

A GENETTIAN READING OF PENELOPE FITZGERALD'S *THE BLUE FLOWER*

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines how Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Blue Flower* (1995) represents the inner life of a historical figure without projecting the psychological realism of the modern novel onto the past. Drawing on Gérard Genette's (1980) categories of voice, focalization, diegetic level, and narrative time, the study shows that Fitzgerald constructs her protagonist, Friedrich von Hardenberg, later known as the poet-philosopher Novalis (1772–1801), almost entirely through the perceptions of other characters, withholding direct access to his own thoughts. The same strategy governs the portrayal of Sophie von Kühn, whose importance in the novel is repeatedly asserted by other characters, but never confirmed by any stable account of her inner life. This structural withholding, the study argues, formally enacts the Romantic idea of irony described by Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), a German philosopher and literary critic who argues, in many of his literary studies, that an ideal representation of reality is permanently flawed and that there is no objective representation, as the process of writing about an event or a figure remains unavoidably subjective. Schlegel's views on the complexity of having an authentic representation of an event in history or a historical figure through literature are exemplified in the unfinished tale embedded within the novel, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, which is read differently by each character who encounters it, reinforcing this same pattern of asserted but unverifiable meaning. The study concludes by showing how the focalization technique contributes to existing literature on Fitzgerald and on the historical novel more broadly.

KEYWORDS: *The Blue Flower*, Penelope Fitzgerald, Gérard Genette, Narratology, Focalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Blue Flower focuses on the early years of Friedrich von Hardenberg, the late 18th century German poet and philosopher also known as Novalis, and his uncompromising love for young Sophie von Kühn. (Sophie was the twelve-year-old daughter of a minor Saxon official; Fritz met her in 1794 and became engaged to her the following year). In bringing to life the life of a leading figure in early German Romanticism, Fitzgerald grapples with a fundamental problem shared by all biographical novelists: how to portray a historical figure who became philosophically significant without either reducing that significance to a simple psychological cause or leaving it as an unexplained mystery. The novel's highly acclaimed solution is distinguished by its simplicity and elision, but appreciation of its effects has not been matched by its description.

The Blue Flower is discussed by Lee (2014) in her biography of Fitzgerald. She clarifies the way Fitzgerald compiled and drew on the five-volume edition of Hardenberg's collected works, reflecting her interest in European history and philosophy and her restraint in making inferences beyond the documentary evidence. Wolfe (2004) discerns Fitzgerald's overarching

techniques as those of evoking great historical change through the small details of domestic life. He commended the novel's lack of romanticism in the face of its romance subject, and its insistence on a material world. This paper suggests that Fitzgerald's restraint is the result of a consistent and directed narratological design, the workings of which can be revealed through the principles of Gérard Genette's narrative discourse.

While previous studies have analyzed Fitzgerald's restraint and use of ellipsis as hallmarks of her late style there have not been attempts to establish the systems that bring up these effects and discuss Fitzgerald's narration as embodied in coherent epistemological intentions. In the article, the term "epistemological" is used in the sense of stating what the focalizing consciousness (and, consequently, the reader) is entitled to know in the text, and it should be differentiated from the term "narrative authority". In this paper, Genette's (1980) ideas about focalization, diegetic embedding, and narrative time are applied to trace the strategies through which Fitzgerald shifts narrative focus, producing a mode of historical-biographical writing in which access to authentic, verifiable fact is rendered uncertain and open to question.

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This paper argues that Fitzgerald constructs Fritz's exceptional stature through three interlinked narrative strategies. First, she consistently employs variable internal focalization through the eyes of others, rather than of her protagonist, and ensures that Fritz's mind and heart are knowable only as their impact on other minds, not as interior focalization. Second, Sophie von Kühn is presented through several conflicting points of view that never agree on who she really is, and even her own diary offers almost no insight into her inner life. Third, she embeds the fragment of Fritz's planned novel as a story-within-the-story whose meaning changes depending on who is reading it. Together, these three strategies mean that the novel's two central questions - why Fritz is seen as remarkable, and why he loves Sophie - are never directly answered.

Unlike traditional biographical novels, which use an all-knowing narrator or a first-person retrospective voice to resolve conflicting evidence, Fitzgerald's novel gives the narrator no such authority: conflicting reports about Fritz and Sophie are simply left unresolved. It does this, the paper suggests, not just as an aesthetic choice for restraint but also as an enactment of the Romantic philosophy that the novel represents: in particular, of the theory of Romantic irony put forward by Friedrich Schlegel, who argues that literary texts are inadequate representing authentic historical details since literary writing, though might strive to be objective, remain flawed. While idealism in portraying beauty in literary texts is unattainable rendering these texts detached further from reality.

