A New Original -
The Adaptation of The Remains of the Day

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Introduction
Adaptation study was for many years mostly about being true to the original version, and fidelity was the number one criterion. As Linda Hutcheon states in *A Theory of Adaptation*, it has only been this way by tradition and that “[a]n adaptation’s double nature does not mean…that proximity or fidelity to the adapted text should be the criterion of judgement or the focus of analysis” (6). Inspired by Hutcheon’s claim, this essay examines the double nature of *The Remains of the Day*, the novel and the film. The essay’s theoretical discussion is based on Linda Hutcheon’s ideas about originality and how we can treat adaptations as precisely adaptations and not as a parasite feeding of the novel. I will begin the introduction of the essay with a short presentation of the novel and the film and their respective author and screen writers.

Kazou Ishiguro’s novel *The Remains of the Day* was first published in 1989 by the publisher Faber and Faber. The novel is Ishiguro’s third and probably his most known. *The Remains of the Day* won the Booker prize in 1989. The book is divided into eight parts, the two parts “Day two- morning” and “Day three- evening” are the longest and represent together about one half of the book. A short synopsis can be found in Appendix 1 and a table with some of the characters mentioned in this essay is placed in Appendix 2.

Turning a novel into a script is not easy; perhaps especially a novel such as *The Remains of the Day* where it is up to the reader to interpret what is actually happening. Much has been said and written about the difficult task of film adaptation. David L. Smith’s essay about the film *Adaptation* directed by Charlie Kaufman deals with some of the hardships a screenwriter goes through. Adaptation is defined as “the representation of representation” (425) and can definitely be a source for anxiety.
The first screenplay for *The Remains of the Day* was written by Harold Pinter, but when the film was reassigned from Columbia to Merchant-Ivory it was rewritten by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. A few scenes from the first version were kept as they were. Both Pinter and Prawer Jhabvala are renowned writers and screenwriters. Pinter was the 2005 Nobel literature laureate and has written a number of film scripts including those for the popular films *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* and *Comfort of Strangers*. One of the leading actors in *The Remains of the Day*, Sir Anthony Hopkins, was very fond of some of the scenes from Pinter’s original script including a scene at the end which was filmed but never included in the final version of the film (director James Ivory comments on the DVD). Prawer Jhabvala has won the Booker prize for her novel *Heat and Dust* and is also well known for her collaboration with Merchant Ivory. The partnership between Prawer Jhabvala and Merchant Ivory has produced more than twenty films, for example *A Room with a View* and *Howard’s End*.1

The director James Ivory and producer Ismail Merchant founded the company Merchant Ivory in 1961. The first Merchant Ivory film was released in 1963 and the company is still producing movies. Merchant Ivory has been known for films set in the early 20th century, usually in Edwardian England, featuring famous British actors portraying characters suffering from disillusion and tragic misunderstandings. This can easily be compared to what Dawson Edwards states in the last section of his essay:

> For Hollywood studios, the adaptation of literary properties represented (and still represents) a relatively safe way to differentiate themselves from one another while tapping into a built-in audience that might ensure strong box office performance. (45)

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1 Information from www.merchantivory.com and articles on www.en.wikipedia.org
By choosing novels of a certain style, Merchant Ivory has gained a solid reputation and thereby attracts an audience eager for the kind of films that Merchant Ivory is known for. In 1993, Merchant Ivory released the film with the same name based on the novel *The Remains of the Day*. The film was directed by James Ivory and starred well known actors such as Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson in leading roles. The film was nominated for eight Academy Awards but did not receive any.

Adaptation of novels has always been a popular way of making films. Dawson Edwards mentions in his essay that “[m]ore than one third of films released in the Classical Hollywood era were produced from previously published novels” (32). The situation is not much different today. Linda Hutcheon refers to 1992 statistics saying that “85 percent of all Oscar-winning Best Pictures [are] adaptations” (4). When writing an essay about film adaptation there is a myriad to choose from, so why select *The Remains of the Day*? The company Merchant Ivory chose to adapt *The Remains of the Day* because the novel fitted their profile. Merchant Ivory has become famous especially for the film adaptations they make and they saw the novel as a source for a film. Another important criterion was quality; Ishiguro is a renowned writer as are Harold Pinter and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Both the novel and film received great reviews and the public success of the film was largely based on the skilful actors involved in the adaptation process.
Purpose
The main focus of this essay is to investigate the film adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*.

The novel and film are used to give examples of ways the story of a novel can change when it is adapted for film. The underlying reason and the consequences of these changes will also be explored.

Method
I will compare the book and the film in their portrayal of characters, structure and focalisation. Specifically, I have selected three different scenes for comparison of the structural differences between novel and film. In addition to these three scenes, I have also looked at two excluded scenes (from the extra DVD material) from the film and analysed these scenes and speculate why the scenes were cut from the final version. The deleted scenes are helpful when examining the last part of the adaptation process, the part where the director decides which scenes to keep and which to cut.

In order to critically compare the two versions, a number of questions will be posed. Among these questions are:

- Has the narrative technique (structure etc.) changed?
- How are the characters portrayed in the book and film respectively?
- Are the same focalizers used in the book and the film?

