

the British Columbia bar from 1986 until 1990, this book asks whether young lawyers in that province have managed to remove or reduce barriers that historically prevented women from fully engaging in the practice of law.

Interviewees were asked why they entered the profession and their current position within it, whether they had ever experienced discrimination at work, where their style of practice fell in the continuum of conciliatory to adversarial, and how they balanced their career and personal lives. Brockman establishes that the men and women involved in the study were more alike than different and that their experiences diverged because of gender. For example, men and women entered the profession for similar reasons, took a similar approach to their style of practice, and held similar status in the profession for the initial years of their practice. However, women were less likely to advance to the partnership level, less likely to have children after being called to the bar, and more likely to reduce their hours of work when they did.

Brockman successfully meets the challenge of taking an academic study and making it accessible to the general reader. By including anecdotes taken from interviews, the author manages to give her study a human face that nicely illustrates her overall conclusions. For example, the trouble many female lawyers face in balancing family and career is made only too real when the reader is presented with examples such as one pregnant lawyer who was still seeing clients when her contractions were nine minutes apart and another who took her dictaphone into the delivery room so that she could do as much work as possible before giving birth. The only flaw in the presentation of Brockman's findings lies in her use of percentages to explain how the interviewees' responses broke down. It would have been more effective to use diagrams more often.

That female lawyers still face barriers will probably come as no surprise to readers. But the value of this work lies in its identification of exactly what barriers still exist. Brockman shows us that simply ensuring that an equal number of men and women graduate from law school and are then hired into entry level positions at firms will not result in equality within the upper levels of the profession so long as the standard by which a lawyer's success is measured remains that of the old boys' club. Women with no household or child care responsibilities who are willing to join in, or at least tolerate, some level of sexual harassment might be accepted and achieve partnership but others will not. Although this study examines the experiences of lawyers in one province, *Gender in the Legal Profession* raises important questions about the culture of the legal profession in general and provides a template for an examination of the experiences of lawyers throughout Canada.

Tammy Moore
University of New Brunswick

Gender and Community: Muslim Women's Rights in India. Vrinda Narain. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2001+202 pages; ISBN 0-8020-4869-2; \$50.00 (cloth).

Gender and Community: Muslim Women's Rights in India by Vrinda Narain, focuses on the situation of Muslim women in India. It assesses the constitutional validity of discriminatory personal law, the perceived opposition between women's rights and group rights, the manipulation of personal law reform to reify patriarchal notions of culture and identity, and the implications of state policy towards the accommodation of difference for women's rights. The legal status of Muslim women within the family is a topic of considerable debate, especially in a multicultural country like India. This is a complex issue that has implications for matters of not only gender equality but also religious freedom, minority rights, and state policy regarding the accommodation of difference. Whereas the Constitution of India guarantees equality rights to all women, Vrinda Narain has argued by citing various cases and judgments from High Court and Supreme Court that Muslim personal law discriminates on the basis of an individual's sex and religion. The book clearly argues that an interrogation of the dominant religious ideology is necessary to prevent legislation from binding Muslim women to an essentialist notion of identity that denies them the possibility of challenging Muslim traditions.

Muslim women's interests are subsumed under the presumed needs of the Muslim collective identity. The state thus reinforces women's subordinate status by buttressing patriarchal structures of authority with discriminatory personal law. Arguments of "religion" and "culture" are deployed by fundamentalist leaders to undermine women's rights and to support patriarchal interests. The author argues lucidly with examples how the state, by focusing on collective rights, has disregarded internal divisions within the groups and has marginalized women's interests. The book clearly points out that if the accommodation of religion-cultural difference can only be achieved at the expense of women's rights, then one has to interrogate whose notion of religion and culture this is. The issue of group definition, the policy of the state towards religious difference, women's rights, and the notion of culture are all intertwined. One cannot be unpacked without demystifying the other. By combining feminist analysis and postcolonial and critical race theory with legal analysis, this book offers a fresh look at the conceptualization of women as the markers of cultural community. Narain has skillfully brought to the pages rich data drawn from cases in the High Court and Supreme Court. The book is very crucial in pointing out that rather than seeking to affirm group identity through discriminatory laws the state that truly respects diversity and the rights of all its citizens must engage in constructive dialogue with all members of

society, especially those who are most disadvantaged. Its strength lies in its nuanced understanding of the links and contradictions between gender equality and group autonomy. This book raises a number of issues which seem worthy of further analysis. Eloquent written, cogently argued and substantially researched, this book would be of interest not only to scholars working on and interested in Muslim women but to all those concerned with the issue of accommodation of cultural diversity in a pluralist society.

