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# What makes a film adaptation successful?

## A case study of The Great Gatsby

Master's thesis in Film- og videoproduksjon

Supervisor: Anne Gjelsvik

May 2022



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# Abstract

This thesis takes on *The Great Gatsby* as a case study to find out if Baz Luhrmann's 2013 adaptation was a successful adaptation. As adaptations have always been popular, the question of how successful they appear. It is important to note that this thesis is a case study of *The Great Gatsby*, and the results found in the study only answer for that specific adaptation.

In the first part of the thesis, the topic at hand is introduced as well as the chosen literature along with a summary of the story of the book, as it becomes especially important in the text, as well helps the reader follow along. During the introduction, the methods will also be introduced, the chosen methods for this thesis are film analysis and reception analysis. Using the two gives a thorough analysis of the adaptation starting in section two.

The film- and reception analysis dives into both the production of the movie as well as how it was received. The audience's opinion becomes central as the film cannot be a success if they do not like it.

In conclusion, Luhrmann brings a lot of personality into this new adaptation of the classic American novel, giving it a new life as well as showing the well-known story in America, to people elsewhere in the world. His adaptation received mixed reviews, the critics giving it a low score while the audience gave it a relatively high score, when comparing the two that is.

Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* is a successful adaptation. He puts a lot of heart into the story as well as tries to stay truthful to the book.

The setup of the thesis can also be used as a template to analyze other adaptations with the same research question.

# Sammendrag

Denne master oppgaven tar *The Great Gatsby* som en case study for å finne ut om Baz Luhrmanns 2013 adaptasjon var en vellykket adaptasjon. Siden adaptasjoner alltid har vært populært, kommer spørsmålet om hvor vellykkede de er opp. Det er viktig å påpeke at denne oppgaven er en case study av *The Great Gatsby*, og resultatene som er funnet bare svarer for den spesifikke adaptasjonen.

I den første delen av oppgaven introduseres tema samt den valgte litteraturen sammen med et sammendrag som forklarer historien fra boka ettersom dette er spesielt viktig i tillegg til at det hjelper leseren være på samme side. I introduksjons delen blir også valgte metoder introdusert. De valgte metodene for denne oppgaven er filmanalyse og resepsjonsanalyse, bruken av begge vil gi en grundig analyse som starter i seksjon to.

Film- og resepsjonsanalysen tar et dykk inn i produksjonsarbeidet til filmen og hvordan filmen ble mottatt av publikum. Publikums mening er sentral i analysen ettersom filmen ikke kan være vellykket uten deres anerkjennelse.

I konklusjonen er det klart at Luhrmann gir mye personlighet til adaptasjonen sin av den klassiske Amerikanske novellen, noe som gir det et nytt liv samt introduserer den kjente historien til andre land. Adaptasjonen hans fikk blandende reaksjoner, kritikerne ga filmen en lav total score, imens publikum ga den en relativt høy score, når man sammen ligner de to forskjellige.

Luhrmanns *The Great Gatsby* er en vellykket adaptasjon. Han putter hjerte og sjel i historien men prøver på samme tid å holde seg til boka.

Oppsettet på denne oppgaven kan også brukes som en mal om man ønsker å analysere andre adaptasjoner under samme spørsmålet.

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Adapting is a bit like redecorating

- Alfred Uhry

# 1. Introduction

Adaptations of books, henceforth referred to simply as adaptations, are all around us, and we cannot seem to escape them, they are everywhere! Whether it is in the cinema or on TV, it still engages us and leaves us wondering what happens next, while the source material is gathering dust on the shelves of a library. In 1992, 85% of all Best Picture Oscar winners were adaptations, as are 95% of miniseries that win at the Emmys (Hutcheon, 2006), "Of the 87 movies that have won Academy Awards for Best Picture so far, 40 were based on or inspired by books. Some are faithful book-to-movie adaptations, while others use creative license and are loosely based on books" (Ranker, 2021).

There is a bunch of different types of adaptations, from musicals to games, songs, and even theme park rides. When we talk about adaptations, "we refer to both a product and a process of creation and reception." (Hutcheon, 2006)

## 1.1 Goal

When you are adapting, you are in many ways translating what is on the page onto the screen, but what does that process include? In my case study, I will use Baz Luhrmann's adapted film *The Great Gatsby*. There are a few different adaptations of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, but Luhrmann's film stands out as the most modernized version, which fits perfectly into my research question, of what makes an adaptation successful. Does modernizing it change the story into something we do not recognize or does the modernization keep the film alive?

To answer this question, I will look into what the different departments of filmmaking did to create the final product, as well as how the media and the audience receive that final product.

The ultimate goal of my research is to figure out if Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* is a successful adaptation.

## Literature

*A Theory of Adaptations* by Linda Hutcheon tries to answer the question of what an adaptation is while also challenging different theories associated with the subject, which in the end leaves us with a less critical view of adaptations as it gives an understanding of what goes into making an adaptation. Hutcheon gives the reader detailed examples to emphasize her points and make herself understood. The book gives a lot of credit, if not more, to the rest of the crew instead of the director. It also challenges the viewer of the films and how we categorize them when criticizing an adaptation. Using Hutcheon's examples, I will study some of the different departments of *The Great Gatsby*, including sound, costume, directing, and editing.

*From book to film* by Arne Engelstad goes directly into the dilemma of what works and what does not in adaptations. He wants the creator and filmmaker to get a greater understanding of how to clearly translate a text and avoid confusion while doing so.

There are a whole bunch of articles written about the film and adaptation I have decided to use in my analysis, all provided by NTNU's library. Most of them go through much of the same as Engelstad, what works and what does not, which will be helpful for my initial goal of the text. Reading these articles as well as various books on the subject will give me different views.



"*The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925 remains his most (posthumously) successful novel and has been prescribed reading within the American education for decades" (Griggs, 2016). *The Great Gatsby* is part of the American school curriculum, which means most 11<sup>th</sup> graders will read it and watch one of the movies. Having been an exchange student, I experienced these classes first-hand. You read the book and during some chapters, you analyze scenes from the different movies to compare the adaptation. Knowing it is part of the curriculum, means many are familiar with the story before watching the movie, and those people will, most likely, base their opinion on the movie based on how true it is to the book. Leonardo DiCaprio himself mentions he read the book while in school. (DiCaprio, 2013)

On the DVD as well as on YouTube, there are interviews with the creators of the movie, explaining why they did what they did as well as what influenced them to make these decisions. This becomes reliable source material as we get the explanations firsthand from those who did it.

Luhrmann has always been interested in showing the world how he makes movies and what goes behind the process from start to end. *The Great Gatsby* DVD includes a couple of hours of footage where Luhrmann goes through some of the more noticeable departments from the movie, like music and costume, and explains the thoughts behind it all.

The behind-the-scenes are both educational and entertaining as it brings the viewer into what goes on well, behind the scenes. Toby Maguire's love for filming behind the scenes, and Baz Luhrmann's love of storytelling come together in a well-made blend as it shows the actors goofing off as well as Luhrmann going into detail to explain what he did to create the *Gatsby* he wanted.

Giving the viewers insight into what goes on during film production, might make the viewer enjoy the film more, or at least make them rewatch it

and be more appreciative of it. The footage is full of small details as well as the origin of many of the techniques used and the reasoning behind them being chosen.

As mentioned before *The Great Gatsby* by Luhrmann itself is the most modernized version of the story we have seen to date. His use of bright colors and modern music brings a fresh look to the already known story. A summary of the story itself and important parts will be summarized and explained. There are many different versions of adaptation, and it challenges the norm to completely modernize works, which is also why Luhrmann has received a lot of criticism, why change something that is already good? Hearing his reasoning behind this might give us a clear answer to exactly that.

## **Methods**

As my first method, I will be using film analysis, focusing on behind-the-scenes and elements used. This is to get a sense of what is changed and important things to note about the film itself. After having analyzed the book and film and how the adaptation, in theory, is, I want to see how the audience perceived it, using reception analysis. Using reviews from both articles and the review section of IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, and Metacritic I will find different opinions to weigh in on the things I find during my analysis as well as put the literature against reviews. While doing my reception analysis, I will use different reviews found on the three websites to try to get an understanding of what the public and reviewers thought of the movie.

## **Discussion**

After having analyzed the adaptation as well as read some of the reviews I want to discuss what I found and debate what becomes relevant in this

research. Being critical of your methods as well as how you use the material found also becomes a topic of discussion, what are some strong and weak points to the research, is there anything that could have been done differently?

As some of the sources are based on opinions, I must also criticize the potential problem that brings. Criticizing the literature is also important, as the opinions made come from it: should the literature give the reader an opinion or examples of ways to think? I think for this, the chosen literature should be used as a guide in the film analysis, then come back again for debate in the discussion section before the conclusion.

Most of the discussion part will consist of comparing what I have found and how it is relevant or not to my study before a conclusion can be made, as well as being critical of the methods used. The discussion part is for me, the writer, to discuss the work process and if it helped me to conclude.

## **Conclusion**

In the last part of the text, I will attempt to answer my research question based on the information found. The answer will not hold for every adaptation ever made, which is why this specifically is for and about *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald and Luhrmann. The text will be summarized so I can reach an ending to the research by which both I and the reader feel accomplished and fulfilled.

## **1.2 *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

“The Great American Novel” (Temple, 2017) was published in 1925.

Taught in schools on the subject of analysis, the story is well known and adapted numerous times. On the basis of this research, it is crucial to know the basics of the story as we jump into it, in doing so I will give a brief retelling of the story as well as tell about the characters we need to know about to continue our research.

### **The Story**

The story is narrated by our main character, Nick Carraway. He has just moved to West Egg on Long Island. West Egg is an area for the newly rich, yet Nick does not fit into that category, as he lives in a small house. His neighbor, however, owns a big mansion and throws big, lavish parties every Saturday.

Across the bay lives the wealthy “old money” families, including Nick’s cousin, Daisy Buchanan, with her husband Tom Buchanan, who Nick went to Yale with. While on a visit there, Nick meets Jordan Baker, who he will have a brief romance with throughout the story.

