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Emperor's New Clothes? Using medieval history to  
reflect on the globalization paradigm

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to give a face to the ‘globalization paradigm’ at work in some global histories and to recognize similarities between this meta-narrative coordination of space and time, and older meta-narratives of the world. Narrating the space and time of the world in order to understand and represent its coherent meaning is not a new phenomenon. This paper looks to medieval history to show that despite claims that the history of globalization is unique to modernity, the meta-narrative is familiar to narrations of the space and time of the world produced in the Middle Ages, before the supposed advent of globalization. The aim is to challenge the assumption that the globalization paradigm is a modern phenomenon, since this assumption conceals links to old historiographies and epistemologies. It suggests that medieval history can offer a critical reflection on existing global histories as well as opening up new directions for the future of the field. In addition to questioning the ‘modernity’ of the globalization paradigm medieval history acts as a reminder of the historically constructed nature of global concepts and the need to think about the ‘globe’ as a diversely narrated and constructed subject rather than a singular-empirical object. The paper looks to the European Middle Ages to reflect on the politics of conceptualisations and historicisations of the ‘globe’, and to show that pluralities are not only produced beyond Europe but within it, and this is a tactical-historiographical move to break away from the contours of pre-existing critiques from the fields of postcolonial and Latin American studies.

**Keywords**

Global history, medieval history, historiography, globalization, universal history

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## Introduction

Lynn Hunt recently observed that the historiographical turn of global history has been characterised by what she termed the ‘globalization paradigm’. While not all global histories operate within this globalization paradigm,<sup>1</sup> its scope and implications are significant enough to warrant further historiographical analysis. Hunt contended that the ‘globalization paradigm’ stepped into the vacuum created by the collapse of earlier paradigms, and the deconstructions, or limitations, of earlier social and cultural theories, such as Marxism, modernization, the Annales school, and identity politics. Hunt followed this with the warning question: ‘is globalization a new paradigm for historical explanation that replaces those criticized by cultural theories? Or is it a Trojan horse that threatens to bring back old paradigms rather than offering a truly new one?’<sup>2</sup> Protagonists of the globalization paradigm have interpreted globalization as an exclusively modern affair, and yet if we look at the histories of the world produced in Europe in the Middle Ages we find many similarities.<sup>3</sup> This article addresses the question recently raised by Hunt from the perspective of the European Middle Ages. The perspective of [the European] medieval history has three functions in this paper. Firstly it explores the connections between the globalization paradigm and the meta-narratives of the world produced in the Middle Ages; this challenges the temporal politics at work in the globalization paradigm, which rests on an assumption of a divide between the Middle Ages and ‘modernity’.<sup>4</sup> Secondly it has an epistemological function, offering insight into the constructed nature of global concepts. Thirdly it has a historiographical function, in opposition to the postcolonial and Latin Americanist assumptions that alternative narratives and critical approaches can only be devised outside Europe, it looks at the pluralities produced within Europe as a way to escape old historiographical problems. This follows the work of Kathleen Davis, who looked to the Middle Ages to challenge the problematic politics of periodization and ideology of ‘modernity’; as Davis explained, this approach is important since ‘the boldest, most celebrated critiques of rigid historical paradigms usually reinforce rather than disrupt this periodization’.<sup>5</sup> The first part of the paper identifies the globalization paradigm at work in some global histories and indicates the way in which the paradigm suffers from a problematic paradox in the form of the reproduction of universal history. The second part of the paper uses medieval history to demonstrate the similarity between the globalization paradigm and older narrations of the world. Finally, it does not just use the Middle Ages to disrupt the periodization at work in the globalization paradigm but uses medieval history to contextualise the multitudinous and complex attempts to understand and represent the coherence of the space and time of the world.

## The globalization paradigm

Historiographical summaries of global history have often explained models but pointed no fingers; this paper’s title, ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’, comes from this sense that that global history is seen but

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<sup>1</sup> See the discussions in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori eds, *Global Intellectual History* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2014), 52.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper the terms ‘Middle Ages’ and ‘medieval history’ are understood as European categories.

<sup>4</sup> The problematic notion of ‘modernity’ is understood here as an ideological construct that has been entangled with the history of colonialism. This has been discussed by Walter Dignolo, most of all in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, decolonial options* (Michigan, 2011), Enrique Dussel, ‘Eurocentrism and Modernity’, *Boundary 2*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1993), pp. 65-76, and Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos 2-3 (2007). The work of Dignolo, Quijano, and Dussel has been very important, but these authors themselves construct a notion of ‘Eurocentric modernity’ which has long been debated by historians both inside and outside Europe. Rather than reproducing these debates, this article follows the approach of Kathleen Davis, who looks to the Middle Ages to challenge the politics of periodization. See Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty, How Ideas of Feudalism & Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty, How Ideas of Feudalism & Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*, 2. Here Davis gives the example of Johannes Fabian’s *Time and the Other*.

not seen, everywhere but nowhere, understood but unknown. Lynn Hunt recently gave this historiographical turn a name, 'the globalization paradigm'. But what is this?

