decide to act as they do (methodological individualism), and that what normally makes them act as they do is their view of the means they need to adopt to achieve their ends (rationalism). Thus Trotsky is praised for showing us "sensible men calculating whether they can get what they want out of the Social Revolutionaries or out of the Bolsheviks" (121). Unfortunately, since Stinchcombe neither considers, nor even shows much awareness of the well-known difficulties of both doctrines, his claims in this connection cannot but appear rather dogmatic. Disappointing also is his failure to offer any analysis of the notions of causal process and causal explanation which are so central to his concerns. He does tell us that causation "does not operate at the grand level of 'Why did the Russian Revolution lead to Stalinism?', but on the segmented level of 'How do revolutionary legislatures legitimate coups d'etat?'" (17). In fact, it often seems to be his contention that it "operates" only at the level of 'How did *this* legislature legitimate *this* coup d'etat?" What we need, then, is a clear account of how such particular causal claims are vindicated, and how, in this connection, the "post hoc" fallacy is avoided. Stinchcombe implies, at one point, that they are established by means of theory — by reducing opaque connections to "theoretically understandable bits" (14): however, this can hardly be the theory that is to emerge from perceiving "deep analogies" between the particular causal connections themselves. Elsewhere he appears content to represent social theory as dependent, in the end, on "pretty good guesses" about what caused what in particular cases (122). It may be that such a procedure is in fact defensible: historians have long been accused of indulging in it. But it is strange to find it stated with so little supporting argument in a work on social science methodology.

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CHARLES TILLY, ed. — *Historical Studies of Changing Fertility.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. *ix*, 390.

Unlike most of the drivel which is published as the "proceedings" of academic conferences, unconnected snippets of interest to no one save the authors and their tenure review committees, the conference on changes in fertility which the National Science Foundation sponsored in Princeton in 1972 has resulted in a volume that everyone interested in this sort of thing will probably wish to acquire. Whether the papers would have been published anyway, and been just as good even had no conference taken place, is beside the point: they are important guides to an increasingly tangled literature and conveniently assembled in paperback for anyone who wants to catch up on the latest in historical demography.

Charles Tilly's introduction summarizes the main debates touching the fertility decline: why does illegitimate fertility drop at the same time as legitimate? Why do all these interesting demographic phenomena seem to erupt just as a massive pauperization of Europe's population (which he calls "proletarianization") begins, and so forth? The piece is lucid and literate, and deserves to be made accessible to undergraduates in pamphlet form. The other contributions are more for specialists.

Richard Easterlin's paper, for example, requires some understanding of mathematical economics to be comprehensible in its entirety, but even for those who don't want to pause too long over the equations and "demand model" graphs,

it is a useful summary of whether children are consumer goods, and whether changes in family size can be explained with the same instrumentarium that may be used for other changes in patterns of consumption.

E. A. Wrigley continues his dance of the veils. But the last veils have still not fallen. In this paper, at least, we get no further results from the family reconstitutions which he and his colleagues have been doing of other English villages (the famous Colyton now having stood for over a decade as the sum total of our knowledge about family limitation). Instead he speculates about the kind of decision-making which might have guided traditional people as they thought about how many children they intended to have.

The most mathematical piece is Ronald Lee's on "Models of Preindustrial Population Dynamics with Application to England". This kind of paper is not entirely inappropriate since it was the Mathematics and Social Science Board of the NSF that paid for the conference, but readers without some formal training in mathematics will probably not be able to follow it. And since my own goes back now about fifteen years, I followed it with difficulty. Lee is interested in, among other things, the relation between wage returns to labour and Malthus's various checks, and in "the demographic strategies which societies might pursue in an effort to protect their population sizes and living standards from the fluctuations of an erratic environment." He finds several, and readers who want to know more will wish to read the piece.

The slimmest essay is Lutz Berkner and Franklin Mendels' on the connection between inheritance systems and fertility, a subject of interest to political economists for around two centuries now and on which each author is currently doing monographic work. We are given a few tidbits from Belgian, French and German examples.

Maris Vinovskis weighs in with "A Multivariate Regression Analysis of Fertility Differentials among Massachusetts Townships and Regions in 1860," and finds that these differentials don't correlate with anything very important, or with anything, at least, which he has been able to measure, such as urbanization, industrialization or mortality. But this is not just a snide remark on my part. It is probable that most of our received wisdom about how structural changes affect such matters of intimate life as birth and death is wrong, and Vinovskis is merely being, quite legitimately, a whistle-blower.

