Spiritual Streams and Cultural Models Pursued by Russian Literary Scholars exiled in Interwar Czechoslovakia (R. Jakobson versus E. Liatsky)

Les modèles intellectuels et culturels des philologues russes exilés à Prague dans l'entre-deux-guerres : R. Jakobson versus E. Liatskij

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SPIRITUAL STREAMS AND CULTURAL MODELS PURSUED BY RUSSIAN LITERARY SCHOLARS EXILED IN INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA (R. JAKOBSON VERSUS E. LIATSKY)

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It is only for the past two decades that the phenomenon of Russian exiles who after 1917 en masse forsook their mother country to settle in Berlin, Paris, Prague, and Belgrade has come under intense scrutiny, at long last exempt from ideological connotations. Hence emigrantology, as an interdisciplinary field on the borderline between traditional philology and literary scholarship, let alone ethnology, cultural anthropology, biographistic studies, and politology, deals with emigration in its own right – tracing its genesis and importance and describing its changing functions not only in the literary polysystem but in the whole structure of social and historical processes.¹ While the focus of emigrantology is a complex research into particular aspects of life in exile (viewed from artistic, social, political, or economic perspectives), its subject goes beyond the original assignment aimed at literature in exile, rather than political emigration – this why e.g. Ukrainian historiography prefers the wider term “diasporovedenye.”² If emigration in its narrowest sense is construed as a literary theme subsumed to emigration as a cultural phenomenon, the result is, according to the French Slavonic scholar M. Aucouturier, no more than a variation of the old comparative theme of expulsion and forced departure from one’s mother country, fairly frequent already in antiquity, whereas a broader understanding of the emigration phenomenon involves producing cultural surroundings in a foreign country, which could not befall on a mass scale earlier than in the 19th

². «Emigrantologia – nauka», p. 117.

310

MILOŠ ZELENKA

and 20th centuries.3 Along with terminological queries concerning the adequate denomination (exile, emigration, inner emigration) of these varying processes, which have assumed, particularly in the last ten years, new modifications (such as migrantship built mainly on economic reasons), in a purely comparative perspective, emigrantology can offer valuable material impulses for tackling the issues of authorian dociousness, namely various forms of bilingualism, closely connected with biliterariness, i.e. the author’s affiliation with more than one literary system.4 Not insignificant is the existence of specific interliterary relations and their division into periods, including the developmental synchrony or asynchrony between the metropolitan and exile literatures – for seldom does the state of affairs end in complete divorce, rather it brings about a wide scale of polemical, at times even clashing, contacts.5 A pivotal approach to the phenomenon of emigration proves to be the acceptance of its multicontextuality, perceived not only as a political but also an artistically polymorphous dialogue of cultures, conducted mainly as autocommunication within the system of differentiated structures and values in the national literature.

Discussions about delimiting the whole purpose of Russian exile activities, which have dominated round tables at the last two international congresses of Slavonic scholars, held in Cracow (1998) and Ljubljana (2003), revealed the limits and potentialities of particular interpretational approaches. In the case of Russian emigration, notwithstanding its specific features, such as deep conviction about the paramount historical significance of its mission as a “stimulating” cultural and spiritual obligation, the emphasis is now laid on refusal to isolate Russian exile literature from a broader European context, or modern world literature, and on combining the spiritual aspect of Russian “expansion” with Central and West European philosophical and artistic thought. Among the first to formulate this standpoint was Gleb Petrovich Struve, the exiled Russian literary historian (1898-1985) who explained its principle in his monograph Russkaya literatura v izgnanii (New York 1956), not published in Russia until 1996.6 Paradoxically, in all kinds of surveys, lexicons and encyclopedic dictionaries summarising the developmental lines of literary thought in interwar

3. Ibid. p. 113-114.
Czechoslovakia, the activities of Russian scholars at that time are for the most part connected with a narrow circle of names (R. Jakobson, D. Czizhevsky, P. Bogatyrev, etc.) participating in the activities of the Prague School. As a matter of fact, there was a much wider scholarly community of diverse generations, methodological schools, and professional specialisations whose Slavonic and comparative scope fell outside the purely specific Czech studies, extending especially to Russian and Ukrainian studies. Literary research was conducted, among others, by A. Bem, E. Liatsky, V. Frantsev, J. Perfetsky, S. Vilinsky, L. Bilecky, J. Javorsky, etc.; while the younger generation, represented by D. Czyzhevsky, R. Jakobson, P. Bogatyrev, etc., developed the structural method of the Prague Linguistic Circle.\(^7\)

For the sake of simplicity, the grouping of exiled Russian literary scholars, or rather philologists established in interwar Czechoslovakia, can be adequately divided into two model spiritual streams, which are differentiated on methodological, generational and quantitative grounds. The first, more numerous, movement is represented by scholars born between the 1860s–1870s, who one and all left their country for the West after 1917 and managed to retain their integrity in the foreign surroundings, while sharing considerably in the intellectual, cultural and scholarly activities of the new community. Such adjustment was facilitated also by the fact that their departure from homeland came quite late in their life; they were middle-aged or elderly men who had achieved success in society and ranked among the domestic elite thanks to their career and scholarly reputation, which brought them respect even outside the Russian territory, especially in the Slavonic countries in Central and South-eastern Europe. Methodologically, they were researchers grounded in positivism and psychologism with varying philological and culturally historical orientation who, besides appreciation of comparative approach, systematisation and critical classification of facts, aspired to syntheses based both on extensive material enquiries and on minutious analytical interpretations. Among those who deserve mention for their achievement are mainly S. G. Vilinsky, the medievalist and tutor of the famous M. Bakhtin at St. Petersburg University, and above all, E. Liatsky; their methodological stand can be described as a continuous synthesis of the traditional Russian culturally historical school, morphology, the comparative study of A. Veselovsky, and psychological methods introduced to Russia by A. A. Potebnya.

