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Analysing Tariq Rahman's Story *The Dance of the Beards* in the Light of Barthes' Narrative Codes

Muhammad Saleem, M.Phil.

Abstract

This study analyses Tariq Rahman's story *The Dance of the Beards* in the light of Roland Barthes' poststructural approach to narratology. Research, within this theoretical framework, is supposed to aim at critical rendering of the formation, character, role and function of the five Barthesian codes: proairetic, hermeneutic, semic, symbolic and cultural. Interconnectedness of these narrative codes allows them to overlap each other to constitute a coherent text as they are thought, in Barthesian vocabulary, as a basic material to the realization of any cultural product as an artistic piece. Following Barthes' poststructural analysis of narrative carried out in his famous book *S/Z*, the whole body of the targeted text will be cut into short but contiguous pieces; these linguistic segments work as a unit of analysis in this research; they may consist of a word, phrase, clause and even a complete paragraph depending upon the researcher's discernment but one thing is ensured that each lexia does have at least one meaning in it.

In this starred text, a star (*) is put before a code detected in the reading unit. The Barthesian codes within which lexias are placed work skillfully not only to realize the weave of an artistic composition in the text they also behave as five containers of meanings formed and evolved in a particular social formation.

The analysis of a text via present poststructural theoretical paradigm is in fact a process of deconstruction; the exhaustive interpretation of a focused material with reference to narrative

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codes is an authentic activity to decode the socially constructed text letting the meanings flow out exhaustively and effectively.

Key Words: Barthes' Narrative Codes, Poststructural Approach to Narratology, Five Codes

1. Introduction

Roland Barthes applied the proairetic, hermeneutic, semic, symbolic and cultural codes to Balzac's novella *Sarrasine* for its exhaustive textual analysis. This poststructural way of narrative analysis is much appreciated for the interpretation and explanation of a literary composition. This new and comprehensive mode of analysis inspired many researchers and critics to make its application to plural texts.

The present study is also designed to apply Barthes' five narrative codes upon Tariq Rahman's short story *The Dance of the Beards*. The purpose of this study is to (a) verify whether these Barthesian codes are applicable to a Pakistani story, (b) know which one of these codes is the most preferred one and (c) have a thorough analysis of the narrative if it is possible.

1.1 Barthes' Two Approaches to Narratology

Roland Barthes' approach towards narrative is evolutionary in spirit and consists of two phases. In his earlier approach he is a pure structuralist therefore he analyses a narrative in terms of its structures. In his famous writing 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' he is seen to deal with the language, functions, actions, narration and system of a narrative. Then a change is marked in his narratological thoughts and he makes a move from its structural analysis to textual analysis. His world known book *S/Z* comprises of his poststructural thoughts towards narratology. Barthes here takes the help of five narrative codes to analyze Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*. These codes are interlacing braids or strands that continue to overlap each other to constitute a coherent and well established network of their own called a text. "He (Barthes) simply unlocks the text, disentangles its constitutive strands and allows it expand along coded avenues of meaning" (Ribièrè, 2008, p.49).

1.2 Reasons of Change in Narratological Approach

This shift of angle in Barthes' narratological views was realized due to different reasons. First, structuralism at that time was in its vehement struggle to search out a model structure for all the narratives. He calls it "ultimately undesirable" (Barthes, 1990.p.3) because if it is proved, after analyzing all the narratives, that they have the identical structures then what is the end product of this hugely laborious research effort? Mireille Ribièrè (2008) holds that for Barthes this entire structuralist dream for a uniform/unique narrative structure was much too reductive (p.49).

Second, Barthes as a poststructuralist seems more realist, wise and discreet; now he has preference for that analysis of a narrative that makes it different and distinguished from other narratives. And the study of a narrative from this angle is much more useful, realistic and

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dynamic than bending, under the structuralist influence, all the narratives to be in structural conformity with the other narratives. “Structuralism was inimical to difference. Yet difference is still understood by Barthes” (Moriarty, 1991, p.117).

Third, in his poststructuralist mood Barthes no longer gives importance to the idea that a text as a cultural product is self-containing, close ended and finished. Rather, he believes that text is a phenomenon that is materialized at the hands of a reader-architect: “some thing being constructed through reading” (Ribière, 2008, p. 49).

Unlike structuralists who endeavour to know how the text was composed, now Barthes stresses the readers’ participation as a meaning production mechanism in the interpretation of the text. The reader is to open the complexities of the text with the help of his culturally imbibed conventions, assumptions and traditions. In this way the meanings continue to well out. Fourth, Moriarty (1991) tells us the other reason of Barthes’ move to the poststructuralist notion of narratology; he says that the structural analysis of a narrative is an angle which is always in demand of huge patience and now Barthes had lost all of his patience to remain structuralist in his narratological perspective (p.49). Here one thing should be noticed that the poststructuralist Barthes is not operative in his reaction against the Structuralist Barthes or structuralism. There is only “a gradual shift of emphasis” (Ribière, 2008, p.50).

1.3 Barthes’ Five Codes

A literary text is an artistic piece of work where there is a clever overlapping and interlacing of different braids called narrative codes in the Barthesian terms. The poststructuralist reader is expected to slice these cultural voices from each other to pursue patterns and meanings they stand for. These Barthesian codes are five in number.

(i) Proairetic Code

The code of action consists of the events and situations in a text to form its plot. This code which basically is linked with the structural aspect of a narrative is connotative in its spirit because the nature of an action and the frequency of actions betray the characteristic features of a character. It is natural for a reader to expect the completion of the action that was started in the text and when this expectation is not realized the way the reader desires, tensions are created and developed in the text.

