

biographical information that makes so many of the entries in the compendium fascinating and readable beyond the scope of a standard reference book.

The explanation of the process through which Dagg defined the parameters for this collection is equally interesting and informative. The guidelines that Dagg sets out not only demonstrate the necessary limitations imposed on the material with which she was confronted - for example, defining a "book" quite rigidly to mean a publication over 48 pages, or excluding cookbooks, manuals, and school primers, and the decision to include books that straddle the line between fiction and non-fiction - but also open up a space for further research into the works that fall outside of the definitions and limits of this work. What is surprising is that with the number of limitations that Dagg has set for her book, the compendium is still so full of variety and material.

Dagg's introduction also outlines the purposes behind the writing of non-fiction for women, particularly women in the nineteenth-century. She explores the material circumstances of the production of these texts, and the intellectual and political climate within which the texts were produced. Ultimately, *The Feminine Gaze* is, and will be, a good source for historians of Canadian women's writing and will provide a broader and more comprehensive context for those interested in the history of women's varied and often surprising participation in Canadian culture.

Karen E Macfarlane
Mount Saint Vincent University

No More Secrets: The Talking Circle- Pt. I; No More Secrets: Understanding Violence Against Women-Pt. II. Sylvia Hamilton, Producer/Director. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Maroon Films and the African Baptist Association Women's Institute, 1999; 2 videos plus workshop guide; \$250.00.

Over the past thirty years, feminist activists and scholars have made tremendous strides in placing the issue of violence against women and children on the public agenda, yet we have done very little to eradicate that violence. Our only solution, in particular with relation to domestic violence, is in the end a very liberal-individualistic one - success is measured by a woman's ability to leave her male partner and become an independently functioning member of society. Other than incarceration, we have made little progress in dealing with the offenders. Court-ordered rehabilitation programs are notoriously ineffective, and the man usually moves on to abuse someone else.

These two videos by Nova Scotia filmmaker Sylvia Hamilton are a courageous effort to find another way to confront the important issue of violence against women.

Many will remember Ms. Hamilton's wonderful NFB film, *Black Mother, Black Daughter* where she first introduced us to the rich cultural heritage of the black women of Nova Scotia, grounded in their local churches. She returns to this community for *No More Secrets*, documenting the struggles of the members of the African United Baptist Association Women's Institute to come to terms with the reality of woman abuse within their own tightly-knit network. This is where the courage comes in - it is no easy thing to undertake this kind of self-critique which can be seen as betraying neighbours and kin, exposing them to unfriendly, even racist outsider scrutiny. The Black community has been subjected to much stereotyping, including the myth that their men are inherently violent. Within their Baptist church, they face a male-dominated leadership which may not always be responsive to this issue. Undeterred, these brave and wise women insist that the problem is one that the community must deal with together, involving both men and women.

Parts I and II are just under 38 and 29 minutes long respectively and are easily divided into shorter thematic sections. They are intended to serve as the basis for group discussions, and come with a clear and helpful workshop guide. The first video takes its inspiration from aboriginal talking/healing circles, bringing together a multi-generational group of African Nova Scotian women to discuss violence against women in their community. The second video gives an overview of woman abuse, relying on survivors of abuse, experts in the field and religious leaders within the Black community. Both videos are essentially introductions to violence against women, presenting many important themes that will serve as a useful entry point for groups of any race or ethnicity new to the issue.

This documentation of a Canadian community coming to grips with gendered violence was made with the financial support of The Women's Program of Status of Women Canada and the Multiculturalism Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. It's really heartening for once to see our tax dollars being spent wisely to support such a worthwhile and important project.

Katherine M.J. McKenna
The University of Western Ontario

Gender in the Legal Profession: Fitting or Breaking the Mould. Joan Brockman. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2001; xiii+259 pages; ISBN 0-7748-0835-7; \$29.95 (paper).

Joan Brockman presents a compelling look into the experiences of one hundred members of British Columbia's legal profession. Based on interviews conducted with fifty male and fifty female lawyers called to

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