The essay has a literary focus and I will primarily use Hutcheon’s concepts of originality and fidelity in the analysis.
Changes in plot structure
When discussing structure, it is important to be able to distinguish between the two terms, story and plot. Peter Barry gives a definition of the two, stating that “[t]he ‘story’ is the actual sequence of events as they happened, whereas the ‘plot’ is those events as they are edited, ordered, packaged, and presented…” (223). This means that the basic story in both the novel and the film is the same, but the plot is often slightly different as we are about to see.

The structure of a plot can be very different from narrative to narrative. A simple model for the structure of children’s books is given by the literary critic Maria Nikolajeva in her book about the narratology of children’s books. The plot is imaged circular in movement where the main character starts and finishes at the same place, the safe but “dull” home. During this journey the character experiences both exciting and dangerous situations.

![Figure 1. Structure of a children’s book. Translated from Nikolajeva’s original version.](image)

This model fits the structure of *The Remains of the Day* as well. Life in Darlington Hall is safe but at the same time something is missing in Stevens’ life. The trip that Stevens undertakes is exciting and he sees a lot of new things, but it is also dangerous. It may not be dangerous in the same way characters in a children’s book are exposed to danger. But to expose one’s
feelings is for Stevens probably the most daring and frightening thing he can do. In addition to
Nikolajeva’s model, another figure is provided from Linda Seger’s book *The Art of
Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film* and concerns the relationship between
direction and dimensionality.

![Figure 2. The relationship between direction and dimensionality](image)

The sense of direction is what leads a story (novel or film) onwards while the dimensionality
of a narrative is marked by sub plots where the reader/viewer gets to know more about the
characters.

Linda Seger, who concentrates her efforts on commercially viable movies, claims that
European films often lack direction, while American films on the other hand miss on the
dimensionality (80). Both versions of *The Remains of the Day* can be said to have a clear
direction and an abundance of dimensionality. Mr Stevens motoring trip and his desire to once
more meet Mrs Benn gives the entire story a clear sense of direction and the side stories about
life in Darlington Hall adds another dimension to the story. The trip can be seen as the “frame
narrative” or “primary narrative” and Mrs Stevens’ memories can be called “embedded
narratives” (Barry 235). In the film, the frame narrative has been shortened somewhat, in
order to allow a deeper exploration of a number of the embedded narratives. This will be
discussed in more detail below.
Another way of facilitating the analysis of a film’s plot is presented by Seger. In *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction*, Seger introduces a way of dividing a film into three different parts, or acts (see Seger 83). I have applied Seger’s three categories to *The Remains of the Day*:

**ACT ONE: Sets up the situation** – Mr Stevens is the butler of an old estate that just has been sold to an American man. Mr Stevens is convinced into taking a vacation and sets out to visit an old friend, Ms Kenton/Mrs Benn.

**ACT TWO: Develops the Situation and Relationships** – Through retrospect, the life in Darlington Hall and the relationship between Mr Stevens and Ms Kenton is shown, especially how Mr Stevens’ difficulties in showing his emotions eventually made Ms Kenton marry another man.

**ACT THREE: Shows Consequences of Decisions Made in Act Two** – Mr Stevens returns to Darlington Hall alone and Mrs Benn stays with her husband and the awaited grandchild.

According to Seger, following such a structure is vital if the desire is to end up with a popular film. Seger states that “[c]reating a commercial and viable adaptation means giving the story a clearer structure… There’s no opportunity to turn back the page, recheck a name, reread the description. Clarity is an important element in commercial viability” (7). This is certainly true in most cases, but does this mean that an adaptation has to be different from the adapted text? Kyle Dawson Edwards states in his essay entitled *Brand-Name Literature: Film Adaptation and Selznick International Picture’s Rebecca* (1940) that:

[i]n some film adaptations, original story lines are drastically altered, characters eliminated, condensed or combined, and narrative emphases shifted: other adaptations attempt scene-for-scene transcriptions of the source material. (32)
Many of the more recent texts on adaptation hold the same belief: many adaptations are different from the source material but they do not have to be different *per se*, as critics Linda Hutcheon and Thomas Leitch claim. A quote from Leitch’s essay called “Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory” leaves no doubt about his critical perspective:

> Though novels and films may seem at any given moment in the history of narrative theory to have essentially distinctive properties, those properties are functions of their historical moments and not of the media themselves.

(153)

Leitch’s quote summarizes the very idea of this essay: the novel and the film version of *The Remains of the Day* may very well be different from each other but it is quite absurd to state that a story always has to change when adapted to film. Many of the ideas that Leitch calls into question are closely connected to the thought of literature as the higher form of art.

*Three chosen scenes*
I have chosen three different scenes which are present in both the novel and the film and will compare the two versions. The specific scenes were chosen because they depict Mr Stevens together with three of the most important characters in his life: his father, Mrs Benn and Mr Farraday, the new owner of Darlington Hall. All of the scenes are crucial to understanding the (unconscious) emotions that Mr Stevens is experiencing. The question to be answered is if the scenes are significantly different, and in that case why? In the DVD edition of *The Remains of the Day* there is some extra material, including a number of scenes that were shot but never were included in the released version of the film. These scenes are the closest one can come to
understanding how the last part of the adaptation process was conducted. I have analysed three of these scenes to see if it is possible to understand why they were excluded. Since two versions of the same occasion (one version from the novel and one from the film) will be discussed, this part of the essay could easily become confusing. The word “scene” is used for a certain moment in a film while the corresponding word for the novel is “passage”.