(ii) Hermeneutic Code

The code of puzzles deals with all that material which contains questions, aporias and enigmas in the text. This code not only structures the narrative, it also “generates various strategies and devices aimed at capturing and maintaining the reader’s interests” (Ribière, 2008, p.46). This code is found usually near the start or at the end of the text. It is also read as connotative in explanation.

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(iii) Cultural Code

The cultural code refers to the lexicalized knowledge, rituals, linguistic behaviours, beliefs and the coded material of a culture. In fact the bits of the cultural material provide a base upon which the building of the story is erected by an author. Usually the amount of cultural codes is in abundance in a text and this code serves as a set of norms which are to be followed or violated in the action of the story.

(iv) Connotative Code

The semic code refers to the additional meanings of linguistic items and chunks. In fact these are the additional meanings of a text which contribute to its thematisation. If we count and juxtapose the additional meanings of a text, the pointing to the theme or themes can be spotted quite easily. Even the proper names are rich in connotative interpretations. Nichols (1985) holds that “the semic codes let us label persons and places in a narrative in an adjectival way” (p.480). Connotations of a text are the fruit and the essence of it.

(v) Symbolic Code

The symbolic code deals with the meaning producing devices like binaries and antithesis in a text. Binary oppositions are at the centre of each artistic composition. This code is similar to the connotative code in character but a little bit wider in its application.

2. Methodology

First, in the light of the writing technique that Roland Barthes pursued in his poststructural book *S/Z* the whole body of the text *The Dance of the Beards* by Tariq Rahman will be cut into short but contiguous segments, pieces or fragments. Barthes calls these short pieces of the text as lexias as they are the units of reading.

Second, lexia is a unit of analysis in this research; it is much flexible in its size and it can consist of a word, a phrase, a clause, a sentence, and even a whole paragraph.

Third, there is no clear cut formula to determine the size of a lexia. Generally, it is said that lexia is an arbitrary product but one thing should be kept in mind that the researcher cuts that portion of the text into a unit of analysis where he sees the presence of one meaning at least.

Fourth, all the contiguous lexias of the text are given number and this number giving practice starts from the start of the text. No lexia is left without a number.

Fifth, all the lexias are put under their relevant codes and they are discussed only with reference to the code they belong to. If a lexia, due to its multiplicity of meanings, belongs to more than one code, it will be discussed under all these codes.

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Sixth, following Barthes' practice in *S/Z* the present story under analysis will be changed into the starred text; all the five narrative codes are abbreviated into HER, ACT, SEM, SYM and REF; a star (*) is placed before a code discovered in the lexia and if there are more than one codes in a lexia then two and three stars are placed before the second and third lexia respectively. Seventh, generally, in the interpretation of these lexias, the targeted meanings- pragmatic not the literal ones- are pursued.

3. Analysis of Data and Discussion

(1) *The Dance of the Beards* *HER.

Is it possible for beards to dance? The answer to this enigma is postponed till the last two paragraphs of the story. And quite interestingly to solve this enigma we have to take the help of other code of Barthes and that is the connotative code: **SEM.

As the literal reading of the title leads to literal senselessness only therefore we have to suspend the semantic interpretation and resort to our imaginative flight and pragmatic stuff. This process would introduce us to the horrible facts of a subcontinental feudal society.

Beards here imply very powerful, corrupt and authoritative institutions in a caste and race ridden feudal society. In this society different institutions like feudalism, church, school and banking have pooled their forces and developed a very powerful network of their own. This network of authoritative social institutions has different functions to perform: to give the impression that they are the symbol of religiosity, goodness, welfare of people, righteousness, kindness and dedication for the society but this is all pretension.

The joint struggle of the powerful institutions of the feudal society is to maintain their yoke upon the poor and socialize their new generation in accordance with their exploitative charter of life. All these institutions help each other laboriously because their sinister interests depend upon their togetherness.

When the narrator-boy who is the grandson of a feudal lord meets Gullu, a boy from the poor family, a peasant, Bansi Lal the son of money lender, resents it. Moulvi Sahib (the priest) comes to the house of the narrator to teach him the Quran because the narrator is to be distinguished from the other poor members of the society. Then the feudal lord along with his watch dogs beats Gullu and sends the narrator into *Zenana* (drawing room for females). When the semantic deviation of the title is fully processed, the result is a cultural code: ***REF.

As the institutions in the story have developed their own networking, in the same way the text has developed its fabric very cleverly with the help of the network of five codes; to understand the text properly the reader has to move from one narrative code to the other and in this process "the object of analysis is to disentangle them (codes)" (Ribi re, 2008, p.46).

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This textual analysis also leads us to the name, number and order of the narrative codes. For example, in the lexia under discussion three codes ---hermeneutic, semic and cultural---took part in the order of HER-SEM-REF. The other important thing about this lexia is that its hermeneutic code keeps the curiosity and suspense of the reader fresh.

(2) *It was the best time of the year, the time when the maize was mowed.* *HER.

How and why the harvesting season of the crop maize is the best time of the year? **SEM. Maize is a special gift from nature to man; the world of nature produces maize with many benefits for man. There are hundreds of food grains on the body of the maize cob; their colour is same; the space they cover on the cob is equal; the amount of nutrients is equal; their shine is equal; the sweet smell they produce is the same and the taste that they possess is the same. When the maize crop is harvested all these features and qualities of the food grains are at the apogee. These features are infact the metaphor of richness of life, true sense of rapture, equal rights of all humans on the globe for blissful joys. That is why it is the best time of the year.

