

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

## Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* redrawn

Between colorful minimalist globalization and 1920's nostalgia

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I would like to finish these acknowledgments on a quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald that has always stuck with me, and which resonates with how I feel about literature:

“That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.”

It is fair to say that this whole dissertation has been a journey, but one that, though tiring and challenging, I truly enjoyed.

## Table of content

Acknowledgments	1
Table of content	2
Introduction	3
I. <i>The Great Gatsby</i> from the 1920's to the 21 <sup>st</sup> century: unsuccessful start to mythical status	6
II. Adapting the Gatsbyesque into graphic novels: Bachelier & Melchior and Morton & Fordham's versions	16
III. Graphic novels and comics adaptation: revisiting literary classics	22
IV. <i>The Great Gatsby</i> read in colors: Bachelier & Melchior's minimalistic approach against Morton & Fordham's Art Deco homage	28
A. Tom's antagonism: when red anger and the color of money combine	30
B. Daisy's complexity in images: white angel or hollow figure?	36
C. The Green Gatsby: hope and disillusion of a myth	43
D. Abstract metaphors in concrete colors: the green light, the pool and Dr. T.J. Eckleburg	49
The green light: color of disillusion	49
The blue of loneliness: Gatsby's pool	54
Black and white morality: deity in <i>The Great Gatsby</i>	56
V. Exploring <i>The Great Gatsby</i> 's ethnic minorities representation in Bachelier & Melchior's and Morton & Fordham's graphic novels	63
VI. Bachelier & Melchior and Morton & Fordham's contemporary take on 1920's gender roles: explicit versus implicit renderings	75
A. The 1920's "New Woman" in 21 <sup>st</sup> century graphic novels	75
Daisy and Jordan: contrasting the angel in the house and the new woman	76
Myrtle and impropriety: the carelessness of the New Woman	81
B. Exploring the topic of Nick and Jordan's ambiguous sexuality through visuals techniques	84
Conclusion	92
Bibliography	96

## Introduction

Described for the first time in 1960 as a “classic of twentieth-century American fiction” by Mizener for *The New York Times*, the success of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is still undeniable. This literary classic, defining of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has proved itself to still intrigue and interest a large public, notably through the many film and stage adaptations of it. Set in Jazz Age Long Island, *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald’s third novel published in 1925, recounts the tragic story of self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby in his quest to win Daisy Buchanan back, a wealthy woman he fell in love with when he was younger, all that with the flamboyant Roaring Twenties as a background.

However, though it is mostly known and read as an accurate depiction of the Jazz Age, *The Great Gatsby* is much more complex than its context. In “The world’s most misunderstood novel” (2021), Anderson explains that the reception of the novel is filled with misunderstandings of it:

flamboyant host is just one part of [Gatsby’s] complicated identity. He's also a bootlegger, up to his neck in criminal enterprise, not to mention a delusional stalker whose showmanship comes to seem downright tacky. If he embodies the potential of the American Dream, then he also illustrates its limitations. (Anderson 2021)

While people often read *The Great Gatsby* in a bid to get the essence of the Jazz Age and its prosperity, its more corrupted sides are often forgotten. Indeed, though the 1920’s were punctuated by flappers, jazz, and overall freedom; Prohibition, consumerism, and corruption were also a big part of the decade. As a matter of fact, this excess in every aspect of life would lead to the 1930 Great Depression. In many ways, the novel warns about these worse sides of the Roaring Twenties, and, as such, Fitzgerald’s novel emerges as a cautionary tale of such excess.

Perhaps the reason why this novel still resonates with people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is because this century has too become a fast-paced, consumerist, and capitalist world. Capitalism and fast-growing technologies have led to a higher consumption, but also to dehumanization and alienation. In turn, this encourages inequalities, but also greed and materialism. The value of goods has overpowered the value of human relationships: the objective seems to be how to make money faster. As such, the 21<sup>st</sup> century mirrors the 1920’s.

But the novel’s success is also explained by the fact it still echoes social issues that emerged throughout the last hundred years. These debates have allowed for a revival and

reinterpretation of the novel's themes many times, through critical analyses, but also through the different adaptations of it. Amongst these adaptations, is Bachelier and Melchior's 2013 *Gatsby le Magnifique*. In their graphic novel, the two French artists reinterpret the story by taking Gatsby's character away from the 1920's he is usually intrinsically attached to and putting him in a more contemporary setting: 21<sup>st</sup> century China. By contrast, another graphic adaptation, Morton and Fordham's *The Great Gatsby: the Graphic Novel*, which emerged in 2020, prides itself on its faithfulness to the original. These graphic novels, though both contemporary, show how *The Great Gatsby* can be interpreted in many ways.

The present dissertation aims to analyze how Bachelier and Melchior's, as well as Morton and Fordham's adaptations reinterpret, in the graphic medium, the aspects of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* that were highlighted by the debates which animated the critical reception of the novel through the years. The novelty behind my approach is to look at these existing analyses of the original novel and explore what the change of medium brings (or fails to bring) to the original, how it is done, but also how these two adaptations echo current 21<sup>st</sup> century social issues and concerns.

The first chapter of this dissertation explores how Fitzgerald's novel was received both critically and publicly from its publication to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how the novel went from unsuccessful beginnings to its canonical status. Indeed, though *The Great Gatsby* was at first a commercial failure, it found a new success at the end of World War II then became the famous literary classic it is today. Because of this newfound success in the 1940's, *The Great Gatsby* started being recognized as an important piece in literature and the last hundred years were punctuated by further analyses mirroring the social issues of each decade.

Chapter two introduces Bachelier and Melchior-Durand's version, as well as Morton and Fordham's one in terms of when and where they were published, their overall style, their cover, and how they start. As both adaptations diverge in the way they rework this story, it is important to first analyze them separately on these different points before starting the actual analysis. Chapter three focuses on the theories and studies made on graphic novel and comics adaptation through the years, and in particular the adaptation of literary classics in this medium. In this chapter, a framework is set to allow a proper analysis of the two versions. Baetens's *Adaptation et bande dessinée : Éloge de la fidélité* (2020) helps explaining why adaptations are important, while Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013) is used to explain what is meant by "adaptation" and what is considered one, as well as how the two analyzed versions are indeed

adaptations. The question “what does the change of medium mean for the story?” is also answered, and elements important to the analysis and identified by Groensteen in *The System of Comics* (2007) are given.

Following the *New Criticism* movement’s methodology of the 1950’s which argued the focus of an analysis should be on the text as an independent object that conveys meaning, chapter four explores how both the analyzed graphic adaptations make use of their medium to reinterpret the symbols behind Fitzgerald’s novel, in particular through the colors and the characters’ attitudes, with the help of Zhang’s “Symbolic Meanings of Colors in *The Great Gatsby*” (2015). Because the novel is composed of a nearly endless number of symbols, this dissertation focuses on six symbols and how they are illustrated in the adaptations: Tom as Gatsby’s antagonist, Daisy’s complexity, Gatsby as a mythical figure, the green light as the unattainable dream, the pool as lost hope, and Dr. T.J. Eckleburg as a divine and moral figure.

Chapter five tackles the same issue that was highlighted in the 1960’s following the Civil Rights movement: how ethnic minorities are represented. In the novel, few of these ethnic minorities are mentioned, though the focus is mainly on Jews and African American. Because the racist prejudice and anti-Semitism is conveyed in the original through the attitudes of other characters, it is also the way these attitudes are portrayed and reinterpreted in Bachelier and Melchior’s, and Morton and Fordham’s contemporary versions that is analyzed.

In the sixth and final chapter, gender roles representation is explored. In the 1970’s, the second wave of feminism highlighted the need to focus more on how women had been portrayed in literature so far. This led to further analyses on Fitzgerald’s novel. Paralleling the 1970’s, the 1920’s were also an epoch of many changes regarding gender roles and a new type of woman emerged from it: the “New Woman”. This final chapter analyzes how this idea of “New Woman”, but also its contrastive more conservative woman, is represented in the graphic medium used by Bachelier and Melchior, as well as Morton and Fordham. The chapter also studies an often-under-analyzed topic found in *The Great Gatsby*: homosexuality. Because mentalities have greatly changed since the 1920’s regarding both gender roles and sexuality, this phenomenon affects how the two 21<sup>st</sup> century graphic novels have addressed such topics.

## I. *The Great Gatsby* from the 1920's to the 21<sup>st</sup> century: unsuccessful start to mythical status

Set in 1922 Long Island, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*'s follows Jay Gatsby from wealth to demise through the narration and recollection of Nick Carraway. When Nick moves to Long Island, he rents a house next to Gatsby's mansion, both facing East Egg, where the upper-class part of New York, which his cousin Daisy and her husband Tom are a part of, lives. Throughout the story, Nick discovers Gatsby's undying love for and desire to reconnect with Daisy, whom Gatsby had met five years prior. Nick narrates the downfall of Gatsby as the latter digs himself deeper into corruption and disillusion in his attempt to win Daisy back. Nick is an ambivalent figure who first states a self-proclaimed trustworthiness and nonjudgment, while still showing internal conflict through his mixed reaction to things, such as his attraction to the fast-paced city lifestyle while being disgusted by its grotesqueness, or his moral criticism of Gatsby's actions while still being captivated by the latter. The story plays out with the Roaring Twenties as a background, a paradoxical age where decadence and prosperity were accompanied by Prohibition<sup>1</sup>, excess and corruption. In many ways, the novel emerges as a cautionary novel in which Fitzgerald warns about these excesses and corruption. The structure of society at the time in which the rich were exploiting the poor, the changing role and identity of women towards emancipation, as well as overt racism and anti-Semitism are all themes that help in highlighting this excess and corruption associated with the Roaring Twenties.

The context in which the book was written is mirrored in the themes found in it. Fitzgerald had moved to New York and found that he needed to sell books to be financially stable and ensure his future with his wife, Zelda, an American socialite. Because of his success with his previous book and where he lived, Fitzgerald was a direct witness and even actor to this post-war climate filled with hedonism and lavish consumerism. The 1920's, though often embellished and fantasized about because of the prosperity associated to them, hid many things behind their apparent decadence and ambition, such as the corruption that emerged from the Prohibition, the tension between older generations with traditional values and new ones, and overall, the moral chaos that ensued from it all. In her critical study of *The Great Gatsby* (1988),

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<sup>1</sup> The Prohibition in the United States of America was a legal ban put on the production and sale of alcohol from 1920 to 1933. This ban led to illegal production and distribution of spirits, the creation of speakeasies, secret establishments where people would go to drink, as well as an increase in bootlegging, essentially the smuggling of alcoholic beverages.

Parkinson explains that Fitzgerald faced an inner tension between his desire to be a critical eye of his society and his wish to secure financial stability as “only optimistic stories were wanted for popular consumption” (11). This desire to write it as a critique can be perceived in the change of title from *Under the Red, White and Blue*, which was linking the story more explicitly to America, to the one known now. By the time Fitzgerald had written this novel, he had moved to Europe, in an attempt to escape the fast-paced and debt-inducing life of New York.

The unsuccessful beginnings of *The Great Gatsby* were no doubt due to a misunderstanding of the story. Fitzgerald had explained it himself in a letter to his friend Wilson, in which he complained about how “of all the reviews, even the most enthusiastic, not one had the slightest idea what the book was about”<sup>2</sup>. *The Great Gatsby* was surrounded by many expectations as Fitzgerald had met with commercial success with his previous book, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), a novel about the morals of the American youth post World War I. Mencken, a highly influent critic at the time, commended Fitzgerald for it, which influenced Fitzgerald’s writing for *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald wanted to write in a manner that would get him similar praises from Mencken again, at the detriment of the authenticity pertaining to his writing. Because the text felt more forced and less Fitzgerald-like, *The Great Gatsby* failed to fulfil the high expectations both the public and critics had for it. Mencken appraised Fitzgerald’s style but condemned the storyline, describing it as “no more than a glorified anecdote” (Mencken 1925). What Mencken failed to realize is how the novel was more than a trivial story, but rather a complex satirical depiction of the moral failure of the Roaring Twenties, which has resonated with the social concerns across decades.

By contrast, other authors praised the novel for its modernity. In a letter sent to Fitzgerald in 1925<sup>3</sup>, the poet T.S. Eliot congratulated him, saying the book “seems to [Eliot] to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James”. A will to experiment in terms of language and structure was one of the main purposes of the Modernist movement under which both authors were writing. Fitzgerald, heavily influenced by this period, combined James’s literary realism with romanticism, a combination characteristic of modernism, which created an interesting contrast that secured *The Great Gatsby*’s place as a modern novel. Though in some ways Wharton, another novelist, aligned with some of Mencken’s critiques in a letter she sent Fitzgerald, she praised the more experimental way Fitzgerald wrote *Gatsby*’s

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<sup>2</sup> Letter found in Fitzgerald, F.S. (1993). *The Crack-Up*, p.270.

<sup>3</sup> Letter found in Brucoli et al. (2003), p.135.

character by making the latter's true origins a mystery until nearer the end of the novel. She argued in a letter some more details might have benefited the character but knows Fitzgerald would have disagreed with her: "but you'll tell me that's the old way, & consequently not *your way*" (Wharton 1925 in Lockridge 1984:107). Parkinson (1987) agreed with Wharton on this more experimental side of the novel by writing that it was a

consciously experimental work by one of the young post-war generation of American writers who visited Europe and were aware of new literary ideas and achievements associated with Modernism. They wished to contribute a specifically American theme to literature by giving new artistic intensity and significance to the language they used. (Parkinson 1987:18)

The poet Stein argued that though Fitzgerald was creating a novel that was for a new audience, it was "different and older" (meaning his style had improved, but his writing kept its essential components, such as symbolism), and compared it to Thackeray's writing. By writing to Fitzgerald that he was "creating the contemporary world much as Thackeray did" (Stein 1925<sup>4</sup>), Stein was placing Fitzgerald in the lineage of satirical literature and thus acknowledged the novel's objective.

The novel was briefly revived following its author's death in 1940 with a few copies being sold, but truly gained in popularity at the end of World War II when it was given to the US military<sup>5</sup>. Not only did these circa 155,000 distributed boosted the novel's success, the extravagance and hedonistic nature of the 1920's could only be seen as appealing in the aftermath of traumatic events such as the two World Wars. Eble (1974) explains that:

[Fitzgerald's] legend seemed to be more alive during the fifties and sixties than it had been at any time since the twenties. Related to that fact is the welling up of nostalgia and the rise of opportunities to bring back reminders of the Twenties. (Eble 1974: 341).

While the novel was first analyzed as some sort of portrait of Fitzgerald's personal life, the 1950's and the New Criticism movement, a formalist movement in literature, emphasized the need to look beyond the context and see the novel as carrying symbolism and meaning. In *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling (1945)<sup>6</sup> explains that *Gatsby* represents America because both are divided between power (power to realize one's dream and power to destroy it), and the dream, the fantasy. As such, *Gatsby's* character becomes a symbol of the duality of the American Dream: the fantasy, the illusion you have of the dream, and the reality of it. Trilling also

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<sup>4</sup> Letter found in Brucoli et al. (2003), p.135.

<sup>5</sup> "The year of 1945 was a bumper one for editions of *Gatsby*. [...] It also came out [...] in an Armed Services edition of 155,000 copies that were given away to military personnel for free." (Tredell 2007: 90).

<sup>6</sup> The essay on F. Scott Fitzgerald written by Trilling in 1945 is found in Mizener (1963), pp.11-19.

mentioned Fitzgerald's moralist and satirical style, which resonates with Stein's comment about Thackeray. By taking a moralist approach to the story, Fitzgerald managed to give his readers a glimpse into what the Roaring Twenties were like while warning them of the consequences of living with a lack of moral values. This gives *The Great Gatsby* a cautionary aspect that still echoes with the fast-paced and consumerist 21<sup>st</sup> century world. This is further reinforced by Stallman's essay "Gatsby and the Hole in Time" (1955) in which he compares Gatsby's character to a "modern Icarus" who "belong not exclusively to one epoch of American civilization but rather to all history inasmuch as all history repeats in cycle form what Gatsby represents — America itself. Gatsby transcends reality and time" (2-3). This transcendence is perhaps one of the reasons for the novel's continuous success through the years.

With the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's, literary critics began to analyze the representation of ethnic minorities. Given the multiple allusions to race in *The Great Gatsby*, an analysis of how the topic of ethnic minorities is treated is important as it gives an insight on the 1920's attitude towards racism: segregation and racial oppression of both African American and Jews<sup>7</sup>. In a 1967 essay, Forrey criticized Fitzgerald's portrayal of ethnic minorities, and in particular of black Americans. He explained that they are "almost always menial characters who are referred to disparagingly" (293). Though this overt racism might have been acceptable in Fitzgerald's time, it was not in the 1960's anymore. Forrey added that "on the basis of what is known from his fiction and his life, it does not seem unfair to suggest that Fitzgerald believed in the inherent inferiority of Negroes" (295). Even though Forrey pointed out Fitzgerald's shifting attitude towards minorities later in his life, notably in the unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon*, *The Great Gatsby* had not gone through that shift yet, and Fitzgerald's point of view at the time is the one that needs to be considered in this dissertation. In "Ethnicity in The Great Gatsby", Slater (1973) adds to this the representation of Jews in the novel and argues that Nick implies that the American Dream is exclusive to certain people given that he does not recognize others' success when they belong to different ethnic groups than his own. The analysis of ethnic representations in the novel is not something that is particular to the 1960's, with many scholars such as Vogel (2015) or Pekarofski (2020) exploring the topic. In a more recent article, "Civilization's Going to Pieces: The Great Gatsby, Identity, and Race, From the Jazz Age to the Obama Era" (2015), Vogel discusses how the skepticism around Gatsby's persona is linked

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<sup>7</sup> At the time, racial oppression was not dying down and the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish-American, in 1913 for a murder he is now believed to have wrongly been convicted of only proved how high tensions were between Americans and ethnic minorities.

with the skepticism around his origins and his identity: Gatsby is believed by many to have been Jewish himself, which, given the widespread anti-Semitism of the 1920's, would explain why Gatsby struggled to secure his position in what Vogel (2015) calls the "WASP establishment"<sup>8</sup> (42). He also studies the way the story resonates with the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the Obama era (as racism increased during Obama's presidency) and within Luhrmann's 2013 film adaptation of the novel (who suggested commonalities between Jazz music of the 1920's and 2000's hip-hop), further proving that the story still echoes postmodern society's attitude towards ethnicities.

In the 1970's, it is another movement that brought about another critical response to *The Great Gatsby*. This decade saw the creation of multiple women's rights movements and what would be called feminism's "second wave", which broadened the scope of what was considered basic women rights. Multiple changes were then seen in the 1970's, such as the Patsy Takemoto Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act in 1972 and the legalization of abortion in 1973 which were reminiscent of the 1923 first version of the Equal Rights Amendment that was designed to guarantee equal rights between genders. Because the role and perception of women were changing in the 1970's society, it makes sense that earlier literary works would be analyzed by Feminist critics, even more so *The Great Gatsby* as the 1920's saw the emergence of another woman: the "New Woman", a more sexually and financially free woman, an independent woman that Jordan Baker seems to embody in the novel. In her article "Only Her Hairdresser...: Another Look at Daisy Buchanan", Korenman (1975) analyzed the portrayal of Daisy Buchanan, Gatsby's love interest, and highlighted the discrepancy and ambiguity in the descriptions of Daisy. She concluded by explaining that Daisy's depiction is the result of the Romantic tradition:

[it] assigns diametrically opposed roles to fair and dark women. In his creation of Daisy, Fitzgerald reflects the influence of this tradition. The character that results is both cool innocent princess and sensual *femme fatale*, a combination that further enhances Daisy's enigmatic charm. (Korenman 1975: 578)

Indeed, in the novel, Daisy displays an air of purity and innocence, but ultimately, she becomes the *femme fatale*, the archetype character that enchants the hero and is the reason for his demise. Fetterley focused more on what Daisy represents rather than how she is represented in her book *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978). She explained "that

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<sup>8</sup> The White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, a term that usually refers to the white American upper-class, usually people of British descent.

the failure of the dream is not in Daisy herself but is rather the inevitable result of the internal dynamics of the imagination which seizes her as the object of its dreaming” (100), emphasizing how she could be the embodiment of the American Dream because she was the object of desire for the male characters, but was also faulted for their failure to obtain it. She is the representation of the power struggle between the male characters in the book.

In “Sexual Roles in *The Great Gatsby*” (1979), Thornton, however, broadened her analysis to gender roles in general and not only female roles. She receded from Daisy’s character and discussed the different sexual roles and sexual role experimentation through the characters of Nick Carraway and Jordan Baker. She pointed out the under-analyzed argument that Nick and Jordan are sexual hybrids rather than traditional figures of both masculinity and femininity. As such, the study of gender roles in *The Great Gatsby* allowed for Nick and Jordan’s sexualities to be questioned and reinterpreted. Wasiolek discussed Nick’s sexuality even further in “The Sexual Drama of Nick and Gatsby” (1992) in which he argued that Nick’s sympathy for Gatsby is indicative of his own feelings towards masculinity and sexuality and how both Gatsby and Tom diverge on its representation. He explained: “Nick shows something of his homosexual leanings in the distaste that he registers for the aggressive masculinity of Tom and the repugnance he feels for Tom's dirty love” (18). Nick dislikes Tom because it forces him to confront his own sexuality.

In the 1980’s, under the influence of Marxist Criticism, the novel started being analyzed as a social commentary on the 1920’s. As Marxist Criticism concerns itself with capitalist societies, its critics bring a valuable analysis into characters’ relationships with wealth, social class, and discriminative attitudes towards one another. In his essay “A New World, Material Without Being Real’: Fitzgerald's Critique of Capitalism in *The Great Gatsby*” (1984)<sup>9</sup>, Posnock described Gatsby as a perfect “product of a capitalist society that Fitzgerald reveals to be profoundly incoherent, founded on contradictions so irreconcilable that they must be ignored or carefully hidden.” (202). It is argued that one of the driving forces of the novel is the pursue of wealth, which in turn turns the characters into mere objects of desire. Posnock pointed this out by showing Daisy as an example:

More significantly, the novel discloses that the most desired people are perceived as desirable objects: Daisy is “gleaming like silver,” her “voice full of money” (pp.150,120). She is never simply Daisy, but is inseparable from the objects that surround her. (Posnock 1984: 205-206)

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<sup>9</sup> Essay found in Donaldson, S. (1984). *Critical Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. Boston: G.K. Hall.

This idea that the people are reduced to objects somewhat resonates with Fetterley's analysis of Daisy in 1978: the pursuit of a dream and of wealth has dehumanized the characters. This is further reinforced by the way Fitzgerald constructs his critique around the fact that many of the characters all convey greed, disillusion, decadence, excess, and corruption in different ways, such as, for example, Daisy's materialism, Gatsby's corrupted ascendance to wealth, Myrtle's consumerism, or Tom's hypocrisy.

The 1990's Postmodernism also showed a different reception to *The Great Gatsby*. Several critics looked at the modern writing Fitzgerald used in the novel and how it combined Romantic language with more modern technologies, such as cars, and realism. In his book *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times*, Berman (1994) analyzes how the references to media and other commercial things such as billboards, hotels, etc. all had a symbolic role that showed how consumerism in the 1920's was taking over relationships between humans. It is argued that the characters have more interactions and relationships with objects and other material things than they do one another. The greater value attributed to objects instead of human interactions parallels the characters' dehumanization Marxists critiqued. But Postmodernism was also interested in the unreliability of narration: in *The Great Gatsby*, though Nick appears to be the sole narrator, he often bases his depiction of Gatsby through multiple sources such as Jordan Baker or Wolfsheim telling Nick about Gatsby's past. As such, Nick builds some of Gatsby's persona around hearsay, without questioning the veracity of what he learns, which makes him an unreliable narrator.

Cinematic adaptations have also helped revive and reinterpret the novel throughout the decades, in 1949, 1974 and 2013. The 1949 version directed by Elliot Nugent suffered contradictory reviews. Some thought it was a financial success, while others pointed out the lack of resonance with the themes of the original. However, Nugent produced this film while the Motion Picture Production Code (known as Hays Code), a series of specific guidelines on what could be shown or not in a film, was still in progress. Because *The Great Gatsby* is a story where moral chaos is depicted, Nugent would have violated the code and would have had to pay a fine. Reducing the storyline to the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy is what made it possible for the film to be released while still observing the code's rules. Nonetheless, this decision to erase a major part of the story explains the divergent reviews. Dixon (2003) argues that "the result was a curiously tedious, flat, and unimaginative film, with little visual or thematic resonance" (290).