**Mr Stevens and Mr Stevens Sr**
The relationship between Mr Stevens and his father is quite tense. And the relationship grows even more complex when the ageing Mr Stevens Sr is employed at Darlington Hall. Extra members of staff are well needed; a big conference is coming up and a great number of important international guests are arriving to discuss the future of Europe. Miss Kenton is the first to notice that something is wrong; Mr Stevens Sr is forgetting things that he should not forget and that he is getting somewhat clumsy. The part of the scene that will be analysed in detail is the one where Mr Stevens has been ordered by Lord Darlington to tell Mr Stevens Sr that his list of duties will be severely reduced, no more waiting at tables and no more carrying trays. The first comments will cover how the passage is portrayed in the novel and then the corresponding scene from the film will be discussed.

The passage starts with Mr Stevens going up to his father’s room early in the morning; “[t]he only times my father could be found in his room were first thing in the morning and last thing at night” (Ishiguro 67). Mr Stevens has to tell his father something that he knows that his father will not be pleased to hear. Mr Stevens finds his father up and ready for work. The passage continues with a dialogue between Mr Stevens and Stevens Sr.

‘I have come to relate something to you, Father.’

‘Then relate it briefly and concisely. I haven’t all morning to listen to you chatter.’
‘In that case, Father, I will come straight to the point.’

‘Come to the point then and be done with it. Some of us have work to be getting on with.’ (Ishiguro 68)

After Mr Stevens has explained the situation and that Stevens Sr will not be allowed to wait at tables, the response from Stevens Sr is “I have waited at table every day for the last fifty-four years” (Ishiguro 68). After having heard that he will no longer be expected to carry trays, Stevens Sr explains that he is not to blame, that it is “those steps. They’re crooked” (Ishiguro 69). These responses nearly end the conversation. Mr Stevens concludes by saying good morning to his father and returns downstairs again.

In the film, Stevens is asked by his employer to lessen the number of his father’s duties. The scene changes to early morning and a sweeping image showing a sunset and the exterior of Darlington Hall.

![Figure 3. A view of Dyrham Park, the exterior of Darlington Hall](image)
This scene which focuses on Stevens and his father is almost identical to the passage in the book. In fact, many of the lines have been taken directly from the book. One small change is however made to Stevens’ explanation. The novel says nothing about the conference but in the film, Stevens’ major reason for not letting Stevens Sr wait at tables is the oncoming conference with its prominent guests.

The scene is a very strong one and shows the complicated relationship between Stevens and his father. This story is developed further in the novel and film when Stevens Sr is taken ill during the last night of the big conference. The part works very well in both the telling and the showing mode and therefore the two versions are almost identical. Large parts of the dialogue have also been directly transcribed from novel to film.

The denial
In both the novel and the film, Mr Stevens denies any knowledge of Lord Darlington on two separate occasions. The two occasions, however, are not entirely the same.

In the novel the first occasion of Stevens denying knowledge of Lord Darlington takes place when Mr Farraday, the new owner of Darlington Hall, is showing the estates to a visiting couple from America. The wife, Mrs Wakefield, is very sceptical to the “authenticity” of the estate and she thinks that it is all fake (Ishiguro 129-130). When Mrs Wakefield asks Mr Stevens about the house and its past, the following dialogue takes place:

Then lowering her voice, Mrs. Wakefield had said: ‘But tell me, Stevens, what was this Lord Darlington like? Presumably you must have worked for him.’

‘I didn’t, madam, no.’
‘Oh, I thought you did. I wonder why I thought that.’ (Ishiguro 129)

When Mr Farraday says that he has been made a fool of and asks why Mr Stevens lied to Mrs Wakefield, Mr Stevens has no answer.

Mr Stevens is reminded of the incident with Mrs Wakefield when he is on his way to see Miss Kenton and his car suddenly breaks down. Mr Stevens receives help from the chauffeur at a nearby house. The chauffeur is curious about Mr Stevens and wants to know where he works and the reaction to Mr Stevens’ answer is: “‘Darlington Hall. Must be a really posh place… Hang on, you don’t mean Darlington Hall, Lord Darlington’s place?’” (Ishiguro 126). Mr Stevens confirms this, but when the chauffeur asks if Mr Stevens himself ever worked for Lord Darlington, Mr Stevens answer is: “‘Oh no, I am employed by Mr John Farraday, the American gentleman who bought the house from the Darlington family’” (Ishiguro 126).

Afterwards, when Mr Stevens is on the road again, he starts to think about why he denied knowing Lord Darlington to a complete stranger and that this was the second time he denied knowing his old employer.

The passage with the American lady, Mrs Wakefield, could not be used in the film because of the simple fact that a minor change was made in the film. In the film version, the new owner of Darlington Hall is a person who has been there before during the important conference in 1936, the American gentleman Mr Lewis. Mr Lewis knows that Darlington Hall is an old English estate and that Mr Stevens is an authentic English butler who used to work for the previous owner, Lord Darlington.

