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GOING WITH THE FLOW: REFLECTIONS OF WATER IN THE GREAT GATSBY

TIIVISTELMÄ

Marjo Pajunen: Going with the Flow: Reflections of Water in *The Great Gatsby*
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Pro Gradu-tutkielmani tarkastelee vesisymboliikkaa F. Scott Fitzgeraldin romaanissa *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Tutkimuskohteenani on veden merkitys romaanissa: kuinka vesi ilmentää romaanin teemoja ja miten se liittyy päähenkilö Gatsbyn hahmoon.

Vesi on alati muuttuva elementti; vesi sataa maahan, se virtaa merissä ja järvissä ja haihtuu ilmaan. Seitsemänkymmentäyksiprosenttisesti vedestä koostuva ihminen on itsekin osa veden kiertokulkua. Tästä syystä vesi on yksi merkittävimmistä kirjallisuuden symboleista. Vesi ei kuitenkaan ole yksiselitteinen symboli, sen tulkinta on aina sidoksissa kontekstiin.

The Great Gatsby – romaani on suurimmaksi osaksi vettä. Kirjan näennäisesti yksinkertaisen juonen alla virtaa paljon vesisymboliikkaa sekä pohdintoja amerikkalaisen unelman vaikeudesta; loistavasta tulevaisuudesta, joka tavoittelu tuo pettymyksiä. Liki satavuotiasta klassikkoromaania on analysoitu ja tutkittu lukuisista eri näkökulmista vuosikymmenten saatossa. Suurimmaksi kysymykseksi on noussut Gatsbyn kiistanalainen hahmo. Romaanin nimihenkilö jää etäiseksi ja arvoitukselliseksi. Tutkielmassani esitän vastausten Gatsbyn hahmoon löytyvän pinnan alta; Gatsbyn elinkaari seuraa veden kiertokulua, ja veden eri ilmentyvät heijastavat Gatsbyn unelmien toteumista ja pettymyksiä.

Gatsby-romaanissa esiintyvät vesisymbolit ovat monimerkityksellisiä.

Vesi on parhaimmallaan virtaavana ja raikkaana. Virtaava vesi kuljettaa tarinaa; unelmat ovat toteutumaisillaan, kunnes paikallaan seisova vesi peilitynellä lahdella tekee unelmat tyhjiksi. Liike on olennainen osa mielikuvitusta, sillä ajatusten virta pitää unelmat liikkeessä. Lumeksi jäänyt vesi kuvastaa unelmien muuttumista muistoiksi. Liike ja alituinen muutos on vedelle luontaista. Gatsby syntyy ja kuolee veden mukana. Vesi muuttaa muotoaan, muttei katoa. Todellisuus kuivuu ja katoaa, mutta unelmat jatkavat kulkuaan veden mukana.

Avainsanat: The Great Gatsby-romaani, vesisymbolit, unelmat, todellisuus, illuusiot

Abstract

Water is the most prominent element in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*: the characters and the plot are deeply intertwined with water in the novel. In this thesis we will explore certain water scenes of the novel and analyze how water reflects the story in *The Great Gatsby*. Firstly, we will study water symbolism. Secondly, we will focus on different stages of water such as mist and snow. Also, attention will be paid to the contrast of flowing water and stagnant water. In addition to that, we are interested in the environments in which water occurs, both natural and artificial, such as the sea, lake, swimming pool and bath tube.

The classic novel has been analyzed thoroughly throughout the past decades. The most controversial topic is the main character's, Gatsby's persona. It is argued that Gatsby's watery character remains vague. Typically, his person is considered to be illusional and less real than the other characters. This thesis argues that the vagueness of Gatsby's watery character is Gatsby's strength. This argument challenges the reality and dreams in the novel; the cycle of water is eternal, whereas solid things melt away.

Key words: *The Great Gatsby*, water symbolism, narrative pace, dreams, reality, illusions

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Introduction: *The Great Gatsby* Below the Surface

“I want to write something new - something extraordinary and beautiful and simple + intricately patterned.” F. Scott Fitzgerald announced his idea for *The Great Gatsby* to Maxwell Perkins, his editor in a letter in 1922 (Turnbull, 2011, p. 182). With *Gatsby*, published in 1925, Fitzgerald definitely hit the right keys. Almost a hundred years-old American classic novel has fascinated readers and scholars all over the world throughout the decades. The seemingly simple plot depicts the summer of 1922 on Long Island where the narrator rents a house next to the mysterious protagonist Jay Gatsby. The novel balancing between future and past embodies timeless themes ranging from the difficulty of the American dream; from money and corruption to love and innocence. And underneath that runs a lot of water.

Nearly a century after its publication, the novel continues to inspire new generations. Consequently, there are countless papers, articles and thesis written on *The Great Gatsby* in different decades. The bibliography of this thesis offers an example: the oldest source book used in this thesis, *New Essays on The Great Gatsby* (Bruccoli, 1985) was published over 30 years ago, whereas the most recent source, *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel*, was published in 2014 (Batchelor). At first glance it seems that the novel has been investigated and analyzed thoroughly. For example, the themes of *New Essays* vary from the values of American culture, illusions, and dreams to the cadences of language in *The Great Gatsby*.

In this thesis I argue that by studying the main characters' involvedness with water we can find deeper layers in the novel. *Gatsby* is a complex novel indeed, and despite numerous detailed and minute analyses, the biggest dilemma of the story, the controversial persona of the main character, remains vague. Gatsby is an unusual protagonist, so little is revealed of him. However, his obscure persona is significant as Gatsby embodies the mystery of the novel, and that is why Gatsby's character has gained a lot of attention. Interpretations of the protagonist vary from “Jesus Christ” (Dilworth, 2010, p. 119) to “the major literary character of the United States” (Batchelor, 2014, p. 5). Bob Batchelor points out that Gatsby “is almost ghostlike in his physical manifestation, always somewhat illusory as he flows above the novel's other players cast upward by the power of his dream” (2014, p. 4). It is true that Gatsby's ghostly appearances tend to raise questions more than giving any answers. I insist that even though Gatsby's character has drawn

scholars' attention, his persona has also been misunderstood. Occasionally, Gatsby's vagueness is taken for his weakness. Batchelor, for one, compares one of the main characters, Tom Buchanan, to Gatsby: "In contrast to Gatsby, Tom wears no mask. As a result, he seems a more 'real' figure (..) (2014, p. 251). Tom might seem more real than Gatsby, yet, this thesis argues that the situation is quite the opposite. In this paper I will pay attention to how imaginary and real are represented in *The Great Gatsby*. I argue that all those more 'real' characters and things in the novel represent only illusions.

