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Print Media Vs Visual Media in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go

Abstract

The paper entitled "Print Media Vs Visual Media in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*" aims to explore how reading a book is different from watching a movie. Many films are based on novels. However, each of them uses different ways to tell the similar stories.

Adaptation in the industry is nothing new. Almost three-fourth of all films ever made has been adapted from novels, plays or short stories of the classic literature in every language. It is always said that the printed text is in some way superior to and more moral than the filmed version. The objective of this paper is to focus on such adaptation. In the process of adaptation every film director recreates or gives new dimension to the original. The main goal of this comparison is to highlight that books are better than movies. Books can let everyone imagine the setting or events that happen in the story. They are also more detailed than movies because movies sometimes leave out some important details. When reading a

nothing else exists and one can be a whole other person in this completely new and amazing world. One can live as someone else, free of one's own troubles, even if it is for only two hundred pages. Books are magic, which is why books are always the best, because while the movies are good, books are always the best.

Print Media Vs Visual Media in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go

"What makes a good book and what makes a good movie are totally different things"

-Graham Smith

In the twentieth century, there are two culturally dominant ways of experiencing fiction. They are the visual form of films and the prose form of novels. Certainly, these two different media have gained millions of fans all over the world. Many literary masterpieces have been represented through films. Often, people like to compare the novel with the film that tells the same story, and many people are liable to agree with the opinion that films could hardly defeat the novels in telling the same story. Most probably, on one hand, this is mainly because of the fact that it is the novel that introduces the story to the readers first. Therefore, whatever the author writes in the story occupies the readers mind and becomes the only correct way of telling a certain story. The differences between novels and films by their very nature decide that these two forms of media will never create the same effects on the psyche of a reader.

As Arundt suggests, adaptation is here in which the gold of art is transformed into the mass of entertainment and refined, legitimate culture is punned into its mass form. The films exhibit the story to people, while the novels tell them the story. According to Mannoo, the novels could be narrated either by the first-person narrator or by someone outside it, the omniscient narrator. Most films are also told from an omniscient point of view. That is to say, one can see and hear whatever the director wants everyone to hear and see. In addition, by their very nature, the visual images directly display the things that are happening while the

audience watches the film. Bluestone claims that the novel has three lenses whereas the film has only one. Consequently, the audience tends to believe that the image tells the truth. They reacted angrily when they realized that it was false, because they were not able to believe that the image could lie. However, the novel writers could handle this very easily.

Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* centers on the relationship between three young people Kathy (Carey Mulligan), Tommy (Andrew Garfield) and Ruth (Keira Knightley).

They have no last names because they are not ordinary people. Gradually, it is known that they are scientific specimens created in the laboratory and raised in order to provide their organs to dreadfully ill patients. Ishiguro's novel was praised for translating his typical moral and psychological concerns to a science fictional tale. 'Never' is not set in the future but in a parallel universe where medical experimentation has been taking place without the knowledge of most ordinary people.

The first problem with the movie is that it never completely lays out the logic of this parallel universe. The cloning process itself is shrouded in mystery. Screenwriter Alex Garland probably wanted to share the limited knowledge of the characters, but this idea could have been maintained while providing just a touch more crucial clarity for the audience. Another problem is that the theme of the dangers of medical experimentation is a rather tired machinery of speculative fiction. This theme is less startling than the filmmakers may realize which would be less of a problem if the message were not delivered in such a solemn, portentous manner.

The poignancy of the love story saves the film from time to time, which is bolstered by the skill of the performances. The film opens at a boarding school, where three excellent child actors Lobeke Winkle-Snell, Ella Purnell and Charlie Rowe, represent the three protagonists, and Charlotte Rampling and Sally Hawkins contribute vivid supporting turns as teachers. Even at this early stage, a romantic triangle is brewing. When the characters grow

up, the three stars perform impressively. Mulligan is luminous as the leader of the pack, and Garfield plays his more simple-minded character with marvelous expressiveness. Knightley manages to create herself as a three-dimensional villain.

The most affecting theme of the film is the notion that even among these scientifically engineered creatures, love provides meaning to their shortened existence. While the story is based on an imaginary scientific scenario, the book is not a debate on the medical ethics of cloning. The events that take place which ultimately lead to their determined end explore, poignantly, what it means to be human. Using the intricate relationships of the threesome, Ishiguro goes deep into the issues of love and loss, dreams and reality, wrongs and their amends, and the ultimate search for the source of being, the very purpose of existence. The movie gives a nostalgic mood, shot in greyish greens and blues, effectively capturing the general atmosphere of the book. When the future looks dim, the best one can do is to look back and enjoy what has been. Alex Garland, the screenwriter has done an admirable job in being loyal to the source material, visualizing the key events and pertinent scenes, bringing to life the haunting memories of Kathy's, whose narratives are taken straight out of the book.