This limitation is not simply a matter of biography; rather, it dramatizes the Romantic concept described by Friedrich Schlegel in the sense that the artist makes the claim for an experience of absolute significance while expecting (as in the case of the myth) the impossibility to ever communicate it in finite terms (Schlegel, 1991; Mellor, 1980). The rest of this article approaches the connection made between the two as a theme developed throughout various levels of discussion, returning to this point at the culmination of each separate section.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fitzgerald's late historical novels have received critical recognition for their elliptical narrative style and their ability to achieve big effects with small means. The most comprehensive analysis of Fitzgerald's literary career can be found in Lee (2014). Lee suggests that Fitzgerald's novels are organized around textual gaps that require the reader to fill in the gaps. Wolfe (2004) claims that Fitzgerald's novels refuse to know any more about the past than their historical moment would have allowed, which makes the historical past feel immediate rather than distant. Neither, however, offers a comprehensive account of the narrative strategies by which these effects are realised; nor do they address the question of how Fitzgerald's formal strategies might constitute a coherent epistemological stance rather than merely expressing biographical care.

Recent literature concentrates on *The Blue Flower*, rather than a mere case of Fitzgerald's general late period writing. Dellming (2017) investigates the way the novel

deals with imagination and fantasy as knowledges themselves. While Turner (2020) analyses the temporal structure of the novel through Kristeva's (1979) concept of women's time - a cyclical, repetitive temporality set against the linear, historical time traditionally coded masculine. Çiçekler (2023) places the novel in the context of postmodern historical fiction, and Qin (2024) maintains that the novel presents a theory of the novel based on Romantic aesthetics. However, none of these works provide an in-depth Genettian analysis of focalization and diegetic structure.

In order to understand how the historical novel makes epistemological claims, we need to consider its larger category, historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon (2003) shows that postmodern historical novels differ from conventional historical novels in their self-conscious treatment of the epistemological grounds of historical knowledge: they are aware that historical narrative is not a window onto the past. De Groot (2009) build on this analysis to demonstrate that a historical novel's narrative style - its point of view, temporal structure and narratorial authority - constitutes the novel's truth-claims. Zero focalization implies that the past is knowable; restricted and fragmented focalization implies that it is not. Fitzgerald's novel is emphatically of the second kind, but this paper suggests that this is a claim that demands a closer look than that afforded by generalizations about restrictions.

The issue referred to as the "biographical historical novel problem" in the paper is one that also exists in the field of bio-fiction. According to Lackey (2016), the biographical novel has unique qualities because it uses a historical character's name while allowing for the creativity involved in writing fiction. Thus, this tension means that the writer has to develop techniques to bridge the gap between biography and fiction. From this wider perspective, Fitzgerald's approach in telling the story can be seen to be an appropriate response to the issue faced by biographers, rather than being a random approach unique to this novel.

2.1 Narrative Theory of Gerard Genette:

The paper draws on Gérard Genette's (1980) typology of narrative discourse, which provides the most sophisticated language in which to discuss the structure of the novel. Genette's distinction between voice (who speaks) and focalization (who sees) enables the analyst to separate the narrator's field of knowledge from the character's field of vision, thereby distinguishing the way *The Blue Flower* works. His distinctions between internal focalization (where the narrator knows only what a particular character knows), external focalization (where the narrator knows less than the character) and zero focalization (where the narrator is not limited to any one character's knowledge) offer a way of charting the distribution of narrative knowledge in the novel. Bal (1997) and Fludernik (1996) have built on Genette's focalization theory, especially in terms of how restriction of perspective necessarily affects the reader's interpretations, and their analyses inform this study.

Later advances in the theory of narrative refined rather than replacing Genette's categories. According to

Herman (1999, 2002), postclassical narratology redefines focalization as a way of cognitive perspective-making that is situated in the process of constructing the story world. Palmer (2004) claims that the fictional mind is perceived through concepts of continuous consciousness, which undermine the distinction between internal and external consciousness. These explanations add clarification to the present analysis: as they show that even the use of external focalization in the case of Fitzgerald involves a process of mind-reading.

Genette's account of narrative duration (the relationship between the time an event takes in the story-world and the space it takes in the narrative text), frequency (the relationship between the number of times events occur in the story-world and the number of times they are narrated) and order (the relationship between the chronological order in which events occur and the order in which they are narrated) offer categories for the analysis of Fitzgerald's treatment of historical time. His idea of diegetic levels - the primary diegesis in which characters inhabit, and the metadiegesis of narratives within the primary diegesis - helps to clarify the role of *The Blue Flower* story-within-the-story.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative, textual approach from the field of applied narratology. Close analyses of passages from Fitzgerald's *The Blue Flower* are undertaken using Genette's (1980) model, in four categories: focalization, voice, temporal order and diegetic level. This is not a comprehensive analysis of the novel; instead, it focuses on the chapters where Fitzgerald's narrative choices most clearly show her approach to controlling what the reader is allowed to know.

I have chosen to examine the novel's first chapter, which sets up the main focalizing disposition; key scenes introducing Sophie von Kühn and placing her under a variety of different interpretive regimes; chapters in which Fritz's imagined novel is read aloud to various audiences; and chapters that most clearly display the temporal structure of the novel, such as Sophie's sequence of diary entries and the Afterword at the end of the novel. In each case, the analysis moves from a close reading of the text to a more general account of the text's structure, with constant attention to the danger of circularity that threatens any argument that links structure to philosophical content.

