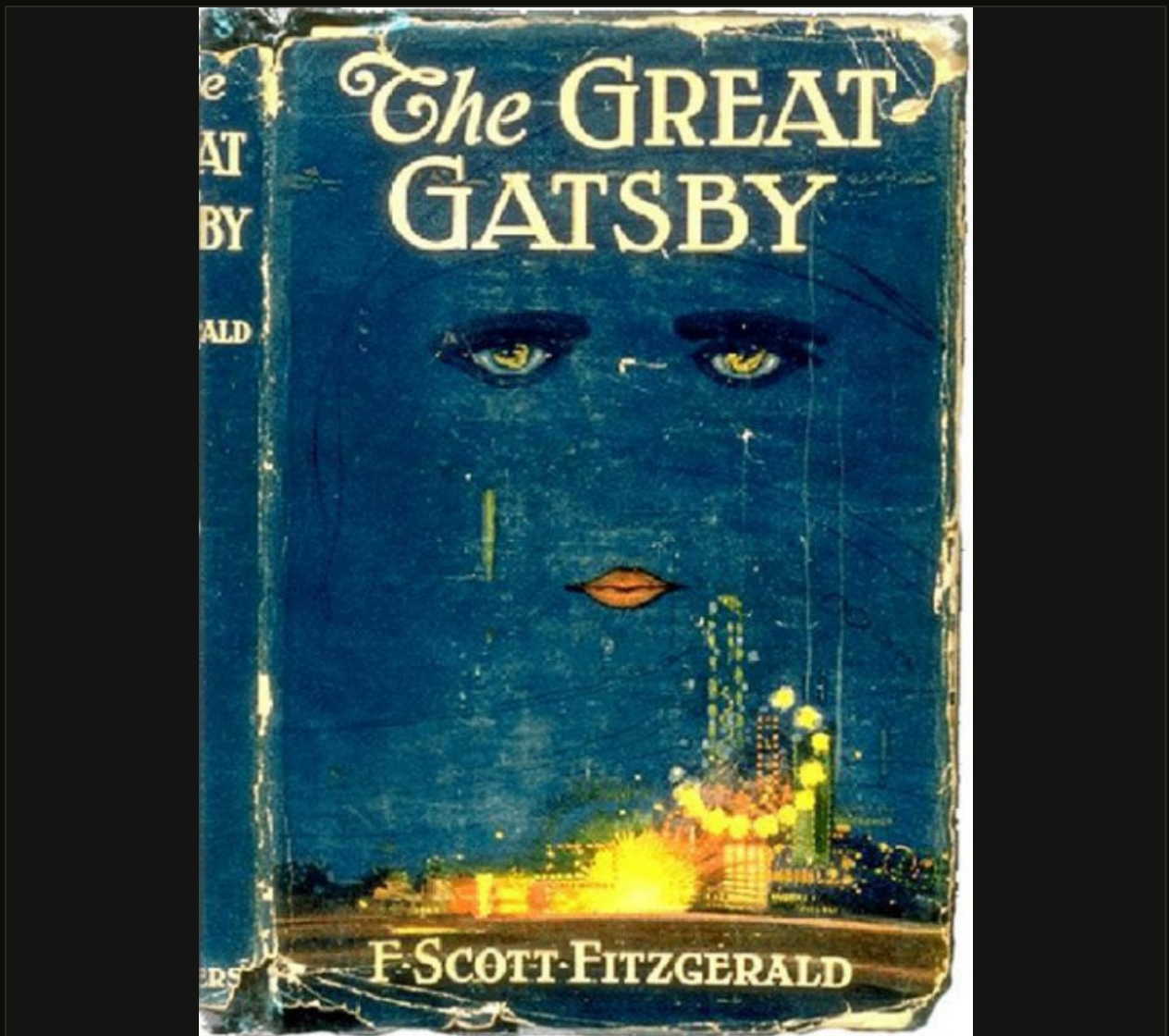




'Keyness' and *Narrative*

Corpus stylistic insights into narration and 'keyness' in 'The Great Gatsby'

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Software such as WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2008) that has the capacity for objective, corpus-based quantification of texts is transforming the way that stylisticians can approach the analysis of novels. As Stubbs (2011) points out, it can enable us to 'make more explicit the evidence on which interpretations are based', and it can 'identify textual features which are of literary significance, including features which critics seem not to have noticed' (231). Corpus stylisticians have praised the benefits of such approaches, given that previously a satisfactorily in-depth stylistic analysis of the novel was almost impossible due to its length (Mahlberg 2011). Keyness theory more generally derives from the results produced from two Word Lists (Scott 2012) that an analyst can create – one of their chosen source text and one of their reference corpus. A word list displays every word in a text or corpus, and its frequency, among other things. Key Words software (ibid.) can then compare frequencies of words on the two lists, and produce a key words list – that is, a list of words that are comparatively more frequent in a source text than in a reference corpus, according to a user-specified 'minimum frequency'. This essay aims to combine approaches to keyness in texts with narratology and literary criticism, to continue the case for using keyness and corpus methods for stylistic analysis.