In the film, another scene is instead added where Mr Stevens denies acknowledgement of Lord Darlington to a stranger. This scene is similar to the second occasion of denial from the
The denial takes place when Mr Stevens is out motoring and has stopped for a pause. He is talking to a shop keeper when asked about Lord Darlington Mr Stevens says that he did not know him.

The second example of denial in the film occurs when Mr Stevens accidentally has run out of petrol and is staying the night on a farm he is taken for a “real” gentleman and treated as such. In the morning, the town doctor gives Mr Stevens a lift to Stevens’ car and they are chatting when the doctor asks about Lord Darlington. Mr Stevens first says that he only has worked for the new owner of Darlington Hall, Mr Lewis. After having said this, Mr Stevens changes his mind and says that he is “proud to have given him [Lord Darlington] the best years of my service”. The scene with the doctor serves the same purpose in the film as the passage with Mrs Wakefield does in the novel. These occasions of denial are part of a subplot that describes Mr Stevens mixed emotions towards his former employer. Lord Darlington was a powerful man and Mr Stevens was his loyal employee for many years. Unlike Miss Kenton, Mr Stevens never reacted against Lord Darlington’s sympathies with the Germans and the British fascists, but these scenes make it obvious that Stevens is aware of Lord Darlington’s mistakes but still fond of his old employer.

The end
One of the important functions of the last passage or scene in a novel or film is to tie the loose ends together and leave the reader/audience satisfied. It is therefore interesting to compare the two endings. Table 1 presents the order in which things happen in the book and film respectively.
Table 1. The ending of *The Remains of the Day*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>Film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Benn waiting for Stevens in the tea lounge</td>
<td>Stevens meeting Mrs Benn in the tea lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about old times in the tea lounge</td>
<td>Talking about old times in the tea lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going with Mrs Benn to the bus stop</td>
<td>Mrs Benn and Stevens going to the pier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying goodbye when the bus arrives</td>
<td>Watching the pier lights come on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Stevens at the pier</td>
<td>Saying goodbye at the bus station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens talking to old man at the pier</td>
<td>Back at Darlington Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting for the pier lights to come on</td>
<td>Helping a pigeon out from the banquet room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 1, the most significant changes are perhaps reflected in the order of events. In the film, Mr Stevens and Mrs Benn go to the pier together to talk and watch the lights on the pier come on. After they have been to the pier they say goodbye when Mrs Benn’s bus arrives at the bus stop. A scene, however, has been added to the very end of the movie. This scene shows Mr Stevens, back at Darlington Hall again, helping a pigeon to get out from the banquet room.

The changes made to the ending of the story are perhaps the most noticeable film adaptation changes. Seger says that “[i]n making the transition to film, many books or plays that are downers have had the endings changed in order to appeal to the wider demographics of film and television” (6). The novel *The Remains of the Day* certainly has an ending that is somewhat dark in tone. A part of Stevens’ inner monologue from the book’s last pages reads “Indeed - why should I not admit it? – at that moment, my heart was breaking” (Ishiguro 252). Mrs Benn has admitted that she has thoughts about how her life would have turned out if she had spent it with Mr Stevens. The film, however, shows Mr Stevens back at Darlington Hall, where he and Mr Lewis are rescuing a pigeon. The last scene from the film shows Mr Stevens
opening the garden doors and a pigeon flying away. This scene alludes to a new companionship between Mr Stevens and his employer and the released pigeon is an obvious symbol of freedom and peace. By using the pigeon, the screenwriter and director employ a visual metaphor to rewrite the sombre ending of the novel, creating a more positive one without making too many drastic changes to a very popular novel. Stevens has been trapped by his thoughts on dignity and rules dictating how it is proper for him to act. The ending of the film suggests that he is ready to let go of such thoughts.

**The excluded scenes**
The DVD with *The Remains of the Day* contains six scenes that were excluded from the final version of the film. I have chosen two of these scenes for closer investigation. Another one of the excluded scenes is discussed later on because of its great importance to Sir Anthony Hopkins. The two scenes discussed in this section of the essay are interesting because they are from subplots where Mr Stevens is deeply insecure and where the director is trying to convey a certain feeling of discomfort that is very much present in the novel. The three scenes that are not part of this analysis are either insignificant or the content of the scenes are discussed in other places in this essay. The following discussion speculates why these two scenes were taken out and what effect did this have?

**“A message”**
This scene displays Mr Cardinal (the son of one of Lord Darlington’s old friends) and Mr Stevens meeting in the greenhouse at Darlington Hall. Since Mr Cardinal’s father is deceased and Lord Darlington is Mr Cardinal’s godfather, it is Lord Darlington’s duty to talk to Mr Cardinal about women. Lord Darlington hands the assignment over to Mr Stevens. Mr Cardinal is looking through some papers in his briefcase and is frightened by the sudden appearance of Mr Stevens. Stevens says that he has a message from Lord Darlington and Mr
Cardinal is very anxious to hear it. Stevens starts talking about the differences between men and women when Cardinal interrupts to say that he already knows this. Stevens is relieved until it turns out that the two of them are talking about two different things. Mr Stevens starts to explain again when Mr Cardinal is called by a group of men standing on the lawn in front of the house.

