

their children, and how they use their bodies" (p. 234). Many community-level health initiatives around the world are aimed at increasing breastfeeding rates, which, according to Carter's perception, is also too narrow a focus. This level of policy often results in "blaming" mothers or prejudicially targeting particular groups of women who defy the assumption that women should be "natural" breastfeeders.

Part of Carter's book is based upon her own study which "examined women's memories of feeding in a working class neighbourhood [in England] from 1920 onwards" (p. 13). In addition, Carter recalls her own mothering experience in Tyneside and rural Zambia -- two locations where she had very different experiences of breastfeeding. She includes an historical overview of infant feeding practices, focusing on the medicalization of childbirth and feeding. Most of the information in this chapter which is not transposed from elsewhere is concerned with the British experience. It is unclear at some points in various discussions whether Carter is drawing upon her own study or those of others. While Carter's theoretical analyses are interesting, the sample included in her own study does not seem to warrant some of her attempts at generalization. She offers various quotations from women in her study, but fails to discuss her sample at any great length.

Much of Carter's section on strategies for change focuses on health care policy where workers could be trained to use methods to better facilitate "working *with* people on issues identified *by* them, and on working towards change in ways which enhance the control which relatively powerless groups of people have over their own lives" (p. 235). However, in focusing upon this group of relatively powerful people in the health care industry, Carter leaves the problem as it stands--removed from those who face the issues in practice, in the privacy of their own homes or communities. In addition, the complex social issue of breastfeeding becomes relegated, yet again, to the health care sphere -- when in fact, as she has discussed throughout the book, breastfeeding is about much more than health and feeding. She does, however, indicate that feminist theorists need

to focus on breastfeeding as an area which could provide energy to the age-old "difference versus equality" debate. "Enhancing women's autonomy and control over their own lives presents a more appropriate feminist goal than does more, and longer, breast-feeding. We may however find that these are not always in contradiction with one another" (p. 240).

While Carter's theoretical discussions are creative and interesting, her practical conclusions leave a lot to be desired. It is important to contextualize this, however, in the complexity of the issue and the reluctance of the reviewer to believe that academic theorizing is in any way recognizably related to the everyday lived experience of most mothers in terms of practical solutions for change.

Noreen Millar

Memorial University of Newfoundland

---

***The World of the Ploughwoman: Folklore and Reality in Matriarchal Northwest Spain.***

Marisa Rey-Henningsen. (Soumalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, Helsinki, 1994); 293 pages; ISBN 951-41-0745-4.

Marisa Rey-Henningsen's monograph is a revision of her 1990 dissertation. The primary research dates back, however, to field trips that took place in the 1960's and in 1977. She also relies extensively on secondary sources and cites as data her experiences growing up in Madrid, listening to the folktales recounted by the women servants whom her Galician parents hired from their home region. Having conducted research in Galicia, I was eager to read this feminist analysis of the connections between rural women's social power and various examples of folktales, proverbs, and songs. This initial enthusiasm was tempered, however, by a characterization in the book's subtitle of the Galician region of Spain as matriarchal.

Given the fact that women in some parts of

"Atlantic" Galicia do commonly inherit property and thus maintain substantial degrees of household authority, anthropologists such as Heidi Kelley have demonstrated the inappropriateness of applying "Mediterranean" models of patriarchy to this part of southern Europe. It is a dangerous proposition, though, to romanticize the fragile situation of smallholding Galician women by referring -- as Rey-Henningsen does numerous times -- to Bachofen's fantastical and disproven 19th-century argument that Greek mythological sources justify the contention that matriarchal societies were widespread prior to the emergence of patriarchies.

There are three major problems with Rey-Henningsen's argument that "fictive" examples of Galician folklore reflect the reality of women having had and still retaining "complete" power and authority over men within households and local communities in *some* parts of the region. First, she does not deal sufficiently with the impacts of various forms of patriarchal state power and the Catholic church in Spain over time. For instance, in one passage, she refers to but does not adequately address the fact that what she describes at a local level is juxtaposed with "the social dominance of the male and his numerical over-representation in politics and business..." (p. 144). Second, although the author contends that her goal is to socially contextualize the folklore she is citing, I found that there was insufficient account of particular communities. Indeed, her focus on contextualization leads her to make the mistake of equating events described in folklore with what she presumes is true in "real" life. On p. 98, for example, she states that "another way to get the son-in-law to leave is to starve him out. Starving the son-in-law is, as we shall see, a motif in several folktales." Yet she reports no specific evidence of her having observed or been told of women doing this to their sons-in-law. She could have avoided such mistakes not only by doing more careful fieldwork herself but also by updating her review of the literature on gender in Galicia. Recent work by Maria Xosé Queizán, Heidi Kelley, Lourdes Méndez, Susana de la Gala, Judith-Maria and Hans Christian Buechler, and others could have been consulted. Instead, Hey-

Henningsen relies heavily on her interpretation of research done by Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana in the 1960s. Which leads me to a third problem with the book.

As has occurred in other parts of the world, women in many parts of rural Galicia have lost significant amounts of social and economic power as agricultural production has become mechanized and as wage work has become more significant than subsistence production for smallholding worker-peasant families. Rey-Henningsen's study would have been more convincing if she had considered the entire context of economic life in specific areas in the 1960s and 1970s and also included some discussion of the impacts on rural women of the rapid changes that have occurred since that time.

The book does have many delightful sections which include examples of folklore. In particular, I enjoyed reading stories in which female characters were strong, intelligent, and powerful. My enjoyment of these stories led me to become frustrated whenever the author referred to additional examples which do not appear. In the Preface to the volume, Rey-Henningsen notes that her original intention was to include all of the folklore in an appendix but that the monograph became too large, and, consequently, the text anthology will appear in a separate volume. The present book would have been stronger if she had focussed on fewer examples of folklore, contextualizing the socioeconomic circumstances of the tellers and audience as well as delving more deeply into indigenous reactions to what she labels the "matriarchal tale paradigm."

Sharon H. Roseman  
Memorial University of Newfoundland