

The Evolution of a Writerly Text: Appropriating a Poststructuralist Application of Roland Barthes' S/Z in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby

Haneen Amireh *

The University of Jordan

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* Corresponding author:
h.amireh@ju.edu.jo

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Abstract

Post-structuralism is a literary movement that developed from the structuralism of Roland Barthes, and it is on this basis that the article chooses the spectrum of poststructuralist theory as its scope, and Roland Barthes' theoretical approach as its benchmark. This article, inspired by the same revisionist spirit and empirical analysis implemented by Barthes' poststructuralist reading of Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine* (1830), aims to contribute to this new reading by approaching F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1926). Reading *The Great Gatsby* is a zeitgeist quasimanifesto for living in the twenty-first century; as we live in a majoritarian capitalist society with a continual stratospheric rise in materialistic egoism that it becomes a conduit for not falling into the ambits of capitalism. It gathers some of the poststructuralist aspects, and it is by utilizing Barthes' six codes that it unveils a complex system of textual codes. Hence; in this paper, six codes of Barthes' S/Z, (i.e.) the hermeneutic, the symbolic, semic, proairetic, referential and the cultural code will be applied and appropriated to the novel. Approaching from this point, the article next takes the analysis of the codes which will be discussed in tandem and regarded as profoundly significant to approaching a text; for Barthes foregrounds the codes as the *raison d'être* for a text to writerly exist. By applying Barthes' codes, it can be thereby corroborated that in poststructuralism, the reader deconstructs and decodes the paradigmatic and discursive kaleidoscopes that emulates a text, unearthing the inchoate mass of ideas.

Keywords: Poststructuralism; Roland Barthes; S/Z Codes; *The Great Gatsby*; Writerly Text.

نُشوء النص ذو طابع كتابي: تبني نظرية ما بعد البنيوية لتطبيق نظرية س/ز لرولان بارت على رواية غاتسبي العظيم لفرنسيس سكات فيتزجيرالد

حنين عميره*
الجامعة الأردنية

ملخص

تعدُّ ما بعد البنيوية حركة أدبية تطورت من بنوية رولان بارت، وعلى هذا الأساس تستخدم هذه المقالة نظرية ما بعد البنيوية كنطاق لها، ونهج رولان بارت النظري كمعيار لها. تهدف هذه المقالة المستوحاة من نفس الروح التحريفية والتحليل التجريبي الذي نفذته قراءة بارت التشريرية لرواية ساراسين للكاتب أونوريه دي بلزاك (1830) إلى المساهمة في هذه القراءة الجديدة من خلال معالجة رواية فرنسيس سكات فيتزجيرالد غاتسبي العظيم (1926). حيث تعدُّ هذه الرواية شبه بيان للعيش في القرن الحادي والعشرين؛ إذ إننا نعيش في مجتمع يغلب عليه طابع رأسمالي الذي يصبح بمثابة مسلك لعدم الوقوع في أطماع الرأسمالية. البحث يجمع بعض جوانب ما بعد البنيوية بطريقة مفهومة وموحدة، ومن خلال استخدام شيفرات رولان بارت الستة المستوحاة من س/ز التي تعدُّ أساسية لتفسير نص أدبي وإثبات تعددية معانيه، ستبني هذه الدراسة وتطبق تلك الشيفرات في تحليل الرواية. تأخذ المقالة بعد ذلك تحليل الشيفرات الستة، وهي: الشيفرات الثقافية، الشيفرات التأويلية، شيفرات الأحداث، الشيفرات الرمزية، وأخيراً الشيفرات الدلالية التي ستتم مناقشتها جنباً إلى جنب؛ إذ تعدُّ ذات أهمية قيمة عند دراسة أي نص؛ لأن بارت يتبنى هذه الرموز لاعتبارها سبباً رئيسياً لإثبات وجودية النص من خلال تطبيق رموز بارت الستة. وهكذا، يمكن إثبات أنه في ما بعد البنيوية يقوم القارئ بتفكيك وتشفير المشاكل النموذجية والاستطردية الذي تحاكي النص، وعليه الكشف عن كتلة الأفكار الغير مكتملة.

الكلمات الدالة: ما بعد البنيوية، شيفرات س/ز، رولان بارت، غاتسبي العظيم، النص ذو طابع كتابي.



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Introduction

For centuries, a conglomeration of scholars, philosophers, and theorists have provided their own interpretive pathway into dissecting texts and psychologically structuring the experience they go through whilst reading a particular text. In recent times, literary theories have been emerging in order to provide new critical approaches that aim at reading classical texts from a different lens. Collectively termed as postmodern theories, these theoretical approaches emerge for the most part from several movements branching out from continental philosophy: phenomenology, hermeneutics and structuralism. The aforementioned schools systematized a kaleidoscopic view of not wanting to analyze meaning figuratively or literally. Nevertheless, they employed a model of looking beyond the text and beyond its language. By doing so, they functionally create a way to perceive language within a much wider scope that leads to discovering that language, despite having peculiar uses, has distinct features which significantly influence the creation of a certain literary work and the criticism of it. This brings to the fore the genesis of poststructuralism, a school branching out from structuralism in the late 1960's.

Structuralism is an intrinsic objective approach that regulates a pre-deterministic reading of a text, albeit from other approaches that tend to focus on the personal, ideological, cultural and historical, responses to literature. This pre-determinism stipulates that the reader approaches a text as a system where relatedness in a text becomes its bulwark, and a grid of the text's segments is intertwined intricately with another within an incessantly linguistic system. Ferdinand de Saussure's perspective on language centers on the fact that meaning is no longer determined by the author or the reader, but resides in the analogy between words or signs. This philosophy of language infers that texts are discursive; and reality is a linguist construct that cannot establish its beingness without construing language on various forms of human discourses.

