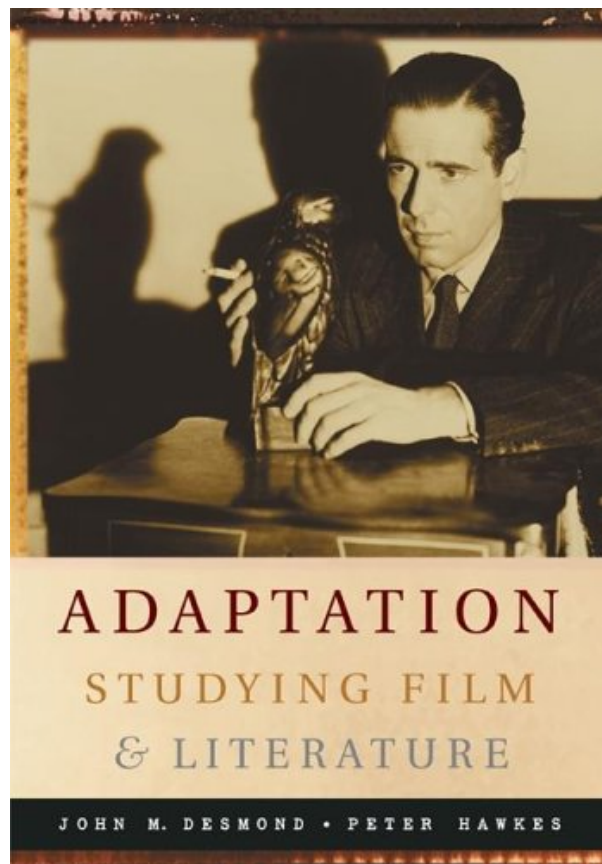
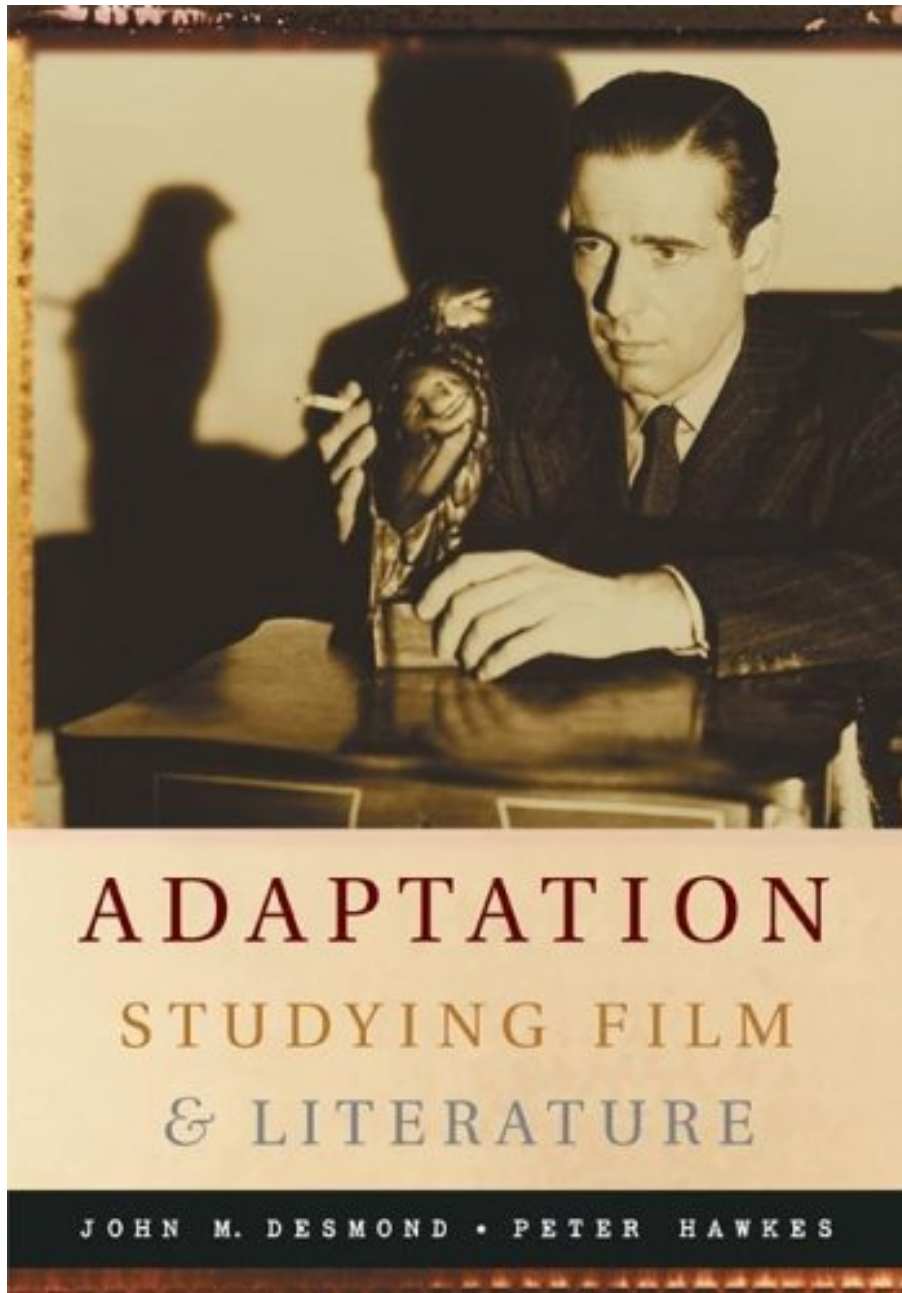