After the dinner party, Tom takes Nick with him to town. While on the way he makes a stop in the Valley of ashes, a grey, industrial area between Long Island and New York, where Tom meets his lover Myrtle Wilson and her husband George Wilson who owns a gas station as well as an auto repair shop. Tom brings Myrtle and Nick to an apartment in Manhattan and hosts a wild party with a few friends.

Not long after, Nick is invited to one of his neighbor’s parties. As he arrives and again meets Jordan, he learns he is the only one to ever get an invitation. After random conversations with random people who gossip about the host of the party, Nick finally meets his neighbor, Jay Gatsby. Right after the meeting, Gatsby goes inside, and Jordan is asked to come

with him. The next time Nick and Jordan meet, she explains she has met Gatsby before, and that he is Daisy's former lover. He bought the house right across the bay from hers and had lavish parties in hopes that Daisy would walk in one day.

Now that Nick knows the truth, he helps Gatsby meet Daisy, and their love blossoms once more, but this time she has to hold back, as she is still married to Tom. Their affair lasts for a while until the warmest day of the year when Daisy, Jordan, Tom, Gatsby, and Nick are having lunch together before they decide to go to the plaza. Daisy and Gatsby had a plan that Daisy would tell Tom she never loved him and then she could run away with Gatsby, though this proved to be harder than planned. At the plaza, a fight breaks out as the truth is revealed. Tom stays calm and collected but Gatsby bursts out in anger, scaring Daisy out the door. He runs after her and they drive home together, though Tom is now certain the affair between the two is over.

When they left Tom's house to go to the plaza, Tom drove Gatsby's car after Gatsby insisted, so when they drove through the Valley of Ashes, Tom was in Gatsby's yellow car. When Gatsby and Daisy head home, they take Gatsby's yellow car, but on the trip into the city, Myrtle spotted Tom in the yellow car. When she saw the car approaching, she ran outside from a fight with George and into the road, waving to who she thought was Tom. With no time to react, the car hits Myrtle and she died instantly.

A little while later, Tom arrives in his blue car with Jordan and Nick. Seeing the commotion, they stop their car and go inside to see Tom's former lover dead. George, who had also seen Tom in the yellow car earlier accuses Tom of the murder, but Tom then tells George that the yellow car belongs to Gatsby.

When they all got home, Nick meets Gatsby and he reveals it was Daisy driving the car, not Gatsby, though Daisy never knew who Myrtle was, she was just too startled to stop. Gatsby stays up all night waiting for Daisy's

call, still expecting them to run away together. In the morning, one of Gatsby's workers informs him he is about to empty the pool, but Gatsby tells them to wait and decides to have a last swim before they do so. As he gets into the pool, George arrives. Gatsby swims to the edge and looks at the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, and before anyone can stop him, George shoots and kills Gatsby before taking his own life.

After the murder, Nick falls into a depression, pushing everyone he knows away.

After Gatsby's death, New York was haunted for me. That city, my once golden shimmering mirage, now made me sick.

- Tobey Maguire (as Nick Carraway)

-

They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made

(Fitzgerald, 1925)

Tom and Daisy run away from New York for a bit before returning and living life as if nothing happened. In the end, Nick is left haunted by the events and the memory of Jay Gatsby.

## 2. Methodology

When looking at an old American novel and its modernization into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I have investigated what big changes are being made that the audience can see, as well as how the audience received the modernization.

“The adapted text, therefore, is not something to be reproduced, but rather something to be interpreted and recreated, often in a new medium. (...) for the adapter is an interpreter before becoming a creator.”(Hutcheon, 2006). As Hutcheon mentions, Luhrmann’s version of *the Great Gatsby* becomes a modernized recreation, not a reproduction of the earlier versions. Making something your own can create reactions, and that is exactly what I will be looking into in my analysis. When determining if an adaptation is good or not, we must look at both the work behind the scenes as well as the reception. This helps to see if the details and film techniques found in the reception analysis, and how these findings were perceived, if noticed.

### 2.1 Film analysis

Using much of Hutcheon’s study, I will analyze the film piece by piece as well as look at the behind-the-scenes to see what the creators themselves have to say about the movie. Hearing the filmmaker’s thoughts become important when analyzing it, as it gives us as the viewer an insight into the planning and decisions made to give us the movie we have today.

“(...) but also the simple but significant fact that there are precious few stories around that have not been ‘lovingly ripped off’ from others. In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception” (Hutcheon, 2006). As mentioned in the introduction,

adaptations are all around us, it can be argued more adaptations are being made than original films. There are different perspectives, and adaptations are just that, different perspectives of a retold story.

*The Bloomsbury Introduction to Adaptation studies* by Yvonne Griggs touches on different types of adaptations, the most fitting type for *The Great Gatsby* described by her, is the 'classic' treatment, though with a tiny hint of re-visioning at the end. (Griggs, 2016). This means that Luhrmann tried to make a movie as faithful to the book as possible yet re-visioned the ending into something he found more fitting. When making an adaptation, you want it to be the one people look to, and if there were made four, exactly the same adaptations of *The Great Gatsby*, it, first of all, wouldn't have sold, but it also would just blend in with the others and the whole point of making an adaptation would be lost. There is no need to make an adaptation that is exactly like the others already made.

## **2.2 Reception analysis**

Even though the adaptation can stray far from the original source, the adaptation can be loved and praised as a film. At the end of the day, public opinion is the most important as it is what sells. If the public does not like the movie, they will not watch it and certainly not buy it. Many use IMDb, or sites alike, as a deciding factor in which the movie they're about to watch is good or bad and also if it's worth the watch. People's opinions play a big part in whether the movie survives through the box office or not. "It is no surprise that economic motivation affects all stages of the adaptation process" (Hutcheon, 2006).

To do a proper reception analysis, as well as answer the research question, I have read some of the reviews the film has gotten, both from critics as well as on user-based reviews, where the audience leaves their opinion on the film.



“If we do not know that what we are experiencing actually is an adaptation or if we are not familiar with the particular work that it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work. To experience it ‘as an adaptation’ however, as we have seen, we need to recognize it as such and the latter to oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing. In the process we inevitably fill in any gaps in the adaptation with information from the adapted text” (Hutcheon, 2006).

The most important thing in my opinion when reviewing an adaptation is to know what the audience knows before seeing the movie. Hutcheon writes about the knowing and unknowing audiences, what they mean and what part they play in adapting. It can sometimes be easy to see who is considered knowing audience or not, as most start comparing the film to the book in their review.

“Indeed adapters rely on this ability to fill in the gaps when moving from the discursive explanation of telling to the performative time and space limitations of showing. Sometimes they rely too much on it, and the resulting adaptation makes no sense without reference to and foreknowledge of the adapted text. For an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences” (Hutcheon, 2006).

With sites like Netflix and HBO, it gives viewers easy access to their content and with all the films and series’ being made today, audiences have become more selective about what they would like to see (Buchanan, n.d.). From what I have learned and from my own opinion, the more modern versions are the most popular among the younger generation, and few sit down to watch a version made before 2000 if there is an updated version, this again goes for younger audiences, under the age of 30. With newer films, there is a newer take, and it is more likely to include actors we love and adore.

The last film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* came out in 1974, so it was due for a new adaptation, which is how the 2013 adaptation happened. Baz Luhrmann has a “go big or go home” approach to the movie and with a budget of 105 million US dollars (Griggs, 2016). Luhrmann spares nothing when it comes to the lavish parties and expensive cars.

“However, is it not simply a matter of risk-avoidance: there is money to be made. A bestselling book may reach a million readers; a successful Broadway play will be seen by 1 to 8 million people; but a movie or television adaptation will find an audience of many million more” (Hutcheon, 2006). At the end of the day, filmmakers want their movies to be successful, adapting an American classic is a risk, but it was a risk Luhrmann was willing to take.

# 3. Analysis

To answer the research question, of what makes a film adaptation successful, I must dive into the chosen film itself as well as use research from the chosen literature to conclude. Film analysis is necessary for this research as most of the changes we see are done on screen, that the audience can see.

“According to its dictionary meaning, “to adapt” is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable” (Hutcheon, 2006). With that quote in mind, let us jump into Luhrmann’s *The Great Gatsby* world and see what adjustments he made to make the film suitable for 2013’s audience.

## 3.1 Film Analysis

“Like parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called “sources”. Unlike parodies, however, adaptations usually have openly announce this relationship” (Hutcheon, 2006).

Baz Luhrmann’s adaptation is a fresh take on the classic American novel that is *The Great Gatsby*. While the 1974 adaptation tried to make a ‘perfect’ adaptation, though, with more focus on the love story, Luhrmann aimed to modernize the piece for a new audience, and bring the story back to life. Luhrmann also decides to focus on Gatsby and Daisy’s love story, this is because Fitzgerald has said himself that he regretted not making the book more of a romantic novel, Griggs tells us. (Griggs, 2016)

In 1974, Jack Clayton made his adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* (Kauffmann, 2012). In the 1974 adaptation, much is changed to keep the

full focus on the love story. Examples of this are, in the book, Jordan tells Nick about Gatsby and Daisy's affair, while in the 1974 version, Daisy herself tells her cousin. Minor changes like that changed the narrative ever so slightly. The 'extreme' focus on Gatsby and Daisy in the 1974 version makes Nick feel misplaced, and more like a fly on the wall than a character, this makes Nick seem like a reliable source for the story, which he shouldn't be as he has opinions, even though he states:

"In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores" (Fitzgerald, 1925).

Though as soon as Nick starts introducing us to characters or meets new ones, he judges them right away, which is the reason why the characters may seem like they are overplayed in the 2013 movie, they are a result of Nick's judgment. Luhrmann justifies, as well as explains, Nick's part as the narrator by making him the writer of the story, and in the end, he becomes the Author of the book *The Great Gatsby*. Luhrmann is insinuating that Nick is Fitzgerald himself.