The second movement is represented by a younger generation of scholars (born between 1890-1900), who went through different experience and whose maturation during World War I and the 1917 Russian Revolution influenced their less uncompromising, more indifferent attitude towards political events – N. B. Jakobson came in 1920 as an official representative of the new Soviet

state. Over and above, they were more open methodologically, which, on the one hand, made them ready to absorb new impulses and the spiritual climate of the early 20th century, and on the other hand, manifested itself in the critical radicalness of their stand against the earlier positivist tradition, which later gave rise to the free spiritual background of the Russian Formalist School, subsequently transformed, in a fruitful symbiosis with the domestic influences, into functional structuralist aesthetics, organizationally anchored in the Prague Linguistic Circle. Their endeavour to integrate into the new community subsequently led to a partial ideological transformation, though their implacable antagonism towards different methodologies and alternative conceptions persisted, as proclaimed in the Statutes and activities of the Prague Linguistic Circle. World renown as a linguist was prominently achieved by the aggressive methodologist R. O. Jakobson, whose numerous versological and mediaevalist studies and monographs, at times co-authored by the ethnographer P. Bogatyrev, embodied the continuity of Russian formalism and Czech functional structuralist school. On the borderline between philosophy and philology were positioned the generously conceived works of D. Czizhevsky, who explored the history of theoretical thought and pursued comparative research into the East Slavonic Baroque. Parallel to it, he gained recognition for his Czech studies, which enhanced Comeniology through new manuscript additions.

Thus E. Liatsky and R. Jakobson, two different models of Russian philologists settled in interwar Czechoslovakia, evidence the inner structuration and value differentiation of this community. They not only demonstrate the need for ensuring continuity in the broken relations and for re-establishing contacts with local community, but primarily become influential in advancing mutual communication, which is mostly polemical, or sometimes even intolerant, within the new context.

Early in the 1930s, Evgeniy Alexandrovich Liatsky (1868-1942) came in Prague as the first contractual professor of Russian language and Literature (appointed by T. G. Masaryk on 1st May, 1922); he functioned as university professor from the 3rd June, 1927 until the Czech universities were closed down by the Nazis, when he was forced to retire. Only in 1933-1935, he delivered,
with the consent of the Czechoslovak government, a course of lectures at Belgrade University, where he was awarded a honorary doctorate for achievements in the history of Russian literature. After graduation from the Historical-Philosophical Faculty, Moscow University, E. Liatsky applied himself, under the guidance of his teachers F. Fortunatov, V. F. Miller and N. I. Sokolov and along with researches in history and philosophy, also to linguistic and folklore studies, and ethnography. The publication of his archive researches, based on his study trips and typified by a wide heuristic basis and systematically concise interpretation of the collected facts, attracted the attention of A. N. Pypin, the famous Slavonic scholar, who in 1907 invited the young researcher to St. Petersburg and appointed him a curator in the ethnographical section of the Alexander III Russian Museum (till 1907). Yet his promising career of a private scholar who steered his activities from ethnographical collection to synthetic works in literary history and to complete editions was forcefully disrupted by World War I and the October Revolution. Hence in 1912-1914 he edited three volumes of N. G. Chernyshevsky’s correspondence of 1862-1882, followed by three volumes of V. G. Belinsky’s correspondence in 1913).

As early as 1912 in tsarist Russia, Liatsky established a cultural publishing house labelled Fires (Ogni, also a scholarly society for editing literary, research and artistic materials), which was later re-established in Stockholm and under the name Northern Fires (Severnye ognı) continued to publish editions of Russian classics. It was already then that the focus of his research pursuits was divided between the ethnological study of Russian folklore and the history of Russian literature in the mid-nineteenth century, the period of Romantic-realistic transition whose moral ethos and social criticism he recognised as the natural climax of more than thousand years’ development of Russian literature. The universality of Liatsky’s thematic scope is underlined by the fact that he never eluded contemporary works (D. Balmont; V. Briusov; M. Gorky; etc.), which he progressively interpreted, regardless of the political background, even after 1917, as an internally structured though indivisible whole. All the same, his attitude towards Russian modern art was in general aesthetically conservative and in his interpretations he preferred 19th-century Russian classics, taking particular pride in his representational biographies of I. A. Goncharov and L. N. Tolstoy. Following the October Revolution, Liatsky emigrated to Finland, later on to Sweden, and his complicated anabasis came to an end in the early 1920s, when he reached a permanent existential destination in newly established


