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Letting Go and the Silence that Remains: The Effects of Translating
Point-of-View from Text to Film in *The Remains of the Day*
and *Never Let Me Go*

Jennifer L. Price

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Point-of-View from Text to Film in *The Remains of the Day*
and *Never Let Me Go*

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Kazuo Ishiguro's novels *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go* exhibit many of the same characteristics as his other works. Out of all of those works, however, only these two novels have been adapted to film as of yet. Because of Ishiguro's reliance on first-person narration and point-of-view his novels are particularly more problematic to adapt to screen. This phenomenon is partially due to the audio-visually dependent medium of film and the camera lens' limitations when it comes to exhibiting character interiority. Therefore, the effect of the translation to screen for both of these films is a shift in how the viewing audience responds to the characters as both characters and as human beings. This shift at times augments, expands, or changes the philosophical implications of Ishiguro's works. This paper explores those shifts and permutations and argues that they can ultimately lead to a more empathetic connection between the viewer and the characters in the stories.

Keywords: point-of-view, Ishiguro, Remains of the Day, Never Let Me Go, film, camera

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INTRODUCTION

In a 2008 article discussing the film adaptation of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Brian McFarlane proposes that McEwan as well as other writers such as Graham Greene have a predilection for cinematic writing in their novels based upon their associations and involvement with original screenwriting and adaptation of their own works. He intimates that these contemporary writers subsequently produce literary works that are more inherently cinematic in their features, and are, as a result, more easily adapted to film ("Watching" 9). One might assume something similar could be said of Kazuo Ishiguro. Ishiguro has worked writing screenplays, including 2005's *The White Countess*, and two of his novels, *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*, have been adapted to the big screen. But Kazuo Ishiguro is not the same sort of writer as McEwan or Greene. Indeed, Ishiguro's works, unlike the works McFarlane examined, do not exhibit characteristics that are particularly easy to adapt to film, especially in their use of point-of-view (POV). In fact, his works could be said to be cinematically resistant.

This classification is primarily because while the themes and settings greatly vary from one of Ishiguro's texts to another, his utilization of unreliable, first-person narration is almost a universal trend in his novels. In fact, the hedges, concealments, and euphemisms of his narrators provide material for much of the scholarship dealing with his novels and scholars often utilize his narrators for literary psychological study. Moreover, these hidden truths in Ishiguro's works produce a tension between what the reader is told and what the reader can only guess is the truth. As Hugh Ruppersburg, a creative writer and scholar, explains it, "the reader of fiction . . . always receives the narrator's description through the medium of the printed word: he never *sees* the action; he only *reads* about it" (11). It is often this tension that ultimately becomes the main action in Ishiguro's novels and yet cannot be exactly replicated on screen. Linda Seger suggests

that first person narration can sometimes be translated into film; however, when that first-person narrator is hiding the truth from his or her audience, or is otherwise unreliable, adapting the story becomes much less straightforward (149).

Because of its medium, film struggles to capture character interiority, especially as it would appear in the first-person literary narrative. McFarlane explains this concept, saying that “while cinema may be more agile and flexible in changing the physical point of view from which an event or object is seen, it is much less amenable to the presentation of a consistent psychological viewpoint derived from one character” (“Background” 16). As a result of this inherent resistance, filmmakers must find ways either to translate that interiority to the screen or to abandon it altogether in order to produce a coherent narrative of the adapted story that will appeal to a viewing audience. Furthermore, unlike the written word, the audio and visually-dependent world of film does not conceal the truth as easily as a narrator in a work of literature. The two film adaptations that have been made thus far of Ishiguro’s works, James Ivory’s 1993 adaptation of *The Remains of the Day* and Mark Romanek’s 2010 adaptation of *Never Let Me Go*, are faced with this problem of interiority. They must present these unreliable narrators who function within the written text as intermediaries between the audience and the story, controlling what the reader is allowed to know in any given scene. And the relinquishment of that control can produce a vastly different story on the screen from the one told on the page.

In the case of the novel *The Remains of the Day*, the narrator, Lord Darlington’s former butler Stevens, conceals everything including his own potential budding relationship with the housekeeper at Darlington Hall and his employer’s dubious associations with Nazi officials during the 1920s. Instead, Stevens tells a captivating tale of polishing silver and professional dignity and the reader only discovers these other truths through the dialogue Stevens shares with

people he meets along the road. In the case of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, the narrator, Kathy H., relives memories of her unconventional childhood and maturation, speaking in such euphemistic terms that the true horror of Kathy's fate, as well as the fate of her friends Ruth and Tommy, is understood only somewhere between the page and the reader. Conversely, in the films, Lord Darlington's 1930s agenda of Nazi appeasement and Stevens's stifled love for Miss Kenton in *Remains of the Day*, and Kathy's identity (and the identity of Ruth and Tommy) as part of a race of clones who were engineered and grown in order to provide organs for donation to ailing human beings in *Never Let Me Go*, are apparent facts that are not, and really cannot be, hidden from the viewer's eye. Therefore, when adapting these novels to screen, and when they strive to maintain some sense of continuity with the source material (as they often do), the filmmakers had to find new ways in which to convey these stories to their audience as well as to recreate interest and tension. Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins articulate this concept when they assert that "adapters . . . must interpret, re-working the precursor text and choosing the various meanings and sensations they find most compelling (or most cost effective), then imagine scenes, characters, plots elements, etc., that match their interpretation" (8).

In Merchant/Ivory's adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*, the re-interpretation and refocus takes the form of alternately re-establishing Stevens's first-person POV through camera work and abandoning that POV altogether while allowing events of the story to take over. In abandoning first-person POV, the filmmakers shift the overall moral of Stevens's story to one of self-condemnation and victimization, while still maintaining the tone of the piece. Moreover, while the plot of the film remains quite close to the plot of the novel, the filmmakers create that similar tone through different means than character interiority, but in doing so they provide a fundamentally different and more final note to Stevens's characterization. This shift in

characterization is predominantly seen in Stevens's relationship with Miss Kenton (a feature of the novel which is fairly covert) and that shift ultimately changes how the viewer is made to respond to Stevens as a narrator, as a butler, and as a human being.

In *Never Let Me Go*, the question of how the viewer responds to characters as human beings becomes pivotal. Unlike Stevens, Kathy's control of the narrative is almost entirely relinquished to the camera lens. That camera lens, while sometimes acting as a visible, framing force on screen, acts more like a third-party observer, and a silent recorder of the events as they unfold. And yet, the most striking effect of the adaptation is not in illuminating the latent themes within the novel by starkly showing the characters' world and making a case for the clones' inherent humanity; instead, through its translation to the screen, the film ultimately demonstrates that, regardless of whether or not the clones are humans, we, the audience, are precisely what they are instead of the other way around. As Kathy tells the viewer in the last lines of the film, "maybe none of us [clones or humans] understand what we've lived through or feel we've had enough time" (*Never Let Me Go*). The film becomes an extreme case of garnering viewer empathy and sympathy for the characters in the story through ways they are presented. The novel oftentimes indicates that the clones are, in fact, not like us at all; however, we viewers of *Never Let Me Go*, watching the characters struggle in a visual setting we could easily project ourselves into, find it difficult to ever question whether or not those characters (the clones) we are watching are different from us in any way.