The film or book you see or read first is often what you base your further opinions on, if you watch Luhrmann's film first, the 1974 version will seem dull and slow, same with the older versions. If reading the book was the first you did, no adaptation will be perfect in your own opinion, either lacking something or making too big of a change. Luhrmann reveals during a Cannes interview that DiCaprio would drive Luhrmann crazy, in a good way, because he always asked, "are we honoring the book?". That was their main and singular focus, as they wanted to honor the classic American novel. (Luhrmann, The Great Gatsby Press Conference - Cannes Film Festival 2013 with Baz Luhrmann & Leonardo DiCaprio, 2013)

To keep an organized analysis with a hint of Luhrmann, I have used the titles of his behind-the-scenes chapters as the names of my chapters in the film analysis.

### **3.1.1 The swinging sounds of GATSBY**

Familiarity is one of the biggest factors when it comes to adaptation. You want the viewer to feel like this is the same book they read before coming to the cinema. He does not make the story without the viewer, an example of the familiarity he uses is when he uses Lana del Rey's song whenever something about Daisy and Gatsby comes up or they talk, after watching the movie, we know that that song is their love theme.

"Music adds such an enormously new dimension to a piece, it's enough for any audience (or critic) to absorb at one hearing. If the characters and situations are familiar, listeners can relax and let the music take them somewhere new and wonderful" (Hutcheon, 2006) .

The film's soundtrack, which contains the famous artists and bands, has both new recordings of some of their songs to fit the movie better, but also some original songs which were used for promotional purposes and not used in the movie itself except for in the credits. Kill and Run by Sia is an example of this.

The use of Young and Beautiful by Lana del Rey helps braid together the romance between Gatsby and Daisy, reminding each of us of when they think of each other and love each other. After the hotel scene, when we are made to believe their romance is dead, the theme never plays again, confirming that their love is indeed dead.

Young and Beautiful are used a lot at the start of the movie, leading up to their affair. Once their affair starts, we hear a more mysterious soundtrack with some of the same notes from the song, telling the viewer that the love is still there, but now something is not as it should be. The

song is represented in many different ways, from just the vocals to a slow piano, to an orchestra version. The best example of the latter is the song on the album called Hotel Sayre (Armstrong, 2013), where it goes from a subtle hint at the song before the theme gets stronger, then Lana Del Rey joins in before the song calms back down again. That song is used when Jordan tells Nick of Daisy and Gatsby's love story. There are undoubtedly parts of the song sneaked in somewhere else on the album other than the obvious ones. This is a clever way to tell the audience what Daisy feels without having Nick tell us, it also blends in beautifully with the already semiotic book.

*"Soundtracks in the movies therefore enhance and direct audience response to characters and actions"* (Hutcheon, 2006). After you, most unknowingly, hear these sounds while watching the movie, you piece the puzzle together without maybe realizing it, that is the power a good soundtrack has.

*"The name of the music director/composer does not usually come to mind as a primary adapter, although he or she creates the music that reinforces emotions or provokes reactions in the audience and directs our interpretation of different characters, perhaps solo violins for sweet innocence or a snarling bass clarinet to make us uncomfortable around ambivalent characters"* (Hutcheon, 2006). The music in Gatsby is repetitive, introducing us at the start to certain sounds and scores for different characters and feelings. This strengthens the familiarity, as soon as we get into the movie, we get a sense of what is going on off the music alone. An example of this is when we see the Buchanan manor for the first time, it plays a strong orchestral tune that we often associate with wealthy characters.

Fitzgerald used a lot of symbolism in his book; examples of this could be the green light and the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, who haunts the

Valley of Ashes. Luhrmann uses the same form of symbolism in his film but emphasizes it with a musical score to further express the importance of these symbols represent. Every time the green light is mentioned, a metallic violin-like sound is made, now made to also represent Gatsby's unreachable dream.

"The idea of infusing hip hop, the ideas of giving the 1920's that modernism, that isn't going to separate you from being within that time period, but makes you sort of understand the cultural references, and what it would be like if these people existed today" (Dicaprio, 2013).

Finding the official soundtrack on Spotify is hard, as it does not exist an album with all of the songs collected, though there are a few separate ones. There is one album with the modern rap songs, these versions are what are being used in the movie. Then there is another album made by The Bryan Ferry orchestra who records covers of modern songs as well as does some of the soundtracks for the movie. The last album is by Craig Armstrong, who does the orchestral score for the movie.

Luhrmann is very eager to tell the viewers of his ideas, and through his explanation, it becomes clear to us that he is very well educated in the book and about the period. He mentions that Fitzgerald often referred to modern music, which at the time was jazz, even though it was still considered controversial to listen to. "Fitzgerald put music front and center in his novel. He took African American street music called jazz, and he put it right as a star in the book. It is in the book; the words are in the book. And people said "why are you doing that? It's a fad it'll be gone next week" and he said "because I want this book to feel right here right now" (Luhrmann, The Great Gatsby Press Conference - Cannes Film Festival 2013 with Baz Luhrmann & Leonardo DiCaprio, 2013).

Luhrmann uses this feel of the music and modernizes it as well by using hip hop, which at the time was considered controversial when it comes to

the language used in the songs. Using modern music, which was controversial yet popular for us in 2013, gives us a greater understanding of what jazz was. Using a mix of jazz and popular music, and having Jay-Z as an executive producer, also brings in a bigger audience from their fans, who might not be the biggest fans of the movie genre. Considering the other films that exist from the same era, Luhrmann's take becomes a breath of fresh air as it makes an effort to make us understand the period by using language and music we know and understand instead of expecting us to already know or having to tell us. "The music was the glue to the characters" (Luhrmann & Armstrong, 2013), said Craig Armstrong, who was responsible for the orchestral soundtrack.

According to Luhrmann in the behind-the-scenes interview, all of the songs have a meaning, they're not just random to be cool and modern. "When we get to the full expression of the song, you get an aha moment" (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes*, 2013). Throughout the movie, we get different layers of songs that lead up to one specific moment. Also included are songs that repeat themselves in their true form, like the first song in the orchestral album which includes snippets of almost every song, it is almost like the song is telling us the story before it happens. That song is called Overture and Sanitarium (Armstrong, 2013)

### **3.1.2 Razzle Dazzle: The fashion of the '20s**

Costumes are an easy and effortless way to introduce a character without having to spend a lot of time explain who they are and what they do. I will be giving examples of the wardrobe for the characters in the movie, as well as show examples of how colors can be cleverly used. Luhrmann uses a lot of color in the movie and is not afraid to hold back. Pictures will be used frequently in this chapter so both the reader and the writer are on the same page.



The use of costumes and extravagant rooms tells us about the characters we meet. While a book can spend pages upon pages explaining how a character looks and acts, and in this case, how our narrator Nick feels about them, the movie only gets a few seconds to do. An example is when



Nick meets Myrtle for the first time. Myrtle is dressed in bright color, clearly standing out from the area surrounding her as well as not fitting in with Nick and Tom.

*1 Myrtle Wilson, the first time we see her in Luhrmann's adaptation.*



*2 George Wilson and Tom Buchanan with Myrtle in the background.*

Wilson on the other hand is dressed in brown, gray, and black colors, he is almost blending in in the Valley of Ashes

Though picture number 2 seems to be edited to be a

bit darker than the original color grade for the film, it still shows how Myrtle steals the eye of not only Tom and Nick but also the viewer. By this point, we don't know specifically who is Tom's lover, but it is made very clear right away. He mentions to Nick that he wants Nick to meet "his girl" right before the scene showed in picture 2, which makes it obvious by the way Myrtle stands out.

The theme of “trying to fit in where you don’t belong” is a continuing theme in *The Great Gatsby*, and Myrtle and Gatsby are both victims of that. Myrtle wears bright clothes and is almost impossible to miss, and Gatsby wears colorful shirts and a pink suit. They are both trying to be big and extravagant, though Myrtle sticks out more. On the poster to the film, it is not hard to see who doesn’t belong there:



3 Movie poster

While the others were in darker clothes, Myrtle is in bright red, leaning onto the logo as if to get attention. The color used for Myrtle also reflects her personality: she is loud and bright, just like the color she is wearing. Our eyes naturally fall on the bright color and she steals the show. Daisy on the other hand is the only one wearing light colors, almost looking like an angel as she sits alone at the bottom of the poster.



*4 Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle*

Myrtle's hair and make-up are also done differently than for Jordan and Daisy. In these 3 pictures of the three women, Daisy and Jordan uses the same style of make-up and hair, though Jordan's make-up tends to be a little darker at the parties. Daisy and Jordan look like they came right out of a 1920s fashion magazine. Myrtle on the other hand has a completely different hairstyle, as well as darker, make-up with eyelashes pointed downward. She almost resembles a pin-up girl to make a reference. Myrtle's make-up is bold, just as she is, Myrtle likes to stand out and it is very clear in this adaptation. One thing to note is she looks very clean and well dressed to be living in The Valley of Ashes, especially compared to her husband Wilson.

"There is yet another rarely considered candidate for the role of the adapter: the film and television editor, whose craft, as Michael Ondaatje has insisted, is "mostly unimagined and certainly overlooked"(2002). As editor Walter Murch puts it, "when it works, film edition – which could just as easily be called 'film construction' – identifies and exploits underlying patterns of sound and image that are not obvious on the surface"(qtd. In

Ondaatje 2002). The editor sees and creates the whole in a way no one else does. Yet none of these artists – screenwriter, composer, designer, cinematographer, actor, editor, and the list goes on – is usually considered the primary adapter of a film or television production” (Hutcheon, 2006).

Baz Luhrmann and his wife, Catherine Martin, have always worked as a team when it comes to film production. She does costume and production design for the film, while Luhrmann directs the film and gets involved with the musical score and editing. When watching the movie, it does feel like all departments walk hand in hand, the music does not crash with the outfits and sets.

“An actor makes the character, the director makes the film, the script provides the story that everyone tells, and clothes are just there to provide an adjunct and a support system to the characterization of the actor” (Luhrmann & Martin, *Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes*, 2013). Said the producer, costume, and production designer, Catherine Martin. Martin won two Oscars for the movie, one for costume design and one for production design together with set decorator Beverly Dunn. (IMDb, 2014) The costumes the actor gets for their role often helps them get more into character as well as understand exactly how the director and costume designer imagine the character. Small details in the clothes, or simply how they dress can help create the character, as what we wear can say a lot about us.