Clayton's 1974 adaptation, with Coppola's screenplay, emulates the essence of the 1920's as it was shot in New York and used props that were historically accurate. This helped in creating a similar atmosphere to the one in the novel. Despite being a financial success, this adaptation met with mixed reviews which appraised the fidelity in terms of portrayal of the story but came across as apathetic and lifeless. The visual features of this film were praised, but the overly long and slow-paced 150-minute film and the seriousness of the script overpowered the positive aspects of this cinematic adaptation. However, the box office success allowed for the novel to be spurred once again into popularity, especially as it had casted famous actors and actresses for the lead roles, such as Robert Redford as Gatsby, Sam Waterston as Nick, and Mia Farrow as Daisy.

Baz Luhrmann's 2013 version has put more emphasis than the others on this idea of visual grandeur described in the story. Some critics, amongst which Morgenstern for *The Wall Street Journal*, argued that the over-the-top splendor "means to dramatize the excesses of the Jazz Age" (Morgenstern 2013). However, such excess is exactly what Fitzgerald was criticizing in the original. Gatsby's character has also been more romanticized in order to engage with audiences unfamiliar with the original story. Such decision makes the film discard Daisy's more manipulative side in the process, as the original character would not be as enticing for viewers coming to watch a romantic cinematic piece. Nonetheless, Luhrmann's adaptation propelled the novel's popularity like it had never before. The focus on a younger audience by implementing a mix of modern and period music has undeniably helped the film be a box-office success, with it being the highest-grossing film for Luhrmann as of today. The release of the film was accompanied by a plethora of products and merchandise, such as Tiffany & Co's jewelry collection, with avid fans wanting memorabilia of the story. From pillows and candles to makeup and even face mask, Gatsby-inspired products are still profitable and popular eight years after the film release. Despite the mixed reception, it is undeniable that Luhrmann's adaptation strengthened *The Great Gatsby's* place as a canonical novel. Turning this classic into a more visual medium brought a new dimension to the myth.

More recently, the story has also been adapted a few times into the comics format. Because in comics and graphic novels there is more emphasis on the visual, this allows for the adapters to play with this visual and exploits the story in new ways. Nicki Greenberg adapted the story into a graphic novel in 2008. The particularity in her adaptation, however, is the choice to have the characters as monsters, while the setting remains unchanged. Such decision allows

to show the monstrous sides of the characters, their true nature is visible. In some ways, this personification of human characteristics combined with the cautionary aspect of the original story makes Greenberg's version reminiscent of the fabulist heritage. Bachelier and Melchior-Durand's 2013 take on the novel also illustrates how the visual can be used to reinterpret the story. They change the setting of the story from 1920's New York to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in Shanghai. Not only was the setting updated to current times, some of the text was also adapted in order to address social issues that are more relevant to postmodern society, such as homosexuality. Morton and Fordham's 2020 graphic adaptation, on the other hand, is more an homage to the original. The text has been adapted to this format, but what was kept was unchanged. The style of drawing, combined with some elements of the Art Deco style popular in the 1920's, sends the readers into the atmosphere of the original novel. The fact that three graphic adaptations were all published in the last two decades is a clear indication of the novel's still ongoing success. To reinforce this, a century after its publication, authors are writing books to fill in the gaps left in the original, such as Michael Farris Smith's *Nick* (2021) in which Smith imagines Nick's, the narrator, life prior to his move to West Egg. This gives the narrator a new dimension which will, no doubt, affect Smith's future readers' interpretation of the original story as they will now have a new understanding of who the narrator is and how his past may affect his judgment and decisions in *The Great Gatsby*.

The fact that *The Great Gatsby* has been an ambivalent subject of analysis throughout the years since its creation shows the complexity and the multiplicity of meanings that it holds. Indeed, this complexity has allowed for multiple interpretations in which more modern social debates have been and can be addressed. When asked by *Life+Times* why his film adaptation of this literary classic is still poignant nowadays, Luhrmann mentioned the fact that the novel has managed to stay relevant throughout time, but particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He explains that Fitzgerald was concerned about the moral decay of society and was worried about how it would end, which parallels what postmodern society has turned into since 9/11. And Luhrmann is right in comparing the two decades, as it is indeed mainly the cautionary aspect of the novel that makes it all the more relevant in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world which can be described as fast-paced and money-centered. But the novel is also linked with a certain nostalgia of the past, a feeling also relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The past appears as reassuring because it is known, compared to the future that is uncertain. As such, many people find comfort in nostalgia by reminiscing of what seems to them simpler times compared to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, forgetting that the past had its own unappealing sides, such as the corruption that ensued from the Prohibition, and the

Great Depression that hit many people a few years later. The characters of the novel are too attracted to the past for many reasons. The main male characters, Gatsby, Tom and Nick, show desire to relive the past: Gatsby because the past, in which he was with Daisy, represents something he longs for in the present and Tom because the present threatens his social position. Nick expresses nostalgia through his fond recollection of moments from his youth, but also through his narration of Gatsby's story.

## II. Adapting the Gatsbyesque into graphic novels: Bachelier & Melchior and Morton & Fordham's versions

A lot of canonical texts have undergone adaptations, but with important differences as far as their approaches are concerned. Each medium allows for different interpretations and renderings of these canonical texts. Though they all come with certain constraints, the different media all allow for new possibilities. Some media, such as films or operas, combine the visual and the oral, and give a new dimension to the original work by adding voices, music, costumes, and actors/singers. As such, they combine multiple art forms such as photography, dance and performance which brings new possibilities of interpretations of the original story. All these elements add new emotions, new meanings. The visuality or orality of these media transpose the story from the abstract and imaginary to a more concrete reality. While all media play on the immersion of the readers, some are more immersive than others, such as videogames. Graphic novels and comics, as they do not use sound and therefore cannot rely on orality nor on the textuality as much, have to find new ways to convey meaning through visual elements.

When it comes to adapting *The Great Gatsby*, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a momentum of revival in many media, but particularly in the comics format with Greenberg's 2008 adaptation, Woodman-Maynard's 2021 version, Melchior-Durand and Bachelier's 2013 *Gatsby le Magnifique* and Morton and Fordham's 2020 graphic novel. The two last ones here are the adaptations that are analyzed as they are both very different in many aspects, making their comparison highlight the diverging ways in which a story can be reinterpreted in a same medium: the 2013 version is more of a critical interpretation of the original novel, whereas the 2020 prides itself on faithfulness and appears as more of a celebration of the 1920's era.

Morton and Fordham's *The Great Gatsby: the Graphic Novel* was published in English in 2020. Aya Morton, an American illustrator, and Fred Fordham, an English author, worked together with the help of Fitzgerald's great-granddaughter Blake Hazard to create this graphic novel. The colors in this version appear paler and more muted as a result of it being seemingly painted in watercolors. This gives a certain softness to the drawings and the characters. The characters are drawn in an early to mid-century comic style, which gives a feeling of "old" comics and accentuates the era described in the story, but also plays on the nostalgia of this era. Though still very neutral, the characters are still somewhat detailed. As such, the facial expressions of these characters are more obvious and more pronounced. Morton also uses a

style similar to Hergé's *ligne claire*, a style made popular by the cartoonist in *The Adventures of Tintin* in the late 1920's. *Ligne Claire* is a style that uses strong dark lines to contrast the different elements on a panel from one another. Central to this adaptation are the elements of Art Deco. Art Deco was an art and architectural style famous in the 1920's and 1930's and which uses a lot of geometric forms, symmetry, and colors, as well as gold. The intricacy of the Art Deco style and its ostentation were at first done to cater to wealthy clients but was also a reaction to the simplicity of more traditional styles. As such, Art Deco became the symbolism of wealth and sophistication during the Roaring Twenties. Many buildings in New York, such as the famous Chrysler Building, are good representations of the influence and popularity of that style at the time. In his 2013 film adaptation, Luhrmann also emphasizes Art Deco in his set and décor. Overall, the visual of this graphic novel, from the characters to the style of drawing to the use of Art Deco are all nods to the Roaring Twenties. This helps recreate the atmosphere that surrounded the story, a world of wealth and beauty, while giving the graphic novel a nostalgic feel.



Figure 1 : back cover and front cover © Scribner / Morton and Fordham, 2020

The cover of this version sets the tone of the adaptation, both visually and textually. The front cover and the back cover of the book (fig.1) are in fact one continuous image of a swimming pool. The bright colors and the characters in the pool illustrate the more playful side of the era, whereas the back cover hints at Gatsby's demise by showing the rest of the pool and his floating pink mattress. Both covers portray the beginning and the end of the story: the

carelessness and playfulness of its beginning, and the deserted pool from its ending. The front cover also announces a fidelity to the original story by using the terms “illustrated” and “adapted”. The objective behind this adaptation therefore appears as not necessarily a desire to reinterpret it, but rather to celebrate the original.

Similarly to the novel, this graphic adaptation starts with Nick narrating what his father had told him when he was younger about not judging people as they might not have had the same privileges as he did. It gives the impression that this is some sort of voiceover that will accompany the reader throughout the piece. To add to this, a clear distinction is made between the narrated parts of the graphic novel and the dialogues, not only through the type of speech balloons, but also through the typography used. When the text is narrated, the letters are less spaced out, and the font is similar to a typewriter’s. By contrast, dialogues are more spaced between the letters and words. These letters are also more rounded, which mirrors how spoken words flow more easily than when written. Emphasizing the contrast between the narrative parts and the dialogues reminds the readers that they are not directly witnessing the story, but that it is Nick’s recollection of it. It creates a distance between the story and the readers.

Though Bachelier and Melchior-Durand’s adaptation of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* could be taken as a comic because of its A4 format (typical of comics), this version still fits in the three other criteria that define a graphic novel according to Baetens and Frey’s argument in *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction* (2014)<sup>10</sup>: the form strays from the conventional and traditional drawings of comics and are more paintings-like, the content deals with serious matters, it is not serialized, and it is published by a publication house that usually issues novels. Because this version shares more similarities with graphic novels than it does comics, it is considered as the former in this dissertation. Bachelier and Melchior’s *Gatsby le Magnifique* was published in 2013 in French. Stéphane Melchior-Durand is a French writer and scriptwriter. With the French painter and illustrator Benjamin Bachelier, they adapted and illustrated this

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<sup>10</sup> In *The Graphic Novel: An Introduction* (2014), Baetens and Frey argue that there is a difference between comics and graphic novels. They distinguish four ways in which they differ: (1) the form (graphic novels tend to go beyond the limits of their medium and break conventions whereas comics are more traditional), (2) the content (graphic novels deal with more serious stories and favor realism), (3) the publication format (graphic novels prefer the book format and are usually what Baetens and Frey call the “one shot approach”: they are not part of a series and rarely have a second volume), and (4) the production and distribution (comics are capitalizable products and tend to be published by big companies, whereas graphic novels are usually the product of independent publishing).

literary classic in a more unconventional way: the setting of the original novel, New York in 1922, has been changed to Shanghai in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not only have the location and era changed, but the text has also been partly modified to convey more contemporary social issues. For example, a change in the text is apparent when Tom talks about intermarriage between ethnicities to intermarriage between people of different social status. In 1925, overt racism was more socially acceptable than it is now. Since the 1960's, the awareness around the prejudices against ethnic minorities has grown. Though this does not diminish Tom's blatant racism in the adaptation, it demonstrates a will to make the story more relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> century social issues. In an interview, Melchior explains this choice to post-modernize the story: "I wanted to put forward the human and psychological dimension of the story, the characters rather than the era"<sup>11</sup>. Though the setting has changed, visual hints of the 1920's can be felt, such as the dancers at Gatsby's party wearing flapper-like dresses, some of Daisy's outfits and the architectural style of Gatsby's mansion. As such, the atmosphere of the Jazz Age is still visually conveyed but intertwined with other styles. By combining scenes reminiscent of the South of France, New York and other urban areas, the graphic novel brings this sense of globalization to the story that the French artists were trying to convey.

The style and organization of this adaptation are very minimalistic, both visually and textually, which in many ways reveal the heart of Fitzgerald's text. In his article "L'épure sied à Gatsby", Potet, a French journalist, argues that this minimalism is what allowed this version to extract its narrative quintessence<sup>12</sup>. The panels are like paintings which play with a large palette of dense colors and layers to convey meaning. Most of these panels appear blurry, which resonates with the sense of mystery that transpires throughout the story. This minimalistic approach is also found in the ways in which the characters are drawn as they are relatively neutral-looking, not caricaturized, yet not naturalistic either. In *Understanding Comics* (1993) McCloud explains that it is an "amplification through simplification": "by stripping down an image to its essential 'meaning' an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can't." (30) This neutral representation can also add a more universal side to the characters. The focus is not on faces anymore, but on attitudes, on acts. In this particular adaptation, this style allows for a visual representation of Fitzgerald's characters being carriers of meaning and symbolism more than characters.

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<sup>11</sup> "J'ai donc voulu remettre en avant la dimension humaine et psychologique du récit, les personnages plutôt que l'époque" Melchior in Le Saux, L. (2013).

<sup>12</sup> Potet, F. (2013). *L'épure sied à Gatsby*. Accessed July 17, 2021, from [https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2013/02/08/l-epure-sied-a-gatsby\\_1828327\\_3246.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2013/02/08/l-epure-sied-a-gatsby_1828327_3246.html).

Unlike Morton and Fordham's cover which reminds the reader of the fact that it is an adaptation, this front cover (fig.2) is a first immersive approach to the novel, the first contact the reader has with the main character. Gatsby's character and persona is introduced straight away: he is shown alone, looking like a dandy, with fish flying around him. The sense of mystery and illusion that surrounds Gatsby's character is instantly given by this cover. To add to that, the cover also precludes Gatsby's ending and the last few pages of the graphic novel in which Gatsby is seen underwater after his death, with fish around him. The contrasting colors also play a role in expressing Gatsby's duality: he has a bright side characterized by his undying hope, but he also has a darker, more corrupted side.

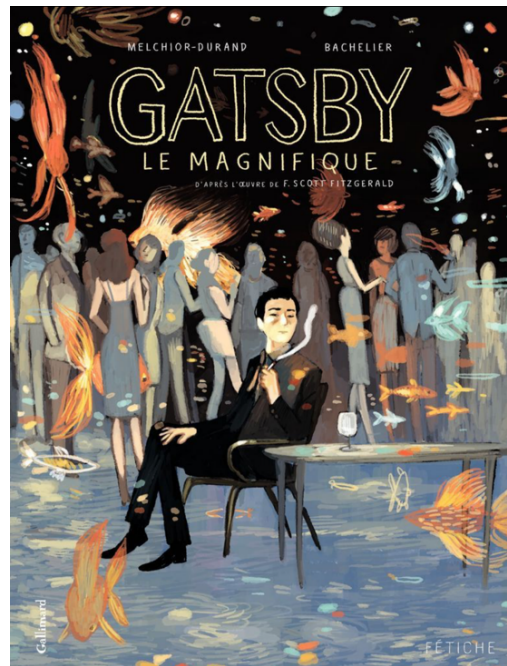


Figure 2: cover © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

This version starts with Nick introducing himself as an architect in China and he is seen in the middle of a construction site. Not only does it allow for the new setting to be introduced straight away, it also connects the reader to this narrator in a more intimate way. Indeed, Nick introduces himself to the reader instead of beginning the narration of his recollections. The reader then feels included in the journey, rather than just being a witness to it. This is reinforced by the large number of dialogues included in the textual aspect of this version. Taking away the power of the narrative voice and focusing on dialogues further gives the impression of an immersion into the story and allows for the readers to identify with Nick more easily.

Both adaptations diverge in the ways in which they rework this canonical story. Where Morton and Fordham's focuses on recreating the 1920's atmosphere through their use of older and historically accurate styles as an homage to the original, Bachelier and Melchior demonstrates a greater explicitness when it comes to discussing global and social issues. The latter reworked the cautionary aspect of the novel into a more contemporary one, whereas the former downplays and even erases some of them, such as Nick's ambiguous sexuality. It is also important to mention that Hazard wrote in the foreword of Morton and Fordham's graphic novel that Fitzgerald "would be charmed by this fresh imagining, with its faithfulness to the text".

Given that Morton and Fordham's version was commissioned by Fitzgerald's family as a way to pay tribute to this classic text, it is not surprising that such fidelity to the text and nostalgic atmosphere are found. This dissertation aims to analyze what these two different interpretations of the original text each brings to the original story and how far they push the limits of their medium to efficiently convey symbolism and meaning through visual elements and techniques.

### III. Graphic novels and comics adaptation: revisiting literary classics

Over the years and with the help of the developing technology in many art forms, literary texts have increasingly been adapted. This growing interest in adaptations is easily explained by how the visual seems to have taken over in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As media forms are developing, they are becoming more easily accessible forms of entertainment for a large audience. Therefore, adaptations in these formats allow for a revival of originals. In *Adaptation et bande dessinée : Éloge de la fidélité*. (2020), Baetens explains:

In today's media culture, which increasingly blurs the boundaries between creation, commerce and technology, adaptation imposes itself, along with serialization, as an essential strategy for any artistic production in the field of storytelling<sup>13</sup>. (5-6)

Not only does the adaptation of classics ensure their legacy and longevity in public memory, but it also ensures a financial benefit if they have proven profitable before. Because adaptations derive from original works, many have analyzed them according to their fidelity to the original, and studies and theories on the matter have emerged. Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptations*, first published in 2006, was a turning point and a steppingstone in terms of theorizing how adaptation works across different media and analyzing the creative possibilities of these media. In a reedition of *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013), Hutcheon explains why such an appeal for adaptations is found:

In *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, George Kubler [...] claims that “[h]uman desires in every present instance are torn between the replica and the invention, between the desire to return to the known pattern, and the desire to escape it by a new variation” (1962: 72). Adaptations fulfill both desires at once. [...]. On an experiential level as well, the conservative comfort of familiarity is countered by the unpredictable pleasure in difference—for both creator and audience. (Hutcheon 2013: 173)

This means that the appeal for the audience is not necessarily to read an exact copy of the original in a new medium, but rather to experience the differences between what they know and new layers of meanings or elements they might discover. Baetens (2020) adds to this by arguing that “the adaptation should be read as one of the keys that can lead to a better understanding of cultural values at a given time”<sup>14</sup> (214-215). Because adaptations reinterpret the original story, they can lead to a large variety of readers' interpretations too. Trying to assert an adaptation's quality solely depending on its fidelity and faithfulness to the original story would not only be too reductive, but also a near impossible task. Baetens (2020) argues that, previously, fidelity

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<sup>13</sup> “Dans la culture médiatique qui est la nôtre et qui brouille toujours davantage les frontières entre création, commerce et technologie, l'adaptation s'impose, avec la *sérialisation*, comme une stratégie essentielle de toute production artistique dans le domaine du récit.” (Baetens 2020 :5-6).

<sup>14</sup> “L'adaptation doit être lue comme une des clés susceptibles d'aboutir à une meilleure compréhension des valeurs culturelles à un moment donné.” (Baetens 2020 :214-215).

was seen as a criterion that would act as a gauge of quality and technique, however, he explains that it is precisely because the adaptation does not try to replicate the original exactly that it allows for faithfulness to be found. He adds “we only adapt faithfully by agreeing not to redo the model exactly”<sup>15</sup> (188). As such, adaptations should not be analyzed in terms of fidelity to the original story, nor as replicas of another work of art. Instead, Hutcheon (2013) argues that adaptations should be seen as a product and as a process, and meet these three criteria:

- A. An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- B. A creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- C. An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work (Hutcheon 2013: 8)

The first criterion has to do with the product in itself, what Hutcheon calls the *formal entity*. An adaptation needs to announce it is a transposition (of medium, of context, ...) in order to be considered as an adaptation. It needs to acknowledge the work it derives from, otherwise it is not an adaptation but an appropriation of the original. The second criterion concerns the *process of creation*. In this case, appropriation is not meant as in a replica of the original work, but rather how an adapter appropriates the text to give a new meaning to it. Salvaging, on the other hand, is the idea that the adaptation will pay homage to the original or ensure it does not go forgotten. The third criterion is more about how the adaptation is received: adaptations become a form of intertextuality as their textuality resonates with the audience’s previous knowledge of the original and other adaptations they have encountered which have brought new insight on the original. The adaptations and the original create around them a web of repetitions and variations that echo one another in the audience’s mind.

These three criteria suggested by Hutcheon help analyze the studied adaptations. Bachelier and Melchior’s *Gatsby le Magnifique* is an acknowledged transposition of *The Great Gatsby*, notably through the title which, though translated into French, has been kept. It is also a transposition as both a change of medium (from novel to graphic novel), and a change of context (from 1920’s Long Island to 21<sup>st</sup> century Shanghai) are found. Therefore, this version is also creative and interpretative: the setting has changed and some of the text has been modified to post-modernize the story. Regarding intertextuality, the original text has been translated, but is still recognizable to readers acquainted with the novel<sup>16</sup>. Changing the setting and some of the text has allowed for this version to become more relatable to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience as not the same social debates were relevant then and now. Indeed, whereas

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<sup>15</sup> “On n’adapte fidèlement qu’en acceptant de ne pas refaire exactement son modèle” (Baetens 2020 :188).

<sup>16</sup> In an interview with *Bodoï*, Melchior explains he used the original text and translated parts of it: “J’ai repris le texte original, afin de sortir des traductions françaises et revenir à la source.” (in Le Saux (2013)).

Fitzgerald's novel was discussing gender roles as well as showing overt racism, these topics have been updated from a 21<sup>st</sup> century point of view. Overt racism is not acceptable anymore, and homosexuality is more explicitly discussed. Because of this change, new interpretations of the story are possible and will impact the adaptation's intertextuality with the original: the audience that knows this version is certain to read the original with a fresh perspective. These criteria are also noticeable in Morton and Fordham's *The Great Gatsby: the Graphic Novel*, though in a different way than Bachelier and Melchior's work is. The recognition of the original text is here too discernable because the title has been kept the same but is even further acknowledged by the addition of "graphic novel" in it. It is also a transposition as the medium has changed. However, the creative act behind this version is to salvage the original more than reinterpreting it. Indeed, as previously explained, particular attention was given to ensure the faithfulness to the original, and this work is therefore more of an homage to the 1920's. The text has been kept and adapted, which ensures the intertextual engagement with the original. In this case, the graphic novel acts more as a celebration of the Jazz Age and a tribute to the original novel rather than a desire to (re)interpret the story.

By transposing Fitzgerald's classic into graphic novels, the specificities of the medium can add to the new interpretation these adaptations can engender. Indeed, graphic novels, by combining visual and textual elements, create new ways to interpret the story and the images. In *The System of Comics* (2007), Groensteen discusses how comics<sup>17</sup> need to be seen as complex inter-weavings of meanings where each element of the page adds to the overall meaning and the narrative. As such, the page layout, the mise en scène of the panel, the illustration of the characters, the frames, the margins, the strips and the speech balloons all need to be analyzed as carrying meaning as their sum is what influences how the readers interpret the panels. The tension between the text and the image therefore created in this medium could explain the dearth in terms of studies on this particular format. Indeed, analysis on visual arts has long been carried out with extensive research and studies on sculptures, paintings, architecture, etc. This is also the case for the written arts with countless theories on a wide array of genres. However, the difficulty when it comes to graphic novels and comics is analyzing and theorizing the combination of the specificities of two, at first glance, very distinctive art forms.

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<sup>17</sup> Though Baetens and Frey (2014) highlight the differences between comics and graphic novels, those differences do not concern the elements theorized by Groensteen in his book. Therefore, his theory is still applicable to graphic novels.

Adaptations often suppose a change of medium, which means that the adapter needs to adapt the original into a set of codes that is particular to the chosen new medium. This is what Hutcheon (2013) calls *transcoding*. The idea behind this term is that each medium has a special set of codes it needs to implement, and which are expected by the readers of said medium. In the case of comics and graphic novels, it will be the combination of the different elements of the page aforementioned that act as the set of codes. But beyond this change of codes, and as usually adaptations are taking their source from much older works, a shift in time, space, and sometimes culture will be obvious. *Transcoding* ties in with Philippe Marion's idea of *médiagenie* in "Narratologie médiatique et médiagenie des récits" (1997). The term, which originates from *photogénie*<sup>18</sup>, *médiagenie* refers to the fact that each medium has its own potential and narrative process. Depending on the medium used, a narrative work will see its potential be developed in an optimal way. When applied to literature, this means that depending on the narration, certain media will work better than others in developing it. Marion also mentions *transmédiagenie*. Whereas *médiagenie* concerns the narrative work's capacity to be realized better in certain media more than others, *transmédiagenie* refers to its capacity to easily be transposed from one medium to another. This means that some narrative works will be more adaptable than others. Because comics and graphic novels are constrained in terms of size, adapters need to make mindful decisions on what to keep, what to put aside and how to do so in order to adapt the narrative work in the most optimal way. When it comes to comics and graphic novels, the advantage is that the visual aspect of the medium allows for the adapter to get rid of many descriptions. Indeed, as settings are shown, they do not need to be written. This is why the *mise en scène*, described by Groensteen (2007) as "the different parameters of the image (framing, choice of point of view, composition, "actions" of the characters, lighting, etc.)" (133), is so critical in terms of conveying meaning. Not everything can be kept from the original, but it still needs to make sense to the reader.

