

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.

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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

working on a writer who was difficult, and whom it would have been hard to be a loyal and patient friend to, whether in the 1790s or now.

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Families, Labour and Love: Family Diversity in a Changing World. Maureen Baker. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001; xii + 316 pages; ISBN 0-7748-0849-7; \$24.95 (paper).

Maureen Baker is the respected author of many Canadian family sociology textbooks. In *Families, Labour and Love*, she offers substantive comparisons of different aspects of Canadian family life with Australia and New Zealand. This choice is based on similarities in the three countries' family policies, demographics, and the presence of similar socioeconomic groups and populations of indigenous peoples.

The comparisons are done with reliance "mainly on a political economy and feminist perspective" (243). The feminist perspective is particularly evident throughout the book, through attention to gender divisions and inequalities in all areas of family life, including the division of paid and unpaid work (such as child care) as well as the negative consequences (dependence, poverty, violence) of these inequalities on women and children. Additionally, chapter four gives a useful overview of the main theoretical perspectives. The two new areas of theorizing, namely the emerging emphasis on fatherhood and the rethinking of emotions and intimacy in families, should be of particular interest to researchers in the area of family sociology.

While addressing similarities and differences among the three countries, the book's main theme of diversity is found in two early chapters which contrast the family lives of colonizers, the colonized peoples, and recent immigrants. There are also extensive discussions of different family forms (two-parent, one-parent, married, cohabiting, divorced, remarried). Considering recent legislative changes regarding same-sex marriages and rights (at least in Canada), this would be something to add to future editions of this book.

As with other of Maureen Baker's family textbooks, this one is well written and easy to follow, making it an ideal university text. The three-country comparisons, by and large, are crisp and cogent. Chapters seven, eight, and nine give solid comparative data and discussions on families and gender division of paid and unpaid work; separation, divorce and remarriage; and state regulation of family life. Chapter nine is particularly informative, focusing on the similarities in the three countries' welfare state regimes and the ill effects of welfare state restructuring on family life, including the increased

emphasis on traditional "family values."

Nevertheless, there is some unevenness in the quantity and presentation of information in some areas. For example, chapter three on settler families and segments on relationship violence in chapter five rely nearly completely on Canadian data. Overall, there is an abundance of materials from Canada and New Zealand, but less so from Australia. This is most evident in chapter six on childhood, reproduction, and child care where a comparison of Canada and New Zealand dominates. Other sets of comparative information from American and European family research are also occasionally used to enhance the three-country comparison.

Families, Labour and Love is a valuable addition to the textbooks in this area. It offers a good overview of the main theories and issues in family sociology while bringing welcome attention to global diversities and similarities in an era that requires us to look both within and beyond the borders of nation-states. Students and instructors will also benefit from the glossary of main terms, and the lists of thought-provoking discussion questions attached to each chapter.

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Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England. Joy Dixon. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001; illustrations; xix + 293 pages; ISBN 0-8018-6499-2; \$46.00US (cloth).

Feminist studies of women and religion may be seen to fall into a number of general categories. One is confessional. Whether conventionally religious (e.g., Christian) or "alternative" (e.g., New Age, Wiccan), these studies are intended for adherents, to help them understand and explore their own tradition. Another category is critical/analytical, in which the religious tradition being engaged is subject to feminist assessment regarding the degree to which the tradition is empowering or damaging to women (generally the latter.) Both of these are normative, insofar as they presume a certain central truth (in the tradition, in the first instance, and in feminism in the second) by which religious traditions and their adherents may be judged. While each has its place, there is still other important work to be done, specifically with regard to women's historical and material engagement in, and articulation of, religious and quasi-religious organizations and ideas. Neither advocacy nor denunciation, this kind of scholarly work is lamentably rarer than it ought to be. Joy Dixon's meticulous and brilliant study of the relationship between the feminist movement and esoteric (alternative) spirituality in England stands as a model for how such work ought to be undertaken in the future.