Style and the Figure of the Author:
F. Scott Fitzgerald's Textual Identity and the Role of Rhetoric and Borrowed Narrative Technique in its Construction

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Jeff STOREY, jeune chercheur, enseignant à l'université de Nice, prépare une thèse sur F. Scott Fitzgerald.

S'appuyant sur l'œuvre de F. Scott Fitzgerald, cet article analyse une des façons dont le lecteur a accès à l'auteur, à travers son style qui est vu comme étant synonyme d'identité. En raison de la nature du sujet, une discussion préliminaire s'impose portant sur la relation historique entre auteur et lecteur afin que cette approche soit comprise dans son contexte théorique. Sont ensuite examinés les modèles stylistiques rencontrés par Fitzgerald, ainsi que leurs influences sur l'identité textuelle de l'auteur.

Reading just about any novel entails a meeting between the person who is reading and the person who wrote. These two people meet through the act of reading, from the moment that the smallest bit of a coherent message is received, or perceived, by the reader. Some schools of literary criticism down-play the role of the author in this business, giving almost complete responsibility for the contents of the message to the reader. In this case the author is considered as non-existant, and it is better, then to use the term mentioned above: perceive. In this case it is the reader alone who makes sense of the text. His perception is actually the "creation" of the text. This is a distillation of the basic position of reader response criticism, characterized most notably by Wolfgang Iser and his followers.

The other extreme is to consider the reader as a constant entity whose only job is to decipher a fixed message that exists and always will exist immutable within the text, and to imagine also that this message was intended by the author. This view of the text, generally associated with I. A. Richards and The New Criticism, has now been, despite its practicality for pedagogical institutions world-wide, rendered largely defunct by the tide of post-strucuralism that has continued to create cross-currents in literary philosophy since the sixties.

Now as literary critics we are stuck somewhere in between these two extremes, constantly enticed by both solutions when confronted with prickly questions. Though neither of these systems is flawless, each provides comfortable answers to basic questions of textual interaction — be it interaction between reader and text, author and text, etc. Unfortunately, one of the more passionate questions regarding textual interaction remains largely unanswered, obscured by hypothetical and / or intuitive reasoning and a tendency to disregard the question as unimportant. Here we are referring to the question of interaction between reader and author.

As soon as the question is asked, we must necessarily clarify certain details. First, we are not entertaining the belief in active, present communication between the author and the reader at the moment of reading. There is no simultaneous two-way communication between the "real" author and the reader. The author, as a real person, is gone from his text when he sends it to his publisher, even though he may be "in" it as far as the reader is concerned. We might, however, argue that the reader was present for the author at the time of writing, in the same way that the author is present for the reader at the time of reading. To cite one example from among many, Anaïs Nin said "we have grown up with the idea of an eye looking over our shoulder […]."[1] This eye, which we have all experienced at some time or other, is the imagined reader, thus present at the time of writing, and communicating to the author in whatever way the author "perceives."

So the reader is in some way responsible for the direction which the act of creation takes. But here we must specify that the reader who is present at the moment of writing is himself a creation of the author. No individual reader could flatter himself as being in any way directly responsible for the form or contents of the author's creation, except in the case where the reader is an acquaintance of the

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[1]. Anaïs Nin, "The Personal Life Deeply Lived", p. 158, in *The American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Albert E. Stone (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), pp. 157–166. Nin goes on to say that this eye looking over our shoulder precludes the author from writing sincerely anything he thinks that another will someday read.

author and knows that the author himself either conceived of his text as a direct personal communication (a love poem) or felt somehow restricted in what he could say because of his awareness of who would read his work.