However, transcoding also has an impact on both the audience familiar with the original work and the new one. Indeed, the original audience, knowing the original text, will have a set of expectations that comes with it, whether it'd be how the characters look like, where the story takes place, or other elements particular to the original. The new audience, however, will have expectations particular to the new medium. Whether the new audience knows the original story

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<sup>18</sup> *Photogénie* is the idea that when a person or an object is being photographed or filmed, their poetic or aesthetic qualities are amplified.

or not, the adapter has to find ways to involve it in the new medium, as well as involving the original audience as well. Of that, Hutcheon (2013) says “many adapters deal with this reality of reception by updating the time of the story in an attempt to find contemporary resonance for their audiences” (142). This is what Bachelier and Melchior do by transposing the story into 21<sup>st</sup> century Shanghai and addressing more current social concerns such as homosexuality.

Hutcheon (2013) also points out that there would be multiple reasons as to why someone would adapt something: “economic, legal, cultural, political, and personal” motivations (95). Indeed, many times adaptations is the only way for artists to retell a story given that they are very protected by copyright. This is particularly interesting in the case of the studied adaptations in this dissertation. Bachelier and Melchior’s version was done in 2013, while *The Great Gatsby* was still under copyright laws, which could explain why the choice to change the time and the place, besides being an artistic one, could have been made. Morton and Fordham’s graphic novel, however, was made in 2020, a year before *The Great Gatsby* would enter public domain, possibly as an attempt to produce an “approved” version. Indeed, this work was commissioned by the descendants of Fitzgerald, which explains such strong similarities with the original without risking plagiarism. That being said, adapting is also a very personal process. It is the adapter’s position on the story, their interpretation, what Hutcheon (2013) calls their “intentionality”. Knowing the author’s intentions when reading the adaptation can influence how it will be interpreted. As comics and graphic novels require a lot of implication and interactivity from the reader, intentionality can have an impact on the adaptation’s reception.

Adaptation studies, such as Hutcheon’s, have mainly addressed the adaptation of books into films, or comics into films (mainly Marvel), but rarely in a book-to-comic stance. Because the status of comics and graphic novels amongst scholars is still questioned and relegated to a lesser place in the prestige hierarchy, not many theories have been formed around comics and graphic novels adaptations<sup>19</sup>. Though Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013) focuses on other media than the graphic novel, her theory gives a basis for this analysis, notably the need to look at the *transcoding*, the sets of codes of a particular medium, in our case graphic novel’s. Though her theory rejects the idea of fidelity, Baetens’s stance on this topic is the one that is considered for this analysis: an adaptation is only faithful because it refuses to be a copy of the

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to mention Baetens’s importance in the field as the author has extensively analyzed and theorized this topic of graphic adaptations of books, more recently in *Adaptation et bande dessinée : Éloge de la fidélité* (2020) where he explained the different ways in which many canonical texts were being adapted in the comic medium.

original. It is because an adaptation distances itself from the original that it can accurately reinterpret and work with the original's themes in a new medium. This means that the different codes and elements particular to graphic novels need to be studied in order to see how they have changed or reinterpreted the original to add to its narration. These different elements are the ones theorized by Groensteen in *The System of Comics* (2007): the page layout, the mise en scène of the panels, strips, speech balloons and frames. Groensteen stresses the importance to look at comics as a system, and therefore not only is it crucial to look at what the different elements in them mean, but also consider how they interact with one another, how their sum convey meaning. In terms of Marion's *transmédiagénie*, Fitzgerald's novel has proven itself to be hard to adapt because of its complexity. This makes this analysis of two adaptations even more compelling as they both rework this seemingly hard-to-adapt story in very different ways.

Because colors are a central part of Fitzgerald's novel and because graphic novels are an extremely visual medium, colors in comics and graphic novels also need to be discussed. Colors are indeed important in comics as the visual takes the focal point of the narrative. In "From Black & White to Color and Back: What Does It Mean (not) to Use Color" (2011), Baetens points out the shyness of analysis on such topic. However, he argues that analyzing colors is important as "color must help the reader better understand a fictional world whose coherence and continuity can never be taken for granted in a medium whose basic publishing structure is the instalment unit" (117). In his article, Baetens highlights the paradigmatic value of colors: colors do play a part in conveying meaning. In *Understanding comics. The invisible art*. (1993), McCloud argues that colors have an "iconic power" as they started symbolizing certain characters back when they were first used. Indeed, readers would associate colors such as blue and red with Captain America, or black and yellow with Batman. Colors then started becoming a more central part of the narrative by adding to the general atmosphere conveyed by the panel. As such, colors were representative of depth, a certain dominant mood, etc. They convey meaning through the emotions they create in the readers' mind (color theory touches on this idea that colors affect our perception). For example, bright colors are usually associated with positive feelings, whereas dark ones are linked to more negative feelings. McCloud explains: "through more expressive colors, comics can become an intoxicating environment of sensations that only color can give" (192). Because colors are an important part of the original story and are important in comics too, as pointed out by Baetens (2011) and McCloud (1993), it is crucial to analyze how both these adaptations play with colors to bring Fitzgerald's symbolism to life.

## IV. *The Great Gatsby* read in colors: Bachelier & Melchior's minimalistic approach against Morton & Fordham's Art Deco homage

The *New Criticism* approach of the 1950's argued that the focus of an analysis should be on the text as an independent object, an artifact, separate from the intentionality of the author and the context of writing. This approach highlighted the need to look at the novel as an autonomous object that carries meaning and symbolism. In this context, Zhang's "Symbolic Meanings of Colors in *The Great Gatsby*" (2015) is used in this chapter to analyze how the graphic adaptations under consideration emphasize the money world of *Gatsby* and how visuals and colors help convey the symbolism present in the original novel.

Colors play an important role in the original novel. In "Symbolic Meanings of Colors in *The Great Gatsby*" (2015), Zhang analyzes the different meanings colors take in Fitzgerald's novel. Six colors are mentioned as being symbolic: green, white, red, yellow, blue, and grey. Zhang explains that "no matter in the Oriental culture or in the Western culture, green is the color of spring, which symbolizes confidence, vitality and hope" (41). But green also symbolizes the pursuit of *Gatsby's* dream and its corruption (mainly through another symbol that is the green light). White shows innocence and purity, but Zhang argues it can also mean "vacuity, superficiality, hollowness and ruthlessness" (38) as it is most often associated with Daisy's character (mainly because she is described as wearing white a lot) and East Egg. Red, which is most often linked with Tom, is the color most "associated with blood, so it is the symbol of violence, danger and rage" (42). Many times, red is used in combination with other elements to mirror the ending of the story, such as in the following quote: "in front of wayside garages, where new red gas-pumps sat out in pools of light" (Fitzgerald 2016: 19) in which red and the word *pool* echo the bloody pool in *Gatsby's* death scene. Zhang also points out how Nick's books are "red and gold" (Fitzgerald 2016: 9), symbolizing how money and violence were associated at the time. And gold, or more generally yellow, is the color of money and materialism. Because gold is encountered many times in luxurious houses, it is also associated with wealth and higher social classes: a good example is Daisy's character, described as a golden girl and whose voice is "full of money" (Fitzgerald 2016: 83). But Zhang argues that yellow is also used to represent "decay, death and destructive power" (42), a symbolism that is reinforced when *Gatsby's* yellow car kills Myrtle Wilson. It is also Autumn, a season full of yellow tones, when *Gatsby* is killed, further strengthening the feeling of destruction brought by

this color. When it comes to blue, Zhang gives it two symbolic meanings: “melancholy, loneliness” and “fantasy and illusion” (43). The author also argues both meanings are often linked with Gatsby, such as when his garden is described in terms of blue tones though he is holding popular parties in it, insinuating he is lonely, or when Nick talks about “blue smoke of brittle leaves” (Fitzgerald 2016: 120) in the air after Gatsby’s death, which symbolizes the end of the spring<sup>20</sup>, and the end of the illusion. The last color to be analyzed is grey. Because it is representative of the Valley of Ashes, the place where everything that stems from capitalism and materialism is dumped, it is the color that “rules the whole novel” (43). It shows the “decadence, bleakness, corruption and disillusionment” (43) of the society in the story, but also its moral decay. Because such analysis is reductive and limited, it will be used with a critical eye throughout the dissertation. As the novel and both adaptations use colors, this section will analyze how far the adaptation go in reflecting Zhang’s ideas and play with these expectations linked with the original. Since *The Great Gatsby* is such a colorful novel, how are these colors used, or not, by the graphic novel to emphasize the symbolism of the novel?

Colors in Morton and Fordham’s graphic adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* are more muted and paler than what is usually found in comics. They are almost pastel-like. They give an impression of softness which also adds a dimension of superficiality: because everything appears as softer, it displays a false sense of calmness, a sense of easy-goingness which contrasts with the story. This parallels the theme of illusion in the novel in which many characters are hiding behind an illusion of quietude. The different colors discussed in Zhang’s 2015 color theory (green, white, red, yellow, blue, and grey) are also the main colors in this graphic adaptation. As such, it is interesting to compare their use with Zhang’s theory to see if they convey the same meanings highlighted by Zhang. The paleness of this graphic novel, painted in watercolors, also plays a role in reinforcing this feeling of nostalgia of the 1920’s brought about by this adaptation (already emphasized by the Art Deco style used) as it gives the impression of a book in which colors have faded overtime, similarly to an archive or an old photograph.

By contrast, colors in Bachelier and Melchior’s graphic novel are brighter. The artists play with colors and their contrasts: bright colors are often shown against very dark backgrounds. Whereas the characters and elements are delimited using *lignes claires* in Morton

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<sup>20</sup> When Autumn comes, many people burn the leaves that have fallen from the trees. When the leaves are burning, they appear to produce a bluish smoke, which is what is referenced by Fitzgerald here.

and Fordham's version, here the colors seem to mix in some ways, they blur into one another, which gives the adaptation more texture. This blurriness mirrors the blurriness of the storyline, it illustrates the mystery around the characters, and Gatsby in particular. Already a link between colors and meaning is seen through this effect. The colors in Zhang's article (2015) are here too all present in the panels, however sometimes one or the other color takes over the whole panel, sometimes the whole page, to reinforce a certain atmosphere pertaining to a specific narrative scene.

As scholars part of the New Criticism movement have highlighted, not only colors carry meaning, characters and objects also do. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is composed of complex inter-weavings of symbols and meanings. As such, many elements which might appear as meaningless are important in the development of the plot. Both graphic adaptations rework these symbolic elements to visually convey them. Both these versions, however, do it very differently as is explained in the following paragraphs. Many elements are analyzed in this section regarding what they represent in terms of symbolism and how these symbols are visually implemented into the studied graphic adaptations of *The Great Gatsby*.

### A. Tom's antagonism: when red anger and the color of money combine

In the novel, Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, is portrayed as the embodiment of generationally inherited money, old money. As such, he represents the opposite of what Gatsby is in many ways: he is conservative, and shows some degree of entitlement, misogyny, and violence, such as when he punches Myrtle or bruises Daisy. Though he has an affair with Myrtle, he shows disdain against the working class and new money. This disdain can be noticed through the way he relates to Myrtle and Daisy: whereas he only bruises Daisy's fingers, he punches Myrtle in the face when she challenges him by repeatedly saying his wife's name. He is more violent with Myrtle because he does not consider her as his social equivalent. In the same way, he does not like Jordan because she is too independent for his taste, which goes against his conservative views of women's role in society. He implicitly hints at it in the book: "By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me." (72). In the novel, Fitzgerald emphasizes the divide between old money and new money, as well as how old money perceives new money ("[Daisy] was appalled by West Egg [...] appalled by its raw vigour that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants" (74)). Therefore, it is no surprise that Tom is also annoyed at,

and somewhat threatened by, what *Gatsby* represents. It seems as though the fact that Daisy is having an affair with someone Tom does not know much about is more important to him than her having an affair at all:

‘I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out . . . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.’ (Fitzgerald 2016: 89)

This passage not only highlights the fact that Tom does not like anything that risks his social status and reputation, but that he is also prejudicial and racist. These aspects of his personality distinguish him from *Gatsby*, and therefore, the American Dream: he did not build his success and wealth on hard work, but on inheritance. He is not interested in any self-improvement either. Tom is also often described as a brute and in physical terms: “gruff husky tenor” (10), “gruffy polite” (71), “savagely” (83).

In Morton and Fordham’s adaptation, many parameters of comics put forward by Groensteen (2007), such as the panel's *mise en scène*, all work together to illustrate Tom’s anger, and hatred for others. To begin with, Tom’s character is drawn as tall, muscly, blond, blue-eyed and playing polo. In many ways, he resembles DiCaprio’s *Gatsby* in Luhrmann’s 2013 film adaptation. His physical portrayal in this graphic novel mirrors that of the Nordic race he references as the dominant race multiple times in the original. Portraying him as such fortifies Tom’s perception of himself as being superior. This superiority is also highlighted in the way Tom is drawn in the panels: he always appears to be towering over the other characters. He is also mainly in the foreground of the frames he appears in, which gives the character an aura of importance. But Tom’s height also illustrates his harsher side, often referred to both in the original and this adaptation, such as when Daisy calls him a “hulking physical specimen” (16).

In this version, Tom is mostly wearing white and blue suits. Both these colors, previously said to represent fantasy and hollowness, are a reminder that his character is hiding behind illusions and appearances, he appears as prim and proper when, in reality, he is quite violent. His facial expression is always one of discontent and he is barely ever drawn with another facial expression than that one, which further illustrates Tom’s short temper. However, what is mostly accentuated in this adaptation is Tom’s dislike and anger at being described as a brute. Unlike in Bachelier and Melchior’s version, the scene in which Daisy calls him a brute is not directly followed by him talking about a dominant race to change the topic. The pause in

textual elements reinforces Tom's sulking. This effect is created through the page layout (18), with three panels being disposed in the foreground, while another panel that suggests the reader is looking at the characters through a window is in the background. The lack of textual elements in those four panels, as well as Tom's expression of clear discontent, and him looking at Daisy strengthen Tom's bad mood.

The conversation about the book here emphasizes Tom's racism, rather than his want to be recognized as an intelligent being. Indeed, Tom is highly concerned with how he is perceived, though he might not admit to it explicitly. When he meets up with Nick at the beginning of the story, Nick points out that he felt as though Tom wanted him "to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own." (Fitzgerald 2016: 10). This impression is further felt twice in the adaptation: first is when he does not want to be called "the polo player" at Gatsby's party, and the second time is when Nick does not want to shake his hand at the end of the story. Tom wants to be acknowledged. This is noticeable when he tells Gatsby about how he is "the first man who ever made a stable out of a garage" (Fitzgerald 2016: 82). In the novel, Tom never talks about his accomplishments, but rather about what he owns, such as when he first welcomes Nick into his house and tells him about how he has a "nice place" (9). This reveals how he feels threatened by others who have accomplished more than him, such as Gatsby. Multiple times throughout the story, Tom tries to bring Gatsby's success down, for example, when he is sitting on the steps at Gatsby's party with Daisy and Tom and questions Gatsby's achievements (126), or when he talks to Jordan and Nick in the car about his investigation of Gatsby (144). In one of the panels of that scene, Tom is portrayed as looking towards the reader with a speech balloon saying "You think I'm pretty dumb, don't you?". This change of perspective creates the impression that Tom is addressing the reader directly, as though he wants to convince them of his intelligence too. The blue of his suit in this strip has become darker than a few panels before. This could visually represent him going deeper into his illusion of knowing everything. Tom is deeply concerned with appearances and how he is perceived. Hence, he feels threatened by others with greater accomplishments.

Tom's racism is noticeable in this graphic adaptation too. In this scene (fig.3), Tom is shown discussing intermarriage between black and white couples. He thinks he makes sense in his tirade about it and his judgment against Gatsby, but as Jordan points out, they are all white in that scene. This creates a tension between textual and visual elements that highlights gradual loss of credibility. To add to that, Nick's narration of the scene highlights the idea that Tom is alone: "flushed with his impassioned gibberish, he saw himself standing alone on the last barrier of civilization" (fig.3).



Figure 3: page 151 © Scribner / Morton and Fordham, 2020

All these different elements work together to bring Tom's harshness and anger to this visual medium. His superficiality and short temper are made apparent by combining the paradigmatic value of blue to the physical traits (angry facial expression, crossed arms) of his character. Tom appears as the bad sides of old money by being entitled and threatened by new money, and therefore threatened by the American Dream and its possibilities.

Bachelier and Melchior uses these different elements too, but in a different way. Indeed, whereas Morton and Fordham use fewer visual elements, in Bachelier and Melchior, more focus is put on colors rather than on the textual part of the story. In this version, Tom's portrayal is completely different from the original. Indeed, as the setting has changed, Tom is now portrayed as a Chinese man. As such, this idea that he would be part of the Nordic race, the one considered dominant by Tom, cannot apply here because he does not bear any physical traits from it. This first change highlights Tom's lack of credibility when talking about races (10). However, his harshness and superiority are still conveyed in this version. Tom is still drawn as being from a higher social class. In one of the panels, Tom is on a horse, wearing a polo attire. Polo is a sport known to be played by richer social classes, and this combined with him wearing blue asserts his superiority. Indeed, blue is often associated with royalty (i.e., the color *royal blue*).

Tom's superiority is also shown through the mise en scène: he is often portrayed towering over the other characters, visibly taller than them and of sturdy build. Many times, it seems as though he cannot fit in the frame. This shows both his bruteness (which stems from Nick's more animalistic description of Tom) and his superiority. The harsher side of his personality is further reinforced by Daisy calling him a brute in another panel in which he is drawn with an angry facial expression. This hints at the fact that Tom does not like to be reminded of this brutality, nor does he want to be described as such.

However, Tom is sometimes drawn smaller or at the same level as the other characters. This change usually happens when Tom is not in a superior stance anymore. When Tom tries to turn the attention away from Daisy calling him a brute, he starts discussing a supposedly scientific book, showing Tom's desire to change the subject to a more intellectual one. In that panel (fig.4), Tom's height appears to be the same as the others. This attempt at diverting



Figure 4: page 10 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

attention indicates he wishes to be perceived as an intellectual character rather than as what Daisy called him. A tension between the visual and the textual appears where the visual challenges the credibility of the textual. The effect Tom is trying to gain from this subterfuge falls short as the other characters appear doubtful of what he says, both in what they say (for example, Nick says “ça a l’air... intéressant” indicating he doubts Tom's claims but is being polite (10)) and how they look at Tom. This, added to Tom heavily drinking while he tells this makes him lose credibility. The caution around Tom's claims is even more underlined using shades of yellow and red as the main tones in this panel (fig.4), which creates an uncomfortable and tense atmosphere.

Some irony also emerges from the panel (fig.4) when Tom states that “everything that makes this civilization, we invented it”<sup>21</sup> (10). This could be a jab at the fact that white people often brag about the creation of many things they have, in fact, stolen from other cultures, but it could also represent how Asian people throughout the centuries have indeed invented many

<sup>21</sup> “Tout ce qui fait la civilisation, c’est nous qui l’avons inventé” (Bachelier & Melchior 2013 :10).

things. It is interesting that such claims would be found in this adaptation as 21<sup>st</sup> century China's expansion mirrors the 1920's USA. Such statements also mirror Chinese President Xi Jinping's 2012 desire to achieve what he calls the *Chinese Dream*. In his online article "Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream" (2013), Lawrence Kuhn argues that the dream is about modernizing China, and how this "'Modernization' means China regaining its position as a world leader in science and technology as well as in economics and business". Thus, Bachelier and Melchior show that the updated setting truly resonates with contemporary Chinese ideologies and desires.

This adaptation, unlike Morton and Fordham's, focuses much more on conveying the idea of anger associated with Tom, which is done through multiple visual elements. Firstly, Tom is always drawn smirking or visibly angry, illustrating both his arrogance and his short temper. The second visual element to stress Tom's angry persona is the use of red. As Zhang (2015) explains, red is often associated with rage and violence. Many times, the panels in which Tom appears have a red tone that takes over the whole panel, which sets up the atmosphere of anger and tension related to Tom's character. Not only is red used as an ambient color in the panels, but throughout the novel (except twice when he meets with Gatsby and Nick, and when he goes to Gatsby's party), Tom is wearing a red t-shirt, further reinforcing his irritated persona.

Visual elements also strengthen the difference between what Tom and Gatsby represent. Following Zhang's color theory, which argues that blue can also be representative of fantasy, Tom's character being portrayed in blue when he meets Gatsby visually shows Tom's desire to assert his superiority and give the illusion of confidence, when in fact he feels threatened by Gatsby. This is further reinforced a panel later (fig.5) in which Gatsby offers for him to change into something more comfortable and he replies that he does not think Gatsby has his size, further adding to this idea that Tom feels the need to assert his dominance on Gatsby. He also appears as confident in the way he is sitting comfortably in the sofa. The red undertones of the panel also suggest a clear tension between the characters, as well as the danger that surrounds the situation. Both the red and the blue mix in this panel and



Figure 5: page 45 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

parallels the colors of Gatsby's death scene: the red mirrors danger and blood, whereas blue mirrors the water of the pool.

Similarly to the original, Tom appears more concerned by the fact that Daisy is cheating on him with a "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (Fitzgerald 2016:89) rather than just her cheating on him. The idea that the American Dream allows anybody to become rich despite where they come from is further emphasized in this version as Tom calls Gatsby a "parvenu", which is a more judgmental way of saying "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere". As such, Tom's judgement of how Gatsby obtained his money is made more explicit in this version than it is in the original. Tom then says in the same panel there needs to be some respect towards marriage, showing his hypocrisy and entitlement.

In their adaptation, Bachelier and Melchior take advantage of the multiple visual techniques of comics, such as the use of shades of red, or creating a tension between text and image, to convey Tom's personality and what he represents. Whereas Morton and Fordham's version relies more on combining textual and visual elements, the French artists limit their use of Fitzgerald's text and let the panels create meaning on their own.

### B. Daisy's complexity in images: white angel or hollow figure?

Daisy Buchanan, Nick's cousin, is a very paradoxical character in the novel. Nick describes her in otherworldly terms, creating this vision of an angelic being. However, despite Gatsby's vision of her and the facade of purity and sophistication she displays to the world, Daisy proves herself to be materialistic, selfish, and quite shallow. Indeed, when she first meets Gatsby five years prior to the narrated story, she promises to wait for him to come back from the war but chooses to marry Tom instead. This choice is one that would secure her position in the higher social class, as well as ensure a wealthy lifestyle.

The 1920's were still influenced by the Victorian Era. As such, Daisy was still in a society where gender roles were very distinct and in which women were still expected to be the "angel in the house", a model that advocated domesticity, submissiveness, and innocence. However, this epoch is also one of liberation, women were becoming more independent (as they had to fend for themselves during the war) both in their life and in their sexuality. Daisy

is stuck in the middle of those two very opposites. Daisy's complex position between the conservative and new woman is discussed in more details in chapter VI of this dissertation.

Because she is part of a more conservative and higher social class, she cannot allow herself to display the same decadence as new money, hence her choice to stay with Tom and avoid a divorce and the reputation that would stem from it. In a way, Daisy knows she is unhappy and tries to find happiness in other things, moments, or people. However, she knows those things do not buy and cannot replace happiness. The complexity of her position is implied by Daisy herself when she tells Nick she hopes her daughter will be a fool, as "that's the best thing a girl can be in this world" (Fitzgerald 2016: 17). This shows Daisy is putting on a facade and has created an illusion around her. Daisy's materialism directly stems from the duality of what people expect of her and what she wants to do. She too displays some sense of superiority. She tells Nick that she knows everything because she has "been everywhere and seen everything and done everything" (Fitzgerald 2016: 19). However, nothing she says supports that point. In fact, very little is known about her true personality. She puts on a show, which Nick can decipher quite quickly and early on. She exists only through the image that the men in her life have created of her.

Both adaptations convey Daisy's attributes: purity and superficiality through multiple visual techniques. Morton and Fordham have rendered Daisy's superficiality and materialism slightly more palpable as they have kept more textual elements depicting it to combine with visual ones. Daisy is always drawn wearing fancy clothes and being in luxurious places, which highlights her social status, but also the lavishness associated with her character. She is always wearing white in this adaptation, which, as Zhang (2015) pointed out, can represent both purity and hollowness. Already, the visual illustrates this duality. To further the illusion, Daisy, most of the time, is drawn smiling, except for three times: when she must be shown mad at Tom, surprised to see Gatsby, and then later on, worried and stressed during the confrontation between Gatsby and Tom. When the confrontation between them starts, Daisy has a worried facial expression and is seen in the background holding onto the mirror (152). This act illustrates her fear of losing her possessions. Though she is mostly seen from an eye-level angle, once the confrontation scene starts, Daisy is portrayed as getting gradually smaller compared to the other characters and the angle changes to a high-angle one, implying her inferiority. This illustrates more visually how she loses the illusion of control she had created: the truth is coming out and she cannot control the narrative as she usually does, nor can she keep illusions up.