The BNC World corpus, against which I have produced a key words list using Key Words software (Scott 2008), is comprised of 10% spoken discourse (10 million words) and 90% written discourse (90 million words). Of this written discourse, 27% is fictional, or 'imaginative' discourse (Burnard 2010). Thus, the total amount of fictional discourse out of the BNC World corpus amounts to just 24.3%. As a result, it can reasonably be expected that a key words list produced against this corpus will inevitably throw up certain key words that can be identified as particularly 'literary', making my analysis of Fitzgerald's literary style of writing easier than had I used, for example, the Fictional Prose section of the BNC alone. A diagram of the kinds of key words that both of these kinds of analysis will produce can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Different 'keynesses'

The reason for the particularly literary point is this: many or most of the words in a novel, standing on their own as single word units and not as context-bound — which is how the computer reads textual data (Scott 2010) — will be extremely common ('unliterary', if you will) words. It is often how the words are syntactically ordered in a novel, as well as their textual context, that gives them their 'literariness'. However, taking my chosen text of analysis, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, as an example, there is a subset of Key Words that can reasonably be identified as 'literary' words in and of themselves (as opposed to contextually 'literary') that can be found in a Key Words list of this type. (This is not, however, to say that the Key Words software will produce every 'literary' word that is in the book within the list — the limitations of the software in terms of identifying words that may be significant are outlined by Scott (2010).)

Table 1 A semantic breakdown of key content words in *The Great Gatsby* — literary words shown in teal

ADJECTIVES / DEVERBAL ADJECTIVES / COMPOUND ADJECTIVES	VERBS	NOUNS
Colour: coloured, white, yellow, light, pale, grey, dim, rosy, dark, bright, blue, lavender, faded (3)	Auxiliary: was, had, wasn't, don't, ought, hadn't, oughtn't, got, couldn't	People: Old Sport, man, girl, butler, chauffeur, policeman, neighbor's, neighbor, bootlegger, girls, butler's
Heat: hot, cool	Speech: inquired, said, cried, demanded, murmur (1), answered, insisted, remarked, talked, whispered (12) , exclaimed, asked, laughed, hesitated, told	Time: moment, afternoon, night, hour, minute, twilight , noon, morning
Love/marriage: (well-)loved (1), married (2), romantic	Sight/hearing: looked, saw, heard, glanced, stared, groaning (2) , eyed (1), looking, faded (5), hear	Cars: coupe, garage, car, automobiles, taxi
Physical description: little, hulking, young, pale, long, asleep, (owl-)eyed (5), crowded (4)	Phone: telephone (7), rang	Clothes: dress, coat, shirts, suit (10)
Voices: husky, impassioned	Movement/position: came, went, turned, broke, sat, come, leaned, hurried, stood, waited, trembling (5) , walked, drove, shook, going, nodded, strained (3), moved, drive (3), stopped, floated , rose (12), sitting, crowded (4)	Body: hand, face, hands, feet, shoulder
Other: crazy, trembling (5) , unfamiliar , curious , ghostly , solemn , strained (5), grotesque , groaning (3) , unutterable , enchanted (4) , purposeless	Mental: knew, loved (19), seemed, want, like, enchanted (1)	Household: door, lawn, house, room, porch, couch, steps, table, garden, chair, windows, veranda
	Other: took, suit (4), light (2), married (22)	Social: whiskey, name, garden, julep, cocktails, rumors, voices, supper, murmur (8)
		Technology: hydroplane, telephone (12), elevator, wire, railroad
		Other: Ashheaps, dozen, light, color, "Gonnegtion", sidewalk, scepticism, rain, moonlight , ashes, shore, rose (8)

