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From Structuralism to Interpretation: Revisiting the Prague School's Theoretical Legacy

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ABSTRACT

The Prague School, established in 1926, stands as a critical intellectual development in the study of language and literature, offering a systematic framework for analyzing the structural and functional aspects of communication. Guided by the intellectual rigour of figures such as Vilém Mathesius, Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, and René Wellek, the School introduced foundational methodologies that advanced structural linguistics through the study of phonemes, markedness theory, and the functional sentence perspective. In the realm of literary theory and poetics, the School emphasised principles such as foregrounding, automatisisation, and the aesthetic function, which sought to elucidate the intricate relationship between artistic form and communicative purpose. Expanding into semiotics, Mukařovský's concept of "the aesthetic sign" redefined the understanding of artistic texts as communicative acts shaped by cultural and functional dynamics. Contemporary scholarship, including Barthes' theoretical extensions, reveals how the Prague School's insights resonate within new criticism, structuralism, post-structuralism, narratology, and cognitive linguistics. While formalistic tendencies in its approach have been questioned, the Prague School's insistence on systematic analysis and the interrelation of linguistic and literary components remains a vital instrument for modern literary criticism. Its influence persists as newer generations of scholars refine, critique, and reinterpret its theories, further enriching the study of language, literature, and culture.

Keywords: Structural Linguistics; Foregrounding; Semiotics; Markedness Theory; Aesthetic Function

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1. Introduction

The Prague School, or the Prague Linguistic Circle as it is also known, became one of the most influential intellectual movements of the first half of the twentieth century, leaving a lasting impact on structural linguistics, semiotics, and literary theory. It all started in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in the 1920s, with this group of literary critics and linguists who revolutionised how literary texts are analysed and linguistic studies are accomplished. As stated by Dobrenko and Jonsson-Skradol, it is critical to establish that the School appeared at a crucial turn in the political and cultural History of Central and Eastern Europe^[1]. This can explain why it would shape the theoretical advancements and the effects within this context. It is equally important to view the activity of the Prague School from the perspective of the development of new theories and methods in the field of literary studies in the twentieth century. According to Jauss, the School's approach is intended to replace the historical-positivist analysis that is dominant in literary studies and focus on the structural and linguistic features of the text^[2]. This transition can, therefore, be concluded to have corresponded with broader processes occurring in European intellectual life and which attempted to establish academic trends that were more structured and empirical in analysing customs and languages.

Nonetheless, the impact of the Prague School is not limited to the chronological framework. According to Wellek, a figure prominently linked to the School underscores that the School remains relevant to the present since the theoretical perspectives suggested by the Prague School scholars are still illuminating in understanding literary language and its aesthetic function^[3]. This longevity is particularly admirable given the many theoretical shifts that have defined literary studies in the decades following the School's critical period^[3]. Thus, the critical reception of the Prague School's approach to literary analysis is not beyond reproach. For instance, the dispersed structuralism in and for world literature, as noted by Bar-Itzhak, brings to light several critical issues regarding the ethics of structural readings^[4]. This critique, therefore, reveals the ongoing controversies over the relevance and usefulness of the Prague School approaches, particularly when scholars become more scholarly and interconnected by globalisation.

Despite these criticisms, the Prague School's impact on comparative and world literature pursuits is undeniable.

Domínguez also notes the work of Dionýz Ďurišin, a Slovak comparatist who worked within the framework of the Prague School and created a distinctly systemic model of world literature that goes beyond the ideas of the Prague School^[5]. This fact shows how the School remains able to respond to the contemporary methods of literary analysis globally. The concept has been applied not only in literature but also in other sciences. To support their claim of their usefulness for sociological analysis, Váňa points out that the Prague School worked on literary fiction with the offer of theoretical concepts that can help study the social world^[6]. Such practical subject suitability, therefore, emphasises the extended relevance of the Prague School's critical ideas in the modern world.

When it comes to the analysis of modern poetry and linguistic anthropology, the given structural and functional approach of the Prague School proves to be inadequate. This is realised when exploring the semiotics of form and the cultural disciplines within these areas^[4]. This study is unique in that it seeks to close this gap by assessing the application of Prague school methodologies in the analysis of contemporary literary texts and their relation to other systems of culture. The goal is thus to prove that even today, Prague School concepts have a lot to bring to theory and debates in literary criticism and related fields.

It is within the present work's methodological framework for this study to examine how the concepts of the Prague School may be suited for analysis and incorporated into the current literature. This is important and potentially provides new insights into the nature of literary production and its place within more encompassing cultural formations. Therefore, this approach enriches the ongoing scholarly discourse on the Prague School's heritage and provides valuable instruments for the researchers and critics dealing with contemporary artistic and cultural texts.