A clearer example to illustrate this point is Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1919) which simultaneously flatters and criticizes Zelda Sayre, whom Fitzgerald would marry shortly after its publication. *Tender is the Night* (1934) likewise falls into this category since it is also in large part an explanation of and apology for Fitzgerald's role in his wife's schizophrenia. Now here, of course, we are seeing these novels from the point of view of a single reader, Zelda. She, we might conclude, was "present" as reader at the moment that the author created.[2] But Zelda reading Scott, like the celebrity recognizing himself in a *roman-à-clef*, is not the average reader. The average reader can consider himself present at the moment of creation only inasmuch as he shares the basic social, cultural and moral code of the society of which both he and the author are a part, thereby belonging to that group whose appreciation and potential censorship of the work might determine its final form. Fitzgerald referred to his readership as "my own personal public — that is […] the countless flappers and college kids who think I am a sort of oracle."[3] Fitzgerald continued to think of younger readers as being his own particular reader, probably because they bought most of his books in his own lifetime, but it is clear that Fitzgerald had an eye looking over his shoulder too, an eye named sometimes Edmund Wilson, sometimes Ernest Hemingway.

We have briefly considered, then the notion of reader as contributor, whether direct or indirect, to the actual act of creation: the reader seen from the author's point of view. Now let us undertake to consider the reader in his own right, and more particularly in what way *he* sees the author.

First of all, a brief word on readers. Since the birth of reader response criticism, the reader has been the subject of a new nomenclature, always the victim of a convenient epithet on the part of the critic to define the strengths and limitations of the reader. There have been a host of average, intended, "implied," informed, naïve and other readers. Whatever his title, the reader is defined in terms of his ability to perform, to activate a given text. We might therefore conclude, perhaps to the chagrin of reader-response critics, that the reader is determined, or at least defined (as far as criticism is concerned) by the text, even though, ironically, the desire to define the reader would seem to want to fix his identity prior to his encountering the text.

One of the more useful reader classifications has been provided recently by Vincent Jouve who suggests the basic divisions of *lectant* and *lisant* to distinguish the reader who consciously grapples with the text and the mystery of its construction from the reader who submits to the seductive power of the text and his own pleasure in reading.[4] If the reader is defined by the text, as we have suggested above, then we might further suggest that a reader reading a complicated, metafictional novel in which form and content reach the mythical point of overlap will be more likely to respond as a *lectant* than the reader reading a detective novel in which the structure is simple and is designed merely to allow the plot to unfold. (This would, of course, require that the reader be "capable" of responding to the more difficult text as a *lectant*, whence distinctions such as average and informed readers). This seems a reasonable supposition, but it raises questions regarding the pleasure to be derived from the reading experience, particularly as concerns the reader's relationship with and perception of the author.

The difficulty with the model proposed above lies in the manner in which we conceptualize the pleasure of reading. Anyone who has read critically, that is, most anyone who has a literary education, knows that reading is work. Work and pleasure being conceived of as polar opposites by a large majority of people, it is not always easy to consider reading which falls under the rubrik of "work" as a pleasure. This is a fundamental paradox of reading professionally. Reading can, certainly, be a great

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[2]. Indeed, one critic contends that nearly the entire literary production of both Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald was nothing more than "a form of private communication […] a method of discourse about their marriage, allowing them to air their grievances and dissatisfactions, fix the blame, indulge in bouts of self-justification." James R. Mellow, *Invented Lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company 1984), p. xvii.

[3]. In a letter to his Scribner's editor, Maxwell Perkins, May 11, 1922. In *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* ed. by Andrew Turnbull (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 283–284. Fitzgerald is here referring to this public in terms of projected sales of a collection of short stories. He clearly considers this group as making up the largest proportion of potential buyers of the book.

[4]. Vincent Jouve, *L'effet personnage dans le roman* (Paris: PUF, 1992), pp. 21ff.

pleasure though it be a duty. But even the most masochistic literature professor alive will occasionally choose to read for distraction, rather than, say, look for symmetry in Carlyle's prose. But pleasure is for each reader to define for himself. We could probably find an example of a person who *would* prefer to study Carlyle's rythms than to "waste" a Sunday afternoon reading without simultaneously exercising, not just titillating, his grey matter. So rather than plod on towards some conclusion that "scholarly" reading is either more or less fun than reading for entertainment, let us rather seek a solution which allows a merger of *lectant* and *lisant*, of reading as study and reading as entertainment.

