

Jahre. The interpretative framework is less convincing. Imhof sets himself an impossible task by announcing his intention "to reconstruct collective mentalities" (p. 73). While charts and tables can tell us much about typical experiences of Germans in recent centuries, demographic data cannot by themselves lead us to attitudes toward life and death. Imhof's speculations about reactions of people in the past to their family circumstances need supporting evidence. His search for motives for the beginning of family planning leads him to a mainly psychological explanation for the fall in fertility: a strengthened sense of responsibility toward children, in reaction to high infant mortality, led to increased use of birth control. This new attitude toward children, in turn, helped to lower mortality. Yet Imhof's reasoning seems circular: he seeks attitudes from his demographic data, while simultaneously explaining demographic change as the result of new attitudes. Imhof recognizes that intervention from outside the nexus of demography and psychology was required to break the customary pattern and prepare a new one; his possible candidates, however, are too vague (population pressure) or too narrow (the French Revolution). Certainly the question of causality remains open: the fullest study of the fertility decline in Germany, by John E. Knodel, *The Decline of Fertility in Germany, 1871-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), could find no set of social and economic indicators which explained the onset of decline.

We cannot derive the consciousness of our historical subjects from quantitative data about their demographic behaviour. Perhaps one could combine the literary approach of Philippe Ariès in *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Random House, 1982) with demographic data to determine whether attitudes and behaviour actually moved in tandem. In the meantime, historical demographers need to continue casting their "objective" evidence in forms relevant to daily life. Arthur Imhof's efforts in this direction should interest both an academic and a public audience.

Steve HOCHSTADT
Bates College

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ANN KUSSMAUL. — *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. ix, 233.

Agriculture was the largest single employer of labour in early modern England, yet a substantial segment of its labour force has remained shadowy. The day labourer has been the subject of a number of studies; but the farm servant, hired by the year and boarded under the farmer's own roof, has been neglected. Ann Kussmaul's short book (a mere 131 pages of text) admirably comes to grips with the problems of sparse documentation and throws light upon this important sector of the rural economy.

The character of service in itself contributed to its scanty representation in the record. Servants were typically youthful, between fourteen and twenty-five years old, and service was a transitional episode between childhood and adult status. Unmarried and subservient to the farmer in whose family they resided, servants were politically invisible. Service offered them an opportunity to save money for future independence, but at this stage they were propertyless and paid few taxes. Coming from the healthiest age group, they left few testamentary records. Low levels of literacy mean that few journals or letters survive. Moreover, the

characteristic mobility of farm servants effectively prevents record linkage. Herein lies the major drawback of Kussmaul's study, for she has been forced to rely heavily on poor-law records for information. The settlement examinations, including those of former servants, contain details of previous employment, residence, and movements of applicants for relief, but are biased towards the failures and the children of paupers and labourers. They neglect the children of prosperous farmers who also entered farm service in large numbers. The lack of formal institutions associated with service, apart from statute sessions or the hiring fair, is a further drawback. Kussmaul deals valiantly with this meagre data base; and her reconstruction of the incidence and conditions of farm service is convincing, though necessarily sketchy in places.

The study falls into three sections, the first dealing with the conditions under which farm service flourished between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. The antecedents of the institution are summarily dealt with in an appendix, and a tenuous link with the medieval *famulus* is suggested. Farm service was rooted in a milieu of nuclear families, impartible inheritance and fixed land-holding patterns, and offered mutual advantages to both farmer and servant. "Service in husbandry was an elegant solution to the many problems caused by the nuclear family ... The institution was, in early modern times, wonderfully adaptable, filling both the roles of family-balancer to small farmers, and labour force to larger farmers" (pp. 26-7). Kussmaul explains the geographical extent of farm service in Europe with reference to the prevalence of the nuclear family in northern and western Europe, and its absence in southern Europe. The geographical variation in inheritance patterns and their effect on the labour pool and hence agricultural service is, surprisingly, not explored in the European context.