Keywords and existing literary criticism

Following one of the approaches to keyword analyses that Mahlberg (2010) outlines, the keywords in the table above have been grouped into the semantic categories into which they fall most easily and naturally. Proper nouns have been excluded, as they are all indicators of 'aboutness' in the most rudimentary sense — consisting of main characters and places in which events take place — and nothing interesting can be gained from

attempting to group them semantically. However, an analysis of the most obvious semantic groupings, which naturally came about as a result of high frequencies of words within certain semantic domains (this was done manually as opposed to using semantic tagging methods – either can produce worthwhile results (Mahlberg 2010)), can provide quantitative, corpus-based confirmation of existing literary criticism on *The Great Gatsby*. While it may perhaps be a somewhat flat conclusion to make, it is certainly valuable. As Stubbs (2008: 231) points out, 'even if quantification only confirms what we already know, this is no bad thing. Indeed, in developing a new method, it is perhaps better not to find anything new, but to confirm findings from many years of traditional study, since this gives confidence that the method can be relied on.'

Kathleen Parkinson's thorough thematic critical study of the novel (1987) includes, as the names of her various chapter subheadings, many of the semantic domains that the Keywords software has enabled the identification of: time, cars, colour, eyes, and Gatsby's house. An analysis of the first few concordance lines of the keyword 'car' can positively reinforce the critical viewpoint that 'throughout the novel, references to cars associate them with restlessness and also with power in all its manifestations and finally with death' (ibid.). On the first line, a car is tearing along, as a car ultimately tears Myrtle to pieces, leading to its being named 'the "death car"' (line 11); and, foreshadowing the later violence and death that Gatsby's car is the cause of, line 4 shows Nick recounting how he 'heard a car stop and then the sound of someone splashing after us over the soggy ground' (my italics) outside the cemetery – both 'splashing' and 'car' recall the reason for Gatsby's death as well as the ultimate location of his murder by Wilson in his swimming pool.

1 Michaelis heard a **car** go tearing along the
 2 just as we were passing a **car** coming the other way.
 3 about driving a **car**. It started because she
 4 the cemetery I heard a **car** stop and then the
 5 had once about driving a **car**?" "Why – not exactly."
 6 grateful for the sound of a **car** stopping outside. It
 7 to him that wheel and **car** were no longer joined
 8 sat discreetly in another **car**. Tom deferred that
 9 your car?" "It's a blue **car**, a coupé." "We've
 10 she left a borrowed **car** out in the rain with the
 11 was over. The "death **car**" as the newspapers
 12 Tom. "In Mr. Gatsby's **car**." She looked at Tom,
 13 his hand toward Gatsby's **car**. "I'll take you in this
 14 the front seat of Gatsby's **car**, Tom pushed the
 15 in July Gatsby's gorgeous **car** lurched up the rocky
 16 never even stopped his **car**." There was nothing I
 17 or curious took her in his **car** and drove her in the
 18 . "He didn't even stop his **car**." The Buchanans'
 19 a front wheel off his **car**. The girl who was with
 20 on the dashboard of his **car** with that
 21 with admiration at his **car**. "It's pretty, isn't it, old
 22 night I did hear a material **car** there and saw its lights
 23 . "Shall we all go in my **car**?" suggested Gatsby.
 24 Island, old sport. In my **car**." "It's too late." "Well,
 25 have to follow you in my **car**. Excuse me for just a

Figure 2 25 concordance lines of occurrences of *car* in *The Great Gatsby*

Parkinson also points out that Daisy and Gatsby are both associated with colours, and that at one point Gatsby's colour scheme even matches her own (ibid.). While the concordance lines display the same textual evidence for this concept that Parkinson has picked out manually, they also show some other thematic and symbolic links that have thus far gone unnoticed; for example, one can see the emergence of a link between the colour white and masculinity or business: line 1, 'a white spot of lather' is on Mr McKee's face; Gatsby is in a 'white flannel suit' on line 3, and takes a 'white card from his wallet' in a businesslike fashion (line 5); the chauffeur,

too, is described as 'white' (line 6), as well as Tom's masculine 'white shirt-front' pressing against Myrtle, when she is recounting to her guests how they met (line 21). The colour white is also associated with racial prejudice (lines 10 and 11): "People begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white." Flushed with his impassioned gibberish he saw himself standing alone on the last barrier of civilization. "We're all white here," murmured Jordan' — and this can also be seen on line 41.

