

Traumatic Film Adaptations: Baz Luhrmann's Cases of 'Cinematic Sublimes': *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

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Abstract: *Departing from the customary approach of trauma studies that identify mainly the pattern of violence and the effects propagated inside the content of the narrative, the present paper regards form rather than content, namely the process of adapting two classic texts, William Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet (1594) and Francis Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby (1925) into two postmodern films by Australian director Baz Luhrmann [*Romeo+Juliet* (1996) and *The Great Gatsby* (2013), respectively]. The transcription of text to screen is mediated by photographic or cinematic processes of selection, inclusion or exclusion, frame composition in the mise en scene, cinematography, editing, sound, as well as the appropriation of theme to an intended audience. Based on Jean-François Lyotard's influential work *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1983), this analysis will concern the relationship between trauma and the differend, which Lyotard does not explicitly link. Turning our attention to the above two postmodern film adaptations, this investigation aims to show – through the concept of 'traumatic sublime' – that the matters of testimony, trauma, and the sublime are not only interdependent but also essential in determining how Luhrmann's films respond, by unconventional mechanisms of adaptation, to the call of the differend when adapting two patterns of 'classic' literature to the big screen.*

Keywords: *trauma vs. differend, cinematic sublime, film adaptation, Baz Luhrmann*