

## Openness in Medieval Culture

This interdisciplinary symposium interrogates the presuppositions of open/closed distinctions in Medieval culture with a view to exploring the semantic field of openness through such related notions as inclusivity, vulnerability, unfinishedness, permeability, excess, profanity. These conceptualizations of openness in the period have had profound influence in a wide array of disciplines such as literature, material culture, hermeneutics, religion, linguistics, history, and history of art.

What does it mean to speak of an open text, an open body, an open mind, an open cosmos in the period? What kind of creative tension was there between the privileged spaces of the monastic cloister, the walled city, the moated castle, and their environments? What role did images of fluidity play in conceptualizing non-binary frames of reference? How did high medieval literature negotiate the exclusive experiences of the court, mystical excess, and sexuality with rhetorical strategies of inclusion toward a broader audience? How did manuscript culture and scholastic hermeneutics contribute to opening up texts to interpretation? How did texts themselves welcome uncertainty, open-endedness, and unfinishedness in their materiality and form? Interdisciplinary conversations will aim to open up channels of communication between the Middle Ages and present discourse. Can such present ideas as open source, open access, open education, open society, and open relationship be brought into productive dialogue with conceptualizations and practices of Medieval Studies? Can openness be constituted as critical method?

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An ICI Berlin and Somerville College,  
Oxford Event

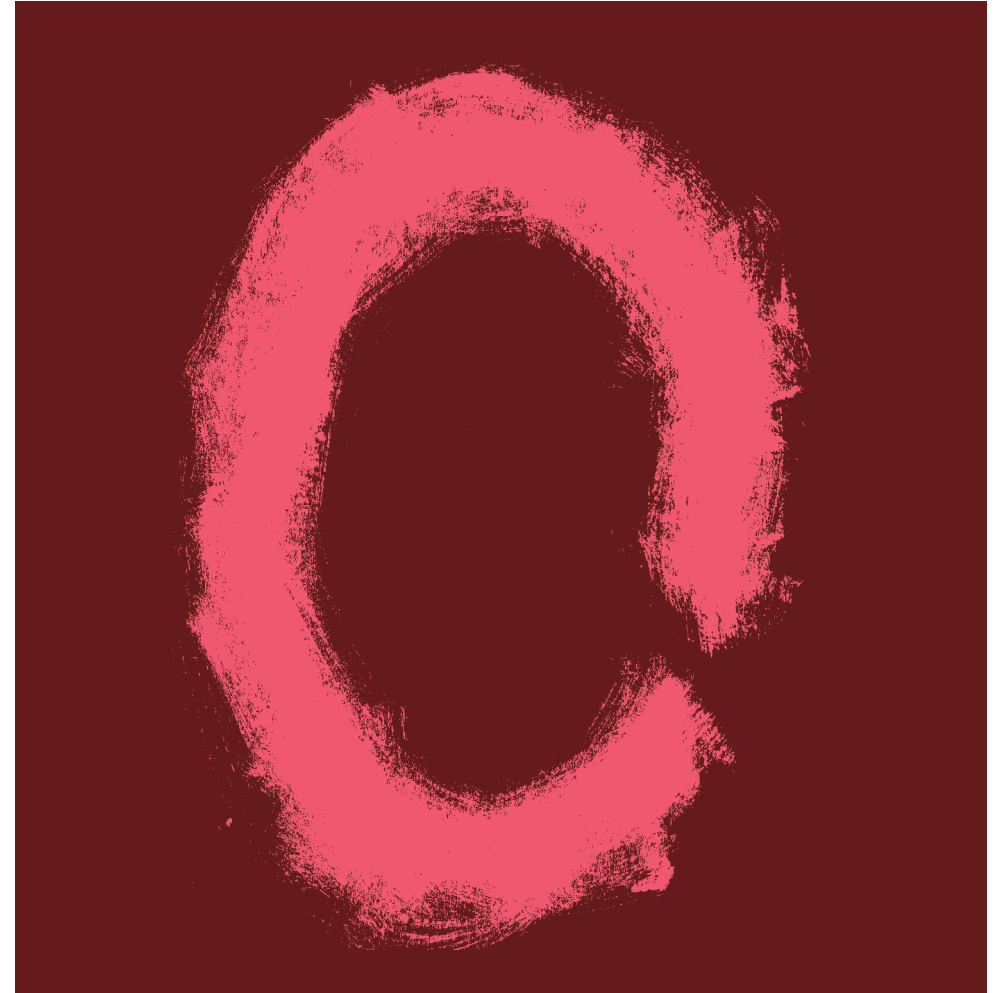


Somerville  
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BERLIN KULTURLABOR  
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## Symposium

27–28 June 2019, in English



# Openness in Medieval Culture

Organized by  
Manuele Gragnolati  
and Almut Suerbaum

**Programme: Thursday,  
27 June 2019**

- 9:30 Morning Coffee
- 9:45 Welcome by Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum
- 10:00 **Ed Wareham**  
Opening the Gates: The Circulation of Texts and Images in Northern German Convents in the Later Middle Ages
- 10:30 **Oren Margolis**  
The Book Half Open: Humanist Friendship in Hans Holbein's Portrait of Hermann von Wedigh III
- 11:00 **Almut Suerbaum**  
Including the Excluded: Strategies of Opening up in Late Medieval Religious Writing
- 11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break
- 12:00 **Francesco Giusti**  
An Interminable Work? The Openness of Augustine's *Confessions*
- 12:30 **Pippa Byrne**  
What Was Open in / about Early Scholastic Thought?
- 13:00 **Mary MacRobert**  
Early Church Slavonic as a Type of Open Tradition
- 13.30 – 15.00 Lunch break
- 15:00 **Manuele Gragnolati and Francesca Southerden**  
Becoming Laurel: Openness and Intensity in Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*
- 15:30 **Nicolò Crisafi**  
Open-Ended and Unfinished: The Vulnerable Dante of the *Commedia*
- 16:00 **Monika Otter**  
Merlin's Open Mind: Madness and Knowledge in the *Vita Merlini*

- 16:30 – 17:00 Coffee break
- 17:00 Discussion of Giorgio Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal*  
Moderated by **Damiano Sacco**
- 18:30 **Zairong Xiang**  
*Kaiqiao*: On Porosity

**Friday,  
28 June 2019**

- 10:00 Morning Coffee
- 10:30 **Benjamin Thompson**  
The Monastic Enclosure
- 11:00 **Johannes Wolf**  
The Point of Compassion in *The book of Margery Kempe*
- 11:30 **Annie Sutherland**  
Becoming Open in Anchoritic Literature
- 12:00 – 12:30 Coffee break
- 12:30 **Brian McMahon**  
Speech-Wrangling: Shutting Up and Shutting Out the Oral Tradition in Some Icelandic Saga Manuscripts
- 13:00 **Alastair Matthews**  
The Multiple Languages of Medieval Denmark:  
Towards a More Open Literary Historiography
- 13:30 **Jonathan Morton**  
In One Hole and Out Another: The Sexual Politics of Psychic wInterpenetration in Richard de Fournival's *Bestiary of Love*