The clothing is one of the biggest homages to Fitzgerald. All of the suits used in the movie are from Brooks Brothers, a company Fitzgerald himself used quite frequently. Another company where Fitzgerald took his business was Tiffany and co, who also agreed to help the film with their old archive of jewelry from the '20s. Prada was another help in the costume department, they have always thrived to have fashion with an

old-style, yet still modern today, almost like the movie itself. Their dresses for the women were old enough to fit the time, yet modern enough for the flappers.

As mentioned earlier, the clothes used by the characters are also a characteristic, examples of this are that Tom uses a lot of blue clothes with stripes, meaning his life is rich and structured. Gatsby's style is very Londonesque, with a lot of colors, and follows London fashion at the time, could this be because he pretends to have studied at Oxford? Nick's style is old style, it shows he is not rich, but not too poor either. All of these costumes as from the 1920s, and the specific characteristics are not easy to see if you're not looking for symbolism or you don't know much about the clothing at the time, but you don't need to know too much, it is easily simplified; Tom uses blue, rich, royal blood, means he's rich. Gatsby is full of colors and life. Nick uses boring brown that blends in.

### **3.1.3 "Within and without" with Tobey Maguire**

Both the DVD and iTunes include the behind-the-scenes footage they made throughout production. Tobey Maguire, who plays Nick, claims he always brings a camera to every film he is in to capture behind the scenes, both for himself and as "fanservice." In these behind-the-scenes, there are also several interviews, some with the actors and then with the director and other departments. Using this bonus content gives us an inside look at what went on, as well as gives further explanation into some of the choices.

Many directors try to keep their job to only directing, but some are more enthusiastic and see the film as a whole, making them join both the music-making as well as editing. Luhrmann is a very dedicated director and wants to make his movies a piece of art and keep the project exactly as he wants it. This means he involves himself in the different departments to create exactly the film he wants. Music has always been



especially important to Luhrmann in his moviemaking, hence why he has so many contacts from the music industry.

The big topic when it comes to the 2013 film and why it is so modern, is just exactly that. The film has a very modern feel, looks modern, yet uses old techniques as well as old-style clothes made modern. All of this modernization is so that a new audience will understand how big a Gatsby party actually was, but by showing it to us as a party today audience would recognize as big, a party with a lot of people and a lot of booze in a huge mansion. He did this to connect with the audience who were not versed in the 1920s. Teens seeing a real '20s party today would most likely think it looked boring.

Politics does not play a big part in the film, though some hot takes are used to characterize Tom Buchanan, which, if shown in the 1920s, would spark debate. During the dinner, Tom starts making racist remarks, and for modern readers, he is a douchebag for saying this and he becomes one of the villains in the story. It does not get much better when he brings Nick along to meet his lover, nor when he makes Gatsby yell at him. The yelling scene does not happen in the book, but the scene and the movie itself needed a climax where it all goes wrong for Gatsby. In the book, Daisy seems more materialistic and cares about wealth and reputation, in the film, this is not so present. In the book, she leaves Gatsby when she realizes he has been dealing with illegal bonds as well as bootleg alcohol. Having the whole movie lead up to just a speaking scene before everyone goes home would most likely make viewers feel tricked. There is no doubt the movie has action, with its fast-driving cars and parties, but the climax scene needed a bit more.

Gatsby's reaction is a reaction of panic, as well as being unexpected. It happens when Gatsby has mentioned that he and Tom are the same, as

Gatsby has just as much money as Tom, he now sees them as equals. This seems to be Gatsby's last argument as Tom goes on to explain how Gatsby is nothing like any of them, which sends Gatsby into a fit of anger and he lashes out.



*5 Gatsby about to hit Tom*

"Gatsby looked in that moment, as if he had killed a man". – Nick Carraway (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby* , 2013)

"On the question of whether the actors can be considered as adapters, the case is no simpler. As in staged works, the performers are the ones who embody and give material existence to the adaptation. Although clearly

having to follow the screenplay, some actors admit that they seek background and inspiration from the adapted text, especially if the characters they are to play are well-known literary ones. But does this make them conscious adapters? (Hutcheon, 2006)

There is a lengthy process that must be gone through when adapting, as mentioned earlier, someone first adapts the original text, the director then adapts his version, and the actors are an adaptation of the director's adaptation. It all depends on the work done beforehand, in my opinion. If the actor has read *The Great Gatsby* themselves, as well as researched what Fitzgerald has said about the characters in interviews or texts later, then I would say they are conscious adapters. If they only get the script and act out what the director has written, they are adapting his work. Knowing how much work the actor has done prior to filming is hard, and sometimes impossible unless they are asked by an interviewer, so most of the time when watching a movie, the responsibility falls on the director himself.

"But in a more literal sense, what actors actually adapt in this sense is the screenplay" (Hutcheon, 2006). This quote by Hutcheon is absolutely true as it is very direct in its meaning, we don't usually know how much work the actor has gone through prior to the movie's release. When asked in later interviews about the movie, DiCaprio tells us that he used the book called *Trimalchio* (Graff, 2017), the first version of the story of Gatsby, which was later edited down to the Gatsby we know today. The book gives a more detailed perspective of Gatsby, helping the actor get to know the character more before jumping into it.

Maguire talked about the work behind adaptations for actors in an interview by Jake Hamilton.

*Interviewer:* "We always talk with actors that are in movies based on classic books, and they always say 'oh yes, I have read the book, and I



did so much research and everything. I was wondering, could there ever be a benefit, to not reading any book? Could you ever consider going into a movie like this, and just completely ignoring the source material?"

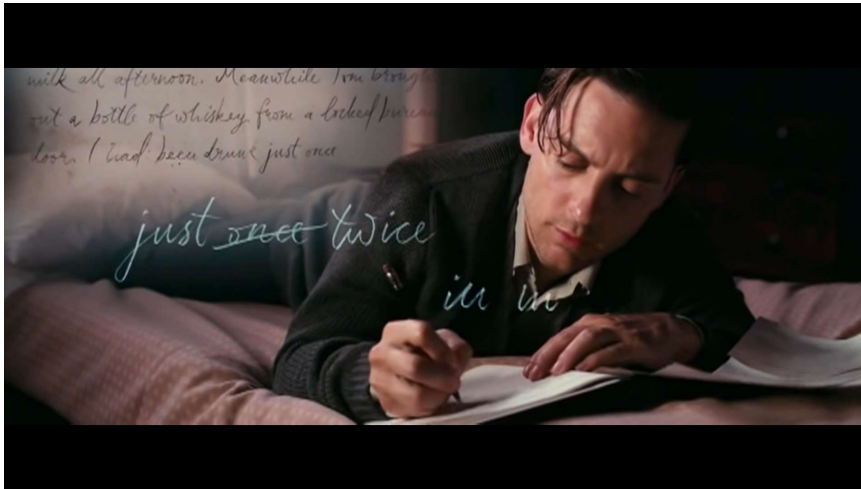
After a brief moment of thinking, Maguire replied: "I don't think so. You know, I certainly think that a lot of this is working with your collaborator, working with Baz and Leo, and Catherine Martine and the other actors. But the truth is you are sifting through this really rich material to get hints and clues and also actually use the material. So much of what we did was informed by the book and is the book, so it would be hard for me to imagine doing that. It is like, you know, ignoring a great resource. (...) It is possible, particularly like, when you're talking about tonally, cause you could really take a leap or make a great departure, but if you're adapting something or if you're making something that is from source material it would be hard to do it if you're not familiar with the source material."  
(Maguire, 2013)

Hearing both actors say this lets us know that in this adaptation, they did their research and got to know the characters. Doing research on such a famous story is crucial to get the characters right, everything they need to know will not be in the script. When adopting an American classic like the book is, there are also extremely grand expectations for the actors to do their characters, as well as Fitzgerald justice.

Luhrmann does a slight change to the ending of the story; instead of dying, not knowing if Daisy would ever call, the phone starts ringing right before Gatsby is shot by Wilson. While we see Gatsby swimming in his pool, Daisy is shown staring at the phone before picking it up. He hears the phone as well as his butler saying, "I know Mr. Gatsby will be very happy that you called", and then Gatsby is shot. In the book, no phone rings and Gatsby dies, knowing Daisy never called. (Fitzgerald, 1925)

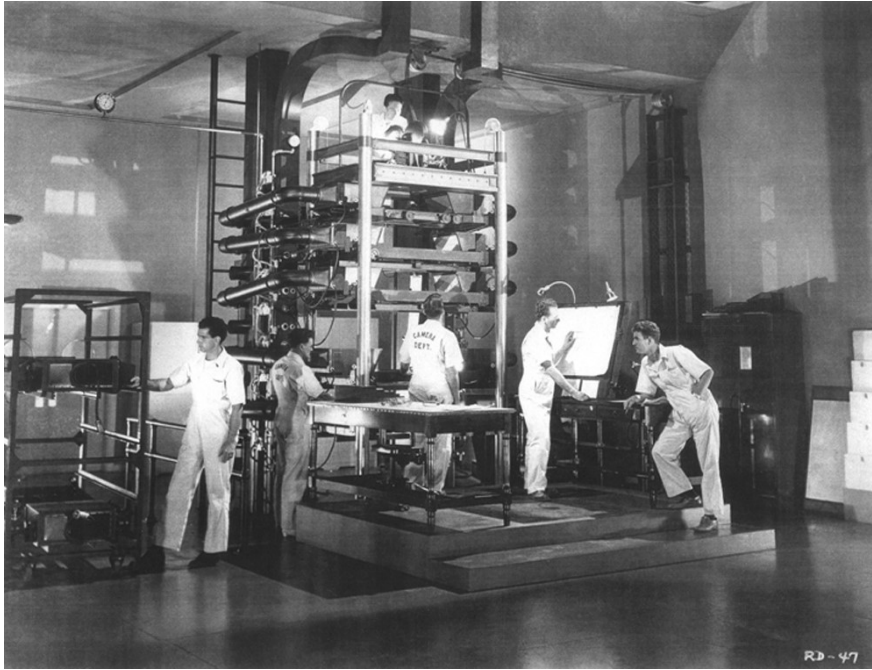
### 3.1.4 Fitzgerald's visual poetry

When figuring out how to film the movie, Luhrmann looked at old 1920s films and a few older ones to get the look and the feel these movies were giving. While watching them, he noticed many of them used a sort of 3D effect, hence why he decided to use 3D himself. The technique is a form of optical illusion where they create many layers on the screen.



