Animating the Unimaginable: Reimagining Narrative, Memory and Identity in Literary Adaptations

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***Abstract*—Literary adaptation is not merely the transfer of a written narrative into another medium; it is a complex process through which stories are reconstructed, memories are reorganized, and identities are reimagined. Adaptation transforms not only the form of a literary work but also its relationship with history, culture, memory, and the audience. This article examines the relationship between literature and cinema through Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), together with their film adaptations directed by John Duigan (1993) and James Ivory (1993), respectively. Drawing primarily on Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, the article argues that adaptation should be understood as a creative and interpretive process rather than as a secondary reproduction of an original text. Rhys's novel reconstructs the silenced history and fractured identity of Antoinette Cosway, while Duigan's film translates this psychological and postcolonial narrative into a visual language of landscape, embodiment, colour, and confinement. Similarly, Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* employs retrospective narration to expose the unreliability of memory and the suppressed emotional identity of Stevens, while Ivory's film externalizes his interiority through performance, gesture, framing, silence, and visual composition. By comparing these two adaptations, the article demonstrates how cinema animates what literature leaves psychologically or imaginatively unrepresented. Adaptation thus becomes a form of cultural memory: it remembers, revises, challenges, and sometimes contests the meanings embedded in the source text.**

***Index Terms*—literary adaptation, narrative, memory, identity.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between literature and cinema has traditionally been shaped by the question of fidelity. For a long time, literary adaptations were evaluated according to how faithfully they reproduced their source texts. Such an approach often positioned literature as the superior original and cinema as a derivative form. The film was expected to reproduce the narrative, characters, themes, and even the emotional atmosphere of the novel. When substantial changes occurred, the adaptation was frequently judged as a failure. Contemporary adaptation studies, however, have increasingly challenged this hierarchy.

Linda Hutcheon provides one of the most influential alternatives to fidelity-based approaches. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, she defines adaptation as "repetition, but repetition without replication" (7). This formulation is particularly significant because it acknowledges the relationship between an adaptation and its source while simultaneously emphasizing difference. An adaptation repeats a recognizable story, but it does not reproduce that story mechanically. It interprets, transforms, relocates, and recreates it. Hutcheon further describes adaptation as a "creative and interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging" (8). Adaptation, therefore, is not simply a movement from one medium to another; it is an act of reading followed by an act of re-creation.

This understanding becomes especially important when the source text deals with memory and identity. Literature can enter the consciousness of a character through first-person narration, interior monologue, retrospective reflection, fragmented chronology, and free indirect discourse. Cinema possesses different tools. It can transform interiority into facial expression, silence, gesture, framing, lighting, sound, editing, landscape, and performance. What is imagined in literature can become embodied on screen. What is hidden in narrative can become visible through cinematic composition.

This article explores this transformation through two novels by writers from markedly different cultural contexts: Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Kazuo

Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*. Rhys's novel revises the story of Bertha Mason from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* by giving voice and history to the woman who had previously existed largely as Rochester's "madwoman in the attic." The novel investigates colonialism, racial displacement, gender oppression, cultural alienation, and the destruction of personal identity. Its narrative is constructed through multiple perspectives and fractured memories.

Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, in contrast, focuses on Stevens, an English butler whose identity has been shaped by professionalism, emotional restraint, loyalty, and service. His journey through the English countryside becomes simultaneously a physical journey and an encounter with his own past. His memories gradually reveal the emotional and ethical costs of a life devoted to duty. The 1993 film directed by James Ivory transforms Stevens's introspective narrative into a visual study of repression, silence, and regret.

The two films provide particularly valuable examples of adaptation because neither can simply reproduce the psychological processes of the novels. Duigan must translate Antoinette's fragmented consciousness, colonial displacement, and sense of unbelonging into visual and performative terms. Ivory must translate Stevens's unreliable retrospective narration into cinematic gestures, pauses, facial expressions, and silences. In both cases, adaptation becomes a process of "animating the unimaginable": bringing to visual life experiences that literature initially communicates through language, memory, and consciousness.

