Carol Symes
“Introducing The Medieval Globe”
The concept of “the medieval” has long been essential to global imperial ventures, national ideologies, and the discourse of modernity. And yet the projects enabled by this powerful construct have essentially hindered investigation of the world’s interconnected territories during a millennium of movement and exchange. The mission of The Medieval Globe is to reclaim this “middle age” and to place it at the center of global studies.

Monica H. Green
“Editor’s Introduction to Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World”
Extraction of the genetic material of the causative organism of plague, Yersinia pestis, from the remains of persons who died during the Black Death has confirmed that pathogen’s role in one of the largest pandemics of human history. This then opens up historical research to investigations based on modern science, which has studied Yersinia pestis from a variety of perspectives, most importantly its evolutionary history and its complex ecology of transmission. The contributors to this special issue argue for the benefits of a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to the many remaining mysteries associated with the plague’s geographical extent, rapid transmission, deadly outcomes, and persistence.

Monica H. Green
“Taking ‘Pandemic’ Seriously: Making the Black Death Global”
This essay introduces the inaugural issue of The Medieval Globe, “Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death”. It suggests that the history of the pathogen Yersinia pestis, as it has now been reconstructed by molecular biology, allows for an expanded definition of the Second Plague Pandemic. Historiography of the Black Death has hitherto focused on a limited number of vector and host species, and on Western Europe and those parts of the Islamicate world touching the Mediterranean littoral. Biological considerations suggest the value of a broadened framework, one that encompasses an enlarged range of host species and draws on new archeological, genetic, and historical researches to look for the presence of plague in the premodern Indian Ocean basin and East Africa, areas where it has previously not been suspected.

Anna Colet, Josep Xavier Muntané i Santiveri, Jordi Ruíz Ventura, Oriol Saula, M. Eulàlia Subirà de Galdàcano, and Clara Jáuregui
“The Black Death and Its Consequences for the Jewish Community in Tàrrega: Lessons from History and Archeology”
In 2007, excavations in a suburb of the Catalan town of Tàrrega identified the possible location of the medieval Jewish cemetery. Subsequent excavations confirmed that multiple individuals buried in six communal graves had suffered violent deaths. The present study argues that these communal graves can be connected to a well-documented assault on the Jews of Tàrrega that occurred in 1348: long known as
one of the earliest episodes of anti-Jewish violence related to the Black Death, but never before corroborated by physical remains. This study places textual sources, both Christian and Jewish, alongside the recently discovered archeological evidence of the violence.

Sharon N. DeWitte
“The Anthropology of Plague: Insights from Bioarcheological Analyses of Epidemic Cemeteries”
Most research on historic plague has relied on documentary evidence, but recently researchers have examined the remains of plague victims to produce a deeper understanding of the disease. Bioarcheological analysis allows the skeletal remains of epidemic victims to bear witness to the contexts of their deaths. This is important for our understanding of the experiences of the vast majority of people who lived in the past, who are not typically included in the historical record. This paper summarizes bioarcheological research on plague, primarily investigations of the Black Death in London (1349–50), emphasizing what anthropology uniquely contributes to plague studies.

Stuart Borsch
“Plague Depopulation and Irrigation Decay in Medieval Egypt”
Starting with the Black Death, and continuing over the century and a half that followed, plague depopulation brought about the ruin of Egypt’s irrigation system, the motor of its economy. For many generations, the Egyptians who survived the plague therefore faced a tragic new reality: a transformed landscape and way of life significantly worsened by plague, a situation very different from that of plague survivors in Europe. This article looks at the ways in which this transformation took place. It measures the scale and scope of rural depopulation and explains why it had such a significant impact on the agricultural infrastructure and economy.

