

AUTHOR AND TEXT INTERPRETATION: F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND «THE GREAT GATSBY»

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To fully understand a literary work, we must explore its origins – who wrote it, when and why it was created, and the meanings the author intended to convey. In *The Great Gatsby* (1925), F. Scott Fitzgerald's personal views, emotions, and thoughts are deeply embedded in the novel's structure and themes. Therefore, to interpret the novel more effectively, we need to consider these influences and how they shape Fitzgerald's stylistic and linguistic choices. This analysis will examine Fitzgerald's narrative techniques, including first-person and retrospective narration, as well as his use of language to establish tone and meaning. Through the linguo-stylistic method of analysis, we will explore his figurative language such as metaphors, similes and other literary tools to uncover deeper layers of expression. Additionally, a cognitive-stylistic approach will help us understand how Fitzgerald's language choices evoke emotions in characters and influence the reader's perception of the novel's themes.

Key words: *author, F. Scott Fitzgerald, the Great Gatsby, interpretation, linguistic/stylistic choices, emotions, themes.*

Introduction

Literature/fiction has an invisible power to enable people to see through the lenses of others, therefore, it is like a looking glass into the world. Literature teaches life experiences from the saddest stories to the happiest ones that will touch the hearts of the readers. Pieces of literature are created by humans, authors who, being a member of a certain society, are singled out due to their profound understanding of the world, nature, feelings and emotions, and sometimes it is difficult to interpret and understand the works of verbal art without “seeing” the author. Hence, it is important to reveal the

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role of the author in the creation of the overall meaning of a literary work. The search for a better understanding of a given text and a closer interpretation of literature come to one point – the origin and mindset of the author. In other words, the possible precise interpretation of a literary text and a possible reproduction of the genuine idea or meaning lying behind the text calls for a specific attention to the creator of the literary text and the real motive of his/her creation. The author, the sole creator of the literary text, takes on a special importance in this respect.

This point has been given an eloquent expression by F. Schlieremacher (1977) and E. Hirsh (1967) who are convinced that for a more in-depth understanding and deeper interpretation of a literary text we need to discover its origin – the author of the work and the author's intended meanings. This is a fundamental fact inherent in any literary experience as “In it is comprised everything that we prize in literature; so much so that to ignore the presence of the author is wholly to ignore literature” (Nagao, 1991, p. 162).

Fitzgerald as creator was concerned “of his time and his country”, of his experiences that he examined and re-examined, of things that made him the kind of author he is (Keshmiri & Mahdikhani, 2015, p. 78). Therefore, in our pursuit of a better interpretation of the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. S. Fitzgerald (1925), we should accept the fact that the author's life, views of life, emotions and feelings, thoughts as well as circumstances in which he wrote his novel – play a crucial role in the organization and realization of the text.

It should also be mentioned that the problem of the author's role in text interpretation is very topical today in terms of linguo-stylistics and cognitive-stylistics which allow to focus on the close interconnection between the true self of the creator and his language, on the reader's comprehension and interpretation of the narrative voice and viewpoint of the author (Semino and Culpeper, 2002; Leech and Short, 2007; Bretones Callejas, et al., 2021). Thus, on the one hand, due to the linguo-stylistic and cognitive-stylistic analyses of the text, it is possible to reveal the specific style and the hidden self of the author, his views and beliefs, emotions and feelings, life experiences and dreams, and on the other – help the reader find keys to the doors of comprehension of the creator and his creation.

How to disclose author as an integral part of the text

The author and his individual style are integral parts of the internal coherence of the text that need to be respected during the process of interpretation (Capozzi 1997, p. 225). The individual style of the author is the accumulation of certain linguistic features which may be encountered in the work of a particular writer. It is the reflection and linguistic expression of the author's life experiences and intentions, “the emotional state and the inner world” (Madoyan 2013, p. 159) that allow to read between the lines and decipher the hidden meanings of a literary work.