II. ADAPTATION BEYOND FIDELITY

Adaptation is fundamentally concerned with movement. A story moves from one medium to another, from one historical context to another, and from one audience to another. Such movement necessarily produces transformation. Hutcheon emphasizes that adaptations possess their own contexts of creation and reception. As she explains, neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum; adaptations travel between different cultural and historical contexts (Hutcheon xviii). This idea challenges the assumption that the source text contains a fixed meaning that the film must preserve. Instead, meaning is reconstructed through the adaptation process. The filmmaker reads the source, selects certain elements, excludes others, emphasizes particular themes, and develops a new aesthetic language.

Hutcheon therefore argues that adaptation can be understood in three interconnected ways: as a product, as a process of creation, and as a process of reception (7–8). As a product, it is an identifiable transformation of a previous work. As a creative process, it involves interpretation and appropriation. As reception, it depends upon the audience's memory of the earlier text. The audience does not experience an adaptation as an isolated work; knowledge of the source text remains present in the act of viewing. This relationship can be described as palimpsestic. The adaptation contains traces of the source text while simultaneously establishing its own identity. The viewer sees the film but may also remember the novel. The literary narrative therefore remains present within the cinematic narrative even when particular scenes, characters, or narrative structures have been changed.

The concept is especially useful for understanding *Wide Sargasso Sea* because Rhys's novel itself is already an act of adaptation and revision. Rhys takes the marginalized figure of Bertha Mason from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and reconstructs her as Antoinette Cosway. The 1993 film adaptation consequently creates another layer of transformation. The trajectory becomes:

Brontë → Rhys → Duigan

The story is therefore not a single fixed narrative but a sequence of reinterpretations. A similar process can be observed in *The Remains of the Day*:

Ishiguro → Jhabvala/Ivory → cinematic audience

The film does not simply reproduce Ishiguro's words. It interprets his narrative strategies and translates them into another system of signs. The adaptation thus becomes an independent artistic work while remaining recognizably connected to the novel.

III. REIMAGINING NARRATIVE: FROM TELLING TO SHOWING

One of the most significant transformations in literary adaptation involves the movement from telling to showing. A novel can enter a character's mind directly. Cinema cannot simply reproduce internal narration without relying on voice-over, dialogue, or other

devices. Consequently, adaptation requires the filmmaker to discover visual equivalents for psychological experience.

Hutcheon identifies the distinction between different modes of engagement as central to adaptation. A novel belongs primarily to the mode of "telling," whereas cinema belongs primarily to the mode of "showing" (Hutcheon 35–36). This difference is not merely technical. It fundamentally alters how narrative is communicated.

In literature, an author can write:

- what a character remembers,
- what a character refuses to remember,
- what a character imagines,
- what a character misunderstands,
- what a character wishes had happened.

Cinema must find ways to represent these experiences through images and sounds. This is particularly important in narratives built around memory. Memory in a novel can be grammatically uncertain, temporally fragmented, or narratively contradictory. Film must give those memories a visual or auditory form. Both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Remains of the Day* are therefore challenging texts to adapt because their central conflicts are internal. Antoinette's psychological fragmentation and Stevens's emotional repression are not external actions. Their most important experiences take place within consciousness. The films respond to this challenge differently.

Duigan uses landscape, colour, costume, architecture, movement, and performance to externalize Antoinette's fractured identity. Ivory, meanwhile, uses restrained performances, silence, framing, spatial distance, and carefully controlled dialogue to communicate Stevens's emotional repression. Thus, cinematic adaptation does not merely illustrate the novel. It develops a new language for psychological experience.

IV. JEAN RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*: MEMORY AND THE FRAGMENTED SELF

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* occupies a crucial position in postcolonial literary history because it revisits the story of Bertha Mason, Rochester's wife in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Instead of accepting Brontë's characterization of Bertha as a mysterious and apparently irrational woman confined in the attic, Rhys constructs a history for her.