From Lynn Hunt we get the sense that the globalization paradigm is the product of 'writing history in a global era'. There have been different attempts to define this global era. Doreen Massey described this 'global era' as characterised by 'a speeding up, and spreading out' and a 'time-space' compression'.<sup>6</sup> Adam McKeown defined it as the era of globalization.<sup>7</sup> Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann also contended that global history should aim to understand the uniquely modern phenomenon of globalization.<sup>8</sup> While the history of globalization may only be a slice of the sprawling and unruly field of global history, global histories are often explicitly or implicitly influenced by the globalization paradigm, which often dominates contemporary discourses on society, economy, and culture as well as history. Approaching the question slightly differently, the French sociologist Alain Touraine set out to define 'a new paradigm for understanding today's world' and noted that 'if the theme of globalization has assumed central political importance, it is for a reason that is not so much economic as ideological'.<sup>9</sup> Since the globalization paradigm is not neutral one must be able to recognize it, be conscious of its influences, and sensitive to the ways we use or represent it as historians.

These commentators give a sense that the globalization paradigm is a new explanatory framework and is particular to modernity. David Harvey described the accelerated compression of time and space as something experienced in the last decades.<sup>10</sup> Doreen Massey, another geographer, also sees the perception of accelerated time-space compression as something recent. The sociologist Manuel Castell describes the new global era as a world of global flows.<sup>11</sup> The historian Bruce Mazlish defined the 'New Global History' as the history of globalization.<sup>12</sup> For Mazlish this new global history, the history of globalization, was uniquely 'modern' and was characterised by the compression of time and space, which was the consequence of an increasingly networked space, the product of the invention of the 'telegraph, the laying of cables, the introduction of the telephone, and then of radio'.<sup>13</sup> In Noel Cowen's summary this description of the way in which European technologies have driven global history leads to the re-invention of a 'rise of the west narrative'; Cowen wrote that 'developing superior technologies, the Europeans responded longer and more successfully to the global impulse'.<sup>14</sup> The problem of this perspective has already been noted by James Blaut, who has critiqued theories that emphasise Europe's unique contribution to global history and theories of Eurocentric diffusionism.<sup>15</sup> There is an obvious danger in attaching global history to the problematic concept of 'modernity', and in the risk of perpetuating the ideology of Eurocentric modernity.<sup>16</sup> Here historians can help since if we think of the globalization paradigm as a historical meta-narrative, its uniqueness and particularity to 'modernity' begins to fragment.

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<sup>6</sup> Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', in *From Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 146-156. The notion of 'time-space' compression was first discussed by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Adam McKeon, 'Periodizing Globalization', in *History Workshop Journal*, 63 (2007), 218-230, 219.

<sup>8</sup> Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, 'Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization', *Journal of Global History*, 5, 1 (2010), 149-170, 153.

<sup>9</sup> Alain Touraine, *a new paradigm for understanding today's world* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 21.

<sup>10</sup> David Harvey, 'Time-space compression and the postmodern condition', in Malcolm Water ed., *Modernity: After Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 98-118, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Manuel Castell's *The rise of the network society* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 3.

<sup>12</sup> See Bruce Mazlish, *The new global history* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Mazlish, "Comparing Global History to World History", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 26, 3 (1998), 385-395, 391.

<sup>14</sup> Noel Cowen, *Global History: A Short Overview* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2001), 135.

<sup>15</sup> See James M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World, Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Walter Mignolo and other Latin American scholars have written extensively on this.

The meta-narrative of the globalization paradigm has a number of identifiable tropes: the acceleration of time, the compression of time and space, the prevalence of spatial metaphors (everywhere is networked),<sup>17</sup> a directional narrative,<sup>18</sup> and a universal claim, which is linked to the assumption that there is a singular and commonly understood object of the 'globe' at the foundation. The directional narrative of the globalization paradigm can be seen as a teleology as the space and time of the world moves towards becoming increasingly global. This meta-narrative is most visible in the strands of global history that see themselves as the history of globalization, a narrative which is often deeply entangled with capitalization.