6 Example of 3D layering

To use 3D was a bold choice, and although many do not like it, Luhrmann makes it work in his own way. The layering creates a reason for the 3D to be there and considering it was a film technique used in the period, it becomes a homage to that as well. An example of a movie that used this was Snow White from 1937. In art class for our bachelor, we learned how they used layering to create depth in a picture, they used a camera called a multiplane camera.



### 7 Multiplane Camera

Although that camera was not used to make *The Great Gatsby*, it was done digitally. Using an old method can become nostalgic for older people watching the movie, reminding them of how movies used to be. This method also solved much of the problem with voice-over, as it added meaning and depth to the voice-over itself.

Voiceovers are highly debated, some think they are needed, while others feel it's a distraction. The story of *Gatsby* has one very prominent narrator and storyteller, Nick Carraway. Hutcherson says voice-over works when filmmakers "effectively use voice-overs throughout to make one character the moral center of the work" (Hutcheon, 2006).

To justify the voice-over for Nick, Luhrmann added a narrative where Nick was placed in Perkins Sanatorium, talking to a shrink. Luhrmann needed a way for the character to tell the story, he needed a character to pull the story out of Nick: the shrink. In Fitzgerald's time, psychoanalysis started becoming popular, so they spoke to a doctor who did just this, and he said in his technique he encouraged his patients to paint or write their stories as a way to express themselves. Nick starts by telling the story verbally before he is told to write it down. Throughout the movie, we cut back to

Nick writing and talking to the shrink, his writing also fills the screen in different scenes. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby* - Behind the scenes , 2013)

The problem with the other *Gatsby* movies that used voice-over, was it was never clear who he actually told it to, which made the method of using voice-over lose meaning and more like a separate distraction than a storytelling device. Who could Nick tell this story to while still making sense and not changing the storyline? In the 2013 version, Luhrmann almost uses Nick as the Fitzgerald of the movie, using different things Fitzgerald did and making them one with Nick. One of these things was the simple fact that Fitzgerald would write his stories by hand and then use a typewriter, Nick also does this.

The mix of Nick's writing and the 3D layering is used to point out certain



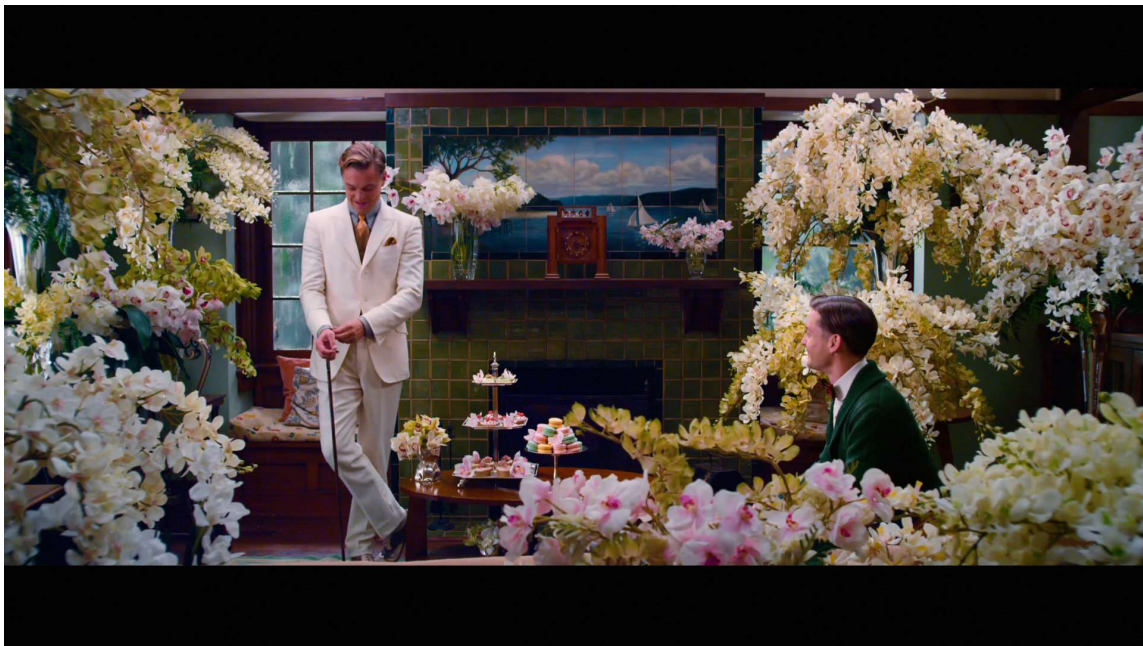
8 *An example of the 3D layering*

things that are considered important for the viewer to know or to add to what is happening. An example is in picture 6, Nick writes "I have been drunk just twice in my life and the second time

was that afternoon" (Fitzgerald, 1925), to show the result of the pill Myrtle's sister gave him and the drink he just chugged, the colors pop when he writes afternoon. This is the last thing being said before a montage of the party starts.

When Nick invites Daisy to come to his house, to meet Gatsby without her knowing, Gatsby sends gardeners to Nick's house to freshen the place up before she arrives. In doing so, he also goes wild with the flowers, filling

the entire living room with orchids. Martin, the production designer mentions in the behind-the-scenes interview that there is no mention in the book of what flowers Gatsby brings, but there is a mention of Daisy's girlhood, where she goes to bed after a dance and there is a crushed orchid on the floor (Luhmann & Martin, *Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes*, 2013). Orchids at that time would be a rare, hothouse flower as she explains it. Those types of flowers would be exceedingly difficult to get, especially in the quantity he gets for Daisy.



9 "Have you got everything you need?" Gatsby asks. "Perhaps more flowers?" Nick jokes

Not everyone would know that orchids were difficult to get at that time, but some might know they are a little pricy even today, and that quantity today would also be a crazy amount. Again, an example of the "go big or go home", but also another way of showing Gatsby's desperate attempt to impress Daisy.

The editing is also playful in many ways, mixing fast cuts, montages, slow motion, and long takes, Luhmann leaves no version of editing untouched, and it all fits perfectly in their respective places. To mention some examples of the editing, I'd start with the scene where Nick drives to town with Gatsby: there are fast cuts and everything seems to move very fast, but why is that? Luhmann explains to us that to drive a car, that Gatsby

would presumably have at that time would feel like driving a jet engine today. People in the 1920s are not used to the fast-moving cars like that, and since we are following the events as Nick remembers them, the car goes really fast even though to us today, it would be a normal speed. Another example of the editing is the cuts made during Myrtle's party, showing only parts of the party indicates those moments are the few moments Nick remembers, and he only seems to 'wake up' when Tom slaps Myrtle, this is also when the cuts go back to real-time.

### **3.1.5 Deleted Scenes**

Story getting eliminated through the adaptation process is one of the things most people criticize, why did they cut this character? Why not tell this story? When discussing the adaptation process, knowing why a filmmaker made that decision is key, and luckily for me, Luhrmann talks about that in his behind-the-scenes. He mentions that the hardest part about adapting a book to film is 'what to let go', there might be scenes you love, so you must decide if you need them, can the story be told without them? After the elimination process, you are left with the scenes you must have to tell the story. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes*, 2013)

He did this change to keep the hope up for Gatsby until the end, this also included removing a scene right before the famous confrontation at the hotel:

Daisy is about to admit her love for Gatsby in front of Tom, but she cowards out of it and suggests they go to town, walking around the room in a sort of panic before fussing about a lighter she cannot seem to light before Gatsby comes over to help her. "'Ah," she cried, "you look so cool." Their eyes met, and they stared together at each other, alone in space. With an effort she glanced down at the table. "You always look so cool," she repeated. She had told him that she loved him, and Tom

Buchanan saw.”” (Fitzgerald, 1925) That scene was kept in the movie, but mentioning it is important in the explanation of why the second part of that scene was cut:

Everyone leaves the room except for Gatsby and Nick, and Nick turns to Gatsby “she loves you, her voice is full of it” to which Gatsby replies “no, her voice is full of money”. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby* , 2013). This scene was filmed and is still to be seen in the deleted scenes on the DVD, but Luhrmann said he decided to remove it. The whole movie is leading up to the big climax at the Plaza where Gatsby confronts Tom, but with that scene, the viewer gets the feeling that Gatsby has given up on Daisy. Luhrmann says he removed it to keep the focus on “who will win Daisy”, as soon as Tom, in terms, runs out the door to get to town, the viewer needs Gatsby to be 100% into “rescuing Daisy, winning Daisy”. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes* , 2013)

Subtle changes like that had to be made to keep the focus on one thing during the entire movie. In a book, the writer has all the time and pages in the world to say what they want, but in a film, you have limited time. When having that limited time, you must decide what the main focus of the story is for you and what you want to portray, that is the first step of an adapter, deciding what makes it on screen.

To leave the last pages of the book, which described what Nick was doing after Gatsby’s death, was a narrative decision on Luhrmann’s part. As mentioned before, he cuts away Nick and Jordan’s love story because there is no space for it, the story is not about Nick’s relationships, it is about his ‘great’ neighbor that Nick gains interest in and observes throughout the story.

When Gatsby is dead, there is no more story to tell, to bring in all the scenes after would drag the movie on for another 20 minutes for no reason. There are three deleted scenes after Gatsby’s death: one where

Gatsby's father visits to see his son for the last time, one where Nick meets Tom a while after the events of Gatsby, and the last one is his last talk with Jordan. Let us break them down.

"One of the things you can do in a novel, beautifully, and Fitzgerald does it beautifully, you know you read a novel, very rarely in one setting, so you can come back to it. And after Gatsby's death, there's a whole lot of revelation, and you know, I think in the novel it's the next...after Gatsby's death it was a blur of reporters and nightmares and blah blah blah. And then suddenly, everyone abandoned Gatsby, and Nick even goes and sees Wolfsheim (A gangster Gatsby worked with). And you realize just how shallow everyone-, everyone has a reason why to abandon him. And then all of a sudden, boom, we had, we shot a wonderful scene, with a beautiful actor, Ralph Cotterill, all of a sudden, Gatsby's fathers there.