Rekha Pande
University of Hyderabad
India

The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith. Judith Phillips Stanton, ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003; xlvii + 813 pages; biographical notes; ISBN 0-253-34012-8; \$59.95US (cloth).

This book is an excellent model of feminist scholarship about the past. It makes available for the first time about five hundred letters written by the late eighteenth-century English novelist and poet Charlotte Smith. The editor, Judith Phillips Stanton, supplies extensive notes and a biographical roster of main characters. She helps readers navigate a complex and poignant story by interleaving a chronology of Smith's publications with dates of key events in the story of Smith's twelve children, her marital saga, financial burdens, and legal woes.

Married off at age fifteen, Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) left her spendthrift and abusive husband when she was thirty-eight years old and soon began writing to support herself and her children. Letters detail complex legal circumstances around her father-in-law's estate, which became mired in delays and wranglings familiar to readers of novels by Charles Dickens. But Smith's circumstances were not fiction. Letters speak of her anguish and despair in the face of illness and sore need. She wrote many letters to publishers to propose new projects, but especially to arrange for advances against books in the works. Her fears of destitution materialized particularly in later years when she had no income to afford even very modest housing.

Smith wrote ten novels, poetry, children's books, and a play. Marginalized until recently in literary histories of the eighteenth century and Romanticism, she is currently a hot topic among feminist scholars of British women's writing. Papers on her adaptation of the sonnet form and on her ideas about nature and the sublime, for example, were peppered across this year's conference of one 18th-century studies society. Her poems and novels are widely available in paperback editions, notably those published by Broadview Press.

Judith Phillips Stanton's book is timely in this regard. But it is not literary scholars alone who should celebrate the appearance of this work. Historians of mothering and motherhood should not miss the opportunity for acquaintance with the emotional intensities and social detail of Smith's story. Legal historians will find case studies galore here about estates, trusts, arbitrations, and marriage matters. As a *femme couvert* Charlotte Smith had no right to control her own earnings as an author, and her husband regularly seized them as well as the twice-yearly interest payments from her marriage settlement. Historians of the book will find a splendid resource in letters that bring the world of eighteenth-century booksellers alive. And students of women's life-writing will find treasure troves for analysis.

Stanton, herself a Smith scholar (as well as a current writer of historical romances set in the late 18th-century and Regency periods), searched out Smith letters for about twenty years, making the rounds of libraries, archives, and private collections in England, the United States, and Canada. When this volume was ready to go to press, two other groups of previously unknown and unpublished letters surfaced. Judith Phillips Stanton conveys a palpable sense of excitement about the discovery of these further resources for piecing together different ways of understanding Smith's life and work. Stanton has not given us, however, every letter she collected, for many letters rehearse the same themes and catalogue the same grievances.

As much as this collection makes the past come alive, it also gives us a lens on the realities of one particular person, a woman with an often abrasive personality. Charlotte Smith's life really was a litany of anguish. Her beloved daughter Augusta died of consumption soon after a difficult and tragic pregnancy, and her other adult children - and their children - were dependent on her across the years. Her estranged husband did not relent in making her life miserable. She had rheumatoid arthritis and at times could not hold a pen. Because she had to move around so much, ever in search of less expensive places to live, she could not carry her books with her, and she gives voice to her despair about being without materials so central to her sense of self. Where the rights of her children were concerned, however, she was insistent and determined to work to secure a better financial path for them. It is astonishing that in the midst of all her hard times Charlotte Smith wrote such thoughtful and politically alert novels as *The Young Philosopher* (1798), her late children's work *Conversations Introducing Poetry, Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History* (1804), and the majestic posthumously published poem "Beachey Head" (1807).

The letters in this long-awaited volume are organized in chronological sections, from an early piece dated 1765, to the last letter, dated September 20, 1806, five weeks before Charlotte Smith died. Judith Phillips Stanton's introduction acknowledges the challenge of