Is there anything 'real' in *The Great Gatsby*? I believe that the answers to that question are to be found in water. Water is a crucial element for humans; we are naturally connected to it as our bodies consist mostly of water. Without water there is no life. Therefore, water is a special element in literature, too. In *The Great Gatsby* water scenes have a special role as they embody dreams and illusions in the novel. Water is Gatsby's element and his power. When studying water symbols, we must remember that water is not one, concordant element. There are different forms of water; it can be fluid, frozen or mist. It is also noticeable that one watery phenomenon, such as rain, can have very different connotations in the novel. Furthermore, my thesis observes that movement is natural to water. Water is constantly moving. However, when water stops moving, it has dramatic consequences for the narrative. Dead calm, literally, represents death: either physical or ideological. Different forms of water, such as snow and mist, represent different stages of the water cycle. A snowflake stands for frozen, unmoving water, symbolically an end of dreams. Mist is a very fragile representation of a dream as it is about to vanish in the air. These manifestations of water can be read as signs that predict the forthcoming events in the story. The movement of water has an impact on the narrative pace and on the narration.

All in all, water serves as a mirror for the story. Water scenes reveal fascinating glimpses of Gatsby's controversial persona, and they also offer interesting viewpoints on some of the major themes in the novel. The missing pieces of the story in *The Great Gatsby* lie below the surface. Thus, this thesis seeks to investigate how closely water is intertwined with dreams, illusions and Gatsby himself. The other characters do not have access to water on their own, water is something that Gatsby offers. Gatsby represents a different element; he is not a man, but he is a representation of dreams and imagination that is connected to the eternal movement of water.

Chapter 2: Reading Water

“All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath” (Turnbull, 2011 p. 117). This famous quote is from F Scott Fitzgerald’s letter as he gave a piece of advice on writing to his daughter, Scottie. The ambiguous statement can be interpreted in many ways, but the line arguably reveals the essence of creativity and its power over the writer in the writing process. The writer’s role is active like “swimming” and passive like “holding your breath” at the same time. Creativity is an unmanageable process and it flows like water. Thus, the quote brings us very close to *The Great Gatsby*. As the novel is deeply intertwined with water, in order to understand *The Great Gatsby*, we need to study a series of water symbols.

Reading water can be compared to reading a novel; there are different layers or currents in the story and typically the most essential parts are hidden. *The Great Gatsby* is no exception; the seemingly simple plot embodies complex themes. There are different types of currents in the novel; both visible and invisible. Edgar Allan Poe discusses the phenomenon of “upper current” and “under current” in poetry. In *Fleeting, Floating, Flowing*, Helena Buescu explains Poe’s idea: “Narrated events themselves form the substance of an “upper current” of meaning, there is also an “under current” consisting of layers of meaning that are not directly articulated, but nevertheless present in the lyrical self’s discourse: memories, sentiments and associations” (2008 p. 32-33). Gatsby’s well-known representation of the “under current” are the famous last lines of the novel: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (1925, p. 172). The sentence embodies one of the novel’s main themes, longing for the past. Gatsby’s future is built on his memories, dreams and imagination. The extract serves a textbook example of the different types of currents, and of course it is an interesting detail that the word “current” is mentioned. In the example the “under current” represents the whole story summarized in one sentence: the impossibility of living in the past. The visible one, the “upper current” is water flowing “into the past”. Interestingly, “into the past” suggests flowing in the wrong direction as one might assume that the metaphorical boat’s natural drift would be moving on towards the future. Therefore, the contradiction between the “upper current” and the “under current”, the water flowing in the wrong direction and the past representing future for Gatsby, creates tension in the sentence. The last sentence captures the tension of the entire novel.

Water Symbols

Water is an original element. Life begins in the water: where there's life, there's water. Humans have a natural connection to water. It is no coincidence that every human is a part of planet ocean, as 71 per cent of the human body consists of salty water, just as 71 per cent of the earth is covered by water (Deloughery, 2017, p. 32). Elisabeth Deloughery cites Jacques Cousteau's words in her book entitled *Routes and Roots*: "our flesh is composed of myriads of cells, each one of which contains a miniature ocean" (2007 p. 21). Hence, sweat and tears represent water, too. Therefore, it is no surprise that water connections run deep in the human unconscious. Water is present in dreams, imagination, and emotions (Lehtimäki, Meretoja, Rosenholm, 2018, p. 12). Markku Lehtimäki argues that water is one of the most constructive elements in literature, suggesting that water can symbolize different things depending on how it is used in a text. Therefore, water symbols are too interesting to be ignored (2018, p. 163). One must notice that water is not one element. There are different types of water; rivers flow, symbolically move forward, whereas oceans can be read as mysterious bodies of water that may represent obstacles or conquests. The ocean is powerful. Markku Salmela remarks on the power of the sea: all life originated in the sea, but there is also the element of danger involved; possibilities of death (2018, p. 41). Typically, rain represents cleansing and new beginnings. Constantly changing water is unmanageable (Lehtimäki, Meretoja, Rosenholm 2018, p. 15). Water connects people, and it offers new adventures. But it may also separate people and cause catastrophes. The deep sea hides the unknown; something that is lying beneath the surface. There is a contradiction; water is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

A single water symbol may have multiple meanings, even in the same story. Lehtimäki observes that the same water symbol may have both positive and negative connotations in each text depending on the context in question (2018, p. 171). In *The Great Gatsby* water plays different roles. Rain, for instance, offers a good example of how water creates different atmospheres in two significant scenes of the novel. In the first rainy scene Gatsby reunites with his lover Daisy after five years on a rainy summer day. In the scene, rain symbolizes refreshment, purification and a new beginning. After the rain stops, Gatsby invites Daisy to his house, symbolically to his life.