This scene is a part of the embedded story where Mr Stevens is asked by Lord Darlington to tell Mr Cardinal about “the birds and the bees”. This subplot begins with a scene inside the house where Lord Darlington asks if Mr Stevens could do him a favour. The next part is the scene described above, the one after that is the second time when Stevens tries to talk to Mr Cardinal in the garden outside the house. The “the birds and the bees” are mentioned once more when Mr Cardinal, on the last night of the conference, asks Stevens if he has anything else to say about the beauty of nature. The omitted scenes are commented by the director, James Ivory. For this scene, he explains that the subplot works fine but the part from the greenhouse really does not make the story develop further. Also there is a joke in the scene about Mr Cardinal’s briefcase and Ivory claims that it is possible that some of the audience would not get the “double entendre”. The final version of the film is 134 minutes long and a scene that does not contribute much to either the subplot or the main plot has to defend its existence in some other way. This scene does not really do that. Mr Cardinal and Stevens meet on other occasions and because of the included scenes, this scene is not needed in order to establish their relationship.
In the novel this subplot is divided in more or less the same way.

1. A request from Lord Darlington
2. Mr Stevens finding Mr Cardinal alone in the library and attempts to convey the message.
3. Mr Stevens surprising Mr Cardinal in the garden.
4. Mr Cardinal making a remark after dinner.

The excluded scene corresponds to number two in the list above; the only change made to it was that the library was in the film exchanged in favour of a greenhouse. The reason for this change might be that it gives the director a chance to use the impressive scenery of the garden and mansion, but it could also be that there already are a number of scenes that take place in the library or that the greenhouse would come across as more colourful and lively from a cinematic point of view.

A number of episodes from the novel, like the one described above, have been left out due to the limited length of a film. A film covering every event of the novel would probably be four hours long instead of two. Subplots that work well anyway have been abridged and become shorter and less elaborate. Such a decision most often comes from the director when he or she is editing a film, but some actors will also be able to influence the final editing since it affects their performance of the adaptation from screenplay to character. By shortening some scenes, other subplots can be expanded with more details. The reason for doing this will be discussed in the section about the changes made to the characters.

“Democracy is finished”
This scene follows after a shot where one of Lord Darlington’s acquaintances has used Mr Stevens to prove one of his points, namely that common people should not be allowed to
decide about matters concerning the country. Mr Stevens enters a room where Lord
Darlington is sitting in a chair while being shaved by a barber. Lord Darlington apologizes for
his friend’s behaviour but goes on to talk about how preposterous it is to think that common
people should have anything to say about how to lead a country. The right way, according to
Lord Darlington, is to follow the example of Germany and Italy and have strong leaders. The
scene feels quite long, it is 1 minute and 38 seconds, and the director states it is “redundant”.
The scene was discarded in favour of another scene where Lord Darlington only makes a
short remark about his friend being out of order with the questions he asked Mr Stevens. The
elimination of this scene can be made, without losing vital information, since Lord
Darlington’s opinions are shown on other occasions in the film, for example the Jewish maids
are sent away and the German counsellor visits Darlington Hall.
Characters
The characters are perhaps the most important ingredient in all forms of narratives, both films and novels. One common way of describing characters is with the paired terms static/dynamic and flat/round. A static character does not change during the course of a story, but a dynamic character has the ability to grow or be different in the end compared to the beginning of a narrative. Flat characters can also be said to be one-dimensional. These characters are not fully developed in the text, and often stand for only one personal trait such as evil or good. Round characters have many detailed traits which mean that they often resemble the people we meet in our everyday lives and thereby it is easier for a reader or an audience to relate to round characters.

The development of interesting characters has been a point of conflict within the theory of adaptation where some argue that film automatically produces more shallow characters. Leitch responds to the critique by saying that:

[s]ince most novels take longer time to read than two hours, it stands to reason that they have more leisure to develop characters who change over time. But I have never read an argument that long novels create more compelling characters than shorter novels… (158).

*The Remains of the Day* does not have an excess of characters, especially not round and dynamic main characters. In the adapting process it can be beneficial to change some of the traits of a particular character to make a character more likeable or interesting. These character changes are present in *The Remains of the Day* as well. A couple of examples of these changes and an explanation of why the changes were made are presented below.
**Changes made in the characters**

**The new owner of Darlington Hall**
The novel begins with Mr Stevens describing how his new employer, Mr Farraday, urges him to borrow the car and leave Darlington Hall for a couple of days. Mr Farraday is described as “an American gentleman...” (Ishiguro 4) and he is the new owner of Darlington Hall. Mr Farraday is mentioned a couple of times in the book: when Farraday lends his car to Stevens, when Stevens is lying to Mrs Wakefield, when Stevens feels that he surprises Mr Farraday with his sudden appearance and in the end of the book when Stevens ponders what to do with the rest of his life.

The opening of the film however, presents the audience with Mrs Benn reading a letter telling about the death of her old employer Lord Darlington and the sale of Darlington Hall. The visual image then switches to an auction where the furniture of Darlington Hall is on sale. A man is buying the estate and all items of furniture belonging to it. The man is Mr Lewis. This Mr Lewis is, both in the film and in the novel, one of the participants at Lord Darlington’s big conference in 1936.