THE REMAINS OF THE DAY

The first of the two Ishiguro novels to be adapted to film was the 1988 Booker-Prize-winning *The Remains of the Day*. The novel tells the story of Stevens, the former butler to Lord Darlington of Darlington Hall in England. He is, at the time of the novel's frame narrative, the

current butler for an American who purchased Darlington Hall shortly after WWII. Stevens, getting on in years, has decided that he would like to meet with the former housekeeper of Darlington Hall, a Miss Kenton (now Mrs. Benn), to offer her a new position at the house. Stevens's decision to offer the position is the result of a recent letter sent by Miss Kenton, explaining how she has left her husband and calling Stevens to the fond remembrance of their days together at Darlington Hall in the 1920s. Stevens's current employer, the American Mr. Farraday, encourages him to use one of the cars to take a holiday and drive to see this old friend.

Throughout the rest of the narrative, which comprises the journalistic recording of Stevens's journey, Stevens not only recounts what happens to him each day on the road to see Miss Kenton, but he also recollects particular memories from the time when he and Miss Kenton were both employed at Darlington Hall. He also attempts to exonerate his former employer from an unspoken crime he refuses to detail, but it is a crime that becomes increasingly apparent as Stevens both relives his memories from before WWII and encounters people on the road who have curious reactions to discovering that he works at the disgraced Lord's former home. In the end, his journey to see Miss Kenton is not as fruitful as he hoped it would be, as she has no intention of returning to Darlington Hall and has, in fact, recently reconciled with her husband. Stevens concludes the narrative sitting alone on a pier, thinking of ways that he can improve in his station and become a better and more suitable butler for Mr. Farraday.

Stevens frequently conceals the truth of what is really happening in most of his memories, and it becomes increasingly clear to the reader every time Stevens slips up or admits a detail that contextualizes events in the novel and fleetingly reveals the truth, that Stevens is hiding that truth from the reader and himself rather than illuminating it. Ruppensburg identifies how this kind of unreliable narration may "lull the reader into a false sense of confidence in what

characters do and say, especially when they are narrators” (11). Ruppensburg also intimates that this trust in the literary narrator is a result of viewing drama and fiction as having the same characteristics. But in its fundamental differences film, like drama, makes this kind of narrative evasiveness much more difficult, and consequently posits Stevens as a much more difficult character to adapt.

The Controlling Eye

In the film, Stevens cannot conceal the truth by masking it with inconsequential facts or half-truths as he does in the text. Alternately, the focus of the film becomes the ways in which Stevens tries to reconcile that historical and personal truth with his espoused creed of dignity, loyalty, and moral stature. The narrative no longer is a memoir of his attainment of those attributes. And yet, the film does not entirely abandon Stevens’s first-person narration. This attempt at POV fidelity is particularly seen in the cinematography and *mise en scène* of the film. Both of these are used in order to assert Stevens’s POV near the beginning of the movie. As Bert Cardullo points out, in order for a filmmaker to mimic a first person narration he or she can either rely on voiceover narration or first-person camera (617), though there are other ways to do it as well. First-person camera, while avant garde, is not a technique most filmmakers would favor for a large commercial audience who have come to see an adaptation of a well-known book.

Considering that stipulation, the Merchant/Ivory production first introduces voiceover narration in order to help assert Stevens’s control of the narrative and to mirror the voice that is present in the novel. At the beginning of the film, Stevens narrates the state of affairs at Darlington Hall. Additionally, the voiceover recounts some of his subsequent messages to Miss Kenton. However, the voiceover can become as problematic as a first-person camera when used too much. As such, some of the voiceover work in the film is given to Miss Kenton in her own

letters and Stevens does not maintain control throughout the use of the voiceover (*The Remains of the Day*). In fact, this technique not only usurps Stevens's control but also removes ambiguity in Miss Kenton's and Stevens's relationship—a thematic shift discussed more fully below. In fine, while the voiceover technique is used to maintain the journalistic tone of the novel, it cannot function solely to demonstrate Stevens's control of the story.

Instead, the filmmakers rely on a type of camera work, other than first-person, to suggest Stevens's control of the narrative at the beginning of the film and to show what Norman Friedman suggests is the necessary “guiding intelligence” (1179) for the narrative. But it is a guiding intelligence that, paradoxically, both is and is not a kind of author, controlling which events are shown. Cardullo describes this technique as the camera eye seeing events as the narrator in the book does (617). This technique allows for the viewer to see events as they take place through Stevens's eyes, which strengthens the residual effects of his unreliable narration toward the beginning of the film; however, that unreliable narration manifests itself in structure through this technique rather than content (as it is controlled by the narrator in the novel) on screen. This shift from control of content to control of structure makes that guiding intelligence both omniscient, as the camera eye reveals all to the audience, and biased, as the camera eye shows only what the character sees.

To put it another way, the untrustworthy narrator becomes an entity outside of Stevens's character, manifests itself through the camera, and tries to reestablish its authority in what McFarlane identifies as an omniscient cinematic world where, “the viewer is aware . . . of a level of objectivity in what is shown” (“Background” 18). There are several specific moments when this camera/character imposes its obvious structure on the screen. Indeed the opening of the film itself is a rounded camera eye, hearkening back to the early days of film when the opening and

closing of the circular lens aperture created the editing break from one scene to another. This specific cinematographic choice underscores the nostalgia Stevens tries to evoke in the novel through his antiquated language, in addition to providing a subtle commentary on Stevens's apparent desire to live in an antiquated past in what he believes were the glory days of Darlington Hall. These desires are not blatantly confessed in the novel but are, once again, part of the truth which manifests itself between the lines of the novel's text. They are desires most expressed by how fondly Stevens remembers those days.

In those cherished memories, Stevens also reasserts his authority through the camera by attempting to visually reposition Miss Kenton, placing her into the station he believes she should inhabit (even though she is now Mrs. Benn). This framing technique is the first indication of how the relationship between Stevens and Miss Kenton functions, or rather, does not function. One of the ways this is accomplished is in how Stevens in the film continually views Miss Kenton through glass. The first time we see Miss Kenton is in a shot that dissolves from the present to the past through the rounded glass window in a door to the servants' quarters (*The Remains of the Day*). In a way, Stevens repeatedly attempts to cage Miss Kenton within these glass frames to assert some kind of authority over her, however symbolically. Yet he is also attempting to keep some distance or barrier between the two of them. Ivory illustrates Stevens's conception of his relationship with Miss Kenton—ostensibly only a working relationship, but a relationship that holds the promise of much more—through these glass frame shots.