This corollary, where the reader is concerned, was a counterforce to valorise how the reader is inherently undermined by the bedrock of traditional critical ontology. Giving the reader a cybernetic and mechanical relationship with the text: a mental space with a missing horizon of personal interpretations, and allowing for nothing to exist beyond its reality except for the scientific systematized study of language. Hence, the emerging focus of the poststructuralist concern is to position the reader as a willing force within a text in order to question the structuralist reality, and to allow the reader to wonder about normative socio-political and ideological questions pertaining to human discourses that inculcate within the truths governing the text.

Broadly speaking, poststructuralism is simply "a fuller working-out implications of structuralism" (Selden, 2005: 144). However, this formulation is quite unsatisfactory, because it is evident that poststructuralism tries to counteract to the scientific pretensions of structuralism:

If structuralism was heroic in its desire to master the world of artificial signs, poststructuralism is comic and anti-heroic in its refusal to take such claims seriously. However, the poststructuralist mockery of structuralism is almost a self-mockery: Poststructuralists are structuralists who suddenly see the error of their ways (Selden, 2005:144).

It can be thence concluded that post-structuralism developed from the structuralism of Barthes and it is on this basis that the article chooses the spectrum of poststructuralist theory as its scope, and Roland Barthes' theoretical approach as its benchmark. Barthes has become a renowned name by the 1970's. Even after his publication of *S/Z*, he had already established his reputation in France as the most influential formulator and advocate of the philosophical approach to literature, film, myth, and other cultural artifacts known as structuralism. The benchmark that provided Barthes' methodological shift to his poststructuralist period is best represented by his short essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968) where he rejects the traditional view that the author is the autonomous force that only gives the source of meaning to the text and its interpretation.

Nevertheless, to enunciate that Barthes is considered as the first to reject structuralism is by no means a facticity; for the Bakhtin School is probably considered as the progenitors of modern literary theorists to reject the Saussurean notion modelled on language. Notwithstanding the fact that Mikhail Bakhtin is considered himself as a Slavic structuralist, he insisted that all instances of languages had to be considered within a social context. Moreover, and in a similar vein to poststructuralism, Bakhtin argues in "Discourse in the Novel" (1934–1935) that a text should examine the vantage point of the discursive nature of language that renders a text a polyphonic one, which is subject to ideology and multiple readings. Hence, through his concept of "Heteroglossia" and under the impact of Marxism, Bakhtin cognizes the importance of placing

a literary text within its milieu.

In his essay, Barthes stresses the fact that the author is nothing but a being who has been thrown into a linguistic existence of the text. As Barthes has argued, and as I will be arguing in this paper, the text is like an onion and the reader peels away layering of meaning in order to reach the pinnacle of his own individualistic understanding of it. In other words, a reader can approach a certain text from a Marxist point of view, psychological, or existentialist. As a result, this has become easier to approach classical texts from different points of views.

Approaching a text from a poststructuralist kaleidoscope allows the reader to master the text and enslave the author into an ocean of nonexistence: “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.” (Barthes 1968: 228). The ideological conflict in the supremacy of giving voice to the text is between the reader and the writer, and in poststructuralism, it is the reader who wins custody of giving voice and creating space for the text. According to Barthes, this supremacy has always been inherently linked to the author who is considered as “the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology” (Barthes 1968: 229).

The coevolution between the writerly text and the significance of the reader came to prominence during the twentieth century. This consensus of incepting the reader as the nexus of the text also reiterates in reader-response theory, as Stanley Fish explains “no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader” (1970: 125) thereby, disclosing the reader as an essential component. Fish’s countenance is merely the obverse to when discussing books as an “end product”, for the reader is yet to be excluded again.

This attests to the dictum within the canonical hierarchal stratum that the reader has always been repositioned at the bottom and the author at the top:

“The Author still rules in manuals of literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men, anxious to unite, by their private journals, their person and their work; the image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions;” (Barthes 1970: 231)

The aforementioned quote can be seen as the peak of Barthes’ approach to poststructuralist thought as twofold, first it has led to the amelioration of the reader by surmounting their lackadaisical position within a text, and second it explicates the idea that a reader possess the fundamental freedom to open a certain text and close its signifying process without paying homage to the signified, along with having the freedom to make their own connection to the text with systems of meaning and ignore the author’s credo and intention. Inasmuch as it counteracts most theoretical approaches or fields of studies, like psychology that approaches texts with knowing the intentional subconscious mind and psychological psyche of the author, and within the ambit of translation, as Walter Benjamin enumerates in “The Task of the Translator” (1923) the translator should not be interested in the reader and the content, but rather in the kinship of languages, poststructuralism tends to vitriolically criticize the authorial supremacy of the author. By stressing his point, Barthes capitalizes the ‘A’ in author to stress the fact that an author has always had an authorial role, like God, and this insignia of authority is rampant in their works: “the politics of literature is not the politics of its writers. It does not deal with their personal commitment to the social; and political issues and struggles of their times. Nor does it deal with the modes of representation of political events or the social structure and the social struggles in their books” (Ranci re 2016:152).

The Evolution of Balzac’s *Sarrasine*: From a Realistic Novel to a Poststructuralist Barthesian Appropriation

“The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.” (T.S Eliot’s ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (p.38)

The Father. As a matter of fact . . . we have come here in search of an author . . .

