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DEPARTMENTAL PAPERS (CIMS)

Literature on Screen, A History: In the Gap

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Abstract

Perhaps more than any other film practices, cinematic adaptations have drawn the attention, scorn, and admiration of movie viewers, historians, and scholars since 1895. Indeed, even before this origin of the movies - with the first public projections of films by Auguste and Louis Lumière in France and Max and Emil Skladanowsky in Germany - critical voices worried about how photography had already encroached on traditional aesthetic terrains and disciplines, recuperating and presumably demeaning pictorial or dramatic subjects by adapting them as mechanical reproductions. After 1895, however, film culture moved quickly to turn this cultural anxiety to its advantage, as filmmakers worked to attract audiences with well-known images from books now brought to life as Cinderella (1900), Gulliver's Travels (1902), and The Damnation of Faust (1904). The plethora of cinematic adaptations in recent decades and the flood of scholarship responding to these films - films like *Bride and Prejudice*, (2004), Bollywood's version of Jane Austen's novel, and scholarly projects like Robert Stam's back-to-back anthologies *A Companion to Literature and Film* (2005), *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (2005) and critical study *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation* (2005) - indicate that the practice of adaptation and the disciplinary debates about it remain as lively and pressing as ever.

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Adapting books for the screen can be treacherous. For every tome that has made the transition successfully in the last 20 years (see *Jaws*, *Carrie*, *The Silence of the Lambs*), there have been at least a dozen others that have fallen flat on their fiber spines. Too often, as any disgruntled reader – or writer – will attest, novels lose their atmosphere and their very essence as they bump and scrape the constricting walls of that endless tunnel called "development" en route to the screen. The *Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* - edited by Deborah Cartmell May 2007. Perhaps more than any other film practices, cinematic adaptations have drawn the attention, scorn, and admiration of movie viewers, historians, and scholars since 1895. Indeed, even before this origin of the movies - with the first public projections of films by Auguste and Louis Lumière in France and Max and Emil Skladanowsky in Germany - critical voices worried about how photography had already encroached on traditional aesthetic terrains and disciplines, recuperating and presumably demeaning pictorial or dramatic subjects by adapting them as mechanical reproductions. Mind the Gap study guide for *Short Stories* ISBN 978-1-4315-1944-6. Mind the Gap team Series managing editor: Dr Patricia Watson Production co-ordinators for CAPS edition: Authors and make your own opinions based on information given in the short story. This process is called evaluation. For example, you may be asked if you agree with a statement, or to discuss a character's motive for doing something. Your ability to respond to the characters in the short story and how it is written on an emotional level. This is called appreciation. For example, you may be asked how you think a certain character feels, or what you would have done if you were in their situation.