As the story progresses and Miss Kenton becomes more of an unpredictable variable for Stevens, their relationship becomes more heated. At the same time, the filmmakers also begin to revoke Stevens's apparent dominance over the camera lens. Later shots in the film mimic Stevens's POV less frequently and are more claustrophobic. It is almost as if, when Stevens feels

himself losing control over Miss Kenton in their relationship he holds on to his visually narrative ability to place her behind that glass and in narrow places all the more. And yet, these claustrophobic shots become fewer and fewer and the loss of control in the shots mirrors the loss of control he feels in his life, the breakdown of his established worldview, and the erosion of his belief in his moral and social code. For all the voiceovers and camera work, the events of the novel overtake the narrative construct of the film and the physical cues from the actors become the most telling element of the internal struggle. They bring what was subtext in the novel, what Deborah Guth calls the “submerged narratives” (126) of the relationship, Stevens’s personal tragedy, and the story’s historical background, to the forefront. Furthermore, those physical cues alter how the audience relates to those events and to Stevens as a character.

The Truth behind the Lies

The first of these submerged narratives is the truth of how Stevens responds to the news that his father has died one evening during the conference held at Darlington Hall in 1923 (set in the film in 1932). Specifically, in the scene in which Miss Kenton tells Stevens of his father’s death, the reader finds Stevens morally reprehensible while the viewer sees the cracks beginning to develop in Stevens’s conception of his own identity. Stevens touts this moment in the novel as his finest—a moment of professional triumph because he did not give way to his feelings (Ishiguro, *Remains* 110). But in the film, without the interiority and Stevens’s constant attempts to focus the reader on anything but his father’s death, his despondency, shows the audience how he is not indifferent but in shock at the news (*The Remains of the Day*).

In the novel Stevens’s monologue justifies his seeming lack of interest or emotion the evening of his father’s death. Viewing this reaction as a personal triumph within his profession—a characteristic of a “truly great” butler—destroys the reader’s empathy. It is one thing for the character to attempt to hide his shock in the novel, as Stevens attempts to do while speaking to

Lord Darlington as Lord Darlington confronts Stevens and remarks, “you look as though you are crying,” and Stevens laughs then replies, “I’m very sorry, sir. The strains of a hard day” (*Remains* 105). It is quite another thing for that same character to offer up justification for that concealment as Stevens does: “Why should I deny it?” he asks (*Remains* 110). Then he details how his unsympathetic, almost inhuman actions mark him as a superior human being as when he states that “whenever [he] recall[s] that evening today, [he does] so with a large sense of triumph” (*Remains* 110). Without that justification in the film, however, the viewing audience is free to sympathize with Stevens and the incomprehensibility of losing a father whom he has always held in high regard or who has been what Molly Westerman calls “the construct of his father as a paradigmatic butler” (161). We see the filmic Stevens begin to question his commitments to dignity and to his profession in this scene. In this way he begins to be a victim in the film more than he begins to attain the title of a “great butler” as he would like the reader to believe in the novel.

Yet not every submerged narrative brought to light in the film engenders the same sympathy for Stevens. Many years after the conference at Darlington Hall, Stevens is still wrestling with his role as Lord Darlington’s butler when he is asked by his employer to fire two of the maids, both of whom are Jewish. As James Lang points out:

Much of Stevens’s narration in the novel consists of his attempts to justify or explain his blind submission to this man, Lord Darlington, even when Lord Darlington asked him to commit the morally repugnant act of cleansing the household of Jewish servants in order to placate visiting Nazi dignitaries. (144)

In the novel, Stevens begins to discuss how he did not believe Lord Darlington to be anti-Semitic, but gets distracted because he was, “in fact discussing the silver” (*Remains* 138). This

continued discussion about the silver frustrates the reader who desperately wants to know the politics of what is going on. In the film this offense is compounded by that fact that Lord Darlington is shown reading *Mein Kampf* before asking Stevens to fire the maids. In this way, the offense is moved from the placation of the Nazi dignitaries to carrying out Lord Darlington's newly influenced desires. Furthermore in the film, the maids are not Jewish-English as they are in the novel; instead, they are Jewish-German and as the conference had been held in 1932 in the film instead of 1923, there is much more historical significance prescribed to Stevens's actions. To put it plainly, this means that in the novel the maids would have just gone to work at another house somewhere in England but in the film they would likely be deported back to Germany—a probable death-sentence for the girls. And it is a death sentence in which Stevens has become an accomplice.

In the film, Stevens is never afforded the ability to explain away his compliance to Lord Darlington's request the way he does in the novel. To be sure, he does try to excuse himself through dialogue in the film to Miss Kenton as carrying out his master's wishes at the time. Yet since the viewer's conception of Stevens's commitment to dignity in his profession and loyalty to his employer is lessened in the film, the audience cannot help but feel as though this is one instance in which Stevens should have attempted to influence the outcome of a situation. If he were to have quietly and respectfully championed the maids' cause to Lord Darlington, or at the very least expressed a level of indignation equal to Miss Kenton's, the viewer might further begin to understand and feel the constraints of Stevens's station within the house. As it is, the viewer finds him to be easily led by anything Lord Darlington says much in the same way the reader has come to view Stevens in the novel. This is one way in which the filmmakers create similarity between the literary and filmic Stevens through means other than having him control

the narration. It is also a way in which the filmic Stevens begins to be painted as a much more tragic figure.

For both the film and the novel, it is the visits of those same Nazis—both at the conference held at Darlington Hall as well as later on when Lord Darlington facilitates a meeting between the Prime Minister and top Nazi officials—which create the substance of the historical truth Stevens desperately wants to keep subordinated in his narrative. But it is historical truth which he cannot hide in the film. In the novel Stevens fixates on the surroundings and remarks that “it is always something of a memorable sight to see that magnificent banquet hall employed to its full capacity . . . the unbroken lines of gentlemen in evening suits . . . the two large chandeliers [letting] a subtle, quite soft light pervad[e] the room” (*Remains* 98). And yet, in fine, these glittering parties are a part of the meetings which later label Lord Darlington as a Nazi sympathizer, the consequences of which Stevens must grapple with on his drive through the country—an outing that constitutes the frame narrative for the story in the novel. While Stevens is busy reliving those days in his memory, those whom he encounters on his journey repeatedly allude to the very important and dubious attendees at that conference. In this way the “truth,” as it is in the novel, is juxtaposed with Stevens’s nearly trivial fixation on the polish of the silver, “to the point,” as Lilian Furst observes, “of thrusting aside the significance of the visitors” when recalling the conference (539). It is this cover-up in the novel that condemns Stevens the most in a reader’s eyes.