A plausible synthesis lies in examining not what the reader derives from his reading experience, but from whence he derives it. Let us call this "place" the author. It is nearly a commonplace to suggest that reading is in some way a narcissistic gesture. Unless forced, one does not generally finish reading a book that does not appeal to him. When a book does appeal to him, and here we limit the field to twentieth-century fiction, it is because there is some draw, some attraction to the main presence occupying the textual space, be it character or narrator, man or beast, and the rhetoric of the text is designed precisely to inspire reader sympathy / desire for this "person" who is the textual manifestation of the author. Let us attempt to deny reader desire for this figure.

We might say "I like reading Hemingway because I like bull-fighting, trout-fishing and sitting in cafés, but I don't care for Hemingway." In other words, it might be possible to enjoy the subject matter without feeling any attachment to the narrator (who is, let us stop denying it, the author). This would amount to saying "I like everything he likes but I don't like him," which is only possible in the event that the reader does not like himself. Let us take for example the tragic and even at times pathetic Dick Diver of *Tender is the Night*, a clear Fitzgerald double. We can dislike Dick for being weak and seducing young Rosemary Hoyt, and we can think he gave up too easily at the end. But he remains an endearing character and we are attracted to things in him that we recognize in ourselves, be it a difficulty to react well, i.e. as he knows he should, in certain situations, or an incapacity to order his universe as he would like.

Going back four hundred years, we find much the same things to dislike in Hamlet, but Hamlet remains our hero and we're pulling for him right to the end. Not because we've ever been in his situation, but because we understand his situation and under the same circumstances would be susceptible to reacting the same way. A mafia hit-man cannot appreciate Hamlet's dilemma because in the same situation he would have killed Claudius without hesitating. For the same reason, the initial critical response to *Tender is the Night* was negative, and the book never had its due because, it is true, it was as hard to believe that Dick Diver had failed as it was to believe that the previous generation's hero, Scott Fitzgerald had failed. Making the mental leap that consists of seeing the author in the protagonist, the critics of 1934 unwittingly criticized the novel when in fact they were dissappointed in the man who was its author.[5]

These last two paragraphs begin to suggest the degree to which rhetoric is important in the reader-author relationship. Even the most disagreeable character-narrator generally manages to gain the reader's confidence and sympathy, a good example being the rather despicable Stavrogin in Dostoevsky's *The Devils*. It is as a result of the author's artifice and rhetoric that the reader is seduced into "liking" the author's representative in the text. And in considering the concept of rhetoric, we are getting very close to some fundamental questions which touch upon authorial identity and the process of fiction itself: what is the author's identity in the text, and how is it made?

These questions are important because they help define fiction writing as a game of seduction practiced by both author and reader. The author, employing rhetoric and artifice which are basic requirements of fiction, creates an object which seduces a desiring reader. What is that object? Maurice Couturier, following Foucault and Barthes, has called it the figure of the author, and his recent book *La Figure de L'auteur*[6] clearly sees this object or "figure" as the goal of the reader's quest in the act of reading, partly because of the reader's narcissism (the reader is invited to identify with the author's textual doubles) and partly because of his curiosity (the reader's feeling that the authorial figure holds some secret).[7] Couturier's book is dedicated to defining this mysterious presence / absence

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[5]. The more important of the sixty-four known contemporary reviews of *Tender is the Night* can be consulted in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in his own Time: A Miscellany*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer (Kent State University Press, 1971), pp. 370–392.

[6]. Maurice Couturier, *La Figure de l'auteur* (Paris: Seuil, coll. "Poétique", 1995).

[7]. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

in the text, how the reader "reconstitutes" the figure of the author by identifying textual ruptures and enunciative gaps indicative of the author's bad faith as clues to authorial presence. The presence of this "figure" is precisely a matter of debate and Couturier tends to treat it in somewhat supernatural terms (comparing it to the mirage of an oasis which tends to disappear before the eyes of the weary desert traveller whenever he approaches it)[8] which are perhaps appropriate given the elusive quality of the "figure" of the author.