Two separate characters from the novel have been combined into one in the film. As Seger says: “Cutting and combining characters helps condense an unwieldy novel into a workable form” (3). This is perhaps the most noticeable change in the cast of the novel’s characters, for someone who has read the book prior to watching the film. Mr Farraday, the new owner of Darlington Hall, is completely absent in the film. Instead, it is an old participant from the big conference who decides to buy Darlington Hall after Lord Darlington has passed away. Introducing Mr Lewis as the new owner reduces the number of different characters in the film and, as Leitch says, for many adapters the chance to fill in the gaps in a text they are adapting is something very exciting. By adding their own material, the adaptors can make the text their
own. I believe this to be absolutely true in the case of *The Remains of the Day*. Linda Seger makes an interesting point on the same subject when she writes that “[t]here is no rule…that says that you can’t use your imagination when working with the original material. The adaptation is a new original” (9). Prawer Jhabvala definitely seized this opportunity, and with some changes she managed to create a new version of a very popular novel.

*The Remains of the Day* is not a novel with a large number of main characters, but the novel has many subplots and with that comes a large number of less important characters. The changes made by Prawer Jhabvala make these minor characters more memorable and reduces the number of faces that an audience would have to keep track of when watching the film.

**The Husband**
One character who is only briefly mentioned in the novel is Miss Kenton’s husband-to-be Mr Benn. Mr Benn is an old companion of Miss Kenton’s, someone she knew at a place where she used to work. Mr Benn, however, plays a more significant part in the film. This is partly because the camera allows the audience to follow Miss Kenton and see things from her perspective. In the novel, told in first person by Mr Stevens, that would have been impossible and the knowledge about Mr Benn comes exclusively from Miss Kenton talking about him with Mr Stevens or writing letters mentioning her husband. When the camera follows Miss Kenton, her meetings with Mr Benn can be shown and Mr Benn thereby receives a more prominent position in the story. In the film it is also suggested that Miss Kenton and Mr Benn became acquainted when Miss Kenton was working at Darlington Hall and that Mr Benn was a visiting butler. This means that Mr Benn is a colleague of Mr Stevens and the two men are, in a scene from the film, shown talking to each other beside a fireplace.
By letting Mr Benn play a bigger part in the film, the love story between him and Miss Kenton is given higher credibility. His appearance at Darlington Hall allows for Stevens and Mr Benn to discuss Miss Kenton and for Stevens to voice the fact that he “would be lost without her”.

The Jewish Maids
A small change was made to the subplot containing the two Jewish girls working at Darlington Hall. Lord Darlington makes the decision to fire the girls, the only reason being that they are Jewish. Miss Kenton is very upset and threatens to leave, but in the end she stays although the two girls are let go. In the novel, the two girls are named Ruth and Sara and there is no mention of the girls before Lord Darlington asks if there are any Jewish staff members.

The girls are introduced earlier in the film and their names have been changed to Elsa and Emma and they are also said to be German. Ruth and Sara are two old biblical names with an obvious Jewish connection. The names Elsa and Emma, on the other hand, shift the emphasis from solely religious to one that includes national origin; the names definitely sound more Germanic. The change of names gives the maids a double accented identity: Jewish and as refugees from a Germany ruled by Nazis. This change could very well just be a chance for the screenwriter to add something of her own, maybe in order to show Lord Darlington’s appreciation of the situation in Germany. The girls are introduced when they start to work at Darlington Hall. Lord Darlington wants to see them so that he can practise his German. In another scene, the girls are seen lighting the fireplace when Lord Darlington comes in and says good morning. Lord Darlington is shown reading a text about Jews (the audience hears the voice of Lord Darlington while seeing him sitting with a book in front of him), he is looking up to see the two girls leave the room. After this comes the scene where Lord Darlington asks if there are any refugee girls on the staff and the following is the same as in
the novel. The girls are introduced earlier in the film than in the novel and this makes the audience more familiar with the two characters and more engaged in their destiny.

The Runaway Couple

The runaway couple consists of two members of staff who decide to leave Darlington Hall and get married. The same type of change is made with the runaway couple as with the Jewish girls. The girl, Lizzie (named Lisa in the novel), is introduced early in both the novel and the film. Miss Kenton wants to hire her, but Stevens is sceptical. Lizzie is hired but Miss Kenton has to promise to take full responsibility for actions of the new member of staff.

The boy is not introduced in the novel and when the couple leaves Darlington Hall Stevens remembers that “Lisa had been with us for some eight or nine months… when she vanished from the house together with the second footman” (Ishiguro 165) and that “the second footman, whose name I no longer recall, left a short note addressed to me…” (Ishiguro 166). This is different from what occurs in the film where the couple are shown kissing in the garden outside Darlington Hall and the boy is called Charles, a character shown on many occasions before he vanishes. Charles is the one who tells Stevens that his father is taken ill and he is also the one who gives the message to Stevens that Ms Kenton needs to talk to him about his father. The boy is also promised a possible job as under butler. No such note is left in the film, instead Lizzie gives her notice in person to Ms Kenton explaining that she wants to quit her job and marry Charles.