Lang explains how in the novel, the reader is led to feel, on the one hand, “narrative sympathy for Stevens, and the external and internal restraints imposed on his character; on the other hand [the reader feels] repugnance at the thought of the willing association he and his employer made with the Nazis” (146). That repugnance, however, is lessened in the film because

when the viewer is faced with Stevens's romantic disappointment with Miss Kenton and outward reflections of despair, that viewer is less willing to condemn him for his associations. In the film, Stevens ceases to be the one concealing truth—the literary perpetrator of a sort of crime against the reader. The filmic Stevens thus becomes a much more sympathetic character. It is true he is powerless to have an impact on Lord Darlington's politics in both the novel and the film. But when Stevens is no longer the one concealing truth from the audience or taking pride in the fact that "Lord Darlington never made any efforts to conceal things from [his] eyes and ears" (*Remains* 74), he can be viewed as a kind of prisoner of social status.

In the film, his inaction becomes less of a product of him trying to keep to some moral code of dignity he has fashioned for himself as a butler, and more of a product of the butler's inferior social station. Stevens can lie to himself, but not to the viewer. Therefore, his part in the story's historical background can do little more than showcase his own pathetic situation in life. Paradoxically, this is also the same fact that saves him from the condemnation his character suffers in the novel at the hands of the reader. In the one medium, Stevens uses his ignorance as proof that he is a good butler, but in the other his ignorance is pathetic and tragic in the larger historical context. Specifically, that ignorance, and how it is perceived by the viewer, is where the fundamental difference between text and film lies.

The Revelation and End of an Affair

For example, in the novel the truth is apparent in the space somewhere between the page and the reader. In the film it lies elsewhere. Theresa Heyd argues that in a novel the burden of constructing the truth of the text rests upon the reader and that a reader's given background will highlight different themes within the text that might not have otherwise been salient (240). This concept becomes especially important in regards to Stevens's relationship with Miss Kenton—an area in which he becomes the greatest victim of all. While most readers do discover some latent

relationship between Miss Kenton and Stevens, the relationship, or really the almost-relationship, is much more central and obvious in the film.

This relationship is played out in everything from showing the tender evenings sipping cocoa that Stevens and Miss Kenton share to their stolen moment when she tries to grab his novel from his hands to Stevens literally seeing Miss Kenton crying in response to his brushing her off (instead of just postulating her tears as he does in the novel). The relationship between Miss Kenton and Stevens is transformed in the film from yet another subtext to the great and central tragedy of the narrative (*The Remains of the Day*). Curiously, the film omits the only lines from the novel that indicate Miss Kenton's interest in Stevens: "I get to thinking about the life I might have had with you, Mr. Stevens. And I suppose that's when I get angry over some trivial thing and leave [my husband]" (*Remains* 239). In the novel, she says this to him during their last meeting when he has presumably come to see if she will do just that. On screen, however, this declaration is integrated into every interaction Miss Kenton and Stevens have.

One of the most interesting developments in the film, and one of the few times in which the film deviates from the plot of the novel, is when Stevens sits on the pier after his last meeting with Miss Kenton. In the novel he is alone, and here the author (and subsequently the reader) leaves him, contemplating his return journey and his future aspirations to become even better suited to serve his new master. In the film, however, Miss Kenton accompanies him to the pier. Miss Kenton's presence on the pier in this scene further engages the audience's sympathy for his situation, even though it is a product of his own actions. It is at this moment that he realizes the mistake he has made in devoting his life to nothing but service, especially the service of a man (Lord Darlington) who was as easily misguided as himself. It is also when he realizes that those early choices and commitments to dignity and loyalty condemn him to live that way for the rest

of his life. Miss Kenton's presence, her attempt at conversation, and his perfunctory answers contrasted with the pained expression on his face, provide an embodiment to Stevens's pain. The banality of Miss Kenton's treatment of him and his visible reactions to that provide the glaring truth, telling him (and the viewer) about all the opportunities he has missed and reminding him that he will never be able to reclaim or obtain them. Ryan Trimm suggests that in the novel the end scene with Stevens on the pier alone demonstrates that Stevens is, "not at the end but merely waiting on it" (209) as Stevens muses about what he must now do with his wasted life once he gets home. There is at least some chance for redemption in that wasted life. The end for the cinematic Stevens is much more certain, however, and Miss Kenton gives the audience a visual representation of how empty Stevens's life has been and how empty it will be once she is gone.

This final change in how the viewer is made to perceive Stevens is shown in the last frames of the film—frames which switch back to the more formalistic camera work seen at the beginning of the film. He and his new employer Mr. Lewis await the arrival of Mr. Lewis's family at Darlington Hall. They encounter a bird which has found its way down the chimney and they chase it around the room until they are able to catch it. They then open a window and let the bird fly away free—just as Miss Kenton escaped the house all those years before. In this moment of freedom and renewed hope both Stevens and the viewer see how he will never experience that moment of freedom. The difference here is that while the viewer takes off with the bird, sharing its rising POV, Stevens is left to watch the upward progress through the glass panes of a window, hearkening back to the attempts of containment from earlier in the film. The difference in the cinematography this time is that Stevens is now the one who is trapped instead of Miss Kenton.

Translating *The Remains of the Day* to film presents a compelling study of how an audience can be made to respond to a character who is an unreliable narrator in the fictional text.

Rebecca Walkowitz states that “unlike the ‘reliable’ narrator, the unreliable narrator is perceived as being the story rather than merely having one” (qtd. in Trimm 202). Yet when the element of the unreliable narrator is not replicated or removed for the film version of *The Remains of the Day*, the viewer is not left with a sense of lacking, a sense that we are missing some part of the story by not being in Stevens’s head. Instead the viewer is given a feeling that there is something beneath the surface of Stevens’s character, hidden behind an actor’s face, which is his true story. The viewer is faced with bleak realism from the opening shots. Stevens cannot hide any events which take place in his memory. Oddly enough, some of the same could be said of the novel: each bit of truth is revealed as Stevens attempts to hide it—or at least hedge it. And yet, the film accomplishes the effect by brutal honesty and explicit representation of the events which engender a greater sympathy for Stevens’s character. Indeed, he becomes much more than merely sympathetic, and more of a tragic figure than he is in the novel, especially in his almost-relationship with Miss Kenton. In the end, it is the greatest irony of all that Stevens, who once commanded the divulgence of all knowledge in the written narrative, who was the dominant voice, is translated into a character on film who is condemned to a life of silent regrets and unexpressed feelings and desires.