The chronology of the global histories that narrate the history of globalization often intersect the chronology of capitalization. Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson argued that globalization should be understood as the integration of international commodity markets which is evidenced by the convergence of commodity prices, which can only be found in the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> For O'Rourke and Williamson the globalization that took place in the 1820s marks the transition from world histories, produced by the likes of William H. McNeil,<sup>20</sup> to global history.<sup>21</sup> O'Rourke and Williamson searched for the origins of globalization by looking for the point at which it started 'influencing overall living standards and income distribution, by changing domestic commodity prices within national economies'.<sup>22</sup> They argue that globalization is defined by market integration, affects the whole world, and is exclusively modern (post 1820s), and that the history of this phenomenon, global history, is therefore different from the world histories of McNeil, Immanuel Wallerstein and Andre Gunder Frank.<sup>23</sup> But was this really a shift in historiographic genre, perspective, or paradigm? It seems to betray signs of universal history in its claims to construct a narrative that is applicable to the whole world. Some historians have challenged O'Rourke and Williamson's chronology but they have not challenged the meta-narrative of the globalization paradigm.<sup>24</sup> For example, some early modern historians have considered the establishment of transpacific trade in 1571 which made the economy truly 'global',<sup>25</sup> while other early modernists have supported that argument that globalization did not occur until later.<sup>26</sup> In all these examples practitioners refer to empirical data to convey the impression that they are scientifically constructing objective knowledge of the globe.

Three factors push these global histories which represent the globalization paradigm into the territory of universal history. Firstly they claim to represent the whole world and the history of humankind, which leads them to dismiss any possibility of global history before the transatlantic or transpacific crossings, and to look to large scale integration for evidence. Secondly they follow a meta-narrative structure (above I identified the tropes as the acceleration of time, the compression of time and space, the prevalence of spatial metaphors, a teleological direction, and a universal claim).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Manuel Castell, *The rise of the network society*.

<sup>18</sup> For example, meta-narratives of global economics which follow models of convergence or divergence are invested with a directional sense of time.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, 'When did globalization begin?', *European Review of Economic History*, 6 (2002), 23-50.

<sup>20</sup> William McNeil, *A World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, 'When did globalization begin?', 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, 'When did globalization begin?', 27.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, 'Path dependence, time lags and the birth of globalization: A critique of O'Rourke and Williamson', *European Review of Economic History*, 8 (2004) 81-108.

<sup>25</sup> This date was suggested in Adam McKeon, 'Periodizing Globalization', in *History Workshop Journal*, 63 (2007), 218-230, 221.

<sup>26</sup> See Jan de Vries, 'The limits of globalization in the early modern world', *The Economic History Review*, 63, 3 (2010), 710-733.

<sup>27</sup> Duncan Bell has even identified the tropes of the globalization paradigm as the defining characteristics of 'Euro-American modernity': 'compression, acceleration, annihilation, closure: these were spatio-temporal coordinates of Euro-American modernity'. 'Making and Taking Worlds', in *Global Intellectual History*, 254-279, 265.

Thirdly they have a sense in which there is one world which is universally known, understood and experienced in the same way.

There are many different genres of universal history. It is most commonly associated with the historiographical genre developed in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, typified by Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, but the genre is broader than this. Karl Lowith contextualised Hegel within a longer European tradition of history from the Bible to Burckhardt, stopping at Orosius, Augustine, Joachim, Bossuet, Vico, Voltaire, Proudon, Comte, Cordorcet and Turgot, Hegel and Marx. Lowith identified all of these as reproductions of the 'philosophy of history', which he defined as 'a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning'.<sup>28</sup> The globalization paradigm, which reproduces a coherent and directional narrative of the whole world, has much in common with this tradition of universal history broadly identified by Lowith.

### **The globalization paradigm paradox: The return of universal history**

The globalization paradigm at work in some global histories suffers from a paradox. It is born out of an attempt to overcome nation-centred history on the one hand, and Eurocentric historiography on the other, yet it links itself closely to a meta-narrative of globalization which has much in common with older forms of universal history.

The connection between global history and the return of universal history has already been noticed. David Christian predicted that the new historiographical turn would see the return of universal history, and for Christian this was not problematic; he argued that 'the new universal history will contain a clear vision of humanity as a whole, for within its universal maps of the past it will be easy to see that all human beings share a common, and quite distinctive history'.<sup>29</sup> Christian defined universal history as 'the attempt to understand the past at all scales, up to those of cosmology, and to do so in ways that do justice both to the contingency and specificity of the past and also to the large patterns that help make sense of the details'.<sup>30</sup> The globalization paradigm strand of global history has presented itself as the meta-narrative coordinating the meaning of the space and time of the world.

Ten years earlier Walter Mignolo had warned of the continuations of universal histories, which he took to be a mode of the perpetuation of European colonialism. Mignolo interpreted globalization as the latest phase of the way in which universalist history has played a role in controlling the world. He wrote: 'from the project of the *Orbis Universalis Christianum* [sic], through the standards of civilization at the turn of the twentieth century, to the current one of globalization (global market), global designs have been the hegemonic project for managing the planet'.<sup>31</sup> The warning is clear, if national history was the handmaiden of nation states, global history can be the handmaiden of hegemonic claims for ordering the planet. Given the connection between history and power claims it is important to reflect upon the global concept at work in global history. For Mignolo, the paradox at work in the globalization paradigm strand of global history is one shared with the fated world-systems analysis which preceded it, which developed as an attempt to transcend the Eurocentric perspective of history but ultimately reproduced it.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 1.

