

depression' thesis against such opponents as A. R. Bridbury. There is no doubt that the evidence, illustrated here for the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is broadly in favour of the depression thesis. This being said, one may question whether the depression thesis does not require new terms of reference. The techniques employed heretofore for comparing the standard of living *ca.* 1300 and *ca.* 1400, for example, suggest that we may be comparing apples and oranges. In short, can we make a proper assessment of economic influence upon demography with traditional views of fourteenth-century social structure that fail to account adequately for mobility, occupational specialization and so forth?

There follows a brief chapter entitled 'Why was the Population Decline so Protracted?' The important thesis is proposed that disease, often age-selective, rather than plague, may have been the long-term deterrent to population expansion under suitable conditions. A short chapter on 'Population in Early Tudor England' is really an invitation to historians to get busy on the 1475-1525 no-man's-land of historical research. Hatcher's one brief excursus into national population extrapolation in his conclusion is, in the opinion of this reviewer, unfortunate in a book of this nature.

Specialists will no doubt find much to criticize in this little volume. It is an inadequate treatment of A. R. Bridbury's labour thesis or of the Miskimin-Lloyd-Munro money and trade thesis, to take but two examples. It may better be concluded, however, that these theses require such small 'problem' volumes of their own. For the purposes of this series, that is, aids to undergraduate teaching, this remains a highly successful analysis and can be strongly recommended.

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ÉLISABETH BOURCIER. — *Les journaux privés en Angleterre de 1600 à 1660.* Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976. Pp. 496.

Diaries were a rarity in Europe before the sixteenth century. The appearance of this new literary genre had much to do with both the Renaissance, with its discovery of the individual, and the Reformation, with its assertion of the autonomy of the individual conscience. Other influences were the rise of literacy, the growing autonomy of the family, and unprecedented social mobility and instability. In consequence, many people turned in upon themselves, seeking refuge in religious and psychological self-examination. There were, of course, other reasons for keeping diaries. A desire to do battle with forgetfulness, and a terror of devouring time, undoubtedly played their part as well. But even more important was the sharp sense of human sinfulness and the unremitting desire for self improvement that obsessed almost all the diarists of the time.

Élisabeth Bourcier's study covers sixty-six early seventeenth-century English diarists. Women's diaries are rare, perhaps because of women's generally lower level of education, perhaps simply because women's diaries had less chance of being preserved. Most diarists lived in the provinces rather than in London, most were married, all were Protestant — whether puritan or Anglican — and, for most, religious questions were at the centre of their pre-occupations.

The diaries of this period are particularly valuable because, unlike those of a later age, their writers did not anticipate that they would be published or even read by others. Accordingly, they

offrent un très grand intérêt pour l'historien des mœurs, mais aussi parce qu'ils témoignent d'une sincérité naturelle, d'une spontanéité souvent absente des journaux modernes, de moins en moins purs d'arrière-pensée. (p. 2)

Yet the weakest part of the book is Bourcier's discussion of the light that the diaries shed on the history and customs of the time. Most of what she tells us about life in London and the provinces, education, law enforcement, marriage and the family, can be learned from other published sources. Moreover, many of her secondary authorities — e.g., Notestein, Jordan, Davies, Campbell — are quite old. Nor are her historical method and assumptions made clear. The reader is not told whether she believes that the evidence from sixty-six private diaries can furnish us with convincing conclusions about how seventeenth-century society really worked. For example, the chapter on London is largely a compilation of information culled from the various authors. Most of the diarists visited the metropolis at least once, and often for long periods. Thus they have a lot to say about shopping, the theatre, drinking, prostitution, turbulent apprentices, the Inns of Court, sermons, masques, the opera, and so forth. But Bourcier does not give her judgment as to whether all this adds up to an authentic picture of what London life was like at the time, or whether it is merely a series of glimpses through the eyes of several dozen fairly prosperous visitors. In fact it is pretty certainly the latter. She simply does not have the kind of random sample upon which to generalize confidently about the social history of the time. Her diarists are drawn from the upper, leisured and educated fifth of society. They comprise lawyers, clergymen, teachers, gentry, and the occasional yeoman. Furthermore, they were by definition a special group of people — those who were so interested in themselves that they were prepared to spend perhaps an hour a day for years on end committing their thoughts to paper.