The Manager. An author? What author?

The Father. Any author, sir.

The Manager. But there's no author here....

(Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (p.6)

In his study of practical structuralist criticism, Barthes chose an unrenowned nineteenth century novella emblematic of realism, written by the French writer Honore de Balzac (1831). The premise of *Sarrasine* (1830) chronicles the travails of a sculptor named Sarrasine who falls in love with Zambinella thinking she is a woman but in reality a castrato. According to Italian culture, a castrated man is mandated to castrate himself in order to play the soprano part in opera. Sarrasine is then awakened by the suspicion of the truth and unearthing the gender of the castrato becomes the work's main deductive pathway. To heighten the reader's involvement within the work, one becomes embroiled in a dispute between Sarrasine's mission to discover the real identity of the castrato and the castrato's deceptiveness in hiding his true identity. The extensive multidimensional ideas in this book merits versatile interpretations, making it a writerly type of text as Raman Selden infers: "The theme of castration, the confusion of sexual roles, and the mysteries surrounding the origins of capitalist wealth all invite an anti-representational reading. It is as if the principles of post-structuralism were already inscribed in this so-called realist text" (2005:153).

This heralds the very hallmark of Roland Barthes' analytical and close reading of *Sarrasine* (1831) in his work *S/Z* (1974), considered to be the benchmark set to interpret a certain text. Barthes' interpretation is nothing but a countervailing thought that was contemporaneously anomalous with other theoretical approaches. Although the title *S/Z* manifests sufficient textual evidence to the initial letters of the two main characters in the novella, the sculptor Sarrasine, and the opera singer Zambinella, it could also refer to the basic example of "difference" he discusses in his essay "The Structuralist Activity" (1963). This "difference" is deliberately yielded to the voiced and voiceless difference between two sounds; the [s] and [z].

The manifold aspects of the work have made it an emblematic of contemporary criticism that gave influence to the reader to undergo a pilgrim's progress when interpreting a certain text. Barthes' experimental method of dissection has developed a line of imitation since the publication of *S/Z*, and the ideas which he generated in the work have proven valuable for ensuing critics. In light of narratology, which is the theoretical study of narrative structure, derives its framework from *S/Z*. More importantly, it is on this basis that *S/Z* with its interpretive framework, has provided a paradigm shift from structuralism's systematized view of language as a signifier and signified to poststructuralism's view of language as discursive. This line of analysis has swelled a tidal wave of influence for an array of theorists, as Geoffrey Hartman, who looks at Sigmund Freud's language from a poststructuralist perspective that deals with language as discursive, and Umberto Eco who studies the juxtaposition between open and closed texts.

Barthes' choice of a realist text is significant on several planes; by analyzing a readerly text like *Sarrasine*, he aims to instantiate that even a realistic text is in fact not realistic at all, but rather a writerly one that draws from cultural, historical and artistic codes and conventions. Barthes' theoretical approach ingeniously regards the plurality of voices in writerly texts that are written in a way that allows the reader to produce meanings. Thus, he is paving the way to the death of the author and the birth of the reader where the reader no longer becomes a mere consumer but an active agent. David Lodge cognizes the significance of *S/Z* explicating: "Paradoxically, the effect of Barthes' brilliant interpretation of 'Sarrasine' is to impress one with the plurality rather than the limitation of meanings in the so-called classic realist text" (1988: 167). Hence, Barthes' method of analysis is somehow considered to narcotize the rigidity of structuralist narratology.

It is within these digressions that he makes clear the logic that underlies his use of codes, the text's inevitable intertextuality, the distinction between a "readerly" and a "writerly" text, and the means by which narrative creates character, the means by which the text creates thematic meaning. To put things in perspective, Barthes suggests six codes for interpreting the text and each code consists of a number of lexis (units).

To Evolve into a Writerly Existence: Analyzing the Six codes of *S/Z*

Oscar Wilde in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) epigrammatically illustrates "to reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim" (1891: 2). Hence, in order for the reader to reveal a work of art, certain tools are utilized. Approaching from this point, the article next takes the analysis of the codes which will be discussed in tandem and regarded as profoundly significant to approaching a text; for Barthes foregrounds the codes as the *raison d'être* for a text to writerly exist. Moreover,

each code brings within its compass a corpora of lexias that incorporates a vast scholarly archive. Approaching from the aforementioned viewpoint, Barthes perceives that the aim of the poststructuralist is mainly to achieve a disintegration of a literary work and then to provide a reconstructive reading in a way that allows the possibility for a text to culturally function as a communicative object. This reconstructive reading comes to the fore with the utilization of the six codes; Hermeneutic, symbolic, proairetic, semic, cultural and referential code.

The Hermeneutic code is the enigma or complication for the novel should consist of complications. Hermeneutic is a Greek word which instantiates the art of interpretation, therefore, this code contains the lexias which either formulate a question or pose a response to a question. Because stories always progress as a series of questions and answers, which is mainly the basis of suspense, the hermeneutic code is the primary code of storytelling itself. For example, the questions posed by Barthes himself after commenting on Balzac's story *Sarrasine*:

Who is speaking in this way? Is it the story's hero, concerned to ignore the castrato concealed beneath the woman? Is it the man Balzac, endowed by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it the author Balzac, professing certain "literary" ideas of femininity? Is it universal wisdom? or romantic psychology? (1970: 228)

To illustrate, these questions are all revolved around the castrato who poses as the enigmatic element in the story. We, as readers, are still unsure if the castrato, disguised as a woman, is a man or a woman. On a similar vein, the ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) is enigmatic; for also the reader is unsure if there's a ghost or if it is a projection of the protagonist's internal conflicts. There are certain literary works that are imbued with plurality and allow the reader to pose questions around enigmatic characters. Another example can be found in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), where Heathcliff himself is the enigmatic hero; for we don't know where he comes from and if the ghost is real or a figment of his imagination.