Again the narrator has made a shrewd use of the hermeneutic code to start the text; the code of enigma leads to the semic code for interpretation and in this way the meanings of the text are comprehended. The other beauty of the networking of these codes in this lexia is to make the text continue to suggest meanings endlessly.

(3) *The rains, which had made the sky a whirling darkness of water and the land a swamp, had slowed down. It did rain once or twice a week but the sun shone too. And when it came out it grew hot. But out in the fields it was intensely green* *REF. **SEM.

Nature continues to provide gifts at a stretch. As soon the maize crop is harvested, the objects of nature like the sun, the sky, the earth and water harness themselves to prepare other types of fruits for the humans. The sky is covered with 'a whirling darkness of water'; it produces huge black clouds full of rain drops to fall on the earth and to change it into a 'swamp'. Then the rains stop and the sun shines on the swamp to let green grasses and crops germinate there.

(4) *and the grass grew upto my shoulder. It was the magic season.**SEM.

Each word of this lexia is full of additional meanings. 'The grass grew up to my shoulder' implies abundance of food, crops, smell and beauties produced by nature for all humans. 'Up to my shoulder' implies he mounds of food, fruits and gifts.

Here the narrator consciously used the phrase 'magic season' to create the implicational character of nature with reference to its subtle influence upon his mind; it has stimulated his sensitive, justice loving and fair imagination which intoxicates him and he enraptured by the sweet atmosphere of nature feels himself in the magic world. This magic season is to be contrasted soon with the horrible feudal environment, now to sear his imagination.

(5) *I would try to run away* *REF. **SYM.

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This lexia is in contrast to the second lexia of the story. In the present lexia the narrator wants to run away from the atmosphere where there is the presence of the Maulvi and in the second lexia of the story the narrator is enjoying the 'best time of the year'. One symbolizes the natural beauties that grip the attention of the narrator and the other implies Maulvi Sahib's mechanical coaching that does not attract him at all.

Here in this lexia, we are moving from cultural code to the semic code in the pursuit of meaning. In fact this lexia and the second lexia of the story form a binary therefore they are rich in meanings: one atmosphere attracts due to its naturalness and the other repels due to its unnatural way of being imposed upon the narrator.

(6) *He had a stick which made my heart stand still and then beat fast. And I went shrinking within myself**REF. **SYM.

In the first paragraph the narrator feels himself honoured and elevated by nature because nature has brought a lot of blessings for him. On the other hand the Maulvi Sahib degrades the narrator because he comes with a stick in hand.

(7) *to where he (Maulvi Sahib) sat next to my grandfather.**REF. **SEM.

The two social institutions are pooling their forces. Their physical thickness with each others represents their networking to pursue their self- centered interests in the society.

(8) *'Dada Jan Adab. Maulvi Saab Adab, 'I mumbled. 'Jeete raho (May you live long),' came the booming response. And then the lesson would begin. Every letter refused to be registered for there was sharp pain and bitter words for mistakes. While my eyes danced on the page hot tears scalded my eyes. And still the lesson went on till the Maulvi Sahib said: 'Enough for today, fool. Now go and learn the verse off by heart otherwise I will break every bone in your body'.**REF. **SEM.

The whole lexia makes a binary with first paragraph of the story. Here there is coercion while in other there is but natural atmosphere.

(9) *I went out cringing and the eyes of the Maulvi Saab drilled holes into me.**ACT.

The narrator boy goes to Zenana. **REF. It is a common scene that refers to the cultural code concerning the traditional Muslim culture in the Subcontinent. The fear of the Maulvi Sahib overrides the nerves of the young Muslim children getting the education of the Quran. ***SEM.

The pronoun 'I' in the present story is replete with additional meanings; its connotations deal predominantly with a natural, free and innocent version of life. 'The eyes of the Maulvi Sahib' are instrumental to emboss the man made static, rigid and the fleecing system upon the innocent mind of the narrator and resultantly his body is 'cringing'. Maulvi's opened eyes that 'drilled

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into' the body of the narrator metaphorise the religious leader's sexual tendencies towards the object. The chunk 'I went cringing' again alludes to the horrible situation after the finish of an abnormal sexual intercourse that is culturally bracketed with the Maulvis and their students.

Corruption of each type in the society is performed at the hands of the institutions in league and the overlapping of the lexias is devised to shed light on this collusion.

(10) *And once was inside the hubbub of the Zenana, I forget all about the lesson.* *REF.

When the younger brothers and sisters are free from school or the religious lesson, they rush to their playmates or to the rooms of their elder brothers and sisters and forget all about their lessons. **SYM.

The present and the previous lexias form an antithesis. In the previous lexia the narrator is a miserable figure but in the present one he is a happy human soul. The reason is simple.

Psychologically, the narrator-boy identifies himself, in the *Zenana*, with the other marginalized and victimized section of the society- the female folk. ***SEM. The word 'lesson' in this lexia gives additional meanings more vigorously than denotative meanings. Its implications refer to the manipulative set of rules shaped by the collusion of fleecing institutions of the society to exploit the weaker sections of the society. But the natural goodness in the narrator-boy resists the onslaught of the cruel institutions against him. 'I forgot all about the lesson' refers to the robust good self of the narrator-boy that refuses to be tamed.

(11) *My elder sisters were cooking things and women sat near them telling stories about the wolves.* *REF.

Women of the house are preparing food in the *Zenana* and the other women are telling stories. **SEM. The good elements and characters in the present stories are basically the providers of food to others---nature, the elder sisters of the narrator and the narrator himself. Here the 'cooking things' must have some provision for the women sitting and telling stories in the *Zenana*. When food is distributed among all the result is 'the hubbub' in 'the *Zenana*'; this noise of the ladies provides the real warmth and pleasures of life to the people during these activities of happy moments of life. Some bitter dangers are also alluded to 'the wolves'. Here the phrase 'the wolves' implies the villains of the human society. There bestial figures are bound to usurp the freedoms, liberty and rights of the weaker sections of the society.