Mulligan's portrayal of Kathy and Garfield's portrayal of Tommy are particularly fascinating. The hidden love Kathy has been holding for years is given a channel for expression briefly only at the end. All through, Mulligan has carried her role with admirable self-control. Garfield's portrayal of Tommy is painfully real, especially when he eventually realizes the finality of his fate. His cry in the dark is poignant and powerful. And kudos to Knightley for accepting a role that puts her in a less than glamorous light. Her change at the end is too moving and gives a deep exploration of what makes one human other than love, there is also the courage to admit wrong, seek forgiveness, and the attempt to make amends.

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In a world of cloning, what constitutes an individual? And what is their worth? One needs to start thinking about such things, and it seems Kazuo Ishiguro has done it very brilliantly. In the dystopia of *Never Let Me Go*, the value of the individual is dependent on the purpose. If one is created just for the purpose of spare parts, then they are done once their purpose is completed. What is so poignant and moving about the story are the characters, who do have emotions and are capable to love and feel, as much as many humans if not even more deeply. So in a sense, Ishiguro is not writing about clones, but rather, about everyone intelligent and supposedly sensible and civilized human beings in a technologically advanced society. Here lies the ingenuity of the novel. Further, a movie is rarely deep and detailed in its storytelling than a book. But its advantage is the visualization and the aesthetic presentation of it both sight and sound.

Ishiguro lays a trap by setting the book in England during late 1990s. It really flows as expected under the narrator's commanding voice, which is the book's biggest strength. It would not be clear for many chapters that the story part gives a vivid picture of different times from the flannel shirt and dial-up internet connection era that one knew and loved. And so the reader is forced to consider some disturbing possibilities.

The film stays true to the book only in the broadest and most accurate ways. It is true that both Kathy and Ruth have romantic relationships with Tommy in each version. But the novel takes great pains to establish Ruth and Kathy's childhood friendship, long before dating enters the span of life. The girls form a 'secret guard' to 'defend' one of their teachers, and take turns lying for each other to improve their social standing. None of these make into the movie, where young Ruth and Kathy are defined to express their interest in Tommy. This crude version of the girl's relationship carries forward into adulthood, where Kathy is depicted as a longing virgin shut out of Ruth and Tommy's sexual paradise. In the book,

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Kathy isn't remotely obsessed with Tommy as a love object, and she has plenty of sex with willing partners. Perhaps the most dramatic departure in the movie, *Never Let Me Go* occurs in its final lines. The film ends with Kathy musing that it might not matter that she and her friends are forced to die young. "What I'm not sure about is if our lives have been so different from the lives of the people we save. We all complete. Maybe none of us really understand what we've lived through, or feel we've had enough time" (NLMG film). This sentiment, though lived through, is nowhere to be found in the novel, which focuses on how Kathy, like interesting on its own, is nowhere put on this earth to be a donor. As Kathy says in her heart-breaking final lines, "The fantasy never got beyond that- I didn't let it- and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just wiggled a bit, then turned back to the car. to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (282).

Ishiguro has accurately captured the little moments of social realism in the scenes like playground arguments, petty jealousies and gossip between high school students and these things make the book such a great read. When a book is great, the movie is rarely artistic. But the movie would not ruin the memory of the novel. Though it is really a solid adaptation, the movie is at a disadvantage from the start since one cannot collect the exciting reading experiences Ishiguro gives into a two-hour film. While comparing the movie with the novel, one beholds that the opening section of the movie has not skillfully captured the essence seen in the text, where the steam builds subtly, steadily and slowly. There is not enough time in the movie to present certain scenes from the book. So it feels like the section in which Kathy, Ruth and Tommy are children at Hailsham time flies too quickly, but once they are grown, it slows down right away and eases into the gloomy state.

The film producers make a good choice when they decide to make everything linear, unlike the book. But the jump from past to future and then to present in a matter of minutes

can only be followed only in a book. Some of the dialogues seem stilted, and the movie is pretty slow. It is harder for a movie to do than a book. Moreover, reading is the best way of gaining knowledge. The book is better than the movie, is a comment often heard when comparisons are made between literature and its adaptations for the screen. Although different media are not easily compared, literature is still regarded as better as or even finer than movies, especially in the field of education. To read a book is generally valued more highly than to watch a movie, even if the story being told is basically the same.

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