The semic code pertains to meanings that are laden with a degree of connotation in relation to character. Such meanings are not to be taken in their literal implication, but should be perceived as rudiments that can encompass resonances and additional linguistic associations correlated with characters or imbued within a characteristic feature. In consequence, the semic code will culminate to establish a character that will evolve through signifiers like the voice/frame of narrative, physical appearance, and name. This contrapuntally may also encompass multifarious connotations in diverse contexts elsewhere in the text. Barthes provides in *S/Z* an example of a semic code through the signifier of the name, explicating:

The proper name acts as a magnetic field for the semes; referring in fact to a body, it draws the semic configuration into an evolving (biographical) tense. In principle, the character who says "I" has no name (Proust's narrator is an outstanding example); in fact, however, I immediately becomes a name, his name.....to say I is inevitably to attribute signifieds to oneself.... (1974: 67-68)

Symbolic code alludes to the myriad of symbols a reader excavates through their reading of a text; for every writer employs their own symbols where some of them are traditional and others are recurring motifs that they have developed. For instance, in the opening sentence of *Sarrasine*, "I was buried in one of those profound reveries...." (Balzac 1830: 3) Nevertheless, the notion of being in a state of daydreams, establishes this opening lexia according to Barthes as the symbolic code, because it sets a tension between two states: "dreaming" whilst being "awake," a dichotomous idea which is generally repeated in the novella that it takes on thematic significance. This phantasmagorical tension foregrounds a symbolic reading of the text, for the state of dreaming tends to be symbolic in most works of literature. For example, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), the reader is unsure if most of the plot is real or a dream, this analysis makes his journey to the forest symbolic. In Magical Realism, the antithesis of dreams and awakening are symbolically used, like in Haruki Murakami's literary works, dreams are used to provide certain existential ideas.

Prouairetic code is an all-encompassing lexia with multidimensional purposes that substantiates interdisciplinary readings of a text. It is the narrative code of sequence that determines the result of actions, and contains the spatial and temporal contexts that are important in terms of contextualizing the actions and identifying a literary work within its cultural code. It is the way the tension is built up and the audience is left guessing what will happen next. Nonetheless, chronological sequence seems to disappear in modern texts, in realism there is one narrator, whereas in modern texts like William Faulkner's *The*

Sound and the Fury (1929), there are multiple narrators with different usages; stream of consciousness- the fragmented form of narration- and dramatic monologues. In consequence, the novel tends to become dialogic and not monologic because each voice throws light on the enigma of the story. This code is elemental for it allows the reader to unveil a vast archive of scholarly approaches when focusing on the historical context. This lexia appositely reconstructs an impetuous interpretation through the understanding of the narration of spatial and temporal contexts. To explicate, having multiple voices fragmenting the novel, and then placing it within a historical context, allows the reader to be exposed to multiple disciplines like psychology, anthropology, and philosophy, on the grounds there had to be a root system influencing literature, since it absorbs whatever is around it. This quantifiable procedure also tends to proselytize the alienation of the author from the text.

Though the subject matter of this study is quintessentially poststructuralist, its groundwork is yielded to the manifold disciplines that form an overture to its kernel. Certain streams within nineteenth century thought exerted an enormous influence on literary texts, making them writerly and polyphonic. In anthropology, James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) had a prominent influence on literature because writers found universal analogies between the past, present and future. In other words, the study of myths revealed universal themes that can be applied in any place or time, and this led to the inception of the notion of defamiliarization. As a result of this, poets like T.S. Eliot could distance themselves by alluding to a myth and henceforth, detaching themselves which developed the theory of impersonality.

Several philosophers came to prominence with their reciprocal rejection of Plato's absolutism-reciprocal to Structuralism's sign and signified- under the pressure of science that contested absolute knowledge. With Albert Einstein's theory of relativity that made him recapitulate that the process of simultaneity is relative and not an absolute relation between events. This culminates in the realization that events that are simultaneous for one observer may not be reciprocal for another, leading to the ineliminable counterintuitive explanation that time flows differently.

The Cultural code is prolific for it permeates the whole Barthesian corpus, specifically *S/Z*. For the first time, there is an approach that yields to analyzing culture and seeks to unearth the underlying structures of meaning found in cultural performances.

While Structuralists have encouraged the reader to methodologically approach a cultural text as a source of language, Poststructuralism meticulously puts the text within the historical context in order to unpack from it a wealth of historical insight. Taking cue from a coterie of theorists who followed this thought process of not showing importance to the historical context, many thinkers, like Matthew Arnold in "The Poetics of Poetry" (1888) spearheaded the idea of undermining a historical context. At the beginning, Formalists have fomented primacy to look at the organic unity of a text, like the Russian formalists namely Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky who perceived that the focal point should be the aesthetic effects through the author's employment of certain literary devices and avoid the aesthetic form with moral and cultural significance. Bakhtin's panegyric on context in "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" (1940), can be seen to succinctly emphasize the generation of meaning through the "primacy of context over text" (1988: 126).