To a certain degree, the present study shares a common goal with Couturier's work. We will soon be about the business of examining the reader's construction of that object of desire, the "figure" of the author. But we will consider the affective and aethetic dimensions of the phenomenon, and will not have recourse to the kind of narratological pyrotechnics that Couturier has necessarily employed in the past to study the over-determined works of Joyce and particularly Nabokov. We agree with Couturier in his assertion that the reader seeks himself in the author's textual doubles and that the act of reading is therefore fundamentally narcissistic and informed by (mutual) desire. We are not, however, entirely convinced when he suggests that the reader perceives the figure of the author as the keeper of a secret, this being the result of the author's attempt to pretend that his characters' and narrators' sexual fantasies are *not* his own.[9] Our disagreement is not in the conclusion of the argument but in the magnitude of its application. This conclusion is quite accurate when one considers that it evolves from an attempt to uncover the intratextual puppet-masters behind the scenes of *Ulysses* and *Lolita*, and *Ada* etc. But, while it might apply as well to writers who shy away from treating sexual matters (Couturier might consider this hypocrasy the height of bad faith), this reasoning does not seem to be the most important consideration when studying the works of Hemingway and Fitzgerald and that group. In other words, in view of the content of their novels, it does not seem as though identifying textual ruptures which arise due to some mis-handling of sexual content on the author's part should be a priority in our arsenal of strategies for pin-pointing the source of the reader's attraction to the text — the object of desire.

To simplify matters for our present needs we shall consider the author in the text as that perceived living presence in the text which is the trace of the author who has willingly submitted himself to doing his own rhetorical and artificial (in the strictest sense) self-portrait (the way in which this presence is "perceived" will be developed below). To provide a "living" example of our view of the figure of the author, and to return to the theme of seduction, it would be useful to consider the literary appreciation provided by Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*:

> What I like best is a book that's at least funny once in a while. I read a lot of classical books, like *The Return of the Native* and all, and I like them, and I read a lot of war books and mysteries and all, but they don't knock me out too much. What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though. I wouldn't mind calling this Isak Dinesen up. And Ring Lardner, except that D.B. told me he's dead. You take that book *Of Human Bondage*, by Somerset Maugham, though. I read it last summer. It's a pretty good book and all, but I wouldn't want to call Somerset Maugham up. I don't know. He just isn't the kind of a guy I want to call up, that's all. I'd rather call old Thomas Hardy up. I like that Eustacia Vye.[10]

We are not going to psychoanalyse Holden Caulfeld, but a few observations from among his preferences help to clarify things. Holden likes war books and mysteries but they are not his favourite. This is probably because these kinds of books tend to be characterized by eventful content and not necessarily by an engaging authorial presence like a narrator — in Aristotelian terms, plot and spectacle have the upper hand on character. Therefore this kind of book contains no "person" who could potentially seduce Holden. Holden also informs us that he likes to laugh. This is one of his personal criteria for seduction. For this reason a book like Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, although as thinly disguised autobiography it proposes a central author-character as "bait", is passed over by

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[8]. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[9]. *Ibid.*, p. 22 : "C'est parce que l'auteur éprouve le besoin de promouvoir son moi-idéal au rang de surmoi face au lecteur et s'efface au maximum de son texte en donnant l'illusion que les désirs coupables de ses personnages n'ont rien à voir avec les siens propres que surgit dans l'imaginaire du lecteur la figure auctoriale comme détentrice d'un secret."

[10]. J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1946, 1951) (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 16.

Holden. The novel describes the lonely boyhood of its hero who is handicapped by a club foot — this kind of book does not make Holden laugh. Dinesen, Ring Lardner and Thomas Hardy are all capable of making Holden laugh and they are all authors whose artifice includes the illusion of being present, nearly "catchable" in their texts. So Holden would like to call them up, an instinctive reaction certainly felt by more than one reader once the reader's personal criteria of seduction are met. So let us suggest that the figure of the author, for our purposes, is the hypothetical person one would like to call up after having read author x's book. Or, in other words, he's the person the seduced reader imagines the author to be *via* the text.

