

# MEDIEVAL FANTASY SYMPOSIUM

International Conference  
Mielno-Unieście, 20-23 September 2020

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Dear Colleague,

You are cordially invited to the eighth Medieval Fantasy Symposium, organised by the Faculty of Humanities at the Koszalin University of Technology, which will be held in Mielno-Unieście between 20 and 23 September 2020. Medieval Fantasy Symposia aim at bringing together specialists in the areas of medieval and fantasy literature, in particular those who seek to find cultural connections between the numerous supernatural elements in the literary output of the Middle Ages (e.g. *Beowulf*, Norse and Celtic mythologies, the Arthurian cycle) and modern tales in the fantasy genre which are set in different quasi-medieval worlds (e.g. *The Lord of the Rings* or *A Song of Ice and Fire*). The scope of the symposia is not, however, strictly limited to the world of literature, as it also embraces the many fields of artistic expression including the fine and cinematic arts. In conjunction with the conference, the Second Inklings Seminar will be organised, an annual event of the newly-founded Polish Inklings Society *INKLIGATAL*.

## “WITH MIRTH AND LAUGHTER LET WRINKLES COME”: NEW PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES TO HUMOUR IN MEDIEVAL AND MEDIEVAL-INSPIRED LITERATURE

It is proverbial – and not for that reason any less true – that laughter is the best medicine, one which has practically no side-effects, complications and intolerance reactions (barring, of course, those that could be expected from the people with no sense of humour or a healthy distance to themselves). It may not stop the actual process of ageing, but it can certainly affect the quality of life, make it more meaningful and fulfilling, particularly when the feeling of mirth comes with the hope which transcends the boundaries of our earthly existence. Should then the wrinkles ultimately come – and come they will, regardless of one’s age, livelihood and inner spirit – let them come “with mirth and laughter” (to use the words of Shakespeare’s Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice*), the *sine qua non*, as it seems, of a good and upright life.

Since all of our regular participants (as well as those who, we hope, will join our merry company this year) “value food and cheer and song above hoarded gold” (this time quoting Tolkien’s Thorin in *The Hobbit*), it has been decided that the eighth Medieval Fantasy Symposium will be dedicated to the various aspects and manifestations of literary (as well as extratextual) humour. It is, therefore, expected to cover all sorts of texts of undisputedly medieval, or even pre-medieval, origin (myths, poems, sagas, legend, chronicles etc.) and post-medieval fantasy (in particular, the works of Tolkien and Lewis) in which humour plays a central or at least significant role. The main thematic areas will include the following:

1. The presence, form and purpose of humour in literature, from late Antiquity through to the Middle Ages and beyond.
2. The humorous and absurd world of medieval marginalia, scribal doodles and extratextual comments from the copyists.
3. The use of comedy, satire and irony to highlight the social, political as well as ethical issues and attitudes in the Middle Ages.
4. The bawdy puns and the more subtle sexual allusions in late medieval texts (Chrétien de Troyes, Chaucer, the *Gawain*-Poet *et al.*).
5. The philological jests, puns, wordplays and private jokes in the literary and non-literary works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.
6. The sources, strategies and manifestations of humour in the works of modern fantasy writers (Pratchett, Sapkowski *et al.*).

Individual papers on any topic within the above-mentioned (or closely-related) areas should take 20 minutes, followed by a 10-minute discussion. Participants are invited to submit their proposals ([medieval.fantasy.symposium@gmail.com](mailto:medieval.fantasy.symposium@gmail.com)) in the form of 200-word abstracts by 31 May 2020. Notices of acceptance will be sent in mid-June. Selected texts relating to the works of Tolkien, Lewis and the other Inklings will be published in the forthcoming academic journal *Subcreatio*. The other papers could be collected into a separate volume (medieval literature) or come out in the academic journal *Symbolae Europaeae* (fantasy).

The conference will be held in the beautiful seaside resort of Mielno-Unieście, situated right between the Baltic Sea and Lake Jamno. The conference rooms are equipped with audio-visual facilities, including data projectors and laptop computers. The conference fee – covering the cost of participation, accommodation, food and drink, conference materials, coffee breaks, evening reception, and future publication – will be 130 EUR/550 PLN (110 EUR/450 PLN for PhD students).

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