

The role of gaps in character identity construction

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The gaps in the form of the non-narrated, in the sense of Schmid (2023), may play a crucial role in the character construction, considering that the character is one of the essential elements of the narrative. A common omission concerns various pieces of information regarding a character's actions, thoughts, words, and relationships — omissions that can influence the construction of their identity and shape the reader's perception of them. This spectrum of gaps primarily affects the character's semantic sphere, which includes their defining features, respectively those elements that contribute to the characterization of the character. However, the gaps can also impact the ontological sphere of the character, especially when they are permanent. At this point, examples from fantastic literature are typically discussed, as these texts often play with gaps between narrative worlds. Furthermore, the character from the fantastic literature may as well exhibit an uncertain ontological status. The central question this study will address is whether a character in literary fiction can be so deeply affected by gaps in their ontological sphere that identifying the character becomes complicated or even impossible. Those narrative procedures and techniques that contribute to the formation of gaps, like delayed identification or even disrupted identification of the character, will also be studied. The novel "Mein Name sei Gantenbein" by Max Frisch will be analyzed as an example of this topic. This text analysis will be focused to highlight the possibility or impossibility of identifying the main character/characters and the impact of gaps on the character/characters construction.