1 shaved for there was a **white** spot of lather on his
 2 colour of the walls. A **white** ashen dust veiled his
 3 nervously, and Gatsby in a **white** flannel suit, silver
 4 . "Aunt Jordan's got on a **white** dress too." "How do
 5 slowed down. Taking a **white** card from his wallet
 6 passed us, driven by a **white** chauffeur, in which
 7 song of it. . . . High in a **white** palace the king's
 8 who sat in state under a **white** plum tree. Tom and
 9 lies a drunken woman in a **white** evening dress. Her
 10 of civilization. "We're all **white** here," murmured
 11 between black and **white**." Flushed with his
 12 , a cheerful red and **white** Georgian Colonial
 13 there. Our beautiful **white** — " "Did you give Nick
 14 whose hair they say turned **cotton-white** one winter
 15 and faster as Daisy's **white** face came up to his
 16 were ajar and gleaming **white** against the fresh
 17 for a while into her **white** shirtwaist, and then,
 18 house that morning her **white** roadster was beside
 19 with the officer in her **white** car. When Jordan
 20 they had driven in her **white** car. Just as Daisy's
 21 he was next to me and his **white** shirt-front pressed
 22 Louisville. She dressed in **white**, and had a little
 23 white
 24 up across the river in **white** heaps and sugar
 25 balloon. They were both in **white** and their dresses
 26 hand. Dressed up in **white** flannels I went over
 26 . He came only once, in **white** knickerbockers, and
 27 in white, and had a little **white** roadster and all day
 28 at one slice in a long **white** cake of apartment
 29 . I followed him over a low **white-washed** railroad
 30 powdered milky **white**. Her eyebrows had
 31 a blue coat, six pair of **white** duck trousers and a
 32 to see a great flock of **white** sheep turn the corner
 33 over on the Cunard or **White** Star Line. He's
 34 . "From Louisville. Our **white** girlhood was passed
 35 , weighing down their own **white** dresses against the
 36 fingers, powdered **white** over their tan, rested
 37 this happened the red, **white** and blue banners in
 38 single wrinkle of the small **white** neck. "You dream,
 39 for her among soggy **white-washed** alleys and to
 40 its feet were startlingly **white** — changed hands and
 41 is if we don't look out the **white** race will be — will
 42 be
 43 spot of colour against the **white** steps and I thought
 44 the courtesy bay the **white** palaces of
 45 house once more. On the **white** steps an obscene
 46 along shore. Slowly the **white** wings of the boat
 47 . They were still under the **white** plum tree and their
 48 as I hurried down the **white** chasms of lower New
 49 , that was as cool as their **white** dresses and their
 49 and the sidewalk was **white** with moonlight. They

Figure 3 All 49 occurrences of *white* in *The Great Gatsby*

Enchanted lives, unutterable visions, and twilight universes

As Mahlberg (2011) points out, polysemy is often associated with literariness. It also goes some way to explaining the appearance of words on the key words list that would typically be very low-frequency. If a word can be (and is) used in more than one or two ways or senses, then, statistically speaking, it is much more likely to crop up on a keywords list — especially in terms of words that are relatively rare anyway. Such a word would be almost doubly 'key', as it is not only rare in comparison with a particular chosen reference corpus, but its frequency in the source text itself is statistically increased by virtue of the flexibility with which it has been employed for literary usage. These are the unexpected words which, on a key words list, appear to be most startlingly 'literary'. Very few of the words that I am about to discuss, for example, appeared on a key words list generated against a) a corpus of Fitzgerald's three other most famous novels, *Tender is the Night*, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, and *This Side of Paradise*, and b) a corpus of twelve twentieth century novels and sets of short stories, six American (Wharton, *Ethan Frome*; Lewis, *Main Street*; Cather, *One of Ours*; Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*; Stein, *Three Lives*; and Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*) and six English (Forster, *A Room with a View*; Joyce, *Dubliners*; Mansfield, *The Garden Party and Other Stories*; Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*; Woolf, *Jacob's Room*; and Lawrence, *The Rainbow*). All of the words emboldened in Table 1 (husky, impassioned, trembling, ghostly, solemn, grotesque, groaning, unutterable, enchanted, purposeless, whispered, twilight, moonlight, and murmur) can be identified as either polysemic or as crossing word-class boundaries in their syntactic usage by

Fitzgerald. The key content words 'trembling', 'twilight', 'enchanted', and 'floating' all appear in Chapter 3 of *The Great Gatsby*, and collectively point to a particularly literary section of narrative which I will now discuss in terms of both lexis and narrative.

