere only as correlatives of stronger, albeit militarized, concepts (“honor”, for instance).<sup>37</sup> Although more idealistic versions of this project have been conceived as entreaties for rediscovering Romania’s lost oratorical glories, I have found out — hopefully on time — that it is not this book’s purpose to deliver a passionate and exhaustive history of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian political eloquence. On the contrary, while working with a large corpus of non-fictional prose (50 orators or so), I tried not to lose sight of literature, chiefly of failed literary pieces and careers. In a way, my appeal to literature was, in Gunnison’s line, a strategy to “cure” the unavoidable faults of rhetorical analysis. I hereby beg for the benevolence of trained rhetoricians. Surely, the series formed by *glory, memory, energy and melancholy* cannot

<sup>35</sup> Roxana Patraș (ed.), *Oratorie politică românească (1847-1899)*, vol. 1-2, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, Iași 2016.

Roxana Patraș and Livia Iacob (ed.), *Oratorie politică românească (1847-1899)*, vol. 3, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, Iași 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Anne Übersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1999, p. 90, 130, 143.

<sup>37</sup> Mihai Chipereș, *Pe câmpul de onoare. O istorie a duelului la români*, Humanitas, Bucharest 2016.