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The second Brno conference on the theory of verse

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THE SECOND BRNO CONFERENCE ON THE THEORY OF VERSE

The Second Versological Conference was held in the Hall of the Philosophical Faculty of the Purkyně University in Brno from 18th to 20th October 1966, and was attended by participants from abroad. Once more the Conference was organized by the Department of Czech Literature and Literary Studies at the Philosophical Faculty of the Purkyně University with the co-operation of the Society for Literary Studies attached to the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The Chairman of the Conference was Prof. Josef Hrabák, Dr.Sc., the Secretary was Doc. Jiří Levý, Dr.Sc.

In distinction to the First Conference (13th—16th May, 1964), which was intended above all to examine the field, and which was therefore planned comparatively extensively — its theme was actually all the "current questions of verse" — the present occasion saw an intensification brought about by the planned narrowing-down of the problems. The subject-matter dealt with was selected to permit concentration on two questions, whose solution requires the widest possible exchange of opinion: the semantics of verse and the mathematical analysis of verse. Since these themes were not chosen by chance or accident, but arose from the real, living requirements of research, the Conference became not merely a review of work done, but also a gathering where problems could be worked out, further tasks indicated and ways sought to carry them out and thus, too, to the planning of further versological work.

Although the fundamental subjects of discussion were the semantics of verse and its mathematical analysis, the Conference did not give an impression of being either narrow or abstract, since around these basic themes there grouped themselves further thematic spheres, whether dealing with comparative versology and the structure of verse, or with some special questions of Czech and Slovak verse. Thus the papers given did not offer merely general statements or postulates, but also concrete material.

A characteristic feature of the Conference was the wide field from which the participants came. Not only representatives of all the Philosophical Faculties in Czechoslovakia and of the Institutes of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences took part in the work, but also research workers from abroad, from Yugoslavia (Sv. Petrović, Zagreb), the German Democratic Republic (H. Raab, Rostock), the German Federal Republic (H. Lüdtke, Freiburg im Br., and I. Mahnken, Göttingen), Poland (M. Džuska, Cracow; Z. Kopczyńska, Warsaw; M. R. Mayenowa, Warsaw; L. Pszcołowska, Warsaw; J. Woronczak, Wrocław) and the U.S.S.R. (J. Lotman, Tartu; Z. Mincova, Tartu; G. Gachechiladze from Tbilisi could not come, but put the text of his lecture at the disposal of the participants of the Conference).

The discussion at the Conference convincingly proved the ever-growing interest in the problems of versification on an international scale. The necessity and usefulness of exchange of opinions and encounter of standpoints among scholars of various countries again appeared and this was also confirmed by the discussion and especially by the lively exchange of views in smaller groups formed ad hoc for special interests. The participants parted company with the wish for the continuation of versological conferences in Brno. The need for an intensive comparative study of Slavonic verse became especially apparent.

In this volume all those contributions are published that were sent to the editors within six months after the conclusion of the Conference. They are arranged and combined into groups in the same sequence in which they were delivered, or in which their delivery was planned. Owing to lack of space it was unfortunately not possible to record the discussion.

The editorial work on the volume was entrusted to Doc. Levý, but his unexpected and premature death on 17th January 1967 wrested the pen from his hand and the editorial work was therefore assumed by Doc. dr Karel Palas, CSc.

JOSEF HRABÁK