The Referential code provides a cultural matrix of values from which the story draws. Gerard Genet corroborates that the subject of poetics should put undue emphasis on the architextuality of a text, "the literariness of literature" (1997: 17), and this includes a set of categories that transcend a certain text, such as literary genres, discourses, and modes of enunciation. This textual transcendence is called transtextuality, where Genet stipulates "as the sets of the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1997:17). He classifies five types of transtextual transcendence, and in order not to divert from the premise of the study, only two types will be elaborated upon; Intertextuality and hypertextuality. The former has been established by Julia Kristeva, who grounds her discussion by drawing upon Russian Formalists and Mikhail Bakhtin's vehicle of thought, and thus, coined it to become the kernel of poststructuralist theory. On this premise, Barthes incorporates this lexia when analyzing a realistic novel that supposedly implements a readerly credo, and approaching it from this type of lexia unravels its intertextuality and makes it writerly malleable. Moreover, this lexia's manifold aspects also allows the reader to interpret texts by making connections to different genres.

Nonetheless, it is by no means a proven conclusion that the referential code should only contain intertextuality. To heighten the reader's involvement, Genet corroborates that when intertextuality is not found, other devices within the same

spectrum can be cognized in a text such as; hypertextually or palimpsests and hypotext. Palimpsests is seemingly taking from plentiful historical circumstances and then building the text around it. Like Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1867), where he used certain resources that include historical occurrences about Napoléon Bonaparte and how the Russians defeated him, hence turning sociopolitical historical facts into fiction. Hypertext, on the other hand, alludes to "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*)" (1997: 21). Like William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (hypertext) which derives material from a (hypotext) the medieval Scandinavian legend of Amleth.

Poststructuralist Appropriation of Roland Barthes' S/Z in F. Scott's Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby (1925) is a key component in F. Scott Fitzgerald's pioneering oeuvre, where its backbone quintessentially encompasses the elements of the Jazz Age, the roaring twenties and the Lost Generation. It is considered to be a prototypal American narration that reflects and valorizes the cultural dichotomy in post-world war one. This perennial novel, in its every fiber of narration, captures the spirit of the author's generation and earned itself a permanent place in the American literary canon. *The Great Gatsby* is a novel that chronicles through the eyes and ears of Nick Carraway the life of the self-made, self-invented millionaire Jay Gatsby who portrays the Jazz Age in all of its self-absorbed decadence and excess. The novel follows the quest of Gatsby, a man who authenticates his social metamorphosis by transcending his position from poverty to wealth, into the arms of his beloved Daisy Buchanan, and eventually to death. Gatsby emblemizes some of Fitzgerald's, and his country's most abiding obsessions steeped in altruism like money, ambition, greed, and the promise of a new beginning.

The Great Gatsby is still timelier than ever, and excavating a miscellaneous amount of research would unquestionably evince this well. A vast wealth of research has been conducted on the novel, and for this reason, a review that is somewhat analogous to the poststructuralist vernacular of the thrust of this study will be mentioned. Mohammad Orskhan examines the deconstructive notion of love within a Derridean perspective in "Metaphysical or Differential: Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* under Derridean Concept of Love" (2019). However, up until this moment, this novel has not been examined from an S/Z application. This novel gathers some of the poststructuralist aspects in a comprehensible and unified manner, and it is by utilizing Roland Barthes' six codes for interpreting a literary text that it unveils a complex system of textual codes inscribed within the narrative body of the novel.

The Hermeneutic Code: The enigmatic element in this novel relies on a long history of telling a story within a story. The narrative frame that Fitzgerald uses is intriguing in a way that this novel doubles up as a mystery novel, through the character of Jay Gatsby whose hidden secrets contribute to the plot's complication. The moment Gatsby is introduced in the novel, Fitzgerald slowly chips away at this persona and peels back his layers. Nick's quest in unveiling Gatsby's secrets mirrors the reader's, so that both the narrator Nick, and the reader collaboratively work to unravel the mystery of Gatsby. From the beginning of the novel, as soon as the reader is introduced to Gatsby, they intuitively know that there is something disconcerting about this character. As the novel proceeds, the reader comes to grasp that Gatsby is not his real name but Jay Gatz is.

This enigmatic element tends to be versatile within an interlocked manner; for while allowing the reader to delve more into the enigmatic narrative spectrum found in a text-in this case Jay Gatsby's true origins- it inevitably generates crucial discussions pertaining to a certain society. In this case, the American society's ideological landscape forgoes one's enigma in preference to their materialistic position. To entail the same line of thought, *Sarrasine* reiterates this strand of universal thought: "provided that good society knows the amount of your fortune, you are classed among those figures which equal yours....even if this family were of gypsy extraction, it was so wealthy, so attractive, that fashionable society could well afford to overlook its little mysteries" (Balzac 1830: 12).

Gatsby is wrapped up in an aura of mystery secluding Nick and the reader altogether, from his personal life and history. The reader at the beginning encounters several roadblocks in trying to understand Gatsby, on the ground that there's so much to grasp. The reader does not know why Gatsby holds on to a secretive past, along with nurturing a hidden agenda of trying to get Daisy back until the end. Moreover, it becomes vague for the reader if the rumors, that were circulating around during

the party regarding his identity are just mere rumors or true facts about Gatsby. It is not until later, does the reader find out about the source of money which happens to be illegal. Through being a bootlegger, selling fake bonds, and committing grotesque criminal acts, Gatsby was able to climb the social ladder and rise to aristocracy.