Ann G. Carmichael
“Plague Persistence in Western Europe: A Hypothesis”
Historical sources documenting recurrent plagues of the “Second Pandemic” usually focus on urban epidemic mortality. Instead, plague persists in remote, rural hinterlands: areas less visible in the written sources of late medieval Europe. Plague spreads as fleas move from relatively resistant rodents, which serve as “maintenance hosts,” to an array of more susceptible rural mammals, now called “amplifying hosts.” Using sources relevant to plague in thinly populated Central and Western Alpine regions, this paper postulates that Alpine Europe could have been a region of plague persistence via its population of wild rodents, particularly the Alpine marmot.

Nükhet Varlık
“New Science and Old Sources: Why the Ottoman Experience of Plague Matters”
Reconstructing the Ottoman plague experience is vital to understanding the larger Afro-Eurasian disease zone during the Second Pandemic. This essay deals with two different aspects of this experience. On the one hand, it discusses the historical and historiographical problems that rendered this epidemiological experience mostly invisible to previous scholars of plague. On the other, it reconstructs the empire’s plague ecologies, with particular attention to plague’s persistence, focalization, and transmission. Further, it uses this epidemiological experience to offer new insights and complicate some commonly held assumptions about plague history and its relationship to plague science.
Fabian Crespo and Matthew B. Lawrenz
“Heterogeneous Immunological Landscapes and Medieval Plague: An Invitation to a New Dialogue between Historians and Immunologists”
Efforts to understand the differential mortality caused by plague must account for many factors, including human immune responses. In this essay we are particularly interested in those people who were exposed to the *Yersinia pestis* pathogen during the Black Death, but who had differing fates—survival or death—that could depend on which individuals (once infected) were able to mount an appropriate immune response as a result of biological, environmental, and social factors. The proposed model suggests that historians of the medieval world could make a significant contribution to the study of human health, and especially the role of human immunology in past environments and societies, by helping to reconstruct these conditions.

Michelle Ziegler
“The Black Death and the Future of the Plague”
This essay summarizes what we know about the spread of *Yersinia pestis* today, assesses the potential risks of tomorrow, and suggests avenues for future collaboration among scientists and humanists. Plague is both a re-emerging infectious disease and a developed biological weapon, and it can be found in enzootic foci on every inhabited continent except Australia. Studies of the Black Death and successive epidemics can help us to prepare for and mitigate future outbreaks (and other pandemics) because analysis of medieval plagues provides a crucial context for modern scientific discoveries and theories. These studies prevent us from stopping at easy answers, and they force us to acknowledge that there is still much that we do not understand.

Robert Hymes
“Epilogue: A Hypothesis on the East Asian Beginnings of the *Yersinia pestis* Polytomy”
The work of Cui et al. (2013)—in both dating the polytomy that produced most existing strains of *Yersinia pestis* and locating its original home to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau—offers a genetically derived specific historical proposition for historians of East and Central Asia to investigate from their own sources. The present article offers the hypothesis that the polytomy manifests itself in the Mongol invasion of the Xia state in the Gansu corridor in the early thirteenth century and continues in the Mongols’ expansion into China and other parts of Eurasia. The hypothesis relies to a considerable extent on work of Cao Shuji (1995), but argues for a different means and direction for the spread of plague than either Cao or William McNeill have previously posited.

Monica H. Green, Kathleen Walker-Meikle, and Wolfgang P. Müller
FEATURED SOURCE ~ “Diagnosis of a ‘Plague’ Image: A Digital Cautionary Tale”
This brief study examines the genesis of the “misdiagnosis” of a fourteenth-century image that has become a frequently used representation of the Black Death on the Internet and in popular publications. The image in fact depicts another common disease in medieval Europe, leprosy, but was misinterpreted as “plague” because of a labeling error. The error was then magnified because of digital dissemination. This mistake is a reminder that interpretation of cultural products continues to demand the skills and expertise of humanists. Included is a full transcription and translation of the text which the image was originally meant to illustrate: James le Palmer, *Omne bonum*, cap. “De clerico debilitato ministrante sequitur videre” (On Ministration by a Disabled Cleric), London, British Library, Royal 6 E. VI, vol. 2, fols. 301rb–302ra.