Czechoslovakia. Liatsky’s stay in Prague helped to develop his varied teaching and research activities; hardly a reserved academician or university scholar, he substantially interfered in the life of Russian exiles, wrote fiction and travelogues, compiled literary anthologies, and co-authored or rather authored Russian textbooks.\footnote{Тундра: Роман из беженской жизни, Praga, Plamja, 1925. Further see e.g. a selection of Russian folk poetry, published in Stockholm under the title Русская народная поэзия. Стихи о любви и скорби. Венец многоцветные, Stokgol’m, Severnye ogni, 1920, 2nd ed., first published in St. Petersburg in 1916 as a token of Russian patriotism in World War I. J. Ljackij – E. Smetánka, Praktická učebnice jazyka ruského, Praha, Vesmír, 1936; J. Ljackij, Cvičebnice ruského jazyka pro začátečníky, Praha, Legiografie, 1928; ibid., Učebnice ruštiny v 45 lekcích, Praha, Kvasnička a Hampl, 1941.}

Nursing an ambition to take root in the new surroundings, he tended to publishing his papers in Czech as well as international journals and anthologies rather than exile periodicals. His literary inheritance in this way testifies to the versatility of his professional and personal contacts with distinguished Slavonic scholars at home and abroad, which flourished during his creative peak in Prague in the 1920s and 1930s – mere correspondence includes more than a thousand bibliographic items. Liatsky’s complete works are collected in two volumes of *Materiály dlja bibliografičeskich i russkich naučnych trudov za rubežom I* (1920-1930, Belgrad 1931) \textit{II} (1930-1940, Belgrad 1941).

Liatsky’s researches into literary history in interwar Czechoslovakia are based on monographic profiles of Russian writers, published in both Russian and Czech. The method he applied there was later developed in his synthetic work *Historický přehled ruské literatury*, the first volume of which was published in 1937\footnote{J. Ljackij, *Historický přehled ruské literatury, část I: Staré ruské písemnictví (XI.-XVII. stol.),* Praha, Slovanský ústav, 1937 (translated by Žofie Pohorecká).}, and volume II was never published officially – preserved up to now is only the Russian manuscript and a single copy of the Czech page proof. The book’s publication itself, however, failed to materialise because, early in July 1942, Liatsky died and the Slavonic Institute, whose member he had been since 1929, was abolished by the occupational authorities. After the war, the works authored by Russian emigrants, unless they were granted pardon, invariably were not published. So Liatsky managed to complete the manuscript of the second volume, whereas the original plan had involved an ambitious three-volume comprehensive survey of Russian literature from the earliest time until the revolution of 1917. Only hypothetically can it be inferred from the uncompleted third volume, surviving in a few partial studies and handwritten drafts in the literary inheritance that the unifying concept of the whole project was Liatsky’s conviction about the Pushkinian era as the zenith of Russian literature that completed the organic synthesis of aristocratic and national cultures. In 1925, Liatsky’s Russian monograph on I. A. Goncharov, entitled *Roman i zhizn′– Razvitiye tvorcheskoj lichnosti I. A. Goncharova* and subtitled *Zhizn′ i byt′ 1812-1857*, was published in his Prague publishing house *Plamya*.\footnote{Ljackij, *Роман и жизнь: развитие творческой личности И.А. Гончарова*, Praha, Plamja, 1925.} The word “byt′” [being] to some extent expresses Liatsky’s methods: the basis of
his inquiry is more than a traditional literary profile, which was pioneered by Ch. A. Sainte Beuve (1804-1869), but the true existence of literature, literary life and all that affects the origin and genesis of an artefact. It aims at the exploration of literary morphology as a means to convey the meaning of a work. This was not a unique approach at the time: it was in the early 1920s that the process of crystallisation of complexly layered syntheses of immanent (formal) and academic approaches reached completion: the very Russian formalists, some of whom had begun their career exploring the “philosophy” of literature (B. Eichenbaum), in the latter half of 1920s continued as analysts of what is in Russian called “literaturny byt’,” i.e. literary life and being with all potential intersections;\(^{15}\) at about the same time, the phenomenologically oriented works of M. Bakhtin demonstrated efforts to overcome the unilateral technologicality of literary research by transition to the aesthetic object as the focus of cultural being. Methodologically, Liatsky can be appraised as an eclectic “combiner”\(^ {16}\) of methods, essentially a cultural-historical philologist whose aesthetical analyses of 19\(^{th}\)-century Russian novel synthesise both exterior and interior factors, such as sociology, biography, psychology; and poetology, structural inspiration, textual morphology, respectively, without letting any of them prevail.

Liatsky’s researches and numerous papers gave rise to a synthesising work entitled Klasikové ruské revoluce (Praha, 1930), translated into Czech from the original Russian manuscript by Žofie Pohorecká. This synthesis, which the author modestly presented as a historical outline, was just a partial initiation into the national literary history. The first part of the Historický přehled ruské literatury, again translated by Žofie Pohorecká and published by the Slavonic Institute in Prague in 1937, includes expositions of Old Russian literature between the 11th and 17th centuries. The author had more than one objective: firstly, his intention was to complete a comprehensive historical survey of literature written in the given period, secondly, the Earliest Russian literature was to be illustrated through telling extracts: on that account Přehled can function as a mirror anthology, for the reader can compare the Russian original and its Czech, in fact, artistic, translation below the text. Such presentation makes both parts of Liatsky’s Přehled unique even without the Czech conditions. His history develops a specific interpretative approach to expounding literary history jointly as a thrilling story and a philosophical-historical narration whose genre oscillates between essay, light metaphor and a solid grasp of factographically concise analysis. At the same time, his intention was to elucidate the regularities of literary development and the specifics of Russian national literature and its philosophy. His handbook thus represents an arena where contests are held to find an effective method, “where the same attention is given to the intuition of inner content and the technique of outer mastery.”\(^ {16}\) Nevertheless, Liatsky’s starting

\(^{15}\) B. Èjxenbaum, Сквозь литературу: сборник статей, Leningrad, Academia, 1924.