(12) *I listened to them...* *SYM.

The linguistic chunk 'I listened to them... (women making noise and telling stories)' is to be contrasted with 'every letter refused to be registered' of lexia 9. The narrator-boy's ears are open to the conversation in the *Zenana* but his mind is closed to the lesson of Maulvi. The conversation of women is not harmful to others; it is beneficial and useful for all. And it is also being produced in that room where every one is given something to eat, and is free, happy and in

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a state of cosiness. On the other hand the Maulvi Sahib's lesson to the narrator is being imposed upon the mind of the boy forcibly.

(13) *and sucked a mango here and lime there.* *SEM.

'Mango' and 'lime' and 'here' and 'there' are all with additional meanings. Mango and lime suggest the vast availability of different freedoms and enjoyments of life. Equal freedoms, equal rights and then equal opportunities for all types of taste and flavours of juicy life are emphasized here. When all these things are ensured, social harmony, social cohesiveness, human ties and the conversation which is full of life are bound to follow us in the *Zenana*.

When barriers among the humans are non-existent, glow of lively moments is afresh; the rush of warm human feelings and passion is constant and deviations from the cosy life are not spotted.

(14) *Then I escaped into the green world outside.* *ACT. The child-narrator goes to the world of nature. **SYM.

The world of the Moulvi is contrasted with the world of nature. The narrator uses the word 'escaped' to show his coming out of the sphere of the Maulvi sahib; this word suggests his running out of a prison house and his rush into 'the green world' symbolizes his losing himself in a pleasant, cozy, free, dynamic and natural world of nature. The lexeme 'outside' is in opposition to inside. ***REF. To fly kite is an activity of children in free time.

(15) *There boys flew kites.* *REF.

It is a common hobby of the subcontinental rural boys to fly kites. **SEM. 'The boys' has the connotations of unspoiled version of innocent, promising and pure forms of human life. 'Flew kites' is also with additional meanings; the children have an active imagination which causes them to see the dreams of their adult life; their flying kites in the open sky and across the whole green field is implicational in character; all the children irrespective of their familial and social status have all the rights to live their life in joys, pleasures and contentment.

(16) *They were the ones I was not to play with: semi-naked, brown and dirty.* *REF.

This reference emphasizes the caste ridden aspect of the subcontinental societies. **SYM. The divide between the haves and have nots is institutionalized and well settled. 'I', under the influence of corrupt social institutions is an attitude which is unavoidably expected to be the centre in relation to the other-the poor people.

(17) *But they ran from one green field to another and the kites over their heads were so colorful. I did enjoy it all.* *ACT.

Boys run in joys with their kites. **REF. ***SEM. 'The boys' in the green field, with colourful kites over their heads has additional meanings. Nature provides 'the green fields' which implies pleasant habitat to the unspoiled versions of life. As each and every grain of maize has equal

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shine, place and importance in relation to other, in the same way the boys here have equal rights of kite flying (romantic and thorough life) in the green field (lap of nature).

Connotatively, the true happiness of life flows to us from the presence of true happiness of others. That is why the good-natured personality of the narrator loses itself in the rush of happiness of the other boys.

(18) *Among them, as in the Zenana, people laughed outright.**SYM.

Both the *Zenana* and the green field are a little away from the cruel hands of the exploiting institutions. The freedoms, rights and equalities among the members of the society, in these two places, produce smiles, laughs and happiness for the people. As there is no division of any type among them, therefore they are close to each other; they collectively contribute to the pleasant atmosphere.

(19) *One of the boys I knew was Gullu. He was of my age and as tall as I. But there the resemblance ended. For Gullu was dark and dirty and wore a loincloth whereas I was fair, clean and wore a shirt and white pyjamas.* *REF. **SYM.

These lines refer to the ugly flaws of a class, race and caste ridden society in the subcontinent. The poor child Gullu is contrasted with the rich narrator.

The point which is very pinching and disturbing in this comparison is this that the touchstone of superiority and inferiority of the boys is not to depend upon their achievements and characteristics rather they are judged on the basis of colour and the type of clothes they are wearing. 'As tall as I' refers to the equality among the boys provided to them by nature but the distraction of this natural equality is done at the hands of cruel institutions of the class ridden society.

(20) *I liked Gullu, and though I was told that his father was a shoe-maker, still used to play with him.* *HER.

The question arises why the narrator mentions here the profession of Gullu's father as a cause for him to remain away from him. The answer is withheld at present. **SEM. The linguistic chunk 'I was told that his father was a shoe maker' has deep connotative sense. The institutions of the society which have pooled their forces to usurp the rights of the majority of the people have very systematic mechanism to train the people who belong to them. 'I was told' in fact means that the narrator was coached time and again by the feudal institution to let barriers be built between the feudal people and the poor population.

(21) *Gullu was obviously flattered at my condescension and boasted about his friendship with me to his other companions.* *REF.

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When the narrator continues to meet and play with Gullu, in spite of warnings from the authoritative but division loving agencies in the atmosphere, the son of the shoe maker feels himself elated. His own self appears gratified at the humane behaviour of the narrator.

Paying no attention to the social barriers by the narrator produces horizontal movements in the society: Gullu boasts of his friendship with the narrator to his companions.