Now we shall turn our discussion towards the manner in which the authorial figure is made and can be apprehended. This could be considered synonymous with discovering how, precisely, the author seduces his reader. In both cases, this entity that inhabits the text and draws the reader in must have some identity, even if that identity is *no* identity, for lack of details, but an identity as object of interest. Identity is a tricky question, not only in literary matters, but in philosophical circles as well. The reader does not generally address the perplexing question of the nature of identity, as we shall do in a moment, but rather takes to his reading our everyday concept of identity. One of the pitfalls of this tendancy is to give the name of the author to the authorial figure, since naming is the basic activity of identification. Once a thing is named, however accurately, it has an identity. This evidently creates a theoretical problem for the purist who wants to deny that the author and the authorial figure are identical and this because our instinctive impulse is to give them the same name, particularly in the case of third person narrators who remain otherwise unnamed in the text. A good example of this is the "unnamed" narrator whose voice is the last we hear in Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*. Any reader would be hard-pressed to eliminate from his own consciousness the idea that anyone other than Fitzgerald "spoke" those words: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."[11] The only other person who could possibly be responsible for these lines would be a likewise unnamed intertextual being who lives in between Fitzgerald's texts and emerges to speak whenever the author had need of a particularly poetic ode on the ephemeral nature of time — but of course that "person" would be Fitzgerald too. Once named, the identity of the authorial figure will tend to be coloured by and confused with the identity of his namesake.

Certain grammatical constructs can cloud the issue as well, even overcoming the importance of a name. Consider the example of Nick Carraway, first person narrator of *The Great Gatsby*. Because he calls himself "I" (and the naming of the self as "I" is an even more important building block of identity than the surname which is provided by others) the reader is likely to hear the "I" and associate it with the author Fitzgerald and hear in it the author's "I" as much as that of the narrator. This is, of course, testimony to the high and "seductive" quality of the narration which makes Nick seem so real that the reader takes him as real — real Fitzgerald! And so, despite the naming (the narrator is *named* Nick Carraway), the reader "corrects" and renames Nick as "Fitzgerald", and the reader is certainly right to do so. And not to worry, the development in the preceding paragraph can co-exist quite harmoniously with Nick being Fitzgerald too. There is no reason why the author cannot leave multiple traces of himself in the same space. The reader will quickly be about the business of synthesizing them into one "figure" that he can live with, and that he will ultimately think of as Fitzgerald.

Now, naming is a first step to creating the illusion of identity. This seems logical as occidental man, since God reportedly said "I am the word", is fundamentally logocentric. Identity is profoundly and inextricably tied up with words because in a large majority of cases identity is expressed through words, spoken and written. Autobiography theorists have come to much the same conclusion as Marshall McLuhan did when he popularized the phrase "the medium is the message." Willis R. Buck transcribes Hume's comments from the end of *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Book 1: "questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties." Buck reiterates: "personal identity is a linguistic phenomenon, a matter of form, not substance."[12] At bottom, identity is a definition of (though not necessarily by) the "self", another endangered species which, like identity, is a poetical invention, according to one critic at the University of California: "[…] structuralist and poststructuralist theories

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[11]. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925) (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 187.

[12]. Willis R. Buck, Jr., "Reading Autobiography." *GENRE*, XIII (Winter, 1980) 477–498, 477.

have contributed to the revision of essentialist notions about the self by calling attention to the self as a rhetorical construct."[13]

Self and identity are, then, rhetorical constructs, the result of the way in which the author strings his prose and poetry together, in other words his style. Thus the metonymic statement "I've been reading Hemingway, or Fitzgerald etc." is not so innaccurate as it would first appear. Referring to the work by the name of the author in this way is a justified act in that through reading the work, one gains access to the author through the author's style, which is himself. Thus traditional fact and fiction boundaries break down and we are no longer concerned with whether the events of the tale told are "true" events in the author's life. The greater truth lies in the fact that whatever the author chooses to recount, he can only tell it through the filter of his own style and it thereafter becomes a true record of the author's identity and is then the stamp of the author's self, present in the text. Albert Stone, autobiography theorist, suggests that the only truth in autobiographical texts is to be found in its form:

> […] autobiography as history always suffers from incompletedness as it does from conscious and unconscious falsification. Yet as verbal artifact an autobiography necessarily manifests by every word, image, episode, and chapter division the architectural presence and imaginative identity of its author. Style is indeed self, if not the only self.[14]

These comments, destined to clarify our understanding of autobiography, are equally valid for the type of fiction that Fitzgerald wrote, if not for all types of fiction. The dominant literary stream in American fiction at Fitzgerald's time was Realism, and only the influence of experimental expatriate and European writers, notably Joyce and Stein, would eventually lead the American stable away from a nearly journalistic transcribing of personal experience into fiction, towards a conscious effort to employ a stricter artifice.