\(^{16}\) Ljackij, Historický přehled..., p. 5.
base is literary morphology as a meeting point of all phenomena surrounding the process of art. He perceives “literariness”, i.e. technique, craft, as an external factor that creates conditions for the internal, i.e. what is explored by humanities as the proper artistic communication, as literary transcendence, an end to which morphology is just a means. This is where Liatsky follows the approaches of A. A. Potebnja, the Russian linguist and literary psychologist who refers to outer form, inner form and contents, but in a slightly differing meaning. As evidenced by notes and bibliographical data, Liatsky had a detailed familiarity with not only the works of Russian literary scholars, even in the field of research he pursued here, but with Central and West European researches as well.

Liatsky’s concept of Old Russian literature approaches that of N. K. Gudzy’s, the Odessa disciple of Sergiy Vîlinsky (1876-1950), later professor at Masaryk University, Brno, who was, though briefly – in winter term 1912 – a tutor to M. Bachtin before he left for St Peterburg, but it is different from it through emphasis on interliterary concept of Old Russian literature. Poetics and stylistic streams are explained here in a wider social context: Old Russian literature is not perceived as a mere reflection of foreign models which are modified on Russian soil. At the same time, it is not seen as an entity for centuries closed, not admitting formative Western influences from Lithuania and Poland. Specific attention is given to Slovo o pluku Igorově where Liatsky could refer to the Czech text of the Slovo, published in 1932 in Jungmann’s translation in the critical edition of V. A. Frantsev, another Russian exile, under the patronage of the Slavonic Institute in Prague. His detailed critical appraisal is focused on plastic analysis of style and composition, on formal mastery, which, according to Liatsky, deliberately accentuates the ideological message of the Slovo; yet on the other hand, Liatsky’s “historical survey” is not, evidently on purpose, overburdened with contemporary debates voicing major objections against the authenticity of the manuscript. The new-found concept thus integrated Russian folk epic into the national literature on the principle of axiology and aesthetical equivalence. A similar approach appears also in Frank Wollman, whose Slovesnost Slovanů (1928), along with other works, is consistently based on the unity of oral and literary production. Further, Liatsky estimates the geographical factor of literary scholarship, illustrating it through the North-South axis, as a conflict which in later development of Russian literature failed to disappear, bearing the stamp of Mediterranean impulses.

The typed version of the original Russian manuscript of the second part of Historický přehled ruské literatury, subtitled Ruské písemnictví osmnáctého století, and supplemented by the author’s handwritten notes, is included in the author’s inheritance kept in the Literary Archives of the Museum of Czech Literature in Strahov, Prague. Its Czech translation, again authored by Sofie (Žofie) 17. A. Potebnja, Эстетика и поэтика, Moskva, Iskusstvo, 1976.
SPIRITUAL STREAMS AND CULTURAL MODELS

Pohorecká, meets, but for a few inconspicuous Russisms in lexis and syntax, fairly high standards. Since this section, as mentioned above, was never published, our research is based on the only available copy of the page proof (though Liatsky’s literary inheritance contains the manuscript of the second volume). In the brief introduction, Liatsky makes an exquisitely fine discrimination between medieval Russian literature and the nineteenth-century classics (“the golden age”), which are separated by the eighteenth-century literature as an important transitional zone. Despite not including the works of Russian formalists and Czech structuralists in the bibliography, Liatsky could not but respond to the ambience of Czech literary structuralism by claiming in the preface that “the subject of my exposition is the art of literature.” Considering literature an independent art, strictly divided from other arts, here, in contrast to the first volume, he pays more attention to the questions of art form and poetic language (which is, among others, connected with his thematic shift from medieval studies to the more recent period of the 18th century) and to composition and genre issues. The inspiring influence of structural aesthetics can also be found in the notion of the acceptance of Western impulses: Liatsky, in correspondence with A. N. Veselovsky’s assumption of “helpful countermotion,” holds that foreign developmental impulses, if they are to be “adopted,” have to fall into a well prepared literary and cultural bedrock.