The Cultural Code is evident through the novel's concern with the cultural power by offering a kaleidoscopic fine-grained snapshot of the American society. While the British cultural scene was receding it was a process of recess strata; the American cultural scene was flourishing and thriving. This novel is considered to be a powerful statement in itself and is imbued with an overarching bodies of knowledge. All things considered, the novel is seen as a critique of capitalism, and the miscellaneous issues pertaining to it, like commodification, consumerism, social inequality and class distinction. Furthermore, it grapples with the ideologies bestowed by the American Dream that indoctrinate far-fetched beliefs.

At its core, it presents a close study of the predominance of American commodity culture, along with its cultural, social and personal consequences. Upper class people are exploiting lower class members, especially women, and through this critique, a process of commodification is taking a grip on the American society. For instance, love is commodified. One crucial example to demonstrate is when Daisy marries Tom where he gives her a white expensive necklace. By doing so, he's acquiring and commodifying her. This also applies to Myrtle Wilson who has an affair with Tom. Not only does Tom exploit her, but also her husband who desperately wants to buy his used car in order to sell it. Tom's selection of lower class women to be his mistresses is to easily enable him to own them, which brings within its compass the concept of commodification.

Hence, commodification ensues the shift from a cultural production to one of consumption. The idea of consumerism is well established in the novel specifically through the glamorously lavish parties thrown at Gatsby's ostentatious gothic mansion and the number of cars owned by Gatsby and Tom. When people eat and drink with an unlimited access to the luxurious foods and drinks at Gatsby's parties, they are consuming everything with an oblivion towards the source of money, which unfolds in them an apocalypse of gluttony. Another idea of consumerism is implemented in the fact that Gatsby has a pool and never swims in it.

The Great Gatsby is a novel that can be perceived as a chronicle of the American dream at a point in America's history when capitalism's promise of economic opportunity for all its citizens seemed at its peak of fulfillment. Through the ideologically ingrained espousal that it implemented which is known as "Get-rich-quick" everybody was happy making money through stocks, nevertheless they were unaware of the fact that they are taking a path to self-destruction. Even the "little man," George Myrtle was hoping to make his fortune by playing the stock market.

As aforesaid, this can be veritably manifested in Gatsby himself, whose meteoric rise from being the son of "shiftless and unsuccessful farm people" (Fitzgerald 1926: 106) to the owner of a "colossal" Long Island mansion with "a marble swimming pool and over forty acres of lawn and garden" (Fitzgerald 1926: 9) seems to incorporate the infinite possibility offered by the American dream. Gatsby becomes an archetypal figure of the self-made man who emblematically grows into a symbol of all men who fail to achieve the American Dream. This underscores how the novel polemically challenged the American dream by disparaging it, and showing that its ideological belief is a false concept and cannot be achieved in clean, but rather crooked and corruptive ways. It is a caveat and an alarming wakeup call by convincing the mass that the American foundational system is rotten, and by doing so, Fitzgerald challenges the foundational system of America.

The Great Gatsby, however, does not celebrate the heady capitalist culture it portrays, but in evincing a Marxist interpretation, the novel attests to unearth its dark underbelly instead. Although Barthes harbored a dim view of Marxist readings of literature, where he enunciates in *Criticism as Language* that "orthodox Marxism has proved critically sterile through offering a purely mechanical explanation of works of literature and providing slogans rather than criteria of value" (2000; 647). Nonetheless, appropriating a Marxist reading to the novel has been elemental. Through its uncomplimentary embodiment of those who are at the pinnacle of the economic heap and its scorching examination of the ways in which the American dream not only fails to fulfill its promise but also contributes to the decay of personal values, Fitzgerald's novel stands as a severe critique of American capitalist culture and the ideology that it promotes. While this novel tries to criticize capitalism and to some extent it does, it fails to push the criticism to its limit and thus, falls prey to the very ideology it is

trying to criticize.

The Semi code: Fitzgerald's employment of a narrative frame to structure history is constructed through Nick Carraway, a partially involved narrator who is reluctantly constrained to pass judgments. All the actions in the novel are filtered through Nick's perception, thereby conjoining authorial perspective with the effect of first person narrative. The title bears paradigmatic importance as it attests that the "Great" Jay Gatsby becomes ipso facto responsible for the subjective unreliability of Nick. Nick is captivated with fascination towards Gatsby that leads him to take his side and invariably position himself as a countervailing force to the rest of the characters. This can be manifested when he tells Gatsby that, "They're a rotten crowd...You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" (Fitzgerald 1926: 98). Throughout the novel, Gatsby's criminal connections are elucidated, but Nick, however is thoroughly charmed with Gatsby that he intends to sideline his criminal connections and illegal praxis.

Furthermore, when Nick attends Gatsby's party, he coincidentally eavesdrops on several people who were gossiping and circulating stories regarding his true identity that "He killed a man once" or that "He was a German spy during the war" (Fitzgerald 1926: 29). Nick nonetheless, is seen to shift the blame from Gatsby to them, declaring that they have to realize with full awareness how they are abundantly consuming his food and exploiting his hospitality, and thus, have no rights whatsoever to be speaking ill about him.

The flip side of the coin is that while this iconoclastic novel tries to criticize capitalism, it falls a victim to the very ideology it was trying to criticize. Nick Carraway comes from a wealthy and aristocratic family, and although his narrative voice is indirectly perceived as a fulcrum that serves to criticize the ideologies of capitalism, he nevertheless fails to escape the ideology in which he lives in. This can be epitomized in the way the novel, through Nick's narration, represents George and Myrtle Wilson who belong to the working class. They are portrayed in a grotesque and ugly manner, which resultantly makes the reader less sympathetic towards them. This is a consequence of Nick's subjective voice, embedded in the novel where he becomes infatuated with capitalism to the extent that the novel distances and alienates the reader from the Wilsons, instead of making the readers sympathetic towards them.