<sup>29</sup> David Christian, "The Return of Universal History", *History and Theory*, 49 (2010), 6-7-27,7.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. David Christian noted that the *Encyclopedia of World History* distinguishes four possible definitions of universal history: "a comprehensive and perhaps also unified history of the known world or universe; . . . a history that illuminates truths, ideals, or principles that are thought to belong to the whole world; . . . a history of the world unified by the workings of a single mind; and . . . a history of the world that has passed down through an unbroken line of transmission." Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History*, ed. W. H. McNeill (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2005), V, 2096.

<sup>31</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Local histories/global designs: coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 21. Note the Latin should read *Orbis Universalis Christianus*.

<sup>32</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Local histories/global designs: coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Enrique Dussel shared this view in his 'World-system and "trans"-modernity' article which argued that world-system hypothesis was itself a narrative of the 'rise of the west'. An example of a global history producing the 'rise of the west narrative' can be

Mignolo called for the production of 'decolonial local histories' to restore 'the dignity that the Western idea of universal history took away from millions of people'.<sup>33</sup> Mignolo overlooked the fact that pluralities of universal histories have been produced both within and outside Europe and assumed that all alternative histories must be produced outside Europe. Mignolo points out the need to relativize global concepts and see them as the product of local histories. He cites the postcolonial agenda of Dipesh Chakrabarty, who argued that Europe must be provincialized "so that the world may once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous".<sup>34</sup> We need to represent plural narrations of the world. However, Mignolo argues that critiques must come from outside Europe,<sup>35</sup> and I disagree with this. Firstly, historiographically we should be seeking to overcome the West vs Rest binary at work in the discipline and not reproducing it; Europe was not the only locality to produce universalist histories of the world, and even in 1946 Lowith observed that the 'occidental conception of history', which he defined as 'implying an irreversible direction toward a future goal', 'was not merely occidental'.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, the global histories produced outside Europe are not inherently theoretically alternative or superior. If we look, for example, at *Global History: A view from the South* we don't get a radically alternative narrative to that produced in Europe but a Marxist perspective, which itself is a narrative coming from Europe and re-telling the story of capitalism. Thirdly, Pamela Crossley observed that "global history" is seen by some historians as an attempt to root out the last vestiges of "Eurocentrism", but warned that "global history as an intellectual enterprise is a production of European and American historians who can never make themselves the object of study".<sup>37</sup> It is therefore important to make this shift and make space within new global histories for making European assumptions, epistemologies, and historiographical traditions the object of study. The medieval history of Europe offers the opportunity to go beyond the Fanonian postcolonial perspective advocated by de-colonial commentators on global history by challenging the idea that alternative global histories can only be found outside Europe.

### **The globalization paradigm in the Middle Ages**

The characteristics of the globalization paradigm (the acceleration of time, the compression of time and space, the prevalence of spatial metaphors, a teleological narrative, and a universal claim) can also be found in the histories in the Middle Ages. I will present here the example of Franciscan history.

In the thirteenth century, during the years of the leadership of John of Parma and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, the Franciscans, a mendicant Order identifiable by their unique doctrine of evangelical poverty, developed their own eschatology of history which was based on the schema of Joachim of Fiore.<sup>38</sup> Joachim theorised a system of concordance which he understood, Lowith summarised, as the 'meaningful structure of a historical process'.<sup>39</sup> Following Joachim, Franciscan historians saw the world as advancing through three ages (of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit) which were broken down into seven stages. Joachim located the third age of the spirit within this world and said that it would be ushered in by new spiritual men, *virii spirituales*. For Joachim the final age and end of world history would come about when the sixth seal of the apocalypse was broken; Joachim described the angel of the sixth seal as 'the one whom Christ looks upon as His like who is to come at the beginning

(Contd.) \_\_\_\_\_

found in Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules – For Now, The patterns of history and what they reveal about the future* (London: Profile Books, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, x.

<sup>34</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992), 23, in Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 205.

<sup>35</sup> Mignolo, Walter, 'The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol. 101, no. 1 (2002), 57–96.

<sup>36</sup> Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, 54. Lowith's interpretation of history was disputed by Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Boston: MIT Press, 1985).

<sup>37</sup> Pamela Crossley, *What is Global History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 103.

<sup>38</sup> See Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History according to Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Press, 1971).