Incidentally, Liatsky’s texts read like historical-philosophical novels, idiosyncratic narrations which do not avoid multitude of metaphors and illustrations, with the author approaching methods known in the USA since the 1970s as “metahistory” – methods whose elements penetrated into fiction, literary research and general history. Liatsky composes his conceptual texts as specifically structured stories that synthesise the fastidiousness of a researcher and the aesthetic relevance of creative writing and which, in harmony with the author’s conception, endeavour to balance “artistic and intellectual excitement”. Ideating history as a gripping, almost adventurous story conceptually led to the implication of specific expositional architectonics which only seems to have no curves and climaxes, but in fact it flows in a peaceful linear stream without debatable and problematic intrusions. Liatsky’s history may be peopled by names and dates, but it is no strict objectivism nor factographical account. He stresses the need to keep the personal element and the objective pressure of a historical trend in balance. Neither can he be labelled as positivist – although his exposition of the researcher’s literary process is unified by the idea of evolutionary progress, he rigorously differentiates between purely historical works of no aesthetic value (even those are part of history) and literary historical works

20. Ibid., p. 5.
of dominant aesthetic value (which make up the core of literary history). Liatsky, a versatile researcher and scholar of Renaissance breed, ranked among the leading literary scholars in Russian exile – folklorist, literary critic and historian, advocate and editor of Russian classics, university teacher, author of Russian handbooks and university textbooks. On top of it, he was a publicist, essayist and prose writer who in his two-volume novel *Tundra* (1925), helped by his own recollections, restored the fortunes of Russian exiles, coming to terms with new reality and nostalgic for Great Russia.

Roman Osipovich Jakobson (1896-1982), who came to Czechoslovakia in July 1920 as interpreter for the Soviet mission of the Red Cross, was censorious toward Liatsky and remained his implacable adversary until the 1940s, when he, in an obituary written already in America, deprived Liatsky’s works of all scholarly aspirations. The conflict was provoked by the senior scholar’s negative attitude to Jakobson’s potential engagement at Charles University, where Liatsky gave lectures as the first contractual professor of Russian language and literature from 1922. The special need for a contractual and, after 1927, regular professor of Russian language and literature followed not only from the importance of the Old Church Slavonic linguistic and literary tradition in Russia, or from the specific position of Russian language in the development of Slavonic philology, but also from the economical and political necessity to train secondary school teachers and administrative staff in Carpathian Ruthenia. Interestingly, Jakobson sent an application to Charles University already in early 1914, that is before his study at Moscow University (1914-1918), but his plans went awry because of the war. The undeniable fact is that Jakobson, thanks to Professor Shakhatov, his Russian tutor, had basic knowledge of Czech prior to his departure from Russia.

Jakobson came in Czechoslovakia as a diplomat in the employ of the Soviet state on 10th July, 1920 – at the time when Russian Formalist School, conducting research on artistic language, flourished. By then he had finished a four-month stay engagement at the Soviet mission in Tallinn, which he left for Moscow in April 1920. His Jewish origin did not prevent the Soviet authorities from employing again his language skills in the service of the Red Cross mission assigned to repatriate Russian prisoners of war. Having been conferred magister’s


23. This information was mentioned by Jakobson in a many interviews he gave in the 1960s and 1970s, eg. R. Jakobson, «V Rímě o Praze», *Literární noviny*, t. 16, no 7, 18th February, 1967, p. 1-3 (conducted by A. M. Ripellino). It is also mentioned by A. Měšťan in the interview «Slavistika je tromf», *Literárny týždenník*, t. 5, 1992, 26, p. 1 and 10-11 (conducted by A. Mikušťáková).

degree at Moscow University, the young scholar enjoyed a growing reputation as a well-read linguist, intimate friend of V. Mayakovsky, active member of the Opozyaz, and chair of the Moscow Linguistic Circle who could take pride in a number of publications, mainly in dialectology and ethnography. After a short-term involvement as interpreter, Jakobson left the mission in October 1920 and in the academic year 1920-1921 extended his erudition through attending lectures delivered by O. Hujer, F. Trávníček, E. Smetánka, and other professors specialising in Czech and Slavonic studies. Late in 1921, he became a temporary contractual press agent for the mission and remained in service until 1st November, 1928. His application for the auditor’s position at Charles University was not recommended by professorial staff on political grounds because, among other reasons, they did not want to risk a split with Professor Liatsky, a prospective contractual professor, who was a political liberal and one of the official spokesmen of Russian exile community in Prague, acceptable for the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ensuingly, Jakobson enrolled at Prague’s German University, where he attended lectures of Professor F. Spina, who installed him late in 1928 as editor of Slavische Rundschau periodical.

In the early 1920s, Jakobson’s ideological position in interwar Czechoslovakia, consequent upon his systematic researches into the linguistic invariance of poetical texts, in particular, to the classification of linguistic features with regard to the speaker’s purpose, impelled the fledgling scholar to radical re-examination of the contemporary notions of the substance of literature and to life-long integration of poetics into the system of linguistic disciplines. This concept regarded poetics not as a normative theory of poetical technology through the system of classical Aristotelian figures of speech, but resolutely asserted itself as universal aesthetics and poetics inspired by contemporary creations. His predominantly linguistic orientation was soon employed in the theory of literature, or rather to expound the peculiar aesthetic qualities of poetic language. The first two major works, Noveshaya russkaya poezia (1921) and O Czeshskom stikhe (1923) both formulated and modified the principal theses of Russian Formalist School at the time when the formalists ceased to study poetic language and its system in favour of the structural problems of the work of art, revealing the technique to construct a literary artefact. It was the latter of Jakobson’s studies, later extended, revised and published as Základy českého verše (1926)27, that heralded his close connection with Czech cultural and scholarly background and which, through analysing poetical language and its differential qualities, elevated literary theory to “academic” status.

