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Bryan C. Keene, ed., *Toward a Global Middle Ages: Encountering the World through Illuminated Manuscripts*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2019. ix + 285 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, and index. \$60.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781606065983.

Review by Carol Symes, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In January of 2019, an international team of researchers—archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, physicians, and scientists—published the results of their extraordinary findings in the journal *Science Advances*.^[1] Excavations at Dalheim, Germany, had uncovered a small medieval monastery complex whose cemetery housed the remains of a middle-aged woman with lapis lazuli pigment embedded in her dental calculus. The assembled expertise of these scholars enabled them to determine that this woman, who had died between 997 and 1162 CE, had been an active participant in illuminated manuscript production at this modest church, founded in the ninth century and dedicated to St. Peter. Not only did the very existence of a female monastery on this obscure site and at this time come as a surprise (the earliest extant documentation of it dates from 1244), but also the existence of a manuscript atelier sophisticated enough to use the ultramarine blue derived from this precious mineral testified that the artist was both talented and famous enough to attract wealthy commissions. Moreover, given that lapis lazuli can be found only in one region of Afghanistan, this is very early evidence of its availability in northern Europe, via the expanding trade networks of the eleventh century. Although there could be a few other potential explanations for the pigment's presence in the woman's mouth—the preparation of paint by an artist's assistant, its use in a form of lapidary medicine, or the devotional practice of osculation (the kissing of illuminated images)—the most plausible is that it was caused by the artist's periodic licking of her brush in order to create a finer point: a practice described in later artistic handbooks.

The implications of this scenario are explosive. How many other unknown female book illuminators could there have been? Is it possible that women's involvement in the copying and decorating of deluxe medieval manuscripts has been grossly underestimated? And how else might we use the traces of luxury materials (including exotic skins, minerals, and textiles) to study the interconnectivity of the medieval globe through the books that still exist, or those that we know to have existed but that no longer survive? For example, what became of the codex commissioned by Sindold, the *amarius* (librarian) of Reinhardsbrunn (a men's monastery), from "sister N" at the women's monastery of Lippoldsburg—and at about the same time when the unknown artist at Dalheim was working, just 70 kilometers away? As extant letters (datable to 1140-1168) witness, Sinbold had sent enough parchment for a book of 384 pages, as well as pigments, leather, and silk for its making.

This recent and fascinating discovery could not have been included in the volume under review, but it exemplifies the larger mission advanced by Bryan C. Keene and his collaborators in *Toward a Global Middle Ages: Encountering the World through Medieval Manuscripts*. The generous framing of this essay collection encourages contributors and readers alike to pool their expertise and to push the boundaries of disciplines and epistemologies; to study books as material objects and agents of exchange, as well as repositories of words and images; to define “the book” broadly in relation to its uses; and—crucially—to account for the fungibility and fragility of books that no longer survive to witness their creation and circulation. Moreover, it insists on regarding medieval Afro-Eurasia as a holistic space, while showing how much can be gained by studying coeval codicological practices in all parts of the globe.

It is about a decade now since the global turn in medieval studies began accelerating, and this volume is another indication that the revolution has gained traction. In 2011, my own Program in Medieval Studies became one of the first to embrace a global perspective. In 2012, following a successful international conference featuring many of the scholars who have since emerged as leaders in this renewed field, we began to lay the plans for the first peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to its interdisciplinary praxis: *The Medieval Globe*, launched in 2014–15 with an inaugural (and prescient) double issue on the Black Death as the first global pandemic, edited by Monica H. Green and published in both Open Access and book formats.^[2] Now in its seventh year, *TMG* is published biannually and features both a miscellany of the best work to be submitted and an annual thematic issue. Many of these have been devoted to topics also addressed by this volume, notably *Reassessing the Global Turn in Medieval Art History*, edited by Christina Normore (*TMG* 3.2, 2017), and *Seals—Making and Marking Connections across the Medieval World*, edited by Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak (*TMG* 4.1, 2018). In 2019, the same year when *Toward a Global Middle Ages* appeared, the Medieval Academy of America’s annual meeting was also global in scope.^[3]