<sup>39</sup> Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, 150.

of the third status of the world's history".<sup>40</sup> The Franciscans were particularly receptive to the historical ideas of Joachim and they interpreted that St Francis was the sixth angel of the apocalypse and, as a consequence of their commitment to poverty, they considered themselves to be the *virī spirituales* who would usher the new age. This influenced the histories written by Franciscans since Bonaventure's *Major Legend* of the life of St Francis, which accepted Joachim's ideas into Franciscan historiography,<sup>41</sup> and was particularly important to the histories of the Spiritualist Franciscans in the fourteenth centuries,<sup>42</sup> and the universal histories written by Franciscans in the Americas in the sixteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

In the fourteenth century the Spiritualist Franciscan Angelo of Clareno wrote a history of the Franciscan Order, *Chronicon seu Historia septem tribulationum ordinis minorum* (*A Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor*), in which you can find all the tropes that define the globalization paradigm. It was universal in the sense that it imagined a coherent narrative of world history which involved all people, and it was teleological as it imagined the unfolding of an eschatological narrative. Clareno's history depicted the sense that the Franciscans were witnessing the birth of a new era of world history; he wrote 'I have seen the enormous birth of the century and labor pains of the virgin before the seventh follows upon the sixth'.<sup>44</sup> This was tied to the sensation that time was accelerating as the Franciscans were on the threshold of a new age of world history. In the fourth tribulation Angelo described John of Parma as receiving a vision warning of the need for change as 'the spirit of Satan is rising up and taking action... many will fall and will not manage to rise again'.<sup>45</sup> This imagery conveys a sense of urgency, linked to a sense of the acceleration of time. The compression of space and time was another common feature of Franciscan history. The figure of St Francis, founder of the Franciscan Order, represented a compression of the time between Christ and the Franciscans. Angelo explained how Francis's actions were Christ's, and how 'the evangelical life renewed through Francis'.<sup>46</sup> Angelo described how Francis received the stigmata on Mount La Verna, which marked him as the angel of the sixth seal.<sup>47</sup> This mystical event symbolised the acceleration and compression of space and time which were part of the Franciscans' model of history.<sup>48</sup> Finally, like contemporary global histories, spatial metaphors dominated Franciscan histories. The prevalence of spatial metaphors in Angelo's history demonstrated how the Franciscans' commitment to poverty and pilgrimage was linked to their role in the unfolding of world history. Angelo repeatedly reminded the Franciscans that they are bound to be pilgrims and strangers (*peregrine et advenae*) in the world and were 'rooted and planted'<sup>49</sup> (*plantasti eos et fundasti*)<sup>50</sup> on the

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in Ubertino of Casale, *The tree of the crucified life of Jesus*, in Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Con., William J. Short, O.F.M. eds, *Francis of Assisi: early documents, vol. II, The Prophet* (New York: New City Press, 2001), 141-206, 149.

<sup>41</sup> Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio *The major legend and The minor legend*, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. II*, 525-717.

<sup>42</sup> Angelo Clareno will be the example discussed below.

<sup>43</sup> Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, ed. Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta (Mexico D.F.: Antigua librería, 1870) and Fray Toribio de Benavente o Motolinía, *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España* (Mexico D.F.: Chávez Hayhoe, 1941).

<sup>44</sup> Angelo Clareno, *A chronicle or history of the seven tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor*, trans D. Burr and E. Randolph Daniel (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 191.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 119.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 20 and 113.

<sup>47</sup> Angelo of Clareno, *Liber chronicarum, sive tribulationum ordinis minorum*, P. Giovanni Boccali ed. (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1999), 256.

<sup>48</sup> Ewert Cousins describes this as 'the mysticism of the historical event', 'Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads', in Steven T Kat ed., *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 163-91, 167.

<sup>49</sup> Angelo of Clareno, *A chronicle or history of the seven tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor*, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Angelo of Clareno, *Liber chronicarum, sive tribulationum ordinis minorum*, P. Giovanni Boccali ed., 172.

road to perfection. For Clareno, the Franciscans' deviation from the path of perfection led to the tribulations which structured his depiction of Franciscan history. Clareno's history described how the Franciscans' global journey of poverty was linked to their journey through global time.

In short, the claims of the globalization paradigm, that the world was approaching a new era, where the whole world was affected, time was accelerating, space was important, would have been familiar to the authors of Franciscan history in the fourteenth century. This may indicate that the globalization paradigm is linked to the broader traditions of eschatological history in ways that were identified by Karl Lowith, and challenges some of the assumptions about the 'modernity' of the globalization paradigm. This helps challenge the politicised periodization at work in the globalization paradigm.

While the meta-narrative at work in the globalization paradigm has much in common with the examples of universal history identified by Lowith (which included the Bible, Augustine, and Joachim), and with the universal world history produced by the Franciscans' identified here, we should not conclude that the globalization paradigm is the latest phase of a secularized eschatology, since the notion 'secularization' reinforces the politicized boundary between the Middle Ages and modernity. As Kathleen Davis has observed, there is a structural and historical link between a medieval/modern periodization, which has been tied to a discourse of secularization, and 'the increasingly contentious, often violent function of "religion" in political life today'.<sup>51</sup> Davis noted that Lowith himself, like Carl Schmitt before him, had argued that 'secularization' was in fact the story 'not of Europe's gradual extrication from religion, but rather the sublimation of theology in the "world"'.<sup>52</sup> Consequently medieval history can play an important role in rethinking global history.