Where the analysis engages in claims about the connection between narrative structure and philosophical content of early German Romantic literature, it does so on the basis of the particular formal features identified in the Genettian analysis rather than inferential claims about themes. The paper acknowledges competing interpretations of Fitzgerald's structural choices where these are methodologically significant and engages in comparative analysis with selected contemporary historical novels in order to clarify what is distinctive about Fitzgerald's narrative strategies.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 The Decentered Protagonist: External and Variable Internal Focalization:

Fitzgerald's most consequential structural decision is announced on the novel's first page, which does not belong to its ostensible subject. *The Blue Flower* opens not with Fritz von Hardenberg but with Jacobs Dietmahler, his university friend, arriving at the Hardenberg household on washday: '*Jacobs Dietmahler was not such a fool that he could not see that they had arrived at his friend's home on the washday.*' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.1)

The narrative is immediately anchored in Dietmahler's consciousness and in his inferential relationship to the physical scene before him. The focalization is strictly internal to Dietmahler: he reads the household's material evidence and draws social inferences, observing that he could tell from '*the great dingy snowfalls of sheets, pillow-cases, bolster-cases, vests, bodices, drawers, from the upper windows into the courtyard, where grave-looking servants, both men and women, were receiving them into giant baskets, that they washed only once a year*' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.1). The narrator adopts Dietmahler's perceptual and cognitive position; the reader is limited to what Dietmahler can observe and infer.

The strategic implications of this opening become clear in the next scene: Fritz becomes the object of Dietmahler's gaze rather than a consciousness in his own right. He appears through Dietmahler's eyes only: a gangly man traipsing through a busy courtyard, screaming about Kantian epistemology and washbaskets. The juxtaposition of intellectual declaration and domestic chaos is achieved entirely through Dietmahler's uninitiated perspective. He registers Fritz's energy as bewildering social behaviour rather than profound thought, and the reader, confined to Dietmahler's viewpoint, can observe the energy without entering its source. This pattern of observing Fritz from without rather than entering his consciousness characterizes the novel's treatment of its protagonist throughout. In Chapter 3, Sidonie reports Fritz 'in the kitchen garden patrolling the vegetable beds, inhaling the fragrance of the broad bean flowers, reciting at the top of his voice' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.12): the image is vivid and energetic but entirely external. When Friedrich Schlegel - Fritz's most intellectually sympathetic peer - introduces him to his brother August Wilhelm through a letter, the description is notable for its careful restriction to observable surface: '*He is thin and well-made, with a beautiful expression when he gets carried away. He talks three times as much, and as fast, as the rest of us. On the very first evening he told me that the golden age would return, and that there was nothing evil in the world. I don't know if he is still of the same opinion. His name is von Hardenberg.*' (Fitzgerald, 1995, pp.41-42)

Schlegel's letter is, in Genettian terms, a narrativized document that introduces a further degree of mediation. It is an embedded first-person account within the heterodiegetic narrative, focalized through Schlegel, and characterized by the epistolary voice's acknowledged uncertainty: 'I don't know if he is still of the same

opinion.' Fritz's ascribed intellectual distinction is thus presented as something Schlegel has perceived but cannot verify - an impression produced by observable behaviour rather than accessed interiority.

The moment at which Fritz's intellectual activity is most directly rendered - his solitary rest between Rippach and Lützen in Chapter 12 - is significant precisely because Fitzgerald mediates even this interior access through a documentary form. Fritz takes out his 'pocket journal' and writes: *'But I have, I can't deny it, a certain inexpressible sense of immortality'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.59). This is not free indirect discourse - the mode through which, in Cohn's (1978) account, third-person fiction renders consciousness directly. It is the reproduction of a written artefact, which introduces a diegetic distance between Fritz as writer and Fritz as focalizer: the reader encounters his interiority at one remove, mediated by the act of notation. The very content of the declaration - a 'sense of immortality' that the journal entry itself acknowledges as 'inexpressible'—signals the limits of the discursive form available to render it.

The overall result of this sustained external and mediated to the protagonist is that the reader can only grasp who Fritz is through his effects on the people around him, never directly. In Chapter 33, the Jena circle discusses him without direct access to his current thinking. Ritter insists that *'for him there is no real barrier between the unseen and the seen. The whole of existence dissolves itself into a myth'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.160). Caroline Schlegel notes that he *'used, of course, to say that every day the world was drawing nearer to infinity'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.160) past tense, reported speech, the secondary account of a secondary account. When Sidonie sees her brother near the end of the novel, her remark crystallizes the novel's structural disposition: *'Fritzchen, I hardly knew your face'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.252). Even those closest to Fritz encounter him as a kind of stranger whose interiority remains opaque.

Fitzgerald keeps decentering Fritz by repeatedly filtering him through other characters' points of view rather than his own. Genette (1980) calls this kind of shift alteration in focalization; here it happens so often that it becomes the novel's defining formal principle, and Fitzgerald never compensates for it by granting Fritz interiority elsewhere.