While there was initially some well-founded concern that global medieval studies would amount to little more than warmed-over Eurocentrism, these and allied endeavors—as well as the many forthcoming initiatives—have shown what can be achieved when scholars of all world regions reach across frontiers.^[4] In this case, Keene and his colleagues’ movement “toward a global Middle Ages” (the phrase is rather too often repeated and placed in quotation marks) very effectively models some of the methodologies, approaches, and scales at which this revolution can work. The volume, beautifully curated and lavishly illustrated (a bargain at the price), is divided into four sections, each with an erudite introduction by Keene. The first, “Glimpsing a Global Middle Ages,” surveys ways of mapping and visualizing the medieval world; it also considers the special challenges of codicological study in regions where repositories of writing call for a broader category of manuscripts (e.g., Byron Ellsworth Hamann’s “micro-history of the [Mesoamerican] instruments of seeing that most closely conform to Old World books”), or where climactic conditions do not favor their survival (Alex J. West on “Manuscripts and the Medieval Tropics”). The following section emphasizes “The Intermediality of ‘the Book’: Bound, Rolled, and Folded Textual Objects” and was my personal favorite, given its focus on the materiality and interactivity of medieval texts, and the embodied ways of accessing them. The third section takes up the question of “Identity: Finding One’s Place in the Medieval World” through close analysis of individual illuminated texts or even single images—as in Roland Betancourt’s sensitive reading of intersectional racial and nonbinary gender identities in a Byzantine depiction of the Ethiopian eunuch encountered by Philip in the Acts of the Apostles

(8:26-40). Finally, “Itineraries from the Atlantic to the Pacific: Travel, Circulation, and Exchange,” looks at the ways that manuscripts record, perform, and/or participate in pilgrimage, migration, and transmission.

The very success of this book prompts me to wonder how we might also study medieval global processes through the analysis of humbler texts that do not catch the eye so arrestingly—for example, Habtamu Mengistie Tegegne’s study of a gospel book (currently in the church of Tädbabä Maryam in northern Ethiopia) that contains the sole surviving copy of an edict issued by King Gälawdéwos (r. 1540-59) in 1548, banning the traffic in his Christian subjects and especially their sale to Arab owners. On the one hand, this was a response to immediate developments related to the ever-growing global demand for African slaves coupled with an ongoing regional conflict between the Ethiopian kingdom and the sultanate of Adal, which was creating the conditions for the capture of Christians and their sale to buyers in southern Arabia and South Asia. On the other, the text of the edict, in Ge’ez, testifies to the centuries-long blending of legal precepts drawn from the Romano-Byzantine, Islamic, and Coptic Egyptian traditions. It is a fascinating artifact, but not an attractive one. [5] Or take the scrap of waste paper on which a Jewish merchant from North Africa, Abraham Ben Yiju, made up a list of all the belongings he was shipping from his home on India’s Malabar coast back to Fustat, after two decades’ trading in the 1130s and 40s. Written in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic transliterated into Hebrew characters), it is notched and worn with use, and was evidently scribbled on the merchant’s knee or some other unstable support. And yet this unlovely, diminutive document opens up a whole world of medieval goods and the values attached to them, as Elizabeth Lambourn brilliantly shows in her study of *Abraham’s Luggage* and “the social life of things” that circulated in and beyond the Indian Ocean World. [6] Indeed, few of the manuscript fragments, in their hundreds of thousands, that have found their way to modern libraries from the geniza of Old Cairo have any claims to beauty or extrinsic value, and yet they are individual and collective witnesses to a global (or, at least, Afro-Eurasian) Middle Ages.

