

## Medieval English Theatre Conference 2024 CFP: **Dramatic Margins**

Saturday 6 April 2024

The 2024 Medieval English Theatre Conference will be held in Newcastle and hosted by Dr James Cummings. The theme will be:

### **Dramatic Margins**

In some medieval manuscripts texts are surrounded by rich decoration that enhances their prestige; in others texts seem curiously juxtaposed with comical or grotesque figures that riot in their margins. The margins of medieval play texts may include paratexts like stage directions, that offer clues as to how plays were performed, or more philosophical or theological notes that indicate how plays were read.

At a more conceptual level, at the margins of what we term 'medieval theatre' are various para-dramatic activities including rituals and processions, calendar customs, and festive games. The participants in dramatic and para-dramatic activities were sometimes mainstream and sometimes on the margins of society. Similarly, the dramatic narratives of much medieval theatre thematise interactions, distinctions and conflicts between marginal and central groups, individuals and spaces. And at a professional level, the study or teaching of medieval theatre may increasingly seem like a marginal activity in many university departments and in the English syllabus.

Margins may be spaces of disempowerment but may also be spaces of freedom. Margins can be found represented in critical theory and in many research frameworks, approaches and lenses, and these can push, question or reevaluate boundaries of different kinds. What is the relationship between the marginal and the mainstream, the marginalia and the main text?

Papers could address the following topics, amongst others:

1. Marginalia in the manuscripts of medieval plays
2. Paratexts of early printed plays
3. The role of digital manuscripts in drama research
4. 'Hybrid manuscripts': can a text be a performance?
5. The theatricality of para-dramatic activities
6. Linguistic boundaries of records of drama and popular entertainments
7. Teaching medieval theatre at the margins of a syllabus
8. Social margins and medieval theatre

Papers should be no more than 20 minutes in length. There are no parallel sessions.

To offer a paper, please submit a short (one paragraph) abstract and a brief (one sentence) biographical note, by **November 17th 2023**, via this form: <https://forms.gle/wv57uKtkiXsJN49P8>.