The layout of another page in the same scene (fig.6) adds to this idea of loss of control and rising stress. Compared to the page that precedes this one, several frames repeat her body position. Each panel equals a certain time in the story, and the more panels, the quicker it seems to happen. Daisy's stress is also overtly presented through the bottom strip of that page, depicting her shaking while trying to light her cigarette, then when the match falls on the floor and Daisy says Gatsby wants too much (fig.6). Here, the text and the image combine to illustrate Daisy's breaking point: she is not ready to give up what she has. This scene is important as it reveals Gatsby's misplaced hope: Gatsby expects her to leave her husband and pretend the five past years did not exist. However, that Daisy is Gatsby's created version of her, she does not exist. The real Daisy cannot do that, hence why she tells Gatsby he is asking for too much.



Figure 6: page 155 © Scribner / Morton and Fordham, 2020

This is already hinted at a few pages before when Nick tells Gatsby “I wouldn’t ask too much of her. You can’t repeat the past.” (132) In that moment, it is not the facade created by Daisy that falls, but the illusion Gatsby had of her. Ironically, though Daisy appears as stressed and losing control, she is still portrayed as put together.

The scene that truly makes Daisy's superficiality and shallowness explicit, however, is the scene in which she talks to Nick alone. Nick is not talking in any of the panels of this page, while Daisy is talking about herself. She claims to be “more advanced” and to have “been everywhere and seen everything and done everything” (27). She then tells Nick with a smirk that she is sophisticated. The irony behind this supposed sophistication is that she claims she is sophisticated while also revealing she is miserable. Because she is “more advanced”, she is blasé, she is not excited anymore. However, this contradicts the excitement Nick notices in her voice many times in the novel. This scene shows the complexity of Daisy's character: she tries

to portray happiness and the American Dream, but it is a facade, which Nick sees through. This irony is conveyed in the panel through multiple visual contrasts. Firstly, Daisy is wearing a white dress against a dark background. She is in a contradiction with the bleakness of her surroundings. She pretends she suffers from the boredom that ensues from her sophistication, but her whole demeanor and physical appearance in the graphic novel show the opposite. To add to these ironic contrasts, Daisy is shown smiling when she claims being sophisticated. Nick's facial expression, however, is the opposite of hers. It makes explicit his doubts regarding her story, as he is portrayed as though he does not buy her performance.

Daisy's actions throughout the story show that she is more concerned with achieving her own happiness, at the expense of others' care. Indeed, in another panel, Nick asks questions about Daisy's daughter, and she replies while having no distinctive facial expression, looking at the horizon as though she is completely disconnected from the conversation. She does not elaborate on her replies to Nick, and her brief answer intensifies the impression that she cares little about her daughter's accomplishments. This highlights Daisy's lack of sustained care for things, her fleeting attention. Through this interaction, Daisy's selfishness comes to light. She is indifferent to many things, and only really cares about herself. Her self-centeredness is further assessed when she lets Gatsby take the blame for killing Myrtle and leaves with her husband when Gatsby dies, as though nothing happened.

Perhaps one of the most important scenes characterizing Daisy is the shirt scene. This scene represents many things, from Daisy's ambivalent character to Gatsby's real motivation behind accumulating such wealth. The shirt scene (fig. 7) is the only scene in this graphic novel in which Daisy is drawn showing deep emotions. Gatsby is showing her his collection of shirts he gets sent from an English man, and Daisy starts crying. The shirts then become symbolic of many things. In "The Quest for Normalcy in the Jazz Age" (2001), Bayan argues that Daisy crying over the shirts "represents her acceptance of material goods as status-affirming products. In her mind, Gatsby's beautiful shirts are a symbol of wealth and represent what could have been of their relationship had he been rich when they first met" (11). Indeed, the scene shows Daisy's awareness of wasted opportunities: now Gatsby is her match in terms of wealth, and she recognizes the possibilities of this situation had she not been married to Tom. But as Bayan (2001) explains, her sadness also illustrates her materialism: she cries because she claims she has never seen such beautiful shirts. Finally, it also highlights Daisy's vulnerability. Indeed, in this moment, Daisy breaks from her made-up persona, she breaks the facade. She acts out of

character and shows her vulnerability, but also her self-awareness: Gatsby is now rich, but that does not change the fact that this is not her life, and it will never be. She realizes this moment

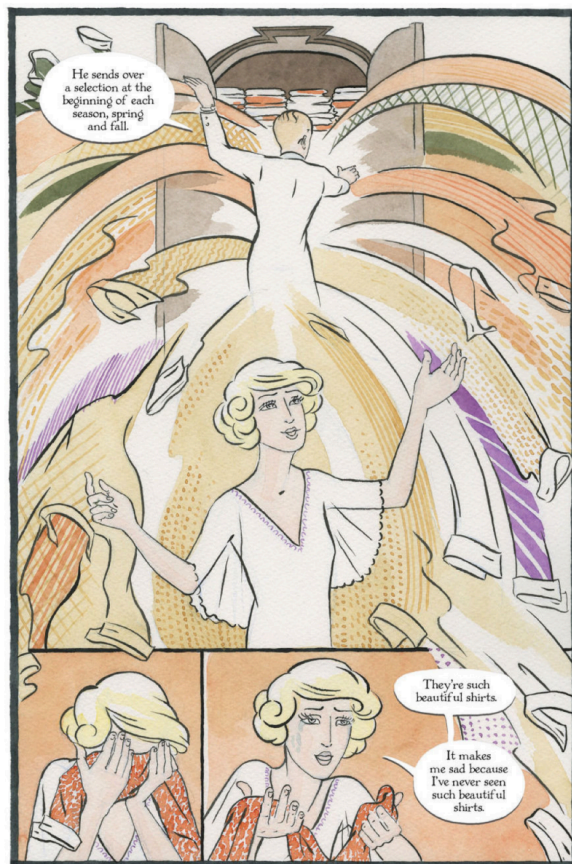


Figure 7: page 107 © Scribner / Morton and Fordham, 2020

of happiness brought by Gatsby and his wealth is too temporary and is fleeting, as was the rest.

In the top panel (fig.7), Gatsby is portrayed as throwing shirts at her. This parallels the idea that he is throwing his accumulated wealth at her. Bayan (2001) argues that the shirts are “indicative of an elite status he craved to join. The shirts as commodities enable Gatz to become Gatsby and show off to Daisy that he does indeed belong in her world” (11). Through this display, he is trying to impress her because he knows material things are what could win Daisy over. This feeling of luxury and wealthiness is reinforced by the overpowering yellow tone of the page, and the hints of green and purple<sup>22</sup>. In the

same panel, Daisy’s dress and her position are reminiscent of an angel. Daisy is once again placed in this “angel in the house” Victorian model from which she cannot escape because she submitted to it by marrying Tom, even when she is with Gatsby. As portrayed in the bottom left panel, Daisy hides behind this materialism that gives her momentary solace from her life, it gives her brief moments of happiness.

In many ways, Morton and Fordham’s adaptation suggests that her superficiality and materialism stem from her self-awareness. Bachelier and Melchior, on the other hand, make Daisy’s complexity more explicit by showing her vulnerability. This added fragility allows for the reader to understand why Daisy is the way she is. Though the shirt scene is not present in this adaptation, Daisy’s complexity is shown through other visual techniques.

<sup>22</sup> Green is associated with money in the USA as it has been linked with its monetary system for a long time. Purple has also long been linked with royalty as during Antiquity, purple pigments were extremely expensive.

Many things are neutral about Daisy's portrayal, such as her position in the frames, her height, and her facial expressions: she barely ever smiles, she is not particularly tall or small, and she barely ever takes over a panel. However, she is drawn with a smirk whenever she is deceitful, such as when Nick explains he realized nothing she had said during the night was true (12), which indicates her neutral expression is most likely a facade, an illusion. She is drawn wearing white and being sophisticated. These visual elements allude to Gatsby's idealization of his former love, but are also a first hint at her hollowness, following Zhang's color theory (2015). The previously explained materialism she hides behind is here merely alluded to. It allows to put forward the other aspects of Daisy's character; she is not as hidden behind materialism as she is in the other adaptation.

She still carries this idea of illusion, of facade, but here the danger behind this illusion is highlighted. Though mostly wearing white, she is also shown wearing red twice in this version. This alludes to the danger that she represents for Gatsby, given that she is the primary cause of his demise, but also alludes

to how her carelessness is dangerous not only for Gatsby, but for others as well. The first time she is linked with this color is the first time she is drawn in the comic (7). She is a vague red figure in the distance, with little details. As this is the first look the readers gets of Daisy, this warns them against this character straight away. The second time she is seen in red is during the scene in which Gatsby tells Tom about his affair with Daisy.



Figure 8: page 66 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

When she tells Gatsby she has never loved Tom (fig.8), Daisy is hidden under a red blanket. The fact she is covered when she tells this, which is revealed to be a lie a few panels after, ties the textual and the visual: Daisy was hiding because she was being dishonest, she was not showing her true face.

This is also in this scene that Daisy's facade is revealed and falls (fig.8). Daisy is always sophisticated, wearing elegant dresses and with her hair done, however, in this scene, her hair

is disheveled, and tears are streaming down her face. She no longer gives the appearance of perfection; she shows her true feelings. Her hiding under the towel also makes her appear as more child-like, vulnerable, but also represents how she is trapped in her current situation. Her physical appearance only emphasizes her more vulnerable and fragile side. This is also reinforced by the way she is drawn compared to the other characters. Indeed, in another panel after Gatsby told Tom he had something to confess, Daisy is naked in the pool and is very small compared to Tom. She is begging him, while Tom keeps pushing for Gatsby to tell him what he has to say. The difference in height illustrates Daisy's vulnerability in this scene and hints at her fearing losing what she has.

By contrast with Morton and Fordham's rendering of this scene (fig.6), Bachelier and Melchior's more minimalistic take on it allows the readers to focus on what Daisy means when she says Gatsby is asking too much of her. Whereas in the American adaptation Daisy appears to stay composed and somewhat shaken up by the confrontation, in this one, her fear and sadness are put at the forefront. The visual conveys more meaning than the textual in these panels (fig.8): Daisy has a lot to lose and is not willing to lose her position, she does not want to give up on her life and her past. By asking her to say she has never loved Tom, Gatsby is actually pushing her away. This is represented in the top panel by the distance between the characters. Gatsby is asking her to forget and act like she has not lived the past five years, but Daisy cannot pretend as though she has never loved Tom or had a child with him. Here too, Gatsby is projecting his version of Daisy onto her, but it is not the real Daisy. In this adaptation too Nick warns Gatsby about asking too much of Daisy (48), but Gatsby is too enthralled by his created version of Daisy to be careful. But Nick criticizes Tom and Daisy's carelessness too at the end of both the novel and this adaptation: they were careless people who "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..." (88). Through this quote, Nick points out how their selfish behavior leads to the demise of others, but they come out unscathed. Though Daisy is torn and vulnerable, the selfishness of her actions does have an impact on others, even though she is not affected by it in the long term.

### C. The Green Gatsby: hope and disillusion of a myth

Many symbolic elements are associated with Gatsby's character, such as the green light, the pool and the parties he throws. But Gatsby himself carries symbolism: around the 1950's and with the New Criticism approach, scholars started to analyze Fitzgerald's character as the embodiment of the American Dream. In "The Great Gatsby: the Tragedy of the American Dream on Long Island's Gold Coast" (2009), Tunc argues that by "using Jay Gatsby to exemplify the rise and fall of the American Dream, Fitzgerald's novel traces the arc of a life as it begins in wonder, reaches for the stars, confronts society's spiritual emptiness and gratuitous materialism, and ends in tragic death" (67). Like the American Dream, Gatsby's quest is clouded by illusions, but the corrupted side of society eventually leads to chaos and the unattainable completion of both Gatsby's and the American Dream. In "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America" (1954), Bewley describes the novel as an embodiment of America's "attitude to life" (223). He develops:

*The Great Gatsby* is an exploration of the American dream as it exists in a corrupt period, and it is in an attempt to determine that concealed boundary that divides the reality from the illusions. The illusions seem more real than the reality itself. Embodied in the subordinate characters in the novel, they threaten to invade the whole of the picture. On the other hand, the reality is embodied in Gatsby (Bewley 1954: 224-225)

Following these interpretations, *The Great Gatsby* emerges as a cautionary tale against the corrupted side of the American Dream. In *Gatsby and the Hole in Time*, Stallman (1955) broadens this idea to a more universal symbolism by comparing Gatsby to a modern Icarus that transcends time and reality. As such, the novel is a warning against the destructive powers of illusions and hope when mistakenly placed. Stallman (1955) explains:

Gatsby incarnates the power of dream and illusion, the recurrent cycles of youth's capacity for wonder by which new worlds have been conquered since the beginning of civilization — the dream of a conquest of space-and-time, the illusions which reality deflates, the power of youth and faith in hope. [...] Like Icarus, Gatsby soars against the tyranny of space-and-time by which we are imprisoned, only to be tragically destroyed by his own invention. (Stallman 1955: 15)

Gatsby becomes the representation of the corruption of society: the desire to be great and self-improve which turned into a chase for wealth and money. The objective is not self-fulfillment and greatness anymore, but wealth and materialism. As such, Gatsby also represents the two parts of the evolution of the American Dream: the idealism that started it, as well as the corruption that has evolved from it.

Gatsby's idealism goes hand in hand with his relentless optimism and hope that he will get Daisy back. Idealism, hope, and optimism are also typical of the American Dream, as America has long been seen as the land of opportunity. Gatsby idealizes Daisy like many people idealize the American Dream. However, as Pearson argues in "Gatsby: False Prophet of the American Dream" (1970: 645), the reality of the American Dream is that it is a dream, it is not real. In the same way, Daisy is also a dream for Gatsby: he created an image of her that does not correspond to who she truly is or has become. Gatsby sees her as a perfect and innocent woman, he does not realize that Daisy is trapped in Romantic gender roles, trapped in the role of the "angel in the house", and therefore cannot leave her husband as though she was never married.

Gatsby's materialism is not one as such, he only gets wealthy to attract Daisy, to be worthy of her as he is not part of the old money world. This relentless hope that he has about getting Daisy back is what is fatal to him in the end, especially, given his lack of self-protection and prudence during the whole ordeal. He even goes as far as believing he can repeat the past as it can be seen in the famous passage between him and Nick:

'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!' He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach his hand. (Fitzgerald 2016: 76)

This shows Gatsby is stuck in his conception of Daisy as how she was when he first met her. Both adaptations use this scene. Morton and Fordham fail to convey the importance behind this scene as the panel (132) only shows Nick sitting on a sofa and Gatsby pacing around looking concerned. Bachelier and Melchior, on the other hand, emphasize the hopefulness behind this quote. A succession of panels (48-49) shows Gatsby looking towards the green light then swimming towards it. As the green light is a symbol of his hope but also the unattainability of this hope (this symbolic element is further developed in the next section of this chapter), the French graphic adaptation associates Gatsby's desire to repeat the past with his undying hope in an extremely visual way. The issue with Gatsby's hope and idealism is that he put emotions and his love for Daisy above everything else in an extremely materialistic era. However, as previously explained, Daisy prefers material things over happiness, and therefore would never have left Tom and her luxurious life behind, not even for love. Because Gatsby is not part of the old money, and even though he was still incredibly wealthy, it would have cast a bad light on Daisy's reputation. There is a certain irony behind this as Fitzgerald underlines in his work how corrupted old money can be as well.

Gatsby's character also represents what the American Dream has turned into: corruption. Though what fuels his quest is love and hope, what he does to achieve this is very corrupted. He has built his wealth and reputation on lies and illegal dealings through bootlegging. This shows the hypocrisy of the Roaring Twenties and Gatsby: people will go as far as doing immoral and illegal things to achieve what they want and get to where they want to be, regardless of how it could affect others. Though both the American Dream and Gatsby's quest started on optimism and hope for a better life and a better future, both have become fueled by materialism and a quest for extreme wealth. Both illusions that have overshadowed the original motive of the quests lead to the doom of the ones who have partaken in them.

In Morton and Fordham's graphic novel, the first time Gatsby is mentioned by Nick is also with reference to his "extraordinary gift for hope" (4). Interestingly, the panel in which it is said shows Nick looking at water which foreshadows the scene in which he is looking at Gatsby's dead body in the pool. Here too this first mention of Gatsby in terms of a hopeful person sets the tone for the rest of the story. Gatsby's optimism transpires through him believing he can win Daisy back with his wealth. He is seeking validation from her by showing her his possessions, which is explicitly shown in the shirt scene (fig.6). During one of their encounters, Jordan explains to Nick that Gatsby was hoping Daisy would go to one of his parties, hence the luxurious side of them. The idea that he wants to show Daisy what he owns to reconquer her is also implicitly highlighted when Jordan says that "he wants her to see his house" (93). When he does show her his house, the first thing he asks is whether Daisy likes it, which further proves that he wants her approval and her awe. Gatsby has collected such wealth to impress Daisy and be worthy of her, and Nick points this out in a panel (106) when he is drawn looking at them both and narrating that Gatsby had "revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes". In that same panel, Gatsby is looking at Daisy attentively. The textual and visual combine to emphasize Gatsby's need to have Daisy's approval. Here, the American Dream for Gatsby is not financial success or self-accomplishment, but success in his love quest for Daisy.

The optimism and hope associated with Gatsby's character are also introduced straight away in Bachelier and Melchior's graphic novel. Indeed, the first time Gatsby is mentioned by Nick, a panel (5) shows Gatsby from behind, looking at a green light representative of both hope and its unattainability. The background is in shades of pink and purple, creating a comforting almost dream-like atmosphere. The visuals of this panel combine with Nick saying

there must have been something magical about him, he must have had a “prodigious gift for hope” (5). Gatsby’s optimism is also represented in the way he is drawn. Unlike Daisy and Tom who are associated with one specific color throughout the graphic novel, the color of Gatsby’s clothes changes multiple times during the story. Whenever he appears as being optimistic, such as when he asks Nick about arranging a meeting between him and Daisy, or when he meets up with Daisy, Tom, Jordan and Nick, Gatsby is wearing blue and pink clothes. Pink is widely used to reference love, and blue has been linked by Zhang (2015) with fantasy. This visually illustrates how Gatsby’s illusion of getting Daisy back and his love for her are linked. Gatsby’s facial expressions are also a sign of his optimism as he is mostly drawn with a smile. Pink is a color often associated with Gatsby, whether it is through his clothes or the ambient colors of the panels. There are multiple hints of that, such as the scene with Daisy and Tom at Gatsby’s party. Nick says that the garden had been “redesigned and replanted to ravish Daisy’s eyes” (46) with the dominant color of the double page being pink. The color is also found in another scene in which Daisy visits Gatsby’s house. Finally, Gatsby is also seen wearing a pink suit when he tells Tom about his affair. These instances link the color with the desire to impress Daisy, further asserting that the association between this color and the character of Gatsby portrays how the driving force in Gatsby’s life is his love for Daisy.

When it comes to Gatsby’s corruption, the two adaptations illustrate it in very different ways. In Morton and Fordham’s version, the corruption in his quest is more explicitly apparent when Nick and Gatsby meet with Wolfsheim. Once the latter has left, Nick questions Gatsby about him and Gatsby reveals Wolfsheim was the one who fixed the World’s Series<sup>23</sup>, revealing Wolfsheim as a corrupted man. In one of the panels in this scene, Nick is seen with a questioning look on his face and asks Gatsby why Wolfsheim is not in jail. This is the first overt reference to the questionable legality of Gatsby’s work partnerships. Another reference to this corruption is at the party Tom and Daisy attended. On those panels (126), Tom, Daisy and Nick are waiting outside on the steps for a car to drive them back and Tom questions whether Gatsby is a bootlegger or not. Nick replies that he is not, but both his facial expression and Daisy’s are quite neutral, as though they are also wondering whether it could be true. In this version, in a panel (157) showing when Tom confronts Daisy and Gatsby, Tom questions the latter about his corruption, with Gatsby admitting to it. Daisy in one of the panels’ background appears as being

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<sup>23</sup> This anecdote mirrors a real-life event that happened in 1919, the Black Sox Scandal, during which players of the Chicago White Sox team were paid to lose the annual championship of Major League Baseball. (cfr *Black Sox Scandal*. (1998). In *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. Accessed July 24, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Black-Sox-Scandal>).

shocked, while Gatsby seems quite stern, and Tom looks angry. Gatsby points out that one of Tom's friends was involved too, which shows that corruption is not entirely limited to new money. By having both sides of Gatsby illustrated, both the hope and corruption, this also allows for the character to fulfil its role as the paradox of the American Dream.

Because Bachelier and Melchior do not include the scene with Wolfsheim in their version, Gatsby's more corrupted side is mostly suggested through textual elements. The historical events that happened after the publishing of the original novel, most importantly the Holocaust, have made many 1920's normal attitudes extremely problematic. Though it was overtly discussed back then, racism and anti-Semitism are not acceptable anymore. Not only are these beliefs frowned upon, but they are also even illegal in many countries. Because the stance on these topics has changed, and because this graphic novel sets the story in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, anti-Semitism would not bear the same meaning as it did when the original was published, nor would it resonate with contemporary readers (this topic is further detailed in chapter V of this dissertation).

One of the only hints the reader has about Gatsby's corruption is through Tom telling Nick and Jordan that he investigated Gatsby. Another time is through the phone call Nick receives after Gatsby's funeral.

In that panel (fig.9), Nick is drawn picking Gatsby's phone. Someone on the other end of it is saying that someone got caught but there is no proof. Though this scene is taken from the original (Fitzgerald 2016:119), Bachelier

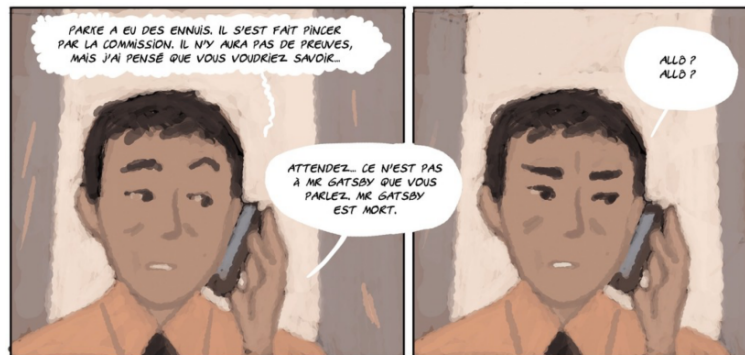


Figure 9: page 82 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

and Melchior have made the panels more relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century by drawing Nick with a mobile phone instead of the typical 1920's phone you would have found at the time, or which is represented in the other adaptation (Morton & Fordham 2020: 191). However, compared to the original, this is the only explicit allusion to Gatsby's corruption in this version as the scene in which Gatsby admits to doing illegal things to Tom has not been kept. In this adaptation, Gatsby's corruption is mainly implied through speculations made by others, such as Tom's (57) or the girls' at Gatsby's party (24).

This version also plays on the idea of Gatsby being the embodiment of the American Dream. It is mainly implicitly conveyed through the *mise en scène* and the portrayal of the character. Besides what he is wearing and his facial expression, his position in the panels is also



Figure 10: page 24 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

an indication of his duality. Indeed, whenever Gatsby is being hopeful or more honest and truthful, he is looking straight at the reader, or the left side of his face is shown. By contrast, whenever his right side or his back are shown is when his more corrupted side takes over and is lying, such as when he lies to Nick about his origins, when he plots a meeting with Daisy at Nick's or when he is interrupted by his business affairs the first time he meets Nick. To add to that, the first time Gatsby introduces himself to Nick, his face is partly shadowed. The expression on his face is hard to read: he appears to be showing pride, sadness, and condescendence all at the same time. This all visually alludes to the mystery around Gatsby's persona (fig.10). Both the readers and the other characters struggle to read through him.

In the story, the other characters act as foils to reinforce elements behind both sides of Gatsby, with Daisy representing his hope, Tom representing his corruption, and Nick developing Gatsby's ambivalence through his narration of the latter. The reason why the metaphors and symbolism behind these characters are not lost in Bachelier and Melchior's adaptation despite the change of location and era is because these characteristics are not inherent to the American Dream. Indeed, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is also led by capitalism, and the divide between the richer and the poorer populations is growing stronger. The American Dream, and most importantly the corruption of it that Fitzgerald was trying to convey in this novel, is still something people can relate to nowadays, especially in an atmosphere of global capitalism. The 21<sup>st</sup> century and its growing technology have made it easier for people to become richer and more famous more rapidly and easily. Changing the setting to China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century only adds focus on how the characters are behaving. Social status is still important in the graphic adaptation. However, the characters are not corrupted anymore by old money, new money, or the American Dream, but because they have made choices that they think exonerate them, despite how it could affect other people. The greed and disillusion the characters manifest is heightened and more noticeable when these very characters are taken away from the essence of their greed and disillusion in the original story.