4.2 The Vague Portrayal of Sophie: Multiple Internal Focalization and its Limits:

If Fritz's discursively produced distinction is constituted through the absence of any details about the inner world of thoughts and feelings of the characters, Sophie is treated even more radically: the novel filters her through several competing, contradictory points of view, none of which settles what kind of person she really is. Sophie von Kühn is the most analyzed character in the novel and the most inaccessible. She is first introduced in Chapter 18 in a passage of careful physical positioning that exemplifies Fitzgerald's deployment of external focalization: *'At the back of the room, a very young dark-haired girl stood by the window, tapping idly on the glass*

as though she was trying to attract the attention of someone outside.' (Fitzgerald, 1995, pp.84–85)

This is pure external focalization: the girl is visible from without, her gesture observable but her motivation speculative ('as though'). Fritz's immediate response - *'Let time stand still until she turns round'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.85) - is rendered in free indirect discourse: we briefly enter his mind, only to find that it cannot tell us anything about hers. He is reacting to nothing more than her back and a single gesture. The irony is clear: we gain access to Fritz's thoughts at exactly the moment Sophie's remain closed to us.

Subsequent chapters multiply the focalizing perspectives on Sophie without resolving any of the questions they raise. Erasmus, visiting Grüningen unannounced, delivers the most dismissive assessment: *'Fritz, she is not beautiful, she is not even pretty. I say again this Sophie is empty-headed, moreover at twelve years old she has a double chin'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.113). Fritz's private journal records bewilderment rather than dismissal: *'I can't comprehend her, I can't get the measure of her. I love something that I do not understand'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.108). The portrait painter Hoffmann, commissioned specifically to render Sophie's essence, fails and explains his failure in terms that reframe the epistemological problem: *'A decent, good-hearted Saxon girl, potato-fed, with the bloom of thirteen summers, and the coarser glow of thirteen winters... I could not hear her question, and so I could not paint.'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, pp.153–54)

Visiting from Weimar, Goethe deflects Erasmus's question about Sophie's qualities into a general theory of desire: *'it is not her understanding that we love in a young girl. We love her beauty, her innocence, her trust in us, her airs and graces, her God knows what — but we don't love her for her understanding'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.237). Friedrich Schlegel, reading Sophie through Friederike's daybook account, produces a diagnostic metaphor: Sophie *'tries to make her mind work in the same way that Hardenberg's does, as one might try to teach a half-tame bird to sing like a human being'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.230). Karoline Just's reaction upon hearing that Fritz has fallen in love at Grüningen is registered entirely through her own body rather than through any assessment of Sophie: *'She felt as though her body had been hollowed out'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.91). The Bernhard, with characteristic directness, says: *'I don't know whether she is pretty. I'm not old enough to judge of these things. But I think she is ill'* (Fitzgerald, 1995, pp.222–23). ("The Bernhard" is intentional, not an error: it follows the novel's own convention of referring to the youngest Hardenberg son with the definite article, as a family nickname, and this usage is kept consistently wherever he is discussed below.)

In Genettian terms, what occurs across these chapters is a systematic deployment of multiple internal focalization: the same figure viewed through the successive perceptual fields of different characters, each producing a different and incompatible account. Unlike some modernist novels, where a stable character is merely complicated by subjective distortion, here there is no stable Sophie to begin with: each point of view adds

another, incompatible impression, and none of them can be checked against a reliable baseline.

Fitzgerald's most significant narrative move is to give Sophie a voice of her own in her diary - yet that voice offers almost no detail about her inner feelings or daily routine, so giving her a voice does not make her image any less vague. Sophie's diary entries in Chapter 28 are among the most formally precise passages in the novel: 'January 8 Today once again we were alone and nothing much happened. January 9 Today we were again alone and nothing much happened. January 10 Hardenburch came at mid-day. January 13 Today Hardenburch went away and I had nothing to amuse me.' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.133)

These entries constitute, in Genette's terms, the singulative narration of repetitive, non-eventful days: one entry records one day, even though what is recorded is repetitive, and Sophie's formulaic phrasing makes the days read as interchangeable. The diary's temporal compression is extreme, months elide into a handful of entries, and its content is unrelated to any psychological interiority the reader expects. It is not a confessional but a book of social accounting. Sophie writes her life in the most objective terms, employing with respect to herself the sort of behaviorist shorthand that the narrator of the novel employs with respect to the world. This form is important: even the genre most commonly supposed to be the site of interior self-revelation (the diary as confessional) is used here as a site of concealment.

Sophie's own speech adds to this effect. Her comments are fresh, direct, and focused on the tangible and immediate. When Fritz reads her the first part of his story and asks her what she thinks of it, she replies: 'Why should he care about a flower? He is not a woman, and he is not a gardener' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.139). Sophie's voice, when given direct expression, doesn't reveal the gap between her ostensible ordinariness and Fritz's love; it inhabits that gap as its proper place. The consequence of this is that Sophie is in Fitzgerald's novel the equivalent of *The Blue Flower* in Fritz's story: ever sought, ever elusive, necessarily unattainable.