Fitzgerald would thus write *Gatsby* under the influence of Conrad, and *Tender is the Night* in the manner of Flaubert. But even though his previous works had been more straitforwardly autobiographical, that is, more easily identified as autobiographical, Fitzgerald would write to Perkins at the time he was writing *Gatsby*, that he had finally written something that was his "own": "I think I've finally written something that is really my own, but how good "my own" is remains to be seen."[15] For Fitzgerald, if not for all authors, form was more personal than content. The fact of writing a novel that depended exclusively on artifice, or shall we say artistry, whether influenced by the style of Conrad or not, made *Gatsby* more personal to Fitzgerald than his other work. Earlier that summer, while still writing *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald wrote, again to Perkins:

> […] in my new novel I'm thrown directly on purely creative work — not trashy imaginings as in my stories […]. This book will be a consciously artistic achievement and must depend on that as the first books did not.[16]

Fitzgerald's remarks make it clear that he believed that style, more than content, contributed to the personal nature of the text.

Taking Stone's conclusion yet a step further, and emphasizing the role of the reader in the apprehension of the author, Patricia Meyer Spacks suggests that "[o]ne can know the author in his work […] only through the study of his artifice."[17] Himself a reader, as well as a writer, Fitzgerald made the following comment in a book review written in 1922: "the lack of a pattern gives the young novelist more of a chance to assert his or her individuality, which is the principal thing."[18] Given our earlier remarks concerning Fitzgerald's conviction that *Gatsby* was more personal than his earlier

13.   LuAnn McCracken, " 'The synthesis of my being': Autobiography and the Reproduction of Identity in Virginia Woolf." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 9, 1 (spring 1990), 59–78, 61.

14.   Albert E. Stone, *Autobiographical Occasions and Original Acts : Versions of American Identity from Henry Adams to Nate Shaw* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 13.

15.   *Letters*, 188. October 17, 1924, to Max Perkins.

16.   *Letters,* 183. April 16, 1924, to Perkins.

17.   Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Introduction" in *The Author in his Work: Essays on a Problem in Criticism*, ed. by Louis L. Martz and Aubrey Williams (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. ix–xix, xv.

18.   Scott Fitzgerald in a review of *The Love Legend* by Woodward Boyd (New York: Evening Post, October 28, 1922). Cited in John Kuehl, "Scott Fitzgerald's Critical Opinions," p. 28, in *Profile of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1971).

novels, this comment, considered in light of his own early autobiographical novels, might seem more than anything to show his chameleon-like critical opinions. We should, however, interpret Fitzgerald's comments as being partly a self-defense for his own two first novels, particularly justifying their lack of form as having been necessary to allow his younger self a certain freedom of expression. The important thing to note here is Fitzgerald's belief that a super-imposed structure or form, which tends to be required by the publishing industry, also tends to make novels, and therefore novelists and their identities, conform to some sort of pattern. The individuality of the artist, i.e. his personal identity within the text, which Fitzgerald suggests is the "principal thing" is thus compromised. The reader, in this case Fitzgerald, laments being robbed of the opportunity to apprehend this personal individuality through his reading of another author.[19]