#### D. Abstract metaphors in concrete colors: the green light, the pool and Dr. T.J. Eckleburg

As previously mentioned, Gatsby is not the only thing that carries symbolism in the original novel. The green light, the pool and Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, all represented in the analyzed graphic novels, are symbolic elements extremely important in the narrative. As such, the way they are used or under-used in the graphic medium can affect their meaning. This second section of chapter IV analyzes, combined with Zhang's theory (2015), how the visual techniques used in these adaptations help in conveying and developing these symbols in the graphic format.

##### The green light: color of disillusion

Another symbolic element in *The Great Gatsby* is the green light. Though just a light at the end of Daisy's dock, to Gatsby it represents way more. It represents the unattainability of the American Dream and Gatsby's desire. Throughout the novel, Gatsby attempts to reach this light, but never succeeds, which parallels his defeat in fulfilling his American Dream. This green light alludes to many aspects involved in the American Dream, such as money, hope and envy. Therefore, it is not only the green light that refers to this dream, but the color green in general too.

Green is probably the most significant color in terms of symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*. It represents many things: Zhang (2015) links it with hope, but it is also linked with money (the American dollar is green, and money was even once known as "greenbacks" during the American Civil War). However, what it might symbolize the most in this story is envy. Indeed, what truly motivates Gatsby is his desire, his willingness to do anything to get Daisy back. From when he met her and found out he could not be with her because of his social status, to the moment he realized Daisy would not leave Tom, Gatsby is motivated by this envy to become better, richer and be, in his mind, worthy of Daisy.

In the novel, green as money is mostly used to describe material things, which adds to this idea that it references wealth and goods. The other colors referring to money (yellow, white and gold) are not used to describe Gatsby as often as they are other characters. This creates the impression that though Gatsby does have money, he can never truly become a part of the old money, and therefore will never belong with Nick, Daisy, Jordan and Tom. The first time green representing money is used is when Nick describes Gatsby's car (Fitzgerald 2016: 46). It is also used when Gatsby arranges for there to be a huge number of flowers for his meeting with Daisy,

which turned Nick's place into a "greenhouse" (Fitzgerald 2016: 59). The last time it is used to refer to money and Gatsby is when Daisy and Nick are at Gatsby's and he's throwing shirts, some of them "apple-green" (Fitzgerald 2016: 64).

The first mention of green as envy is also the first time it is used in the novel: when Nick first sees Gatsby stretching out his arm towards a green light coming from the end of Daisy's dock. Nick does not speak to him, as he mentions that Gatsby seemed to be "content to be alone" (Fitzgerald 2016: 19). The stretching out of his arm symbolizes Gatsby's will to reach Daisy, which his whole journey is about, and, in parallel, his American Dream. Another time green is used to mean envy is when Gatsby, still James Gatz at the time, sees Dan Cody, a wealthy man who ended up taking Gatsby as his assistant. At the time, Gatsby was wearing a "torn green jersey" (Fitzgerald 2016: 68). It is his meeting with Cody that made him get a taste of luxury, but also not inheriting Cody's money that triggered that desire to become wealthy.

However, the green light is also a sign of hope, for Gatsby, Nick, but also the readers. In the same way the first reference of the green light can be associated with envy, it can also represent Gatsby's hope to be reunited with Daisy again, as well as the loss of that hope. Indeed, when Gatsby mentions the green light to Daisy, it is then that he realizes, now that he has reached her, that the green light is but a green light and has lost its significance. Nick explains that Gatsby's "count of enchanted objects had diminished by one." (Fitzgerald 2016: 65). This is one of the only glimpses at the illusion created that Gatsby seems to catch onto. His obliviousness to the illusion that surrounds his relationship with Daisy is further confirmed when Nick says after Gatsby's death:

I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him. (Fitzgerald 2016: 122)

In some ways, it is Gatsby's hopefulness and his that ended up killing him. But Nick seems to want to believe that not all hope is lost, neither for him nor the reader. After Gatsby's death and before returning to the Midwest, Nick looks at the green light and talks about how the first explorers must have felt discovering this new place full of new opportunities and hope. Though both might have failed many times, Nick points out the willingness and importance to still hope:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. ... And one fine morning— So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (Fitzgerald 2016: 122)

In Morton and Fordham, these three meanings associated with green are used. Gatsby's car is described as it is in the original: yellow with green seats. The two colors emphasize this idea of money. Adding to this is Gatsby wearing a yellow-gold suit. The greenhouse, however, slightly differs from the novel: flowers are shown, but not to the dramatic extent it is said to be in the Fitzgerald's story (99-102). Though they might not be green, the number of flowers still show Gatsby's willingness to spend a large amount of money to impress Daisy.

The first time Gatsby is introduced in this adaptation is him reaching for the green light.

The page (fig.11) is divided into three panels, two smaller ones showing Nick observing something in the distance, the other showing Gatsby from behind with his arms opened. In the panel that takes the whole page, Gatsby is seen from behind looking at the green light in the distance. The colors in these panels are all shades of green and blue, further adding to the idea of hope and illusion that fill Gatsby's

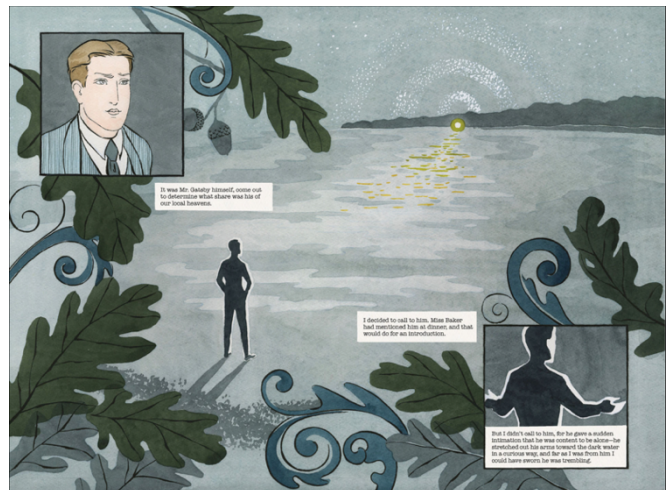


Figure 11: pages 32-33 © Scribner / Morton and Fordham, 2020

character. Similarly to the original, when Gatsby first meet Cody he is wearing a green shirt (114). The different angles on that page illustrate the power dynamic between Cody and Gatsby at the time: whenever Cody is shown, he is show from a low angle, which indicates a superiority to Gatsby. By contrast, Gatsby is shown from a high angle, further implementing his social status compared to Cody's.

The same panel (fig.11) where Gatsby reaches for the green light can be used to symbolize hope as well. The leaves are represented in dark green here, and then again in a lighter green with yellow when Nick and three men find Gatsby dead in his pool (fig.12). In another panel, prior to Gatsby's death, the gardener tells Gatsby the leaves are going to fall soon (182). In a way, the leaves represent the hope fading away. They are still there when Gatsby is looking at the green light, but they have fallen once he has died. To add to this interpretation is this quote:

[...] he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. (fig.12)



Figure 12: page 186 © Scribner / Morton and Fordham, 2020

On the last page (200), the same idea about the importance of hope is conveyed. The last panel shows a boat sailing towards the green light. The colors are dark blues with white waves, which are, at the bottom, in the form of Daisy and orchids. This can be interpreted as how, despite the illusion and the loss, there is more behind it. It is a visual representation of the last sentence of the novel. The green light is representative of Gatsby's hope, but it is also a representation of the American Dream and its failures. Though it all might have seemed so promising, it is a moral reflection on whether the end does justify the means and how far one can and will go to obtain what they truly want. However, and as the last sentence of the novel explains, it is ludicrous to believe that the past can just be erased and that the illusion will be able to prosper indefinitely: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (Fitzgerald 2016: 122). All in all, the green light is truly a representation of hope, greediness, and illusion.

By contrast with Morton and Fordham, Bachelier and Melchior, however, put more emphasis on the green light rather than on green in general. This emphasis brings forward the symbolism behind the light. The first time the green light is introduced in this version is actually through Nick, not through Gatsby (6). Two colors are the main focus of this panel: red (which Zhang (2015) links to blood) and green. Nick is looking through binoculars at the other side of the water, where Daisy and Tom live, and they are reverberating the green light at the end of the Buchanans' dock. A narrating speech balloon contains the following text: "It was on the other bank, taunting with its glittering facade our chic-and-fake, that resided the authentic good taste of the true aristocracy"<sup>24</sup> (6). Nick's facial expression is neutral and does not indicate any particular emotion, however, the red background, the green light and the mention of aristocracy

<sup>24</sup> "C'est sur l'autre rive, narguant de ses façades scintillantes notre ostensible chic-et-toc, que résidait le bon goût authentique de la véritable aristocratie." (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013: 6)

all forebode the story's tragic ending. It also reiterates Nick's place as a witnessing entity of the unfolding of the events.

After Nick has left the Buchanan's and right before seeing Gatsby, a panel (fig.13) shows a cat with green eyes that has captured a frog. The colors are a dark blue which adds a melancholic atmosphere to the panel, but it is the cat's green eyes that stand out. Indeed, the frog has often been used in fairytales as the "before" form of the prince. Gatsby was poor and became rich, so it could be implied that Gatsby is the frog, and, in that sense, this picture represent how old money ends up killing Gatsby. It also represents how the importance he puts into his hope is what will lead him to his demise. Both these ideas are reinforced by the next panel showing the cat behind Gatsby, emphasizing that the unfolding of events that leads to his death will happen behind his back, while he is oblivious to it.



Figure 13: page 13 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

The only occurrence of green as envy in this adaptation is through Gatsby stretching his arms. A close-up on Nick's face is the last panel of the page (fig.13), and the green light is reflecting in his eyes. This acts as a contrast between Gatsby's green light meaning envy, and the green seen in Nick's eyes. Indeed, the green reflecting in Nick's eyes can, once again, be interpreted as Nick witnessing the damages the green light is and will be doing.

The first time green is used with Gatsby's character is when Nick starts recounting the story of what happened. In the panel (5), Gatsby is seen from behind looking into the distance at the green light. The background color, besides the green, is a mix between purple and pink, suggesting Gatsby's love for Daisy, as well as creating a dream-like atmosphere. The narrating speech balloon makes the link between the green and hope more explicit: "there must have been something magical about him, a prodigious gift for hope"<sup>25</sup> (5).

<sup>25</sup> "Il devait avoir en lui quelque chose de magique, un don prodigieux pour l'espoir..." (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013: 5)

The last time green is seen in the graphic novel is on the last two pages. The panels (91-92) show Gatsby gradually dive deeper into the dark waters, towards a green light. The background is black, which can symbolize death. The bottom panel includes a green light. The panel can be interpreted as a metaphor for the need to keep hoping and keep swimming even after a loss. In the last page of the graphic novel (92), Gatsby appears to be stuck in the green light a deep-sea fish is producing. This can mean multiple things. Firstly, it is a representation of the disillusion created by the higher society: Gatsby was the victim of old money's illusions. But it also represents how, even in death, everything surrounding Gatsby is still a mystery. Finally, it emphasizes how, though it is all over, hope is still the leading force behind everything. This really echoes with what Nick says at the end about still being hopeful.

### The blue of loneliness: Gatsby's pool

Another element that symbolizes Gatsby's hope is his pool. Not only does it represent his wealth and success, but the pool also shows Gatsby's inability to give up on hope. When Gatsby's gardener tells him he will drain the pool because leaves will start falling (Fitzgerald 2016: 105), Gatsby admits to Nick that he has not used that pool all of summer. He tells the gardener to not do it that day, which shows his refusal to accept the change of seasons and change in general. Both adaptations use the pool or references to it, but once again, in very different visual techniques.

Morton and Fordham don't use the pool as such but allude to it many times. The first allusion is in the very first panels of the graphic novel (4-5). Nick is looking at a billboard with a girl dressed as a mermaid, and the water around her slowly starts to take over most of the panels. In the last panel of this double page, a narrating speech balloon says: "it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams, that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men." (5). Both the quote and the water of the panel foreshadow Gatsby's end. Blue, the typical color of a pool, and which Zhang (2015) associates with loneliness, is one of the overpowering colors in Gatsby's parties (56-61; 64-67; 122-126). The people at those parties are drawn as blue shadows against a darker or lighter blue background. Not only does it link Gatsby with blue and hints at the way he dies, but it also shows his loneliness. Despite the large number of people coming to his parties, Gatsby is lonely. Two other scenes link Gatsby and the pool. When Jordan tells Nick about the events leading to Daisy's wedding and Gatsby's return (90-93), the panels depicting what

Jordan is telling are drawn in the shape of puddles. The same thing happens when Gatsby tells Nick about how Daisy and he were in love (178). In this second scene, the overpowering color is blue, and a narrating speech balloon indicates “he was clutching at some last hope and I couldn’t bear to shake him free” (178), once again linking hope with Gatsby and the pool, and therefore foreshadowing how his hope is what kills him in the end.

Bachelier and Melchior put even more emphasis on the symbolism of the pool than the other version. First of all, when Nick discusses the first time he saw Gatsby (fig.13), the panels are composed of different shades of blue and Gatsby is in front of the green light and water. This first meeting presage Gatsby’s end. Blue is often used in relation with Gatsby. When he first meets Tom (44-45), Gatsby and Nick are in the pool. The colors, though mostly blue because of the pool and the sky, slowly fades to a light blue and red when Tom comes, and they take over the whole page. This not only links Tom with danger through the red shade, it also links him to the pool and forebodes Gatsby’s death in his pool because Tom misled Wilson on who killed his wife, Myrtle. The same red and blue tones are used in the scene after Gatsby’s party which Tom and Daisy attend (48), when Nick tells Gatsby he cannot repeat the past. The green light is then seen in the last panel of the page. Unlike the previous scene linking Tom with Gatsby’s death, this one links Gatsby’s end with his undying hope.

The pool is also at the forefront of this adaptation. Probably the most important reference to it is when Tom confronts Gatsby and Daisy about their affair (61-68). Instead of being in a hotel, the characters go to a pool in the city. This is the most explicit foreshadowing of Gatsby’s being killed in a pool that there is in the adaptation: Gatsby’s attempt to win Daisy back is what leads to his death. Both the cover of this version, as well as when Nick first meets Gatsby at his party show a pool with fish flying around. Not only does this strengthen the mystery and idea of illusion around Gatsby (Nick even says to Jordan that “all this is truly mind-blowing”<sup>26</sup> (23)), but it also creates a parallel with the pool in which he dies. However, at the party, Gatsby is still hiding behind the mystery and the illusion, hence the fish, whereas when he is in the pool during the confrontation scene, there are no artifice, he is naked, which can be taken as a metaphor for him baring his soul.

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<sup>26</sup> “Tout cela est proprement hallucinant” (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013 :23)

## Black and white morality: deity in *The Great Gatsby*

Another thing that carries symbolism in *The Great Gatsby* is both the character of Owl Eyes and Dr T.J. Eckleburg's billboard, or eyes in general. In "Eggs and Eyes in 'The Great Gatsby'" (1961), McDonnell analyzes the meaning behind the two and goes further by associating Dr T.J. Eckleberg, Owl Eyes, East Egg and West Egg to a divine figure in the novel.

Because America's history has always been linked with a strong religious influence (religion has long been used as a motivator in American events, such as its discovery<sup>27</sup> or the Manifest Destiny<sup>28</sup>, and is even mentioned in the Declaration of Independence<sup>29</sup>), it is surprising that the novel only has a few overt reference to religion, such as when Catherine, Myrtle's sister, tells him that Daisy is a Catholic and that is why she will not divorce Tom — which Nick knows to be a lie, or when Nick describes Gatsby as "a son of God". Instead, two elements seem to symbolize God: Doctor T.J. Eckleburg's billboard and the man Nick nicknamed Owl Eyes. They both act as references to eyes looking at others. Doctor T.J. Eckleburg's billboard is first mentioned when Tom takes Nick to meet his mistress. Nick describes the eyes as looking down from above, which is often how God is described. Thus, this is the first comparison that can be done between Eckleburg and God, or rather between eyes and God. McDonnell (1961) argues that the similar descriptions between Eckleburg and Owl Eyes link them together and that:

Fitzgerald indicates the symbolic meaning of Eckleburg's eyes by having Wilson [...] stare out a window at the eyes and say, "God sees everything." The eyes of Eckleburg are an image of a brooding, omniscient intelligence which notes the follies of man in the waste land of the 1920's; Owl Eyes represents the sympathetic focusing of this deity's attention on the fall of the romantically idealistic and naive Gatsby. (McDonnell 1961: 33)

In this quote, McDonnell highlights how both Eckleburg and Owl Eyes act as different aspects of a divine and moral figure. In "Seeing 'The Great Gatsby' Eye to Eye" (1976), Pinsker adds that "the function traditionally served by an All-Seeing God is transferred to the Owl-Eyed

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<sup>27</sup> Motivated by religious purposes: the idea was to find another commercial sea route for the Catholic Spanish Empire that would not be controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Christopher Columbus was thus sent to find a route and discovered by chance America in 1492.

<sup>28</sup> Manifest Destiny was the widely held belief in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the settlers were sent to America by God in order to "civilize" Native Americans, which in turn led to slavery and a massive genocide that reduced the Native American population by circa 90%.

<sup>29</sup> Four references are made to God in the Declaration of Independence. This document also insinuates that freedom, and the pursuit of happiness are God-given rights: "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".

character” (70). Because this symbolism is extremely visual, this dissertation analyzes how the two adaptations have reinterpreted these two characters.

Morton and Fordham’s representation of the billboard is like the original: a massive washed-out billboard showing two blue eyes overlooking a wasteland with “Doctor T.J. Eckleburg” written at the bottom of it (34). At first glance, the billboard acts more as a visual contrast between poverty and the rich than as a divine figure. Indeed, the billboard is an advert in front of people who are shown working under it. The only colors are the blue from his eyes, and the yellow from his glasses. Following Zhang’s color theory (2015), yellow represents money. By contrast, the people working at the bottom of the billboard are grey figures working in the grey “valley of ashes”. Zhang (2015) links grey with bleakness, but also corruption and decay. This superposition of colors creates an interesting visual and symbolic contrast between the different social classes, which is strengthened as the billboard is detailed, whereas the workers are only portrayed as figures, dehumanizing them: they no longer appear as individual people, but rather working shadows. This links back with these ideas of carelessness and disillusion so present in *The Great Gatsby*: the rich live in their own perfect world oblivious to the lower social classes’ tribulations.

The metaphor of the billboard as a divine entity becomes more obvious in the scene showing Tom, Jordan and Nick on their way home after the discovery of Daisy and Gatsby’s affair (144). The car’s yellow color here changes from symbolizing money to symbolizing the foreseeable destruction that will ensue: Myrtle’s death. Right before the billboard is seen, Tom says “God knows where!”, then the next panel talks about Doctor T.J. Eckleburg’s eyes, which creates a more explicit link between God and Dr T.J. Eckleburg, and thus, the metaphor behind the latter. This is further reinforced a few panels later (160): the eyes on the billboard are shown on the right of the panel, and the valley of ashes is on the left. The colors of the panel, dark shades of grey and blue, help in visually creating an atmosphere of doom and death. A narrating speech balloon adds to this: “so we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight” (160). This signals the doom that is to come, both for Myrtle and Gatsby. The billboard is also briefly shown after Myrtle’s accident in the background (162), once again looming over the people. The panel’s colors and atmosphere are like the one previously mentioned, besides the red from Myrtle’s blood on the ground. The different speech balloons all say “Oh, my Ga-od!”, once again tying Doctor T.J. Eckleburg with God as it is the only thing that can be clearly deciphered from the panel besides the cars and the building.

Melchior and Bachelier push the symbolism behind the billboard even more. The first time Doctor T.J. Eckleburg’s billboard is represented is before Nick and Tom’s trip to see Myrtle (5). On that panel, Nick says “My tolerance had reached its final limits”<sup>30</sup> (5), which links the textual and the visual to set the metaphor: the eyes act as a moral figure that oversees the unfolding events of people’s life. Many visual elements emphasize this metaphor. The first one is the size of the billboard. Whenever it is shown, it is either taking most of the panel’s space, or it is considerably bigger than other things shown in the panel. The colors play a part too: the billboard is always in black and white, unlike in the novel where it is in colors, which resonates with the adjective “black-and-white”, often taken as meaning “sharply divided into good and evil”<sup>31</sup>. Hints of red, a color Zhang (2015) associates with anger, are always found in the panels in which the billboard is visible. Throughout the adaptation, the eyes also appear to be moving and looking at the characters. The different colors used, as well as the personification of the billboard and its size all work together to give the impression that the billboard represent a higher moral figure that judges the characters’ actions throughout the story.

One of the moments in which the billboard interacts with the scene is when Myrtle dies (70). Three panels show the billboard: in the first one it is facing Gatsby’s car, and in the second it is behind Myrtle, who is in front of the car. Myrtle confuses Gatsby’s car with Tom’s because



Figure 14: page 70 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

of the rain and the color, as she had seen Tom driving that car earlier in the story. Both Myrtle and the billboard behind her appear to be squinting their eyes, which asserts the billboard’s position as its own character in the story. The last panel showing the billboard is a close-up of Wilson (fig.14), Myrtle’s husband, in front of it. Unlike in the previous panel, the eyes are no longer squinting, they are more opened, as though they are in shock. This mimics Myrtle’s own eyes

in the previous panels in which she lays on the floor dead with her eyes wide opened. The

<sup>30</sup> “Ma belle tolérance avait atteint ses ultimes limites” (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013 : 5).

<sup>31</sup> Merriam-Webster (n.d.). Black-and-white. In *Merriam-Webster Online*. Accessed July 21, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/black-and-white>.

different angles in these panels strengthen the metaphor: in the second panel of the central strip, the perspective is a high angle shot, the reader is looking down. The eyes on the billboard, though they are being looked down on by the reader as well, are still above Myrtle and Wilson. This gives the impression of a superiority, which parallels the often-believed idea that God is looking down on people, and in this case, on the characters in the story. In another panel on the bottom strip, the perspective is shown from a low angle shot. In the original, it is in that moment that Wilson decides to get revenge. Christianity often argues people should not seek revenge, as it is God's "job". In that moment, however, because Wilson decides to take matters into his own hands, he takes on the role of God for a moment, hence the change of perspective which shifts the power and Wilson's character becomes the superior entity.

A second comparison that can be made between God and eyes is the character that Nick names Owl Eyes. Nick does not know his name but meets him in Gatsby's library when the man seems astonished by the fact that the books in Gatsby's library are real books. This shows how Gatsby's world is full of illusion and mystery. He also appears at the end of that party, outside where there is a car accident. The third time he appears in the story is at Gatsby's funeral, which confuses Nick as he does not know how Owl Eyes could have known about the funeral.

Both Doctor T.J. Eckleburg and Owl Eyes are described wearing enormous spectacles, which links them to vision, to the ability to see. They are also both faceless in the story and not much is said about their physical appearance. God is commonly described in the Bible in terms of other things, by using comparisons. God's physical appearance is never truly given, which makes God faceless as well. They are both linked with knowledge too. Doctor T.J. Eckleburg is linked to knowledge by being a doctor, he is linked to science, but most importantly he is linked to the knowledge that helps vision. Owl Eyes is linked to knowledge as well. The first time is when he claims the books are real. Books are also often linked to knowledge, so Owl Eyes holding the books could be a metaphor for him holding the knowledge, knowing what is real and what is not. The second time he is linked to knowledge is at the funeral. He knew about it even though Nick did not give him any details about it, it even surprise Nick to see him there. However, during the car accident scene, Owl Eyes keeps repeating how he is not involved in the car accident, that he wasn't even driving. This insinuates that Owl Eyes only sees, he does not interfere. This could also be said about Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. The billboard overlooks the land but does not interfere with the lives under it. Both are just witnessing the others, and they are present as they watch everything unfolds: Tom's affair, Myrtle and Wilson's fight and

Myrtle's death for Eckleburg, and Gatsby's party and funeral for Owl Eyes. They watch the fall of the main characters as they get to their inevitable demise.

In Bachelier and Melchior's adaptation, Owl Eyes is not present. This could be explained by the fact that this adaptation already visually represents what was implied in the original novel through the billboard, hence why there was no need to further reinforce the metaphor through Owl Eyes. By contrast, Morton and Fordham do use this character, but as more of a background one, he does not bear as much importance as he does in the original. He appears in the library, and at Gatsby's funeral, but is never named, just shown wearing glasses. This lack of identity allows for the reader to identify him as a watching entity more easily as there is nothing used to describe him besides his glasses.