There's this other great piece, where he shows a copy of 'Hopalong Cassidy' and in it, you see that James Gatz has written 'be better to parents, workout, learn about electricity' you know, he's got ambition. He's got a vision of himself for the future.

The only problem with this is, apart from the fact that it was drawing away from the Nick-Gatsby, was that we've learned all of this already, and we couldn't see that until we had actually done it. So wherever, however touching the scene was, really it was confusing this reinternalizing of Nick. We see this is something you do in cinema, we see young Gatz very early on, when Nick Carraway says 'he's real name was James Gatz', we see the little boy, already with vision, reaching up, having a vision. So we know this: we know he was born with ambition, we've been told it earlier.

So again it was a very very hard decision and it was in the film for a very long time." (Luhmann, The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes , 2013)

It is easy to see when Luhmann explains the scenes before showing them, this scene, in particular, was one he wanted to keep. For a long time, as he said, it was in the cut too. The scene getting cut is a direct result of an adaptation process, it was intended to keep it but when looking at the big picture, quite literary, it did not fit in. This decision was also to keep the pacing natural, so when you left the cinema, you were still in some shock of what just happened instead of waiting for the last 20 minutes to finish. This does not mean the scene with Gatsby's father was not good, it was just not needed to end the story.

After Gatsby's death, the viewer, along with Nick himself, is stumbling around a world we do not recognize. As Luhmann mentioned, we don't need to specifically see what happens to Gatsby, we see that no one shows up anyways, what we also see is Daisy and Tom leaving as well as Nick's harsh words about them: "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy — they smashed up things and people and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness" (Fitzgerald, 1925). That quote tells



us that Tom and Daisy are not coming back, we do not need more confirmation about them than that. When watching the film in full, Luhrmann realized that the story of *The Great Gatsby* is actually about the relationship between Nick and Gatsby, even more than it is about Gatsby and Daisy. The story is about Nick trying to figure out why the person people seem to throw away like trash, "is the most hopeful, human being he's ever met and is ever likely to meet again. And why this guy he wrote the story about named Gatsby, is, in fact, great" (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes* , 2013).

In the book, the relationship between Jordan and Nick fades away: "she was talking on the phone about the country club and then we weren't talking anymore." (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes* , 2013). In the film as it is, Jordan still sort of fades as she becomes less important to our narrator. They did film a romantic scene between the two where they made out in a taxi, yet that ended up being cut out. It was hard to use the romance as it did not conclude, as mentioned above it just fades away. If they had been the most important romance in the film, then you would need a beginning, middle, and end, and there was not enough time to squeeze that in in a way that it would make sense and not feel forced. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes* , 2013) During test screenings of the film, before those scenes were cut, the audience was confused as they did not understand if Nick and Jordan were together or not. The focus simply had to be on the primary romance, which was Gatsby and daisy.

The last scene that was excluded was Nick's run-in with Tom. Luhrmann mentioned they first wrote a confrontation scene with all the characters which did not exist in the book, this was not filmed as they figured it would not make sense. In the book, there is a scene where Nick sees Tom

in a jewelry store. The takeaway from that scene is that the audience and reader realize that Tom has moved on from all the events around Gatsby. "Again, the pulled scene was a scene that just needed, for all its value, it distracted from this idea of going back into Nick's internalized experience." (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes*, 2013)

### **3.1.6 Conclusion of the film analysis**

The story of Gatsby is a rather short story but with a lot of detail, some of which people missed within the movie itself if they had not watched the interviews prior to release. We do not need a long explanation of how Tom looks, you see it, and Edgerton, the actor portraying Tom, acts it out.

Some characters are cut as they do not make any difference to the movie, and the ending is changed to bring Gatsby's hope through to the end.

There is a lot of heart and soul put into this adaptation by Luhrmann and Martin, though much is overlooked as it is information mostly found in the DVD and some magazines. The movie is big and extravagant, using the original story as its bible, but sadly, the whole bible that is *The Great Gatsby* didn't make it onto the big screen and based on Luhrmann's explanation it, it is in the end justified.

## **3.2 Reception analysis**

It does not matter if the filmmakers did everything I went through in my film analysis if it is lost to the audience. "Something is always lost in translation; and yet something can also be gained" (Griggs, 2016). Some things get changed as they are filming, when they notice something does not flow and change it into a better solution, these are also things people can react to when reviewing the movie.

Reviews and box office success are one of the two main things people look at when checking if the movie they are about to watch is worth their time.

IMDb has all this information and more, you can see trivia, reviews, box office, etc. To look through the reception of *The Great Gatsby*, I am going to be using IMDb, Rotten tomatoes, and Metacritic, as these are the pages commonly used by audiences, and also because IMDb isn't the 'end all be all'. Looking at the critics and people's reviews, I am going to form an opinion on how the movie was received.

Something that can happen for a lot of projects, is people disliking them after the first viewing. Giving the film a second try a little later might give the viewer a completely different experience. Though viewers tend to turn away from things they do not like, which is understandable and natural, I might like spiders if I give them a chance, but I would rather pass. My point is, circumstance has a lot to say when it comes to your judgment of a movie, which means I should always take the reviews with a little grain of salt.

Many of the critics who come upon these three webpages might be the same, as they gather information from online magazines as well. Though I will only include them in the chapters from the webpage where I found them. Looking at the reviews will help to answer the research question, as the public's opinion is important when determining if a film is successful or not.

### **3.2.1 Internet Movie Database (IMDb)**

The internet movie database is a website created to tell you all about films, which actors are in them, trivia, release dates, etc. It is created almost as a fan service where you can look up famous actors or find interesting new films to watch. On the website, you can also leave reviews on the films, giving the film an overall IMDb score, which many look to to see if the movie they are about to watch is good or not. The website was

created in 1990, though it did not come to the web until 1993. In 1998 it became a subsidiary of Amazon. (Wolfberg, 2018) Amazon bought the company in 1998 and intended to use it for sales and advertisement for DVDs. The site can also be used by film creators, in 2002, IMDbPro was launched, helping film creators contact each other as it included information on how to contact creators or their agents. (Jamie, 2020)

When comparing how many rated this movie across the three web pages, IMDb wins with over 400,000 more ratings than Rotten Tomatoes. While working on this chapter, I got curious and asked my film bachelor class as well as the class I have now, which of the three pages they used for finding info on films they're either watching, talking about, or curious about: they all answered IMDb, so with the rating difference in mind as well as my two film class's answer, I can surely say IMDb is a page people trust to research movies as well as read reviews.

It is also the oldest page out of the three. When looking at Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic, it is easy to see the similarity between the three. Metacritic seems to go for a broader system, including song albums and books, which IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes do not, as they are movie and actor based as well as video games.

IMDb, much like Wikipedia, is volunteer-based, as logged-in users can make edits to an actor's page or add facts to another, though there is an approval process by the IMDb team to check if the information given is legitimate before it is posted.

On IMDb, the overall review for the movie is 7,2/10 from 526,001 reviewers. While looking at the IMDb page and the rating, we can also see what age demographic liked the movie the most, as you have to have a

registered user with your age to rate the movie.

### Rating By Demographic

	All Ages	<18	18-29	30-44	45+
All	7,2 526 370	7,4 197	7,5 107 202	7,1 213 769	6,8 37 950
Males	7,1 274 841	7,5 121	7,4 68 393	7,1 154 705	6,8 28 901
Females	7,5 109 699	7,1 53	7,8 35 551	7,4 55 630	7,1 8 244
Top 1000 Voters		US Users		Non-US Users	
6,5 628		7,0 58 030		7,2 213 839	

10 Graph from IMDb

When looking at the graph above (IMDb, n.d.), we see that the film is highest rated by females between the ages of 18-29, though after that the ratings decline ever so slightly for all genders. It is also notable to mention the US rating is lower than non-US ratings, could this be because the US users have read the book and know the story well?

When looking at the reviews on IMDb they are quite mixed, some quite enjoyed the movie while some others thought it was a bad adaptation and not a good representation of Fitzgerald's work. Luhrmann has, as mentioned before, a specific style which includes a lot of colors, popular or a lot of music, and fast editing, which not everyone seems to like, especially not for this film. This movie is no exception as it brings all these things and more. This of course sparks controversy as *Gatsby* is an old-time period piece that some say cannot be modernized and should be kept as the period piece it is.

Luhrmann's version tops the list with its 7,2/10, topping all three of the older adaptations. The only screen adaptation that has gained a higher score, was a live read published in 2021, it got 8.6/10. (IMDb, 2021). This again puts Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* as the best adaptation made of Fitzgerald's story. Though we also have to remember that during the time

of the first movies, even the 1974's version, IMDb was not yet created, the website was launched in 1990. This means the people who have seen the movies, would have to come back to it 26 years after they had first seen the movie to give the site their honest opinion. The first written review for the 1974 version on the page was posted in December 1998, giving the movie a 7/10 but warning the viewer that it is clear the movie was made in the 1970s. (Spoon, 1998). After that first review, the next is like night and day, some praise the movie for being the most faithful to the book while others say the complete opposite. In the end, the 1974 version has, to date, a score of 6,4/10. (IMDb, n.d.)

On any movie, as long as you have an account, you can leave a review. After having left it, people can read it and rate if it was good or bad feedback, this also helps the analysis, if a lot of viewers agree with what is being said, the comment can be conveyed as "more valid." This is also a way to agree or disagree with the statement made. Looking at the highest-rated helpfulness review might give us what most people reviewing the movie thinks, though the average score remains the same.

The worst review with the most "helpfulness" likes, 131 out of 214, which means over half of the people reading it agreed, gave the movie a 1/10 on the site and said:

"An incredibly noisy mess of a film filled with nonsensical dialog, modern music that makes no sense in the setting and acting like out of cartoons. This director is all flash over substance, seems like he directed it on 10 hits of acid. Nothing original, nothing new about it. This is a film for simpletons and the weak minded.

Dull beyond belief. Headache inducing. You will want to shoot yourself in the head after twenty minutes. I can't imagine anyone who actually liked this and have to give it a one star to counteract the 10 star reviews by people who most certainly don't know what good movies are about.

