

Rosamond McKitterick, ed. *Atlas of the Medieval World*. Oxford University Press, 2004; first published in Britain for TIMES BOOKS by HarperCollins, London, 2003. pp. 304

This lavishly illustrated volume is just the sort of thing you want to keep on your coffee table or prominently positioned in a well-appointed office to show how aesthetically pleasing medieval studies can be. With a list price of only \$45.00, this is a real bargain given the number of high quality images (all in full color) that it provides.

Far more than simply a series of maps (and there is no shortage of these, which cover everything from language groups in medieval Europe to the spread of the Black Death to the rise of Islam in Southeast Asia), McKitterick's *Atlas* also includes images of manuscript pages, illuminations, archival documents, architectural monuments, and other works of art. Surrounding this cornucopia of images is narrative text that walks the reader through major periods and events in medieval history, not simply in Western Europe, but

also in Byzantium, the Middle East, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. In fact, only the Americas, Australasia, and the Pacific Islands are omitted from its geographic scope.

What does this latest in a long line of historical atlases have to offer gender studies? Sadly, almost nothing at all. Gender is never mentioned as a variable in Viking migrations (pp. 64-67), the military colonialism of the Crusader States (pp. 146-47), or the late medieval establishment of new trading posts in Africa by the Portuguese (pp. 278-79). Gender is equally missing from sections on the non-European world. The bibliography of close to 300 different items includes not a single work on gendered theories of space (such as Roberta Gilchrist's *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past*, Routledge, 1999); indeed, the only item I identified with a major component of gender theory was Joyce Coleman's *Public Reading and the Reading*

Public in Late Medieval England and France. The seven-page glossary has only a brief biography of Empress Wu (728-805), who is identified as the sole female sovereign in Chinese history.

Other women do make a few cameo appearances. We find passing references to the usual Western European suspects—Eleanor of Aquitaine, Margery Kempe, Matilda of Tuscany, and a few others. On pp. 150-51 we find not only a reference to the beguines, but also the only map in the volume to show a gendered distinction: the houses of beguines are distinguished from those of their male equivalent, the beghards, in a map of European monastic houses. In the glossary entry on “aurality,” we learn that literacy was “concentrated among clerics, noblewomen, and also town dwellers” (288). This latter acknowledgement may well be due to the fact that the volume’s editor, herself one of the premier historians of literacy, once published an essay on early medieval women’s literacy. But these passing “add women and stir” references are no substitute for the otherwise

complete lack of gender analysis that conceivably, after thirty years of feminist scholarship, might easily have been used as a structuring element for the whole book. Instead, we still find such antiquated habits as referring to countries and states with feminine pronouns.

All of us who teach Medieval Studies will, of course, benefit from such a handsomely produced work. But publication of “authoritative” reference volumes such as this reminds us that there are still significant areas of Medieval Studies where questions of gender (and the now highly sophisticated methodologies to explore it) still have made no mark. One must wonder why, in a volume that can cover half the globe and incorporate such relatively new theoretical perspectives as the literary concept of *mouvance* (p. 291), there still is no room for gender analysis and those who “hold up half the sky.” That such an erasure of gender can still occur in a work directed at the general public is all the more lamentable.

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