(22) *One of them, Bansi Lal by name, came to me once and warned me against Gullu. Chote Lala, ' he replied' His touch defiles the likes of you. He is of low caste, ' I don't believe in all that I replied without conviction.*HER.*

The enigma is produced with reference to Bansi's attitude towards Gullu as low caste. **SEM. Bansi Lal with his advice and then threat to the narrator is with additional meaning. He represents the monetary institution of the society. First, the institution of church in collusion with the feudal institution and now the monetary agency is to identify itself with the other institutions usurping the rights of the society. Bansi is blunt and prejudiced against Gullu...the poor but major strata of the society.

'He is of low caste' is an institutional slogan which works in the hands of the exploiting people to let the poor be sacrificed for the elevation of the honour of the rich.

(23) *'And if Khan Sahib finds out?' Khan Sahib was my grandfather and his name was enough to blanch my cheeks, *REF. **SEM.*

The words of this lexia have connotations for us. The narrator who was adamant to continue to play with Gullu in spite of warning from Bansi Lal loses the stiffness of his intention when Bansi threatens to bring the matter before Khan Sahib-the grandfather of the narrator. 'His name was enough to blanch my cheeks' implies the strength, powerfulness and rigidity of the feudal institution against the tidings of nature and the weaker sections of the society. The narrator is still not corrupted by the social institutions but he is subdued and repressed before them. His natural and justice based self is retreating a bit now.

(24) *'I only allow him to show me places,' I replied evasively. 'I'll show you places,' he replied.*SEM.*

Bansi, apparently a young boy, is connotatively a support that a corrupt institution provides to the other social institutions to let the network of a set of cruel institutions enjoy power over the helpless masses in the society. Instead of letting the narrator meet with Gullu, Bansi offers himself as a replacement to the son of the shoe maker: 'I'll show you places'. Here the words 'show' and 'places' are again with additional meanings.

The narrator who by nature is open minded, a fair sense, righteous intellect and a version of natural concept of life is forced by Bansi to learn only those rules and experiences ('places') which suit the member of a feudal institution.

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(25) *I had no reply and decided to allow him to do so. Bansi Lal was delighted. He looked at the semi-circle of the other boys standing and huddled together like sheep* *REF. **SEM.

Each and every phrase of this lexia is based upon rich connotations. When the institution dealing with wealth moulds the narrator to be away from the poor sections of the society, Bansi feels himself strengthened and that is his triumph. As soon as Bansi wins the narrator to his side, all the poor boys playing in the green field lose their individualistic status and are turned into a collective body with ordinary name: 'boys standing huddled together like sheep.'

As we see in the imperialistic novels that the colonized people are presented collectively in terms of a chain, line, and heap of black shadows in the same way Bansi Lal's filter is foregrounded and the poor boys are marginalized as 'huddled together.'

(26) *With triumph and started running towards a hill.* *REF. **SEM.

When Bansi bends the narrator to his own side, he is in 'triumph'; he at once makes a plan to leave the place where the poor boys are in abundance and, along with the narrator, runs towards a 'hill'. The immediacy to drag the narrator from the green field towards 'the hill' which connotatively suggests man-made superior standard and status is noticeable. Their reaching the hill would allow them to 'look at' –look down upon- the weaker sections of the society.

(27) *I followed, and soon we were lost between criss-crossing field and groves of guava trees and huts where thin brown men sat milking goats.* *REF.

The narrator along with Bansi is lost in the fields.

(28) *The other boys were not visible any more and Gullu wasn't there.* *SEM.

'The other boys were not visible' implies two interpretations: the narrator feels a regret at his going away from the field of the poor boys and the obvious change of place that the narrator now feels. 'Gullu was not there' suggests the change that the narrator feels conceptually.

(29) *Bansi Lal, the money-lender's son took me up the hill and sat down on the summit.* *REF. **SEM.

The attitude of this lexia is implicitly conveyed through 'the hill', 'the money lender's son', 'sat down' and 'on the summit'; 'on the summit' implies the presence of aristocratic mindset, the highest social status, authoritativeness and the thinking that is to rule, degrade, usurp and control the poor masses.

When all the institutions of the society establish a powerful network of their own, the pulverization of the poor sections of the society is ensured.

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(30) *The scene below was really fascinating. Far away there were kites but they were below me.* *SEM. The narrator feels another type of beauty which is the result of his distancing from Gullu.

Still the kites of the poor boys attract the narrator, but the gaze from the top of the summit has its own charm for him now.

(31) *Bansi told me all about him and, of course, not fit to be spoken to by me. Gullu, however, was the most despicable of the lot. He was an untouchable who couldn't even come into the temple.* *REF. **SEM. One institution strengthens the other institution at the cost of the poor. The upper class for its distinguishedness thinks it essential to keep her members distanced from the lower people. For this purpose faults are hunted in the lower classes; they are presented as untouchable and they are also kept away from places like mosques and temples.

The degradation of the lower classes adds a dose of 'greatness' to the upper class.

(32) *'He eats snakes', Bansi shuddered with horror. I too shuddered. How could anyone eat snakes I wondered.* *SEM The money lending business depends upon the maintenance of other corrupt social institutions like feudalism. Ultimately to serve its own interest the business of money lending represented through Bansi levels serious and horrible accusations against Gullu.

The sentence 'He eats snakes.' is the metaphor of the maximum meanness to which a corrupt institution can go and it also clarifies the availability of unlimited freedoms available to the corrupt institutions to maintain their stature at the cost of the poor.