He smiled like a weatherman, like an ecstatic patron of recurrent light, and repeated the news to Daisy. 'What do you think of that? It's stopped raining'. (1925, p. 86)

Interestingly Gatsby is called "weatherman" and "ecstatic patron". The expressions suggest that Gatsby can manage an unmanageable element, the rain. The idea gives Gatsby hope and hope is certainly needed as dreams are always built on unmanageable elements. In the scene Gatsby's reaction is relief; rain has a cleansing effect as it washes away his fears. However, the same water symbol creates a very different atmosphere at Gatsby's funeral. Before the funeral, the narrator notices the sky is turning dark as he returns to his home in a drizzle. At Gatsby's funeral it is pouring.

About five o'clock our procession of three cars reached the cemetery and stopped in a thick drizzle beside the gate—first a motor hearse, horribly black and wet, then Mr. Gatz and the minister and I in the limousine, and, a little later, four or five servants and the postman from West Egg in Gatsby's station wagon, all wet to the skin. (1925 p. 165)

In the scene Gatsby is gone, and all there is left is the pouring rain. This time it is not refreshing summer rain. On the contrary, the heavy rain has very negative connotations. There is a clear contrast between the two rainy scenes: a clear, sunny summer day and a gloomy autumn afternoon. If the refreshing rain washed away the fears in the first scene, in the funeral scene Gatsby himself is washed away by the heavy rain. There are some negative signs in the passage such as "dark" and "drizzle". In the funeral scene the scenery becomes even more sinister as "horribly black and wet" and "thick drizzle" reveal. It is noticeable that everyone in the scene is "wet to the skin". Like a tragedy, rain holds the scene, and no-one can escape from it. The rain ends Gatsby's story, but as a matter of fact, Gatsby dies twice. In the extract above Gatsby's body is buried in the heavy rain. But the actual death occurs in the pool in an earlier scene. First, Gatsby drowns in the water, symbolically his spirit and dreams are washed away by water. Later, when his body is buried, the heavy rain controls the funeral scene. Like Gatsby's birth, his death is also a part of the circle of water.

The extracts above show us the influence the water symbols have on the text. Water is like another language in literature. Due to its familiarity, water provides great metaphors for a writer to transmit emotions and ambiance to the reader. However, water language cannot be read like letters or words. As Monika Schmitz-Emans writes on water in literature: "Nobody will ever be able to perceive *all* potential meanings or even to lay hold of any certain or definite meaning"

(2008, p. 45). Schitz-Emans takes the sea as an example; waves roll on the shore in incessant succession, but there is no division between one wave and another (2008, p. 45). Margaret Cohen considers the open sea as “empty elements to be filled with the viewer’s imagination” (2010, p. 119). Margaret Cohen argues that typically there are information gaps in the text that offer an important opportunity for the reader’s interpretation. According to Cohen they let the reader “enter into the text, forming his own connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he is reading” (Cohen, 2010, p. 80). By filling the gaps, the reader creates his own interpretation of the story, thus the gaps enable the reader to have a dialogue with the writer. Water symbols help the reader to have a personal connection to the text as the reader is familiar with them. This phenomenon can be described as ‘telepathy’. In order that the text lives in both writer’s and reader’s mind, some type of mind reading is involved between both participants in water writing and reading. What is not written is equally important as what is written.

Chronotopes

Water symbols can also be studied as chronotopes. In *The Chronotopes of the Sea* Margaret Cohen divides different types of water into categories according to their colour (2006, p. 649). Cohen states that the poetic function of the seas, rivers and coasts in prose fiction is “narrative - to help advance the action – as well as to convey theme and content” (2006, p. 647). The scene in which Gatsby was born in “the most insidious flat on Lake Superior”, represents a chronotope of white water according to Cohen (2006, p. 656). The name *Superior* also figures white water aptly as Cohen remarks that it symbolizes the “conception of the sublime” (2006, p. 658). Cohen remarks: “White water is not only a dangerous space but a dangerous time, a representation of time of crises” (2006, p. 658). The whiteness of this type of water traverses from white crests of waves and white foam to fog. Fog is intertwined with Gatsby’s death; a night before Gatsby dies, fog surrounds the sea.

I couldn’t sleep all night; a foghorn was groaning incessantly on the Sound, and I tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams. (1925, p. 140)

In the example the foghorn can be read as a warning sign. Additionally, the narrator’s nightmares suggest that something dangerous is about to happen. White water is significant in Gatsby’s story,

which discusses the questions of morality: “White is beyond morality, just as it demands an ethos of action beyond a black-and-white notion of good and bad” (2006, p. 657). The contrast between good and bad, right and wrong is figured in the scene, in which Gatsby is “peering toward the bleared windows from time to time as if a series of invisible but alarming happenings were taking place outside” (1925, p. 82). Gatsby is waiting for Daisy. His intention to have a romantic relationship with a married woman is not morally right. However, Daisy is his true love.

Blue water, such as the sea, typically symbolizes open ocean adventures. In blue water violent surprises may occur. “On blue water, individual characters test their agency” as blue water is “the realm of the open ocean containing immense and violent powers” (2006, p. 650). Blue water is described as “zones beyond the control of sovereign and law” (2006, p. 650). The sea water between East Egg and West Egg represents blue water in *The Great Gatsby*. Firstly, Long Island represents a dream that once was approachable after a long and challenging sea voyage: “I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailor’s eyes” (1925, p. 171). Secondly, blue water tests the protagonist’s survival skill. Cohen argues that the poetic function of blue water is to affirm the protagonist’s stability; the character’s virtue is his resistance to change, “no matter what the situation” (2006, p. 654). Indeed, Gatsby refuses to change, he wants to recreate the past. Also, the narrative suggests that Gatsby’s business takes place in a “zone beyond the law”, which adds the elements of blue water to the novel.

Another important zone in Gatsby’s story is the seashore. Cohen sees the shore as a social place, a contact zone where different people meet (2006, p. 661). The borders of the shore are typically vague. Gatsby’s mansion is located at West Egg, by the sea. His lavish garden parties bring people together from both sides of the bay, the wealthy and fashionable East Egg people and more modest West Egg residents. Cohen specifies that “the shore is a place where boundaries are tested, only to be reaffirmed rather than dissolved” (2006, p. 661). This is the case for Gatsby’s parties; even though they bring different people together, the order of the social classes remains. That becomes clear in the scene in which Daisy, an upper-class character, finds Gatsby’s celebration vulgar, and because of her remark Gatsby gives up his parties. The parties mingle people together but only apparently and temporarily.