The crux of Fitzgerald's subjectivity lies in his employment of Nick Carraway's voice. On the surface, Nick condemns the nucleus of capitalism in order to garner the trust of his audience, but when the reader peels away the layering of his narrative voice, Nick is benefiting from the fruits of capitalism. Through his employment of pathos, the reader turns a blind eye to Nick's defense mechanism which justifies Gatsby's capitalist praxis, and adopts an abominable attitude towards people who do not belong to the higher class. Entrenched also in the lush language is the author's explication about commodities which entices the reader to be thirsty and enthusiastic in hunting for materialism and wealth. In other words, instead of discouraging the reader from seeking capitalism, it encourages them even more. Moreover, the novel was set during the Jazz Period, and accordingly, Jazz music is an African American invention, notwithstanding that there was not a single black person within the storyline. To cap matters, Fitzgerald is distorting reality for his exclusion of black people and for attributing a black movement to the white people.

With regard to the Referential Code, Fitzgerald's employment of it is ingrained through his intertextuality with T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" (1922), which initiates that *The Great Gatsby* is a novel which is considered to be a prose version of it, especially in the chapters revolving around the valley of ashes. Another referential element is a verse taken from a song entitled "The Sheik of Araby," composed in 1921 by Harry B. Smith, which responds to the famous and worldwide recognized film *The Sheik* (1921) starring Rudolph Valentino. This avers that the novel draws on some ideas of the age itself, as it was published and written at a time when cinema was emerging. When Fitzgerald wrote the novel he was influenced by the cinematic techniques, and he himself had a hand at screen writing, he comes from a place where movie production was crucially important.

Nonetheless, a vast scholarly archive instantiates that his use of this movie in particular unveils a history of Orientalist thought. In *Orientalism* (2003), Edward Said corroborates that Western scholarship of Islamic civilization was incumbent on political ideologies that is yielded in self-affirmation and cultural myopia towards the East rather than objective study. Ironically, Said uses one encompassing overview of Fitzgerald, incorporating him more than once as one of the many

heterogeneous set of writers whose literary works quintessentially highlight the existence of the scope of orientalism. “I think to speak of a genre of Orientalist writing as exemplified in the works of Hugo, Goethe, Nerval, Flaubert, Fitzgerald, and the like” (Said 2003: 32). Peter L. Hays simultaneously conceptualizes that the use of *The Sheik of Araby* was not done randomly, “It refers to the movie of the same name and echoes its suggestion of class-almost racial- distinction between the blonde daughter of a British nobleman and the dark-haired, dark-skinned sheik.” (Hays 2011: 322) Although Barthes did not support a Marxist approach to a text, he on the other hand cognizes the significance of orientalist thinking through exposing historical occurrence of colonialism, and this axiom is crystalized in ‘Grammaire africaine’ (1970), where he enunciates the importance of unearthing the contours of postcolonial discourse found in texts, which merits further involvement of the reader to excavate these contours.

Another referential element in the novel is a biblical intertextuality that is vested in the quotation “‘God sees everything,’ repeated Wilson. ‘That’s an advertisement,’ Michaelis assured him” (Fitzgerald 1926: 87). This quotation corresponds to the biblical verse, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (King James Bible. 2017: Proverbs 15:3). By the same token, Tom Buchanan’s reading of *The Rise of the Colored Empire* by “That man Goddard,” is a reference to Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* (1920). It is also considered as a symbolic reference as it sufficiently manifests textual evidence that systematic racism, classicism, anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant sentiments are substantiated in the novel and espoused by Tom, a partisan whose race, wealth and gender position him as the mouthpiece of the capitalist dominant ideology.

The Symbolic Code: Fitzgerald employs a plethora of highly symbolic images revealing the double meaning of the passage. To start with the West Egg and East Egg, the juxtaposition between the two areas is an axiomatic emblem of symbolism. The latter symbolically represents the established aristocratic familiar origins, while the former represents the newly Nouveau Riche. However, the people who neither represent the East Egg nor the West Egg are trodden and crushed by the capitalist regime, they are the ones who live in the valley of ashes, a decayed and barren waste land. The Valley of Ashes is:

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 (Fitzgerald 1926: 27).

The aforementioned quotation is a powerfully chilling image that symbolizes the life led by those like George and Myrtle Wilson who do not have the socioeconomic resources of the Buchanans. Moreover, people like the Wilsons don’t stand a chance in a world dominated by people like the Buchanans and ashes are what is left over for them after something is consumed or wasted. This symbolizes the downfall of American society.

For this reason, the valley of ashes and the billboard advertisement of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg are reciprocal in their imperative significance of symbolic function. Dr. T.J. Eckleburg is a faded billboard sign put up by a wealthy oculist in the Valley of Ashes, which grows to become a God-like figure of judgment to members of the Valley. This implies that religion started taking a back seat to consumerism in this era, considering that this Valley’s “God” is a billboard intended to help capitalists profit off of the poor inhabitants of the Valley. The two poignant images are analogous to Gatsby on the grounds that Gatsby, the self-made god-like figure, looks for the green light over his dock in a same way this god-like billboard looks over the Valley. This chilling Orwellian like image also reiterates *Nineteen Eighty Four’s* (1949) “Big Brother is watching you”, as it tends to outline how people who are not part of the symbolic order of capitalism tend to live a deterministic existence, as it will be determined that they will never rise unless they get rich. Hence, an invisible metaphorical arc, as in Dr. T.J. Eckleburg’s sign- will surveil individuals living in that valley as it will continually hamstringing them with prejudicial roadblocks and passive entrapment of accomplishments, and let them inhabit marginal spaces within the hierarchal stratum of society.

