

The Great Gatsby ARNs

Ritoban Roy-Chowdhury

October 29, 2020

Chapter 1

What?

We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored space, fragilely bound into the house by French windows at either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea. (pg. 10)

How?

Fitzgerald has beautiful, vivid descriptions of his settings as he introduces the to the reader. He uses similes and metaphors, “like pale flags” and “wedding-cake of the ceiling”, “making a shadow . . . as wind does on the sea” so the reader can perfectly visualize the setting. The comparisons are well-fitted to the characterization he’s creating. The Buchanan’s are a wealthy aristocratic family, and by invoking “flags”, like medieval noble families, a “wedding-cake”, a distinct symbol of wealth; the “wine” in the “wine-colored rug” is also associated with wealth.

Why?

This quote is characterizing the Buchanan family (Daisy and Tom) household, who are shown to be wealthy. They, in West Egg, are more traditional and are contrasted with the new aristocracy of East Egg. The vivid description build up the image of “old wealth”.

Chapter 2

What?

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight. (pg. 28)

How?

- Polysyndeton, “houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, . . . of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air”

- “gives out a ghastly creak and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spaces and stir up an impenetrable cloud”, repeating and.
- Personification “ashes grow like wheat”, “ashes take the forms . . . of men”
- Hyperbole, they’re not literal ashes, it’s a metaphor for how desolate the area is. Calling it a “valley of ashes” is hyperbole.

Why?

This is the drive between the wealth and opulence of West Egg and Gatsby, and the business center of New York, for which Nick came to the East in the first place. It’s a commentary on how the wealth around the area relies on and effectively exploits the region, neglecting it and allowing it to fall into dereliction and disrepair. Gatsby and the rest often drive through this area on their cars (which are themselves symbols of wealth and the American dream), but they ignore it as much as possible.

Chapter 3 No. 1

There was music from my neighbor’s house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went **like moths** among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before. (pg. 47)

How?

- Simile: People attending Gatsby’s party are compared to moths, his station wagon “scampered like a . . . bug”.
- Imagery/Loaded Language: “cataracts of foam”, “scampered”
 - The servants “toiled all day” to fix the “ravages”

Why?

This characterizes Gatsby and his parties. We’ve already met the old money of Tom and Daisy, with their flags and large estates, now, Gatsby shows much of the same superficiality and materialistic lifestyle. Fitzgerald shows that while the two styles of wealth are distinct, they both share many crucial characteristics – exploitation and oppression of servants, obsession with materialism. Additionally, this section establishes the car, Gatsby’s Rolls-Royce, as a symbol for the American Dream and social mobility, that continues to be used throughout the story.

Chapter 3 No. 2

With Jordan’s slender golden arm resting in mine, we descended the steps and sauntered about the garden. A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight, and we sat down at a table with the two girls in yellow and three men, each one introduced to us as Mr. Mumble. (pg. 52)

How/why?

- Diction
 - “slender golden arm” – gold is often used throughout the story to symbolize wealth. This is also hyperbole, as Jordan’s arm is not literally gold. It’s a reference to the sheer opulence and ostentation present in the wealth.

- “sauntered about the garden” – the word “sauntered” evokes a sense of privilege and confidence, further building up the atmosphere of wealth Fitzgerald is trying to create.
- “a tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight” – the word “floated” suggests that the servants doing the carrying are invisible, once again, contributing to the aura of wealth and mystique that surrounds this party.

Chapter 4

With fenders spread like wings we, scattered light through half Astoria—only half, for as we twisted among the pillars of the elevated I heard the familiar “jug-jug-spatr” of a motorcycle, and a frantic policeman rode alongside.

“All right, old sport,” called Gatsby. We slowed down. Taking a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man’s eyes.

“Right you are,” agreed the policeman, tipping his cap. “Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse me!”

“What was that?” I inquired. “The picture of Oxford?”

“I was able to do the commissioner a favor once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year.”

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.

How?