Antoinette Cosway is presented as a woman caught between cultural worlds. She is a white Creole woman in Jamaica whose identity is destabilized by colonial history, racial tensions, gender relations, and displacement. She does not belong securely to any of the available communities. Her identity is therefore relational and unstable. The novel's narrative structure reinforces this instability. Different sections are narrated by different voices, particularly Antoinette and Rochester. The reader is not given one stable, authoritative account of reality. Instead, reality emerges through competing memories and interpretations. This narrative strategy is central to the novel's representation of identity. Antoinette does not possess an identity independent of the stories told about her. Her identity is repeatedly renamed and redefined by others. The most devastating example occurs when Rochester refuses to recognize her chosen identity and calls her Bertha.

Naming becomes a form of power. To rename Antoinette is to remove her history and impose another identity upon her. Her transformation into Bertha is therefore not merely a change of name; it is a psychological and colonial act of possession. Rhys's novel can consequently be read as an intervention into literary memory. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* remembers Bertha as the threatening woman in the attic. Rhys remembers what Brontë's narrative excludes: the woman's childhood, family, cultural displacement, marriage, and psychological suffering.

The novel therefore asks an important question: Who has the power to decide which version of a person becomes literary memory?

The answer is closely connected to narrative authority. The person who tells the story determines what is remembered and what is forgotten. Rhys's novel challenges the authority of the earlier narrative by giving voice to the marginalized figure.

V. FROM RHYS TO DUIGAN: VISUALIZING COLONIAL MEMORY

John Duigan's 1993 film adaptation translates Rhys's complex narrative into a visual medium. The film stars Karina Lombard as Antoinette and Nathaniel Parker as Rochester and adapts Rhys's 1966 novel for the screen. One of the major strengths of the cinematic

form is its ability to make landscape function psychologically. In Rhys's novel, Jamaica is not merely a geographical setting. It is deeply connected to Antoinette's sense of belonging. The Caribbean environment represents childhood, memory, cultural identity, danger, desire, and loss.

The film makes this relationship visible. Landscape becomes a visual extension of Antoinette's psychological condition. The natural world is often excessive, colourful, sensual, and unstable, contrasting with the controlled English world associated with Rochester. This contrast is significant because the film turns cultural displacement into a visual experience. The viewer does not simply read about Antoinette's displacement; the viewer sees the environments that construct and threaten her identity.

Architecture also becomes significant. Spaces of confinement repeatedly reflect the politics of gender and colonial authority. Antoinette's movement becomes increasingly restricted as Rochester gains control over her life. The transformation from open Caribbean spaces to enclosed interiors parallels her psychological movement from freedom toward imprisonment. The film therefore develops a visual vocabulary for the loss of identity.

VI. THE POLITICS OF THE GAZE

The cinematic representation of Antoinette also introduces another dimension: the gaze. A novel can describe a woman's psychological experience from within, but a film inevitably places the body before the camera. This creates a complex relationship between subject and spectator. Antoinette becomes both a character experiencing oppression and an image being observed. This tension is especially important because *Wide Sargasso Sea* is fundamentally concerned with who possesses the authority to define the Other. Rochester repeatedly interprets Antoinette according to his own assumptions. The film can reproduce this process but can also challenge it by allowing the camera to remain close to Antoinette's experience.

The adaptation consequently becomes an arena in which the politics of looking are negotiated. Recent scholarship on Duigan's film has also emphasized the significance of its changes from Rhys's novel and has argued that the film's alterations affect the political agency of the characters. Moradi and Anushirvani, for instance, describe the film as an adaptation that significantly changes the balance of agency found in Rhys's novel. This observation reinforces the larger argument of the present article: adaptation is never politically neutral. Every cinematic decision—what to show, what to omit, whose perspective to privilege, and how to frame a character—participates in the reconstruction of meaning.