26. Jakobson settled in Prague not only in the job line, but also in his private life – on 13th May, 1922, he married Sofia Nikolayevna Feldmannova, an officer at the Soviet trade mission in Prague who completed there the study of medicine.
27. Jakobson, Základy českého verše, Praha, Odeon 1926.
In Jakobson’s view, poetry seen as language performing aesthetic function is indifferent to the described subject; it is “utterance” concentrated on expression, whereas in practical and emotional language, this quality recedes into background in favour of the communicative function. Jakobson’s phonological concept of versology polemically refuted the normative concept of Czech versology and absolutisation of Dobrovský’s prosodic theory, likewise it opposed mechanically employed beliefs in the obligatory use of regular stress in modern Czech poetry. Základy českého verše still maintains Jakobson’s early formalistic theory of immanent development of poetic forms and devices, where, in his opinion, one “violent” act of regulated variation of long and short syllables prompts a different type of “violence,” that is to say, further regulated variation of accentuated and non-accentuated syllables: apparently, the theory of “organised” violence of poetical form on language was explicit in most works of Russian formalism. In structuralism, this notion was substituted and altered by a semantically narrower term “tension,” or rather, dialectical tension. Thus a consistent battle rages at all levels and on all planes of a literary work (such as structure, element, material, dominant, progression, arrangement) between the deforming and deformed factors, both the weaker and the stronger ones. The theory of literary work was on the whole construed on a potentially “totalitarian” principle, on the textual strategy of permanent confrontation. This stand was then addressed by S. N. Trubetskoy, whose temperate appraisal of the original Russian version was one of the first to modify the assumption that any metre implies certain violation of language:

We must not forget that linguistic tolerance (to express it metaphorically) is anything but boundless and that language does not condone every violence.  

However appreciative Trubetskoy may have later become of Jakobson’s research and teaching activities, he did not conceal apprehension over his inclination towards radicalism and bohemian lifestyle. The younger scholar’s criticism of his older colleague’s radical leanings was valid only to some extent; his avant-garde vision of linguistic experimenting crossed his endeavour to submit his scholarly metalanguage and adequately chosen terminology to the requirements of objective neutrality.

Jacobson’s personal life and political struggles registered in the archive documents of the Ministry of Interior and other political bodies of the time, which reflect the personality features of the young scholar, are exhaustively recapitulated by the historian R. Vévoda. Similarly, the American Slavonic scholar J. Toman documented Jakobson’s intellectual development with regard to the

29. R. Vévoda, „Muž, který byl nepodhodný aneb od agenta III. internacionály k agentovi FBI (I. a II. část)”, Střední Evropa, t. 12, 1996, 64, p. 64-75; 65, p. 88-100.
ambience pervading the Prague Linguistic Circle in his monograph *The Magic of a Common Language* (1995). 30 Undoubtedly, his initial period in the early 1920s was marked by strong radicalism which was reflected in his lifestyle and in the manner of his scholarly communication: his anxiety to be in the epicentre of events by participating in discussions and opinion clashes removed the dichotomy of “private” and “public” spheres, expressing at the same time the avant-garde vision of the whole man. 31 In the letter to V. Shklovsky of 7th November, 1922, Jakobson calls Liatsky a “villain who are not many,” refusing to recognise him as a “scholar,” considering his monograph study on Goncharov a “disgrace” like the fact that Liatsky remains “deaf” to the problems of modern Russian literature. 32 Similarly, in a study he co-authored with his friend, Russian folklorist P. Bogatyrev for the first volume of Slavia, where the two scholars appraised Russian Slavistic publications, they objected to Liatsky’s assessment of *Rus strazhdushchaja – venets mnohotsvetny*, an anthology of poetry edited by him and published in 1916, classifying it as “insufficiently expert.” 33

At first sight, Jakobson’s radicalism may have resulted from the generational gap and dissimilar methodology: their controversy however had deeper political roots. In September and October 1922, Prague was visited by the Russian emigrant in Berlin V. B. Shklovsky, a literary theoretician and major representative of the Formalist School who lectured there at the invitation of Česko-ruská jednota [Czech-Russian Unity], a charity headed by the Russophile author F. Táborský, and subsequently, by J. Polívka, the Slavonic scholar and folklorist and Liatsky’s university colleague. 34 The society endeavoured to disseminate all-round knowledge of Russia, without being explicitly identified with a particular political movement or platform. Jakobson’s task then was to sound, through the exiled publicist and art historian N. F. Melnikova-Papouškova and her husband J. Papoušek, a diplomat and officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shklovsky’s potential transfer from Berlin to Prague and to arrange for Shklovsky to be granted an official state subsidy for Russian exiles. 35 Liatsky protested against Shklovsky’s lecture for Polívka’s society (Jakobson in his letter ironically refers to Liatsky’s allegedly informing Polívka of Shklovsky’s Jewish

origin), because the conservative academic regarded Shklovsky’s stay in Prague as provocation aimed at Russian exiled authors. Moreover, Liatsky did not approve of Shklovsky’s public criticism of foreign intervention in Russia.

Even though relevant archive documents are still missing, it is evident that Liatsky’s intervention was more successful: Shklovsky did not settle in Prague and, like Jakobson, in the mid-1920s could not embark on pedagogical and academic career at Prague or Brno Universities. In the letter of 19th November, 1924, written to N. N. Durnov, his tutor and Russian linguist, he says “there is again a demand from Moscow to dismiss me from my position… I am not going to Russia, I cannot gain a foothold here – as the English saying goes, I have no choice but eating worms in the garden.”