2. Background Information

2.1. Origins and Key Figures

The Prague School, officially established in 1926 by Vilém Mathesius, became one of the critical intellectual currents that significantly influenced the further evolution of linguistic and literary analysis. Mathesius, a Czech linguist, endeavoured to gather linguists and literary theorists willing

to focus on the structural study of language and literature and introduce radical views and theoretical approaches in these fields^[7]. The School rapidly garnered the attention of prominent scholars in the field, forming a vibrant intellectual community dedicated to reshaping linguistic and literary studies in the following decades.

Another pioneer acknowledged as a part of the Prague School was a Russian linguist, Roman Jakobson, a multi-disciplinary scholar working in Europe and America. Outes also expresses that Jakobson's work in the philosophy of 20th-century literature can be analysed in three phases, with each stage characterised by significant shifts in both the scholar's ideas and his residence^[8]. Similarly, Qu stresses the European crises and Jakobson's journey as an intellectual while discussing his distinctive feature theory^[9]. However, while Outes and Qu provide background information and a biography of Jakobson's work, Waugh's work deals with the topic more deeply, especially concerning Jakobson's contribution to semiotics and language theory and his relevance to modern linguistics^[10]. The numerous contributions and ideas of Jakobson evoked a rather profound impression and remain crucial for linguistics and related disciplines.

A prominent figure of the Prague School, Jan Mukařovský was an essential Czech literary theorist who contributed to the fields of aesthetics and semiotics. According to Feshchenko, it is vital to note that Mukařovský's works on the notions of artistic communication as an object of semiotics and linguistic aesthetics contributed to the development of a more holistic approach to understanding the link between language, art, and society. This view is supported by Váňa's study of the sociological truth of fiction that connects Mukařovský's insights with the aesthetic configuration of novels and the iconic aspect of reading^[11]. Nevertheless, as reference^[11, 12] focus on the beauty and popularity of Mukarovshchyné's work, Mrugalski underscores the structuralism and semiotics roots of the said contributions on Poland contributing to transnationalism^[13]. Mukařovský's theoretical, methodological, and empirical work was not confined to but broadened the aesthetic and semiotic perspectives of the Prague School on literature and communicated them across country borders.

Nikolai Trubetzkoy of the Prague School was instrumental in shaping phonology as a separate branch of linguistic analysis. Concerning this, Shapiro asserts that through ad-

vancing the theory of language change, Trubetzkoy played a significant role in laying the framework of structural phonology^[14]. This view is consistent with Anne-Gaëlle and Velmezova's argument of recognising Trubetzkoy's valuable input on semiotics within structural linguistics^[15]. Nevertheless, whereas these scholars pay attention to how Trubetzkoy introduced new concepts to the Prague School, Bierwisch considers how the Prague School as a collective entity contributed to Trubetzkoy by referring to Jakobson's impact on him, suggesting a less direct narrative among Prague School scholars^[16]. In this aspect, Trubetzkoy's role can best be described in two domains: phonology and structural linguistics.

René Wellek was a Czech-American literary critic who introduced Prague School theories to the Anglophone world. Raq et al. argue that Wellek's comparative approach to literary criticism, which included the theories of the Prague School, has the potential for studying various philosophical works^[17]. It accentuates that the critical approaches developed by the Prague School have not been limited to the linguistic and literary paradigms alone. These individuals had diverse experiences and interests that helped to make the Prague School an academically varied and engaging movement. There is a consensus amongst scholars regarding the value of their input. Nevertheless, there is a complex understanding of the nature of their concepts' effects and their connection. For instance, Karstens points to the impact of the Russian formalists on the shaping of linguistic structuralists within the context of the Prague School^[7]. This view, therefore, offers further complexity to the intellectual prehistory of the School.

The concerns and experiences of the pioneers of the Prague School thus point to multifaceted interactions between discursive formations, biographies, and cultural and political conditions. Jakobson, Mukařovský, Trubetzkoy, and Wellek belonged to different cultures and were interested in various subjects. As a result, they came up with a pluralistic approach to studying language and literature that is still relevant today.

2.2. Interdisciplinary Impact

Jointly, their work not only created new paradigms in linguistics and literary theories but also pioneered an interdisciplinary field of study still significant today in understanding language, culture, and communication in the

twenty-first century. The School's approach transcended the boundaries of traditional linguistics and literary criticism by integrating concepts from semiotics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary orientation allowed the Prague School to address broader questions about the relationship between language, art, and society, making their contributions relevant across multiple academic disciplines.

One of the most significant aspects of this interdisciplinary impact was their focus on language as a social phenomenon. By emphasizing the functional aspects of language, the Prague School bridged the gap between linguistic structures and their cultural and communicative roles. For instance, Jan Mukařovský's concept of the "aesthetic function" showcased how literary texts operate within social and cultural contexts, offering insights that extend beyond literature to other artistic and cultural forms, such as visual arts, music, and theatre. This idea has influenced modern cultural semiotics and media studies, providing a framework for analyzing how texts and artworks communicate meaning within specific cultural systems.