Flowing Water

The most prominent feature of water is movement. Water is constantly moving and changing its shape. It is intangible and sometimes invisible, but it is everywhere. Water rains on the Earth, it flows in rivers, moves in streams and currents in lakes and becomes a part of tidal movements in the oceans. Eventually water evaporates into the air to fall on the Earth again. The natural flow of water is significant in literature, too. Arja Rosenholm (2018, p. 15) argues that flowing water changes characters. This is an interesting argument when we look at the protagonist's, James Gatz's transformation to the Great Gatsby. In the scene in which the character was born, James Gatz rows a boat to a millionaire's yacht. When he reaches the yacht, he is already a different man with a different name. He becomes Jay Gatsby in Lake Superior. The name "superior" gives Gatsby's character a noble element. Gatsby is an improved version of James Gatz. However, the particular flat on Lake Superior is described to be "the most insidious". The word choice figures the flat dangerous waters. That is Gatsby's world; adventurous and deceitful. Boats float on water, but water also hides dangers below the surface. Like water, Gatsby's character is constantly changing. Once born in dangerous, yet sublime waters, Gatsby dies in an artificial body of water, in a swimming pool.

There was a faint, barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other. [...] A gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of compass, a thin red circle in the water. (1925, p. 154)

There is a clear contrast between water flowing freely in a big lake and "barely perceptible movement of the water" in a pool. Movement is an important factor in Gatsby's character, which is created by imagination. Some similarities can be seen between water and Imagination; they are both intangible and moveable. Imagination is fuel to dreams, and once it stops moving, dreams die. Therefore, the expression: "the fresh flow from one end urged its way" can be read as the dreamer's death. There is not enough room in the pool: "a red, thin circle in the water", in other words all that is left of Gatsby, must flow towards the drain as the fresh flow urges its way. Interestingly, Gatsby's blood forms a circle, which symbolizes his spirit, his "extraordinary gift for

hope" (1925, p. 8). A circle has no beginning, no end. It can be seen as a metaphor for eternity, it emphasizes Gatsby's character as a part of the circulation of water.

In this chapter we have studied the water symbols, its chronotopes and movement. In the next chapter, I will discuss in what direction does water flow in *The Great Gatsby*.

Chapter 3: Writing Water

“One of the papers said they thought the rain would stop about four” (1925, p. 82). Gatsby’s hopeful remark embodies a tension in the novel; when elements such as time and rain are unmanageable, Gatsby jumps at all there is left – that is hope. In the scene Gatsby has finally managed to have enough courage to invite Daisy for a tea. The meeting takes place in the narrator’s, Nick Carraway’s house. Gatsby is a nervous wreck as he has waited for this opportunity for years. In the meantime, he has created his fortune and bought his splendid mansion. But the rain is not the only obstacle. For Gatsby’s dream to come true, all the unmanageable elements must be aligned. Since he cannot control time, weather, or Daisy’s emotions, Gatsby goes back in time, he continues to live in his memories and builds his future on them. Gatsby is a complex dreamer as Fitzgerald’s first description of the protagonist’s persona show:

If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. (1925, p. 8)

In the extract Gatsby’s personality is compared to an intricate machine that can register unmanageable events far away. The words “heightened sensibility” suggest that just like the machines register earthquakes, Gatsby’s character registers the movements in his environment as he reflects the values of the society, superficial relationships and social climbing versus true love and integrity. That is why the protagonist’s persona is less tangible than other characters’, Gatsby is fluid like flowing water. As a matter of fact, water is also included in that description; earthquakes make water levels rise, thus water is included in the first introduction of Gatsby’s persona. Earthquakes are dangerous and unpredictable. If we think about Gatsby’s story as a water cycle, the fact that the very first description of Gatsby includes an earthquake warning, suggests that his character is in the danger zone at the very beginning. The expression “promises of life” illustrates that Gatsby’s bright future is a product of his own imagination. But unlike the fine machines, Gatsby is unable, or better unwilling, to react to ever changing situations that may threaten his dream. He lives in his own world. He is inspired by the past and refuses to go on with the flow. Going stubbornly against the current eventually destroys Gatsby.

Narrative Pace

The extract above also offers a good example of Fitzgerald's narrative style; his long and winding sentences and his ability to draw unusual connections. The sentence in question includes many commas. The extract starts with personality and ends up in an entirely different situation, including earthquakes and machines. The element of surprise is typical of Fitzgerald's writing technique; unpredictable and totally different ideas are introduced in one sentence. Surprises reward the reader as after reading one sentence the reader finds himself in an unexpected place with new ideas. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan writes on acceleration and deceleration in narration: "The effect of acceleration is produced by devoting a short segment of the text to a long period of the story, relative to the "norm" established for this text. The effect of deceleration is produced by the opposite procedure, namely devoting a long segment of the text to a short period of the story" (1983 p. 53- 54).

The narrative pace in the novel is directed by Nick Carraway, the first-person narrator. Carraway is the type of a narrator, who according to James Phelan, represents "the narrating I, who is available to readers, who tells the autobiographical narrative and whose voices may be multiple" (2005 p. 68). Occasionally Carraway addresses the reader:

Reading over what I've written so far, I see I have given the impression that the events of three several weeks apart were all that absorbed me. (1925, p. 56)

As a narrator, Carraway shares the pages between his own history and Gatsby's tale. Among many other critics, George Garrett points out, that as a matter of fact, Gatsby's tale is Nick Carraway's own story (1985, p. 108). The summer represents an important period in the narrator's own life: Carraway is a young man looking for direction for his life. He starts a new career in the bond business, but his business remains equally indefinite as Gatsby's source of wealth; another character, Tom Buchanan, has never heard of the companies the narrator does business with. And like Gatsby, Carraway loses in the game of love. After Gatsby's death the narrator returns home. Garrett suggests that "Yet the main thing that happens to Carraway, from the reader's point of view, is his fascination and involvement with his neighbor – Gatsby" (1985, p. 109). The suggestion, that the narrator is living two lives at the same time, makes Carraway an ambiguous character, too, and it adds layers to the story. This autobiographical aspect of the narrator plays an important role in the narrative pace. The acceleration in narration takes place in the Gatsby

scenes. Time seems to fly in Gatsby's life. For instance, it takes only two sentences for the narrator to summarize Gatsby's summer events as we can read in the following extract:

There was music from my neighbour'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. (1925, p. 41)

The whole summer is summarized in "the summer nights". Time remains vague as well as people, who "came and went like moths". However, the first time Carraway himself attends Gatsby's party, he uses half of the chapter to describe the details. In Chapter Four three pages are dedicated only to mention all the people's names who wandered in Gatsby's garden. In narrative terms, the deceleration takes place in the scenes from the narrator's own life. The scenes that he reports thoroughly are long and include less surprises, therefore they are less exciting to the reader. As a matter of fact, the acceleration technique works in Gatsby's favour. The lines that describe Gatsby's summer, such as "blue gardens" and "like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars", are poetic. Hence, the reader's attention is drawn to Gatsby.