Etienne van de Walle, writing on the French fertility decline in the years before 1850, is presumably prefiguring the argument of the second, forthcoming, volume of his study of French historical demography over the last century and a half.[1] He concludes that France remains a "tantalizing puzzle" because fertility there declines a good half century before it does anywhere else and because no one really knows why it happens. Van de Walle figures out that regional differences are linked to differences in mortality, but that a decline in mortality cannot (yet) be said to cause the decline in fertility. An assertion which otherwise many people would have been inclined to make.

Rudolf Braun's essay, the final one in the volume, will in some ways warm most gladly the hearts of traditional historians, in that is does a minimum of numbers-crunching and a maximum of snuffling about in descriptive historical evidence of the epoch. Braun enlarges the argument of his famous study of cot-

[1] Etienne VAN DE WALLE, *The Female Population of France in the Nineteenth Century: A Reconstruction of 82 Départments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

tage industrialization in the highlands around Zurich, which alone should send historians who can't read German but who've known for years about this marvelous book, open-walleted to buy the volume under review.[2] And he adds as well some numbers, noticeably absent from the original German edition, to bolster his assertions about how cottage spinning and weaving transformed peasant demographic behaviour at the end of the eighteenth century.

All in all, probably not for the classroom but a must for one's own library.

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GUY BOIS. — *Crise du féodalisme.* Paris, Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1976. 412 p.

Paru dans la collection « Cahiers de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques », ce livre est, à plusieurs égards un ouvrage important. À tous les historiens de la fin du Moyen Age, il semble aujourd'hui évident que l'Europe occidentale vécut au cours des XIV^e^ et XV^e^ siècles un tournant majeur de son histoire. Temps de famine, de maladies, de guerre, bref temps de crise dont les secrets sont loin d'être tous percés: les mécanismes régissant l'économie médiévale ne sont pas encore tous connus et, caractère aggravant, les documents font trop souvent douloureusement défaut. Y eut-il plusieurs crises s'additionnant les unes aux autres, ou une seule crise générale de l'ensemble d'un « système » dont les structures ont succombé petit à petit sous le poids des contradictions? Il y a là un important débat. La contribution de Guy Bois s'inscrit dans la seconde de ces options. C'est une thèse d'inspiration marxiste qui vient prendre place à côté des travaux de Dobb, Kosminski et Hilton. Dès les premières pages de son ouvrage, l'A. situe fort bien la part qu'il entend prendre aux recherches actuellement en cours sur l'économie médiévale. Si les penseurs du XIX^e^ siècle n'ont pu analyser les mécanismes du système économique antérieur au capitalisme, ce travail est aujourd'hui possible grâce aux efforts conjugués d'historiens et d'économistes. L'ouvrage repose sur un postulat fondamental: il existe, avant le capitalisme un système socio-économique cohérent. La tâche des historiens consiste à rechercher les lois qui le régissaient. Cette tâche, l'A. s'y est attaché dans le cadre géographique restreint de la Normandie orientale (i.e. à l'est de la Seine). Le livre est constitué de trois parties distinctes dont l'ordre de lecture est indifférent: une partie de « macro-analyse » ou recherche des grands indices: prix, salaires, production, population; une seconde partie est vouée à l'étude des sujets économiques, seigneurs et paysans; la dernière partie est plus chronologique. Ce n'est qu'à la toute fin de son travail que l'A. tente une systématisation à partir des résultats obtenus en cours de route. C'est cette systématisation qui nous retiendra ici.

Cinq cycles économiques émergent de l'étude minutieuse des documents dont disposait l'A.: trois phases de décroissance ou de ralentissement (1250-1364; 1410-1450; 1500-1550), entrecoupées de deux périodes de reprise dont la seconde fut très vive (1364-1410; 1450-1500). Soumise aux contraintes de la société englobante, cette société rurale qui reprend corps sous nos yeux — Rouen n'entrait

[2] Rudolf BRAUN, *Industrialisierung und Volksleben: Die Veränderungen der Lebensformen in einem ländlichen Industriegebiet vor 1800 (Zürcher Oberland)* (Erlenbach-Zürich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1960).