Furthermore, the Prague School's methodologies have had a profound influence on comparative literature and world literature studies. Scholars such as René Wellek adapted the School's theories to analyze literary traditions across languages and cultures. This comparative approach has encouraged researchers to explore universal structures and functions in literature while also acknowledging the unique cultural contexts that shape texts. As a result, the Prague School facilitated the development of systemic models for understanding literature as a global phenomenon, paving the way for contemporary concepts such as transnationalism and intercultural dialogue.

The interdisciplinary impact of the Prague School extends beyond theoretical contributions to practical applications. For example, their work on phonology and structural linguistics has informed advancements in fields like computational linguistics and artificial intelligence, particularly in areas such as natural language processing and machine translation. Similarly, their insights into narrative structures and the interplay between form and function have been instrumental in film studies, narratology, and communication theories. Roman Jakobson's communication model, which highlights the interrelation of linguistic functions, remains

a cornerstone in media and communication studies, influencing how scholars approach the analysis of messages and their reception.

Employing a historical theoretical approach to map out the evolution of the School and its theoretical outreach, this study explores initial paradigms endorsed by School luminaries such as Vilém Mathesius, Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, and René Wellek in linguistics and literary analysis. These figures not only introduced innovative ideas within their respective fields but also demonstrated the interconnectedness of disciplines in addressing complex intellectual questions. Their legacy continues to inspire scholars to adopt interdisciplinary frameworks for studying language, literature, and culture, ensuring the enduring relevance of the Prague School in contemporary academic discourse.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Theoretical Contributions

3.1.1. Structural Linguistics

Before the Prague School and its structural-functional paradigm, early linguistic schools introduced problems connecting theoretical consideration with practical application in literature. Thus, Karstens shows that Russian Formalism prepared the basis by creating strict processes of dealing with literary texts, whereas those benchmarks were too far from actual practice in most cases^[7]. In this aspect, Toutain and Velmezova explain that early semioticians tried to develop more valuable means of analysis but did not yet have the integrated functional view that would define the Prague School^[15]. These initial attempts speak to the historical issue of coming up with a practical approach to the textual analysis that, until Prague School, remained an unmet task.

The Prague School was directly involved in the growth of structuralist linguistics and the subsequent transformation of this branch into a field distinct from that created by Saussure. The Prague School, particularly Mukařovský, shifted from Saussure's two-part sign model (signifier–signified) to Husserl's phenomenological three-part model, later advanced by Ingarden, which incorporated the referential or intentional object to offer a more nuanced understanding of meaning construction^[18]. In this aspect, although Saussure is credited with laying the foundation for structural linguis-

tics, the Prague School scholars devised a less static and more function-based approach to linguistic analysis^[19]. This evolution significantly departed from analysing and handling language features in isolation. Zun has pointed out that this systemic approach helped develop a better understanding of language as a means of communication rather than a series of individual components^[20]. However, as pointed out by Repka, the Prague School's move beyond Saussurean linguistics was far more extensive than was once assumed, primarily due to emphasising the functional components of language^[21]. Thus, this shift given by post-Saussurean or postmodernists to a more structuralist kind of analysis extended Saussure's paradigm while simultaneously creating the way for future growth of the structuralist and communicative paradigm of language.

One of the principal legacies of the Prague School is the notion of the phoneme, which continues to be relevant in linguistics today. According to Quammic-Wallen, a phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that can vary in meaning in a given language, and its primary function is to justify differences in meaning and reference^[22]. This definition aligns with Zun's interpretation, though Zun further emphasises the phoneme's role in sociolinguistic variation^[20]. For that, it is crucial to consider that, unlike the modern linguistics' exclusively phonetic approach, the Prague School has deemed the phoneme as a functional unit, focusing on both the form and the function of the phenomena it implies, which is yet to be fully explored by the contemporary linguistics^[21]. The different views on phonemes demonstrate how the Prague School's research remains significant while simultaneously showing that there is still a lively discussion about the exact nature of phonemes and their consequences.

The Prague School was involved in making the markedness theory and the Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). The markedness theory initially aims at binary oppositions in sounds and provides comparative analysis for later language sub-features such as morphology, syntax, and discourse levels^[19, 22]. However, Zun points at the same time to its binary structure^[20]. FSP remained relevant in today's socio-historic discourse because it reformed the syntactic approach of language and replaced it with communicative roles^[21]. FSP becomes problematic when sampled in languages with less asterisked word order than the initial set of languages^[19]. The entirety of the theories of the Prague School did advance

structural linguistics. It is, therefore, essential to note that their ideas are not without problems and issues, which, thus, describe the reality of linguistic theory formulation and use.

The intellectual development of East European literary traditions prior to the Prague School analysts developing methodological approaches to literature before the twentieth century had not been extensively discussed. Ulicka proves that these traditions made an essential contribution towards the formation of the form-function approaches to the works of literature^[23]. This historical context becomes more consequential through Zarycki, who notices one more feature of the methodological approach of the Prague School, namely, the socio-political aspects that have been paid too little attention in the later studies^[24]. Understanding these pre-Saussurean structuralist efforts to incorporate both structural and functional methods in modern literary criticism shows that there has always been a problem of coming up with usable techniques for applying the two in literature.