Simply ruined Gatsby, the book was never like this, but anyone under 30 will think it's cool. Rap music? Really?" (Headly66, 2013)

Though it is impossible to know the age of this user, it said they were registered in 2000. (IMDb, n.d.) They also mentioned they did not like the rap music, could this all lead down to it being an age thing? Does it have

to do with people's general taste in music? The film cannot rely on its viewers knowing anything about the progress, and it does not matter as greatly as the filmmakers want it to either. Using Fitzgerald's suit company is cool, yet it does not do anything for me as a viewer, nor does it make the film a better product, as a whole? As just a movie, not at all.

Luhrmann is known for a "go big or go home" style of directing, which not everyone seems to like, just the same as people not liking the same genera of movies and series. So, in the end, even when you like the genera, the movie itself might not be to your liking. If you liked the calmer version directed by Clayton, Luhrmann's circus of a film can become overwhelming, and with barely any time to take a breather as there is action happening almost all the time, the movie can become chaotic and in the end: too much.

### **3.2.2 Rotten Tomatoes**

Rotten Tomatoes is a webpage created in 1998. (Vo, 2021). The site differs from IMDb in the sense that it includes a summary of critic review score as well as a public review. This means the site has a 'closer' relationship with the professional critics, letting them have their own percentage separate from the public one. An important thing to notice is that in April of 2022, Rotten Tomatoes managed to be in the top 1000 sites in the world. When looking at the information gathered from Alexa, Rotten Tomatoes was the 593<sup>rd</sup> highest ranked site in the entire world, in the US at the same time, it earned a ranking of 254, though this is only available to see on a site called Web Archive as Alexa closed down in 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2022. (Alexa; Way Back Machine, 2022) That tells us how big the site is, also that many people use it and that it is a well-developed site used to look for film reviews. It claims to be the "world's most trusted recommendations resources for quality entertainment." (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d.)

They have a point system with three tires:

Certified fresh: This means the movie ranked 75% or higher and that it has been reviewed by at least 80 critics, another criterion for this tire is that 5 of those critics need to be certified as top critics.

Fresh: The movies here can be between 60% and 100%. Movies in this tire have either not been reviewed by enough critics to get the certified seal, hence they do not meet the requirements but are still highly rated.

Rotten: Movies with a score of 59% or lower get this seal, this means the movie is most likely not good or people seem to dislike it for some reason. (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d.)

Along with their critic system, they have two tires for audience reviews, as well as a verification mark to verify that the reviewer has seen the movie. To get the verification mark, the user must provide proof to the website, these reviews might be more helpful as I then know that the writer has 100% seen the movie, or at least attempted to. Sadly, on *the Great Gatsby* site, there is no page for verified audiences, as this feature was not introduced until 2019, 6 years after the movie was released.

The *Great Gatsby* received a critic score of 48%, deeming it as rotten on the 'Tomatometer'. (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d.) Critics were not happy with the adaptation, 158 of them deeming it rotten while 144 critics deemed it fresh, giving the movie an average score of 5,9/10.

"Top Critic is a designation created to distinguish Tomatometer-approved critics who excel at their craft. Critics selected are well-established, influential, and prolific; they are, in a sense, the cream of the crop. Top Critic status is granted by a set of criteria and a selection panel and cannot be applied for" (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d.). On the site you can also compare all reviews to top critics: Top critics gave the movie an even lower score at 31%. 54 deemed it rotten and 24 deemed it fresh, giving it a 5,3/10.



On the other hand, the audience gave the movie a much higher score, doubling the top critic's score. The audience score gave the movie a 67% rating, 3,7/5, based on 100,000+ ratings. While on the lookout for reviews, I found this:

"It was okay. To say the least, it wasn't stellar. To say the most, I've chosen this movie as the main focus of an essay on why book movies need to have actual emotion behind the lens, and why most of said movies feel entirely like a cash grab. This movie felt like it was meant to waste my time. The characters were bland, the fact that Nick was in a mental institute brought nothing to the table, the cinematography seemed like cheap eye-candy, they added more sex than was necessary, and the music had NOTHING to do with the 1920s. To say the movie was bad would be to say that my dead grandfather on my dad's side could still be rolling in his grave. To say anything positive about the movie would be to say that the tree that's fallen on my house and caved in the roof could add value to the property." (Sam W, 2022)

Sam comments exactly on much of what I wrote about in my film analysis. Though I explained much of what Sam dislikes in my film analysis, that does not matter if he did not understand that while he was watching the movie. If movie techniques in Gatsby have to be explained afterward, they are not done right. One important thing to note in Sam's review though, it does not mention anything missing anything from the novel. Was this to him a true adaptation, just a little too modernized?

According to a study made by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, sites like Rotten Tomatoes ruin the cinema experience (McClintock, 2017). This issue is further pushed when the American ticket company named Fandango buys Rotten Tomatoes and shows the critic score of every movie while viewers are trying to buy tickets. An example of this is here:

**F FANDANGO** Enter City + State, ZIP Code, or Movie **GO** MOVIES THEATERS + TICKETS

**IN THEATERS**

**DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS (2022)**  
 PG-13, 2 hr 6 min

74% 86%

In Marvel Studios' "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," the MCU unlocks the Multiverse...

[MORE DETAILS](#)

11 Example of the critic score

Here I am wanting to buy a ticket to the next big Marvel movie, and the first thing that meets me, among pictures, is the score. If you click on either the tomato or the popcorn, it brings to you another part of Fandango's website, which shows all reviews from Rotten Tomato users and critics.

**DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS (2022) REVIEWS + RATINGS**

OVERVIEW MOVIE TIMES + TICKETS SYNOPSIS MOVIE REVIEWS TRAILERS MORE

**IN THEATERS** **FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2022**  
 PG-13, 2 hr 6 min  
 Action/Adventure

74% 86%

SEE IT IN 35MM | Digital 3D | IMAX | IMAX 3D

**IN THEATERS ON FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2022**  
 Get notified by email as soon as tickets become available in your area.

Email Address

Zip Code

Powered by **Rotten Tomatoes** [Rate Movie](#)

74% Tomatometer 86% Audience Score

★★★★☆ Verified 1h ago  
**Jared**  
 Was surprised to find how little I liked this installment of the MCU films. It felt too convoluted, it was like Reimi just wanted to cram 3 hours of storyline and character development into a 2 hour movie. It has its moments but it was mostly disappointing for me.

★★★★☆ Verified 2h ago  
**HJ**  
 The CGI was awesome, but the plot was rather lame. And who thinks of naming a kid "America"? Geez, stop the faux-patriotic clap trap.

12 Critic score on the ticket sale website

This further pushes the new norm to check reviews before buying or watching a movie. Filmmakers now become less cooperative when it

comes to critics and give them as little time as possible to watch the movie and review it before the premier. (McClintock, 2017) Should a critic's film review influence curious viewers away from a movie they might like? Even though *The Great Gatsby* has a low critic rating, it remains one of my favorite movies and one that I would recommend to anyone. When looking at my town's cinema webpage, it also has reviews, though these reviews are from users on the website itself and not gathered from another company.

Luhrmann's version does however get a better score than the 1974 version, as the latter got a 39% by critics based on 36 reviews, 11% by top critics based on 9 reviews. The audience score reached a 47% with 10,000 + ratings. "To a short, sleek novel like *Gatsby*, where the slight action moves forward like a capricious swimmer, nothing could be more destructive than the slow pace and top-heavy lavishness and overexplicitness" (Simon, 2019). By reading Simon's review on Clayton's version, I sure hope Luhrmann gave him everything he asked for. It seems from his review of the old movie, that the 2013 version would be perfect for him. When going into his article for the review, I change my mind as he strictly says "When will the movies learn not to adapt great, or even good, novels to the screen? This is not the place to debate into which of those categories *The Great Gatsby* falls; either way, it is a work of art because of its style, and there is no way in which a written style can be turned into a cinematic one" (Simon J. , 1974). The modern film language is something else than what film was in 1974, now using CGI (computer-generated imagery) and effects are easier. Fast car scenes are easy to film, you can seamlessly blend the picture of the Buchanan's garden to the house. I mean, we can even use CGI to hide Henry Cavill's mustache in *Superman*, which would be impossible in 1974.

### **3.2.3 Metacritic**

Metacritic was launched in January 2001 (Metacritic, n.d.). It gives reviews to everything from films to video games, to books, and albums. They follow the traffic-light system: green means good, yellow means average, and red means bad. The colors are something most of us, who are not colorblind, are familiar with and know the meaning of without it having to be explained. Like Rotten Tomatoes, Metacritic has a label for certain movies over a certain percentage: if the movie receives a Metascore of 81 or higher by a minimum of 15 professional critics, it gets labeled a "must-see". (Staff, 2018).

Like Rotten Tomatoes, the page has both a critic review and a user score. Out of all three, Metacritic has the least amount of ratings, their user ratings of only being 875 and critic ratings of 45. The 'Metascore', which is the score determined by the average of the critic ratings, is 55. Rick Groen said in his review "The climactic plot twists, which strain on the page, definitely shouldn't work on the screen, yet Luhrmann survives them by turning death itself into a stylized act, just the final pas de deux in a thematic ballet. In the end, as those famous last words, literally, dance across the screen, the verdict is clear: This is a great adaptation that falls just shy of being a great film" (Groen, 2013). By reading Groen's review, his meaning is clear, the adaptation itself did the book justice, but as for a film made for entertainment, it falls shy. Making a movie that works both as an adaptation and entertainment can be hard, but it is up to the adapter what the initial goal is.

As Metacritic was the site with the least reviews and ratings, there is nothing more to sum up from there, but the score helps out in the end.

### **3.2.4 Marketing and public relations**

Marketing has a lot to say when finding out if a movie is successful or not. The usual method to see if a movie flopped or not is to check what its budget was and how much money the film earned, if the budget was

higher, it was not a successful box office movie. Marketing could be the live or die for a movie, if it is not advertised and letting people know the movie is coming, the actors alone will not always be enough to bring in people. The possibilities for how to best market are endless, they can be as creative as they want. The more special things they do, the more people are likely to hear of them.

