



# Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From *Gone with the Wind* to *The Passion of the Christ*

By Thomas Leitch

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Most books on film adaptation—the relation between films and their literary sources—focus on a series of close one-to-one comparisons between specific films and canonical novels. This volume identifies and investigates a far wider array of problems posed by the process of adaptation.

Beginning with an examination of why adaptation study has so often supported the institution of literature rather than fostering the practice of literacy, Thomas Leitch considers how the creators of short silent films attempted to give them the weight of literature, what sorts of fidelity are possible in an adaptation of sacred scripture, what it means for an adaptation to pose as an introduction to, rather than a transcription of, a literary classic, and why and how some films have sought impossibly close fidelity to their sources.

After examining the surprisingly divergent fidelity claims made by three different kinds of canonical adaptations, Leitch's analysis moves beyond literary sources to consider why a small number of adapters have risen to the status of auteurs and how illustrated books, comic strips, video games, and true stories have been adapted to the screen. The range of films studied, from silent Shakespeare to Sherlock Holmes to *The Lord of the Rings*, is as broad as the problems that come under review.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

I would highly recommend Leitch's study, in particular for its diversity and complexity. The author demonstrates that he is familiar with a large and heterogeneous corpus, including canonical as well as popular or marginal films and texts, which adaptation studies can only benefit from.

(Thomas Van Parys *Image & Narrative*)

As a cogent summary and critique of film adaptation, this would be a good first book for newcomers to the subject... Highly recommended.

(*Choice*)

This convincingly argued and eloquently presented volume is replete with an array of accessible examples that provide an illustrative stylistic lightness of touch... whilst resisting any potential dilution of the underlying radical and important thesis—a thesis which incontrovertibly advances and enhances our approach to adaptation studies on a number of highly original and insightful levels.

(Dr. Alison Forsyth *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*)

One of the best books ever written on the topic of motion-picture adaptations. It provides not only a full-scale theoretical and cultural map of the field but also a convincing argument for teaching students how to write and think critically. It was a joy to read.

(James Naremore, Indiana University)

*Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* is a worthy and distinctive entrant into an already crowded field. Its strengths lie in the detailed and persuasively argued collective case histories... as well as its often penetrating and always illuminating discussions of specific problems.

(R. Barton Palmer *Film Quarterly*)

For those interested in the cinematic works their favorite books inspire, Thomas Leitch's *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* should provide food for thought.

(Rebecca Oppenheimer *The Jeffersonian*)

I highly recommend the book both to those new or well versed in adaptation studies as a thought-provoking look at the questions to be asked – and perhaps answered – in this domain of ever-increasing importance.

(Shannon Wells-Lassagne *Cercles*)

#### From the Back Cover

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#### About the Author

**Thomas Leitch** is a professor of English at the University of Delaware.

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