3.1.2. Literary Theory and Poetics

The scholarly advances made by the Prague School in the domain of literary theory and poetics mark a dramatic shift in the process of building rationalised models of textual analysis. Their approach was based on accentuating the features that set literary language apart from any other type of discourse, which has left a permanent mark on how people interpret and analyse texts^[25]. Zelenka agrees that the Prague School's methodology was a groundbreaking innovation in the early twentieth century as it attempted to provide a systematic approach to textual analysis that transcended the hermeneutic propositions^[26]. However, Ulicka explains that while innovative, their work was grounded in overlooked early twentieth-century East European literary traditions^[23]. This dichotomy between innovation and tradition remains an ongoing topic of debate in the contemporary discourses on the Prague school.

The theory of foregrounding, which is based on the procedures of Prague School poetics and Bergson's philosophy, has accumulated a great deal of theoretical work. Gregoriou simply explains foregrounding as when particular linguistic features help the readers pay attention to certain aspects of a text, generating aesthetic experiences^[27]. Wadi et al. build upon this definition of foregrounding by pointing out that it happens at the linguistic levels and through form and meaning connections^[28]. Odendahl presents another view,

physical and neural, that can shed light on how figures of speech pin readers' attention^[29]. The change of foregrounding theory proves the continuity and reinterpretation of the Prague School in the Anglophone world, particularly with regard to the auto- and de-automatisation processes.

The concept of the aesthetic function, which the Prague School stipulated as the significant focus on the foregrounded language rather than the informative and referential meaning in the texts, remains the object of discussion. Ulicka also observes that this idea changed the perception of the literary language and set new parameters for its interpretation^[23]. For instance, Zelenka notices that aesthetic function occasionally causes priority focus on the formal aspects of a text instead of other textual parameters^[26]. In addition, Odendahl provides a more balanced opinion, arguing that the positive interconnection of the aesthetic function with other linguistic functions corresponds to the Hybrid Model distinctions^[29]. Recent theoretical debates associated with these notions continue to prove that the Prague School left behind a considerable imprint in terms of the methodology to be applied to literary analysis. Such diverse discourses draw attention to the sustained topicality and theoretical ambiguousness of the concept of aesthetic function in modern literary discussion, inspiring the further study of the possibilities and contentiousness of the idea.

Current discussions regarding the roles of form and function in literary analysis reflect the Prague school of thought. Gregoriou notes that even in present stylistics, one will still find the issues that the Prague school raised over fundamental problems, such as how linguistic form produces literature^[27]. Nevertheless, in Zarycki's work, it is noted that some aspects of Prague School theory, and in particular, the socio-political component of it, did not receive sufficient attention from researchers later^[24]. Such controversies remain timely, indicating the continued influence of Prague School poetics and the dynamic nature of the discipline of literary theory.

3.1.3. Semiotics

The Czech and Slovak structuralist schools formed during the 1920s and 1930s can be regarded as the main contributors to semiotics as a theoretical discipline. However, such pioneers as Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce worked earlier in the same century. In a linguistic sense, Saussure set up the idea of the value of signifier and

signified, while Peirce introduced the triadic semiotic model of Icon, Index, and Symbol. These base theories, however, concerned themselves mainly with linguistic signs and their direct signification, thus leaving broader semiotic cultural uses comparatively untouched.

The contributions of the Prague School to semiotics, therefore, expanded the study and scope of sign systems, not limited to linguistics. In addition, the traditional methodologies, which had limited semiotic methods to language alone, were daringly expanded to other aspects of culture, such as art, theatre, and cinema, by the Prague School. Kõvamees states that this expansion was revolutionary regarding how scholars viewed the connection between signs and meaning in culture^[30]. However, Tatsenko posited that the Prague School was far from disruptive, as it elaborated on existent theories in semiotics while steadily widening the scope of their implementation^[31]. Despite these distinctions, both scholars can be viewed as agreeing with the fact that the Prague School significantly influenced the expansion of semiotics in the subject area.

Jan Mukařovský's concept of the 'aesthetic sign' shifted semiosis and art along with the artistic message in art semiotics. Näsman illustrates how this concept changed the perception of art in communication and also laid down a theoretical framework of parameters of relativity between artists, customers, and culture^[32]. In contrast, Kõvamees thanks Mukařovský for his great discovery that broke new ground in studies of signs for aesthetics^[30]. The theory was criticised for simplifying aesthetic processes into binary systems^[30]. This fact proves that the controversy related to the concept and function of the aesthetic sign remains valid in art theories and semiotic analysis perplexities.

