**The Medieval World HI 127, Lecture 9:**

**Europe and the Aftermath of the Black Death**

* repeated outbreaks over the next century wipe out recovery
* population declines by another 1/3
* widespread population growth only from late C15th
* wider context of crisis eg. C14th prayer: “*A fame, bello et peste, libera nos Domine*” (From hunger, war and plague, free us Lord)

**Cultural Impact**

* huge psychological impact in the short-term as normal processes and rhythms of life temporarily break down and chaos, panic, disaster reign
* many flee the cities eg. Boccaccio’s *Decameron*
* doctors had few answers (but over time developed some more effective responses)
* search for scapegoats eg. waves of killings of Jews in France, Switzerland, Low Countries, northern Spain and Germany in 1348
* many saw the plague as a sign of God’s wrath towards humanity for its sins
* wave of intercessory processions, particularly of flagellants
* flourishing of popular religion eg. Pilgrimages, devotion to protector saints such as Sebastian and Roch
* new focus on preparing for a good death (*Ars moriendi*)
* works of art focus on death and its close relation to life eg. *danse macabre*
* others indulge in *this* life – leading to the ‘worldliness’ of Renaissance culture?

**Economic Impact**

* Black Death resulted in a huge amount of wealth transfer, diversification of the economy and some new growth
* But generally seen as bringing in/prolonging a period of economic depression compared to the growth of the C11-13th
* sustained increase in wages in the short-term
* governments tried to control wages eg. Statute of Labourers(1351)
* continuing bad climate (Little Ice Age from the C15th) encouraged recurrent famines
* collapse of agricultural prices worsened conditions in the countryside
* peasants sought better conditions by migration to cities, abandoning rural villages
* decline of manorialism despite repressive efforts of landlords
* but less population pressure allowed for diversification of crops eg. grapes, olives, mulberry trees (for silk)
* growth ofworking poor in the towns; regulation of begging, vagabonds, criminality
* general trend towards higher standards of livingeg. more luxuries, better diet
* birth of a consumer society?
* debate about the effects of the Black Death particularly on the Italian economy – was the Renaissance a product of prosperity or hard times? [see Lopez, Miskimin, Cipolla, Brown]
* initial contraction but then expansion in some industries eg. Wool, silk, papermaking, glassmaking, printing, armaments, decorative arts
* stimulated labour-saving innovations like printing press, firearms

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