NEVER LET ME GO

The more recent of the two adaptations of Ishiguro novels is Mark Romanek’s 2010 *Never Let Me Go*. The novel upon which the film is based shares many of the same qualities with *The Remains of the Day*, particularly the presence of an unreliable narrator and a fixation on memory. *Never Let Me Go* is the story of three characters, Kathy, Tommy and Ruth, and their maturation as students at Hailsham School in England. The story operates in a historically alternate timeline where medical advances in the 1960s and 1970s enabled the eradication of

fatal disease, including cancer. The life expectancy by the 1990s when the story begins is well over one hundred—at least for most. The story follows the three characters through their years at school and into the years beyond when they fulfill the purpose of their creation. That is to say, the reader eventually becomes aware that Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth are clones who were grown in order to provide organs for donation to ailing human beings.

The story is told through Kathy who, in the years after leaving Hailsham (a school with a decidedly political agenda that tries to prove clones should be raised humanely), has become a companion or “carer” for other clones as they go through their “donation” process. She is, essentially, someone to hold their hand and sign the release forms. These “donations” entail having pieces of their entirely healthy bodies periodically excised and donated until, finally, their life functions cease and they “complete.” Kathy spends the bulk of the novel reminiscing about her time as a young student at Hailsham and the friends (Ruth and Tommy) she made there. These memories become particularly frequent as she is assigned to be a carer to both Ruth and Tommy and the three friends attempt to atone for and reconcile their possibly wasted lives with the limited amount of time they have left. The novel ends with Kathy, having lost both Ruth and Tommy to completion, announcing to the reader that she cannot allow herself to wallow in sadness for long because she has to get back into her car, “to drive off to wherever it was [she] was supposed to be” (*Never* 288).

The Deconstruction of Morality

The novel has been both praised and critiqued for its stark look at genetic engineering and the possible impacts of science and technology on humanity. It is precisely humanity, however, and not science that is questioned within the story. While the novel does concern itself with questions of morality as tied to scientific advancement, the ostensible ultimate question of the narrative is whether or not clones are also humans. While the novel allows for the reader to

ask this question, the film adaptation of the novel does not. Instead, the themes of equality, humanity, and inhumanity become the most prevalent of all other themes in the film. Moreover, while Stevens was made into a victim of circumstance in the film adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*, Kathy, Ruth, and Tommy cannot be anything else but victims in the film adaptation of *Never Let Me Go*. André Bazin expresses this ability of film to “distribute” or “dissipate” the aesthetic energy from a novel differently, “according to the demands of the camera lens” (Bazin 25).

Moving past questions of redistribution of theme in the film though, is the explicit discussion of what the “mystery” of *Never Let Me Go* is about. It is what Kathy’s narration often masks in the novel. Discussion of the characters’ roles as clones and their fates, while only really hinted at in the novel, is explicitly discussed early on in the film where it is part of the students’ classroom instruction, albeit unsanctioned classroom instruction. Consequently, in the film headmistress Miss Emily calls the revelation “deliberate subversion” (*Never Let Me Go*). In the novel, one of their teachers, Miss Lucy, merely hints that they should be taught more about donations (Ishiguro, *Never* 29), and she tells them that she hopes, “one day . . . it’ll be explained to [them]” (Ishiguro, *Never* 40). We see in the film, however, this “subversion” as Miss Emily calls it on screen when Miss Lucy tells her class full of students that soon after they leave school they will begin donating their vital organs because it is what they were created to do (*Never Let Me Go*). Miss Lucy continues to explain that she feels she must tell them “who and what they are” because she believes it is the only way for them to “lead decent lives” (*Never Let Me Go*).

When reading the novel, many readers can become frustrated with the characters because, while those readers are inclined to believe *a priori* that a clone—fashioned, grown, constructed—of human substance, must be human, these characters do not always act in the most

human of ways. It becomes alienating to the novel's audience when these clones, even after they are fully aware of what they are and why they were made, never consider rebelling against their fate. Ishiguro himself in the commentary for the DVD of *Never Let Me Go* points out that this is the question he is most frequently asked by readers of the novel. This point becomes most baffling to the novel's audience because a desire for freedom and a rebellion against enslavement are frequently thought of as inherent human traits. The closest any of these characters come to expressing rebellion in is when Tommy throws periodic fits. Kathy comments on those fits saying, "maybe the reason [Tommy] used to get like that was because at some level [he] always *knew*" (*Never* 275). Presumably, she means that he knew what their fate is, even before the rest of them became fully conscious of it. But that is as far as the discussion ever goes within the text.

In the film, the idea of subversion introduced by Miss Emily of "lead[ing] decent lives," (*Never Let Me Go*) is one that the viewer can identify with more as a noble act. Even still, this revulsion at the clones' lack of self-preservational instinct is not difficult to understand given films such as 2005's *The Island*. In that film, clones are posited in a similar circumstance to that of *Never Let Me Go*. But unlike the protagonists of *Never Let Me Go*, when they discover the reason for their creation they fight, attempting to gain their freedom and the ability to determine the course of their own lives. Perhaps this tendency for an audience to project their personal history and cultural contextualization onto a narrative, once again as it is identified by Theresa Heyd (Heyd 240), is one reason Ishiguro set the narrative in an alternative past and present.

Divorcing this world from ours undercuts any presupposition the reader has as to what morality should be present to govern the society. Moreover, it opens up the possibility to assert a different kind of principle which governs that society. It is a technique which the historically bound *Remains of the Day* did not have the luxury of employing to ameliorate Stevens. In *Never*

Let Me Go, Ishiguro strips what the reader would traditionally view as viable points of human identification between the clones and the audience. Once these connections are severed, the reader becomes more susceptible to accepting a different morality when it comes to the clones. “Humanity” can no longer be an ethical measuring stick. Shameem Black argues that “if there is to be any empathetic connection with Ishiguro’s protagonists, it will not occur through the consoling liberal realization that the clones are humans, just like us” (786). Therefore, in this world created by Ishiguro, the reader cannot rely on preconceived notions of what constitutes humanness to direct moral judgment in how clones should be treated. Black goes on to argue that even though the characters appear inhuman and artificial “it is difficult not to be moved by [their] childhood innocence and [their] terrifying predicament. Precisely because Ishiguro’s characters call attention to their own artificiality and their own role as simulacra, they make a claim on our empathy” (801). And it is empathy engendered despite our aversions to the clones’ inhuman actions.