Water is a distinctive element in the novel. When Gatsby is not present, water gets everyone's attention as the lines following the opening extract reveal:

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 motorboats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. (1921, p. 41)

Gatsby, who is famous for not attending his own parties, is present in the scene above: "his raft", "his beach" and "his two motorboats" indicate that Gatsby offers an access to water and it is something that fascinates and entertains his guests. Also, the expressions "slit the waters", "aquaplanes" and "cataracts of foam" show that there is a lot of movement in the water. In the scene movement associates with the enjoyment and that is how Gatsby entertains his guests even though he is not physically present.

Narrative Currents

If reading a novel, as suggested in the first chapter, can be compared to currents, writing a novel is making the currents flow. Interestingly, the two main voices in the story, Carraway and Gatsby represent their own currents, both floating in opposite directions. Carraway, who claims to be an

honest and realistic man, sets his hope on the future. At the beginning the narrator's arrival at his newly rented house "by the most domesticated body of saltwater in the Western Hemisphere, the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound" (1925, p.10) show that his narrative current is flowing forward. However, "domesticated saltwater" offers a very different scenery compared to Gatsby's birth scene on "the most insidious flat on Lake Superior". Even if the narrator has access to water, "domesticated" suggests that there is no current, the water stays still. The water has no place to flow, symbolically it has no future. Compared to Gatsby's dangerous waters, Carraway's water does not flow. That suggests that the narrator's dreams cannot really survive, not even in his imagination. However, the narrator has that "familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer" (1925, p. 10). Even during the confusing summer events, when the narrator turns thirty and believes that what the future holds for him is "a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm, thinning hair" (1925, p. 129), the narrative is still flowing forward. Carraway remains rather optimistic throughout the novel. It seems that nothing can stop Carraway's narrative current from going forward, whereas Gatsby's tale floats backwards, as we can read in the line: "Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay" (1925, p. 76). If Carraway moves to a house to start a new life, Gatsby has chosen his house to be close to his dreams. Daisy lives "just across the bay", but she belongs to the past.

Interestingly, the two currents flowing in opposite directions unite after the tragic events. After Gatsby's death Carraway sees the East as "haunted" and he decides to return home. Suddenly, Carraway's narrative current turns back into the past as he cherishes his college-time memories from the Mid-West:

When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. (1925, p. 166)

In the example the current does not flow anymore. The water has frozen into sparkling grains of snow. The dream has turned into a memory, thus there is no movement. Like snowflakes, memories must be cherished carefully, so that they do not melt off and disappear. The metaphor of snow reveals the essence of memories; they cannot be touched. A memory cannot be forgotten either. It must be kept alive by cherishing and admiring. Therefore, Gatsby's attention is always drawn into the past. He must keep his memories alive.

Indeed, Gatsby is a great dreamer; this is something that Gatsby scholars agree on. But it is an interesting detail, that the narrator, Carraway, turns out to be a dreamer as well. For Gatsby, the past is a golden memory that only gets better as time goes by. Carraway claims to be realistic, his attitude towards the future is moderately optimistic. At the end, however, Carraway becomes nostalgic like Gatsby, as we can see in the extract above. He also longs for the past, his home and his youth. When the narrative current takes an opposite direction, as Carraway starts to yearn for the past, the two narrative currents in the novel, the protagonist's and the narrator's, wind up in a riptide. Dreamers must keep their dreams alive; the narrative current must flow on. Longing for the past as well as moving towards the future keep the narrative currents going in the novel. The story is built on an assumption that life will be better again in the future. As we have learned, Gatsby has his brilliant, imaginative past, whereas Carraway keeps his hopes up for the future. It is the present moment that is disappointing. Once the movement stops, the narrative current loses its direction. Taking water as an example, this phenomenon can be compared to a whirlpool; it spins water around until it disappears into abyss. In the narrative, the whirlpool represents the present moment, which is dangerous times for dreamers. In the novel, both Gatsby and the narrator, get stuck in the dreamer's whirlpool with tragic consequences. As a matter of fact, Gatsby's death in the pool is a good example of whirlpool as his blood forms a red circle on the water.

Dead Calm

The Great Gatsby shows that flowing water is a vital condition for keeping dreams alive. When water flows, Gatsby's dream is going strong. However, in the scenes in which his dream is slipping away, water stands still. According to the narrator, the characters make a "rather harrowing scene" (1925, p. 109) to sort out their romantic relationships in Chapter Seven as we can read in the extract below:

On the green Sound, stagnant in the heat, one small sail crawled slowly toward the fresher sea. Gatsby's eyes followed it momentarily; he raised his hand and pointed across the bay. "I'm right across from you." "So you are". (1925, p. 112)

The scene takes place in the Buchanans' house. Obviously, the distance to Gatsby's mansion across the bay remains constant. However, it does not seem to matter anymore, it is mentioned as

a trivial detail in the dialogue. The distance between Daisy and Gatsby is growing. And it is the stillness of water that separates them. In the scene, Gatsby's dream might come true as Daisy is about to tell whom she loves. But "Sound, stagnant in the heat" is not very promising for Gatsby. The water has lost its flow, and in the stagnant Sound Gatsby's dream is about to die. Symbolically the only moving thing leaves the Sound as "one small sail crawled slowly toward the fresher sea". The expression "dead calm" figures well the scene. There is no hope left in the Sound. Even the sailing boat needs "the fresher sea" to move on. Interestingly, the same Sound is presented very differently in Chapter One:

He stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished. (1925, p. 24)

Compared to the previous extract, in this scene Gatsby's behavior shows excitement. He stretches his arms towards the Sound "curiously" and he is "trembling". In Chapter Seven Gatsby only points with his hand across the bay, where he lives. There is a short dialogue without any emotions, which emphasizes the fact that Gatsby's house's location, closeness to Daisy, does not matter anymore. The extract above figures the moment when the narrator sees Gatsby in person for the first time. It is remarkable that as soon as the narrator notices him, Gatsby disappears. In the scene both Carraway and Gatsby are standing in their own gardens by the bay. The disappearance draws the reader's attention elsewhere. The narrator loses sight of Gatsby as he glances at the sea. The word choice is interesting here. The narrator does not give any reason for glancing seaward, but he does it "involuntarily". As if he knew that Gatsby's character is vague, and just like the surface of water, it could flow away any moment. All the narrator sees is a green light, "minute and far away". The scene reinforces Gatsby's dreamy and fluid character. As we have learned, Gatsby's character, or story, was born in the water. Also, Gatsby, the man himself, is first seen by water. But Carraway only sees a glimpse of Gatsby. After his short appearance, Gatsby vanishes like water disappears in the darkness. This raises a question: Is Gatsby a real character or only Carraway's alter ego?

All the information on Gatsby's character is observed by the narrator, who tells the story. Garrett points out that some of the scenes are wholly imagined by Carraway (1989, p. 113). A good example of this is the case of Carraway's report on Gatsby's last moments as he is waiting for a message from Daisy:

I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true, 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 [...]. (1925, p. 153)

In this extract Gatsby's emotions and thoughts are entirely dictated by Carraway. The narrator uses phrases "he must have" as if he had access to Gatsby's thoughts. The expressions like "lost the old warm world" and "an unfamiliar sky" manifests homesickness, that is something that the narrator suffers from before he decides to return to the Mid-West. Occasionally it can be challenging for the reader to differentiate between true representation and imagination in the novel. This type of narration reinforces the mystery of the distant Gatsby. In Chapter Four we will not only investigate Gatsby's character, but also focus on his relationship to the other characters.

Chapter 4: Dreaming Water

“Why *candles*?” objected Daisy, frowning. She snapped them out with her fingers. “In two weeks it’ll be the longest day in the year”. She looked radiantly. “Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it?” (1925, p. 17). Daisy’s question reveals the central theme of the novel: life is built on illusions. Waiting for “the longest day of the year” suggests that the day is something special. However, the expression “only to miss it”, shows that the dream passes by quietly and imperceptibly. The question involves a slight disappointment, and “always” suggests that the disappointment comes every year as if it were supposed to be that way. The question “Do you watch for [...]” and “miss it” is addressed to the others at the dinner table, Nick Carraway, Tom Buchanan and Jordan Baker. The question assumes that they all share the same disillusionment.

We have already studied Gatsby’s relationship to water. This chapter seeks to investigate the dreams of Tom and Daisy, the other main characters. The focus lies on what Gatsby represents for them, and especially on Tom and Daisy’s connections to Gatsby’s element, water. There is no water in the extract above, but curiously enough, there is fire. “Why *candles*?” Daisy wonders. Candles belong to a festive occasion. Daisy’s gesture, putting out fire, shows that she does not want anything out of ordinary. Candles create a festive atmosphere, however, for Daisy the longest day is something that is promising but disappointing at the same time. Therefore, candles can be read as a representation of a missed opportunity, a shattered dream. The expressions “object” and “frowning” reveal that Daisy rejects dreams. However, “she looked “radiantly”, suggests that Daisy hides her disappointment behind a smile. Daisy is not driven by her dreams. Her dream element is different from Gatsby’s, his dream currents flow with water. It is remarkable that without Gatsby Daisy has no access to water. Tamed fire, fire that can be easily put out, represents her pipe dreams. Daisy’s dream element is weak as water extinguishes fire.

Watery Dreams

Daisy is the incarnation of Gatsby’s dreams, but one should remember that Daisy also dreams of Gatsby. Daisy is married to Tom, one of the wealthiest men of the Mid-West. However, his immature behavior is frequently discussed by the narrator. Daisy is aware of Tom's infidelities, and her famous comment: “That’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool”

(1925, p. 22), offers a revealing glimpse into her character. The line figures Daisy as a prisoner in her own life; she must play her “beautiful” but “foolish” part. For Daisy, Gatsby is a romantic character who represents true love. The lines below reveal what Daisy tells Gatsby after they have met after years’ separation:

The rain was still falling, but the darkness had parted in the west, and there was a pink and golden billow of foamy clouds above the sea. “Look at that, she whispered, and then after a moment: “I’d like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around.” (1925, p. 91)

The extract shows that water is involved in Daisy’s dreams via Gatsby. In the scene it is still raining, but darkness has parted, symbolically making some room for dreams. The dreams are described as “a pink and golden billow of foamy clouds above the sea”. The image is very appealing, yet very fragile. Clouds are not tangible. In that sense clouds represent an imaginary element as one cannot hold them or manage them. Yet, there is water involved in the image as clouds contain water suspended in the air. The origin of the water is “the sea” underneath. The sea water is strong, it moves land and wears away rock. Interestingly, there is a drop of that strong water element in Daisy’s dream, but somewhere between the sea and the sky, it has lost its power. In Daisy’s dream water is in its most fragile form as it is about to vanish into the air. The image figures the clear difference between Daisy’s and Gatsby’s dreams: strong water and hazy air. Nevertheless, the clouds described as: “pink”, which is the colour of love, and “gold” that represents Gatsby’s elegance. Daisy’s wish to “ get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around” figures a dreamy, yet idle image as it is difficult to see Daisy’s motives behind the metaphor. “Push you around” accentuates the purposelessness of Daisy’s dream. Even if she had Gatsby in her life, she probably would not know what to do with him. Therefore, the pink and golden clouds reflect Daisy’s daydreams; they are beautiful but vain.

