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**A COMPARISON
OF 20TH CENTURY
THEORIES OF STYLE**

(in the context of Czech and British scholarly discourses)

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I am greatly indebted to all friends and colleagues who kindly agreed to read and proof-read the following pages and to provide me with their valuable advice and commentary; needless to say, the responsibility for all faults and mistakes remains entirely mine. This work is a revised version of my previously unpublished UK dissertation (Křístek, 1999); and although time passes very quickly, the subject matter of this work (i.e. the development of stylistic theories) does not change – in fact, could not have changed indeed. Therefore I believe that members of the academic community, focusing either on Czech studies or on English studies (students, teachers, translators), will find this small book a useful guide providing a basic orientation in one of the scholarly disciplines as well as a possible impulse for their future professional career (and since this work deals with stylistics, I cannot resist the temptation to stress that some medieval and even antique traditions relating to this discipline are still in use these days, namely, *captatio benevolentiae*).

Table of Contents

0	Introduction	9
1	Czech Theories of style	11
1.1	Czech stylistics during the first three decades of the 20th century	11
1.1.1	<i>The pioneering 20th century theoretical works</i>	12
1.2	Czech stylistics 1932–1954	16
1.2.1	<i>The 1932 debate on standard language</i>	16
1.2.2	<i>The situation after the 1932 debate</i>	20
1.2.3	<i>The 1941 debate on style</i>	21
1.2.4	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published between 1941 and 1954</i>	22
1.3.	Czech stylistics from 1954 to the present	27
1.3.1	<i>The situation in the early 1950s</i>	27
1.3.2	<i>The 1954 conference on style and stylistics</i>	27
1.3.3.	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published between 1954 and 1960</i>	30
1.3.4	<i>Investigations of literary style carried out in the 1960s</i> ..	31
1.3.5	<i>Expressional theory of style</i>	34
1.3.6	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published in the 1970s</i>	35
1.3.7	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published in the 1980s</i>	38
1.3.8	<i>Theoretical works on style and stylistics published from 1990 to the present</i>	41
1.4	Present-day situation of Czech stylistics	45
2	British Theories of Style	46
2.1	British theoretical works	46
2.2	Present-day situation of British stylistics	60
2.3	Czech works on the stylistics of the English language	61

3	Comparison of Czech and British theories of style	66
3.1	Theoretical preliminaries	66
3.1.1	<i>Main aims of comparing languages</i>	66
3.1.2	<i>Contrastive approach and stylistics</i>	67
3.2	The methodology used for comparison	69
3.3	Definitions of style and stylistics	70
3.4	Relations of stylistics to other theoretical disciplines	72
3.4.1	<i>Stylistics and linguistics</i>	72
3.4.2	<i>Stylistics and theoretical disciplines investigating literary works of art</i>	73
3.4.3	<i>Stylistics and poetics, stylistics and rhetoric</i>	75
3.4.4	<i>Stylistics and sociolinguistics</i>	76
3.4.5	<i>Stylistics and psycholinguistics</i>	77
3.5	Stratification of stylistics	78
3.5.1	<i>Stratification of Czech stylistics</i>	78
3.5.2	<i>Stratification of British stylistics</i>	79
3.5.3	<i>Comparison of Czech and British stratifications of stylistics</i>	84
3.6	Functional concept in Czech and British theories of style	86
3.7	Mutual influences of Czech and British theories of style	91
4	Conclusions and possibilities for further research	95
4.1	Prospects of stylistics in general	95
4.2	Results emerging from the comparison of Czech and British 20th century theories of style	97
4.3	Possibilities for further research	99
	Bibliography	104

0 Introduction

Although general problems of style, stylistically marked/unmarked means of expression, metaphors or tropes appear as early as in Aristotle's works (mainly in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, but partly also in *Organon*), modern stylistics as an autonomous theoretical discipline was not established until the first decades of the 20th century. Undoubtedly it would be very tempting to observe and compare the development of this discipline in various countries from the classical period through the Middle Ages up to the present, but the aim of this work is more modest. Its purpose is to provide a contrastive view of 20th century Czech and British theories of style and stylistics in general.

The period dealt with was chosen intentionally – stylistics during the 20th century, in the context of both Czech and British scholarly discourses, developed into an autonomous theoretical discipline, linked with numerous branches of linguistics and literary theory (discourse analysis, textual syntax, pragmatics etc.).

To avoid possible confusions, it is necessary to start by defining basic terms – the adjectives *Czech* and *British* used in constructions such as *Czech and British theories of style*, *Czech and British stylistics*. There are no major difficulties with the adjective *Czech* – books on stylistics written in Czech usually deal with stylistics of the Czech language, are aimed at a Czech audience and were published in the Czech Republic or in the former Czechoslovakia.

On the other hand, numerous works on style and stylistics written in English vary by many features: language whose stylistic features are being investigated, the country of origin, the audience at which they are aimed etc. and referring to all of them as simply *British* would be misleading. The use of the attribute *British* is therefore limited in this work to works

- concerning stylistics of the English language,
- written in English and aimed primarily at an English-speaking audience,
- published in the United Kingdom and/or having a considerable theoretical influence on style investigations there.