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Adaptation: Is the Book Really Better Than the...Television Series?

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Abstract

When the topic of 'adaptation' is brought up, more often than not the coupling of a novel and its most recent Hollywood hit come to mind. Although it may not be at the forefront of the general population's mind, adaptation is something that we encounter often, and consciously or not, we all have our own theory on the subject. While it may seem that the evolution of book series, to film adaptation, to booming franchise may be recently trending with the acceleration of blockbusters such as *Harry Potter*, adaptation has been a fundamental part of the advancement of media. This paper looks at film and television adaptations founded outside of the literary canon, exploring the discourse of what constitutes high or mass culture and how the medium of the adaptation fits or breaks the conventions that "classic" film adaptation has established. In addition, the medium-specific differences between film and television will be examined for how they limit or enhance a literary adaptation, whether it is a single novel or a series. What happens to the critique of an adaptation when it extends past the narrative created in the source text, opposed to the adaptation that begins and ends with the source narrative? In addition, adaptations will be looked at through a contextual and historical lens, rather than a moralistic or hierarchical lens, producing a criticism that incorporates the differences among the media involved in adaptations.

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release, there is no way to include everything, especially when it comes from a long novel. The film version of *Gone with the Wind*, for example, omits the fact that Scarlett O'Hara had two children by her first two husbands, and she really disliked the children. And then there are the multiple film adaptations of a book. Take a classic "like *Pride and Prejudice*." There's the BBC version with Firth and Ehle, and the 2005 version with Macfadyen and Knightley. The book never really had an organized fandom, per se, though it was a bestseller when it came out in 1995 and the author, Alice Hoffman, was fairly well-known among a certain set of readers. I didn't know much about it when I first encountered it by chance at the library when I was probably around 13 or 14, back when I was still picking most of my reading material at random from the options the nice librarians had set face-out on the shelves. A week or so later I read the first 7 or 8 issues of the comic series. And now I know my opinions on adaptations have definitely shifted, because I think the show is better than its source material. And what does it mean when we say that an adaptation is "better" than the original? Is it still an adaptation, or is it something separate and new?