The Prague School contributed immensely to the development of cultural semiotics and is today seen as an essential source for views of signs and society. Tatsenko emphasises their contribution to developing knowledge of the social aspects of sign systems and cultural artefacts as meanings in social settings^[31]. Nevertheless, according to Näsman, they focus on the structural aspects and neglect historical and social interpretation aspects as well as differences^[32]. However, both approaches agree that with the Prague School, the basic concepts concerning semiotic signs placed in culture were initiated, and subsequent debates confirm the lasting significance of the theoretical legacy that the Prague School

scholars proposed.

4. Discussion

The Prague School's ideas have had a lasting impact on literary theory and analysis, influencing various schools of thought and methodologies:

4.1. New Criticism

The interactions between formalism and historical analysis at the Prague School and in New Criticism are far more developed than simplistic dichotomisations allow for, deserving more extensive investigation. Skovajsa notes the interaction of these approaches in terms of their concern with textual and structural aspects of culture, and this observation understates the nature of their relationship^[33]. Zarycki differs from Wodzisz and Roth in this aspect because Zarycki also recognises their theoretical and cultural differences, allowing for a more accurate depiction^[34]. This paradox indicates that while there was competition between these schools, there was a process of mutual transformation through which they influenced each other more than was once thought.

The notion of textual autonomy is another example of such a multifaceted connection. As a supporting argument, Vitězová's analysis of how this principle recasts literary education details its practical application but might underestimate its theoretical depth. It is contended by Vitězová that the reliance on structural analysis, embraced by both schools, is not simply a shift in methodology; it re-envisioned text and context^[35]. However, a more nuanced interaction of social and cultural factors remains within the formal analysis advocated by the Prague School, implying a more layered conception of textual independence compared to their New Critic counterparts^[33, 36]. This analysis of textual autonomy shows how the Prague School moved beyond strictly structuralist and formalist conceptions of the text while still maintaining a concern with textuality that offsets sociopolitical interpretation.

Modern criticism shows the continued viability of both schools but also their flaws. Zarycki's statement that is called to note that their methodological tools remain helpful even when corresponding theories are changed requires further evaluation^[34]. As Vitězová mentioned, close reading and several formalist pieces of evidence exist in modern methods

and theories of literary analysis, and it is not only the survival of the methodologies but also the theoretical transitional phenomena^[35]. Apresjan supports this argument by claiming that this evolution simply speaks to the fact that although both schools' foundational tenets are as important now as they were when they were first coined, how they are employed is arguably more sophisticated and context-sensitive^[36]. This state of affairs perfectly proves that the theoretical paradigms may progress by elaborating new fundamentals without denying the initial concepts, thus contradicting the adage that the new is always the replacement of the old.

Through this analysis, it can be understood and concluded that the extent of interaction between New Criticism and the Prague School is more than what many people currently consider. Due to their shared focus and development of the concept of the 'formal' as a method of literary analysis, which they used in their work despite using their theoretical approaches, they established a modern historical, methodological model of analysing literature. However, the differences in how they treat contextual aspects show that future studies should investigate how these approaches can complement each other rather than negate each other, which may provide new perspectives for analysing literature in the modern context.

4.2. Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

The Prague School's structural analysis had a rather formative impact on structuralism and post-structuralism, even if this relationship is more nuanced than one might at first assume. McMahon stresses how the systematic approach was beneficial to the development of structuralist thinking^[37]. Consequently, Pilščíkov provides a seemingly different view inasmuch as the School's ideas were not limited to a systematic approach or analysis^[38]. Moreover, Mrugalski's findings also prove that Prague School scholars were less rigid in their practice as opposed to the West European structuralism of the 1960s^[13]. This flexibility is well illustrated by how Skovajsa discusses the possibility of cultural autonomy within the structuralist tradition in the Czech Republic^[33]. These divergent interpretations seem to indicate that the theoretical models proposed by the Prague School were more nuanced than commonly assumed and that they successfully incorporated both structuralist rigour and contextual awareness.

The movement from one mode of theorising to another,

from structuralism to post-structuralism, marks a significant shift in theoretical development. Although Pilščík mentions post-structuralists as using Prague School ideas despite denying fixed signs^[38], Tuckerová considers these concerns as part of the general discussion of the function of the minor literature^[39]. Analysing Jakobson's work with the help of Waugh, it is possible to understand how the post-structuralist developments were constructed upon, not against, the Prague School. This suggests that post-structuralism was not so much the direct negation of the principles of the Prague School but rather a much more nuanced reformation of the core presuppositions regarding language and meaning that those principles posit.

In this regard, the geographical and cultural aspects of the Prague School's impact demonstrate the theory's applicability. Thus, Mrugalski, in his work devoted to the analysis of Polish structuralism, shows that regional transformations created their own set of parameters^[13]. Zelenka's research on Czech and Slovak comparative studies concerns the School's role in the definition of world literature perception^[26]. Toutain and Velmezova reveal the significant contributions of the Geneva School to the development of semiotics in structural linguistics^[15]. Even though these activities lasted for only an admittedly short period, the School produced theoretical output that broke away from the national linguistic paradigm and secured its wider international recognition in linguistic science^[15]. This geographical variation in theoretical adaptation contributes to the idea that the principles of the Prague School had a high degree of elasticity, which allowed them to be implemented in diverse cultural and academic conditions.

