

REVIEWS



Eva Stehlíková |  
*Payment on Debt*  
 Herta Schmid. *Struktury a funkce* [Structures and Functions]

Ed. Aleš Haman and Radim Kopáč.  
 Prague: Karolinum, 2011. 424 pp.

Professor Herta Schmid has worked at several universities (Bochum, München, Potsdam, Amsterdam) and in the years 1995 to 2002, co-edited, with W. Koschmal, the journal *Balagan*, focusing on Slavic drama, theatre and film. Her own research concentrated on Russian, Polish and Czech cultures, dedicating much attention to Prague Structuralism. Between 1975 and 2008, she co-edited as many as 12 crucial volumes.<sup>1</sup> The title of her

1 Out of this number I would like to mention those most relevant for our purpose: on the theory of drama: *Moderne Dramentheorie* (Kronberg 1975); *Drama und Theater. Theorie – Methode – Geschichte* (Munich 1991); *Bühne und Öffentlichkeit, Drama und Theater im Spät- und Postsozialismus* (Munich 2002); on semiotics of drama and theatre: *Semiotics of Drama and Theatre* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1984); on drama and theatre communication: *Dramatische und theatrale Kommunikation. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Dramas und Theaters im 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen 1992); and on Czech Structuralism: *Jan Mukařovský and the Prague School/Jan Mukařovský und die Prager Schule* (Prague

dissertation thesis, *Strukturalistische Dramentheorie. Semantische Analyse von Čechovs Ivanov und Der Kirschgarten* (Kronberg 1973), completes a graphic picture of her research interests and methods.

A selection of her work (which may well be the first of its kind) was done by Aleš Haman and Radim Kopáč. Given the fact that it is focused on a Czech readership, the editors divided the selected texts, published between 1989 and 2009, into three groups: the first contains 7 studies dedicated to the leading figure of the Prague Structuralist School, Jan Mukařovský;<sup>2</sup> the second group is

1999). In this context another two volumes of conference proceedings on leading Czech poets deserve a mention: *Karel Hynek Mácha, Die tschechische Romantik im europäischen Kontext* (Munich 2000); *Vrchlický und der tschechische Symbolismus* (Munich 2003); and on the fruitful era of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Kapitel aus der Poetik. Die zehner Jahre in der tschechischen Symbolismus und Avantgarde* (Munich 2008).

2 These texts are: Das ‘Drei-Phasen-Modell’ des tschechischen Strukturalismus. Eimermacher, Grzybek, and Witte (eds.). *Issues in Slavic Literary and Cultural Theory*. Bochum, 1989: 107–152; Uebereinstimmungen und Abweichungen zwischen tschechischen Strukturalismus und postmodernem Denken. Bakoš, and Michalovič (eds.). *Československý štrukturalismus a viedenský scientizmus*. Bratislava, 1992: 205–233; Das Problem des Individuums im tschechischen Strukturalismus. Schwarz (ed.). *Prager Schule. Kontinuität und Wandel Arbeiten zur Literaturästhetik und Poetik der Narration*. Frankfurt, 1997: 265–303; Besteht ein Bruch zwischen Mukařovský’s Poetik und Ästhetik? Macura, and Schmid (eds.). *Jan Mukařovský and the Prague School*. Prague, 1999: 75–100; Der Sammelband *Torso a tajemství Máchova díla* als Dokument

dedicated to the analyses of Czech literary works (by Comenius, Jaroslav Vrchlický, and Karel Čapek); and the third comprises of 4 chapters analyzing the poetics and semantics of Václav Havel's plays.

All three groups present Herta Schmid as an innovative thinker unwilling to settle with the traditional readings and ready to develop Structuralist theories creatively. In doing so Schmid relates to the work of others (Oleg Sus, Felix Vodička, Robert Kalivoda, Miroslav Červenka, Mojmir Grygar, Milan Jankovič, Mojmir Otruba, Květoslav Chvatík, Lubomír Doležel) as well as confronts it with the post-Structuralists (Jacques Derrida). Czech readers will appreciate Schmid's valuable confrontations of Czech Structuralism with its predecessors (Russian Formalism, Leo Spitzer, Karl Bühler, Robert Hanslick). It seems that the aesthetic of Friedrich Schiller would be a rewarding subject of study in this context with its influence of

Kant, Shaftesbury and Burke, as Herta Schmid suggests. Her texts show Czech Structuralism as an open and dynamic work containing the germs of new solutions capable of new interpretations. So Schmid presents telling evidence that Mukařovský's anthropological and functional aesthetic contains "post-Structuralist" elements; that his "system of the poetic idiom" has all the features of Saussure's concept of "system"; likewise she finds in Mukařovský a certain counterpart to Peirce's theory of two interpretants (the "primary- and environmental interpretant").

Inspiring contextual investigations and discoveries – that is Schmid's most consequential contribution. There is little doubt that this (and the symposia where she convened encounters and discussions of Czech and German scholars) is what has played a central role in the rehabilitation and rethinking of the heritage of the Prague Structuralist School. This volume, opening with Aleš Haman's introduction and concluding with a full bibliography of Schmid's work, gives a chance to understand the scholarly paths of this leading and so far insufficiently appreciated theorist.

des Prager Linguistischen Kreises. Schmidt (ed.). *Kapitel zur Poetik Karel Hynek Mácha*. Munich, 2000: 195–222. It is worth noting that there are two studies among them that were not originally published in German: "Přístupy k subjektu v pražské strukturalistické antropologii a v genetickém strukturalismu Ernsta Cassiera" was first published in Slovak (Michalovič (ed.). *Subjekt autor – auditórium*. Bratislava, 1997: 146–166), and "Erkenntnis und Interesse bei Jan Mukařovský und in der aktuellen Kulturwissenschaft" came out first in Czech (Sládek (ed.). *Český strukturalismus po poststrukturalismu*. Brno, 2008: 160–178).