

# **The Trickster as Liminal Agent: Exploring Gaps in Narrative and the Dynamics of Disruption**

Věra Koukalová

Charles University, Czech Republic

This paper explores the role of the trickster archetype in narrative structures, particularly during liminal phases characterized by disruption and instability. The trickster serves as a catalyst for change, challenging established norms and introducing heterogeneity that leads to gaps, integral components of narratives, that act as frontiers of narrativity. These gaps are not merely incidental; they are essential for shaping the narrative's coherence and guiding its progression. In modern narrative theory, gaps are understood as places of indeterminacy that can take various forms, such as omissions in character development or unexplained events (Iser, 1978; Eco, 1979). The trickster's actions often create these gaps, which can lead to periods of ontological instability, forcing a re-evaluation of the very nature of the fictional world. As Victor Turner describes, liminal phases are moments of transition where established norms are challenged, allowing for a reconfiguration of narrative dynamics (Turner, 1969). The trickster embodies this transitional quality, instigating disruptions that propel the narrative forward and create opportunities for exploring latent possibilities within the story. The presence of gaps introduced by the trickster archetype can manifest as egregious omissions or ambiguities that compel readers to confront the limits of the narrative. This aligns with the findings of Storchi (2014), who emphasizes how the absence of direct depictions of key events enriches the reader's interpretive experience by prompting them to make connections and draw conclusions. Furthermore, as noted by Gritter et al. (2018), the interplay between gaps and narrative structure is crucial for understanding complex narratives, particularly in how they reflect the trickster's role in shaping the story's trajectory. Ultimately, the trickster's disruptive actions reveal what remains non-narrated, illuminating untold events that belong to the story but are left in the shadows. This notion resonates with Schmid's (2023) exploration of how gaps can highlight the implications of non-narration, enriching the overall narrative experience. By navigating and manipulating these gaps, the trickster not only propels the narrative forward but also invites a deeper examination of the fictional universe's complexities. In conclusion, the trickster archetype is pivotal in shaping narrative development during liminal phases. By disrupting established norms and introducing gaps, these characters create a dynamic interplay that underscores the importance of the trickster in contemporary storytelling, ultimately enhancing the understanding of narrative incompleteness and its implications.

## **References**

1. Iser, W. "The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response." Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
2. Eco, U. "The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts." Indiana University Press, 1979.

3. Turner, V. "The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure." Aldine Transaction, 1969.
4. Storchi, L. "The Role of Gaps in Narrative: A Study of Reader Engagement." Narrative Inquiry, 2014.
5. Gritter, Z., et al. "Gaps and Reader Interpretation: Understanding Complex Narratives." Journal of Narrative Theory, 2018.
6. Schmid, W. "Narrative, Gaps, and the Unsaid: Exploring the Implications of Non-Narration." Narrative, 2023.