

Pillars sequel: Outline notes 4 May 2004

“...a violent, tormented, bewildered, suffering and disintegrating age, a time, as many thought, of Satan triumphant...”

--Barbara W. Tuchman: “A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century”

“The level of English and Welsh population attained in 1300, close to six million people, was not reached again until the mid-eighteenth century.”

--Norman F. Cantor, “In the Wake of the Plague: the Black Death and the World it Made”

Part 1

In the first half of the fourteenth century, in the town of Kingsbridge in southern England, several interrelated conflicts involving the local lord, the church, the monastery, and the commercial leaders of the town.

- i) A mystery
- ii) A love story. He is contentedly married. She is hopelessly in love with him. She would be a more suitable wife for him, but he stays.
- iii) A power struggle. A abuses his power. Everyone gives in to him except B who defies him. Will B be destroyed? Or will he break the rule of A?
- iv) A controversy over a new bridge
 - (a) Technical problems of building & engineering
 - (b) Finance
 - (c) Political. By making one market more accessible, it will damage another.
- v) A contest for control of the priory. There is conflict between the conservatives who run the priory and a group of reformist younger monks who want to return to the golden age of Prior Philip. There is a book, picture, or map of the town in the twelfth century which they use to buttress their case. This serves also to create links for the reader with “Pillars”.
- vi) Major historical conflicts.

Part 2

In 1348, each of these dramas is bouleversé by the Black Death.

- Some protagonists die, resolving conflicts
- Unexpected inheritance thrusts some characters into power and wealth
- Otherwise, the conflicts are transformed into disputes about how to deal with the emergency.
 - Some elements exploit it, aggrandising themselves with land, buildings, etc
 - Others dedicate their lives to helping the sick. Almost all of these die.
 - There are conflicts about what the plague is, what causes it, and how it can be combated. The Jews are blamed.

Part 3

When the immediate crisis is over, our heroes attempt to rebuild the Kingsbridge community, trying to attract peasants to work the land, rebuilding the bridge—against the opposition of the short-sighted, who try to impose a wage ceiling, etc. This culminates in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.