One of those inhuman actions, and perhaps the most alienating aspect of the book for readers, is Kathy’s first-person narration—dispassionate, mechanical, and euphemistic to the point of boredom. Martin Puchner describes Kathy as “apparently undisturbed by what she narrates” (35) while the reader becomes more horrified with the realities of this alternate world. Puchner goes on to address this point of reader alienation when he describes that “the more one learns about this underclass of organ donors, the more disturbing the casual blandness of Kathy H.’s voice becomes, leading to an ever increasing divide between her disaffected tone and one’s own growing horror and outrage” (35). For example, Kathy only discusses “completion” not death. She speaks of herself and her friends as “students” and not children. The three friends go out to search for Ruth’s “possible” and not her genetic donor. Kathy makes banal statements

such as, “it had been an unusually busy period for me [as a carer],” and conceals the terrifying truth and body count in her everyday experience (*Never* 242). And, perhaps most of all, Kathy talks about “donations” instead of invasive operations that leave clones struggling to stay alive after vital organs have been taken from their bodies. Therefore, while Kathy’s unreliable narration stems from disaffection or a kind of disconnection, as opposed to Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* as a narrator who actively hid the truth, the reader’s attention is still drawn to the action taking place on the periphery of the prose. The reader then becomes often irritated that the narrator does not fully address that action.

The Apparently Human

As mentioned, however, the film does not really ever allow for the audience to become alienated from the characters because they are clones or because of the narration. In fact, while Kathy’s narration is replicated to a point in a few voiceovers, the euphemistic tone the novelistic Kathy uses is absent in the filmic Kathy. This filmic Kathy tells the viewer that she tries to take pride in her job as a carer (much like Stevens does in *The Remains of the Day*) but that “it wears [her] down” (*Never Let Me Go*). While the line is taken directly from the prose of the novel, in the film it is not couched in other statements about how picking and choosing donors to work with is a way to deal with that fatigue. Kathy in the film does not know how to deal with her exhaustion, except to live in her memory instead of her present. The filmic Kathy’s narration also accompanies powerful images of silent emotional suffering which become the “submerged narratives” revealed by the film. While there are instances in the film where the viewer gets glimpses of the clones’ inability to function as “regular” humans, the instances are almost universally explained away by recognition that the clones lack conditioned or nurtured humanity and not natural humanity.

For example, after Ruth, Tommy, and Kathy have left Hailsham they take up residence in a small community of clones known as the “Cottages” (which are really run-down buildings on an abandoned farm). This is the place where they, and students from other schools, are to spend a brief period of time before they begin their donations. On one of the first nights at the Cottages a group of students, some who have been there longer than others, sits down together to watch television. As Ruth, Kathy, and Tommy observe the other students laugh at the comedic program, the viewing audience sees a fleeting anxiety in the characters as they hesitate to laugh because they do not understand why the show is funny. Ultimately, Ruth begins to laugh because everyone else is laughing, and Kathy and Tommy sit uncomfortably silent as the scene cuts. Various other moments like this appear sporadically throughout the film, and yet these moments never cast definitive enough doubt in the viewer as to the clones’ humanity, especially when they are juxtaposed with other deeply affecting emotional displays.

These other emotional displays and how they are filmed are, in fact, curiously related to the issues of narration and film as well as oddly connected to a filming technique used in *The Remains of the Day*. Specifically, these moments of extreme poignancy are almost exclusively filmed from behind some sort of glass partition: Kathy watches Tommy go into surgery for his final donation from behind the glass of a surgical observation room in the opening scenes of the film (as a sort of flash-forward). The viewer also watches Tommy’s emotional breakdown on a deserted country road through the windshield of their still-running car and illuminated by its headlights after he and Kathy discover that deferrals are a myth. It becomes almost comforting to the audience to feel there is some recognizable filter material between them and the anguish that is depicted on screen.

As discussed earlier, this distorting technique was seen in *The Remains of the Day* as a way for Stevens to attempt to reassert narrative control. It functions similarly in *Never Let Me Go* as a way to let the viewer know that they are in the role of narrator to an extent, with the glass partition acting as a kind of visible camera lens that casts the viewer as the director of the scene. Moreover, these shots are almost exclusively from Kathy's POV. Equating with the narrator visually in such a way often leads a viewer to feel more emotionally complicit in whatever the camera is recording. In this case, it causes the viewer to identify with the narrator, Kathy, and to empathize with the characters' sorrow. The different partitions also function on another level to uncomfortably mimic the walls of a cage in a zoo, almost as if the viewer is watching these displays as being acted out by animals. David Jauss explains that point-of-view, like these partitions, is often used in literature, "to achieve the emotional, intellectual, and moral responses the author desires" (6). But instead of controlling what the viewer sees by camera POV, the glass acts as a way to frame what is shown. And each time these inhuman constraints are placed upon the clones the viewer begins to feel the injustice of the situation more and more. Consequently, that viewer is led to believe more in the clones' inherent humanity, or at least in an inherent equality with themselves.

The Undeniably Human

Further adding to the film's tendency to humanize the main characters are the changes in characterization. These are changes that are almost impelled to take place because of the visual dependency of film. For instance, the cinematic Kathy, much like the cinematic Stevens in *Remains of the Day*, cannot deal with the narrative as euphemistically as the literary Kathy can. The film also cannot hide her true feelings and reactions behind a mask of mechanical narrative that concerns itself with seemingly insignificant memories juxtaposed with horrific realities that she presents as little more than everyday occurrences. In the film, these everyday realities

become alternately more difficult for Kathy to cope with and the audience watches as she slowly breaks down over the course of the film. We as the audience see her loneliness as she sits at the miniscule kitchen table in her carer's apartment; we see the truth dawn upon her as she and Tommy sit in Miss Emily's parlor as she struggles to tell them there is no hope for them to be together; we see the loving look she gives Tommy as he is wheeled into the operating room for his final donation; we see the tears well up in her eyes as the doctors push sedating doses of drugs into his system for the procedure; we, like Kathy, see the antiseptic spread over his chest as the doctors prepare to remove his heart.

The end of both the novel and the film mark an end to Kathy's journey. Shortly after Tommy's death, we see Kathy on a quiet country road looking through a fence and into a sunset. This fence is near a field, and is peppered with bits of paper and plastic blowing in the wind. It is a place where she imagines all the lost bits of her childhood and her life have blown and become caught in this resting place. She fantasizes that if she waits long enough Tommy will show up on the other side of the fence; however, she never lets herself fantasize a reunion with him. She knows it is an impossibility. In the film, Kathy allows herself the fantasy at the fence, but then tells the audience in a voice over that she has received her summons to start donating (*Never Let Me Go*). This revelation stands in for the novel's last sentence when Kathy tells the reader that she is going to go "wherever it is [she] was supposed to be" (*Never* 288). In Kathy confessing her fate as certain in the film—that she must start donating—the lesson she has learned throughout the course of the story that she is, in fact, a genetic equal, becomes more apparent to the viewer. That message is then paired with an image of Kathy, tears streaming down her face, thinking back over everything that has happened and knowing that everything is entirely unfair. "Maybe none of us understand what we've lived through," she says in voiceover, "or feel we've

had enough time” (*Never Let Me Go*). It is an message and image that lingers with the viewer and creates a profound empathy within the audience.