Prague School ideas persist in modern theory because they represent crucial perspectives on language, literature, and meaning. Thus, as Váňa notes, their thinking remains relevant for shaping the approach to the literary fiction in question, which is significant in the context of social theoretical understanding^[6]. Ulicka further exemplifies their enduring influence on Eastern European literary theory^[23]. This pedagogical perseverance is accentuated further by Repka through the School's contribution towards functional grammar configuration^[21], while Vítězová presents the tangible usability in today's literature instruction^[35]. Such contemporary usages indicate that through the application of a historical-critical perspective, the theories of the Prague School can still be

relevant today for the understanding of modern-day literary and linguistic problems. However, such theories may have to be appropriately readapted for use today. This persistent influence suggests that many of the School's theoretical contributions were not simply looking back on historical theory but were establishing its cornerstone that continues to develop and meet emerging theoretical needs, hence denoting tremendous theoretical staying power or recalling power.

4.3. Narrative Theory

The structural-functional analysis postulated by Jakobson at the Prague School significantly impacted the evolution of the narrative theory, although their connection remains debatable and frequently contentious. In support of this claim, Glanc et al. have stated that Lovec's psycho-paleography works were methodologically central for the Prague School, stating systematic analysis of practical application to functional relationships to structural linguistics by Glanc et al.^[40]. However, this did not entail the linguistically-centered perspective, although the developed framework was general and could encompass other objects of study, such as narrative. This methodological heritage is reflected in the adoption of systematic approaches to analysing story arcs, characters' roles, and various other tools and techniques used in narratives by narratologists. The Prague School's approach to analysing literary works as systems of interacting elements was desirable to early narrative theorists searching for a more formalist analysis model.

The narrative theorists adopted many of their ideas from the Prague School but also adapted them in various ways to explore narratives. These changes frequently meant adjusting concepts borrowed from Prague School linguistics to the needs and requirements of narrative analysis^[41]. In this context, they yielded ideas that carried this thinking beyond the strict parameters of the Prague School paradigm^[42]. This ongoing disagreement about the nature of this intellectual legacy is testimony to the importance of Prague School ideas and the ingenuity of subsequent scholars, who sought to apply these principles to new types of analysis. Comparing Vladimir Propp's narrative functions with the Prague School structuralism shows that both methodologies were developed parallel to one another in literary theory. Jesenšek discusses how Propp's methodological focus on the search for universal archetypes in the morphology of narratives cor-

responded to the systematic approach of the Prague School while arising from a different theoretical context^[43]. Both were emerging points to a more significant climate of intellectual inquiry that embraced systematic and structural models of texts that operated beyond the provincial and the disciplinary. Consequently, the proximity of the works of Propp and the methodology of the Prague School can be viewed as allowing scholars to determine the identity of the different approaches associated with their analysis based on the systematisation of studies.

The relationship that has been posited between Propp's work and methodology by the Prague School has not been entirely accurate since there are critical differences in the approaches that exist in terms of theoretical frameworks and objectives of analysis. In this aspect, Glanc et al. explain the different intellectual traditions and purposes underpinning each approach and argue against a simplistic view of structural methodologies^[40]. Thus, these divergent approaches played their part in furthering the practices and work into the increased systematicity and scientificity^[40]. They laid the groundwork that can still be observed in literary interpretation today. The conceptual paradigms set forth by these structural analysis methods persist to impact today's theories of literary narrative. According to Harding, although present-day narratives differ from the earlier structural paradigms in specific ways, they adhere to many aspects pioneered by the Prague School linguists and the initial theorists of the story^[41]. This influence can still be witnessed through the constant utilisation of structural conceptions and analysis frameworks, although these appear diversified and advanced to fit new theoretical experiences.

While contemporary narrative theory has roots in structuralism, it has evolved and embraced elements from other fields, such as cognitive science and cultural studies. According to Jesenšek, this has resulted in the increased use of the diversity of theories for analysing narratives, as opposed to a sharp focus on structure alone^[43]. Nevertheless, both scholars know the importance of structural approaches in understanding narrative texts as they offer a systematic way of analysis. Thus, it can be concluded that despite the methodological shifts in the narrative theory paradigm after its structuralist onset, the Prague School legacy continues to inform the field while often extending beyond its roots^[44]. This is, therefore, apparent in this continual development,

which shows that as theorists add to the work of their predecessors, they also take away and build on the theoretical work that stemmed from structural analysis.

The relationship between structuralism in the Prague School and narrative theory is much more nuanced than has been discussed in the literature. Glanc et al. and Harding focus on methodological inheritance, but they must acknowledge the need to foster adaptive transformation^[40, 41]. Modern analysis shows that the impact of the Prague School on the theory of narrative was not just adoption but the transposition of meaning. This implies that narratologists did not merely integrate structural-functional concepts but reinvented them. Such an interpretation refutes Jesenšek's concept of akin development and goes instead toward a process-oriented theory evolution^[43]. The evidence also rules out the possibility that practising narrative theorists merely regurgitated Prague School principles in their analyses. Instead, they reconfigured the principles in elaborate ways to come up with entirely new approaches.