Every time he appears in Morton and Fordham's graphic novel, it only confirms what has been previously said of him and Doctor T.J. Eckleburg as possible divine metaphors. When he is seen for the first time in the library (62-63), Owl Eyes is wearing a white suit. White is representative of sincerity, purity, but also of the divine, according to "Plato's claim that in picturing the gods white is most appropriate color (Laws 956a)" (Ferber 1999: 233). In the same double page, the character also says that he "ascertained", which is another synonym for "determined". Christianity is known for believing in a theological determinism, the idea that certain things are predestined, predetermined to happen because a divine entity decided so. Once again, given these different elements, an implicit connection between God and Owl Eyes is made, both through the textual and the visual elements in the graphic novel. This connection can also be seen the final time Owl Eyes is in the adaptation at Gatsby's funeral (194-195). Indeed, the first time Owl Eyes' face is seen in this scene is when he utters the words "Amen to that.". He is the only one speaking in a panel on the next page (195) drawn from a high angle, a perspective that implies superiority. The second time Owl Eyes appears, during the car accident taking place after Gatsby's party, it only confirms his passiveness regarding the story, he does not interfere nor participate ("But I wasn't even trying." and "I wasn't even driving. There's another man in the car ..." (69)), he is only a witnessing entity.

The metaphor for God only fully takes its meaning with Wilson in chapter 8 when he looks at the billboard. Michaelis, another character, asks Wilson if he has a church he goes to and when Wilson responds negatively, Michaelis reiterates that Wilson should have a church. At first glance, it appears that Wilson does not believe in God. However, he tells Michaelis how he told Myrtle "she might fool me but she couldn't fool God. [...] I said 'God knows what

you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God! [...] God sees everything" (Fitzgerald 2016:109). Wilson utters this while looking at Doctor T.J. Eckleburg's billboard, and Michaelis reminds him that it is just an ad. This is when the parallel between God and Doctor T.J. Eckleburg is the most obvious and is confirmed.

In Morton and Fordham's adaptation, the metaphor of the eyes being God is made explicit. Indeed, Wilson is talking to Michaelis about his thoughts on what happened that led to Myrtle's death, and while doing so he stares at the billboard of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. He then says "I took her to the window... And I said 'God knows what you've been doing. You may fool me but you can't fool God!'" (175) and Michaelis replies, seemingly concerned and disapproving, that the billboard is an advertisement. In the last panel on the page, both are looking at the billboard through the window, and Wilson reiterates "God sees everything.", which really sets the metaphor that the eyes are metaphorical of deity.

In Bachelier and Melchior's *Gatsby le Magnifique*, much like in the original novel, it is when Wilson goes to get revenge against Gatsby that the metaphor of the eyes as a representation of God can truly be made. Indeed, in the three panels of that scene (78), the eyes are following Wilson walking. In this adaptation, the billboard even starts interacting with the character by asking questions to Wilson, replacing Michaelis in the original. It asks the same questions Michaelis did, such as whether Wilson has a church or not. Wilson replies by uttering "Oh my god ! Oh my god !". The billboard goes on to remind him that the accident was indeed an accident, but Wilson repeats what is said in the original: that Myrtle could fool him, but that she could not fool God. The layout of this page adds to this connection with God by being divided into three parts, like some sort of vertical triptych, a style of painting that was, and is still being, used a lot in religious paintings and depictions of the Bible. Wilson is wearing a red tracksuit, embodying this feeling of anger he is feeling. The billboard, by contrast, is still in black and white. In the three panels on the page, the billboard is taking the most space and gets increasingly bigger, while Wilson gets smaller. In this adaptation, the eyes really become a character that is inherently part of the storyline. The billboard interacts with the characters but does not interfere with their action. Once again there is this sense that the eyes are watching the characters and their actions, quietly judging what they are doing, so there is this idea of the eyes being like God.

The eyes in the story really act as a disapproving entity. Indeed, in both the adaptations and the original, the eyes are mostly there when the characters are being deceitful, such as when

Tom is meeting his mistress, or when Myrtle acts out of greediness. It appears the eyes are watching the characters' carelessness; they can see beyond the illusion the characters have created for themselves and others. They look at the rich's obliviousness to the consequences of their action and witness the poor being the victim of this corruption and disillusion created by the former.

Both adaptations use visual techniques to illustrate the metaphor of Dr T.J. Eckleburg representing God or another deity, mostly through the size of the billboard, but also the colors used on it. Though Bachelier and Melchior do not use Owl Eyes' character, the metaphor still works through Eckleburg. They do this by giving the billboard the ability to look at and interact with the other characters in the story, and it becomes a fully-fledged character. Morton and Fordham's adaptation, on the other hand, does need Owl Eyes as the billboard does not interact with the other characters as it does in the other graphic novel.

In conclusion of this chapter, though both Morton and Fordham's and Bachelier and Melchior's adaptations use and reinterpret the different symbolic elements that were analyzed in Fitzgerald's novel, Bachelier and Melchior's *Gatsby le Magnifique* appears as more efficient in this process. While the French version plays more on the visual, Morton and Fordham's version is still very led by the textual elements. It seems to struggle to carry the symbols to their visual full potential because they restrict themselves by respecting and integrating the text so much. This prevents the readers to fully immerse themselves into the story as they are constantly reminded they are reading one (for example, through the "chapter" pages), and even that it is an adaptation (as the cover explicitly states what it is: "illustrated" and "text adapted"). It gives the impression of being a graphic novel version of Luhrmann's film rather than its own interpretation of the original, with many scenes reminiscent of the 2013 cinematic adaptation. The focus is clearly on conveying a nostalgia of the 1920's through the Art Deco elements and the style of drawing. This shows how this version was culturally influenced by the frenzy around the 1920's, brought back by Luhrmann's film. By contrast, Bachelier and Melchior use the full possibilities of the medium to push forward the symbolism behind the original. Stripping *Gatsby* from its original era and location, the 1920's and New York, allows to focus on the quintessence of the story. The symbols that fill Fitzgerald's novel are therefore heightened and more noticeable because they are taken away from the decadence that adorns the story.

## V. Exploring *The Great Gatsby's* ethnic minorities representation in Bachelier & Melchior's and Morton & Fordham's graphic novels

The social context in the 1920's is deeply linked with the American Dream. Indeed, the rise of consumption and consumerism happened in parallel with the rise of immigration rates in America. Many of these immigrants were coming to America because of this American Dream that was sold to people universally. New York being near Ellis Island where immigrants would arrive to be processed saw a diversity and multiplicity in ethnicities<sup>32</sup>. However, this high concentration of immigrants created tensions between the different groups. It is therefore no surprise that race and ethnicity would be discussed in *The Great Gatsby*, especially as it was set in the 1920's, an era dominantly known for its flappers and bootleggers, but also marked by events such as the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, a highly racist and violent organization against black people, but also immigration restriction laws. 1920 is also the year Lothrop Stoddard, a white supremacist, wrote his book named *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* in a pseudo-scientific attempt to rationalize eugenics<sup>33</sup>. This is particularly important to point out as Tom Buchanan is seen discussing a book written by a certain Goddard in the story, a name relatively similar to Stoddard, with the book's name also bearing a resemblance with Stoddard's. But Tom is not the only character that is concerned with ethnicities, though he is the only one showing it so overtly. Nick, in some of the ways he narrates the story or certain details he pays attention to when meeting other people, also shows some degree of concern regarding ethnicities. It is these ethnic minorities representations, in particular African American and Jewish representations in the graphic adaptations, that are analyzed in this section.

During the 1960's, the Civil Rights movement led to a deeper analysis of how these ethnic minorities were represented in literature, and *The Great Gatsby* did not escape this phenomenon. In his article "Negroes in the Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald" (1967), Forrey criticizes how black Americans were portrayed in the literary classic. He argues Fitzgerald displays a certain overt racism in the novel by giving the characters from ethnic minorities more menial parts, a racism that could possibly parallel Fitzgerald's own views of minorities (295).

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<sup>32</sup> *Ellis Island. Overview + History*. (n.d.). Statue of Liberty. Accessed June 23, 2021, from <https://www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island/overview-history/>.

<sup>33</sup> Eugenics is defined as "the practice or advocacy of controlled selective breeding of human populations (as by sterilization) to improve the population's genetic composition" (Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Eugenics. In *Merriam-Webster Online*. Accessed June 23, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eugenics>).

This racism is mainly seen through the characters' attitude towards these ethnic minorities, which is what is analyzed in this dissertation.

Tom Buchanan is the character that is the most overtly racist in the book. In the first chapter, he already mentions race and ethnicities. When Nick tells Daisy she makes him feel uncivilized, Tom jumps on the occasion to discuss a book he has read and starts on a rant in which he explains that the book scientifically proves that there is a dominant race, which he considers himself a part of, and that they need to watch out for the others. He uses the book to pseudo-scientifically justify his racist attitude. This can be seen in these two passages:

'Well, these books are all scientific,' insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. 'This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things.' [...]

This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and—' After an infinitesimal hesitation, he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. '—And we've produced all the things that go to make civilisation—oh, science and art, and all that. [...]' (Fitzgerald 2016: 14)

The last part of the above passage is a slight hint at the fact that his theory is already flawed, which will be implicitly confirmed many times throughout the novel. Indeed, he hesitates to call Daisy a Nordic, which could be explained by the fact that before meeting Tom, Daisy was engaged to someone from New Orleans. Given the history of New Orleans prior to the 1920's<sup>34</sup>, it is unlikely she would have been engaged to someone that could claim to have this Nordic heritage. Indeed, New Orleans's history is one filled with a colonial past (both French and Spanish), the slave trade and the civil war. This city was characterized by its diversity in terms of ethnicities. Because of that, Daisy goes against the idea in the book that the "dominant race" Tom claims himself to be part of needs to watch out and not mix. To add to that, even Tom's surname is an indication of the fact he cannot claim a Nordic heritage either. Indeed, the adjective *Nordic* refers to northern Europe<sup>35</sup>. Because his surname is *Buchanan*, the name of a parish in Scotland and an old Scottish clan, his origin is not Nordic, excluding him too from this "Nordic dominant race". As Tom is comfortable in his position and his social status, his belief in this dominant race and the theory provided by the book could be more of a red herring for his will for things to stay as they are and an indication of his fear and the fact he feels threatened. This is further confirmed when he gets angry when he learns Daisy and Gatsby are

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<sup>34</sup> *History of New Orleans*. (n.d.). New Orleans. Accessed June 23, 2021, from <https://www.neworleans.com/things-to-do/history/history-of-new-orleans-by-period/>.

<sup>35</sup> Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Nordic. In *Merriam-Webster Online*. Accessed June 23, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Nordic>.

having an affair and he compares that to intermarriage between people of color and white people: “Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.” (Fitzgerald 2016: 89) further highlighting his fear that someone will threaten his wealth and position, even though, as Jordan points out, all the people present and discussed are white.

Morton and Fordham use these two passages in their version of *The Great Gatsby*. As aforementioned, Tom is physically portrayed in this version in a way that parallels the Nordic race he references as the dominant one. This places him in this superiority he believes he has because he is of Nordic descent. When Tom talks about the book (18-19), the first four panels on the page are disposed in a way that makes the reader feel as though they are looking through a window. This effect is done through the addition of some sort of grid on the panel. This distances the readers from the scene, and adds to the idea of illusion, of a performance. This scene directly follows Daisy calling Tom a “hulking physical specimen” (16), which suggests Tom’s desire to change the subject from his brutality to one that would make him appear more intellectual. Three smaller panels focusing each respectively on Tom, Jordan and Daisy are on top of the square panel. Jordan and Daisy are turned towards the reader, which emphasizes the feeling of it being a performance, a fictional scene. The whole performative act behind this scene already makes Tom lose credibility.

When he first mentions the book (18), Tom is drawn as though he looks concerned, with his eyebrows furrowed. He is wearing the previously analyzed white and green polo shirt, which shows that Tom is linked with money and higher society. This adds to the idea that Tom sees himself as being part of this higher society and as such as having some sort of moral high ground to discuss such topics. The background behind him is grey, a color that has been associated by Zhang (2015) with disillusionment and moral decay. The choice for this background color thus creates two feelings: the first one is that it reinforces what Tom says in the speech balloon (“Civilization’s going to pieces.” (18)), the second one, gives the idea that Tom is morally corrupted and what he says is hiding ulterior motives. On the other page (19), a few panels show Tom going on with his explanation. In the top three panels, the other characters seem to be concerned and questioning the veracity of what Tom is saying, all furrowing one brow and raising the other. Daisy is the only one who attempts to lighten up the conversation by telling the others that Tom is reading “deep books with long words in them.” This also discredits

Tom's words as the other characters, who are supposedly part of this "dominant race" as well appear to doubt what Tom is telling them.

When Tom talks about intermarriage (151), two panels at the top of the page are important. The background is yellow, thus adding an atmosphere of wealth and luxury. This is further reinforced by the first panel of the page showing Tom sitting on a sofa with intricate details on both the wood frame in yellow and the fabric in blue. He is also portrayed wearing a blue and white suit. Zhang (2015) previously linked these two colors with hollowness, vacuity, and illusion. Here, the white acts as a smokescreen of Tom's personality. He wants to appear as this person with good and pure intention, when in reality he is superficial and vapid. This is further emphasized by the blue of the suit which reinforces the idea that Tom's personality that he presents to the world is an illusion and hiding who he really is. In both panels, Tom seems angry, his brows are furrowed, and he has his arms crossed in the second one, showing he is also defensive and closed-off. His demeanor and the colors chosen for these panels illustrate how Tom thinks highly of himself, which, combined with him calling Gatsby "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (151), visually represent his classism and eugenic ideology as he associates being someone of importance to origins.

In Bachelier and Melchior's *Gatsby le Magnifique*, both passages are included as well. However, given that this adaptation has gone through a change of setting and era, both artists have included these moments in a different way than in the original novel. Indeed, at first glance, the story being set in the 21<sup>st</sup> century could mean that racism is not as explored as this century has seen an increase in movements against racism such as Black Lives Matter. With the continuously growing fight against racism everywhere, can such topics be represented as they were in the original, especially when the story is now placed in China? Though anti-black racism is not as reported or talked about in China as it is in America, anti-black racism there is still very much happening. In *Anti-Black Racism in China: Through the Eyes of Aaron A. Vessup and Lou Jing* (2020), Springer points out how black people are still the recipient of racism and microaggressions, due to the history of colorism there. Therefore, though the location and period has changed, a topic such as racism is still important to discuss, even more so now that a discussion on racism has been opened in the last few decades. However, racism is not as overt as it was during the 1920's, hence the slight changes in the way racism is presented in this adaptation.

In this version too Tom speaks about a book talking about a dominant race which is supposedly scientifically justified (10). However, the book mentioned here is “La guerre des civilisations” by a certain Hutchinson. This refers to a more recent book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, by Huntington (1996) who puts forward a theory according to which there cannot be a universal civilization because of cultural cleavages. However, as Henderson explains in *Not Letting Evidence Get in the Way of Assumptions: Testing the Clash of Civilizations Thesis with More Recent Data* (2005), “systematic evidence has emerged to refute the clash of civilizations thesis (Gurr, 1994; Russett et al., 2000; Henderson and Tucker, 2001; Chiozza, 2002; Fox, 2002)”. Henderson also concludes that

A review of the empirical evidence indicates that when we analyze data on armed conflicts up to the year 1999, we find no evidence of a ‘CoC’. Even where there appears to be an increasing incidence of interethnic and inter-religious conflicts, it is evident that these conflicts are clearly not ‘clashes of civilizations.’ (Henderson 2005: 466)

In this quote, Henderson argues that there are no data that could confirm that there is indeed the clash between civilizations that Huntington believed in. Here too Tom tries to justify his racism with a pseudo-scientific book that has been widely contested, though this one is more modern and recent, and therefore more relevant to today’s society. In terms of how the visual adds to the textual, all the elements contribute to giving the scene the idea that Tom is concerned with ethnicities and is feeling threatened. The colors are mostly shades of red and yellow, which show Tom’s anger and ergo produces an uncomfortable atmosphere. Tom’s facial expressions translates his anger and concern too, with him furrowing his brows while talking. The other characters shown have somewhat neutral facial expression, though they seem to be questioning what Tom is saying. On top of that, the fact he is consuming alcohol alters the trustworthiness of the affirmations he is making.

The most striking difference between the passage from the original novel and this adaptation, however, is when Tom talks about letting Daisy cheat on him (62). Indeed, in the original, Tom’s racism is quite overtly shown, with him mentioning intermarriage between ethnicities. In this adaptation, this has been changed into: “It might be the latest trendy thing amongst parvenus to sit on your ass while Mr. Nobody tries to fuck your wife ... but I’m not buying it !”<sup>36</sup> (62). Instead of talking about race, Tom is talking about new money and their lack of manners. This allows the divide between old money and new money to be put even

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<sup>36</sup> “C’est peut-être le dernier truc à la mode chez les parvenus de rester posé sur son cul pendant que monsieur je-sais-pas-qui essaye de baiser votre femme... mais moi j’achète pas !” (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013 :5).

more forward than it is in the original and emphasizes the idea that there is a difference in behaviors between both social classes. By doing so, Bachelier and Melchior allow their adaptation to highlight this theme that dictates most of the original novel. Here too Tom's anger is visually emphasized as he is wearing a red shirt in the panels. He is also seen looking down at Gatsby and Daisy who are in the pool while he is standing on the edge, portraying his feeling of superiority on Gatsby. This is further highlighted by the fact that Tom is on the left of the panels, and Gatsby on the right. They are divided by their location, like they are divided by where they live, and by their social positions. To add to that even more, Gatsby and Daisy are shown naked, whereas Tom is fully clothed. This further reinforces the vision of decadence that people have of new money. In this passage, Tom is also shown drinking alcohol, once again reducing his character to an angry man always drinking.

In the past few years, many films have addressed the issue of social and economic inequality in Asian countries, such as Jon Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) inspired by the eponymous novel by Kevin Kwan (2013), or more recently Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019), both discussing Asian classism, though in a different genre. In "Reproduction sociale et violence symbolique dans *Parasite* de Bong Joon-ho" (2019), Larregue argues that social reproduction is the cause of the classism found in *Parasite*. He explains: "social reproduction refers to the mechanism by which individuals are led to occupy the social position that their parents already occupied [...] This reproduction does not occur randomly or naturally"<sup>37</sup>. This means that because there is some sort of social pre-determinism, it is nearly impossible for one to get out of their "intended" social class as everything has been put into place to keep diverging social classes separate. In the film, Mr. Park, the dad from the upper-class family, even says "If there's one thing I hate, it's people who cross the line" (*Parasite* 2019), making his position on the topic quite explicit. In "Analysis of Social Class Inequality Based on the Movie *Parasite* (2020), Liu reinforces this idea of pre-determinism by arguing that "it is hard for the poor people like Kim family to have the opportunity to escape poverty and enter the so-called upper class" (80). The fact that this issue has been discussed in many Asian films is a testimony to how much people are concerned about social and economic inequality. In many ways, this mirrors what happens in *The Great Gatsby*: though Gatsby does everything he can to belong to the higher social class, because of how he came into money, he is still not recognized nor

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<sup>37</sup> "La reproduction sociale désigne le mécanisme par lequel les individus sont conduits à occuper la position sociale qu'occupaient déjà leurs parents [...] Cette reproduction n'intervient pas de façon aléatoire ou naturelle" (Larregue 2019 : 5).

legitimized by old money. As such, because of this growing concern in Asian countries and the parallel with the original story, it is no surprise that this would be the main focus of this version set in 21<sup>st</sup> century China more than racism would be.

But as aforesaid, Nick is also showing concern regarding ethnicities, though it is not done as overtly as with Tom. This is mostly seen throughout the descriptions that Nick makes of his encounters with other people. Indeed, whenever Nick encounters someone, he mentions their nationality or their ethnicity when they are not the same as his own, more often than not accompanied by a quick physical description filled with the stereotypical attributes of these ethnicities. Though it is done in a more implicit way than with Tom, the fact that Nick feels the need to mention other people's nationality or ethnicity if it differs from his own shows that he does pay attention to these differences and judges them as being important enough to point out. This is something Nick often does during the novel, such as when he speaks about a child and describes him as "a grey, scrawny Italian child" (Fitzgerald 2016:22) or when he speaks about Michaelis who he first introduces by "the young Greek" (Fitzgerald 2016:94) then by his first name. The first time he mentions someone's ethnicity in the novel is when he talks about his servant who is from Finnish origins. He never mentions her name, only referring to her as "My Finn" or "The Finn", which dehumanizes her as she is only described by her ethnicity. To add to this sense of loss of humanity, the first time Nick mentions her in the original novel is right after talking about his dog and his car:

I had a dog—at least I had him for a few days until he ran away—and an old Dodge and a Finnish woman, who made my bed and cooked breakfast and muttered Finnish wisdom to herself over the electric stove. (Fitzgerald 2016: 8)

Though this is important to point out from the original novel, the Finn is absent from Bachelier and Melchior's adaptation. She is neither seen nor mentioned, which could be explained that in the context of that particular adaptation and given what has been said previously about racism in China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this would not bear the same relevance as it does in the original. A Finn would not be seen as something out of the ordinary in this adaptation. In some ways, this lack of relevance could also explain why the Finn is only seen once and never mentioned in Morton and Fordham's adaptation. Indeed, though this version has kept the exact dialogue from the original regarding reading the book and the intermarriage, the meaning behind talking about this Finnish woman would fall short of expectations as a contemporary audience would not necessarily make the distinction between someone like Nick and someone like the Finn in terms

of ethnicities. This could be the explanation as to why there is no mention of the Italian child nor is Michaelis's ethnicity mentioned in both adaptations.

Nick's racism is more apparent when he talks about black people and Wolfsheim. He seems surprised to see black people being driven by a white chauffeur and even mentions the fact it is laughable they would look at him haughtily:

As we crossed Blackwell's Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled towards us in haughty rivalry.

'Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge,' I thought; 'anything at all...'  
(Fitzgerald 2016:49)

This implies that Nick thinks it is laughable that they would do that and that, in some ways, they are acting out of their place ("Anything can happen now"). He does not take the rivalry seriously, which indicates he might see them as inferior people compared to him still.

Here too this passage is absent from Bachelier and Melchior's *Gatsby le Magnifique*. As Melchior mentions during an interview, he wanted to "put forward the human and psychological dimensions"<sup>38</sup> of the book. This could explain why the focus is on the main characters and why what might appear as details is not more explored. This does not highly affect this idea of racism in the original novel as there is still this idea of "dominant race" introduced by Tom's character, however, this allows the adaptation to go beyond discrimination based on just skin color, highlighting this idea that it is also a discrimination based on money and social status.

In Morton and Fordham's graphic novel, the scene with the car is illustrated (81), though it is not explicitly said that black people being driven by a white chauffeur and looking at Nick with rivalry is what surprises Nick. Indeed, on the page the focus is put more on the big city and the multiple structures of the bridge rather than on who is driving who. The middle strip shows the car with two people of color and a white chauffeur, and Nick is seen looking at them, but they are not looking back at him nor are they looking with rivalry. Though it is implied that Nick finds it surprising that a white chauffeur is driving people of color by having the speech balloon say "'Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge,' I thought; 'anything

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<sup>38</sup> Le Saux, L. (2013). Stéphane Melchior-Durand se frotte à « Gatsby le magnifique ». Accessed January 28, 2021, from <http://www.bodoi.info/stephane-melchior-durand-se-frotte-a-gatsby-le-magnifique/>.

at all . . .”’, it is not done very explicitly in a way that would allow the reader to make a clear connection between this meaning and the panel. As such, this part is more of a nod to the original story rather than a visual representation of Nick’s racism.

When it comes to describing Wolfsheim in the original, Nick does so by mentioning his nose first. This is usually the first stereotype people use when talking about Jewish people, but also what was mainly caricatured during the Holocaust propaganda. Using this stereotypical attribute as the first physical trait to describe Wolfsheim shows that Nick might also be biased and inclined to judge others based on their appearance:

A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness. (Fitzgerald 2016:49)

This is clearly an attribute that Nick emphasizes and seems to pay particular attention to as he mentions multiple times after that (“expressive nose” (49), “Wolfsheim’s nose flashed at me” (50), “his nostrils turned to me” (50), “his tragic nose” (51), ...). Nick also puts the emphasis on the fact that Wolfsheim has an accent when he speaks in English by noting how he says “Oggsford” instead of “Oxford” or “gonnegtion” instead of “connection”. This further highlights the fact that Wolfsheim is not American. Not only does the character of Meyer Wolfsheim call attention to Nick’s racism, but it also shows that Nick might not be as non-judgmental narrator as he claims to be in the first few lines of the book (“In consequence, I’m inclined to reserve all judgments” Fitzgerald 2016:7). However, in *Fitzgerald and the Jews* (2015), Krystal questions whether such representations of Wolfsheim was just an influence of the 1920’s anti-Semitism or if it gives away Fitzgerald’s own views on the matter:

But I have to wonder if such obvious stereotyping constituted true animus. The caricatures of Jews propagated by the Dreyfus Affair around the turn of the century and by the German press in the nineteen-thirties were driven by pure hatred; Fitzgerald was simply reiterating a familiar physiognomic code. (Krystal 2015)

As such, this raises the following question: was Nick truly anti-Semitic or just reproducing the typical and caricatural facial features given to Jews at the time? And is this side of Nick found in both the studied adaptations?