Water is more prominently involved in Daisy’s other dream of Gatsby. In the scene water surrounds Daisy as she lies in a bathtub. The scene takes place a night before Daisy is to marry Tom, but she cannot let go of Gatsby’s letter:

She began to cry—she cried and cried. I rushed out and found her mother’s maid and we locked the door and got her into a cold bath. She wouldn’t let go of the letter. She took it into the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball, and only let me leave it in the soap dish when she saw that it was coming to pieces like snow. (1925, p. 74)

In the scene Daisy lets Gatsby go symbolically. Daisy goes through a transformation as she is crying, and her body lies in cold water in the bathtub. Cold water represents a wakeup call. A warm bath would be nicer, but in the scene, the maid and Jordan want Daisy to clear her head and to face reality; she must marry Tom. The reality hits Daisy hard as she has tears in her eyes. The line “She wouldn’t let go of the letter” reveals that once Daisy’s feelings for Gatsby were strong. The expression “She took it to the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball” shows that Daisy lets go of her dream of Gatsby involuntarily. Also, Daisy wants people to know that “Daisy’s change’ her mine” (1925, p. 74). However, it is too late to call off the wedding, and she knows it. Letting go of her true love is a painful experience. Daisy does not want to let go of the letter. Interestingly, snow is included in the extract: “She took it into the tube with her and squeezed it up in a wet ball, and only let me leave it in the soap dish when she saw that it was coming to pieces like snow”. Wet paper does not resemble snow much. However, “snow” refers to the fragility of the paper. Remarkably, the water in the bathtub is cold, the next stage is freezing into snow. Again, like we have seen in the previous chapter, water frozen into snow represents a dream turning into a memory. Symbolically, the scene captivates Daisy leaving Gatsby for good as she puts the wet paper on the soap dish. The fragile paper, representing their love story, is falling apart just like Daisy’s dream of marrying Gatsby is turning into a memory. Water is cold and relentless; it dissipates the letter. Symbolically, all there is left is snow. As we have seen in the previous chapter, snow represents the essence of memories; they cannot be touched. That explains why Daisy dreams of Gatsby so light-heartedly later in the novel. Her dream of true love died in the bathtub scene years before, therefore “a pink and golden billow of foamy clouds” symbolizes Daisy’s memory of her long-gone dream.

Interestingly, water has turned into mist in Gatsby’s dream, too, in the scene in which Daisy and Gatsby finally meet:

If it wasn’t for the mist we could see your home across the bay”, said Gatsby. “You always have the green light that burns all night at the end of your dock”. (1925, p. 90).

In the scene strong water has turned into hazy mist. There is mist between the two homes; the moment the dream becomes realized, the mist gets in the way making the vision blur. Finally, Gatsby and Daisy are reunited, but the dream is slipping away. Metaphorically the mist transforming from water to air, symbolizes the dream that is also changing its form. Even though the idea of the dream is about to vanish in the air, Gatsby is not ready to admit that. He justifies

his dream by saying “if it wasn’t for the mist”. However, “the mist” cannot be taken away from the scene. The mist is part of the image as well as the famous “green light”, they both represent Gatsby’s illusions. “The green light” can be interperated as the driving force behind the dream and “the mist” is the unmanageable element, blocking the view between Gatsby and Daisy.

Dry Reality

The character with the least illusions is Tom Buchanan. Unlike the others around him, Tom has realized his dreams. He has his mansion, his polo horses, and his little family. He has a flat in New York to spend time with his lover, Myrtle Wilson, the garage owner’s, George Wilson’s wife. However, the narrator remarks that even though Tom is a young man, the highlights of his career as a polo player are already behind him. Tom’s realism challenges Gatsby’s dream world. Gatsby has Daisy in his dreams, but Tom has Daisy, and his lover Myrtle, by his side, they are flesh and blood. However, both the worlds are surprisingly similar; the narrative shows that Tom’s reality is equally as unstable as Gatsby’s dreamworld. His solid, secure life is only an illusion as the characters head for New York on a hot day and they pass by Wilson’s garage. In the scene George Wilson becomes aware of his wife’s unfaithfulness and decides to take her to another town. Daisy is in another car with Gatsby, driving away from Tom.

Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic. His wife and his mistress until an hour ago secure and inviolate were slipping precipitately from his control. (1925, p. 119)

If water represents dreams, “hot whips” probably refers to hard reality. In the scene there is no water, no dreams to ease Tom’s panic. Interestingly, the temperature is a crucial factor in both scenes of disillusionment; water is too cold for Daisy, and the air is oppressively hot for Tom. In the scenes, the temperature brings forth new aspects. That is how the elements surprise the characters. The expression “slipping from” reveals that Tom’s imagined control over his life is only a delusion. After all, there are illusions in Tom’s life. Susan Resneck Parr argues that in the novel the characters “offer their own variations of the theme of individuals choosing illusions and playing roles as a way of creating a sense of meaning and order in their lives”(1989, p. 68-69). Both Buchanans, Tom and Daisy, play their parts in life. Their marriage is an illusion, and their lifestyle is based on keeping up appearances. Gatsby seems to be an incarnation of an illusion.

However, his dreams are true, and unlike the others, Gatsby has not lost his innocence. That makes Gatsby stand out from all the other characters: in the world of illusions he is real. The narrator praises Gatsby's character:

No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end; 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. (1925, p. 8)

In the extract Gatsby is figured as fresh water, and "foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams" refers to the other characters. There is a confrontation between Gatsby's purity and the other characters faults that have contaminated the water. The expression "what preyed on Gatsby", suggests that Gatsby is a victim. Considering that the lines are on the second page of the novel, the image has a very significant meaning as it compares Gatsby's special, floating nature to the others for the first time. Gatsby has his own element, water, but the other characters represent different element, dirt. They have a contaminating influence on Gatsby. The narrator summarizes the nature of the others as "abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men", suggesting that they lack Gatsby's determination and direction in life. They just float around on the surface of the water, slowing down its natural movement.

