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### Summary

*Insofar as film is considered a storytelling medium, it is often compared unfavourably to literature. A film adaptation of a book is generally bedevilled by the so-called fidelity issue: is the film capable of imitating the 'original' tone of the novel? If not, then the film is regarded as a disappointment. This article aims to circumvent the hierarchy that tends to privilege literature over cinema. The first impulse consists of a return to the writings of film theoretician André Bazin who argued that the relatively young medium of film, in order to develop its 'language', should 'digest' influences from literature and theatre. The second impulse concerns a reading of Jean-Luc Godard's film *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*), from 1963, based upon a novel by Alberto Moravia that satirizes the film industry. The plot is about the failure to adapt Homer's *Odyssey* to the screen, but the irony is that the Greek classical story is nevertheless realized via a detour in the disintegration of the marriage of the present-day couple. At the same time, Godard had to give in to the demands of his producers, but time and again he does so in such an oblique way that the film, which superficially looks like a big-budget movie, becomes a satire of the film industry. Hence, *Le Mépris* is not an attempt to 'translate' the content of the book, but a*

*deliberate and creative mis-translation that 'digests' literature in order to criticize the conditions under which the film is made. Thanks to the many double entendres and smart devices of *Le Mépris*, a 'novel for a train journey' is transformed into a superb metafilm.*

**Peter Verstraten** is universitair docent Intermediale Literatuurwetenschap in Leiden. Van zijn hand verschenen *Handboek filmnarratologie* (2006) en *Celluloid echo's: cinema kruist postmodernisme* (2004) bij Van Tilt. Zijn proefschrift was getiteld *Screening Cowboys: Reading Masculinities in Westerns* (1999). Hij was medesamensteller van bundels over 'psychoanalyse en film' (2006) en 'psychoanalyse en muziek' (2007) die verschenen bij Dutch University Press.