VII. MEMORY AS RESISTANCE IN *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Memory in Rhys's novel is not simply a record of the past. It is a contested territory. Antoinette's memories preserve an identity that dominant social structures attempt to erase. Her memories of Jamaica, her childhood, her mother, Christophine, and her earlier life become increasingly important as her present identity is destroyed. Memory therefore functions paradoxically. It can be painful, but it also preserves traces of the self.

The film transforms these memories into visual flashbacks and recurring images. Memory becomes spatial rather than merely verbal. The audience encounters the past through landscapes, faces, objects, and repeated visual motifs. This transformation demonstrates the difference between literary and cinematic memory. In literature, memory may be narrated through language. In cinema, memory can become an image.

The image has a special power because it appears immediate. A remembered landscape can occupy the screen with the same visual force as the present. The distinction between past and present can therefore become unstable. This instability is essential to Antoinette's identity. She exists between remembered self and imposed self. The closer she moves toward the identity of "Bertha," the more intensely the past survives as a counter-memory. The adaptation consequently animates the struggle between memory and erasure.

VIII. KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*: MEMORY, SILENCE AND IDENTITY

If *Wide Sargasso Sea* examines identity through colonial and gendered displacement, Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* examines identity through professionalism, emotional repression, and historical complicity. The protagonist, Stevens, is an English

butler whose entire sense of self is organized around the concept of "dignity." His professional identity requires discipline, emotional restraint, loyalty, and self-control. He believes that a successful butler should subordinate personal feelings to service.

The novel, however, gradually reveals the cost of this philosophy. Stevens narrates his story retrospectively. He travels through England while remembering his years at Darlington Hall. The narrative is therefore structured through memory. But his memories are not completely transparent. He frequently minimizes emotionally significant events, changes the subject, or explains painful experiences in professional language. This creates a gap between what Stevens says and what the reader understands.

His identity is consequently produced through narration itself. Stevens does not simply remember his life; he interprets it according to the professional values he has internalized. His relationship with Miss Kenton provides the clearest example. The possibility of emotional intimacy exists between them, but Stevens repeatedly suppresses personal feeling in favour of professional duty. The tragedy of their relationship is therefore not created by dramatic conflict but by what remains unspoken. Silence becomes the language of Stevens's identity.

IX. THE UNRELIABLE MEMORY OF STEVENS

Stevens is not an unreliable narrator because he deliberately deceives the reader. His unreliability is more psychologically complex. He is unable—or unwilling—to recognize the emotional implications of his own memories. His narrative constantly moves between remembering and interpreting. He recalls events and then immediately explains them according to professional values. This creates dramatic irony. The reader often understands what Stevens cannot admit.

For example, Stevens interprets his relationship with Miss Kenton primarily through professional categories, while the emotional significance of their interactions is visible beneath his restrained narration. The reader therefore participates in reconstructing the emotional truth that Stevens suppresses.

The novel consequently transforms memory into an act of self-discovery. The journey undertaken by Stevens is significant in this regard. His physical movement through the English countryside becomes a movement backward into memory. The landscape allows him to revisit moments that he had previously organized under the category of professional duty. Yet memory does not produce a simple recovery of truth. Stevens cannot return to the past and change it. Instead, remembering reveals what has been lost.

The title *The Remains of the Day* is therefore deeply connected to memory. The "remains" refer not only to the remaining years of Stevens's life but also to what survives after the central commitments of his past have been exposed as inadequate.

X. FROM ISHIGURO TO IVORY: THE CINEMATIC LANGUAGE OF REPRESSION

James Ivory's 1993 film adaptation of *The Remains of the Day* translates Ishiguro's internal narrative into performance and visual restraint. The film was directed by Ivory, written by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, and stars Anthony Hopkins as Stevens and Emma Thompson as Miss Kenton. The central challenge for the film is obvious: how can cinema represent a character who rarely expresses what he feels? The answer is performance.