The conditions of service are discussed next: wage levels, standards of living, work patterns, hiring practices and the obligations of both farmer and servant. Drawing on the experiences of individual servants Kussmaul fleshes out the bare bones of her subject, but the degree to which these literate youths are typical is in some doubt. The reason for leaving service was commonly marriage and the establishment of an independent household on the basis of capital accumulated during the years of service. Inevitably, evidence from the settlement examinations introduces a bias into this discussion, for by their nature they represent failures in this transition. The same source, however, illuminates clearly the anomalous mobility of farm servants within the rural community and shows that there was neither a tendency towards cumulative movement over long distances nor a predilection for migration after leaving service.

The third and most ambitious section of the book attempts to identify long-term cycles in the agricultural labour supply in early modern England and to explain them in terms of wider social and economic conditions. The author uses the seasonality of marriage to estimate the proportions of servants and labourers employed in agriculture at different dates. She argues that when service was strong, marriages would show a peak in October when contracts ran out following the harvest. This does not necessarily hold true in "horn and thorn" areas or regions where the normal hiring date was not Michaelmas. However, on the marriage evidence she postulates a decline in farm service through the early seventeenth century, an upturn from 1650 through the eighteenth century, and a final decline following 1815. These cycles are explained in terms of demographic trends, changes in real wages, the relative price movements of grain and animal products, enclosure and alternative employment. All of this is well-argued and convincing, though it perhaps underplays the role of urban migration and rural industry in drawing off potential labourers from the later seventeenth century onwards.

Kusssmaul is to be congratulated on her stimulating handling of a problem-beset topic. She is well-served by her editors and there are few misprints, though "freed", rather than "feed" (p. 72), suggests a more servile status than young servants actually held. Her book is a welcome addition to the literature on labour and society in early modern England.

Pauline M. FROST
Vanier College, Montreal

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JOHN McMANNERS. — *Death and the Enlightenment. Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. Pp. vii, 619.

In the last chapter of his magnificent book, John McManners finds himself in agreement with Samuel Johnson who said that most people, to his knowledge, did not think about death. In his personal testament which opens the book, McManners cites one of André Malraux's characters for whom the knowledge that he was going to die was of greater importance than the fact of death. Indeed, for him death's existence was measured by man's personal knowledge of it; and that can never be known by the living. These opening and closing statements give a precious unity to McManners' masterly study. It is a rare example of historical erudition exploding with an equal zest for ideas and the incredible volume of information which we have been accumulating about the social history of France over the past generation or so. Neither has overwhelmed its author. He continually charms and intrigues us as he reviews, comments upon, and weighs the evidence on the state of medical thought and practice; life expectancies; the musings and treatises on the nature of the soul and the glories, terrors, or non-existence of the afterlife; the commonest and the uncommon preparations for the last scene; the prolonged or unceremonial funerary preparations; the disposal of bodily remains which became a matter of hygiene as well as public outrage; the question of death imposed as the test of political sovereignty; and the problems posed by self-imposed death, which, by asserting supreme sovereignty over one's self, disturbed the brightest and profoundest minds during the century.

Life may not have obsessed most people, as thoughts of death consumed a host of clerical experts in dying. Yet the opportunities for and the problems of living claimed the energies of most other individuals at either end of the mortality scales and in between. Experience of life, above all its manifold risks, even though few died satiated with it, probably made most French men and women the unconscious heirs of Montaigne, whose love of life in an even more threatening and insecure age prompted his defiant conviction, "But you do not die because you are sick, you die because you are alive."

McManners' study is therefore as much about life as it is about death. It is a nearly flawless treatment. It is reflective in its tone and its wisdom is never strained. Expressed in impeccable language, it reviews and analyses the ambiguous meanings that were given the mysteries of life, most of all its absurdity. If it is customary to think of death as the greatest absurdity of all, what we contrive to do, and what our forebears in the eighteenth century as well as many others who lived before that highly critical age did, is to try to extract some purpose from the contemplation of the juncture of existence and non-existence. While, to be sure, he