This structure is not neutral. Sophie is selected as the 'main figure with narrative absence', which draws on the long Romantic tradition wherein a beloved is treated as a muse and her worth is associated with her being unattainable. Viewed through this lens, it appears that Fitzgerald does the same thing while simultaneously revealing the masculine ideology behind the Romantic desire. The very act of giving Sophie the same structural vagueness, which is common to Romantic cultural representation of a female object of desire, is done by presenting several contrasting perspectives about her, such as Erasmus, Goethe, Schlegel and Fritz's reflections on her.

The same Romantic irony which was encountered at the level of character in Fritz's decentering is exemplified in this unresolved multiplicity: Sophie's importance is consistently encouraged by the various characters, but never substantiated, which is essentially the process that Schlegel has theorized.

4.3 The Embedded Narrative:

Metadiegesis and the Story of *The Blue Flower*: Penelope Fitzgerald includes another novel within her own novel - a novella written by her character, Fritz. Fritz's novella is called *The Blue Flower*, and Fitzgerald borrows this same title for her own novel. The narrative style, which Fitzgerald employs here, using a novel within a novel function as a second level of narration. Genette (1980) identifies metadiegesis as a mode in which a character within the primary story tells or composes a narrative of their own, creating an embedded frame. *The Blue Flower* deploys this structure with particular sophistication, because the metadiegetic fragment appears not once but three times, read by different audiences and producing different interpretive responses on each occasion. The fragment is first read aloud by Fritz to Karoline Just in Chapter 17. Its content describes a young man lying awake, longing for something he cannot name: 'His father and mother were already in bed and asleep, the clock on the wall ticked with a monotonous beat, the wind whistled outside the rattling window-pane. From time to time the room grew brighter when the moonlight shone in. The young man lay restlessly on his bed and remembered the stranger and his stories. 'It was not the thought of the treasure which stirred up such unspeakable longings in me,' he said to himself. 'I have no craving to be rich, but I long to see *The Blue Flower*.' (Fitzgerald, 1995, pp.77-78)

When Fritz asks Karoline what *The Blue Flower* means, she attempts a careful interpretation: 'The young man has to go away from his home to find it. He only wants to see it, he does not want to possess it.' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.79). Her interpretation is empathetic and all-seeing, but also external: she connects the story's emotional content to its shape, without claiming to know what it ultimately means. This mirrors the role of Karoline throughout the novel as a focalizer of great insight but limited knowledge - she sees the form but not the content.

When the same passage is read aloud to Sophie and the Mandelsloh in Chapter 29, the responses diverge entirely. Sophie, asked why the young man cannot sleep, replies: 'Oh, no, that doesn't keep him awake. He only notices it because he is not asleep' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.139). The Mandelsloh attends to the narrative's emotional logic rather than its philosophical implication: 'He can't sleep, because he is alone. He looks for another dear head on the pillow' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.140). When Fritz offers the closing paradox - 'If a story begins with finding, it must end with searching' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.140) - neither Sophie nor the Mandelsloh pursues it. The Mandelsloh asks how the story will end; Fritz says he does not know.

The third engagement with the fragment occurs in Chapter 48, when the Bernhard, alone in a room at Schlében-bei-Jena, recognizes in his own situation the opening conditions of Fritz's story: 'My father and mother were already in bed and asleep,' said the Bernhard to himself. 'There is no wind, but from time to time the moon shines in and the room becomes bright. Somewhere, too, a clock is ticking.' And so it was, even though he could not see it. (Fitzgerald, 1995, pp.249-50)

The Bernhard, who has secretly read the fragment from Fritz's book-bag, reflects that 'the stranger who had spoken at the dinner table about *The Blue Flower* had been understood by one person and one only. This person must have been singled out as distinct from all the rest of his family. It was a matter of recognizing your own fate and greeting it as familiar when it came' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.250). The Bernhard, with characteristic self-absorption, interprets the fragment as being specifically about himself. He is both right (in that the story is about the experience of singular recognition) and wrong (in that he is not the story's intended referent).

What occurs across these three encounters with the metadiegetic fragment is a structural enactment of the novel's dominant epistemological disposition. Each audience focalizes the embedded narrative through their own concerns and capacities: Karoline reads it as a story about longing and departure; Sophie and the Mandelsloh read it pragmatically; the Bernhard reads it as autobiographical prophecy. The fragment itself remains constant, but its meaning is constitutively plural, determined by the focalizing consciousness brought to bear on it. This is a recursive application of the same principle that governs the primary narrative's treatment of Fritz and Sophie: just as Fritz is apprehensible only through varying external perspectives, and Sophie is constituted through competing unresolvable accounts, *The Blue Flower* story is rendered meaningful only in relation to the consciousness that reads it.

The structure of the embedded story is self-reflexive. The fragment in the original form is an incomplete narration of a story which reveals the incapacity to possess something that is desired and it is being read by an audience that cannot find an agreement on its purpose. This narrative technique reflects another one where the narrator does not allow the reader in and voice his opinion about Fritz or Sophie. Hence, this level can serve as a technique of reflecting the whole novel itself. *The Blue Flower* can be understood as a miniature story of unfinished and incomprehensible stories embedded within the narrative that reflects some deeper meanings which have titles of its main characters.