The subplot with the young couple has been extended in the film in a similar way to the story about the Jewish girls. More information about the characters makes the stories more vivid and engaging. The staff is personalised, by given names and backgrounds, and as a consequence many of the members of staff have a greater role in the film than in the novel.
In theoretical studies of narratology, the analysis of characters plays an important part and there are many ways to describe how a character functions in the text. For a character to be lifelike and easier for an audience to relate to, there is an obvious advantage if the character is both dynamic and round. A lack of rounded characters can make a story seem shallow and pointless. *The Remains of the Day* has only two real main characters but there are several characters that are dynamic and/or round. The number of dynamic and/or round characters however, is greater in the film than in the book. This fact can easily be seen in all my examples of character changes between the novel and the film. The film has expanded the minor characters in order to make them more engaging to the audience. The lovers Lizzie and Charles are given a history and background and the Jewish girls are introduced to Lord Darlington already upon their arrival to Darlington Hall. I do not see this as a necessary change; these characters and their stories could have remained as they were in the novel. I believe, however, that increasing their importance made the film more engaging than it would have otherwise been. Having more rounded and dynamic characters in the film enables the audience to experience the life in Darlington Hall without Mr Stevens telling about it.

**Focalisation and Adaptation**

Peter Barry, explains that focalisation “means ‘viewpoint’ or ‘perspective’…” (232). Barry goes on to explain that the focalisation can be external (the reader can only know what the characters say or do) or internal (the reader has access to the thoughts and feelings of one or many of the novel’s characters). The novel *The Remains of the Day* has internal focalisation through Mr Stevens, however his great appreciation of the concept of dignity makes him unwilling to talk about his emotions. Still it is a homodiegetic first person narrative; in crucial situations Mr Stevens can tell the reader how he is feeling. One example of this is witnessed in the end of the novel where Mr Stevens says that his heart is breaking. The story is also
focalised through Mrs Benn when Mr Stevens is reading the letters that she has sent him. The internal focalisation in a film is often done by using voiceover, an all knowing voice commenting on what is going on in the film. Voiceover has often been criticized as the easy way of adapting a novel to film. One who reacts strongly against the use of narrators and voiceovers is Seger who claims that voiceovers are “more usually applied to give information that could be conveyed in more dramatic ways” (25) and that “the technique works against the immediacy of film… putting the emphasis on what is said, not on what is happening” (25). Hutcheon, also considers voiceover and calls it a “more literary device” than for example letting the characters receive information by eavesdropping on one another. Hutcheon, however, does not criticize the use of voiceovers. Thomas Leitch discusses the use of voiceovers in his essay *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory*. Leitch asks if voiceover has to be uncinematic because it is literary. The answer from both him and Hutcheon is no, while Seger probably would give a positive answer.

The technique of voiceover is used in the adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*, but with moderation. Voiceover is for example used to let the audience hear Miss Kenton read one of the letters that Mr Stevens has sent her. As Hutcheon states, there is an obvious difference between “what characters and therefore what we see and what they might actually know” (55).

Connected to what the audience sees and knows is the question of reliability. Narrators can be reliable or unreliable. Unreliable narrators are those who “provide enough information about situations and clues about their own biases to make us doubt their interpretations of events…” (Culler 88) As Culler states, readers often “accept this statement until we are given reason to think otherwise” (88). The unreliability of Mr Stevens is closely linked to the dignity he holds
so high. The reader gradually comes to understand that Mr Stevens’ account of what has happened in the past might not be as accurate as the reader would like.

Dignity prevents Stevens from showing and acting on his feelings and it is more convenient for Stevens not to speak about those emotions at all. Stevens is also just an ordinary person, he is not omniscient and thereby he has a limited point of view. Mr Stevens can describe what he thinks that Miss Kenton is feeling but he can never be sure. His first description can later be proved wrong. In the novel he at least once explains that he was earlier mistaken in one of his memories. After saying goodbye to Dr. Carlisle, he drives away and is soon preoccupied with the thoughts of old memories. It is one memory in particular, he is thinking about “that behind that very door, just a few yards from me, Miss Kenton was in fact crying” (Ishiguro 222). It is the circumstances around this fragment of a memory that seem to bewilder Mr Stevens, and the reader realizes that what we learn from Mr Stevens is not perhaps always correct. Can readers trust a narrator that states that “I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter” (Ishiguro 223)?

Related to the fact that Mr Stevens is an unreliable narrator is that much of the action in *The Remains of the Day* takes place beneath a seemingly calm surface. How do you convey this mood through the movie screen? Part of the answer is found in the script and another part is definitely the actors. A quote from the review of *The Remains of the Day* in the newspaper *Daily Mail* states that “Sir Anthony Hopkins gives one of the greatest performances in the history of cinema”. The actors play an important part in the adaptation process and some of them want to influence the final result more than others. Sir Anthony Hopkins was very fond of one of the scenes from the original script. The scene is from the very last part of the film and shows Mr Stevens talking to an old man. The very same passage is present in the novel as
well. According to James Ivory, Hopkins felt so strongly about this scene that he said that he would reconsider participating if they did not shoot the scene. The reason behind this was that Hopkins felt that the scene was “very important…and showed his character” (Ivory). The scene is very emotional but the director, James Ivory, says that he felt that the outcome was not totally successful. One can also argue that the character of Mr Stevens is conveyed in a number of other, more important scenes. Leitch is on the same track when he claims that number six of the twelve fallacies of the adaptation theory of today is the “fact” that:

[n]ovels create more complex characters than movies because they offer more immediate and complete access to character’s psychological states. The ability to enter the minds of fictional characters directly is of course one of the glories… of prose fiction. (158)

I would, like Leitch, claim that this is not true for the film version of The Remains of the Day. This is partly due to the fact that Mr Stevens is an unreliable narrator and that, even though, the readers of the novel have access to his mind they are not allowed to know everything. Stevens himself is in some cases not aware of the depth of his own feelings, or too afraid to admit to himself what he is feeling. The film adaptation Mr Stevens is equally complex as is the same character in the novel. The complexity of Stevens’ feelings comes across so well that the scene at the pier is not needed; it could even have been too much for the audience to have seen Mr Stevens cry after almost two hours with a character who is completely out of touch with his own emotions.
Conclusion
This essay is about issues regarding the adaptation of *The Remains of the Day*. It is not an essay about claiming whether the film or the novel is a superior version. As I have shown in this essay, the novel and the film version of *The Remains of the Day* are different in some important aspects. Since the adaptation of a novel to film can be seen as a process where a number of people are involved, the writer of the novel, the screenwriter(s), the director and not least the actors, it is quite difficult to make a full analysis of the changes made to a novel. A good summary of the process is expressed by Linda Hutcheon: “[a]daptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (7). This is definitely true for the two versions of *The Remains of the Day*. The story is the same in both the novel and the film, but the plot is slightly changed.

As I have shown, *The Remains of the Day* has both a clear direction and dimensionality. The frame narrative with the tour of the English country side is kept more or less the same, but some details, mostly towards the ending, have been altered. Some scenes are almost identical in the novel and the film (e.g. the dialogues between Mr Stevens and Mr Stevens Sr), while some are changed due to changes in the number of characters and others scenes have been changed for dramatic purposes. The excluded scenes were probably not included in the final version because they would have affected the length of the film without adding something to the plot’s direction and dimensionality that was not there before. The focalisation in the film has changed to also include Miss Kenton which allows for deeper understanding of her situation and her decision to marry Mr Benn. Voiceover is used in some situations in the film, for example when Mr Stevens or Mrs Benn is reading a letter.
I do not believe that an adaptation of a novel into film per se has to be different. The old theoretical explanations of adaptation theory made by people like George Bluestone used to stress the significant difference between novels and films. One of Bluestone’s most well-known books on the subject states: “This study rests upon the assumption that each medium has a specific nature which invites certain kinds of communications while obstructing others.” (Leitch 150) However, there has been a common assumption that literary works are superior to films. I believe that this is inaccurate. *The Remains of the Day* would have been a good movie even if no changes had been made to the script and some of the changes made can seem irrelevant and unnecessary if the goal is to make as few changes as possible in adaptation. However, the novel and the film are two separate versions of a core story and as Leitch very correctly states it is absolutely true that “[t]hough it takes less time for most audiences to sit through most feature films than it does for them to read most novels, films…can contain quite as many telling details as novels” (155). The difference between only transcribing a novel and actually adapting it can be the difference between a good film and a great one. Much research in the field of adaptation theory has been based on the comparison of popular culture of films and high culture of novels. If you can ignore these old traditions it is possible to enjoy an adaptation for what it really is, a new original.
Appendix 1. Synopsis

*The Remains of the Day* is the story about the ageing butler Mr Stevens, who after the passing of his old employer, Lord Darlington, has started to think about his own life. The novel begins with Stevens’ new employer, named Mr Farraday in the novel and Mr Lewis in the film, telling Stevens to take a couple of days off from work. Mr Stevens is allowed to borrow a car for a trip in the English countryside. Mr Stevens decides to visit Cornwall where Miss Kenton, an old co-worker from Darlington Hall, now lives with her husband Mr Benn. Through a series of Mr Stevens’ memories and from a letter from Miss Kenton (who for more than twenty years has been Mrs Benn) the story of the life in Darlington Hall is told. The years just before World War II were very turbulent ones for the inhabitants of Darlington Hall where the owner Lord Darlington is deeply involved in international affairs and Mr Stevens has to face the death of his father, Mr Stevens Sr, and his own tender feelings for Miss Kenton.
## Appendix 2. Table with characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Stevens</td>
<td>Butler at Darlington Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Kenton/Mrs. Benn</td>
<td>Housekeeper at Darlington Hall, her married name being Benn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Stevens Sr.</td>
<td>Mr. Stevens’ father, also employed at Darlington Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Darlington</td>
<td>The original owner of Darlington Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Farraday (in the film it is Mr Lewis)</td>
<td>The American man who buys Darlington Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Lewis</td>
<td>One of the participants at the conference in 1936. In the film also the one who acquires Darlington Hall after the passing of Lord Darlington.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal</td>
<td>The son of one of Lord Darlington’s old friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

Primary sources


Secondary sources