So, in addition to examining medieval luxury manuscripts through global lenses, we can attend to those that have disappeared from view—like the oeuvre of the anonymous female artist working with exotic materials at Dalheim. And we can also extend our inquiry to textual objects that are not objets d’art but were, nevertheless, products of global medieval processes. Keene and his colleagues have helped to map that landscape, and have drawn our attention to its untapped riches.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Timothy Potts, “Director’s Foreword”

Bryan C. Keene, “Prologue”

Bryan C. Keene, “Introduction: Manuscripts and Their Outlook on the World”

Morgan Conger, “A Timeline for a Global Middle Ages: Linear Time and Modes of Remembering the Past”

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Alka Patel, "Stories and Pictures from All the World: South Asian Book Arts from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century"

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Eyob Derillo, "Traveling Medicine: Medieval Ethiopian Amulet Scrolls and Practitioners' Handbooks"

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Part Three: Identity: Finding One's Place in the Medieval World

Roland Betancourt, "Imperial Brutality: Racial Difference and the Intersectionality of the Ethiopian Eunuch"

Kristen Collins and Bryan C. Keene, "Mobilizing the Collection: Teaching Beyond the (Medieval) Canon with Museum Objects"

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Kaiqi Hua, "Horses, Arrows, and Trebuchets: Picturing the Mongol Military Campaign in Eurasia"

Mark Cruse, "Novelty and Diversity in Illustrations of Marco Polo's *Description of the World*"

Alexandra Kaczynski, "Visualizing Byzantine and Islamic Objects in Two Fifteenth-Century Francophone Manuscripts"

Part Four: Itineraries from the Atlantic to the Pacific: Travel, Circulation, and Exchange

Jill Caskey, “Transplants and Transformations in a Global Middle Ages”

Michelle H. Craig, “Manuscripts, Faith, and Trade across the Medieval Sahara”

Tushara Bindu Gude, “Narrative Shifts: The Life of the Buddha in Palm-Leaf Manuscripts”

Elizabeth A. Eisenberg and Melanie Holcomb, “Travelling off the Page: Bringing the Voyage to Life in Hebrew Poetry and Paintings”

Rheagan Eric Martin, “Peregrinations of Parchment and Pewter: Manuscripts and Mental Pilgrimage”

James Cuno, “Epilogue: Global History and the Art Museum”

NOTES

[1] Anita Radini et al., “Medieval Women’s Early Involvement in Manuscript Production Suggested by Lapis Lazuli Identification in Dental Calculus,” *Science Advances* 5.1 (09 January 2019), DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aau7126 <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/1/eaau7126> (accessed 3 January 2020). The team’s historians were Alison Beach, now at the University of St Andrews, and Michael McCormick of Harvard University.

[2] *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, ed. Monica H. Green, *The Medieval Globe* 1 (2014) can be accessed online at https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/medieval_globe/1/ or purchased from the publisher: https://arc-humanities.org/?s=pandemic&product_cat=0&book_author=0&post_type=product. Information about past and forthcoming issues of *The Medieval Globe* can be found at <https://arc-humanities.org/our-series/arc/tmg/> and via ProjectMUSE: <https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/749>.

[3] The program can be found at <https://www.medievalacademy.org/page/2019Meeting>.

[4] Examples include *Medieval Mississippians: The Cahokian World*, ed. Timothy R. Pauketat and Susan M. Alt (School for Advanced Research Press, 2015); *The Global Middle Ages in Past & Present* 238, issue supplement 13 (November 2018); the new *Journal of Medieval Worlds*, launched by the University of California Press in 2019; the exhibition and catalogue *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa*, ed. Kathleen Bickford Berzock (The Bock Museum and Princeton University Press, 2019); and the upcoming online course on “Medieval Africa and Africans” for K-12 educators, sponsored by the National Humanities Center and the Medieval Academy of America: <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07ehbykfao8ae9ba81&llr=kb46kgcab>.

[5] Habtamu Mengistie Tegegne, “The Edict of King Gälawdéwos against the Illegal Slave Trade in Christians: Ethiopia, 1548,” in *Legal Worlds and Legal Encounters on the Medieval Globe*, ed. Elizabeth Labourn, *The Medieval Globe* 2.2 (2016): 73-114, photograph on page 74.

[6] Elizabeth Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage: A Social Life of Things in the Medieval Indian Ocean World* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

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