

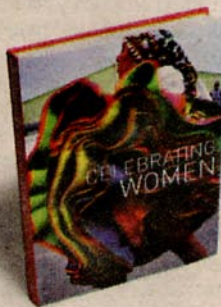
| ROAD READS |

BOOK: "Celebrating Women," by Paola Gianturco (powerHouse Books, \$49.95)

TARGET AUDIENCE: Anyone with a mother.

QUICK TAKE: In Swaziland, virgins are honored, even by the king, at the annual Reed Dance. It's an ancient

ceremony with an urgent, modern subtext: the reduction of teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. In Vienna, women play dress-up at a masked ball



BY JULIA EWAN—THE WASHINGTON POST

where every dance is a "ladies' choice." In Finland, couples compete in an international "wife-carrying" contest where, to discourage anorexia, the prize is the woman's weight in beer. Photojournalist Gianturco combines some of the most striking portraiture this side of National Geographic with insightful reportage from familiar as well as remote parts of the globe: matronly commanders of the kitchen on Guadeloupe; Swedish girls wearing crowns of lighted candles to become Sankta Lucia; celebrants in Calcutta beheading young goats to honor a Hindu war goddess.

Gianturco makes a decidedly unpreachy case for the power of women and girls. Even the Miss America pageant, often dismissed as the apotheosis of superficiality, shows women thinking and doing. "I am here for the scholarships," declares Miss South Dakota. "Why else would anyone wear these ridiculous shoes?"

RANT: Glossy paper and an assertively modern typeface sometimes make the text difficult to read, and that's a crime.

RAVE: A big, beautiful book—too rich to stay on the coffee table. —Jerry V. Haines