As late as April 1930, Jakobson defended at German university his dissertation based on the earlier published treatise Zur vergleichende Forschung über die slavischen Zehnsilber (1929), in which he analysed a folk rendering of the North Russian song Puteshestvye Vavili, made in 1915, comparing it against Russian spiritual epic songs and the Russian five-foot trochee. He obtained a doctorate at Prague’s German university (his Russian doctorate not having been recognised) for a thesis written in German because he was on the editorial staff of Slavische Rundschau, the official journal of Slavonic linguistics, published by the German university in Prague, yet his choice was influenced mainly by his resolution to avoid the Russian exiles Liatsky and Frantsev at Charles University, with whom Jacobson’s radicalism and differing methodology might have clashed over fundamental issues. It is no secret that complications with his postdoctoral qualification at Brno University, for which he applied already in 1930, were caused by objections of some of the staff members which were mainly politically motivated – they referred to Jakobson’s uncertain nationality and clandestine bolshevism. The renewed postdoctoral application was finally approved by the professorial staff and definitively confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in September 1933.

Jakobson’s genuine desire to achieve reputation within the Czech context, together with growing apprehension over the political development in the Soviet Union, made him reject, already in 1928, the generous offer of A. Skaftymov, the famous literary historian and Dean of Saratov University, who invited thirty-one-year-old Jakobson to assume professoriate in general linguistics and Russian philology. In the early 1920s, the open-minded scholar, who maintained friendly relationships with Czech leftist artists (S. K. Neumann, V. Nezval, J. Hora, J. Seifert, etc.), was kept under Prague police surveillance.

38 The archive materials of the SÚA (National Archives), funds: PMV (225), 1919-1924, IV (3) 50 (R.
diplomatic reports reveal that the young pundit scrupulously avoided political activities so as to have unrestricted access to academic and literary pursuits. In Czech surroundings, his left orientation, paradoxically, did not rule out a certain political restraint. According to his own announcement in the central document, Jakobson did not support any political party, on the contrary, since his arrival in Czechoslovakia he had been critical of the official party line in Moscow, which subsequently resulted in his total retreat from the embassy services. 39 Referring to this, Jakobson pointed out that as early as in his first Czech newspaper communication in August 1920 – in his teacher A. Akhmatov’s obituary – he expressed protest against Moscow’s government attempts to violate and bring to line the people’s spiritual life through aphorism ‘you cannot use a wrist watch to drive in nails’. 40 When Jakobson’s colleague from the Prague Linguistic Circle B. Havránek, incumbent Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, Masaryk University, Brno, officially inquired about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ position on his completed postdoctoral application, the official reply from 31st March, 1930, signed by K. Krofta and marked as “confidential” was:

Throughout his service for the Soviet Mission and later for the Soviet Embassy, Mr Jakobson maintained a positive attitude to our state. Furthermore, the Ministry can assert that it is not informed about any act of Mr Jakobson’s disloyalty: his attitude to our nation gradually got warmer, and in recent years it has been manifestly favourable. The Ministry is familiar with incidents when Mr Jakobson intended to benefit our state and succeeded. As press agent, he particularly endeavoured to extend correct information about our country not only in the USSR, but in other countries as well. Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would not exercise its veto to prevent his appointment as contractual professor at any Czechoslovak university, on the contrary, it is disposed to recommend his application if necessary or if similar proposal is submitted by Masaryk University. 41

It is possible to endorse the opinion that Jakobson’s life, its ideological and political peripeties symbolise the typical lot of modern intellectual, first succumbing to illusions and later painfully subduing them. This is what enables us “to say something important about the events of our time, about political, societal, spiritual, and last but not least, moral struggles which have been carried on in this century.” 42 It is an obvious fact that Jakobson’s arrival in Czechoslovakia

39. Cp. duplicate copies of R. Jakobson’s letters to the Dean of FFMU Brno, of 1. 4. 1939 (The Archives of MU, Brno, fund R. J. – osobní dopisy, folder 1939-1941, unclass.).
40. Ibid. Also cp. R. Jakobson «Prof. Šachmatov», Čas, t. 30, 1920, 68, p. 2.
41. Quoted according to the duplicate copy of the letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic to the Philosophical Faculty, Masaryk University, Brno, of 31th March, 1930 (Archiv MU v Brně, fund R. J., unclass.).
42. Vévoda, «Muž…», p. 65.
in July 1920 was not problem-free; the left-wing press (Venkov, Národní politika, etc.) attacked him – in the same way as the whole Soviet mission led by S. I. Gillerson – as a disguised Communist agent ready to infiltrate the academic community at Prague university.\textsuperscript{43} The intricacy of his personal situation is documented by his correspondence in 1920 with Elsa Triolet, a childhood friend who later married the French novelist Louis Aragon, in which Jakobson makes ironic comments about the invectives of left-wing press (“snake” “fraud” “bastard”).\textsuperscript{44} The Russian scholar may have given a warm welcome to the legal recognition of the Soviet Union in 1934 and ensuingly supported the conclusion of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Help in May 1935, nevertheless, in the early thirties he definitely rejected the request of the Czechoslovak authorities for his repatriation, even though the Soviet Union repeatedly prolonged the validity of his passport up to 1936.\textsuperscript{45} The legation councillor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs J. Šrom, previously in the service of the Czechoslovak trade mission in Moscow, warned him privately of potential retaliation on his return home. In defiance of this tough stand, Jakobson was convinced of the indivisibility of literary creations made by Russian and Ukrainian exiles and the official cultural production in the Soviet Union. When the head of the Soviet delegation at the First Congress of Slavonic Scholars, academic N. Sakulin, analysed the congressional session, he gave a positive comment on Jakobson’s proposition that “affiliation with a political group does not determine the complex of spiritual world”, emphasising in the same breath that the general inclination of formalists towards sociologism is negatively affected by Jakobson’s opinion about the abstruse implementation of Marxist ideology in humanities.\textsuperscript{46}