- Simile – fenders compared to wings
- Diction
 - “scattered light” – creates a tone of gradiosity and beauty
 - “sunlight through the girders” – Imagery, almost feels like the sun is rising behind New York.
 - “white heaps and sugar lumps” – the sugar symbolizes wealth, but this is yet again, a different kind of wealth.

Why?

Gatsby’s flying through the city is almost surreal, almost Godly. This is further reinforced when we find out he’s basically above the law. And yet, the immorality of the actions is striking – he’s basically bribed the police officer, after seemingly lying about going to Oxford. Gatsby, recounting his life story fulfilling the American dream of rags to riches, while flying along in a car, which is a symbol of the dream through the book.

Chapter 5

He literally glowed; without a word or a gesture of exultation a new well-being radiated from him and filled the little room.

“Oh, hello old sport,” he said, as if he hadn’t seen me for years. I thought for a moment he was going to shake hands.

“It’s stopped raining.”

“Has it?” When he realized what I was talking about, that there were twinkle-bells of sunshine in the room, he smiled like a weather man, like an ecstatic patron of recurrent light, and repeated the news to Daisy. “What do you think of that? It’s stopped raining.”

“I’m glad, Jay.” Her throat, full of aching, grieving beauty, told only of her unexpected joy.

How?

- Diction
 - “literally glowed”, “radiated” – Gatsby has now been reborn, he’s a completely new person
 - Positive mood: “twinkle-bells of sunshine”, “unexpected joy”

Why?

The rain has ended, and the sun has come out. Gatsby and Daisy have repaired their relationship, and everything seems to be going well. Instead of merely saying “Gatsby was ecstatic”, Fitzgerald uses the environment to set the mood to better illustrate the happiness that Gatsby and Daisy have arrived at.

Chapter 5 No. 2

Instead of taking the short cut along the Sound we went down to the road and entered by the big postern. With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, admired the gardens, the sparkling odor of jonquils and the frothy odor of hawthorn and plum blossoms and the pale gold odor of kiss-me-at-the-gate. It was strange to reach the marble steps and find no stir of bright dresses in and out of the door, and hear no sound but bird voices in the trees.

How/Why?

- Imagery
 - “enchanting murmurs” – Fitzgerald shows how Nick is keeping his distance (cause he’s third-wheeling hard), but also conveys the Daisy walking the line between constant adulation Gatsby and the “prim and proper” image she’s expected to create.
 - “feudal silhouette” – Gatsby’s mansion makes a “feudal silhouette”. The new wealth of Gatsby really isn’t that different from the feudal lords of before. The idea that wealth, inherently, is corrupt and oppressive is a running theme throughout the book, and it’s reflected in the word choice here.
- Symbolism
 - Gold has often been used as a reference to money, and this time, it refers to a “pale gold odor”. That’s again, not literally true, it’s hyperbole, but it establishes the tone, and suggests that Daisy is really just attracted to Gatsby’s wealth.

Chapter 6

An instinct toward his future glory had led him, some months before, to the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf’s in southern Minnesota. He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor’s work with which he was to pay his way through. Then he drifted back to Lake Superior, and he was still searching for something to do on the day that Dan Cody’s yacht dropped anchor in the shallows alongshore.

How?

- Word choice
 - “dismayed at its ferocious indifference”. Ferocious indifference is a paradox, an oxymoron, emphasizing just how ridiculous Gatsby felt his station is.
 - But in contrast, words like “drifted” and “still searching” imply Gatsby didn’t really have any strong feelings about his future career

- “drums of his destiny” is a really interesting metaphor that really illustrates Gatsby’s perception of himself.

Why?

- Fitzgerald demonstrates Gatsby to be a pompous, arrogant young man. You could even call him supercilious, which Nick called Tom. This is also once again, another instance of Nick breaking his contract to reserve judgement.
- The “despising the janitor’s work” hints at the underlying theme of class conflict in the story. Unsurprisingly, the rich are contemptuous of those whose work they rely on.