(33) *When I came back Bansi led me into mischief. We went into field and plucked the green maize cobs. I enjoyed doing this though I wasn't hungry and didn't even know whose field it was.* *ACT. **REF. ***SEM. The sentence 'Bansi Lal led me into mischief' connotes the mischievous character of the money lenders in the affairs of innocent people. 'We went into the field and plucked the green maize' implies the performance of the role of devil in the story of Adam and Eve. Like Satan Bansi enters into the field of a farmer without permission. Bansi calls Gullu a snake eater but in fact he himself performs the role of a snake in the Biblical terms. The act shows the haughtiness of the fleecing institutions towards the poor. 'I enjoyed this though I was not hungry' suggests the vulnerability of the poor before the rich in a caste and class ridden society.

It is tragic to note that the narrator along with Bansi plucks and destroys some of maize cobs in spite of the fact that he 'was not hungry'.

(34) *Just then dogs barked and an old man came shouting, tried to twist his face into smile and said: Sarkar these are unripe. I will send them to your house and you can have as many you want. He was whining, that old man, and bending low. The dogs whom he had beaten with his stick, hid between his legs and growled.* *ACT. **REF. ***SEM. There are some obvious patterns in the reactions of the old man before the narrator; the dogs which bark are the symbol of active powerfulness of an individual to safeguard his assets; but 'the dogs, whom he had

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beaten with his stick, hid between his legs and growled' metaphorises the tamed, repressed and colonized forces. There is clear resemblance between the old man's reactions and reactions of the dogs.

It means the awe of the feudal institution has injured the ego, and chained the freedoms of the farmers.

(35) *I and Bansi left the field and Bansi told me that the field was mine and the old man was an impudent dotard. I was eating what I had in my pockets so I didn't reply.* *REF. **SEM. Bansi is a proper name built with so many connotations. In each and every phrase and sentence the additional meanings of his name change. To let the business of money lending continue and prosper, the story of mastery of the feudal lord upon his farmers is necessary. That is why Bansi appears in different roles to let the son of the feudal lord exert his egotistic pressure upon the peasants time and again.

'Bansi told me that the field was mine and the old man was an impudent dotard' has two implicational messages: the narrator is himself the master of the field but his ego is injured by the peasant and the old man is so rude that he needs punishment.

(36) *From the next day the maize started pouring in. The smell of the harvest was strong in the vast courtyards. There was hustle and bustle and riotous colour everywhere. Carts full of things were brought and emptied.* *REF. ** SEM. The patterns of slavery are so powerful in the minds of the peasants that they quickly, happily and routinely bring the crop laden carts to be emptied in the house of the feudal lords.

They have accepted that whatever they themselves grow on the fields is basically meant for the granaries of the feudal lord only.

(37) *bullocks kept munching the green and their bells kept tinkling.* *REF. **SEM. There are many connotations in this lexia. The bullocks, the castrated young oxen, suggestively stand for the controlled, pet, colonized and repressed peasants; their original and natural powerfulness for self defence has been snatched and now they are behaving just like slaves or the beast of burden for their masters.

The consistent tinkling of their bells implies their accepted loyalty for their lords.

(38) *Then I went out and lay down on the fresh smiling maize crop. I could see the stone walls of the house and far away the well with its pulley from where I was. All around me was food.* *ACT. **REF. ***SEM. All the important images in this lexia are arranged as metaphorised entities. 'Fresh and smiling maize crop' symbolizes the everlasting beneficial and pleasant behaviour of nature for all the humans. Around the smiling maize crop mounds, there is 'warm' air that is the metaphor of motherly attitude of nature to humans. 'The stone wall of the house' is the metaphor of a prison where this maize crop whose smile and freshness was for all the humans is going to be imprisoned. The 'far away well stands for the world of warmth, nature,

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goodness, urbanity and beauty; but the feudal lord has turned his back upon this well and here his role is that of a usurper.

(39) *I went out and found more carts arriving. The men shouted to each other but hush fell over everyone when my grandfather came out. His clerk, called Munshi ji by everyone, was with him. 'Is it all in?' asked Dada Jan. *ACT. **REF. ***SEM.* The men who are bringing carts are tamed slaves whose slavery is externalized through the castrated bullock pulling carts to the house of the master. 'The man shouted to each other' but Dada Jan shouted to all of them: 'is it all in?'

The Munshi of Dada Jan is that character who through his calculations maintains the slavery upon the peasants and satisfies the ego of the cruel exploiter of the weak humans.

(40) *'No Sarkar. Two carts are left,' replied the Munshi in his ingratiating voice. Let those sister-fuckers hurry up, said my grandfather. Yes Khan Sahib,' replied Munshi ji. *REF. **SEM.* The Munshi uses the high sounding words like 'Sarkar' and 'Yes, Khan Sahib' but the words that the feudal lord uses for farmers are quite mean: 'let those sister-fuckers hurry up.'

This established discourse between the slave and the master betrays the durability of the system and the non-presence of rebellion on the part of the victimized peasants. The clause 'let those sister-fuckers hurry up' metaphorises the cruel encroachment of the feudal lord upon the rights of the peasants.

(41) *My grandfather turned to go in. Before I could turn to hide myself, he saw me. By his look I knew he was sure that I had heard him abusing the cart-drivers. 'You donkey why do you come where grown-ups are doing their work,' he thundered. *REF. **SEM.* The dirty utterances of the feudal lord in the previous and the present lexias are opposite to each other in their meanings. For the peasants the phrase 'sister-fuckers' also contains the sexual motives of the feudal against the sisters of the peasant. But in the present lexia the use of the lexeme 'donkey' has but the meaning of an idiot only.

(42) *I cast my eyes down and didn't lift him till I heard his footsteps pass by. *REF.*

The narrator boy is with low eyes before his Dada Jan as a show of respect to the elders.