Style distinguishes author in the use of language. It consists of individual choices from the general language, i.e., what choices to make in a particular text. It is the author's stylistic choice and linguistic expression that condition perceptions dependent on the creativity of the reader to interpret the text. Besides the general reader, there is also the literary analyst – the linguistic observer that discloses the creator's language and style and helps the reader in setting up an objective dialogue with him/her. This

observer's "scrutiny is not just a matter of looking at the text, but of looking through the text to its significance [...] to check or validate intuitions by detailed analysis" not aiming at replacing the reader's own aesthetic perceptions but prompting, directing and shaping them into a better understanding (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 4). In this sense, the interpretation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is the disclosure of the author as an intrinsic part of the text and his style as his "dress of thought" (ibid, p. 13).

As already mentioned, Fitzgerald's authorial style and the linguistic choices typical of it can be investigated through **(1) linguo-stylistic** and **(2) cognitive-stylistic** methods of analysis. The former will focus on the **(1a)** application of narrative techniques (first-person narration and retrospective narration); **(1b)** identification of lexical choices to convey meaning/tone, **(1c)** usage of figurative language (metaphors, similes, epithets, symbols and other literary tools) in *The Great Gatsby*. The latter will enable to comprehend how Fitzgerald's stylistic choices of language shape **(2a)** emotions of characters and **(2b)** perceptions of themes, thus enabling interpretation of the text based on linguistic cues.

Comprehension of the creator and interpretation of his creation

The **(1) linguo-stylistic tools** in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* are not randomly selected – they constitute an indispensable part of the world he has created and function in close conjunction with his individual writing style, world vision, life perceptions, personal attitudes and approaches and, in their turn, shape the overall meaning of the text.

The author's **(1a) narrative techniques** include first-person narration (Nick Carraway as a narrator shapes the understanding of the protagonist and other characters) and retrospective narration (Nick Carraway recounts certain events after they have happened). Below is example of first-person narration that aims at shaping the reader's comprehension and experience:

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. (p. 20)

Overall, the first-person narrative helps the reader to interpret Nick as a subjective, often ambiguous and unreliable narrator. However, Nick's eloquent narrations are rich with imagery and elevate the novel's prose. Nick's retrospective narrations, his recount and analysis of events give the novel an account of the moral decay of the wealthy elite and an air of nostalgia and mystery. Just in the opening of the novel Nick reflects on a past event:

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. 'Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.' (p. 1)

Nick's reflections of the past signal reconsideration of his past judgments and conclusions based on his past experiences.

Fitzgerald's **(1b) lexical choices** are crucial in establishing the tone and mood of the novel and contribute greatly to the authorial individual style. His words create luxuriant, fascinating descriptions of Gatsby's parties (*lights, bright, sun, chatter,*

laughter, cocktails, garden, orchestra, music, glistening, hors d'oeuvre, spiced, champagne) which, however, specify the ultimately worthless, hollow, superficial spirit of the jazz age. The characters' portrayal and discourse reflect either high or low social class. Daisy and Tom Buchanan's use of refined lexical units testify to a privileged status while Myrtle Wilson's rough words demonstrate her working-class background and low status. For example, Tom is *supercilious* (superior looking), Daisy's voice has *the sound of money in it* (rich person's voice), Myrtle uses harsh words (*he wasn't fit to lick my shoe*). The lexical units such as descriptive and sensory adjectives (*bright, rosy-colored, fantastic, grotesque, dreamy, thrilling, passionate, grotesque, powdery, brisk*), concrete and abstract nouns (*light, valley, gold, hope, dream, love*), active and sensory verbs (*grow brighter, lurch*), adverbs enhancing mood and atmosphere (*within, without, simultaneously*), greatly contribute to Fitzgerald's signature style. Adjectives create a vivid imagery and enhance themes of wealth and decay, nouns mostly ground personal ambition, verbs evoke movement and feeling and unexpected adverbs, although less dominant than adjectives, intensify emotions.

Fitzgerald's use of **(1c) figurative language** enhances themes of illusion/disillusionment and elevates his individual style. The metaphors and the simile in the passage below express wealth and extravagance.

Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the **youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves**, of the freshness of many clothes, and of **Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor**. (p. 150)

The metaphors youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves and safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor, as well as the verbal simile gleaming like silver arouse associations of affluence as opposed to poverty and the poor.

The metaphors below illustrate Gatsby's extravagant social world:

On Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages along the shore, **the world and its mistress** returned to Gatsby's house and **twinkled hilariously on his lawn**. (p. 61)

The world and its mistress as a metaphor exemplifies wealth and glamour. It may function as a periphrasis for Gatsby's party guests, as well as personification for them as the world itself. The metaphor twinkled hilariously on his lawn evokes images of being distant (twinkling like distant stars) on the one hand, and being superficial (in an unserious, hilarious way) on the other.