Explicating the meaning in the symbol of judgment being located in the Valley of Ashes is significant, as it undergirds that most of the immoral behavior that deserves judgments takes place there; from racial discrimination to Tom’s adulterous affair with Myrtle. And considering Dr. Eckleburg is often described as almost frowning over the Valley, Fitzgerald

obliquely implies that if there is a God he would be displeased with what is taking place in this nation. In George Wilson's case, the faded eyes can symbolize the death of the American dream, or the American dream being an illusion to begin with. To endorse the aforementioned idea, Dr. Eckleburg's yellow glasses are a lone source of a color situated in a Valley filled with gray. This brings forth a visualization of a decaying and hoaxed image of the American dream, and corroborates that while some people are immersed with the ideology of the American Dream and are using it to establish a name for themselves, they will eventually end up like the grotesque ashes in the valley.

The significant symbolism behind setting the novel in New York is to implement that New York became the heart of capitalist darkness and the locus of the financial world in the 1920's. In essence, this setting is set contrariwise to the rural areas in which the characters originated from including Tom, Daisy, Nick and Gatsby. Gatsby and Daisy first meet in Louisville, and it is divided into two parts. The Highlands, where Daisy lives, and the Lowlands; The former is owned by the high class people that are always protected from floods for being able to afford living in the mountains, and the latter is owned by the lower class people that cannot afford to buy houses in the affluent area and thus, are destroyed by the floods. In a similar vein, Nick Carraway moves to New York to learn about the bonds: "so I decided to go East and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business" (Fitzgerald 1926: 3). The bond business is symbolic in itself, for it is the fabric of capitalism that represented the burgeoning financial businesses. Through this symbol, the novel documents a cumulative moment in American history when the nation became the financial center where in a few years, the Great Depression and the crash of the stock market will take place. In a way, it symbolically stands as a foreshadowing element in predicting the corruption of the financial world and giving a pessimistic impression of what is yet to come.

Proairetic Code: The Great Gatsby is a modernist novel written from a first person narration, however it is until placing it within its historical context and undertaking a revisionary interpretation, in conjunction with an empirical analysis, that the novel becomes a writerly type of text. The novel's narrative pattern when placed within its historical context was able to potentially generate interdisciplinary readings that substantiated ecumenical interpretations in previous lexias. The narrative code of sequence does not manifest that *The Great Gatsby* is a story of the American Dream but rather a story of a self-made man who tried to capture the American dream. There's a sequential pattern that governs the actions of the characters in the novel; seek, find and lose. Similarly to Gatsby where he seeks Daisy, finds her and loses her. This code also employs as a device in building up tension where the readers are left cliff-hanging guessing what would happen next, like when Daisy finds out about Gatsby's poor origins. Hence, it creates anticipation for the reader by wondering whether she will stick with Gatsby despite learning the truth or desert him.

Conclusion:

The Great Gatsby is a holy grail of the roaring twenties with a tangled web of threads, where the lives of its characters disintegrate before our own eyes and those threads need to be unraveled. Once unraveled, the reader is able to encounter a wide range of probable meanings. Reading *The Great Gatsby* is a quasi-manifesto for living in the twenty first century, as we live in a majoritarian capitalist society that it becomes a conduit for not falling into the ambits of capitalism. Fitzgerald tints our glasses with a tautology of capitalist grandiose rhetoric filled with glamorous settings, and a rosy prose imbued with a lush language. However, he leaves the lenses just translucent enough for the readers to see that Gatsby represents the truth of the American Dream, among several other aspects. By applying Barthes' six codes, the reader is not only able to unravel the tangled webs enunciated in the text, but also to extract a multidimensionality within the text and adopt a multifaceted perspective, showing that in poststructuralism, the reader deconstructs and decodes the paradigmatic and discursive kaleidoscopes that emulates a text, unearthing the inchoate mass of ideas.

It can be argued that Barthes' use of *Sarrasine* in particular is to make a statement; just like how the artist created a sculpture of a woman, when in reality it was a man, what the writer creates is not the truth but a figment of their own imagination. Therefore, the writer's job after giving birth to their work ends, because it is a representation of their own truth and it is the reader's job to unearth- to use a Nietzschean aspect-the multiple truths the writer failed to see. The American dream was Fitzgerald's and Gatsby's nemeses altogether, for Fitzgerald firmly believed that *The Great Gatsby* is the

manifesto of the American dream, and that some rich people can be relied on to uplift the status quo of the United States; it is after castrating the American dream did he realize that the rich are all destructible, as Ernest Hemingway corroborates:

He remembered poor Scott Fitzgerald and his romantic
awe of [the rich]....

He thought they were a special glamorous race and when he found they weren't it wrecked him just as much as any other thing that wrecked him (1936: 3).

1. Moreover, The Death of the Author still bares contemporaneous significance up until this day, as it has been approached recently by readers of the *Harry Potter* series in 2020 through making an analogy with the signifier of The Death of the Author. Henceforth, deciding to distance themselves from the author J.K. Rowling after her controversial remarks on transgenderism. The fact that the concept of the Death of the Author is still so relevant makes poststructuralism incessantly perennial.

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