

Gaps in the Narrative of the Modernist Poetry. Its Function and Ways of Interpretation.

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The incompleteness of information concerning the fictional world is an essential aspect of a narrative poem. According to Lubomir Doležel, to construct a fictional world that could be considered complete, the length of the text would need to be infinite. However, poems are generally not too long, making their fictional worlds quite fragmentary. This characteristic is particularly evident in modernist poetry, where even extensive narratives remain fragmented. As Marie-Laure Ryan suggests, realistic literature aims to maximize completeness. However, modernist poetry incorporates gaps as an important part of the narrative structure rather than merely attempting to cover them.

This paper focuses on analyzing Slovak modernist poetry from the early 20th century. Since modernist poetry generally consist mostly of cognitive processes and the mental experience of the world, significant parts of the narrative are the speaker's memories. Gaps are often displayed in incomplete present situations distributed among concrete memories. Spatio-temporal coordinates define the poem's framework, positioning the speaker on a different level from his or her memories. This fragmentary composition makes the modernist poetry particularly suitable for analysing the role and function of narrative gaps in various contexts, closely connected to spatio-temporal arrangement of the poem- especially to narrative world (as explained by Marie-Laure Ryan, a coherent, unified, ontologically full existing geographical entity based on readers imagination).

Poems of modernism follow recurring motifs: unfulfilled love, relationship crises, and conversational miscommunication. Despite their extensive nature, these narratives are notably fragmented. The utterance of the speaker is filled with inner monologues, strengthening its introspective and ambivalent character. For the spatio-temporal anchoring, the speaker navigates multiple temporal and spatial levels at the same time - simultaneously existing in the present while recalling past encounter with a woman (Janko Jesenský) or generally presents woman in a various way (Ján Smrek, Ján Poničan). The Slovak modernist authors were not tied exclusively to Slovakia, as they studied abroad. They observed new movements and influences directly and responded to modernist trends emerging from (and not only) Central Europe: therefore, the tendencies remain similar to other national modernisms as well.

This study particularly examines the narrative structures of early 20th-century Slovak modernist poetry (up to the 1920s). Its analysis incorporates the possible worlds theory and works with the hypothesis that not only are the gaps an indispensable part of the narrative structure, but that they also play a crucial role for the interpretation of a lyric poem of a certain historical period.