Fitzgerald's individual style becomes most striking due to literary tools which add vividness and depth to descriptions.

This is a valley of ashes – a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (p. 23)

The epithets *valley of ashes* and *grotesque gardens* will be interpreted as a wasteland for the poor people in contrast to the shining wealth of the elite. The simile *ashes grow like wheat* symbolizes destruction and decay. The ashes, then, are personified, extended metaphorically (*ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men* to symbolize a crumbling existence. The epithets *transcendent effort* and *powdery air* imply barely existing, suffocating figures and symbolize lifelessness.

*On week-ends his **Rolls-Royce became an omnibus**, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his **station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug** to meet all trains.* (p. 39)

While not a direct simile, the implicit contrast *Rolls-Royce became an omnibus* symbolizes Gatsby's hospitality, his ability to receive and serve endless guests. To enhance the authorial style and imagery still more, the simile *station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug* is used. This simile reinforces the idea of movement/action (*scampered*) and agility (*bug*) symbolizing wealth through *yellow* (the color of gold) and unabating, intense social life.

Overall, the stylistic devices in the novel serve the aim of reinforcing the contrasting notions of illusion and disillusionment, dreams and reality, grandness and unattainability.

The analysis of **(2) cognitive-stylistic tools** in *The Great Gatsby* makes it possible to demonstrate how the reader is affected mentally and emotionally by the author's language and how s/he builds and interprets meaning. Let us try to interpret pieces from the novel based on linguistic cues, first of all to comprehend how Fitzgerald's stylistic choices shape both **(2a) emotions of characters** and **(2b) perceptions of themes**.

She held my hand impersonally, as a promise that she'd take care of me in a minute, and gave ear to two girls in twin yellow dresses who stopped at the foot of the steps. (p. 47)

The emotions of the characters are expressed via different linguistic units. For example, *held my hand* implies intimacy, however, the adverb *impersonally* signals detachment, which means there is certain emotional distance between the two characters. Next, *as a promise* envisions attention, but *in a minute* delays the fulfillment of the promise which indicates to indifference between the two of them. Narrator's indirect speech testifies to emotional inconstancy which is intensified by *gave ear to two girls*, suggesting that social interaction with the girls is a priority.

Themes to be perceived include superficiality and detachment (*impersonally, in a minute*), wealth and uniformity (*twin yellow dresses*) and finally – isolation and solitude in an endless number of people.

Let us analyze another example to see how Fitzgerald's stylistic choices shape both emotions of characters and perceptions of themes:

So, the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes. (p. 115)

The *caravansary* which *had fallen in like a card house* presents Gatsby's emotional devastation at the collapse of everything he has built around Daisy. Here the simile compares the luxuriant parties, the house and all the wealth in it with a fragile *card house* that crumbles in a moment. The *disapproval in her eyes* intensifies Gatsby's catastrophic emotional defeat.

The themes perceived include illusion (*caravansary* as American Dream) and idealization (*card house* as fragile dreams). The broader themes are presented in disillusionment at the past that can never return and love that has fallen apart.

Thus, Fitzgerald the creator is always present in his creation. His life, authorial style and intensions underlie interpretation of *The Great Gatsby*. As the artist puts it himself "That was always my experience – a poor boy in a rich town; a poor boy in a rich boy's

school; a poor boy in a rich man's club at Princeton [...]. However, I have never been able to forgive the rich for being rich, and it has colored my entire life and works" (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 586)

Conclusion

Interpreting a literary text with accuracy and depth requires an understanding of its creator since a book is never just words on a page – it carries the voice, experiences, and emotions of the person who wrote it. In the case of *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's own life, struggles, and dreams are woven into the novel's very fabric. His choices – how he tells the story, the words he uses, the symbols he creates – aren't random. They reflect his perspective on wealth, love, and the pursuit of an unattainable dream. Hence, this study reaffirms that:

- The author plays a pivotal role in shaping the meaning of a literary work.
- The structure, themes, and characters of a novel are inherently tied to the writer's personal vision.
- A writer's life, as well as the historical and social milieu of his time, influence both the narrative and its underlying messages.
- Linguistic and stylistic analysis provides essential insights into an author's intentions, allowing for a richer and more nuanced interpretation of the text.