(43) *Then I too went out and found that a shed had been improvised. In this they had poured the maize crop till the cobs had spilled overact. *ACT. **REF. ***SEM.* The linguistic chunk 'a shed had been improvised' has a lot of connotative meanings. The lust and hunger of the feudal lord has exceeded the limit which suggests that the food for the peasants is being snatched by the cruel feudal lords without any shame. Rather, the feudal lord feels triumphs over improving his granary at the cost of the tiller of land.

(44) *Men were assiduously arranging them but they spilled over and spread out.*

*REF. **SEM. The maize crop is the symbol of nature's gift of food for all the humans. The equal shine of all grains of a maize cob metaphorises the right of happy and rich life for each and every individual. But here the centuries old feudal system, a serious type of slavery, is self-regulatory in character.

(45) *I went behind the huge mound of gram and cobs and flung myself on the mountain of sweet-smelling food.**REF. The narrator moves to the mounds of maize.

(46) *After sometime I heard someone moving cautiously on all fours. I looked around and found several such mounds. And behind one of them was Gullu. And he was hungrily devouring a milky-white cob. At first he hesitated but when I laughed, he also laughed and we both helped ourselves to the sweetness of the maize.**REF. It is a common scene that there are so many heaps of maize and children are playing over them. **SEM. The words one 'Gullu' and 'several such mounds of maize' are bound to convey additional meanings. Gullu is here as a looter or a rebel against the system but very weak one. His presence against the mounds is good but his actions to be a friend with the narrator, at the present moment, and 'hungrily devouring a milky-white cob' for himself only shows his petty selfishness not a sign of rebellion against the system of feudalism. Gullu, an entirely weak fellow, is the only rebel against the human exploitation in the story.

(47) *There we sat with the grain all brown and green and ivory and golden and spread around us. There were mounds and we didn't imagine it would all end. It was under us and on the left and on the right and when we rolled over it we could smell it. The odour was fresh and even more enticing than that of the wheat which came in April.* *SEM. All the phrases of this lexia are connoted. 'There we sat with the grain all brown and green and ivory and golden and spread out all around us' connotatively suggests the lesson of the story. So many types and so many mounds of maize symbolize the abundance of food given by nature to man. Gullu and the narrator metaphorise the society for which the food is more than the need: 'we did not imagine it would all end.' The two boys surrounded by infinite number of maize mounds are equal in their hunger for food.

(48) *And above us the first stars were blinking in slowly darkening sky.**REF. **SEM. Stars are bad omen here. Gullu's punishment is to start soon.

(49) *I do not know how long we would have stayed there if we had not been caught. The Munshi caught us. Oh Chote Lala main, 'he said incredulously. And then his face twisted it self into an expression of contempt.*

*And what is this brat of a chamar doing here,' he shouted. I was forgotten and some strong men picked up Gullu and dragged him before my grandfather. He told me not to pluck the unripe maize-cobs was bending low at his feet.**REF. It is a common thing when the son of a poor peasant meets and enjoys with the feudal son it is resented by the feudalist setup. The Munshi calls the narrator as 'Chote Lal Mian' but Gullu is labeled as 'a brat of a chamar.' The

face of the Munshi is twisted to see Gullu near the maize mounds. On the other hand he addresses the narrator quite respectfully

(50) *How dare you tell my grandson not to pluck your dirty cobs shouted my grandfather.**REF. The land lord snubs the old peasant not due to the offence of the latter, rather he shouts at the helpless farmer to water his ego as the factual owner of the slave. Sartre holds that the ultimate purpose of man is to become God. Same case is here.

(51) *'Khan Sahib, Sarkar have mercy' pleaded the old man and wrung his trembling hands'. I said I would send them to the home of the Chote Sarkar' and with tears flowing his trembling chin, the old peasant tried to prostrate himself before my grandfather. My grandfather kicked him in the mouth and I saw him fall backward with his mouth bleeding profusely.**REF. It is a common scene in feudal societies to see the punishment of the peasant at the hands of the master.

(52) *'Beat some sense into his chamar's bastard,' said my grandfather to the Munshi as Gullu was thrust forward for his inspection 'see to it that he stops stuffing himself as if it is his father's property. And as for this insolent old peasant, burn his whole crop and beat him to pulp. And so saying Dada Jan went away.* *REF. The old farmer and Gullu are punished publicly to send a lesson, from the feudal authorities, to the other people.

(53) *I remember myself shouting but I was held in strong hands. And before my eyes they beat the old peasant and Gullu. They kicked them and slapped them and abused them. And they fell again and again, the old man and Gullu and rose and were beaten down. And blood flowed fast out of them and they were kicked. Then, shouting, abusing and trying to break away, I was dragged into the Zenana.* *REF. The slavery is so powerful in the society that no one raises a rebellion against the cruelty of the land lord.

(54) *But even then nothing would have happened. I had cried the whole night and in the morning I was better. And then I went out and thought I would walk up to the hill, I found the way but didn't climb the hill. For just before it began, I found a field which was black and from which smoke still rose to the blue sky. The fire had consumed the whole crop and nothing was left. I saw the old peasant lying in a cot under banyan tree. He was groaning with pain and spitting blood, And around him sat children who were eating wild berries. He tried to get up and twist his face into a smile when he saw me but I ran away.* *ACT. **SEM. The narrator-boy is unable to protect Gullu. He can only weep which symbolizes his helplessness before the cruel.

(55) *And as the wind blew against my face I noticed that my cheeks were cold with running tears. And they came trickling down into my mouth and I tasted them: they were saltish.* *SEM. Each and every phrase in this lexia is with additional meanings. The tears that travel to the mouth from eyes of the narrator are unpleasant: *'they were saltish.'* Connotatively, this phrase suggests that the tears bring but bitter taste. Same is the case with the institution of feudalism.