Nick Carraway can be identified as a 'homodiegetic narrator' — 'a narrator [who] is also one of the characters inhabiting the storyworld' (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005: 223). Following Genette's (1988) breakdown of narratology into three parts, the narrator type is classed under 'voice'. At various points in the novel, one of them being chapter 3, Nick's narrative voice seems to transcend the time period of the novel, breach into the realm of 'hypothetical focalization' (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005: 175), and also cross between narratorial prominence categories. At the beginning of chapter 3, and for the first three paragraphs, Nick's narration begins and remains in the perfect tense, in a mixture of the factual and the 'lyrical' (Garrett 1985: 111) language that, for Garrett, characterises Nick's narrative style. Though several of the keywords from Table 1 feature in these three paragraphs — 'night', 'girls', 'garden', 'blue', 'morning', 'butler', 'yellow' and 'crowded' — generally speaking they all reflect 'aboutness' and not literariness, except for the adjectives 'blue' and 'yellow', which are both employed in an atypical, metaphorical way ('blue gardens', 'like a brisk yellow bug'), reflecting Nick's lyrical, rhetorical narrative style.

Fitzgerald's editor, Maxwell Perkins, said of the narrative style in a letter to Fitzgerald: 'by an occasional glance at the sky, or the sea, or the city, you have imparted a sort of sense of eternity' (Hoffman 1962: 176), and this sense of eternity is imparted partly through the deixis employed — temporal deixis, such as music 'through the summer nights', and *Gatsby's* Rolls-Royce travelling 'between nine in the morning and long past midnight', creates the sense of steady, unbroken rhythms at work. Because we are situated as central, along with Nick (and indeed critics have pointed to the fact that Nick is narrating from a secure location as evidence for his reliability as a narrator (Murphy 2012)), we are witness to the beginnings and ends of everyday occurrences at *Gatsby's* ('through', 'between' and 'past'), creating the sense of eternity. Spatial deixis situates Nick — and arguably the reader's camera angle — gradually above the entire city. The guests 'came and went', and at the level of the text we too are 'among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars', gradually brought upwards via the view of the 'tower', the sand and the sea from above, until finally we can see 'an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city', as if looking down, along with Dr. T. J. Eckleburg and Nick, on the whole scene — the whole text-world and the location of the events that are to come. Not only deixis is responsible for this: the description of a car as a bug also places the reader high above these everyday occurrences, simply observing the fictional landscape. As Perkins also commented, Nick is 'a narrator who is more of a spectator than an actor: this puts the reader upon a point of observation on a higher level than that on which the characters stand and at a distance that gives perspective' (Hoffman 1963: 173). This narrative technique illustrates a shift between Friedman's categories of narratorial prominence (Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005: 442), Nick being the 'I' as witness for most of the novel, yet for brief moments transcending his role and instead becoming, and dictating, the camera angle. It is still Nick narrating for these sections — however, the reader is transported *with* him, and not *by* him, in the manner of a filmic camera shot.

At the beginning of the fourth paragraph, the sense of time in which we experience the narrative is shifted subtly to the present by the use of the verb construction 'has arrived', moving us from viewing the parties, with Nick, as generalised entities, to instead a seemingly particular and specific night in which we are partaking. This is reinforced throughout the paragraph with temporal deixis such as 'now' and present tense verb forms such as 'are dressing' and 'floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside'. This tense shift is deepened and accentuated by, to use Perkins' terms, the 'glance at the sky' (Hoffman 1963: 176) — 'The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music' (Fitzgerald: 18). What the narrative style achieves here is to express the darkening of the night by a colossal point-of-view shift, so that we are observing not only the party but the entire earth and its relation to the sun and planetary movement; we have lurched as the earth is lurching, and the party has become something of a microcosm.

The key content words which I have pointed out as being significantly literary contribute much to the narrative style of this section. Whilst an analysis of deixis and point of view has shown the fundamental viewpoint shifts that contribute to a sense of eternity, a close look at the function of keywords in this section can elucidate Perkins' impression, in reading the book, of being on a 'rapid railroad journey' with vivid pictures and scenes that 'blaze with life' (Hoffman 1963: 175). An explanation of the sense of speed can be grasped from not only the deictic shifts already discussed but also Fitzgerald's use of polysyndeton, which produces a building rhythm; the vivid pictures, though, are produced by the literary language in effect here. To start with 'trembling': we can see from Figure 4 that half of the occurrences of the word in the novel are verbs (lines 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8) and half are deverbal adjectives (lines 1, 3, 4, 9 and 10). Particularly interesting uses are on lines 4 and 5, both of which appear in this chapter. On line 4, though there is the ellipsis of the object that the word is actually referring to – the woman's dress – 'opal' instead stands in its place. Should we replace the object where it would be, we would have the sentence 'one of these gypsies in a trembling opal dress', but by excluding the definite article and the object, Fitzgerald gives the reader the sense of a flurry of 'trembling' colour: the woman is not only nameless, but also conceptually distanced from us, as the focus is on her clothing. In a similar fashion, much of the narration in this section focuses on the physical and the sensory – there is colour ('opal', 'yellow', 'colour'), sound ('the air is alive with chatter and laughter', 'music', 'opera of voices') and excitement ('new', 'full swing', 'alive', 'enthusiastic', 'burst'). The recounting of the parties gradually becomes the experience of them, and the experience of them becomes a sensory amalgamation of colour, sound and movement; at one point there is even a kind of literary synaesthesia, exemplified in the phrase 'yellow cocktail music'.