Since *The Great Gatsby* is a fairly well-known story in and of itself, the title alone will bring in a lot of people who have read the book in high school or just liked the story in general. It is important to mention that in 2013 when the movie was released, I had not heard of it. I did not hear of it before I went to the US in 2015, this could mean the movie was created and advertised mainly for the American audience, but others are welcome to join in on the experience, but maybe more clueless about the story as one of the main themes in the story itself is the American dream.

In the marketing of *Gatsby*, Carey Mulligan, who plays Daisy Buchanan, was on the May 2013 cover of *Vogue*, a month before the film's release. She wore a modernized '20s look to get people excited for the movie.



13 Carey Mulligan on *Vogue* May 2013

Luhrmann and Mulligan also co-chaired and helped on the MET gala exhibition, which included Prada designs from the late 1920s (Bowels, 2012). To modernize the film, even more, Luhrmann collaborated with famous musicians such as Jay-z, Sia, Florence, and the Machine, and Kayne West (now goes by Ye). Luhrmann also seems to use some elements from the 1974 film, this could be Luhrmann's way to pay homage to the older film as well as show he respects another adaptation. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes* , 2013)

"But adaptation as repetition is arguably not a postponement of pleasure; it is in itself a pleasure. Think of a child's delight in hearing the same nursery rhymes or reading the same books over and over. Like ritual, this kind of repetition brings comfort, a further understanding, and the confidence that comes with the sense of knowing what is about to happen next" (Hutcheon, 2006). Hutcheon mentions the word repetition a few too many times in her book on the subject of adaptation, but that is simply because that is what makes an adaptation successful, repetition of a beloved theme and story keeps us coming back for more. This both includes the story of Gatsby, and the actor Leonardo DiCaprio and Baz Luhrmann; If we know their work is good, we consistently come back to watch their movies. Repetition and familiarity walk hand in hand when it comes to adaptation moviemaking, bringing audiences back for a story they have heard over and over again, and still entertaining them to this day. *It is repetition, but without replication, bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition. (...) As adaptation, it involves both memory and change, persistence and variation.* (Hutcheon, 2006)

One of the things both adaptations, 1974 and 2013, seem to be slightly criticized for is their use of actors. Both directors use the big celebrities of the time, making not only the name of the movie pull in viewers but the names of the cast as well. This can be seen as good and bad, some claim in their reviews that the actors were chosen for just being big names and

did not give anything to their roles. In the film analysis, I wrote about what DiCaprio himself did to prepare for the role as well as others. Robert Redford, who played Gatsby in the 1974 version said in an interview that he liked the book and knew much about it, but the studio making the movie did not (OfficialSBIFF, 2014).

*"An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise"* (Hutcheon, 2006). Using the movie in school keeps both the book and movie alive, as well as sparks interest in the other adaptations made from the same source material. Keeping kids at school interested in the book might be easier when a famous movie is used as a reward in the end. DiCaprio is still one of the most famous male actors and keeps pulling in audiences. Tobey Maguire was quite famous at the time of the release of the movie because of his work as Spider-Man, but now, with him making an appearance in the new Spider-Man movie, (IMDb, 2021) he will most likely again bring in an audience.

### **3.2.5 Conclusion of the reception analysis**

Knowing how Luhrmann approached the project, it can be presumed he made the film for both knowing and unknowing audiences. He makes the film easy to understand, and the characters themselves are slightly overplayed to make it easier for first-time viewers, and also overplayed to the point where the knowing audience sees the story through Nick's eyes, as intended.

How people watch the film also affects our opinion of it. There is a significant difference between going to the cinema of your own free will to

watch a movie you think looks interesting, versus having to watch the movie in an English class to debate what Fitzgerald was trying to convey. In American English classes, by the time you get to watch the film, you have been reading and hearing so much about the story you are sick and tired of anything Gatsby. When watching the movie on the television at home, the movie is interrupted by advertisements, being on your phone and talking to family members, taking you out of the experience as a first-time viewer. Watching a movie should be an experience in itself and should take you on a journey during its runtime. Distractions can ruin the movie, and leave a bad taste in your mouth, even if you liked the movie, whatever distracted you took all the focus. Even yourself can be hard to trust with a review when it all depends on how you watched it, were there any disturbances, and what mood were you in? A movie like Gatsby might require a second watch, as a lot of the scenes happen quite fast, and you might not have time to enjoy the movie on its own.

“When giving meaning and value to an adaptation as ‘an adaptation’, audiences operate in a context that includes their knowledge and their own interpretation of the adapted work. That context may also include information about the adapter, thanks to both journalistic curiosity and scholarly digging. (...) As readers, they interpreted the narrative in their own ways; as creators, they made it their own” (Hutcheon, 2006). The problem with many of the bad reviews I have read for this analysis, like Rex Reed’s for Observer (Reed, 2013), is that it is so clear they dislike the director as well as the actors from the start. It might have to be because of their earlier projects or the inability to see growth within the actors. When reading Reed’s review, it is hard to take it seriously as it is so harsh for uncalled reasons, it comes across as childish and not a true review of the movie, but as a biased hatred of the creator for unknown reasons.



## 4. Discussion

*There are many and varied motives behind adaptation and few involve faithfulness (Hutcheon, 2006)*

When filmmakers decide to make an adaptation that has already been made before, they must decide what changes they want to make to further improve the old adaptations. Hutcheon's quote ties into Luhrmann's decision to modernize the film. He did not want to be too faithful to the time the story was made in, he modernized it to let the modern audience get a fresh take, and since the latest *The Great Gatsby* movie came out in 2013, it was due to make another. It had to feel like these people could live now.

"If we know the adapted work, there will be a constant oscillation between it and the new adaptation we are experiencing; if we do not, we will not experience the work as an adaptation. However, as noted, if we happen to read the novel after we see the film adaptation of it, we again feel that oscillation, though this time in reverse. Oscillation is not hierarchical, even if some adaptation theory is" (Hutcheon, 2006).

It is more acceptable to adapt famous stories like *Romeo and Juliette* to a respected "high artform" like opera or ballet, but making it into a modernized movie is not accepted the same way, even though all forms of it, still count as an adaptation (Hutcheon, 2006). An adaptation can both be a critique of the original work or a tribute, everyone has their reasons for their adaptation.

"Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (Hutcheon, 2006). Most of the bad reviews of the movie found problems with labeling Nick as an alcoholic at the start, they found it unnecessary and ill-fitting, but seems

to forget Nick has always been an unreliable storyteller. It mentions in the book how he fades away from the life he lived, now hating New York, for Nick to fall into depression and alcoholism does not seem too unlikely in my opinion.

Though in the end, we have to remember that *The Great Gatsby* "Was the 17th highest-grossing film of its release year. The picture finished 2nd place on its opening weekend, behind Iron Man 3 (2013). At the time, it had the 6th largest opening weekend for a film that did not debut in 1st place, the 2nd largest opening weekend for a film starring Leonardo DiCaprio, and was director Baz Luhrmann's highest grossing movie." (IMDb, n.d.)

## 5. Conclusion

“Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (Hutcheon, 2006).

*The Great Gatsby* has been labeled as ‘The Great American novel’, this puts a lot of pressure on adapters of all kinds.

It is clear all the different decisions, from 3D layering to music, to flowers, it all is very thought through and has a specific meaning. “Like classical imitation, adaptation also is not slavish copying; it is a process of making the adapted material ones own” (Hutcheon, 2006). Luhrmann mixes the adaptation with a modern look and old film techniques to create something new.

Another point touched on during this analysis is the reviews, *The Great Gatsby* received mixed reviews, though leaning closer to a higher score. Filmmakers like myself often encourage people to watch the movie before looking at reviews, creating their own opinion on the film.

The behind-the-scenes help the viewer see the process of creating the movie, and all the small little details that come with it. Looking behind the scenes of a film should add something to the viewer and give them a greater understanding of the choices made in the movie. What is being said and shown in the behind the scenes should not be necessary for someone to see and hear to like the movie. For example, I can think *Gatsby*’s suits look cool and stylish, so the fact that they used the same suit company as Fitzgerald himself should come as fun trivia, but people sadly will not know that unless told.

Even though I want to say that knowing viewers’ opinion matter more than those who have not heard or read it, that is simply not a freedom we can take. When making a movie or a series, it is for everyone and everyone watching should understand who is and what is going on based on the information the movie gives you alone. The creators cannot expect

all their viewers to know the source material, the movie can be a love letter to fans as well as be an introduction to the story for other viewers. Maybe that is why it is perfect for Luhrmann to adapt it. He did not go to an American high school and did not spend months at school reading the book and analyzing it, we know this as he mentions the story of how he first read the book in the behind-the-scenes. (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby - Behind the scenes* , 2013)

Luhrmann mentions at a press conference in Cannes in 2013 that Fitzgerald's granddaughter came to see the movie and said "I have come all the way from Vermont to see what you have done with my grandfather's book. I think Scott would be proud of this film because people have said for many years that you cannot take his first-person narrative and make it into a film, and I think you have done that. And by the way, I loved the music" (Luhrmann, *The Great Gatsby Press Conference - Cannes Film Festival 2013 with Baz Luhrmann & Leonardo DiCaprio*, 2013). So, the movie is approved by the author's granddaughter.

Even though something was first, that does not necessarily mean it is the best. It is faster and easier to sit down and see a two-hour movie than to read a 150-page book, which is why many opt to watch the movie instead. Whenever making a movie it is often about the money, the filmmaker wants to make more money than they have spent to call it a successful film. Using well-known stories is often about the money you can earn, though is the heart of the story there?

Luhrmann shows interest in almost all areas in the process of making this film, and as Hutcheon mentioned many times, the process of adaptation is not just about the director himself, but the crew as a whole. Luhrmann has included every aspect of filmmaking, not giving us a great soundtrack at the price of bad cinematography, which often happens as a budget issue.

I would argue Luhrmann's *Gatsby* is a well-done adaptation with heart in every department, it is truly a love letter to Fitzgerald's work of art, and it also made it to the box office, I would deem *The Great Gatsby* by Luhrmann a successful adaptation.

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