Apart from the changes the viewer is allowed to see in Kathy, perhaps one of the most fascinating results of adapting *Never Let Me Go* to film is the ways in which Ruth’s character becomes more central to the story. While the film still follows Kathy as its main character, there are additional pivotal scenes where Kathy and Ruth interact that do not appear in the novel. Jauss writes that “handling point of view is much more than a matter of picking a person or a narrative technique and sticking with it; rather, it involves carefully manipulating the distance between narrator and character . . . so as to achieve the desired response” (6). Focusing on Ruth thus allows the filmmakers to full explore some of the terrifying possibilities of Ishiguro’s world without too radically changing the distance between the audience and Kathy as the narrator. Exploring Ruth’s character it is not difficult to see that she is, in both the novel and the film, extremely self-centered. She continually invents and perpetuates fanciful stories. Even her relationship with Tommy, which ultimately keeps Kathy and Tommy from being able to fully realize their relationship, is a story she invents. It is a lie that she perpetuates in order to get the things she wants, including attention and a chance for deferral. In the film we see her as the character who tries to mimic other clones and what she sees as “human” actions in order to appear more special and therefore more worthy of attention.

One episode in both the novel and the film that demonstrates this aspect of Ruth’s characterization is when Ruth, Tommy, Kathy, and a few acquaintances go to investigate a claim that someone has sighted Ruth’s “possible,” the human whose DNA she shares. In both the film and the novel, Ruth spends a large amount of time speculating as to what this woman might do, where she might work, and so forth on the drive to the village where this woman had allegedly

been seen. She is animated and vivacious, craving attention. Consequently, she does not seriously allow for the possibility that the person who told her about the woman might actually have been lying. In both novel and film, Ruth is apparently shocked out of her certainty when faced with the reality that the woman is not her model. On film, however, the viewer watches this play out as the three friends press their faces up against the window of a travel office (another use of a glass barrier tied to powerful emotional moments for the characters) and see that the woman does not look like Ruth at all.

Ruth then, in a surprising moment of truthfulness, illuminates for both the reading and viewing audiences what all the clones seem to implicitly believe: that they, in fact, were not modeled on socially respectable humans, but instead were modeled from convicts, prostitutes, and other undesirables. In her revelation that they believe they were “modelled from *trash*” (*Never* 166), Ruth faces up to the fact that she cannot be a genetic equal to humans, because clones are all fundamentally seen as genetically inferior to the rest of the human race, even by themselves. In the novel, the last thing the reader hears about Ruth is when she gives Kathy information about where to find the old Madame from Hailsham in the hope that Kathy and Tommy may qualify for a deferral. She then dies a few days later, silently, having lost her ability to speak and “far away inside herself,” with Kathy by her side (*Never* 236).

The film, however, moves beyond this abbreviated and mechanical death for Ruth to explicitly create profound philosophical implications that hang only on the edges of the literary text where readers supply their own morality. In a scene near the end of the movie, before Ruth has given Kathy the information about where to find Madame, Ruth and Kathy are having a conversation as Ruth struggles down the hallway of her treatment center. Her second donation has not gone very well and she is dying—quickly. Ruth’s nurse tells Kathy that she believes

Ruth, “wants to complete. And when they want to complete they usually do” (*Never Let Me Go*). The viewer then watches as the once-strong and self-important Ruth divulges a fear that is even more terrifying than the idea that they, as clones, have been scraped together from the genetic gutter. Ruth tells Kathy that some of the other patients have been talking about what happens to them after they complete: “How maybe after the fourth donation even if you’ve technically completed you’re still conscious in some sort of way. Then you find out that there are more donations—plenty of them—there’s just no more recovery centers, no more carers, just watching and waiting until they switch you off.” (*Never Let Me Go*).

Ruth’s fear that she can no longer believe in an ending to the pain, articulated minutes after her nurse says that Ruth just wants to die, resonates with the viewer because it highlights how much Ruth wants to cease existing. It is this conversation with Kathy that demonstrates to the audience how much like themselves, hoping for an end to pain, Ruth truly is. In the novel, the clones’ “afterward” is ignored just as their genesis is ignored. In the film, where the clones come from may not matter, but if and where they are going to go once they are gone becomes immensely important. Moreover, this added scene, where viewer’s potential fears are directly shown or professed by characters on screen, engenders audience projection and empathy. The viewer listens to Ruth’s fear, posited as gossip she’s heard from other clones, and hopes that she is once again wrong, just as she was with the woman who was not her genetic model.

Furthering Ruth’s characterization, indeed “completing” it in a way, Ruth’s last scene is perhaps one of the most shocking events in the entire adaptation. The viewer is shown Ruth’s final donation, in a stark and nearly silent operating room. Unlike in the novel, where Kathy is there to hold Ruth’s hand as she drifts in and out of consciousness in her final hours, Ruth is alone on screen. She is surrounded by doctors who are intently carving something out of her

body. Ruth's eyes are open, though she is unconscious. These open eyes are a common occurrence while under general anesthesia; however, under normal circumstances the operating staff respectfully tapes the patient's eyes closed. Ruth, as a clone, in their minds does not need any such respect. A persistent beeping from a heart monitor is the only sound in the room, save for the murmuring of the operating staff. Suddenly, as the organ they sought is lifted out of Ruth's body and slid into a waiting bag, the beeping of the monitor stops and becomes a flat, lifeless, tone.

Ruth's fear, her last bit of gossip, lingers with the audience as they watch her lying wide-eyed on the table and they listen to the heart monitor flat line. Medically speaking, Ruth's fear, as she expressed it to Kathy in the hospital in the earlier scene, is partially founded because, as the audience knows, even after a patient has lost a heartbeat there are measures that can be taken to resuscitate them. So it is as if Ruth is hovering just beyond with the potential to still be alive if anyone were willing to put in the effort to revive her. But it is effort that no one will expend. The doctors rush the donated organ out of the room, turn off the monitor, leave Ruth's mangled, bloody body lying on the table, and turn off the lights. It is shocking to watch. Everything the audience knows about operations, dying patients, and human decency rebels as the scene plays out as being profoundly morally wrong.

But it is an image that is absolutely necessary to enhance the film's theme of humanity and equality. Norman Friedman identifies how literature can express "more ideas and attitudes [but that] it presents qualitatively weaker images" (1161). So while the novel obliquely lets the reader spend Ruth's last few hours with her, it does not necessarily produce the same impact as watching Ruth's surgically molested body lie dead and uncared for on the operating table as

nurses and doctors scramble to care for the organ ripped from that body. It is a silent, visceral image that would be difficult if not impossible to replicate in the prose.