Chapter 6 No. 2

Tom was evidently perturbed at Daisy’s running around alone, for on the following Saturday night he came with her to Gatsby’s party. Perhaps his presence gave the evening its peculiar quality of oppressiveness—it stands out in my memory from Gatsby’s other parties that summer. There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-colored, many-keyed commotion, but I felt an unpleasantness in the air, a pervading harshness that hadn’t been there before. Or perhaps I had merely grown used to it, grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself, with its own standards and its own great figures, second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so, and now I was looking at it again, through Daisy’s eyes. It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment.

How?

- Word choice
 - “perturbed”
 - “peculiar quality of oppressiveness”
- Asyndeton and anaphora
 - same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-colored, many-keyed commotion,
 - repeating “the same”
- Cumulative sentences
 - Or perhaps I had merely grown used to it, grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself, with its own standards and its own great figures, second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so, and now I was looking at it again, through Daisy’s eyes.
 - Each subordinate clause builds on the idea, that Nick has become accustomed to Gatsby’s parties, and slowly builds up to the idea that he’s looking at it “through Daisy’s eyes”.

Why?

Nick has finally come to realize how Daisy felt in the party. No longer flustered by Gatsby’s splendor, seeing it as a “commotion” with “unpleasantness in the air”. This is a result of Tom being present, and Nick, as was established pretty early on, doesn’t like Tom being there. Nick starts to empathize with Daisy, being stuck in an awkward situation with Tom pulling her on one side, and Gatsby pulling her the other way.

Chapter 7

The next day was broiling, almost the last, certainly the warmest, of the summer. As my train emerged from the tunnel into sunlight, only the hot whistles of the National Biscuit Company broke the simmering hush at noon. The straw seats of the car hovered on the edge of combustion; the woman next to me perspired delicately for a while into her white shirtwaist, and then, as her

newspaper dampened under her fingers, lapsed despairingly into deep heat with a desolate cry. Her pocket-book slapped to the floor.

How/Why?

- Loaded language
 - Constantly repeating words associated with heat, “hot whistles”, “simmering”, “noon”, “combustion”, “perspired”, “dampened”, “deep heat”, “desolate cry”
 - Heat becomes a symbol for the conflict between Tom and Gatsby. Daisy repeatedly says she feels the heat as she tries to put off the inevitable conflict.

Chapter 7

Her voice is full of money,” he said suddenly.

That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it. . . . High in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl. . . .

How?

- “inexhaustible charm” – word choice, conveys just how omnipresent money is, how it completely dominates their lives
- Imagery
 - “jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it” – Fitzgerald makes us hear the sounds of money chiming to bring the idea home

Why?

- This is Nick’s biggest realization. Gatsby and Daisy really only want each other because of their money! They’re not attracted to each other, they’re attracted to each others money. The entire reason why Gatsby has spent his entire life is to win Daisy’s affection, and the only way to do that was to become wealthy.

Chapter 8

The “death car” as the newspapers called it, didn’t stop; it came out of the gathering darkness, wavered tragically for a moment, and then disappeared around the next bend. Michaelis wasn’t even sure of its color—he told the first policeman that it was light green. The other car, the one going toward New York, came to rest a hundred yards beyond, and its driver hurried back to where Myrtle Wilson, her life violently extinguished, knelt in the road and mingled her thick dark blood with the dust.

How/Why?

- Imagery – “gathering darkness”. Why is the darkness gathering, around a *car*?
 - When it “wavers tragically” – not only is that the death that literally happened, but also alluding to Gatsby and Daisy’s relationship, which tragically existed for a short period of time, but then rapidly fell apart.
 - This also plays into the larger theme of the novel, with the wealthy completely neglecting the “valley of ashes” between East/West Egg and New York, speeding through it on their cars. They’ve achieved the American dream, they have cars now, they don’t need to stop for the poor ashen folk in between!

Chapter 9

After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction. So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line I decided to come back home.

How/Why?

- Nick presents himself as the victim, as someone who merely observed the events and was negatively affected.
- Fitzgerald continues with this consistently stellar imagery, additionally using alliteration here. "blue smoke of brittle leaves" and "wind blew the wet".