4.4. Reception Theory

The Prague School's focus on the reader in constructing meaning is relevant to later reception theory and even reader-response criticism. Despite the Prague School paying particular attention to textual patterns, identifying the reader as an active participant in meaning construction remained instrumental in forming succeeding theories. It can be observed that the Prague School's approach to reader reception was less comprehensive than it might initially appear. Rather than viewing readers as active agents who construct meaning independently, the Prague School primarily framed the reader within the confines of structural linguistics, focusing on how texts are received through linguistic structures rather than exploring the reader's role in meaning-making. This tension between the two approaches portrays the close affinity between Prague School concepts and the subsequent reception theories.

The change from Prague School principles to reception theory is a theoretical change of a kind that scholarly traditions view as necessarily diverse. Czech reception theory has been significantly shaped by the application of Prague School theories. However, there is a growing need to shift the paradigm toward approaches that prioritize historical and sociological perspectives, moving beyond the structural-

ist framework.. This apparent paradox is compounded by Jauss's claim that reception theory both continued and developed sufficiently the Prague School's formalism^[2]. Contemporary scholars often integrate aspects of the Prague School with reader-oriented approaches. However, this integration is not a straightforward process and should not be viewed as a simplistic combination of the two frameworks. Mrugalski brings into consideration another facet, noting that the impact of the Prague School on reception theory differs somewhere in Eastern Europe and Western Europe^[13]. This adds to the geographical aspect of this trend in theories.

Cultural and academic repercussions of these theoretical advancements show highly diverse regional differentiation. The critique of the Beat Generation in both the American and Czech contexts aligns with observations on cultural differences in reader response theory, emphasizing how these variations shape interpretation and reception. Zelenka continues this story by emphasising how literary theory in the same period as the Prague School remained closer in Central Europe; at the same time, it also forged new modes of interpretation^[26]. Through the analysis of the theoretical crossroads, the latter shows that such particular approaches remain an imprint of the Prague School and are adapted and developed through theoretical and cultural changes.

In light of the above discussion, the conventional assumptions regarding the direct link between the Prague School and reception theory need substantial revision. Whereas Shadi's remark about the School's structural linguistics orientation is vital to pinpointing the problem, it does not address the theoretical shifts described by Jauss^[2]. A closer look at the contribution of the Prague School to reader-response criticism would show that the contribution was not a cumulative one but rather a dialectical one. The clash between structural linguistics and the readerly agency, which one may assume to be a problem, was, in fact, crucial in exposing the weaknesses and subsequently advancing the interpretative paradigm. This process of exposing and addressing these weaknesses paved the way for the incorporation of reader-oriented approaches, which emphasized the active role of the reader in constructing meaning. Rather than viewing interpretation as a static process dictated solely by the text's structure, this shift allowed for a more dynamic interaction between the text and the reader. The Prague School's contributions, though limited in directly addressing reader

agency, laid the foundation for later theoretical frameworks, such as Jauss's reception theory and Iser's reader-response criticism, which sought to reconcile structuralist insights with the subjective experience of reading. By challenging the boundaries of structural linguistics, the Prague School sparked a critical dialogue that continues to shape contemporary debates on the relationship between textual structure and interpretative agency.

4.5. Cognitive Poetics

The correlation between the Prague School concepts and cognitive poetics is a noteworthy advancement in the theory of literature. However, the nature of this connection is not entirely clear and sometimes ambiguous. As Jacobs and Hakemulder pointed out, cognitive poetics has successfully reinvigorated such critical ideas of the Prague School, specifically foregrounding and defamiliarising through linking and integrating with modern cognitive psychology^[45]. There was a change in the connection between the cognitive poetics and the Prague Schools' concepts during the resultative pragmatics. Jacobs and Hakemulder show how cognitive poetics has reactivated two central ideas of the Prague School, foregrounding and defamiliarisation, by linking them to contemporary cognitive psychology^[45]. The authors subsequently review empirical work on reader cognition, arguing that this body of work gives rise to fresh interest in the structural hermeneutic patterns of the Prague School. Stopel, on the other hand, provides a more complex picture, which is necessarily contained within the recognition of how thinking from the Prague School became incorporated into cognitive poetics. In this aspect, Stopel articulated that so drastic has the change been on most of the concepts known today that we find they bear little resemblance with what they formerly held^[46]. It underscores the possible contradiction of the structural and cognitive perspectives on literary study, underpinned by similar theoretical frameworks.

The integration of these combined approaches into literary analysis has proved to be quite helpful while at the same time posing some methodological issues. In his 2018 study, Kuruc focuses on how cognitive poetics has implemented the insights of the Prague School into the interpretation of literature in Eastern Europe. Kuruc argues that this integration has offered significant prospects for elucidating how literary texts influence readers' minds in politicised regions^[47].

