

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
announces a Lecture

by

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Script as Character

Current discussions of the ‘empowerment of physical letters’ have adopted the terms graphicacy and performativity, but have seldom explored medieval ideas about this topic. The word character was used in antiquity and the early middle ages to convey how the shape of a letter conveyed a particular sound. But it was more than a grammatical term: it was used to denote a brand for slaves and animals, and to describe the mark of the Beast in the Apocalypse, and other monograms. In this paper I shall examine the various meanings of character, and the ways in which it became a key term in Augustine’s discussion of baptism and Paschasius Radbertus’s discussion of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Character is a term which expresses the complexity of written forms and provided a model for discussions of identity. Bringing the term character into our investigations of the power of writing allows us to engage with medieval thought in all of its complexity.

Thursday, 19 January 2017 at 6 pm
Room 0001, CSMC