Interestingly, Meyer Wolfsheim is not a character that is present in Bachelier and Melchior’s *Gatsby le Magnifique*. This version focuses more on the differences between social classes rather than ethnicities, hence why a character such as Wolfsheim would not highlight anything in particular. This character does act as an element that makes Nick question Gatsby’s

rise to wealth in terms of legality, but other elements contribute to it, which could be the reason both artists did not see much opportunity in using this character, as it does not bear much relevance regarding what they are trying to achieve with this adaptation. In Morton and Fordham's version, the scene with Meyer Wolfsheim has been kept, but there are no obvious mentions of his nose nor any other physical attributes that would link him to being a Jew. The fact that he is Jewish is also not mentioned, and he is not drawn differently than the other characters. Here again, the possibility of a more racist side to Nick's encounter with Wolfsheim has been taken away. Nick, unlike in the original version, does not appear as a character with anti-Semitic and racist tendencies anymore, but instead, as the non-judgmental narrator he claims himself to be, leaving Tom to be the sole character to be linked with racist ideologies.

Based on the different, overt and covert, mentions of others' ethnicities and how much they appear to mean for Tom and Nick, it can be pointed out that illusion is also deeply linked with the question of racism too. Nick wants to appear as a non-judgmental person while still showing signs of concerns towards ethnicities, while Tom wants to appear as an intelligent man who is just trying to "protect the dominant race" when in fact, he feels threatened. By judging both the people of color and Meyer Wolfsheim, both who have become successful in terms of money and could be considered as having achieved the American Dream, Nick adds this idea that the American Dream is exclusive to certain people as he does not recognize others' success. Slater (1973) explains:

Though no proponent of the views of fervent ethnic baiters such as Tom Buchanan, Nick is presenting an ethnocentric interpretation of the American dream, excluding from it a whole section of the nation, the East, as well as those with intense ethnicity of a different sort than his own, such as unreconstructed Swedes and the Jewish Meyer Wolfsheim. (Slater 1973:59)

This exclusiveness that Nick adds to the American Dream, whether intentionally or not, could explain why Gatsby, who had become rich and successful, could still not achieved this long sought-after American Dream, as he was not part of the class that could. In "Civilization's Going to Pieces: The Great Gatsby, Identity, and Race, From the Jazz Age to the Obama Era" (2015), Vogel discusses this further by adding that such skepticism around Gatsby's rise to wealth is representative of the skepticism around his origins. Indeed, many have read and analyzed the story and have pointed out how Gatsby's association with Wolfsheim and his real name, Gatz, could all indicate Gatsby's own possible Jew origins.

Wolfsheim has long been analyzed as being inspired by Arnold Rothstein, the criminal mastermind behind the Jewish mob of New York City, who was said to have conspired to fix

the 1919 World Series previously mentioned. However, in “The Passing of Jay Gatsby: Class and Anti-Semitism in Fitzgerald’s 1920s America” (2020), Pekarofski argues that there are discrepancies in the description of Wolfsheim and Rothstein and that, as such, Gatsby is the one that resembles Rothstein more than Wolfsheim does. This reinforces the idea that Gatsby could be a passing Jew. To add to that, Pekarofski argues that “bootleggers were almost exclusively poor and ethnically other: Polish, Irish, Italian, and Jewish. Perhaps most noteworthy is the fact that one-half of these bootleggers, by Haller’s estimates, were Eastern European Jews (9)” (54). As Gatsby was revealed at the end of the novel as being a bootlegger, this could still be an indication of his possible Jewish roots. Another passage which could point towards Gatsby being Jewish is when Tom confronts him and explains he has discovered something about Gatsby. Tom reveals Gatsby’s link with corruption to the others, but such confession could also lead to his own downfall because of his association with Walter Chase, another bootlegger. This raises the question as to why Tom would risk his own reputation to confirm rumors about Gatsby? Pekarofski (2020) argues that this could mean that Tom was about to reveal Gatsby’s true origins and would explain why he is so threatened by Gatsby. Pekarofski (2020) explains: “while many other ethnic groups represented a threat to racial, ethnic, or cultural purity in the nativist discourse of the period, only Jews seemed to represent this kind of financial, intellectual, and political threat to the ruling class elite.” (65). This means that Tom would be more threatened by Gatsby because the latter could potentially be a match in terms of capital and intelligence. Whereas other ethnic minorities would be a threat to racial purity, Gatsby being a Jew could destroy Tom’s theory about a dominant race. Because of this, Bachelier and Melchior’s decision to focus on classism rather than racism highlights how much of a threat Gatsby is to Tom, even though Gatsby’s possible Jewish heritage is not implied in this adaptation.

To conclude this section, because Fitzgerald’s novel deals with the issue of racism through certain main characters’ attitude towards ethnic minorities rather than having face-to-face confrontations with said minorities, it is harder to render visually. However, both adaptations manage to keep the idea of inequalities through combining visual techniques and textual references. Morton and Fordham still stay very close to the original text, which allow them to include these racist tendencies by combining visual elements of “superiority” (such as Tom being portrayed similarly to the Nordic race which is in his opinion the dominant one) and the textual.

Bachelier and Melchior, however, show a clear desire to update the story to both a contemporary setting, but also to current social issues, more typical of Asian countries. Because racist and anti-Semitic remarks are extremely problematic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and given the change in ideology regarding these ethnic minorities, such topics would not be as relevant nowadays as it was back in the 1920's. Nevertheless, the French artists keep this idea of dominant race, but associate it with social status rather than ethnicity, a topic more relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in Asian countries. Even the book Tom mentions has been changed to suit the new ideology discussed. As such, not only is the setting updated, but the story also is. However, both adaptations fail to convey the hints of Nick's own racist and anti-Semitic tendencies. In the original, this layer of meaning is important as it helps the readers understand Nick is an unreliable narrator. From the beginning, Nick has claimed himself to be nonjudgmental, however, as the story progresses, it comes to light that Nick does judge others, raising questions around his credibility.

The analysis of ethnic minorities representation in the two 21<sup>st</sup> century adaptations has shown the difficulty in visually illustrating such topic in the graphic medium because of how the original abstractly addresses racial and social inequalities. Had Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* included a confrontational scene between those ethnic minorities and the main characters, or at least more concrete references of racism instead of mentions of a book about a dominant race and the passage on black people, the reinterpretation in the graphic medium would have been more easily rendered. Nonetheless, the fact that less emphasis is put on this particular issue also highlights the culturally influenced context in which these adaptations were made, and thus how much mentalities have changed regarding racism and anti-Semitism in the last hundred years.

## VI. Bachelier & Melchior and Morton & Fordham's contemporary take on 1920's gender roles: explicit versus implicit renderings

### A. The 1920's "New Woman" in 21<sup>st</sup> century graphic novels

In the 1970's, gender roles were once again changing. Feminism's second wave led to an increase in focus on how women were portrayed in literature. This change in gender roles and gender perception mirrored the one that was happening at the time Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* was being written: women had to be more independent as men had gone to war. As such when they came back, women's roles had changed, and the "New Woman" had emerged. This "new woman" was contrasting with the conservative one, and as society was also changing, conservative and progressive ideologies were put face to face. In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson all represent different aspects of these changing gender roles and how women were perceived back when the story was written. This section analyzes how these changing gender roles are reinterpreted and visually illustrated in Morton and Fordham's version, as well as in Bachelier and Melchior's one, from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective.

The place of the woman in the 1920's society considerably changed when they were given the right to vote in the United States. This change, mixed with the fact that during World War I women had to fend for themselves and be more independent as men went to war, also meant that women's behavior changed. Women, until then mostly conservative in their physical appearance and way to represent themselves were now wearing shorter dresses and skirts, sporting shorter hair, and seen smoking and drinking. This "new woman", as they ended up being called later on, was also freer in terms of their sexuality. Leuchtenburg (1958) says:

The new woman wanted the same freedom of movement that men had and the same economic and political rights. By the end of the 1920's she had come a long way. Before the war, a lady did not set foot in a saloon; after the war, she entered a speakeasy as thoughtlessly as she would go into a railroad station. ... In the business and political worlds, women competed with men; in marriage, they moved toward a contractual role. ... Sexual independence was merely the most sensational aspect of the generally altered status of women. (Leuchtenburg (1958) in Freedman 1974: 373).

In the very patriarchal world in which *The Great Gatsby* takes place, this very sexual independence is represented as problematic. However, this whole idea behind the "new woman" of the 1920's cannot be seen as a black or white thing, but more like a spectrum. In this sense, Daisy, Jordan and Myrtle all can be placed on this spectrum, representing different

parts and degrees of it. This “new woman” is depicted in the original in such a way that Daisy appears as being conflicted between her conservative role and the desire to become this new woman, Jordan as the embodiment of it, and Myrtle represents the carelessness that was brought about by the emergence of this new type of woman. This contrast between the three women can be seen in their description by F.S. Fitzgerald.

It is, however, important to mention that these three women are described from Nick’s perspective. As Jordan highlighted in the novel, Nick is not the sincere narrator he claims himself to be, and as such his opinion of Daisy could be influenced by how she treats Gatsby, whereas his opinion on Myrtle could stem from him being disapproving of her affair with Tom, his cousin’s husband. Nick’s descriptions of the three women are entirely based on his own subjective opinion of them.

### Daisy and Jordan: contrasting the angel in the house and the new woman

The way Jordan is described makes it feel as though, at first, she is somewhat an unmarried version of Daisy, but a more boyish one, she is more of a “new woman” than Daisy is. Indeed, Jordan is an independent woman, she is not married, and she has a career as an athlete. Because she is financially and sexually free, Jordan is the fully realized version of the “new woman”. As such, Jordan becomes more equal to the men in the story. Even the way she is physically described is manlier than Daisy:

a slender, small-breasted girl with an erect carriage which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her gray sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face. (Fitzgerald 2016: 13)

This manlier description shows that as gender roles were changing, women were becoming more equal to men in their rights and position. Jordan’s character really highlights how Daisy is stuck in her more conservative role, stuck in the “angel in the house” Victorian model. As such, she acts more as counteracting element to Daisy’s actions. She has a more realistic outlook on life than Daisy does. Daisy is still trapped behind the facade of perfection that old money displays to the outside world, and as such ventures into the search of moments of happiness, no matter the consequences. Jordan also acts as a questioning figure regarding Nick’s sincerity that he prides himself upon. At the beginning of the novel, Nick says:

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since. ‘Whenever you feel like criticizing any one,’ he told me, ‘just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve

had.' He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments [...]. (Fitzgerald 2016: 7)

However, Jordan questions that in the last chapter of the book by telling Nick she thought he was “rather an honest, straightforward person.” (Fitzgerald 2016: 120). She questions the illusion created by Nick regarding his sincerity. Given that Nick is the narrator, this urges the reader to question his sincerity too, and therefore, everything he has said so far. This shows Jordan’s freedom in terms of opinions as well. She is not afraid to challenge Nick, nor to speak her mind.

Daisy, however, is at first described as this perfect host, the embodiment of the pure and innocent woman. Even her name suggests this purity. Indeed, daisies are white flowers, often linked with innocence as they are usually picked up by children. Zhang (2015) also linked white with purity. By her name, but also by the fact that she is wearing a white dress when she is first mentioned in the book, there is already this aura of purity and innocence around her character. However, as previously explained in chapter IV of this dissertation, Daisy is an incredibly complex character. Though described as such, Daisy is not pure and innocent, but rather deceiving and hiding behind a facade. Both these attributes can be explained by her situation: Daisy, being from old money, was still expected to behave in a more conservative “angel in the house” role. She was expected to be this domestic, submissive, and innocent being, while other women were developing into the new woman. In “Beautiful Fools and Hulking Brutes: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925)” (2003)<sup>39</sup>, Pelzer argues that “In Fitzgerald’s novel, women remain prisoners of patriarchy. They are either commodities to be possessed and discarded by brutish louts such as Tom Buchanan or embodiments of an ideal for romantics such as Jay Gatsby” (127). Because Daisy does not have the same kind of freedom Jordan has because of her marital situation, she is stuck in between this desire to evolve with the epoch in which she lives, while still being prevented from doing so because of her social status. Thus, Daisy is constantly looking for fleeting moments of happiness, which she finds through material things, as well as in her relationship with Gatsby. In reality, Daisy is the victim of the Romantic tradition. In “Only Her Hairdresser...: Another Look at Daisy Buchanan” (1975), Korenman argues that Fitzgerald created Daisy as the embodiment of both part of this tradition:

Romantic tradition assigns diametrically opposed roles to fair and dark women. In his creation of Daisy, Fitzgerald reflects the influence of this tradition. The character that

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<sup>39</sup> Essay found in Fisher, J. & Silber, E. (2003). *Women in Literature: Reading through the Lens of Gender*. Greenwood, pp.127-129.

results is both cool innocent princess and sensual femme fatale, a combination that further enhances Daisy's enigmatic charm. (Korenman 1975: 578)

Indeed, this cool and innocent persona is more of a facade Daisy projects onto the world. Korenman (1975) explains that duality through Daisy's description. Though many people assume Daisy is blonde, many physical descriptions contradict one another in the novel. Korenman (1975) argues that this is due to the "symbolic suggestiveness" that surrounds her character as she is described belonging to this realm of gold (voice "full of money" (Fitzgerald 2016: 83), "high in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl" (Fitzgerald 2016: 83). However, it is never explicitly mentioned Daisy has blond hair, besides the association between her explaining her daughter has yellowy hair and her saying she looks like her daughter. By contrast, an explicit reference to her hair being dark is made: "[Gatsby] kissed her dark shining hair" (Fitzgerald 2016: 103). Whereas she is presented as the typical fair-haired heroine of the Romantic tradition ("passive security-minded, and pragmatic" (Korenman 1975: 577)), Daisy also embodies traits of the dark-haired ones: she is sultry and sexual. She speaks with a "fluctuating, feverish warmth" (Fitzgerald 2016: 67) and with a "low, thrilling voice" (Fitzgerald 2016: 12). This duality present in both the descriptions made by Fitzgerald and Korenman's analysis of this character highlights how Daisy is stuck between her own social position and her desire to evolve as this new woman.

In Morton and Fordham's version, the focus is put more on the pure and innocent side of Daisy. Indeed, she is represented wearing mostly white, with blond hair and always being put together. The way she is drawn shows a certain lightness to her character, almost as though she is a dainty thing. Even during the confrontation scene, Daisy is put together, her stress only being visually shown through her shaking. Throughout this adaptation, it is mainly Daisy's sophistication that transpires. In one of the panels (27), however, this idea that she is trapped in her position is made more explicit. As she tells Nick that she has "been everywhere and seen everything and done everything" (27), the bench both characters are sat on looks like it is encaging them. The overpowering color in the panel is also grey, which not only emphasizes the bleakness behind what she is saying, but also hints at the illusion of being a free and independent woman. Her self-awareness is also made more apparent by her saying she *knows* (27), as though she knows her true place and knows the limits and possibilities of her position. This is further reinforced by her telling Nick she hopes her daughter will be a fool (26). However, one moment in particular does suggest Daisy's duality through her attitude. When she meets up with Nick, unaware of it being an arranged meeting with Gatsby (100). Right

before realizing Gatsby is there, Daisy is shown being sensual and flirty. She is asking Nick if he told her to come alone because he is in love with her. She is then drawn looking over her shoulder, looking at Nick in a flirty manner. This shows that Daisy does take advantage of this coy woman persona she displays.

By contrast, Bachelier and Melchior play more on her duality than the other adaptation does. Indeed, though she is also mostly wearing white in this version, Daisy has dark hair. Because Asian people are known to have darker hair, this allows Daisy to appear as more traditional and conservative against Jordan's unusual blond hair, but it also places Daisy in this *femme fatale* position in the Romantic tradition much more. While she does appear as pure and innocent through the many white outfits she wears and her general behavior, she does show signs of deceit. She is cunning, as it can be seen multiple times through the way she is drawn smirking (12, 37, 52, 54). This adds to this idea that she is pretending to be this innocent woman, when she plays with her sensuality and sexuality to get what she wants. In one of the panels that show her smirking (12), the overpowering color is blue. Zhang (2015) has linked blue with fantasy, but blue can also be representative of loneliness and sadness, as per the saying goes "feeling blue". In this case (12), the dark hues of blue can give the impression of Daisy being sad, which goes with her explaining to Nick how she has grown cynical. However, the fact that blue also mean fantasy, and her smirking replace the impression of sadness by the feeling of illusion created by Daisy. This is even more heightened by the octopus on the ceiling. The octopus has very different meanings in a lot of different cultures, but it is overall known as a very intelligent animal. The octopus, mixed with the shades of blue and Nick's revelation that he felt tricked, all act together to further add to the feeling that Daisy is being deceitful and playing a role. Here too when she meets up with Nick alone (37), she asks him if it is because he is in love with her that he wanted her alone. Not only does this show she knows about her charm, but the way she is illustrated smirking emphasizes her flirtier and seductive side.

In this version, the vulnerability and fragility associated with Daisy's character is also put forward. This allows to show the complexity in Daisy's position. Though she might be deceitful and hiding behind illusions, she is a deeply sad character. She knows what is expected of her given where she comes from, but she is also trapped. Indeed, though the 1920's saw an increase in divorce rates, partly because of the changing gender roles, Daisy was still stuck in a more conservative, Victorian-Age-like marriage. Not only would it have affected her financially, but divorce was also still heavily stigmatized at the time. In "Marriage and divorce

in early twentieth century drama” (2015), Levitt argues that in the 1920’s, women were represented as “child-like and in need of a man's guiding hand to protect them from the wiles of the modern world, especially in matters of marriage, since divorce was both ruinous to a woman's reputation and rare” (140). As such, because of the conservative values and decorum held by her social class, divorce would have jeopardized Daisy’s reputation. The most obvious reference to her being trapped is when Tom confronts her and Gatsby about their affair (fig.8). Daisy is no longer put together, with mascara dripping down her face and her hair a mess. She is not the picture of perfection anymore; she is not hiding behind her facade.

When it comes to Jordan’s character, both adaptations reinterpret her character in different ways. Jordan could be seen as the embodiment of this new woman of the 1920’s: she is financially independent, and she appears as having some freedom in her sexual endeavors as well. As aforementioned, Jordan is described in manlier terms than Daisy is. This puts her as some sort of equal of men.

In Morton and Fordham’s adaptation, Jordan’s full potential as being representative of the 1920’s new woman is not exploited. She is represented as slightly more androgynous than Daisy, having less curves and shorter hair, but she is still very feminine. Only two scenes could indicate her differences with Daisy. The first one is when they are first shown in the graphic novel (10): both Daisy and Jordan are sitting on opposite ends of the sofa. They are both dressed in white and sitting in a similar way. The fact that they are on opposite sides could signal that though they might appear as the same, in some ways they are opposites. However, this is not an explicit reference to this possibility, but a mere subjective take on the scene. The other instance is when Jordan drives, and Nick sits in the passenger seat (72). Right before letting her drive, Nick explains that Jordan was involved in a scandal according to which she had lied multiple times. He then claims that “she was incurably dishonest, and wasn’t able to endure being at a disadvantage” (72). This, combined with her driving the car, indicates that Jordan likes to be in charge. Because the “angel in the house” is expected to be submissive, Jordan’s desire to be independent and in control of her life contrasts with this more conservative woman.

Bachelier and Melchior, however, push forward this idea of Jordan representing the new woman. Straight away she appears as very contrasting of Daisy: she is blonde with short hair and wears a dark dress, whereas Daisy has dark long hair in a bun and wears a white dress. Not only does Jordan’s blond hair contrasts with Daisy’s, but it also shows some sort of progressive style. Indeed, as aforementioned, Asian people are often born with dark hair. The fact Jordan

has blond hair shows that she is not the traditional Asian woman. Her dark dress also represents the fact that, unlike Daisy, she is not hiding behind an innocent and pure appearance. However, she is portrayed as dishonest: Jordan is also wearing sunglasses, which hides her eyes. This adds a new layer of meaning to Jordan: she can be deceitful and not show her true face. This is further supported by Nick saying this in the original novel:

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body. (Fitzgerald 2016: 42)

On top of that, it turns out that Jordan knew much more than she led on, such as Tom's affair, or what Gatsby told her. In the above quote, it is made obvious that Jordan is ready to be deceitful and manipulative to get what she wants, including sex. Her sexual freedom is also represented in one of the panels (26) which portrays her and Nick having sex.

This version also highlights her more androgynous side, as depicted in the original novel. Indeed, Jordan sports shorter hair and has barely any curves compared to Daisy's character. Her androgyny is also reinforced in the scene where she goes with Nick to one of Gatsby's parties (22-27). Though she wears dresses in most of the graphic novel, in that scene, Jordan is wearing a suit and flat shoes. This is the opposite of the usual more feminine look, which visually pushes forward the idea that Jordan is more like men in that society. She is portrayed in this graphic novel as more liberated and more equal to the men in the story.

### Myrtle and impropriety: the carelessness of the New Woman

Though Jordan seems to be contrasting of Daisy's character by being more rational and more of a new woman through her sexual and financial freedom, the true contrasting character is Myrtle. She is on the opposite end of the spectrum of this "new woman" of the 1920's. She is described in the novel in much harsher terms:

The thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face, above a spored dress of dark blue crepe-de-chine, constrained no facet or gleam of beauty, but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering. (Fitzgerald 2016: 21)

Compared to Daisy's delicateness and purity, Myrtle is sturdy and sensual. A more covert contrast is made between Daisy and Myrtle through Nick saying that though she wasn't particularly beautiful, Myrtle had a "perceptible vitality" (21). Indeed, when he first sees Daisy, she tells him she is "paralyzed with happiness" (11). While Daisy has a certain lightness when she speaks, Myrtle appears as very bossy when speaking to Wilson. The way she talks to him gives the impression that she feels superior to him. This is more explicitly mentioned later on in the novel when she says Wilson "wasn't fit to lick [her] shoe" (27). But the real contrast is visible when comparing the parties both women are throwing. While Daisy appears as being the perfect host, making light conversations, attending to her guests, trying to keep her argument with Tom as a private thing, Myrtle is the complete opposite. The atmosphere is much wilder, the guests are gossiping and heavily drinking, Myrtle is talking down on the people working for her and became much more arrogant, and the evening ends with Tom punching Myrtle in front of the others. Nick even says he was "simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" (28).

In Morton and Fordham's adaptation, Myrtle is first shown wearing a blue dress. She appears as very condescending towards Wilson; in both the way she looks at him and how she speaks to him. Here again it is very contrasting to how Daisy is when first mentioned. When they are at the party, Myrtle has changed into a white dress. Not only has she changed into a new dress, but she has also changed how she interacts with the others, even looking down on others ("These people! You have to keep after them all the time" (Fitzgerald 2016: 25)). Myrtle has also changed her whole attitude to appear as being richer and from a higher class. In a way, her wearing a white dress indicates that she wants to be seen like Daisy. But the way Tom interacts with both is here too very telling. A stark difference can be observed between how the two scenes, Daisy's party (10-30) and Myrtle's one (42-52) are drawn. At the former, the reader is looking at the party from outside, through a window. The party seems quiet and calm. This feeling is heightened by the boats sailing on the calm sea behind the table and the warm colors. Myrtle's party, however, is drawn in a much more chaotic way. Instead of taking one page, the panel takes two pages. Nick is sitting in the middle and is surrounded by a lot of different elements that spiral around him. This gives the reader a similar sensation to the one that Nick is experiencing because of the alcohol and the wild atmosphere at the party. The party is visually "all over the place". It is the same thing with both fights. With Daisy and Tom's one (21-22), they are just shadows behind a window, being observed by Jordan and Nick. It is so calm that Nick even asks if something is happening. However, the fight between Tom and Myrtle (51-

52) is here too much more chaotic and wilder. The panel is seen from above, everyone is circling around Myrtle who is bleeding on her white dress whilst Tom appears angry behind the couch.