Metadiegetic narrative thus does not just exemplify the novel's theme - the pursuit of the ineffable in the face of Romantic longing - but also embodies it. As Fritz explains to Sophie: 'If a story begins with finding, it must end with searching.' And it is a succinct description of the narrative. The reader of *The Blue Flower* is always the position of the young man awake: the object of desire is named but not depicted, desired but not possessed.

4.4 Duration, Frequency and the Significance of the Present Moment:

Narrative time is the fourth element of Fitzgerald's narratology. Genette's temporal categories - order, duration, and frequency - make it possible to describe precisely how the novel's handling of time reinforces what it lets the reader know. This ties its philosophical concerns to concrete historical detail.

The first chapter of the novel, in its iterative narration, profiles the regularity of the Hardenbergs' material life: 'they washed only once a year' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.1).

This is Genette's iterative mode - saying once what was repeated - and it sets the novel's world in the rhythm of repeated practice as opposed to event. The historical world of Weissenfels is introduced not as a sequence of significant moments but as a pattern of embedded repetition, against which the singular events of Fritz's interior life must establish themselves. The material world is iterative; the Romantic aspiration is singular. This temporal distinction structures the novel throughout.

Against this iterative ground, the novel deploys extreme variation in narrative duration across its chapters. The short, episodic chapters constituting the novel's first half compress considerable material into brief scenes, while later chapters dealing with Sophie's medical treatment in Jena slow the narrative down to fine-grained detail. The sequence of chapters covering Sophie's operations (Chapters 47 and 48) attends to the arrangement of sheets, the positioning of the bed in the centre of the room, the timing of the surgeon's arrival, and the postponement from eleven o'clock to two in the afternoon. In this scene Sophie's physical suffering and the Mandelsloh's practical courage require the full weight of temporal presence. The philosophical debates of the Jena circle are compressed into summary; Sophie's operations occupy real time. The temporal architecture thus reverses the conventional priority of the biographical historical novel, in which intellectual history is narrated expansively and domestic or medical detail is compressed.

The clearest use of the novel's temporal strategies occurs in Sophie's diary sequence (Chapter 28). The reader receives a singulative narrative (one entry per day), but the content of the entries is iterative, each one enacting a non-event: 'Today was like yesterday and nothing much happened' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.133). The diary entries describe separate days whose sameness makes the days interchangeable, thus producing an iterative rather than a successional sense of time. This mismatch between the diary's form and its content captures the novel's larger point: the gap between how much significance Fritz attaches to Sophie and how ordinary her own recorded life is. Significantly, the entries do not record the events that the reader has come to consider significant: Fritz's visits are recorded merely as the name 'Hardenburch came at mid-day' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.133), while his departures are remembered for their emotional effect - 'I had nothing to amuse me' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.133) - rather than their philosophical content.

The novel's climax occurs in its concluding Afterword. This part narrates the years from 1795-97, as the novel shifts register entirely: 'Sophie died at half-past ten in the morning on the 19th of March, two days after her fifteenth birthday. Fritz, at Weissenfels, got the news two days later' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.281). The death that the story has been leading to is expressed in declarative terms. The Afterword then allocates subsequent deaths, promotions and marriages over a page and a half: 'Erasmus is dead at twenty-two, Sidonie dies young, Fritz dies at twenty-eight, Karoline is eventually "married to her cousin, Carl August"' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.282), the Mandelsloh lived until she was seventy-five.

The loss of time at the moment of most intense feeling is not avoidance but the logical consequence of the novel's epistemology. If Sophie's death were rendered in scene, it would offer narrative insight into her final experience: the insight denied inner consciousness throughout the novel. The Afterword adheres to the main narrative structure: Sophie is reported by external, factual means, not by means of an interiority that the text has not seen itself as in a position to know. Fritz's last entry in the novel, left as is - 'Still, I would rather be dead' (Fitzgerald, 1995, p.282) - is representative in its bleakness: the recording of an emotional fact, rather than its exploration, in line with the treatment of his interior life up to this point.

This temporal asymmetry carries the same irony into time: an intellectual and emotional desire for the infinite is always reduced to a summary or reiteration, whereas the finite experience of the body and the material realm can be given the utmost stage value, thus fulfilling Schlegel's view that the infinite idea has no proper finite expression.

5. DISCUSSION

The Genettian narrative analysis conducted in the previous sections suggests that Fitzgerald's narrative restraint is the product of a deliberate narrative design, not merely a general preference for understatement. The novel's rejection of zero focalization, its use of variable internal focalization through secondary elements, its ironic recursion to the metadiegetic Blue Flower chapter, and its modification of temporal values blend as elements of a structurally unified formal system.