For the Franciscans, the inner meaning of the world may have been theological, but theology is itself historically diverse and influenced by different cultural, intellectual, and political contexts. The Franciscan example reminds us that there were diverse understandings of the meaning of the space and time of the world in the Middle Ages; by the fourteenth century they had travelled all over the known world and established convents in Africa, China, Russia, Scandinavia, the Middle East, and the Canary Islands, and they were influenced by this experience. The Order had also produced a range of intellectuals and historical theorists from Bonaventure to Peter Olivi, Angelo Clareno and, later, Gerónimo de Mendieta. The strand of Franciscan history represented here does not simply represent the *Orbis Universalis Christianus* narrative of the over-simplified European Middle Ages identified by Mignolo. For the Franciscans it was the spread of evangelical poverty that drove the unfolding of the space-time of the world, and this model of global history differed both from the unfolding of the history of capitalism often at work in the globalization paradigm, and the spread of a universal Christendom imagined by the papacy. The papacy in fact tried to repress the Franciscans' interpretation of universal history on many occasions, not least in the fourteenth century when some of the Spiritualist Franciscans identified the pope as the anti-Christ, whose coming had been prophesized by Joachim of Fiore. The Roman Church had a problematic relationship with the historical writings of Joachim of Fiore, and the Franciscans' use of his ideas was frequently under investigation by the Church. Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, who Marjorie Reeves eloquently observed 'appropriated the Joachimist future for the Franciscan Order', had his work condemned in the thirteenth century.<sup>53</sup> When Angelo Clareno, a controversial Spiritualist Franciscan who himself faced imprisonment for his ideas, came to write his history in the fourteenth century, it was both a comment on the persecution of the Franciscan Order as well as a history of the world. In the Middle Ages, as in modernity, narrations of the meaning of the space and time of the world often responded to the politics and beliefs of the contexts in which they were written. The Franciscan story thus reminds us that in the Middle Ages there were competing meta-narratives of the world which were the products of highly politicized contexts.

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<sup>51</sup> Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty, How Ideas of Feudalism & Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*, 77.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>53</sup> Marjorie Reeves, *The influence of prophecy in the later Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 187.

The broader political context of the construction of global concepts should always be considered. For example, when, in the fourteenth century, the Franciscan Paolo Minorita (Paulino Veneto) produced histories of the world (*Chronologia magna* and *Satyrica Historia*)<sup>54</sup> and a map of the world<sup>55</sup> his construction of these global contexts was closely entangled by the desire for a new crusade to the Holy Lands.<sup>56</sup> The narrations of space and time produced in the Middle Ages were also influenced by the contexts in which they developed, and this supports Davis' opposition to the myth that 'medieval people subordinated all concepts of time to the movement of salvation history'.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the history of the construction of representations of the space and time of the world, beliefs and politics have played an important role.

### **The construction of global concepts: some lessons from the medieval mappa mundi**

Medieval history offers a way to deconstruct the objective concept of the 'globe' which is at the heart of the globalization paradigm and new global histories. Medieval history acts as a reminder that understandings of the world have been constructed in different ways at different times and offers insight into the complex influences acting upon the construction of global concepts.

Franciscans produced histories of the world as well as intellectual theories and maps in order to understand and communicate the inherent meaning of the world. Like today, conceptualisations of the global were constructed through different mediums in the Middle Ages, through histories, intellectual theories (geographies and sociologies of space, cosmographies), and maps. Attempts to capture the meaning of space and time are linked. Histories and cosmographies were often produced in conjunction with maps. To cite a famous example, Martin Waldseemüller's *Universalis Cosmographia*, which was produced in 1507 and was the first map to give the name 'America' to the New World, was made to accompany the cosmographical text *Cosmographiae Introductio*.<sup>58</sup> Cartographic representations of the global were concretely linked to histories and theories of the meaning of global space. Understanding and communicating the meaning of the world was important to the Franciscan Order, and so they produced maps and cosmologies as well as histories. In the prologue to his *Satyrica Historia* Paolo Minorita explained that 'without [maps] I say it would be not so much difficult as impossible to imagine or conceive in the mind the dispersal of the sons of Noah and the four great kingdoms'.<sup>59</sup> Paolo Minorita's work indicates how histories, theologies, and maps all worked together to construct and communicate an understanding of the space of the world and its meaning. As we turn now, and finally, to medieval maps and cosmographies we should bear in mind that these are all part of the same project to unlock and represent the meaning of global space.