Anthony Hopkins's portrayal of Stevens relies heavily on minimal gestures, controlled facial expressions, posture, and vocal restraint. Instead of telling the audience directly what Stevens feels, the film allows emotion to emerge through tiny deviations from his professional composure. This is one of the fundamental strengths of cinematic adaptation. What is psychologically described in a novel can become physically observable in a performance. Stevens's body becomes a text. His posture communicates discipline. His facial expressions reveal moments of hesitation. His silences communicate emotional conflict. His refusal to act becomes an action in itself. The adaptation therefore demonstrates that cinema can make absence visible.

XI. SILENCE AS NARRATIVE

Silence is central to both the novel and the film, but the medium of cinema gives silence a special force. In a novel, the author can explain a character's silence. In a film, silence can remain literally silent. The viewer must interpret the character's face, body, spatial position, and interaction with others. The scenes involving Stevens and Miss Kenton illustrate this

particularly well. Their relationship is constructed through proximity and distance. They often occupy the same physical space while remaining emotionally separated. This spatial organization transforms psychological repression into visual composition.

The camera can show what Stevens refuses to articulate. Consequently, the film's silence does not simply reproduce the novel's silence. It transforms it. The literary silence becomes cinematic silence, and the latter depends upon performance and spectatorship. The viewer becomes responsible for interpreting emotional meaning.

XII. MEMORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

Both Rhys and Ishiguro present identity as something constructed through memory. However, the nature of this construction differs. Antoinette's identity is damaged because other people attempt to impose an identity upon her. Stevens's identity is damaged because he has internalized a system of values that suppresses his individual emotional life. Antoinette struggles against an externally imposed identity. Stevens struggles against an internally imposed identity. This difference makes the comparison particularly productive.

Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea and Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day present two contrasting but interconnected explorations of identity and memory. In Rhys's novel, Antoinette's identity is largely externally imposed through colonial, racial, and patriarchal structures. She experiences a profound sense of cultural displacement because she belongs neither completely to the European world nor to the Caribbean society surrounding her. Her identity is further threatened when Rochester renames her "Bertha," an act that symbolically erases her individuality and personal history. Thus, colonial displacement and gendered oppression contribute to the destruction of Antoinette's sense of self. Memory, however, becomes a means of preserving the threatened identity that society attempts to erase. Her recollections of childhood, Jamaica, her mother, and her earlier life maintain a connection with the person she once was.

In contrast, Stevens in Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day constructs his identity internally through his commitment to professionalism, loyalty, and the ideal of the perfect English butler. His identity is shaped by class hierarchy and professional discipline, which require him to suppress his personal emotions. While Antoinette is renamed and redefined by another person, Stevens gradually defines himself through the professional role he has chosen to inhabit. His commitment to dignity prevents him from acknowledging his love for Miss Kenton and from confronting the moral implications of Lord Darlington's political activities. Consequently, memory performs a different function for Stevens: rather than simply preserving a threatened self, it gradually exposes a suppressed self that he has spent his life refusing to recognize.

The differences between the two novels are also reflected in their narrative structures and cinematic adaptations. Rhys employs a fragmented and multi-perspectival narrative, shifting between Antoinette and Rochester and allowing competing versions of reality to emerge. This fragmented structure reflects Antoinette's psychological instability and the fractured nature of her identity. When John Duigan adapts the novel into film, he translates these psychological and cultural tensions through visual landscape, architecture, colour, movement, and performance.

