

Gaps in Narrative from the Perspective of Czech Structuralists

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This paper explores the concept of narrative gaps through the lens of Czech structuralist theory. It examines how these gaps function within a narrative and contributes to the overall structure and meaning of a text. By analysing key works and concepts of prominent Czech structuralists (e.g. Mukařovský, Vodička, Doležel, Červenka), the paper highlights the importance of these gaps for analysis and interpretation.

For example, although the literary scholar and aesthetician Jan Mukařovský is not the author of a comprehensive concept of gaps in literary works, his approach and specific analyses of literary texts are fundamental to systematic (structuralist) reflection on the role and function of gaps in narrative. Mukařovský's recently published university lectures on epic (2021) are particularly interesting and inspiring. He mentions the importance of gaps in relation to issues of time and space in narrative, as well as in the analysis of monologue and dialogue in narrative (or epic, lyric and drama).

Vodička's concept of concretisation (or interpretation of literary works) responds to Ingarden's notion of places of indeterminacy. Doležel and Červenka largely follow Mukařovský and Vodička, elaborating their notion of gaps into theoretically well-founded concepts.

By analysing these theories of Czech structuralists, the study try to understand of how narrative gaps can be both a deliberate stylistic choice and a natural element of storytelling. The aim of the paper is to outline the historical development of the thinking of selected Czech structuralists on narrative gaps and to attempt a critical re-evaluation of these theories and their use in contemporary narratology.