The Reconstruction of Morality

Those cinematic images, however, only serve to underscore the ethical and moral questions presented by the narrative. Perhaps the greatest ethical question when it comes to *Never Let Me Go*, both film and novel, is whether or not the clones are human even if we do not think of them as human in the traditional sense. If Ruth, Kathy, and Tommy do not qualify as human because they do not rebel against their fate are they any less worthy of human consideration or equality? As Miss Emily, former teacher at Hailsham, reveals, in Hailsham's view the answer to this question is no: Hailsham's entire purpose was to prove to an indifferent world that there was a different way to treat the clones and, raising them in these improved circumstances, to determine whether or not the clones had souls. This is why "students from Hailsham are special" as Miss Emily tells the student body in the film (*Never Let Me Go*). The teachers at Hailsham attempt to prove this by examining the students' art. This belief that art reveals the soul is not unique. As Karen Armstrong articulates it, "art involves our emotions, but if it is to be more than superficial epiphany, this new insight must go deeper than feelings that are, by their very nature, ephemeral" (8). Therefore, the teachers and, presumably, the board for Hailsham school examine the art produced by these students to see if any deeper meaning, even beyond feelings, can be expressed by children who the rest of the world see as little more than medical resources. Hailsham's teachers, however, lack the courage of their own convictions and their mission ultimately fails.

For Tommy's character this question of art is pivotal. In the novel and the film Tommy's hope rests upon his belief that if he demonstrates to Madame through his drawings (something he, as a student at Hailsham, was never able to produce for the teachers) that he has a soul, he

would qualify for special treatment: a deferral granted so that he and Kathy may spend a few years together before they must resume and complete their donations. He tells Kathy in the film, “They can look into our souls, they can *see* and know if we are really in love or not” (*Never Let Me Go*). At the end of the novel, Miss Emily explains to Tommy and Kathy that there are no deferrals. In the film, Miss Emily cannot bring herself to speak that truth. The viewer watches as Tommy slowly breaks down and withdraws within himself as Miss Emily explains that the school wanted to answer the ultimate question of the narrative: are the clones human? In the film, Miss Emily reveals to Kathy and Tommy that Hailsham had been, in fact, trying to provide an answer to a question that people were no longer asking (*Never Let Me Go*). At the end of the scene, Kathy is the one to directly tell Tommy the truth: deferrals are, and always have been, a myth.

This is one reason Shameem Black argues that *Never Let Me Go* as a novel, “shares a pervasive late-twentieth-century cultural skepticism about the viability of empathetic art” (785) or in this belief that, “art bares the soul of the artist,” (*Never* 254) and can create empathy between human beings. The reader comes out of the novel with little or no respect for the teachers at Hailsham and, consequently, the narrative questions whether or not these methods of determining humanity through something as trivial as school children’s art projects were a viable or ethical route to use in fighting for the clones’ rights. Placing this assertion that art reveals the soul in Hailsham’s purview can suggest that the entire theory of empathetic art is as Black argues—as futile as Hailsham’s mission of raising the clones as normal children. But it is at this juncture, on a strictly formal level, that the film itself cannot become complicit with all of the themes of the novel. The diminutive view of empathetic art in the novel becomes particularly ironic considering that the process of adapting the novel into the new art form of film engenders

audience sympathy and empathy in a way the novel does not. As an audience viewing the film, it becomes difficult to condemn the concept of empathetic art or Hailsham's attempts at humane upbringing. Hailsham ultimately fails in its mission to convince the world that clone children should be treated like humans and Tommy's art does not afford him the reprieve he hopes for; however, the film accomplishes the mission of empathetic art by allowing the audience to identify with the characters without the filter of an unreliable narrator.

In the film's form, then, lies evidence that art can and does prove something about humanity. The images of Tommy's despair, of Ruth's lifeless body, and of Kathy's weeping face are all visually depicted in such a way as to leave no room to question whether or not these characters are human and live and die as such. If they are not, then we are not. Even Kathy's narration, translated from the page to the screen, does not remain as flat in the film as it does in the novel. For Puchner, "flatness is the point" of Ishiguro's novel (34). And yet, flatness and disaffection do not become, and cannot be, the point for the viewer of the film. Within the images and slight variations in characterization, the filmmakers are able to solidify the clones' equality. While the viewer may still retain some lingering frustration with the characters' seemingly mute acceptance and lack of revolt, as a medium film can allow for muteness in a way that is not only impossible in the prose of the novel. But it is a muteness that can also speak more loudly when defining themes or morals. This holds especially true for the adaptation of *Never Let Me Go* where frequently the unspoken truths are demonstrated through visual, unspeakable means. Ultimately, it allows for an answer to the seemingly unanswerable question of the novel by not allowing that question to be asked at all.

CONCLUSION

Suzanne Diamond writes that “it is a truism to observe that, once you tell a story, it is no longer yours to control” (100). Such is the case with Ishiguro’s narrators in his novels and such is the case with the film adaptations of those novels. Both Stevens and Kathy H. conceal truth from their audiences within their respective narratives. For the literary Stevens, it is perhaps the by-product of the recognition of his missed opportunities and wasted life as well as a pervasive shame for his complicity in morally reprehensible events. For the literary Kathy, it is perhaps the by-product of her inhumanness, her artificiality, and perhaps that artificiality is justification for the fate she and the other clones share. But when those characters and their stories are subsequently translated to the screen these narrators can no longer control what the audience sees. They relinquish that control to the filmmakers. As such, Stevens is reduced to an even more tragic figure who is not deluding himself, but who is instead forced to consciously live the life he has spent years building even after he recognizes how pointless and empty that life truly is. Kathy and her friends silently manifest emotions that resonate with the viewer, even as Kathy, Tommy, and Ruth all struggle to appropriately act out social mores and behave like normal young adults. In fact, the audience is led to a level of empathy that does not prove beyond a doubt that these clones are humans, but proves that we, the audience, become defined by how like these clones we are.

Peter Brooker writes that “adaptation can . . . open out an alternative, undeveloped, or suppressed trace” (119). It can illuminate truth and underscore theme. At times, it can fundamentally change the way an audience relates and reacts to characters within the narrative. It can change the moral of the story. This holds especially true when adapting unreliable narrators such as Stevens and Kathy, where decisions must be made about how to deal with characters whose stories have been taken over to be told by someone else—someone who might not be

willing to lie for them or let them hide behind a false or cool exterior. In the case of these two narrators the films are able to produce in the viewer a more pronounced emotional connection with the characters than the novelistic character who is potentially concealing truth. That is why the adaptations of these novels make characters who appear inhuman in prose appear more human on screen. This transformation compels us to examine more critically the worlds they inhabit and the injustices, at times self-inflicted and at times undeserved, they suffer.

Paradoxically, it allows us to identify echoes of our own experience within their tragedy.

Ultimately, the adaptations alter the way Ishiguro's narrators are read on both the screen and the page, and, potentially, the way the adaptations enrich those readings.

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