

MEDIEVAL FANTASY SYMPOSIUM

International Conference
Mielno-Unieście, 23-26 August 2018

Call for Papers

Dear Colleague,

You are cordially invited to the sixth Medieval Fantasy Symposium, organised by Koszalin University of Technology, which will be held in Unieście between 23 and 26 August 2018. 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, Arthurian cycle) and modern tales in the fantasy genre which are set in different quasi-medieval worlds (as in *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.

“Life’s but a walking shadow”: Perceptions of and Reflections on Transience in Medieval and Medieval-Inspired Literature

In the well-known passage from Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, an anonymous advisor to King Edwin, the early seventh-century ruler of Northumbria, reflects on the words of the Roman missionary and future saint Paulinus by comparing human life with the *adveniens unus passerum domum citissimus pervolans* “swift flight of a sparrow through the house” (bk. II, ch. XIII). Some ten centuries later, sensing his imminent doom, William Shakespeare’s Macbeth chimes with the nameless Northumbrian, likening life to a “brief candle” and adding that it is “but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more” (II.5.23-6). Human existence, it seems, is thus, on the one hand, envisaged as a mere phase in one’s progress towards the afterlife in Heaven (the sparrow flying out of the house) and, on the other, it is reduced to a self-contained span whose post mortem whereabouts can never be known (candle, heard no more). This way or another, the rite of passage for all human beings is, inevitably, the end of one’s earthly existence, a recurrent theme in the world of literature, from the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* to Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*.

This year’s conference will focus on various aspects (cultural, religious, political, intellectual and other) traditionally associated with death. It could therefore cover all sorts of texts of undisputedly medieval origin (poems, sagas, chronicles, epitaphs etc.) and post-medieval fantasy (including historical fantasy) whose principal theme is the loss of life or which at least in some way revolve around the question of mortality. The main thematic areas will include:

1. traditions of mourning, coping with the loss of a loved one;
2. heroic death in combat and its various cultural implications;
3. burial traditions and practices, sacred ground issues;
4. cultural and mythological depictions of death;
5. journeys to the underworld and imaginings of afterlife;
6. immortality, sanctity, resurrection and re-embodiment.

Individual papers on any topic within the abovementioned areas should take 20 minutes, followed by 10-minute discussion. Participants are invited to submit their proposals (medieval.fantasy.symposium@gmail.com) in the form of 200-word abstracts by 15 May 2018. Notices of acceptance will be sent by the end of May. Selected papers will be published in a conference proceedings volume.

In addition to two plenary lectures, a number of sessions, a field trip and panel discussions are planned.

The conference will be held in the beautiful seaside resort of Mielno-Unieście, situated right between the Baltic Sea and Lake Jamno. All the 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 120 EUR/490 PLN (95 EUR/390 PLN for PhD students).

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