

The great gatsby movies: 1974 and 2013 essay

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Over the past 90 years the most incredible novel of Francis Scott Fitzgerald “The Great Gatsby” was filmed five times by different directors. The first movie came out in 1926 and the last screen version of the book was released last year. Hence, the whole world has had an opportunity to enjoy not only the significant novel of the great American author, but the five screening versions of the exciting story as well. The most famous screen adaptations were presented to the viewers in 1974 and in 2013. And if the old version the most vividly shows the tragic story of Gatsby - just how the reader of novel has indeed imagined it, the last film has rather adapted to the demands of the modern audience - impressive picture, favorite musicians in soundtracks, combination of light humor and sentimental drama has undoubtedly caught the attention of a great number of judges of modern cinematography.

In 1974 Jack Clayton directed “The Great Gatsby” with Robert Redford (J. Gatsby) and Mia Farrow (Daisy Buchanan) in the leading roles. Francis Ford Coppola was the screenwriter for this movie and Nelson Riddle produced the music for the film. Almost 40 years later Baz Luhrmann directed his own vision of Fitzgerald’s novel and invited Leonardo DiCaprio and Carey Mulligan to play the roles of Gatsby and Daisy respectively. This movie came to the screens in 3D and earned more than 350 million dollars from the worldwide box office. Both of the versions has gathered mixed critique reviews, that is why it is necessary to examine these movies and compare them with each other.

The most surprising thing about these two films is that they both are quite true to the novel - storyline itself, a lot of details, characters, and the general

idea of the Fitzgerald's work are strongly supported and vividly presented by Clayton as well as by Luhrmann. What also interesting is that the plot develops in the same way in both "The Great Gatsbies" - their running time is equal (140 minutes) and all events occur in the same order in both films; the key moments of the story, dialogues of the main heroes, Nick's narrative throughout the whole film are the same in both movies as well. However, the surprising affinity to the novel is the only thing that movies of 1974 and 2013 have in common.

First of all, the difference in presenting the period of 1920s can be noticed from the beginnings of the films - from the first minutes of his movie, Luhrmann presents to the viewers the situation in America during those times: society plunged in the noisy parties, alcohol, drugs and debauchery; the dry law made the alcohol to be even more desirable and demanded, and the parties became more frequent and licentious. Clayton missed these moments and did not reveal the essence of entertainment in the 1920s; therefore the directors placed the accents on different things; Luhrmann wanted to satisfy his modern viewers by gorgeous parties, dances, and violation of the rules, while Clayton focused on the relationships between main heroes.

Hereby, it can be said that the film of 1974 is smooth enough, and it lacks dynamics, though Clayton's "The Great Gatsby" cannot be considered as boring or tiresome. Such embodiment and presentation of the story are rather connected with the capabilities of the cinematography of the last century and the director's way of thinking and vision. At the same time, when Luhrmann has created the dynamic picture and turned the first part of

the film into show, it is obvious that he counted on the fact that he would impress the viewer and grab his attention. And he was not mistaken: the film is exciting and unpredictable and still true to novel simultaneously. "The New York Times" wrote about it: "Mr. Luhrmann's reverence for the source material is evident. He sticks close to the details of the story and lifts dialogue and description directly from the novel's pages. But he has also felt free to make that material his own, bending it according to his artistic sensibility and what he takes to be the mood of the times" (Scott "Shimmying Off the Literary Mantle 'The Great Gatsby,' Interpreted by Baz Luhrmann").

Speaking about starring cast and their representation of the main characters of the original novel, it should be mentioned that Gatsby himself is shown perfectly in both versions of the film: handsome and charming young man, his sincere smile, manners of a gentleman and fascinating embarrassment in front of the love of his whole life - that all were performed by Redford and DiCaprio in the best way. On the other hand, the images of Daisy and Nick differ in these movies. Clayton tried to show Daisy as playful, carefree woman with light character, but sad inside, while Luhrmann presents Daisy as slightly pensive and serene woman, but charming and kind as well. In Carey Mulligan's eyes it is immediately evident that something bothers her heroine, and that this "something" is deep in her soul; in contrast, Mia Farrow shows a soul sorrow of Daisy only in the middle of the film, though it is hard to define whose "Daisy", Mulligan's or Farrow's, is closer to Fitzgerald's Daisy. And finally, Nick character also needs an attention. While watching "The Great Gatsby" of 1974, Nick (Sam Waterston) seems to be

calm, sedate and intelligent man, and that is how he (Nick) should be presented. While watching “ The Great Gatsby” of 2013, Nick (Tobey Maguire) looks like silly, a little ridiculous naïve, and that is how he should not be presented. During the whole film Luhrmann’s Nick has silly facial expression (or it is the problem of Tobey Maguire?) and only by the very end of the movie he is imbued by the tragic Gatsby’s story.

Perhaps the most striking difference between two versions of “ The Great Gatsby” lays in musical accompaniment during the films. Nelson Riddle in 1974 chose music without lyrics, quiet, but sometimes tense melodies and several jazz tracks in the party scenes. On the other hand, music in 2013’s “ The Great Gatsby” is the second director’s brilliant solution after Leo DiCaprio who is the first key to the success of the film. In pursuit of the wide audience, Luhrmann decided to fill his movie with plenty of the world modern stars: Florence + The Machine, Lana Del Rey, Fergie, The XX, Sia, Kanye West, Frank Ocean, Jay Z and Will. I. Am, and moreover, he also used covers on U2 by Jack White and on Amy Winehouse by Beyonce. Such diverse musical selection gives an excellent charm to the movie: it is strange to observe how people in the 1920s allegedly party with the music by Fergie and Will. I. Am or drive over the bridge listening to Frank Ocean or rappers, but at the same time, the audience surely likes this strangeness.

Works cited

Scott, A. O. “ Shimmying Off the Literary Mantle ‘ The Great Gatsby,’ Interpreted by Baz Luhrmann”. New York Times. New York Times, N. p., 9 May, 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.