The Caribbean landscape becomes an external representation of Antoinette's emotional and cultural displacement, while enclosed spaces increasingly suggest her confinement and loss of freedom. Ishiguro, by contrast, uses retrospective first-person narration, through which Stevens looks back on his life and selectively reconstructs his past. His narration is restrained and often unreliable because he interprets emotionally significant experiences through the language of professionalism and duty. James Ivory's film adaptation must therefore transform Stevens's interior narration into a visual language of gesture, silence, facial expression, spatial distance, and framing. Stevens's emotional repression is communicated not through dramatic declarations but through what he refuses to say or do. Thus, while Duigan externalizes Antoinette's fragmented identity through landscape and visual imagery, Ivory externalizes Stevens's suppressed emotions through performance and cinematic silence. Both adaptations demonstrate that cinema does not merely reproduce the narratives of Rhys and Ishiguro; rather, it reimagines their representations of identity and

memory by converting psychological experiences into visual and performative forms.

XIII. ADAPTATION AND THE REANIMATION OF MEMORY

The concept of "animating the unimaginable" can be understood in relation to the specific problem of memory. Memory is invisible. It has no physical body. It exists as recollection, association, emotion, and narrative.

Cinema gives memory a body. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the remembered Caribbean landscape can appear before the viewer. In *The Remains of the Day*, the remembered past can be embodied by Hopkins's performance as Stevens. This process does not make memory objective. Instead, it dramatizes the subjective nature of remembering.

The films make visible the tension between past and present. In Duigan's adaptation, Antoinette's memories are connected to a world that is disappearing. The Caribbean landscape becomes increasingly associated with loss and displacement. In Ivory's adaptation, Stevens's memories reveal a life whose meaning has changed with time. What once appeared to him as professional dignity increasingly appears to the viewer as emotional deprivation and ethical blindness. Thus, adaptation transforms memory from narration into visual experience.

XIV. IDENTITY AS PERFORMANCE

Another important connection between the two works is the concept of identity as performance. Stevens performs the role of the perfect butler. His professional identity requires him to behave according to a set of expectations. His individuality is subordinated to the role. Antoinette, meanwhile, is forced into an identity constructed by Rochester and colonial society. The name "Bertha" becomes a performance imposed upon her. Both characters therefore exist between selfhood and social role.

Stevens asks what it means to be a butler. Antoinette struggles with what it means to be Antoinette when others refuse to recognize her as such.

The cinematic adaptations make these performances visible. Costumes, body language, architecture, and dialogue establish social roles. The camera observes characters performing identities that are both imposed and internalized. The films thus reveal identity as something enacted rather than simply possessed.

XV. THE POLITICS OF REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

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Memory is never politically innocent. To remember one thing is often to forget another. Literary narratives construct memory by selecting which events become central and which disappear. Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is itself an act of cultural remembrance because it restores a history that *Jane Eyre* marginalized. It asks the reader to remember Bertha differently.

The adaptation of Rhys's novel therefore participates in a layered politics of memory. It remembers Rhys's intervention into Brontë, while simultaneously interpreting that intervention for a cinematic audience. Ishiguro's novel similarly reconstructs personal and national memory. Stevens's recollections are connected to the political atmosphere of pre-war England and to Lord Darlington's involvement in appeasement. His private memories therefore intersect with national history.

The film makes this relationship between private and public memory more visible. Political meetings, formal interiors, costumes, and historical settings place Stevens's personal story within a larger national narrative. The individual memory of Stevens consequently becomes part of the memory of a society.

XVI. ADAPTATION AS DIALOGUE

Neither film should be regarded merely as a visual copy of its literary source. Instead, each adaptation establishes a dialogue with its source. Duigan's film asks what happens when Rhys's postcolonial critique is transferred into cinema. The adaptation inevitably negotiates questions of race, colonialism, gender, sexuality, and representation.

Ivory's film asks what happens when Ishiguro's deeply interior narrative is transformed into performance. The adaptation makes visible the emotional meaning that Stevens's narration repeatedly conceals. This is why Hutcheon's theory is so useful. If adaptation is "repetition without replication," difference is not evidence of failure. Difference is evidence of interpretation (7).