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John Desmond is Associate Professor of English at Dutchess Community College, where he teaches courses in composition, film and literature, and politics and films.

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This concise and readable new text for courses in Film Adaptation or Film and Literature introduces students to the art of adapting works of literature for film. Adaptation describes the interwoven histories of literature and film, presents key analytical approaches to adaptation, and provides an in-depth overview of adaptations of novels, short stories, plays, nonfiction, and animation. The book concludes with an analysis of why adaptations sometimes fail.

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ADAPTATIONS: Films and Literature

By Dr C J Singh

ADAPTATION: STUDYING FILM AND LITERATURE is a joy to read. Historically, films adapted from a literary text have won seventy-five percent of all best-picture Academy Awards, so this engaging textbook should interest not only readers taking film courses but also other film aficionados.

The co-authors teach college courses in Film Studies, Literature, and English Composition. Their composition expertise shows in the exceptional clarity of their writing. Throughout the book, they present engaging examples of adaptations from novels, novellas, short stories, nonfiction, and graphic stories (animations).

Too many film-reviewers assume that successful film adaptation emerges principally from fidelity to the original literary text. Not so. "Film is another medium with its own conventions, artistic values, and techniques, and so the original story is transformed into a different work of alike. . . . We use fidelity not as

an evaluative term that measures the merit of films, but as a descriptive term that allows discussion of the relationship between two companion works. To begin the description of the relationship between text and film, we ask you to compare the two in detail and then to classify the adaptation as a close, loose, or intermediate interpretation (page 2)."

Among the several novel adaptations discussed, the book presents a detailed analysis of Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird." The discussion begins with a brief summary of the novel and goes on to describe Robert Mulligan's adaptation under the following rubrics: kept elements--setting and situations; added elements; and dropped elements. An example of dropped elements: of the novel's sixty-eight characters, forty are dropped.

The novella adaptation presented is Norman Maclean's "A River Runs Through It," directed by Robert Redford. Short-story adaptations include: Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers," directed by Robert Siodmark; John Cheever's "The Swimmer," directed by Frank Perry; Jonathan Nolan's "Memento Mori," directed by Christopher Nolan with the title "Memento." Both the Memento short story and the adaptation are excellent examples of postmodernist nonlinear narratives.

The stage play adaptations analyzed include Tennessee Williams's "A Streetcar Named Desire," directed by Elia Kazan. The outstanding nonfiction film adaptation analyzed is Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's "All the President's Men," directed by Alan Pakula.

The concluding chapter reviews a failed adaptation: F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," directed by Jack Clayton. The analysis of this failure elucidates many choices the screenwriter, the producer, the director must make along with the inevitable conflicts among practitioners of different crafts all collaborating to make a film.

I would have liked to see discussion of at least some international adaptations in this five-star book.

-- C J Singh

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By George Siecko

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