In this respect, her work shows how cognitive poetics can expand and deepen the possibilities of the Prague School research on text. However, there are still many discussions about integrating structural and cognitive theories. As Stopel has noted about cognitive poetics, while it purports to expand upon the framework developed by the Prague School, it sometimes adds concepts of mind that are not present in the structural account^[46]. While Jacobs and Hakemulder agree with this observation to a certain extent, they also point out that the fusion of cognitive science with literary theory has entailed reconceptualising structure semantics to some extent^[45]. All these debates have not ceased; therefore, integrating cognitive poetics with Prague School perspectives can still be fruitful in advancing the study of the texts and readers' experiences.

Nevertheless, some theoretical contradictions exist between the Prague School and cognitive perspectives, yet more consensus is apparent regarding the possibilities of integrating these two paradigms in productivity. Kuruc finds that this synthesis has allowed for a better understanding of how literary devices function on readers while preserving the systematicity inherent in the Prague School approach^[47]. This perspective implies, therefore, that cognitive poetics has moved away from some of the features of structuralist theories but has meaningfully continued the Prague School tradition of studying text in new theoretical directions.

In relation to Prague School concepts and their correlation to cognitive poetics, one would witness a developmental change in the theory rather than mere borrowing. Although Jacobs and Hakemulder both highlight foregrounding and the effectiveness of defamiliarisation within cognitive psychology^[45], Stopel's note concerning the conceptual transformation^[46] suggests a change on a far deeper level. Interestingly, Kuruc's critique of Eastern European literature^[47] overcomes such a simplistic view by showing that cognitive poetics is more than simple synthesis. This indicates that it is not the dogma of the Prague School that is important to maintain but the cognitive approach to its principles.

5. Conclusions

The Prague School is a cornerstone of twentieth-century literary theory and criticism; its principles reflect contemporary practice. The legacy of the Prague School

still shapes modern theory and criticism of twentieth-century literature. The scholars who asked for a scientific approach to language and literature provided the foundation for modern literary criticism. They developed practical analytical methods based on texts' structural and systematic aspects and focused on literature's social and aesthetic functions; these methods are still relevant in the modern academic context. The continued liquid application of the fundamental principles of the Prague School in today's literary practice can be observed through continual learning adaptation. Thus, Bakhtin's ideas are valuable not only for literary investigations but also for linguistic and cultural anthropology, proving the significance of these concepts. For the most part, the principle of a systemic and communicative construct for a literary work remains viable, but there are controversies regarding some of the School's formulated concepts.

Another key concept that belongs to the Prague School is the definition of the structural and functional characteristics of the Literary Language where such semiotic demarcation between literary texts and other types of language use is stressed. At the same time, it is possible to note that this is a theoretical concept of the specificity of the formation of literary culture, which remains relevant. The role of post-structuralist theories of literary production, such as foregrounding, automatization, and aesthetic function, today is that they offer scholars a rich set of concepts that enable them to explicate how literature produces meaning and communicates it. Despite critics claiming that the Prague School's structuralism is too formalistic, removes historical context, and does not consider the reader's position, the Prague School's central assumption of collecting laws internal to literature is still viable in contemporary literary science. That application remained relevant deep into the School's influence and underlines its enduring impact. Prague School's influence is not limited to literary science but branches to linguistics, semiotics, and many cultural aspects. Overall, it has contributed to how meaning is constructed and disseminated through cultural media: these texts help understand contemporary literature and culture.

The findings of this study have several significant implications in diverse domains. Education emphasises the value of incorporating Prague School methods into modern curricula to gain a holistic understanding of text analysis. For instance, it has offered a set of recommendations for Prague

School principles to be used in conjunction with newer theories to develop more intricate concepts for analysis. It also draws attention to interdisciplinary possibilities, suggesting that concepts from the Prague School should be used in other disciplines, such as media studies or digital humanities. On the methodological level, it exemplifies how the return to the historical past of the theory may prove fruitful, suggesting that the same may apply to other schools of literature theory. Another significant implication is that it discusses the cultural outcomes of the study in the formation of possible current phenomena like new media and communication in the current globalised world. In this context, it underlines the ongoing value of the Prague School in the study of meaning-making and dissemination in today's evolving world.

Therefore, the Prague School's theories and concepts are crucial for finding the way in the labyrinth of modernist perspectives towards contemporary literature and culture. Its focus on systematic procedures and the formal remains a guiding paradigm for sharpening literary analysis regarding scientific standards. Regardless of the ongoing discussions about the roles and meanings of literature in postmodern, digital, and global contexts, the structural and semiotic tools forged by the Prague School remain essential for critical analyses. These conceptual frameworks offer stable approaches to the study of texts and the understanding of cultural semiotics, guaranteeing the activity of the Prague School as a research model in today's intellectual environment.

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