In 1939 Jakobson sent a letter to A. Novák, Rector of Masaryk University, to inform him that he had never been affiliated with any political party or association, except a brief membership in the Russian Constitutionally Democratic (cadet) Party in 1917. His withdrawal from diplomatic service was commented by the police headquarters as follows: The exact cause is not known. According to unconfirmed information, competent Soviet authorities harboured doubts about his unlimited trustworthiness, since it was allegedly discovered that he was an illegitimate son of a Russian aristocrat… it is probable that Jakobson was to be replaced in his positions. Jakobson, however, did not obey the order to return to Moscow and remained in Prague, in spite of it, he did not turn hostile to the Soviet government and there were no retaliations against him from the

\textsuperscript{43} R. Jakobson, «Stav kultury v Rusku (Rozhovor s členem sovětského poselstva Červeného kříže)», Lidové noviny, t. 28, 1920, 356, p. 5 (interviewer: N. Melnikova-Papoušková). The first references to the activities in interwar Czechoslovakia confirm Jakobson’s strong radicalism: he was considered an extremely leftist “bolshevik,” who allegedly disseminated Communist ideas among students.


\textsuperscript{45} Vévoda, «Muž…», p. 66-67.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
Soviets... Jakobson’s scholarly and social activities caused dissatisfaction mainly among Russian emigrants who warned that he was a clandestine enemy of the Czech nation, an agent of Moscow who maintained contacts with Communist journalists and authors. There even appeared a belief, which could neither be confirmed nor refuted, that Jakobson was in both the Soviet and, allegedly, the Czechoslovak employ.

Jakobson’s sentiment to Russian emigrants, with regard to his unclear nationality, was adduced in the deprecatory votum separatum lodged in his post doctoral qualification by František Novotný, a classical philologist and professor at Brno university:

Dr Jakobson is a USSR citizen. The emergency situation, fomented in Russia by the Revolution, impinged on the lives of Russian intellectuals, in particular, Russian scholars. Some of those who remained in Russia enjoy more or less freedom, depending on how much they adapted to the programme of the ruling party; many were executed by firing squad, others are in prison. Out of those who live outside Russia, some were deported, but mostly they deliberately went into exile so as to escape the new power. Dr Jacobin does not belong to any of these categories. He has been living outside his country for years, he is neither exile nor émigré.

A logical conclusion drawn from Jakobson’s confusing political stance, jointly with his methodological radicalism and pugnacity, was a preconceived suspicion growing within the more conservative Russian exile fellowship, Liatsky not excluding, which was partly dispelled in 1937 by his doctoral qualifications and appointment as associate professor, and combined, among others, with obtaining Czechoslovak nationality. The somewhat relieved tension between Jakobson and Liatsky is documented in Jakobson’s letter of congratulations on Liatsky’s 70th birthday of 7th March, 1938, which, besides polite formulas – probably under the influence of precarious domestic situation (threatening Nazism) when, after the official termination of the so called “Russian action,” the position of Russian exiles in Czechoslovakia generally worsened - surprisingly says that they were together awaiting “many a fierce battle against those who believe that it is possible to discredit Russian culture and Russian academic tradition.” Still later, as mentioned above, in the obituary written in American exile in 1944, Jakobson repeated his cardinal refutations, namely accentuating the implacable antagonism of scholarly discourses.

47. Quoted according to the study authored by P. Kuldanová – M. Zelenka, «In margine vědecké biografie Romana Jakobsona (1920-1939)», Opera Slavica, t. 4, 1994, 1, p. 34.
48. Votum separatatum of František Novotný from 24th Jan. 1933, which is archived in the Moravian Museum in Brno (fund R. J., unclass.).
If Prague, jointly with Berlin and Paris, belonged to the most celebrated world centres of Russian exiles, in the field of scholarly communication it undeniably became its most significant centre. The city boasted newly established universities and faculties, a variety of central archives and institutions, flourishing social activities supported by journal publishing activities and organising various celebrations and jubilees. All this attests that the phenomenon of Russian exile community created a political and cultural subsystem whose values became integrated, as an entirety of its kind, into the new “host” surroundings, at the same time representing a richly structured complex whole that further prolonged and developed, yet also negated, the cultural tradition of the old homeland, especially while encountered with the emergencies of its own cultural enclave. The very cases of Liatsky and Jakobson as major representatives of different scholarly discourses of exiled Russian literary comparatists offer sufficient solid material for the study and theoretical generalisation of these models in their mutual relationships and functional complementarity, which can advance understanding of the complex phenomenon of Russian exiled scholars in general.