



Across Text and Screen: Programming Subjectivity through Soft Power and Popular Culture in *Never Let Me Go* and Its Film Adaptation

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Abstract

Memory and the acts of return play a crucial role in identity formation. It reveals the ways individuals construct a sense of self within contemporary cultural discourse mediated by social, technological, and affective forces. The paper examines Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and its 2010 film adaptation directed by Mark Romanek as an extended intermedial engagement that explores conditions under which clones are denied complete autonomy. It exposes how soft power operates through regulation of emotional life. Moving beyond conventional readings, the paper contends that control is secured through affective engineering i.e., shaping of subconscious emotional attachments that bind subjects to oppressive institutional systems. Drawing on interdisciplinary frameworks of Alison Landsberg's prosthetic memory, Lauren Berlant's cruel optimism, Michel Foucault's biopolitics, Stefan Herbrechter's critical posthumanism, along with Linda Hutcheon's concept of adaptation as an intermedial process, the paper reconceptualizes memory not as a stable repository of lived experiences but as a mediated structure embedded within technoscientific regimes, producing obedient posthuman subjects. Situated within popular culture, the paper contributes to intermedial studies while offering a critique of soft power. It demonstrates how film adaptation acts as an extension and intensifies these processes by normalizing systemic violence through intimate emotional structures.

Keywords: Adaptation, Critical Posthumanism, Cruel Optimism, Posthuman Subjectivity, Prosthetic Memory, Soft Power.