Ultimately, language isn't just about style; it's a key to unlocking intended meanings and emotions of the creator who never really leaves his work. Every time someone reads *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald is there, speaking through his words, waiting to be understood. And every new interpretation is an act of rediscovery, a way to keep the creator's voice, proof that a great writer never truly fades away, that his presence endures as long as his words continue to be read and reinterpreted.

ԳԱՅԱՆԵ ՄՈՒՐԱԴՅԱՆ, ԶԱՐՈՒՀԻ ԱՆՏՈՆՅԱՆ – Հեղինակ և երկի մեկնաբանություն. Ֆ. Սքոթ Ֆիցջերալդը և «Մեծն Գեթսբի» – Գրական ստեղծագործությունը լիովին ընկալելու և մեկնաբանելու համար անհրաժեշտ է դիտարկել հեղինակի այն մտքերն ու գաղափարները, որ նա մտադիր է փոխանցել ընթերցողին: Իր «Մեծն Գեթսբի» վեպում Ֆ. Սքոթ Ֆիցջերալդի հայացքները, հույզերն ու մտքերը խորապես ներկառուցված են վեպի կառուցվածքի և թեմատիկայի մեջ: Հետևաբար, վեպն ավելի արդյունավետ մեկնաբանելու համար պետք է հաշվի առնել, թե ինչպես են նշված գործոնները ձևավորում Ֆիցջերալդի ոճական և լեզվական տարրերի ընտրությունը: Հեղինակի պատմողական տեխնիկայի, ներառյալ առաջին դեմքի և հետահայաց շարադրանքի, փոխաբերական լեզվի, իմաստային տարրերի կիրառությունը նպաստում են շարադրանքի ընկալմանն ու ճիշտ մեկնաբանությանը: Լեզվաոճական ուսումնասիրության մեթոդը հնարավորություն է տալիս ուսումնասիրելու վեպի լեզուն և ոճը (փոխաբերություններ, գեղարվեստական համեմատություններ և գրական այլ հնարներ)՝ բացահայտելու համար արտահայտչականության խորը շերտերը, իսկ ճանաչողական-ոճական վերլուծության մեթոդը օգնում է ըմբռնելու, թե ինչպես է լեզվական տարրերի ընտրությունը նպաստում թեմաներ ձևավորելու, հույզեր կերտելու և ընթերցողի դրանք ընկալելու և մեկնաբանելու գործընթացների վրա:

Բանալի բառեր – հեղինակ, Ֆ. Սքոթ Ֆիցջերալդ, Մեծն Գեթսբի, մեկնաբանություն, լեզվական/ոճական ընտրություն, հույզեր, թեմաներ

ГАЯНЕ МУРАДЯН, ЗАРУИ АНТОНЯН – Автор и интерпретация текста: Ф. Скотт Фицджеральд и «Великий Гэтсби».– Чтобы полностью понять литературное произведение, необходимо изучить его истоки: кто его написал, когда и почему оно было создано, а также смыслы, которые автор намеревался передать. В «Великом Гэтсби» (1925) личные взгляды, эмоции и мысли Ф. Скотта Фицджеральда глубоко укоренены в структуре и темах романа. Поэтому для более эффективной интерпретации романа необходимо учитывать эти влияния и то, как они формируют стилистические и языковые решения Фицджеральда. В данном анализе будут рассмотрены повествовательные техники Фицджеральда, включая повествование от первого лица и ретроспективное повествование, а также использование им языка для создания тона и смысла. С помощью лингвостилистического метода анализа мы изучим его образный язык, такой как метафоры, сравнения и другие литературные инструменты, чтобы раскрыть более глубокие слои выражения. Кроме того, когнитивно-стилистический подход поможет нам понять, как языковые решения Фицджеральда вызывают эмоции у персонажей и влияют на восприятие читателем тем романа.

Ключевые слова – автор, Ф. Скотт Фицджеральд, «Великий Гэтсби», интерпретация, лингвистические/стилистические решения, эмоции, темы.

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Source of Data

Fitzgerald, S. (1925) *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.