The film tells us something about the novel precisely because it changes the novel. An omitted scene may

reveal what the filmmaker considers unnecessary. An altered character may reveal a different political emphasis. A visual motif may transform a psychological theme. A change in chronology may create a different relationship between memory and present experience. Adaptation is therefore a form of criticism. The filmmaker becomes, in effect, a reader who writes through images.

XVII. THE READER, THE VIEWER AND THE ACT OF MEMORY

Adaptation also transforms the audience. A reader constructs images mentally. The reader imagines Antoinette's Jamaica or Stevens's Darlington Hall. The film provides concrete images, but it also limits the range of possible visual interpretations. This does not necessarily make film less imaginative. Instead, it shifts imagination from image creation to image interpretation.

The viewer interprets performance, editing, lighting, music, framing, and sound. The act of adaptation therefore creates a new relationship between memory and spectatorship. The audience remembers the novel while watching the film. Previous knowledge becomes part of the viewing experience.

Hutcheon describes this relationship when she explains that adaptations function intertextually through the audience's memory of other works (7). The adaptation is therefore experienced simultaneously as a new work and as a reminder of another work. This double consciousness is central to the experience of adaptation. When an audience watches Antoinette on screen, it may remember Bertha Mason. When it watches Stevens suppress emotion, it may remember Ishiguro's narrative voice. The film therefore carries the memory of the novel within itself.

XVIII. REIMAGINING THE UNIMAGINABLE

The phrase "the unimaginable" does not necessarily mean something that cannot be imagined. Rather, it refers to experiences that are difficult to represent directly: trauma, psychological fragmentation, emotional repression, cultural displacement, and the instability of memory. Literature has the advantage of interiority. Cinema has the advantage of embodiment. The most successful adaptations do not simply transfer content from one medium to another. They discover cinematic equivalents for literary effects.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, landscape, colour, movement, architecture, and performance translate Antoinette's fractured consciousness. In *The Remains of the Day*, silence, gesture, spatial distance, facial expression, costume, and performance translate Stevens's emotional repression. The two adaptations therefore demonstrate two different forms of cinematic translation. Duigan externalizes psychological fragmentation through the environment. Ivory internalizes historical and emotional conflict through performance. Yet both films demonstrate the same fundamental principle: adaptation is a process of reimagining rather than reproducing.

XIX. CONCLUSION

Literary adaptation is best understood not as a competition between the "original" and the "copy" but as an ongoing dialogue between texts, media, cultures, histories, and audiences. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* demonstrate the complexity of memory and identity in literary narrative, while John Duigan's and James Ivory's cinematic adaptations demonstrate how those complexities can be transformed through the visual medium.

Rhys reconstructs the history of a woman whose identity has been erased by another narrative. Duigan transforms that reconstruction into a cinematic experience of landscape, confinement, desire, and displacement. Ishiguro constructs a narrator whose memories gradually expose the emotional consequences of a life devoted to professional duty. Ivory transforms that interior narrative into a visual performance of silence, restraint, and regret.

The comparison demonstrates that adaptation does not merely reproduce narrative; it changes the way narrative is remembered. It does not simply preserve identity; it interrogates the processes through which identity is constructed. It does not merely visualize memory; it demonstrates how memory itself is unstable, selective, and interpretive.

In this sense, adaptation can be understood as a form of cultural memory. It carries earlier stories into new historical and technological environments while allowing those stories to acquire new meanings. The

source text remains present, but it is transformed through the creative imagination of the adapter.

Hutcheon's formulation that adaptation is "repetition, but repetition without replication" (7) therefore provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for understanding these works. Adaptation repeats the story but changes its body, voice, rhythm, perspective, and cultural significance.

Wide Sargasso Sea and *The Remains of the Day* demonstrate that the movement from page to screen is not a movement from imagination to reality. It is a movement from one form of imagination to another. Literature imagines the invisible through language; cinema animates that invisibility through image, sound, body, space, and performance. What is unimaginable in one medium can become newly imaginable in another. Adaptation, therefore, is not the death of the literary imagination. It is its continuation.

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