

The 6th Conference

From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria

Conference Report

Like its predecessors, the 6th Conference *From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria* was hosted by the University of Warsaw on 27th–29th of September 2017. The conference sessions were held in the Department of English Studies, conveniently situated within walking distance of Warsaw Central Station. Professors Grażyna Bystydzieńska and Emma Harris supervised the work of the executive committee, including Prof. Dorota Babilas, Prof. Paweł Rutkowski and Dr. Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko.

The conference has a ten-year-old history. Thus, its 2017 edition was a jubilee one. Its framework is succinctly described on the website in the following way:

From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria is a biennial conference organized by the British Studies Centre of the University of Warsaw since 2007. The conference title highlights the timespan that is covered and provides a framework for the highly varied perceptions that contribute to a picture of the great themes that link the 18th and the 19th centuries.

Over the ten years, it has managed to attract such distinguished keynote speakers as: Professors Philip Allingham(Lakehead University), John Barrell (University of York), Roger Ebbatson (Roehampton University), Herbert Grabes (Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen), Sarah Harrison (King's College, Cambridge), Michael Hollington (University of Kent), Jacek Holówka (University of Warsaw), Donna Landry (University of Kent), Nigel Leask (University of Glasgow), Paddy Lyons (University of Glasgow), Alan Macfarlane (King's College, Cambridge), Anthony Mandal (Cardiff University), Oleg Polyakov (Vyatka State University of the Humanities), Adam S. Potkay (The College of William and Mary in Virginia), Iorwerth Prothero (University of Manchester), Natalia Soloviova (Lomonosov State University of Moscow), Brian Southam (Jane Austen Society), Jeremy Tambling, University of Manchester.

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The conference has developed its publication series, which features five volumes of proceedings.

The conference began with the conferment of a volume of twenty-eight scholarly papers dedicated to professor Grażyna Bystydzińska, written by her colleagues, pupils and friends, celebrating her scholarly achievement, her contribution to the advancement of the study of English literature in Poland and her involvement in the organization of the QAQV.

The conference was graced by the presence of three distinguished guest speakers.

Ann Heilman from School of English, Communication and Philosophy at the University of Cardiff, author of such books as, among others, *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing* (2007), *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (2010), *George Moore: Influence and Collaboration* (2014), *Neo-/Victorian Biographilia and James Miranda Barry: A Study in Transgender and Transgenre* (to be published in 2018). In her keynote speech ("Tell me your secret doctor James": Gender-crossing, life writing and the case of James Barry'), she presented the case of James Miranda Barry, who, born Margaret Ann Bulkley, lived his/her entire adult life as a man and pursued a successful career of a surgeon. In the speech, professor Heilman addressed the issues of biography and biofiction as well as transgenderism and transgenre.

Paddy Lyons, senior lecturer in English literature at School of Critical Studies, University of Glasgow, specialist in the poetry and drama of the Restoration, literary theory and translation, co-editor of *Romantic Ireland: From Tone to Gonne; Fresh Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (2013), spoke on 'Alexander Pope and animal rights.' Against the background of eighteenth-century attitudes to animals, he discussed Pope's changing views on animal rights in *Windsor Forest* and *Essay on Man*.

Jarlath Killeen, Associate Professor, Academic Liason Officer for the School of English, author of five monographs including two on Oscar Wilde: *The Faiths of Oscar Wilde* (2005) and *The Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde* (2007) - and three on Gothic literature: *Gothic Ireland* (2005), *Gothic Literature, 1825-1914* (2009), *The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction* (2013), talked, very much in a Gothic spirit, about 'Cleaning up the Dead: Vampires, Sanitation and Corpse Culture in Victorian England.'

The papers were presented by forty participants in two parallel, thematically arranged sections, covering a wide spectrum of eighteenth

and nineteenth-century related topics, including poetry, fiction, culture and the new media. The most richly represented and explored was Victorian literature, with essays devoted to such diverse writers as Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Bleak House*, *The Cricket of the Hearth*), Anthony Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, George Eliot, Sheridan Le Fanu, Arthur Conan Doyle, Elizabeth Gaskell, Robert L. Stevenson, John Henry Newman and John Ruskin. The earlier fiction papers dealt with the works by Daniel Defoe and Walter Scott, Frances Burney, Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, Charles Lucas, and Mary Shelley. The few 'poetic' papers discussed the works of Alexander Pope, William Blake, William Wordsworth and Oscar Wilde. Uniquely, drama was represented by a study of Roman plots in John Dennis's tragedies. Neo-Victorian literature and steam-punk featured in papers dealing with the modern depiction of Jack the Ripper and Steven Hunt's *The Court of the Air*.

Amongst the most fascinating cultural cum historical issues tackled in the presentations were the rogue art of William Hogarth, the Pre-Raphaelite fashion inspirations, representations of young Queen Victoria in film and in Gaetano Donizetti's operas, Polish-Irish relations, the nineteenth-century social settlement movement, landscaping Irishness, sport in Victorian society, literary echoes of Anglo-Swedish relations, and predictions of war in late-Victorian speculative writing. One other highlight of the conference was the Translation workshop 'Fun with a Fairy-Tale: W. M. Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* and its Polish Versions,' prepared and run by professor **Izabela Szymańska**, the University of Warsaw.

Delightful intellectual diversion was provided by *The Cheerful Hamlets* – a students' of English amateur theatrical group, whose performance of *Freshwater* by Virginia Woolf, her only play, entertained the conference participants at the end of the first day.

The conference was a genuine success. It provided a forum for an exchange of ideas concerning the wide range of topics discussed. Moreover, it was an inspiring event for its participants and a wonderful social event. We are looking forward to the next *From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria* conference to be held in 2019.

Anna Kędra-Kardela, Aleksandra Kędziarska