In Bachelier and Melchior's adaptation, however, when Myrtle first appears she is wearing a tight small pink tank top and a tight low-rise skirt (16). This really contrast with Daisy's modest and white flowing dress when she is first introduced in the graphic novel (8). Myrtle also seems angry which is heightened by the yellow and red background and her facial expression. During the party, she has changed into a blue dress (19). As mentioned previously, blue can represent illusion. Wearing this color on her dress emphasizes the fact that Myrtle is playing a role, she acts like she is a rich woman. The tension between Tom and Myrtle at the party is visually increasing: the close-ups on both characters are getting closer until the moment Tom hits Myrtle, and the characters get redder (20). Both characters' facial expressions appear extremely angry too. In comparison with the scene where Tom and Daisy argue (11), this is much more violent. Indeed, with Daisy and Tom, the fight is hinted at when Daisy leaves the room to join Tom in another one, but nothing is seen, showing that their fight is something private, they keep away from guests. However, on this page (20), the bottom strip shows Tom hitting Myrtle in one of the panels, and then everyone tending to Myrtle crying on the floor with blood on her dress in another.

In a way, Myrtle represents the wild, extremely careless, and greedy part of the spectrum that is the "new woman", whereas Daisy represents the trapped conservative "angel in the house" in an era of increasing personal freedom for women. Myrtle wants the life that Daisy has, she wants the luxury, the status and wants to get out of this lower position in society that she has with Wilson. All Myrtle has is a hopeful dream to get a better life. What she does not realize is that Daisy is hiding behind the illusion of perfection. As such, Daisy keeps appearances up, and appears content with her life even if it means allowing Tom's unfaithfulness. This is mostly due to what is expected of her and how the conservative values of her environment trap her in this relationship. Not only is it about keeping up the appearances, but Daisy does not have another choice. Jordan, unlike the two others, can fully embody this new woman because she is not tied to a conservative agreement like marriage, which allows her to experiment on her sexual freedom, and at the same time, she is not financially dependent either. Jordan appears as having the best of both Daisy and Myrtle's worlds.

Whereas Bachelier and Melchior emphasize Daisy's complex situation and Jordan's more androgynous side and sexual freedom, Morton and Fordham's version does not manage

to convey these ideas as well. Daisy's vulnerability and position, which explains her decisions that lead to others' death, is barely insinuated. This takes away from the complexity of her character. Jordan too falls short of expectations as she is reduced to a background character. Unlike in Bachelier and Melchior's adaptation, her being the symbolism of this 1920's new woman is not explored. However, though, both graphic novels manage to reinterpret and visually portray Myrtle's desperation for a better life and her being the victim of social hierarchy and inequality.

### B. Exploring the topic of Nick and Jordan's ambiguous sexuality through visuals techniques

Perhaps one of the biggest illusions found in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is some of the characters' sexual ambiguity. Sexuality is never explicitly discussed in the novel, though hinted at many times. Given the era during which it was written and the changing roles between men and women, it is somewhat surprising that sexuality would not be one of the main themes of the novel. Indeed, as it has been previously discussed, women's behavior changed as they were given more rights and more freedom. They also had to fend for themselves while the men were at war, rendering them more independent when they came back, hence a change in the dynamics between men and women at the time. Women were sexually freer and more adventurous in their sexual endeavors. The end of the war combined with a rejection of the Victorian values that were still inherited from before the Civil War led to a destruction of traditional roles in relationships, which, in turn, led to a certain ambiguity regarding relationships and sexuality, and therefore sexual experimentation. This sexual ambiguity is mainly seen or implied in *The Great Gatsby* through the characters of Nick and Jordan, and it is perhaps through this sexual ambiguity that a relationship between them started and ultimately failed. In this section, it is this sexual ambiguity and the questioning of the gender roles that stems from it that is analyzed in both graphic adaptations.

Jordan Baker is seen as the embodiment of the "New Woman", she is not dependent on any men and is, in fact, financially independent through a successful career in golf. Nick mainly describes her in attributes or traits that would usually be ascribed to men or masculine characters. He insists on her being slender ("slender muscles" (17), "slender golden arm"(32)), jaunty ("there was a jauntiness about her movements" (37), "hard, jaunty body" (42)) and haughty ("broad haughty face" (42)), and also points out her lack of femininity: "She was a

slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet.” (Fitzgerald 2016: 13). However, though her physical traits are described in such terms, Nick’s descriptions of what she is wearing show that she is still in touch with her femininity in the way she dresses. Jordan through Nick’s portrayal of her appears as a very androgynous character which takes after both genders. When it comes to her sexuality, nothing much is said in the novel. It could be interpreted that she has some sort of freedom regarding her sexual endeavors, especially as Tom says of her “They oughtn’t to let her run around the country this way.” (Fitzgerald 2016: 18), but nothing much is said about whether Jordan is interested in men, women, or both. She does go to Gatsby’s party with a man but pays little to no interest to him during that party. To add to that, Nick says of her:

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body. (Fitzgerald 2016: 42)

Where this could be interpreted as Jordan enjoying her freedom and not wanting to be tied down, the fact that Nick mentions her feeling safer where “any divergence from a code would be thought impossible” and her “subterfuges”, could also indicate a certain sexual ambiguity that Jordan would hide as it was not considered as normal at the time, it was not a typical code of conduct. In addition, when Nick sees Jordan one last time before leaving New York, he explains he doubted her when she told him she was engaged to another man. This could also point towards a certain understanding that Nick has of Jordan’s sexuality. This idea is notably reinforced by him saying earlier in the novel that “the broad haughty face that she turned to the world concealed something” (Fitzgerald 2016: 41-42) and that she was dishonest.

In Morton and Fordham’s version of *The Great Gatsby*, there are little textual descriptions of Jordan. She also does not appear as particularly more muscular or more masculine than other female characters portrayed in the book and is rather quite feminine. As such, any reference to a possible sexual ambiguity is not found in this adaptation and her sexuality is never developed further. In Bachelier and Melchior’s adaptation, however, though there are no textual descriptions either, the way she is visually represented shows her more masculine side. Indeed, she is drawn as much more slender, less voluptuous, and more androgynous than other female characters in this version. She has short hair and does not appear to wear any makeup either. Her masculine appearance is even more underlined when she is

drawn wearing a dress that looks like a suit at Gatsby's party. However, unlike in the original novel, when she tells Nick she is engaged, she does not specify whether it is to a man or a woman, leaving room in this version for interpretation.

But perhaps one character that is the most ambiguous when it comes to sexuality is Nick. Nick's sexuality is barely ever mentioned, with him refuting the only time someone links him with someone else. When asked by Daisy and Tom about his supposed engagement with a girl in the West, Nick vehemently denies it, saying it's a libel. Such rejection of the idea, suggesting it is almost defamation of his character could indicate a certain propensity to be interested by men and not women, though this is not explicitly said. If such thing is the case, then maybe it is no coincidence that he would describe Jordan in such masculine terms as it could be her boyish attitude and figure that attracts him to her. Nick mentions being almost in love with her in two instances: "I wasn't actually in love, but I felt a sort of tender curiosity" (Fitzgerald 2016: 41) and "I thought I loved her. But I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires" (Fitzgerald 2016: 42). This really accentuates the fact that Nick is more intrigued by her than he is in love, something about her is appealing to him, and that something could be her androgynous side. In the same way, it could be that Jordan reminds Nick of himself, as he also appears as somewhat a combination of feminine and masculine. In "Sexual Roles in The Great Gatsby" (1979), Thornton explains:

He is the ideal listener, encourager, and sympathizer, the "confidante" not only of Gatsby but also of Daisy, Jordan, Myrtle, even Catherine. Women recognize in him his ability to project and understand the feminine psyche. What they "confess" is inevitably their own moral weakness. He is able to sympathize with their immorality as he too has his indiscretions and his guilt complexes — the Middle Western affair, the office affair, and the unresolved Jordan affair. (Thornton 1979: 466-467)

In this quote, Thornton explains that women are more drawn to Nick because he understands them. This could possibly be because Nick is more in touch with his feminine side than he is his masculine one. His more feminine side is also pointed out by Tom when he implies that he is stronger and "more of a man" (Fitzgerald 2016: 10) than Nick is. Both Jordan and Nick, though, seem to have a certain understanding of one another, and few instances could imply that they knew about each other's situation regarding their sexuality. The first instance is when Nick just met Gatsby at his party: "It was on the tip of my tongue to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled. 'Having a gay time now?' she enquired. 'Much better.' I turned again to my new acquaintance." (Fitzgerald 2016: 35). Though the use of the term "gay" could just be used to describe Nick's improved cheeriness, it could still be seen as an intentional

coincidence to use this word in particular, given the ambiguity surrounding Nick's character. It further appears as much more than a coincidence when it happens when Nick just met Gatsby, a male character. The word "gay" is scarcely used in the novel, only being used five times, each time possibly being both meanings. The second instance where Jordan and Nick seem to know more than they are leading on is the last time they talk, right before Nick leaves New York:

'You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride.'

'I'm thirty,' I said. 'I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honour.' (Fitzgerald 2016: 120)

Jordan questions Nick's sincerity, which goes against what he was saying at the beginning of the novel. The fact that Nick says he is too old to lie to himself right as he decides to leave New York to go back to the West could hint at him leaving to be able to explore his sexuality without the "interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old" (Fitzgerald 2016: 119) of the East.

But Jordan is not the only character that highlights Nick's sexual ambiguity. The first character to do so is Tom. Not only does he imply at being "more of a man" than Nick is, but Nick also seems to have some weird obsession with Tom's masculinity. Indeed, besides implying Tom's lack of intelligence, Nick always describes Tom in terms of his physique, adding to him a bestiality ("gruff husky tenor" (10), "gruffly polite" (71), "savagely" (83), "sturdy physical egotism" (19) ...). Whereas he briefly mentions Jordan's body and describes it in masculine terms, he seems fascinated by Tom's body:

Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body—he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage—a cruel body. (Fitzgerald 2016: 10)

However, and maybe that is why Nick does not take much of a liking to Tom is because Tom represents the typical and traditional embodiment of masculinity, whereas Nick does not. Thornton (1979) explains that Tom "exemplifies [...] redundant masculinity" (459):

Tom is the epitome and the most extended characterization of the Fitz-gerald 'male', the man of action, not of feeling. His first name links him with the traditional masculine associations of 'tomboy' and 'tomcat' as his last name, Buchanan, connotes the masculine

aggression, violence, and corruption of the buccaneers or pirates of an earlier age. (Thornton 1979: 459)

Both his name and description make Tom the embodiment of the manly man in the original novel.

In Morton and Fordham's version, though Tom is drawn as a tall and masculine man, the description Nick makes of him is not included. Therefore, the only hints at his masculinity are done through visuals: he is taller than the other characters, appears as very muscly and is represented as confident. In Bachelier and Melchior's adaptation, a similar thing is done: Tom is represented as highly masculine through how he is drawn, not through a textual description. Because he is drawn as such a masculine character, the idea that he is more masculine than Nick is not lost on the story in both adaptations, however, the dimension in which it could be supposed that Nick's heightened femininity is a reference to his ambiguous sexuality does not transpire through neither of these versions.

Though the idea of Nick having an ambiguous sexuality is not something that has been analyzed by many scholars, the scene that could convince someone of such ambiguity is the scene in which Nick meets Mr. McKee. Indeed, the character of Mr. McKee is one of the most explicit, though it is still very much left to be interpreted as such, moments in which it could be deciphered that Nick is indeed homosexual, or at least bisexual. It is particularly interesting that this is the first and only time Mr. McKee will be mentioned in the novel. It then raises the question? Why add this scene if it has no particular effect on the storyline other than to suggest Nick's homosexuality? Indeed, Nick describes the McKees in very contrasting terms and oppositely to usual gender norms. Mr. McKee is said to be "a pale, feminine man", whereas his wife is said to be "shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible" (Fitzgerald 2016: 24). Already, an aversion to women is apparent here by the way he defines Mr. McKee, and all the other women in this scene, for that matter. Mr. McKee's ambiguous sexuality is also insinuated by Tom when they are discussing his work in the following passage:

Mrs. McKee's pointing suddenly at Catherine: 'Chester, I think you could do something with *her*,' she broke out, but Mr. McKee only nodded in a bored way, and turned his attention to Tom. [...] 'Ask Myrtle,' said Tom, breaking into a short shout of laughter as Mrs. Wilson entered with a tray. 'She'll give you a letter of introduction, won't you, Myrtle?'

'Do what?' she asked, startled.

'You'll give McKee a letter of introduction to your husband, so he can do some studies of him' (Fitzgerald 2016: 26)

Most of the time, sexual ambiguity is mostly apparent through play on words, such as the previously discussed “gay” with a double meaning, or here with this idea of “studying” someone. This passage is interesting because Tom mentions doing some studies on a man when he realizes Mr. McKee is not interested in doing so with Catherine, a woman. Another play on word is later done when Nick and Mr. McKee are in the elevator, leaving the party. To begin with, it seems weird that Nick would leave with Mr. McKee, without the latter inviting him to join him to do so. The scene goes on as follows:

Then Mr. McKee turned and continued on out the door. Taking my hat from the chandelier, I followed.

‘Come to lunch some day,’ he suggested, as we groaned down in the elevator. [...]

‘Keep your hands off the lever,’ snapped the elevator boy.

‘I beg your pardon,’ said Mr. McKee with dignity, ‘I didn’t know I was touching it.’ [...]

... I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hands. (Fitzgerald 2016: 29)

The choice of words for the phrase “groaned down in the elevator”, a sound which is usually associated with sexual pleasure, does not, once again, appear to be chosen by coincidence as it does not make much sense other than the sexual one in this context. To add to this metaphor, the elevator boy tells Mr. McKee to “keep [his] hands off the lever”, which is an image that has often been associated with a sexual act when analyzed in *The Great Gatsby* (cfr. Wasiolek 1992). To conclude the scene, there is a missing part of the evening with no explanations from Nick to the reader, just a sentence placing Nick and McKee in his underwear in the latter’s bedroom, suggesting something sexual happened between them both.

In Morton and Fordham’s *The Great Gatsby: the Graphic Novel*, no description of either Mr. or Mrs. McKee are added. The way they are drawn does not suggest any sort of reversal of gender roles, nor does it hint at a feminine side of Mr. McKee. The scene in the elevator is also excluded from the narrative, though one single panel shows Nick, Mr. McKee and the elevator boy going down (53). By contrast, in Bachelier and Melchior’s adaptation, the layer of sexual ambiguity has been heavily worked on and made explicit. Melchior explained in an interview that he had “attempted to modestly delve into Nick’s homosexual dimension”<sup>40</sup>. Mr. McKee is drawn much more feminine than in the other adaptation; he is slender, is wearing sunglasses

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<sup>40</sup> “J’ai tenté de fouiller avec pudeur la dimension homosexuelle de Nick” (Le Saux, 2013).

and has greyish hair. He is also drawn wearing a green t-shirt, which is a color often associated with envy. This could visually represent Nick’s desire for McKee. Contrary to the original novel, McKee is also not married in this version. He is alone when he is at the party. This takes



Figure 15: page 21 © Gallimard / Bachelier and Melchior, 2013

away the possibility to hide the character of McKee behind his wife and takes away what would be taken as a definite sign that he is not homosexual. More explicitly, this adaptation fills in, in its way, the few hours not narrated by Nick in between leaving the party and being on the side of McKee’s bed by showing Nick and McKee going to his apartment and having sexual intercourse (fig.15). The background of the panels is getting darker, showing that the door is closing, and they are left in the dark. This suggests that they are doing this behind closed doors, it is still done secretly. Nick is also shown in this version having sex with Jordan after the above-mentioned scene, but the narrating speech balloon of the scene emphasizes how this act is more about carnal pleasure than love as Nick says “For a moment I thought I loved her. Then I remembered I was one of the few honest people I know”<sup>41</sup> (27). Finally, the most explicit time this ambiguity is questioned in this version is when Tom, while driving with Jordan and Nick at the back, asks the latter whether or not Gatsby has managed to trick Nick or if it is because they are having sex, then proceeds to say “You’re queer, aren’t you?”<sup>42</sup> (57).

While Morton and Fordham’s adaptation does not include this layer of meaning of sexual ambiguity, Bachelier and Melchior put it forward. The choice to not add such dimension

<sup>41</sup> “Pendant un instant, j’ai cru que je l’aimais. Puis je me suis souvenu que j’étais l’une des rares personnes honnêtes que je connaisse” (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013 : 27).

<sup>42</sup> “Ben quoi ? T’es pédé, non ?” (Bachelier & Melchior-Durand 2013 : 57).

could be due to either a choice to not delve into such topics, or simply because it is still an under-analyzed theme in *The Great Gatsby*. Though Bachelier and Melchior highlight this dimension, there is still this idea of ambiguity: Tom is not entirely sure Nick is gay, and Nick and McKee have sex behind closed doors. This emphasizes the fact that though it is supposed, there is still some mystery around his sexuality kept by Nick as he never answers Tom, nor is his moment with McKee revealed to anyone. Though only one of these adaptations has put forward this theme, this is yet another way to show the multifaceted illusion created by the 1920's.

In the 2010's, sexual ambiguity has become a topic that more people feel free to talk about. As such, it is surprising that Morton and Fordham's version would not dig deeper into this topic. On the other hand, Bachelier and Melchior show that their version is up to date with 21<sup>st</sup> century social issues and topics by once again putting forward symbols and meanings that were not as explicitly discussed in the original. This not only shows a desire to make the original more relevant to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience, but it also reveals how these topics that are still talked about today were already of concern in the 1920's. This also reveals how mentalities regarding such issues have moved forward since a hundred years ago.

## Conclusion

Fitzgerald's novel has long been recognized as a literary classic. As such, it is no surprise that many scholars have analyzed its content through the past hundred years, in concordance with the social debates that were prominent at the time. Three social issues were retained in this dissertation: the symbols behind the novel, and the representations of both ethnic minorities and gender roles. As such, the aim behind this dissertation has been to analyze how debates that animated the critical reception of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in the past hundred years have been reinterpreted in the graphic medium used by Bachelier and Melchior, as well as Morton and Fordham. The focus was on how both these graphic adaptations use their medium and what they bring to the original, as well as how they echo current social issues and concerns. Throughout this dissertation, one of these adaptations, Bachelier and Melchior's, set itself apart by showing a more efficient approach to the reinterpretation of Fitzgerald's original.

Throughout the years, many analyses have noted how colors and characters have proven themselves to be of great importance when it comes to the narrative of Fitzgerald's novel. Because graphic novels are an extremely visual medium, such elements would take an even greater importance than in literary novels. In this sense, Bachelier and Melchior's *Gatsby le Magnifique* stands out against Morton and Fordham's adaptation. The French artists appear to have focused more on visual elements, they have taken advantage of their medium's possibilities and have pushed them to their limits. In a way, the minimalism behind their adaptation, both in terms of drawings and references to the text, has allowed for this version to entirely focus on the narrative quintessence of the original. The change of setting from 1920's New York to 21<sup>st</sup> century China has heightened the symbolism behind the story: by taking the characters away from the context they are intrinsically associated with, the narrative quintessence is of Fitzgerald's novel is made more palpable. Taking *Gatsby* away from the 1920's allows for a deeper understanding of the different meanings that surround the narrative.

By mostly relying on the visual and using the possibilities of their medium, Bachelier and Melchior show more efficiency in the reinterpretation of these different symbolic elements that constitute the story: Dr. T.J. Eckleburg becomes a character that interacts with the others, Daisy's vulnerability is noticeable, the pool becomes an inherent part of the story through multiple visual references to it that forebodes the ending, and the meaning of the green light as

the unattainability of the dream is made more explicit. The French artists play with the different techniques of their medium, such as perspective, frames, colors, and the overall mise en scène of panels, and exploit these techniques to their full potential.

Other topics such as the representation of ethnic minorities also highlights a desire to update the story to contemporary social issues. Indeed, the change of setting led to a change of text as well: the story was updated to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an epoch in which racism and anti-Semitism, though still ideologies that few people carry, are not as relevant. The French artists changed the book referenced by Tom to one that discusses differences between civilizations. Though it is not about a dominant race, there is still this idea of dominance and superiority, but through the social hierarchy. It is a new and more current ideology that is discussed, which places the original novel under a new, more contemporary light. The lack of emphasis on this particular issue thus also portrays how mentalities have changed since 1925 regarding racism and anti-Semitism.

The same thing can be said regarding gender roles: women's roles in 1925 were changing in this post-war climate, which led to women's desire to be freed sexually but also in other aspects of their life. In the novel, Daisy and Jordan both represent aspects of the "New Woman" that emerged in the 1920's: Daisy is still trapped in her conservative role while being tempted by this new woman, while Jordan is the embodiment of this financially and sexually free woman. Bachelier and Melchior's version accentuates Daisy's vulnerability and the complexity of her situation, which makes it easier to understand the character's decision to stay with her husband. This version truly emphasizes how Daisy, though she appears to voluntarily choose money over love, is in fact a victim of her social class where a choice has been made for her. Jordan, on the other hand, truly embodies the new woman in this version. The symbolism behind her character is pushed forward, and her financial and sexual freedom is made explicit. In fact, Jordan and Nick's ambiguous sexuality are put at the forefront through visual elements (clothes, colors, etc.), whereas it was only implicitly referenced in the original. This, once again, shows a desire to make the story more contemporary and discuss more relevant and current social concerns. It is also through this that the change in mentalities in the past hundred years is made apparent.

By contrast, Morton and Fordham's *The Great Gatsby: the Graphic Novel* falls short of expectations. Because it relies too heavily on the text (the incentive behind this adaptation is,

in fact, made clear on the cover by the terms “illustrated” and “text adapted”), it limits them. The adaptation is forced to recreate scenes and becomes stiff and less immersive. The readers are constantly reminded that they are reading an adaptation, from the cover to the numerous “chapter” pages. Because it is restricted by the textual elements and a more traditional layout, this adaptation struggles to carry the original symbols to their visual full potential. Though some of the symbols can still be visually perceived, such as what the green light represents, Gatsby’s duality, or Daisy as trapped in her “angel in the house” role, they are not fully exploited. As such, many of these meanings, by only being alluded to, fail to be conveyed onto the panels.

The same thing can be said regarding the representation of ethnic minorities into this graphic adaptation. Morton and Fordham, because they relied much on the text, were able to carry the sense of racist tendencies throughout their adaptation. The mention of the book and the idea of a dominant race is present, and Tom acts as the embodiment of this Nordic superior race through its physical portrayal, but once again, the adaptation does not fully develop such topic. However, both versions fail in portraying Nick’s own prejudicial tendencies, which contrasts with his self-proclaimed trustworthiness and nonjudgment at the beginning of the story. This is important in the original as it illustrates how Nick’s character is not as reliable as first thought. By not mentioning it, Nick’s credibility is not questioned.

When it comes to gender role representation, here too Morton and Fordham’s adaptation seems to be limited because of the emphasis put on the faithfulness to the original text. The American artists stick with the idea that Daisy is the “angel in the house”, but the lack of emphasis on the complexity of her character makes her lack dimension. As such, she appears as very selfish, and the constraints of her position do not appear as impactful on her decisions as it does in the other adaptation. When it comes to Jordan’s character, here too the symbolism is lost. She is still represented as very feminine and her financial and sexual freedom is barely implied. Because of such under-exploitation, Jordan becomes more of a background character in this version and loses her meaning. As a matter of fact, sexuality is not even explored at all, with innuendos that could be hinting at Nick’s ambiguous sexuality being removed from the narrative altogether.

To conclude, this study has shown that Bachelier and Melchior’s version proves itself to be a more efficient rendering of the story in terms of narrative. In *Adaptation et bande dessinée: Éloge de la fidélité* (2020), Baetens argues that “we only adapt faithfully by agreeing

not to redo the model exactly” (188). Because Bachelier and Melchior distance the story from its original setting, it allows the focus to be put on what is left of the story without its decadent context. Portraying Gatsby without the 1920’s emphasizes the quintessence of the novel, the more cautionary aspect of it and the critique of superficiality that Fitzgerald was trying to convey. The focus is therefore put on the plot and characters’ behaviors in universal meaning. Morton and Fordham, by contrast, seem to want to reach their audience in a didactic fashion, but fail because their adaptation focuses too much on the attitudes and setting of the 1920’s, rather than exploring the symbolism behind Fitzgerald’s novel. Therefore, their version comes across as more of an homage to the original, as some sort of culturally influenced memorabilia of the 1920’s nostalgia that Luhrmann’s 2013 film adaptation brought back. Perhaps such adaptation should be used to introduce the story to a new audience, whereas Bachelier and Melchior’s version would be more appreciated by readers already familiar with the original story. Nonetheless, comparing these two graphic adaptations with the original novel has revealed the possibilities and flaws/failures to go further with a literary text in the graphic form.

Though this dissertation has focused on two adaptations from 2013 and 2020, there is no doubt that more adaptations, both in the graphic medium and in other ones too, will see the light of day, especially as Fitzgerald’s classic is no longer under copyright laws. Because of this, *The Great Gatsby*’s legacy will enter a new age, one in which everything is possible. But what better homage to Fitzgerald than to be borne back ceaselessly into his novel?

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