We have previously mentioned that Fitzgerald would go on to embrace the narrative techniques of Conrad and Flaubert. If the foregoing argument is to be maintained then we might suggest that *Gatsby*, an example of this more consciously artistic fiction, is then somehow less personal or contains less of Fitzgerald's individual identity because it has been formed by his literary influences. This is not the case, however, and we shall thus have to clarify some aspects of style. In calling *Gatsby* a Conradian novel, we are referring to Fitzgerald's reordering of the chronology of the story so that it unfolds to the reader much in the way that a "real" story in everyday life reveals itself in broken bits to the person seeking to know what has happened.[20] To the critic analysing Fitzgerald's novel, this may seem to make the novel Conradian, but the reader hears only Fitzgerald through this telling. The narrative technique renders the text so convincingly real that, as we have stated, the reader takes Carraway, the compelling narrator, to be Fitzgerald himself, much as readers had done with Conrad's Marlow.[21]

Simply put, this borrowing of a narrative technique does not alter Fitzgerald's identity within the novel as would, for example, Fitzgerald's attempted borrowing / imitation of Conrad's prose rhythms (had Fitzgerald attempted such a thing). Fitzgerald was very aware of the author's susceptibility to borrowing prose rhythms and what that would mean to his personal identity in the text. As he wrote to Hemingway in 1934,

> I think it is obvious that my respect for your artistic life is absolutely unqualified […]. There are pieces and paragraphs of your work that I read over and over — in fact, I stopped myself doing it for a year and a half because I was afraid that your particular rhythms were going to creep in on mine by process of infiltration. Perhaps you will recognize some of your remarks in Tender, but I did every damn thing I could to avoid that.[22]

Writing in 1934, Fitzgerald had just finally completed *Tender is the Night* after a nine-year dry spell which had begun with the publication of *Gatsby*. At the end of this time he felt himself, somewhat blocked, to be particularly vulnerable to imitating (integrating) the very characteristic rhythms of Hemingway, at which point it would no longer be Fitzgerald writing but rather Hemingway — and Fitzgerald knew this.

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[19]. Fitzgerald neglects to mention that first novels have a tendency to be imitative / derivative and that his own first novel, like Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929), owes an obvious debt of gratitude to Joyce, whose influence on the style of *This Side of Paradise* does tend to jeopardize Fitzgerald's identity in a way that Conrad's later influence does not.

[20]. For a further development of this influence see pp. 24-25 of James E. Miller Jr. "Boats Against the Current" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* The Great Gatsby, ed. by Ernest Lockridge (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.,1968), pp. 19-36.

[21]. We might therefore view "Conrad's" technique as one which allows the reader a feeling of proximity to the author, without it necessarily colouring the text with Conrad's presence when employed by another author.

[22]. *Letters*, 336, to Hemingway, June 1, 1934. On a similar note, when things were going better for Fitzgerald, and Hemingway was still to some degree his protegé (1926), Fitzgerald teased him in another letter suggesting that the "borrowing" was happening in the other direction. Referring to *The Sun Also Rises* Fitzgerald said "Did not realize you had stolen it all from me but am prepared to believe that it's true and shall tell everyone," p. 325

In order to understand the influence of Flaubert on Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* we must consider Fitzgerald's own remarks on that subject which tell us what he himself felt that influence to be. Writing to Thomas Wolfe in 1937, Fitzgerald remarked:

> Now the more, the stronger, man's inner tendencies are defined, the more he can be sure they will show, the more necessity to rarefy them, to use them sparingly. The novel of selected incidents has this to be said: that the great writer like Flaubert has consciously left out the stuff that Bill or Joe (in his case, Zola) will come along and say presently. He will say only the things that he alone sees. So *Madame Bovary* becomes eternal while Zola already rocks with age…[23]

For Fitzgerald the main noticeable contribution of Flaubert to his own work, which Fitzgerald would subsequently advise to his rather long-winded friend Thomas Wolfe, was that the author must cut and select his own work unsparingly. We should note also in the first line of the citation that Fitzgerald felt that this strategy was necessitated by the strength of the author's "inner tendencies", which we might interpret as being his *self* revealed in his work. Though the comment is decidedly ambiguous, it would appear that Fitzgerald felt that this cutting would in no way interfere with the self in the work, but might even enhance it, the "stronger" man being the author who is able to cut his own prose into a novel of selected incidents. Whichever is the case, it is clear that Fitzgerald felt this would contribute to the eternal quality of the novel in question, and this can be taken as a certain pre-occupation with the self in the work. One of the main reasons man creates, according to popular folklore, is to attempt to defeat the incontravertible flow of time (this is, after all, the most easily cited theme in Fitzgerald's work — "boats against the current") and to leave some eternal trace of himself.