Throughout the Middle Ages people produced *mappa mundi*, portolan charts, and cosmographies and histories which delineated their understanding of the world. The history of medieval maps also provides a glimpse of the history of the political epistemology of the European global concept. Examples of European medieval world maps include the Beatus maps (late eighth century), the Isidore world map (eleventh century), Henry of Mainz's world map (twelfth century), the Zonal, Psalter, Ebstorf, and Hereford world maps (thirteenth century), and the world maps of Ranulf Higden, Pietro Vesconte, and Alslake (fourteenth century).<sup>60</sup> These cartographical projections might

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<sup>54</sup> *Chronologia magna*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (Venezia), lat. Z. 399 (1610); *Satyrica historia*, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (Firenze) Plut. 21.sin.1.

<sup>55</sup> Cod. Vat. Lat. Fol. 264.

<sup>56</sup> See Evelyn Edson, Reviving the crusade: Sanudo's scheme's and Vesconte's maps, in Rosamund Allen ed., *Eastward Bound, Travel and travellers, 1050-1550* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) 131-156.

<sup>57</sup> Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty, How Ideas of Feudalism & Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis Cosmographia*, Library of Congress, G3200 1507 .W3 Vault, available online <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28g3200+ct000725%29%29> (accessed 27/03/2015).

<sup>59</sup> Paolo Minortia, *Satyrica Historia*, cited in John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 42.

<sup>60</sup> See D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London: British Library, 1991).

seem alien, and perhaps not even like representations of the world, to eyes accustomed to the cartographic model of the world established by Gerard Mercator in 1569. Comparisons between medieval maps and with medieval *mappa mundi* and representations of the world that dominate global imaginations today can help relativize some of the assumptions at work in contemporary conceptualisations of the 'global'.

The orientation of medieval *mappa mundi* may at first seem different to modern world maps. The cartographic historian J.B. Harley observed how this can offer insight into the geo-political implications of conceptualisations of the global. Harley, who writes that:

Throughout the history of cartography ideological 'Holy Lands' are frequently centred on maps. Such centrality, a kind of 'subliminal geometry',<sup>61</sup> adds geopolitical force and meaning to representation. It is also arguable that such world maps have in turn helped to codify, to legitimate, and to promote the world views which are prevalent in different periods and places.<sup>62</sup>

In medieval maps these "holy lands" were often Jerusalem, and in modern maps it is often the northern Atlantic, home of the capitalist world-system, that is centralised. In both cases the orientation of the representation of the world is deeply political.<sup>63</sup>

Medieval *mappa mundi* remind us that conceptions and representations of the world are not neutral but are constructed to have coherent meaning and are tied to ideological positions. For example, *mappa mundi* were often constructed in such a way as to represent the flow of eschatological time, which gave meaning to space.<sup>64</sup> Fox-Friedman described the *mappa mundi* as a vision "that attempted to unite the world's physical reality with its deeper spiritual destiny".<sup>65</sup> The way in which representations of global space are linked to a coherent and directional narrative of unfolding time does not seem so alien from the globalization paradigm.

Medieval *mappa mundi* also offer insights into the diverse archives that contribute to the construction of global concepts. If you look, for example, at the Hereford *mappa mundi* you find evidence of ideas about the space and time of the world drawn from a great range of sources: the bible, reports of pilgrims and travellers, medieval bestiaries, and classical cosmographies. Medieval representations of the world are an open framework for gaining insight into the complexity of ideas that contribute to the construction of a global concept.

We also gain insight into the complexity of the construction of global concepts by looking at medieval cosmographies. Produced by an anonymous author at the end of the fourteenth century, the *Libro della Immagine del mondo*, held in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, is a good example of a medieval cosmography which offers insight into the complexity of global history.<sup>66</sup> It integrates a story of the history of the world, charts of the planets and elements, stories of the Greek Gods associated with those planets, descriptions of animals, weather, and disease, and both T and O and portolan chart depictions of the world. Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, published in 1410, is a more famous example of a medieval cosmography and shows the influence of classical scholars such as Aristotle and Ptolemy, the Christian scholar Isidore of Seville, and the Islamic scholar Averroes among other influences.<sup>67</sup> Witnessing these diverse sources that contributed to the construction of a

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<sup>61</sup> J.B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988: 289-90, cited in J.B. Harley, "Deconstructing the map", *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 25, 2 (1989), 1-20, 6

<sup>62</sup> Harley, J.B. 'Deconstructing the map', *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, Vol. 25, no. 2 (1989), 1-20, 6.

<sup>63</sup> We only need to think about the debates over the Peters projection of the world to remember this.

<sup>64</sup> See Alessandro Scafi, "Defining Mappamundi", in D.A Harvey ed., *The Hereford World Map, Medieval Maps and their Context* (London: British Library), 2006, 345-354, 348.

<sup>65</sup> Jeanne Fox-Friedman, "Vision of the world: Romanesque art of northern Italy and the Hereford mappamundi", in D.A Harvey ed., *The Hereford World Map, Medieval Maps and their Context*, 137-152, 147.