(56) *And then the dance of the beards started, white, red and black beards bent over me and receded* *SEM. 'The dance of the beard started' stands for all the fleecing authorities and corrupt institutions that combine their forces and start their activities to realize their ugly aims. These

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institutions which apparently are doing some religious and godly work are in fact the institutions that exploit the masses. They collectively emboss their ulterior character upon the imagination and mind of the narrator.

(57) *and as they came near I shouted. For the beards were long and pointed and grew thick like a jungle,*SEM.* These 'long' and 'pointed' beards which are 'thick like a jungle' imply the powerful, cruel and satanic social institutions from which escape is impossible for the narrator.

There is all pretension in their beards. These beards are satanic and barbarous in their actions.

(58) *but they were not green. They were hard and would rub tough skin off me. They were grim and they were always present. *SEM.* 'They were not green' implies the unnatural, unjustified and immoral dominance of the corrupt institutions which would 'rub tough skin off me'; the brutal grind of these bullying institutions would continue to the complete subjugation of the narrator. The self-centered institutions which are 'grim' and 'always present' coach the right minded and truth lover innocent young narrator to the point of butchery.

(59) *When I closed my eyes, they disappeared but then I started having nightmares about them. And I shouted, and shielded my eyes and the beards were there. I couldn't escape from them. *SEM.* The beauties of nature have stimulated the imagination of the young narrator. He tries to escape from the dance of the beards into the safe heaven of imagination by shutting off his eyes. All this is but vain.

The dance of the beards burns the beauties of his imagination. The result is the grip of nightmares upon the narrator.

(60) *The mounds of food were no longer there. The smell of newly harvested crop was no more in my nostrils *SEM.* The grind of the institutions is so grave upon the narrator that the beauties of his imagination are replaced by the ill smell of exploitation of people. 'The mounds of food' and 'smell of nearly harvested crop' both are lost. He no more feels in his nostrils the sweet smell of maize. The greedy institutions have enveloped his whole being.

(61) *But all around were the beards: bushy ones and short ones. The beards met and came in a rush to rub me off the slate. They commanded, they taught, they prescribed what one was to eat, and what to drink. And what one could wear and what not; and whom one could meet and what one was to say and how it was to be said. They measured and weighed and calculated. And they could not be escaped from. *SEM.* The grind and the pressure of the institutions continue to inscribe the charter of self-centredness, exploitation of people, and erosion of urbanity upon the personality of the narrator. The charter of these institutions is prescriptive in nature and there is no choice available to the narrator but to surrender to the demands of the beards. 'They (beards) measured, they weighed and calculated. And they can not be escaped from.'

(62) *I was very weak and I opened my eyes with great effort. My mother was there: 'Munno,' she said 'are you all right'. 'Yes mother.' 'Alhamdo Lillah,' she said gratefully. Then came a*

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cough, a male cough. My mother withdrew. Dada Jan came in accompanied by the Maulvi Sahib and the physician, our Hakim Ji. The Hakim Ji had a long red beard, the Maulvi Sahib a black one and Dada Jan, a white one. I closed my eyes to wish them away. *REF. The mother, another weaker section of the feudal society, comes to the help of the narrator.**SEM. All the verbal and non-verbal gestures of the bearded men are with additional meanings. In the last lexia of the story the white beard of Dada Jan, black beard of Maulvi Sahib and the long red beard of Hakim Ji are visitant upon the bewildered narrator; in their final effort these beards form a wall around the narrator; the only sound audible is ‘a male cough’ which implies the pride and haughty roar of the feudalistic grind.

Like Gullu the narrator is also a very weak opposition to the deep rooted and monstrous values of the society. The narrator closes his eyes to ‘wish them away.’

4. Conclusion

The application of five Barthesian codes on a Pakistani short story *The Dance of the Beards* produced many positive results.

First, the data analyzed above shows that the Barthesian codes are universal as voices and strands in a literary piece of literature, therefore they are quite befitting for the analysis of a local text. These poststructural devices can be applied to any story, novella, and novel successfully.

Second, these codes are the total material needed for the construction of a literary text. Meanings are lying across the axis of these codes. When we slice one code from the other, the mine of meanings is revealed. In this way the researcher arrives at the thorough study of the story.

Third, with the help of these narrative codes we study the whole body of the text; it produces the pleasure of reading for the reader and he enjoys it.

Fourth, the Barthesian codes facilitate the reader to gaze upon the text from a variety of angles and in this way it becomes easy to analyze the text.

Fifth, Barthes’ poststructural approach to narratives enables the researcher and reader to penetrate deeper into each and every linguistic device used by the narrator. This x-raying method of analysis does not allow even a single and minute detail to escape from the eye of the reader.

Sixth, the Barthesian poststructural mode of literary analysis is more precise and more accurate in interpretation as each and every judgment of the researcher depends upon textual evidences.

Seventh, the present study shows that the codes which are predominantly preferred in use are cultural, semic and symbolic ones. The least used code in the story is proairetic; connotatively it stands for the lack of action and rebellion on the part of the narrator against the butcheries of his

feudal grandfather---Dada Jan. The maximum use of the semic and symbolic codes in the text points out the multitude of evils existent in the feudal society.

Eighth, it is observed often that the same lexia preserves more than one code and the interpretation of one code leads to the door of the other code. This tendency found in the story under analysis proves that it is full of meanings. It also proves that the lexias as containers of meanings are individualistic entities as well as related to the other units of meanings. “The text is a complex system of intersections in which all elements are related to one another” (Rivière, 2008, p.46).

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