So perhaps there is some fundamental irony in the fact that Fitzgerald immortalized himself through the use of borrowed narrative techniques. We began by considering the question of author-reader interaction and have been therefore required to consider to what extent the author's borrowing of another's style affects the former's presence in his own text. It would appear from the examples we have studied that stylistic borrowings, like readers, are to be divided into categories. Adopting a structural method which involves chronological manipulation of the text or selective representation does not seem to interfere with the personality of the textual presence whereas imitating the poetic aspects of another author will ultimately compromise authorial identity within the text, as far as the reader is concerned. We might therefore divide stylistic borrowings into two types, structural and poetic / thematic, of which only the latter will earn the author the epithet "derivative", thus not only colouring his textual presence with noticeable outside influence but also denigrating him as a copier. This kind of influence is to be felt by all readers.

Far more compelling for the reader/critic is the chain of interaction which involves the author's borrowing of a structural method. In the case of Fitzgerald we ask ourselves now "Is it Fitzgerald, or is it Conrad?" as we read through the temporal shifts of *Gatsby*. There is no doubt that the influence can be traced, pedantically demonstrated if need be, but it is clearly Fitzgerald whose self is injected into the text. His borrowing must be interpreted as an admiration for another author, for whom Fitzgerald was an admiring and inspired reader. Fitzgerald, as a reader, took a model, Conrad, and then made his own text. But we would be mistaken to think that Fitzgerald made his text out of Conrad. Fitzgerald made his text out of himself, a part of which was a narcissistic admiration for Conrad.

Further down the chain is the reader who comes to Fitzgerald *via* his texts, *Gatsby* or *Tender*. This reader will interact with the textual presence, the figure of the author. If the author writing is too intrigued and preoccupied with his literary models, he will not leave room in his own text for the reader to feel him, to interact with him. The result is an unsuccesful text, a text in which the reader feels the model's influence so strongly, or so badly employed, that he can't get the name of the model out of his head, a fact which creates confusion which seperates the reader from the author with whom he is yearning to be in contact. This situation also frustrates the reader because he feels ignored by the author. In this case the author of the present text has failed in that he has removed himself from his own text to too great an extent, leaving the reader the feeling that he is dealing with an absence rather than a presence.[24] This feeling is accurate because the author's desire, which should be directed

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23.   *Letters,* 574.

24.   Although we are currently concerned with prose writing, a fine example of this phenomenon is to be found among the poets in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) in which the combination of a didatic tone and reference to myth and a series of authors dating back to antiquity serves to remove the poet completely from his text. The textual presence of the author in this case is highly impersonal and not at all endearing, that of a

towards the reader (as we have said, the author's pre-perception of the reader makes the reader in part contributor to the author's textual self) is instead directed elsewhere, to an over-present model, giving the reader every reason to feel jealous and slighted, resulting in the reader's condemning the book, or passages of it, as derivative. In Fitzgerald's novels, this is never the case.[25] The models can be discovered through background study, but they remain, themselves, background. It is Fitzgerald himself who inhabits his texts (shamelessly soliciting the attention of the reader, as an author should do), testimony to this being the reader's overwhelming desire to imagine that the succession of narrators and characters are really Fitzgerald himself, albeit with some slight modification.

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tyrannical and ostentatious stage-director. Eliot shared with Proust the notion that the artist expressed though his work a self that is different from the self he shows to intimates, friends and acquaintances.

[25]. Although they stated the problem differently, this is probably also a part of the problem contemporary critics had with *Tender is the Night* — not that it was overly derivative, but that too much effort was required for them, as readers, to remain in constant harmonious contact with Dick Diver. Because Fitzgerald infused himself so deeply into the person of Diver, the reader often feels abandoned at moments when the text is dealing with the sub-plots of Nicole and Rosemary, this because he feels that Fitzgerald is no longer present.