Besides recounting much that is already known to students of the period, Bourcier also gets some significant facts wrong. It is not true, for example, that men were hanged while women were burned in seventeenth-century England. Burning was reserved for heretics of either sex. Witches, for example, of whom more than ninety per cent were female, were hanged. On the age of marriage, Bourcier asserts that boys and girls both married young. This may be true for the nobility and upper gentry, but Peter Laslett has demonstrated that the mean age of brides and bridegrooms was 24 and 27 respectively in the diocese of Canterbury in the first part of the seventeenth century.

On the positive side, Bourcier's study brings forward some insights which challenge received interpretations. Lawrence Stone and Edward Shorter, for example, have maintained that love and tenderness are seldom found in the European family before the late seventeenth century at the earliest. From Bourcier's study we learn that some diarists treated their wives with condescension or contempt, and communication was occasionally so bad that spouses were reduced to exchanging letters. Nevertheless, there are many instances of genuine affection. Sir Thomas Hoby would often spend the evening reading to his wife. Other husbands were extremely solicitous towards their wives during periods of illness. Henry Slingsby and Anthony Ashley Cooper described their wives' qualities with great tenderness. Children were cherished. "Les pères autant que les mères sont attentifs à leurs progrès, et notent avec régularité leurs moindres faits et gestes" (p. 212). These findings will have to be acknowledged in any future history of the family.

The early seventeenth century was a time of bitter religious strife. The diaries contain many references to current debates over what we would regard as theological trivia: vestments, Sabbath observance, the position of the altar,

bowing at the name of Jesus, and so forth. However, a false emphasis on religious excesses and conflicts by some historians has previously given a distorted view of both puritanism and Anglicanism in the seventeenth century. Bourcier suggests that what united these people religiously was profounder than what divided them. Furthermore, she gives no support to those historians who find a political motive behind every religious manifestation. It is salutary to be reminded of "l'immense religiosité d'hommes et de femmes conscients de leurs faiblesses et de leurs imperfections..." in the seventeenth century (p. 325).

If the book does not provide a complete picture of private life in the period, it none the less presents a judicious collective portrait of a remarkably diverse group of men and women.

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PETER CLARK and PAUL SLACK. — *English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700*. Oxford: Open University Set Book, 1976. Pp. 176.

The publication of Peter Clark and Paul Slack's *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700*, in 1971, made a decisive contribution to the rapidly burgeoning interest in pre-industrial English towns. Its introduction was among the first successful attempts to identify general trends from the wealth of literature which has come forth in the past decade, while the essays which followed provided illustrations of key themes. It was not, however, a book for the novice or undergraduate: though it may have encouraged the introduction of the subject into an increasing number of university curricula, its value as a teaching tool remained limited by its very specialized approach. Thanks in part to the needs of the Open University in particular, we now have a companion volume by the same team, *English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700*, precisely for that purpose.

In view of this pressing need in one of the genuine growth areas in the field of English History, it would be difficult to imagine a more timely and appropriate publication. Yet one must not ask of it more than it was intended to offer: the authors have identified, categorized, and synthesized the work of others, but they have not, with few exceptions, added evidence unpublished elsewhere. Yet this is a caveat, not a criticism, for what they have done has been done splendidly.

Beginning with a rational sifting of the literature, we are offered a convincing and fundamentally functional definition of a "town". This is followed by a taxonomy of urban types, based again largely upon functional criteria: country towns, new towns, provincial capitals, and London, a type all its own. The concluding chapters turn from taxonomy to modes of urban life: the economy, social structure, political order, and, in the only rather weak chapter, the cultural role.

Several themes emerge from this approach, and here we find the specimen leaving its glass case and engaging in the dynamics of social, political, and economic change. Thus, for example, we have towns of middling proportions prospering as centres of marketing, transport, and administration during the 16th and early 17th centuries, and often combatting successfully the remnants of feudal and manorial ties through the acquisition of incorporative charters and the growth of