1 lit Daisy's cigarette from a trembling match, and sat
 2 town let's start." His hand, trembling with his effort at
 3 of milk spilled from his trembling hand. "I saw it in
 4 one of these gypsies in trembling opal, seizes a
 5 a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff,
 6 to light a cigarette was trembling. Suddenly she
 7 could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I
 8 away his tragic nose was trembling. I wondered if I
 9 He took out his wallet with trembling fingers. "Look
 10 turned and caught it with trembling fingers and set it

Figure 4 All 10 occurrences of *trembling* in *The Great Gatsby*

The key word 'twilight' is also interesting to consider here. It has several possible meanings: the literal meaning of the light period between darkness and sunrise or sunset and darkness; figuratively, an intermediate period or having an intermediate quality; and partial illumination of something, or a dim light, among others. From the concordance lines below we can see that on line 1 it is used explicitly to refer to a time period, as does line 3. Line 2, when sourced, shows the line 'So we drove on towards death through the cooling twilight'; line 7 occurs in the section of narrative just before Wilson proceeds to kill Gatsby; and line 9 describes the period between Daisy's despair of waiting for Gatsby to return, and her regeneration in the dating circle ('Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men'). Lines 2, 7 and 9 all express dual meanings in the sense of an intermediate period: the period between Myrtle's life and death, Gatsby's life and death, and Daisy's despair and rejuvenation. In terms of chapter 3, the word twilight is not only used to refer to the time of day but also produces vivid imagery – 'A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight'. Here the cocktails seem entities capable of floating in and of themselves, due to the fact that the waiters presumably holding them are overlooked, rendered mere facilitators of the consumption of alcohol; the use of the word twilight reinforces the paranormal imagery of the scene. Line 4, when Nick is recounting his time spent wandering New York, constitutes an example of an imperceptible focalized object (Bal 2002). It is only in and through Nick's imagination that it is possible to perceive such a thing as an 'enchanted metropolitan twilight'.

1 . They arrived at twilight and as we strolled
 2 death through the cooling twilight. The young Greek,
 3 , rose through the hot twilight: "I'm the Sheik of
 4 enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting
 5 Baker, with several feet of twilight between them
 6 the park through the soft twilight but each time I
 7 pane, nodding into the twilight. By six o'clock
 8 floated at us through the twilight and we sat down at
 9 the floor. Through this twilight universe Daisy

Figure 5 All 9 occurrences of *twilight* in *The Great Gatsby*

Conclusively, an approach to the literary study of the dominant themes, motifs, and narrative style of a novel using corpus linguistics and keyness theory can be done very successfully, if only achieved in relatively small bursts of intensity and insight. It would still, even with the benefit of being able to cover the whole text quantitatively and using corpus linguistic tools, be incredibly time-consuming to follow up every single concordance insight into the usage of a key word in order to produce an extensively thorough account of the uses of key words in a text (though less so with the use of semantic tagging tools). I have followed up simply a snapshot of literary language in a key words list, and how this can inform our understanding of narrative in *The Great Gatsby*. Though Scott (2010: 52) states that 'processing word- and letter-forms is not at all the same as understanding and distinguishing between *May* as a month and as a person's name, or *may* as a modal auxiliary versus the flower [...] the KW procedure cannot yet handle related forms, but [...] it would be desirable for it to do so', I contend that it is the fact that the computer is not able to distinguish between related forms of words that has enabled a successful literary analysis of *The Great Gatsby*: in line with Semino and Short's argument (2004: 7) that 'corpus linguistic techniques provide useful tools to identify textual features that are not striking enough to be perceived or discovered by a human observer', without the grouping together of the various uses of the literary words I have analysed by the computer, it is less likely that they would have appeared in the list and therefore warranted following up. Instead of this advantage being taken away from such software, I suggest that it simply be an option, and not a reduction.

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