<sup>66</sup> *Libro della Immagine del mondo*, anonimo, 1380, Portoani, Carte nautiche e planisfere, Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, EL II.II.83.

<sup>67</sup> Pierre d'Ailly, *Imago Mundi* (Boston: Massachusetts historical society, 1927).

global concept in the Middle Ages prompts a reflection on the diverse ideas shaping our own conception of the world.

It is therefore additionally important to explore medieval conceptions of the world since these texts had a legacy in shaping later European interpretations of the world. Christopher Columbus relied heavily upon Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, and medieval descriptions of the world such as this shaped his imaginations and perceptions of the Americas. The impact of the medieval global imagination on the world today can still be found, for example, in the nomenclature of the world. The name 'Brazil', which had been the name of a mythical island floating off the coast of Ireland from the fourteenth century, is now firmly fixed to the land mass monopolising the South American Atlantic coast. In 1502 the Spanish named the Western Indian archipelago the Antilles; Antillia had often been cast in the Atlantic space of medieval world maps and the Antilles islands were important in the medieval global imagination as they had been the legendary refuge of Christians who had established the *Sette Citades*, or Land of the Seven Cities, during the Islamic conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth century. Patagonia is so-called because when Magellan rounded the coast of South America, he reported that the land was filled with giants,<sup>68</sup> and thus the place came to be called Patagonia, after these fabled giants.

However, medieval history is not simply an archive for ideas that have shaped modernity and the modern global concept. Mignolo has described the Middle Ages as an invention of modernity, but I argue that uncovering medieval history, and especially the diversity and complexities of its conceptualisations of the world, can contribute to the project of decolonising histories and epistemologies. Uncovering the pluralities, ambivalences, and ambiguities at the heart of the European Middle Ages contributes to the questioning of Europe, its histories and epistemologies, and opens up new directions for global history. Medieval history is also an archive of lost ideas, possibilities and worlds. The Middle Ages is therefore the natural place to begin the excavation of multiple globalities, which should be one of the aims of a new global history that does not simply reproduce the globalization paradigm. Historians have looked at the global histories of early modern religious Orders such as the Jesuits, but these histories have too easily fitted the globalization, entangled as it is with the history of capitalism.<sup>69</sup> Yet the Middle Ages hold more possibilities and alternative understandings of the world and its meaning. Medieval scholars were even more ready to accommodate the idea that there were multiple worlds; as Luke Clossey observes, 'medieval philosophers had hotly debated the possibility of a plurality of worlds, the *pluralitas mundium*' [sic].<sup>70</sup> The idea that there may not be just one but many worlds coexisting came from the Greek Atomists and was kept alive throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>71</sup> Consequently the Middle Ages have many lessons for new directions in global history.

## Conclusions

This article has sought to interrogate the globalization paradigm in order to expose and discuss the potential paradox at work in the expanding field of global history, which risks reproducing the universalist conception of history that it seeks to critique. The paper has suggested that medieval history offers a way out of this conundrum. The paper has interpreted the globalization paradigm as a meta-narrative and used medieval history to show that the tropes of the meta-narrative at work in the globalization paradigm can be found in medieval narrations of the space and time of the world, which challenges the way in which the globalization paradigm can be seen as an explanatory paradigm which is exclusive to 'modernity'. While it has traced similarities between the meta-narrative of the globalization paradigm and earlier forms of universal history it has stopped at interpreting the globalization paradigm as a secularized eschatology, and instead followed Davis' line of argument

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<sup>68</sup> Antonio Pigafetta, *First Voyage Round the World of Magellan*, with notes and introduction by Lord Stanley of Alderley, London: Hakluyt Society, 1874), 49-55.

<sup>69</sup> For example Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>71</sup> Amos Fukenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the middle ages to the seventeenth century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 140.

which does not make a distinction between 'secular' and 'theological' ideologies and instead critiques the idea of secularization at work in the temporal politics of periodization.

Alternatively the article has invented the Middle Ages as a site of opportunity for excavating diverse conceptualisations of the world, and for gaining insight into complex processes involved in the construction of global concepts. It has shown how the tropes of the meta-narrative of the globalization paradigm were at work in the Franciscans' narration of the meaning of the space and time of the world, but also noted that the Franciscans' produced their histories in dialogue with their contemporary political situations, and that the histories they produced were just one form amongst many. Medieval history thus reminds us not just of the problems of periodization, but also of the complex, constructed, and political nature of global concepts, and of the historic (or cartographic) renderings of the coherent meaning of the space and time of the world.

Finally, there is a need for global history as it creates a new context for exploring history outside of national, international, and transnational paradigms, but it should avoid the dangers identified here, particularly that of the return to a universal history and the reproduction of local politics, beliefs and ideologies. It is important to interpret the world as subject and not object as a starting point for any new global history and to excavate diverse understandings and representations of the world. In short, we must look to the past to prevent the globalization of our future.