The obvious counterargument to this claim is that these features simply express the responsibility of historical fiction writing, the novelist's conscientious resolve not to know more about the past than she can prove. This account is supported by Fitzgerald's Author's Note which elaborates the documentary sources of her novel in the five-volume collected works of Hardenberg. The book's characters are historical individuals; the novelist has refused to make up the rest. This version of events is not unlikely, but it is not enough. A novelist concerned with historiographic discipline could opt to stick to the external action, or to limit her free indirect discourse to points (where allowed by documentary evidence). Instead, Fitzgerald has crafted a structure of variable focalization in which the trope of shifting point of view becomes the dominant principle of form in the novel, and in which competing narratives are used as an intentionally unresolved pattern. The fact that every focalizing consciousness that impacts on Sophie - including Sophie herself in her diary - does not resolve the mystery of her being suggests intention that goes beyond the bounds of biographical restraint.

The link between this narrative structure and the Romantic tradition depicted in the novel needs clarifying. Mellor (1980) and Friedrich Schlegel understand Romantic irony as the artist's simultaneous endorsement of an ideal of absolute significance and recognition of the impossibility of expressing it to the end in finite terms. As Schlegel puts it in the Philosophical Fragments, a work that Fitzgerald would have read in the course of her

work on Hardenberg's literary circle, the ironist simultaneously enunciates contradictory positions without determinatively resolving them (Schlegel, 1991). Fitzgerald's novel is so structured. Fritz believes with conviction in Sophie's significance; also, every other consciousness in the novel including, in his more reflective journal entries, Fritz himself cannot verify this significance. The novel doesn't settle the question. Nowhere does a focalizing perspective claim the right to make this adjudication because nowhere is a focalizing consciousness accorded the right to make it. This is not thematically coerced; it is structurally assured.

Clearer version of the Schlegel sentence above (the original wording could be misread as implying Schlegel commented on Fitzgerald's novel, which is not possible given they are centuries apart): "As Schlegel writes in Philosophical Fragments - a text that Fitzgerald, given her research into Hardenberg's circle, would very likely have known - the ironist simultaneously asserts contradictory positions without resolving them (Schlegel, 1991)."

What matters most about Fitzgerald's character is that she does not make it easier for us to interpret, but rather deeper. Because the reader cannot know Fritz to be exceptionally endowed except for its impact on others, and because the reader must see Sophie through the failure of others to see her, Fritz and Sophie are paradoxically enhanced by their obscurity. For Fritz and Sophie, the reader acts as Fritz acts for Sophie: deciding to trust the evidence we present as both relevant and inconclusive evidence of significance. This structural positioning of the reader - as an active constructor of meaning rather than a passive recipient of authorially guaranteed psychological truth - is the formal correlate of the Romantic philosophical tradition in which the novel is embedded. Reader-response theorists, from Iser (1980) onward, have argued that textual gaps and indeterminacies generate the active meaning-making that constitutes genuine literary experience. Fitzgerald's narrative builds these gaps as load-bearing structural elements rather than incidental features of novelistic form.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper argues that the narratological structure of *The Blue Flower* constitutes a coherent and deliberate system designed to render the ineffable through structured absence rather than through positive psychological representation. Through the sustained analysis of Fitzgerald's deployment of variable internal focalization, her constitution of Sophie as a permanent interpretive lacuna, her recursive use of the metadiegetic Blue Flower fragment, and her manipulation of narrative duration and frequency. This study has demonstrated that what critics have described as Fitzgerald's 'restraint' or 'ellipsis' is in fact a precision instrument of epistemological design.

Clearer version of the opening sentence of this paragraph: "*The Blue Flower* is built, at every structural level, to represent what cannot be directly said: it uses deliberate gaps and withheld access, rather than direct psychological description, to convey what its characters cannot fully know about each other."

The analysis applies Genette's narrative strategic categories namely focalization, multiple narrators, fragmentation, and time order to explore how Fitzgerald depicts the life of the German philosopher Friedrich von Hardenberg, moving beyond an aesthetic appreciation of her style to an explanation of its formal effects. The avoidance of zero focalization, the dynamic allocation of narrative authority to rival observer-focalizer points of view, the use of the metadiegetic frame as an unresolved site of interpretive conflict and the unfolding of the novel as a dynamic between iterative and singulative times each contribute to a novelistic articulation that formally performs the Romantic philosophical traditions it describes.

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خواندنه‌کا جینیتی بۆ رۆمانا گولا شین یا پینیلۆپی فیتزجیرالد

پوخته:

ئەف فەكۆلینه تیۆرین فەگوتنێ جیرارد جینیتی د رۆمانا ژیانامیی یا پینیلۆپی فیتزجیرالد ب ناڤی "گولا شین" (١٩٩٥) جیبه‌جی دکت. ناریشیا سهره‌کی د رۆمانین میژوویی بین ژیانامیی دا ناریشیه‌کا فەگوتنێ یه: فەگوتنێ سهرده‌م چه‌وا دشت شیانین ده‌روونی یا که‌سایه‌تیه‌کی میژوویی نیشان بده‌ت، بێی کو ب شیوه‌یه‌کی نه‌گونجای ل گهل سهرده‌می ریاڵیزما ده‌روونی یا نوێ تیکه‌ل بیت؟ ئەف فەكۆلینه پینشیار دکت کو فیتزجیرالد فێ ناریشیا میژووناسی چارسه‌ر دکت، نه‌ ب ریکا بابەتان، به‌لکو ب ریکا بکارئینانا تیوریا فۆکه‌لازیشن، ده‌نگی و ده‌می فیکیرانی. ب پشته‌ستن ب پۆلینکرنا جینیتی (١٩٨٠) بۆ ناخفتنا فیکیرانی - ژ پۆلینین وی بین ده‌نگی، فۆکه‌لازیشن، ده‌می فیکیرانی، و تێگه‌هی وی بێ ئاستین چیرۆکی (ئاستین دیجیتیک) - ئەف لیکۆلینه دیار دکت کو فیتزجیرالد ب به‌رده‌وامی رمت دکت کو نیرینا فیکیرانی خۆ و هک ئیک ل گهل نیرینا پالمانی سهره‌کی، فیردیرچ فون هاردنیرگ (نوفالیس)، پیناسه‌ بکت. ئافاکرنا که‌سایه‌تیا میژوویی ل نک فیتزجیرالد ب ریکا نه‌بوونا فیکیرانی یا کومبوویی و گوهرینا فۆکه‌لاسیشنا ناڤخویی ب ریکا فیکیرین لاوه‌کی ده‌یه‌ته‌ نه‌جامدان. ل ده‌مه‌کی کو که‌سایه‌تیا "سوڤی فون کۆین" و هک غیابه‌کا مه‌عریفی یا به‌رده‌وام د سه‌نته‌ری رۆمانی دا ده‌یه‌ته‌ جیکیرکر، و چیرۆکا ته‌مام نه‌بووی یا "هاینریش فون ئوڤته‌ر دینگن" و هک جه‌مه‌کی فیکیرانی بێ ل سهر ئاستی میتادایجیتیک بۆ هه‌فرکیا لیکدانه‌فی ده‌یه‌ته‌ چاندن. هه‌روه‌سا فەكۆلین ناماژن ب وی چهندێ دکت کو ئەف شیواژن نفیسینی ب شیوه‌یه‌کی فهرمی دژایه‌تین فله‌سه‌فی بین رۆمانسیزما ئه‌لمانی یا ده‌سپیکێ دکته‌ دراما، و خوینده‌فانی دکت به‌ ناڤ بارودۆخه‌کی به‌ر هه‌مدار بێ گومانا مه‌عریفی دا، کو رهنگدانه‌فمیا هه‌را رۆمانسی یا "نایرونی" یه، و هک یا فیردیرچ شلیگل ناماژ به‌ پێ دای.

په‌یه‌قین سهره‌کی: گولا شین، پینیلۆپ فیتزجیرالد، جیرارد جینیتی، فیکیراناسی، فۆکه‌لازیشن.

قراءة جينيتية لرواية بينيلوبي فیتزجيرالد "الزهرة الزرقاء"

المخلص:

تطيق هذه الدراسة نظريات جيرار جينيت السردية على الأسلوب السردی لرواية بينيلوبي فیتزجيرالد السيرية "الزهرة الزرقاء" (١٩٩٥). تكمن المعضلة الرئيسية للرواية التاريخية السيرية في كونها مشكلة سردية: كيف يُمثل الصوت السردی المعاصر الديناميكيات النفسية لشخصية تاريخية دون إدخال الواقعية النفسية للعصر الحديث بشكلٍ مخالفٍ للسباق التاريخي؟ تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أن فیتزجيرالد تحلّ هذه المعضلة التاريخية، ليس من خلال الموضوع، بل من خلال التلاعب الدقيق بالتركيز، والصوت السردی، والزمن. بالرجوع إلى تصنيف جينيت (١٩٨٠) للخطاب السردی - فئاته للصوت والتركيز، والزمن السردی، ومفهومه عن المستويات السردية - يكشف التحليل أن فیتزجيرالد ترفض باستمرار تعريف وجهة نظر راويها على أنها مطابقة لوجهة نظر بطلها، فیردیرک فون هاردنیرغ (نوفاليس). يتجسد بناء فیتزجيرالد للشخصية التاريخية من خلال غياب سردی مترام و تركيز داخلي متغير عبر رواة ثانويين، بينما تُرسخ صوفي فون كوهن كغیاب معرفي دائم في قلب الرواية، وتُدمج قصة هاینریش فون أوفتردينجن غير المكتملة كموقع سردی ميتافيزيقي للتنازع التأويلي. وتشير الدراسة أيضاً إلى أن أسلوب الكتابة هذا يُضفي طابعاً درامياً رسمياً على التناقضات الفلسفية للرومانسية الألمانية المبكرة، واضعاً القارئ في حالة معرفية مثمرة من عدم اليقين تعكس الفكرة الرومانسية عن السخرية كما حددها فیردیرش شلیگل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الزهرة الزرقاء، بينيلوبي فیتزجيرالد، جيرار جينيت، علم السرد، البؤرة السردية.