



However, this is not only a book of captivating stories. Through the life of people that were dispersed, this book provokes a strong reflection on the work of historians. It reminds us that we tend to see stories from one point of view, and that we choose some kind of sources and not others. In this way *The Power* opens, or reopens, a line of investigation where the topic is not only the people of the past but also the work of historians and their way of looking at the past. However, this does not mean that this book contains actual criticism of historiography: it just suggests different ways of working on history, and alerts us of the dispersal of sources, which is something different than to lose or fail to find them. It suggests that we all are part of history, and as such we can disperse ourselves in our habits, or from looking at the past in only one way—much like the crowd of Spain looking at the population of the modern Spanish America before the works and travels of Mercado and Solórzano, as narrated by José Luis Egío in “Travelling Scholastics: The Emergence of an Empirical Normative Authority in Early Modern Spanish America.”

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.555

*The World the Plague Made: The Black Death and the Rise of Europe.*

James Belich.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. ix + 622 pp. \$39.95.

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To explain the formation of a global modern world has been intriguing. While Marxist historians such as Immanuel Wallerstein and Sven Beckert describe the history of globalization as a process in which peripheries were hauled into a world system by Western European countries, the Californian School argues that the world system was not dominated by the West until the early nineteenth century. Belich refrains himself from answering the question directly; instead, he focuses on subglobalization and cross-regionalization, or, in his own term, transformative connectivity (8). Taking the Black Death as a starting point, the book explores how plague-incubated changes facilitated the expansion of regional systems before 1800.

In part 1, the author traces the plague's origin, transmission mechanism, and effects. The Black Death originated in areas near Central Asia (chapter 2) and caused extremely destructive effects in a few centuries. The relationship between humans and economies experienced a sea change due to profound demographic decline (part 2). Resources per capita increased in the early plague period. For example, real wages rose and non-manpower became more available, thus contributing to higher consumption and mechanization. Investment in education increased as birthrates declined and nuclear families became popular (50). Other revolutions, such as a print revolution and a military revolution, which the plague potentially triggered, laid a foundation for following economic expansions.

In part 3, the book presents a panoramic look at the international and domestic environment of European and non-European countries that the Black Death struck. Influenced by the plague, Eurasian countries launched an expansion process and developed cross-regional networks: the Ottomans in Southern Europe (chapters 8 and 11), Chinese expansion in South Asia and Muslim regions (chapter 9), the Mediterranean circle (chapter 10), the Dutch expansion and the Northern European trade system (chapter 11), Muslim expansions in North Africa and West Asia (chapter 13), and Russians' eastward expansion (chapter 14). The expansions ushered in subglobalization before the large-scale globalization was launched from 1800. In part 4, Belich discusses which Eurasian power could be described as an empire that not only was a cross-regional hegemony but also possessed newly explored colonies. As the spearhead of overseas expansion, the British empire succeeded in building a maritime hegemony and prepared conditions for industrialization.

Taking non-European expansions back to the stage, Belich also aims to "de-exceptionalize" (25) the rise of Western Europe. While Eurocentric views hold that it was European uniqueness, such as evangelist spirits, growth-friendly institutions, and judiciary systems inheriting from Roman and Greek origins, that caused the rise of Western Europe, Belich highlights the role of the Black Death which was an accidental event in global history. In particular, Belich discredits the interpretative power of the "European Marriage Pattern" (Jan Luiten van Zanden et al., *Capital Women* [2019]). The positive effects of the plague upon marriage lasted relatively briefly and thus cannot explain the puzzle of economic booms in West Eurasia (414).

Despite its sheer volume and extensive reference, the book has two weaknesses. Firstly, the title dwarfs the content that the author presents. It is in fact not about the world that the plague made but about the world during and after the plague. Although the author argues that the plague was not the dominant piece of the story but the biggest missing piece (447), the book rarely centers the effects of the plague upon globalization from 1350 to 1800. It concentrates on the subglobalization process per se. The plague and subglobalization were operating like two parallels in the same temporal and geographic space. Secondly, the book is short of evidence capable of proving the effects of the plague. The assertion that the plague incubated profound changes is highly hypothetical and thus unconvincing. Whether the plague truly fostered economic revolutions and geographic expansions is left unclear.

To conclude, while the book provides an excellent panorama of Eurasian expansions and introduces new perspectives of global history from 1350 to 1800, its emphasis on the role of the Black Death in the process is lacking in proof.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.566