The different elements the characters represent influence their relationships to each other. Resneck Parr notices Tom's skeptical attitude towards Gatsby throughout the novel (1989, p. 64). Daisy and the narrator put their faith in Gatsby at times, but Tom is strictly against him. He calls Gatsby "Mr Nobody from Nowhere" (1925, p.123). Of course, Gatsby is not Tom's dream. Considering that Gatsby wants to marry his wife, he represents a threat to Tom. However, the choice of words: "Mr Nobody from Nowhere" thwarts Gatsby's character; Tom talks about Gatsby as if he did not exist. For Tom, that might be true. If Gatsby's character is built on imagination, Tom's lifestyle emphasizes a lack of imagination. His lovers represent lower class people, Myrtle, and the maid from his Chicago years, are women who hardly challenge him. The party Tom throws in his New York flat is violent and messy, nothing like Gatsby's romantic garden parties. Tom lacks Gatsby's ability to dream, his watery character. As argued previously, Tom has no access to water even when water is needed. An interesting example of this is the scene in which Daisy is supposed to choose between Tom and Gatsby. Daisy wants to have a bath again, like in the scene before her wedding. In the hot weather the heat adds pressure. Daisy needs water desperately. But Tom does not even think of cold baths: "The thing to do is to forget about the heat", said Tom impatiently" (1925, p. 120). Tom's

answer reflects his attitude towards dreams. "Forget about" reveals that Tom does not live in the world of imagination, dreams have no place in his life. He does not want water as he does not believe in dreams.

Illusions

After all Tom's reality turns out to be only illusions, it can disappear as easily as foamy clouds. Roger Lewis remarks that *the Great Gatsby* is a novel about illusions: "[...] those illusions matter so much that you chase after them, because even though they are illusions, nothing matters as much as they do" (1989, p. 55). Therefore, *The Great Gatsby* is a complex novel, in which both dreams and reality are only illusions. This gives Gatsby another chance. After the water has vanished in the air and illusions are stripped, Gatsby's remarkable character lives on. As a comparison, Tom's unwatery character dries up. Tom survives, and his character remains the same, but his personality shrinks before the narrator's eyes. Tom is not seen as a man anymore as the narrator utters: "I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child" (1925, p. 170). Whereas Gatsby's story that begins in natural waters and ends in a pool as his blood flows down the sewage, makes a full water circle. Water does not stop moving, it forms a never-ending circle. This does not apply only to Gatsby, but to the world as we can read in the extract at the end of the novel:

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. (1925, p. 171)

This scene resembles a lot the scene I discussed in Chapter Three; Gatsby's first appearance by the bay and his immediate vanishing in the dark water. Gatsby is gone, and the world around him, the people of "the big shore places", including Daisy's house, are losing their importance as the houses become "inessential" and they begin to "melt away". Interestingly, the verb "melt", figuring solid things becoming fluid, connects the houses and the people living in them, to water. There is no water, no movement in them. Once the wealthy people of the Sound had their secure places in the society, but now their gorgeous, solid houses are melting away. All this happens because the narrator changes his point of view. There is one illusion less in Carraway's world.

As the scenery disappears, the “old island” appears again, representing what is left of “the new world”. This is the origin of the American Dream: the dream is so close, almost within reach, until it disappears. Resneck-Parr calls the narrator’s experience in West Egg a lesson of the American experience: “that moments of hope and promise and wonder can be found only in the past, that – except in the imagination – the past is irrecoverable, that the present brings it only with the betrayal of dreams and that the conscious individual must nevertheless continue to hope and to struggle” (1989, p. 76-77). In this illusion betrayal and recovery change repeatedly. The narrator gets a revealing glimpse of that as he cannot see the houses across the Sound. The same scenery, Long Island that once represented “new world” to the “Dutch sailors”, offered a glimpse of hope to Gatsby, and to the narrator himself, too. All the attempts to conquer “the old island” fail as “the new world” becomes “the old island” again and again. Gatsby is not the only one who dies. From showy houses to the great expectations, everything under the sun disappears and fails. Fitzgerald’s solution to that is going with the flow. Gatsby seizes on the only real thing, his pure dreams. That connects Gatsby to water. Like water, Gatsby is moveable, always changing but never disappearing. Thus, his persona becomes even more alive after his death.

Conclusions

To conclude, water tells its own story in *The Great Gatsby*. Water is a prominent element in the novel, as a matter of fact, water scenes reveal the story before action takes place. This is how the reader has a dialogue with water symbols: Refreshing summer rain promises romantic moments, whereas dead calm, the scenes in which water does not move anymore, foreshadow the end of dreams and illusions. Furthermore, water has a great impact on the atmosphere. A good example of this is the pouring rain in Gatsby's funeral: nobody cannot escape from the rain that holds the scene like a tragedy. The protagonist, Gatsby, beginning in the dangerous waters of Lake Superior and ending up in a pool, makes a full water cycle. Gatsby's fate reflects the whole story in the novel; everything ends. That becomes clear in the last scene, in which houses, and the island disappear- only to appear again.

Water is Gatsby's element. The others may have access to water via Gatsby, but no other character is able to make water flow like Gatsby. Different types of water reflect the imaginary power of the characters. Mist represents fragile daydreams, whereas Gatsby's element, flowing water, is strong enough to carry the others, but only temporarily. Water is refreshing and wanted, but it is also unmanageable and unpredictable. The last line of the novel: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past (1925, p. 172) underlines the separation between "us", symbolically "boats" and Gatsby, "the current". The narrative figures the other characters as something that slows down Gatsby's current: "It is what prayed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams [...]" (1925, p. 8). There is a confrontation between Gatsby and the others; Gatsby is a strong current flowing independently, however, he is exposed and vulnerable to the environment around him. Water gets contaminated. At its best, water is fresh, flowing freely like a mountain stream. In the novel flowing water moves forward the narrative, and it is Gatsby's presence that accelerates the narration.

The narrative balances between the future and the past. The narrator, Nick Carraway, moves the story forward. Whereas Gatsby's narrative current is constantly longing for the past. Interestingly, at the end Carraway's narrative current takes a different direction and the two currents meet. With the currents disappearing into the abyss, both the characters lose their illusions. This happens to the narrator and Gatsby. Thus, the last line "boats against

the current” may refer to Gatsby, too: Obviously, he is notorious for living in the past. However, the line also suggests that no-one can escape from the eternal movement of water: Water wears rock away, it moves land, and its circulation is unstoppable.

The power of water lies in its mobility. The state of water changes quickly: it may freeze or evaporate in the air. That makes water a surprising element. *The Great Gatsby* balances between reality and illusions. Everything changes, and the characters who resist changes lose their dreams, their illusions, or their meaning. Therefore, going with the flow makes Gatsby an extraordinary character. Gatsby lives forever.

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