runs the risk of presenting an unsatisfactory overall picture, but an editorial introduction which specifically formulates a general European model of the development of food policies since the nineteenth century combined with a thematic organization of the individual contributions, succeeds in producing a sense of cohesion. It helps too, that the papers fall into geographical groups: England and Ireland; Germany and Poland; Finland, Sweden and Norway; Belgium and the Netherlands; Bohemia, Transylvania and Hungary, and Italy. There is a sense of a wider European picture being built out of the local studies, although the omission of France leaves a curious blank at its centre.

The contributions fall into five thematic groups: dietary policy in wartime (World War I); state policy and groups at risk (schoolchildren and adult Norwegian males); the development of quality control (in Finland, Britain and Germany); dietary trends (the introduction of the potato, the story of saccharin, trends in inter-war Sweden); diet in an institutional context (Irish workhouses and charitable institutions in Warsaw); and the effect of the EC on European food. Across these divisions, a number of themes become apparent. As Burnett and Oddy point out in their introduction, food policies were frequently philanthropic in origin and were gradually adopted by governments as urban poverty forced itself on public attention. Military and industrial manpower considerations had become important stimuli to government intervention by the early twentieth century. Specific policies were often dictated, however, by the demands of powerful interest groups like sugar beet producers and dairy farmers. In a fascinating account of the political history of Norwegian food policy, Thor Øivind Jensen shows how the political construction of milk products as a "protective food" in the 1920s put Norwegian males at risk: by the 1950s heart disease accounted for more than half the deaths among them.

For the most part, these essays focus on the world before 1940. Two late-twentieth-century developments identified by the editors—the association of food policies with Welfare State programmes during post-war reconstruction, and the movement to limit high-cost universal services after 1970—are explored only by Burnett in the context of the rise and decline of school meals in Britain. Within the framework of the editorial model, however, all the essays testify to the diversity of influences operating on food policies and choices—education, income, social image and social class; the processing, distribution and availability of foodstuffs, vested interests, perceived interests and public pressure; and changing conceptions of the responsibilities of government and of the public purse.

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Peter Razzell, *Essays in English population history*, London, Caliban Books, 1994, pp. v, 229, £35.00 (1–850660–131).

The essays collected in this volume have, with two exceptions, been published over a period of three decades and are devoted to the problem of explaining population growth in England, in the century and a half after 1700. The scale and chronology of this growth, although the subject of some debate, are relatively uncontroversial; the key questions have been the relative contribution of the birth rate and the death rate and the extent to which decline in the latter can be attributed to improvements in popular living standards. Throughout his engagement with these issues Razzell has consistently argued that declining mortality was responsible for population growth and that this was independent of the economic growth experienced in the period of the classical industrial revolution. He has also been a consistently controversial author; his writings are aimed clearly against, or in support of, a particular point of view, and they have generally triggered extensive debate.

The essays fall into three groups; the first dates from the 1960s and is concerned with smallpox mortality, the issue with which Razzell established his reputation. His

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argument at this point was that lower smallpox mortality accounted for most—conceivably all— of eighteenth-century England's population growth and was brought about through inoculation, vaccination playing only a minor role. These essays are now of largely historiographic interest since the author—most refreshingly—tells us that he has changed his mind and no longer holds such views, but they contain none the less some still useful information on smallpox and its control.

The second "group"—actually a single essay—is, by contrast, still well worth reading for its own sake, although it deals with an issue which most historical demographers might regard as somewhat passé. This is the 1974 critique of Thomas McKeown's argument for improved food supplies as a cause of mortality reduction as early as the eighteenth century. McKeown's views cut little ice with those working on this period but gained wide currency elsewhere, and Razzell's essay remains a most concise and convincing demonstration of their inapplicability before the 1870s and also contains some very valuable thoughts on changing personal hygiene and its implications for mortality.

Since the 1970s historical demography has been dominated by work on parish registers using, first, family reconstitution and subsequently the aggregative back-projection technique developed by E A Wrigley and R S Schofield for their 1981 *Reconstruction* of English population history. This material and its accompanying fertility-based interpretation are the subject of the remaining essays jointly arguing that age at marriage did not decline in eighteenth-century England and that mortality fell further and earlier than allowed for in the *Reconstruction*.

In support of this Razzell advances both a critique of Wrigley and Schofield and fresh evidence concerning adult mortality. A number of arguments are deployed—with varying degrees of force—against Wrigley and Schofield, but to resolve the crucial issue, that of baptism under-registration, would require the kind of large-scale study unlikely to find funding under present conditions. The most fruitful part of the argument thus concerns adult mortality; from such records as marriage licences, where individuals state if their parents are still alive, he is able to show that adult mortality fell substantially in the early eighteenth century. This may not be as hard to reconcile with the *Reconstruction* results as Razzell implies but it does suggest changes in age-specific mortality relationships raising awkward questions for its underlying methodology, as well as opening up a very valuable new line of research into a topic concerning which we still know remarkably little.

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Hans Binneveld and **Rudolf Dekker** (eds), *Curing and insuring, Essays on illness in past times: the Netherlands, Belgium, England and Italy, 16th–20th centuries. Proceedings of the Conference 'Illness and History', Rotterdam, 16 November 1990.* Publications of the Faculty of History and Arts 9, Hilversum, Verloren, 1993, pp. 222, Dfl. 43.00 (90–6550–408–7).

This collection of conference papers presents a number of works in progress by European medical historians in 1990. Dutch speakers from Erasmus University Rotterdam were responsible for about half the material. The editors emphasize the special importance of social history and history of mentalities in contemporary medical history, and the papers on plague, unofficial healers and medical jokes in Italy and the Dutch Republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries exemplify these approaches. Giulia Calvi's work, suggesting that the Florentine plague of 1630 revealed what men, women, rich and poor held dearest, is particularly accessible, while the contributions on Calvanism and Catholicism in the Dutch Republic require more effort from the non-specialist reader.

Wim Cappers' account of the financial incentives introduced to persuade innkeepers and others to make some effort to save

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