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SANDRA JOSIPOVIĆ
University of Belgrade

THE ESSE-9 CONFERENCE AT AARHUS

The 9th Conference of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) was hosted by the Department of English of the University of Aarhus, Denmark, 22-26 August 2008. The ESSE conference is the largest regular gathering in English studies in Europe. The ESSE-9 attracted 450 participants. This ESSE conference was a major event in this part of Europe judging by the fact that the participants came from all over the world: Poland, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Switzerland, Romania, Russia, Italy, Spain, Serbia, Netherlands, Portugal, UK, Ireland, Belgium, Hungary, USA, Hong Kong, Algeria, Jordan, etc.

The first chapter of the University of Aarhus' history began in 1928 and ever since it has been developing steadily into one of the leading European universities. The buildings of the University of Aarhus are gathered in and around the University Park and through the years they have multiplied considerably and today they have the total floor area of 246,000 m². In a harmonious interplay with the rolling hills of the park, the uniform red brick buildings of the Nobel Park complex provided congenial and stimulating atmosphere throughout the proceedings. Various talks were assigned to rooms in different buildings in the Nobel Park complex which enabled participants to circulate freely between the sessions, meeting great number of people or strolling by the lake in the University Park. When presenting their papers participants respected the designated 15-20 minute limit and a fruitful discussion ensued afterwards. Doors were kept open in all the sessions, giving opportunity to people to shuffle between different talks without disturbing the proceedings. Dr Dominic Rainsford, the Chair of Academic Programme Committee and Local Organizing Committee, supervised everything and made sure that the proceedings ran smoothly and flawlessly. Many student assistants were always ready to step in to point the participants in the right direction or to provide them with laptops for the Power Point presentation or some other special technical equipment.

The conference participants had the opportunity to present their papers in: seminars, round tables or poster sessions. There were 47 seminars, 10 round tables and 24 poster sessions. Therefore the papers were very varied covering a wide range of topics. For example, seminar 1: Cross-linguistic and Cross-cultural Approaches to Phrasaeology focused on new theoretical perspectives and the latest developments in phrasaeology, including stylistic investigations in this field. Seminar 2 Censorship across Borders: The Reception of English Literature in the Twentieth-century Europe explored the official reception and censorship of many famous writers like Joyce and Orwell in the twentieth-century Europe, taking into account the social, political and

historical context and analysing the extent to which censorship was determined by national and international concerns. Seminar 3: The House of Fiction as the House of Life: Representation of the House in Literature and Culture, 1700-1900, explored the literary, visual and cultural representations of the house and the construction of the domestic space from divergent disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. Since from *Paradise Hall* to *Howard's End*, the house offers a deeply complex model of the world and may be taken as the shifting expression of a *zeitgeist*, the topics included the poetics of rooms, professional domesticity, the house as the landscape of existence, etc. As for the literature some other seminars included: Narrative Developments from Chaucer to Defoe; From Hell to Paradise: The Lure of the Occult and its Cultural Representation; Wholeness, Healing, and Spirituality: African American Women's Revisions; British Poetry and Pop; Continuation or Change? Literature in English in the New Millennium; Life Writing, Writing Lives; Towards the Bicentenary: New Bearings in European Dickens Criticism; Writing-Machines and Literature, etc. Regarding the language, some of the seminars included: Lingua Franca English in Use; The Impact of Lingua Franca English; Modern English Syntax: Historical and Comparative Approaches; Focusing on a Linguistics of Difference: Intercultural and Contrastive Approaches; Meaning Construction: Functionalist, Cognitivist and Constructionist, etc.

Round tables included the following interesting topics: Making Use of Electronic Collections: Problems of Selection and Description; What's So Special about Literature? Literariness, Cognition and Ethics revisited; EL Domains: Losses or Gains?; Britain After Blair; Ideology and Metaphor, etc.

The poster sessions ranged from: The 'Gospel of Work and Wealth' in the Catholic and the Protestant Economic Discourse to Mythological and Religious Influences on Tolkien's Middle-Earth.

Five plenaries were given during the conference. On the first day of the conference we were honoured to hear Mark Turner, from the Case Western Reserve University, giving the lecture on 'Conceptual Blending in Language and Literature'. On the second day, Jenny Uglow, from the University of Warwick, delivered the lecture on 'Words and Pictures: Milton and Bunyan, Epic and Chapbook'. Nigel Fabb, from the University of Strathclyde, lectured on 'What Is a Line of Verse?' on the third day of the conference. On the fourth day of the conference, we were privileged to hear Steven Connor, from the University of London, talking about 'Thinking Things'. On the fifth day, Toril Moi, from the Duke University, gave lecture on 'Early Modernism? Reflections on British Literary History 1870-1914'.

The conference was crowned with an excursion to Rosenholm Castle and the conference dinner. The Castle is the home of the Rosenkrantz family, the very same one whose member was made one of the characters in Shakespeare's Hamlet. It was a custom for all the noble families of that time to send their offspring to travel around Europe to visit the most renowned universities and cities. One member of the Rosenkrantz family managed to visit London and allegedly met Shakespeare himself. This family still to this very day occupy one wing of the Castle. When everything is considered, the ESSE-9 was a very memorable event in both educational and cultural sense. Let's hope that all the organizers of the future ESSE conferences will live up to the standards set up in Aarhus, Denmark.