

Mary S. Hartman. *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xi + 297 pp. \$70.00. Review by R. BURR LITCHFIELD, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

This book will be useful for those interested in a lively discussion of writing about family and gender history over the past generation. But its shallow depth and peculiar logic limit its value as an historical work. The author is a professor at Rutgers University and director of the Rutgers Institute for Women's Leadership. She is known for an earlier co-edited book *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (1974), an early and respected collection of essays on women's history from the Berkshire Conference (of which she was president). The present book focuses on a theme in demographic, family, and gender history that arose during the upsurge of interest in historical demography in the 1960s from an article by J. Hajnal entitled "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective" (in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, eds., *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*. London: E. Arnold, 1965). In traditional Europe the mean age at first marriage for men was later than for women, but both tended to marry in their late rather than their early twenties, and a large proportion of the population (10-15%) never married. This observation produced much speculation about causes and consequences. (It should be noted, however, that with the rise in standard of living resulting from the commercial and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, which facilitated earlier household formation, the traditional marriage pattern unraveled. Until quite recently, marriage age has fallen and the proportion married has risen sharply.) Hartman's book focuses on the forty-year discussion of this theme and adds theorizing of her own, called here a "re-imagining," about its implications. The book is "subversive" presumably because demographic, family, and gender history can be made to seem productive of insights with large implications not perceived by more traditional economic, social, political, intellectual, and cultural history. The chief elements in the discussion, however, were present a generation ago.

In fact, there proved to be at least two traditional European patterns: a southern (Mediterranean) one where there was limitation of marriage but husbands sometimes married later and wives much earlier (in their late teens or early twenties), and a North Western European one where both partners

married later. The author focuses on the North European pattern. Although this was present in Western Germany, Northern France, the Low Countries and England (and by extension New England), the monographic literature surveyed is mostly about England, much of it selected from work of the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure. This is unfortunate since although the author uses the Mediterranean pattern as a foil for her discussion of the North European one, the ample literature about the southern pattern (only works in English, or translated into English, are cited in the footnotes) is largely ignored.

From the later debate about Hajnal's article the author fills in details: the chronology of appearance of the northern pattern (before the mid-fourteenth century?), a possible cause (the need of peasant families on feudal holdings to keep older children at home as a work force?), and property implications (less secure tenure because households were formed later?). The author's chief interest, however, is the gender implications of the traditional pattern. In the continuing tension between men and women, it was easier for men to preserve a male hierarchy of dominance with the younger wives of the Mediterranean pattern than in the northern European one, where husbands and wives were closer in age and thus more equal household partners. Greater equality gave women more power but also created more anxiety about the relationship between the sexes. The author compares two case areas in some depth: Montaignou, in southern France, through the English translation of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's classic study of this fourteenth century heretic Cathar village (*Montaignou: The Promised Land of Error*. [1978]) and Salem, Massachusetts, through the work of recent scholars studying the witchcraft trials of the 1690s. The author's gendered elaboration of Hajnal's model does not fit seamlessly into the historical cases. At Montaignou wives do seem to have been quite subservient to husbands; they were treated more as mothers of children than as helpmates, and they tended not to be Cathars. But the author criticizes Le Roy Ladurie's interpretation on ideological grounds for not perfectly fitting her model without appealing to further evidence (even though the Latin source he used is published) or referring to studies of other Mediterranean communities. At Salem more studies are available. Still it is unclear whether the greater power of wives that led women to make denunciations of witchcraft to further enhance their power was more important, or rather the greater anxiety of husbands that led men to join the

witch hunt in an effort to protect property from women. Other circumstances of Salem in this period are partly explored.

The traditional marriage pattern developed in peasant society. One wishes in this book for more discussion of aristocratic or middle class elites (both men and women) who are generally more interesting to historians because they are more articulate and better documented. Upper class families presumably experienced the same kind of pressures that peasant families did, but they may have expressed them differently and elaborated different outcomes. But the author passes directly from peasant society to “large social processes,” although the means of arriving at these is unclear: the Reformation, the English revolutions of the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment (labeled here the “so-called Enlightenment” [209]), the French Revolution, capitalism, industrialization, democratization, modernization. “Most women and men had no sense that familial arrangements that had emerged first among the peasant masses played any part in their attitudes or actions” (230). One misses here the “affective individualism” that more traditional historians say softened family relationships in the upper classes through the Enlightenment and helped eventually to mitigate the suffering even of unwed mothers oppressed by clerically upheld patriarchy in such places as Italy and Ireland. The author’s “re-imagining” of history goes beyond what can be sustained in the book.

Interest in this kind of demographic family history has waned in recent years, and younger historians have returned to elaborating traditional modes of history in new ways. But women’s history has developed splendidly. Perhaps readers should be advised to seek out other more rounded works in this field before accepting this one at face value.

Jesús Escobar. *The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xxvii + 347 pp. + 123 illus. \$85.00. Review by ELIZABETH R. WRIGHT, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA.

The title of this book gives an understated distillation of Jesús Escobar’s wide-ranging, multi-faceted fusion of social and architectural history. His point of departure is the ambitious and sophisticated urban planning enterprise designed to give Madrid a central plaza (*plaza mayor*). But from here, he provides a dense, scrupulously researched, and meticulously documented study of how early modern people of all social echelons engaged their urban