

ages but most are in the young to middle adult range. They are all feminists and they explore what that means to them, and how they arrived at their current understanding of both meaningful feminism and its limitations or pitfalls. In spite of its apparent general appeal, this book is limited by the fact that the writers are all privileged and almost exclusively heterosexual.

The title is great. The mere mention of it generates conversation. All of us, every woman out there, have thought at some point: "Yes, I feel like such a bitch." Or our friends remind us that, "Yes, you are a bitch". This book holds up the goodness of being a bitch. It gets us to a place we need to be. It forces us to look at our own anger and resentments.

The essays are reflective. The writers tell their stories with humility, sharing what worked for them without prescribing for others. For some, confronting their own issues led to deconstructing their parents' relationships with a consequent surfacing of compassion and acceptance. For readers, too, following the writer's life events can be an invitation to a reflective path. The reader can think again about her own relationships, marriage, divorce, or motherhood, what it has meant to be a feminist and what it means yet again in the present.

One of the most revealing, honest and poignant essays was Elisa Schappell's piece, "Crossing the Line in the Sand, How Mad Can Mother Get?" It will comfort others to read and be reassured that they are not the only mother out there who came close to hurting her children and later feeling the pent-up emotion that comes with the knowledge of what could have happened in those moments of anger, resentment, and frustration. And then even later realizing how much they love those same kids and how repentant they are for their actions. Parenting is an emotional roller coaster ride and this is a gracious and compassionate essay that offers the reader reassurance she is

not alone in the struggle to be the perfect parent.

Chitra Divakaruni, the award-winning author of the novel, *The Mistress of Spices*, tells of the struggle she encounters living in sunny California and the expectations placed upon her by Indian relatives every summer, all summer long. Expectations and perceptions that grow out of our cultural background are a theme here.

"A Man in the Heart," by Hazel McClay, calls us to the task of asking that all-important question: what is really important for my life, what can I live without and what is it that I really have to have? McClay says that, "I look at the kinds of passions Charlie and I do have...a passion for high jinks and laughter, for music and the open road. For truth. For courage. Integrity. Imagination. And each other.... This is something that has never happened to me before. And it means more to me than a hundred breathless fucks." Tellingly, honesty at this level still isn't quite acceptable. McClay is one of three contributors who use pseudonyms.

Halfway through the book it felt like heavy reading. The theme that appeared to have taken over was getting a bit wearying. However, 3/4 of the way through the interest peaked again. At the end the reader will be grateful for the stories and the reflection that they stimulated.

## **MODERN WOMEN MODERNIZING MEN: THE CHANGING MISSIONS OF THREE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN ASIA AND AFRICA, 1902-69.**

Ruth Brouwer Comptom  
Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002

REVIEWED BY CLARA THOMAS

Ruth Brouwer's subjects, Choné Oliver (1875-1947), Florence

Murray (1894-1975) and Margaret Wrong (1887-1948), became professional women, missionaries in the broadest sense, in the years when the entire missionary enterprise was in transition. Growing concerns about professional training and a broadening and secularizing of missionary activities gradually replaced the early narrow, church-oriented ideal. No longer would it be taken for granted that women missionaries would work primarily, or solely, with women. These three women spent their careers in a mission world that was changing: each one of them was an important agent of its change.

Oliver, whose father was a business man and the first mayor of the town of Ingersoll, Ontario, became a Medical Missionary in India in 1902. Her sponsor was the Presbyterian Church of Canada (later the United Church). In 1929 she was appointed the first full-time secretary of the Christian Medical Association of India. For the rest of her life the upgrading of medical education in India became her project and crusade. She was fervent in her expressions of Christian faith, but she was also thoroughly secular and, indeed, ahead of her time, in her determination to improve medical training. She could not and would not be contained in any narrow definition of women's place in the practice of medicine: Brouwer quotes one colleague, "probably male," who spoke of "her manly sense joined to her female tenderness." The rising tides of Indian nationalism encouraged her in the task she had already set herself—the training of native Indians to the highest standards in medicine and nursing. She was a gifted and efficient bureaucrat who learned to navigate successfully the many roadblocks she encountered in achieving her goal. Her work left its lasting imprint on the entire medical missionary enterprise.

Florence Murray, a Presbyterian minister's daughter from Atlantic Canada, was the superintendent of a large mission hospital in Japanese-ruled Korea from 1921 to 1942 when,

because of wartime conditions, she was one of four Canadians repatriated. In 1946 she was invited to return, to help in the establishment of a medical training programme for women at the Ewha women's University in Seoul. Again in 1950 when war broke out, she was forced to leave Korea, but she was back in 1951 helping refugees and working on a Danish Red Cross hospital ship. Far less conventionally "womanly" than Oliver, Murray spoke her mind freely and with decision. Her chief concerns, like Oliver's, were standards of training for medical personnel, but she was also an activist beyond her immediate professional field. She involved herself in the education of local people about all aspects of public health, especially with regard to tuberculosis and leprosy. After her mandatory retirement in 1969, she returned to Halifax, and busied herself with promoting Canadian links with Korea in all fields, and in urging overseas service on the young: "[such service is] an adventure in understanding and building world peace...the whole world is waiting." She contributed to religious life wherever she was, but she was a doctor first and always. Male colleagues who knew her professionally and personally were unlikely to challenge her authority: she was both an recognized professional and a formidable adversary, crisply outspoken and sometimes acerbic in her opinions.

In 1929, Margaret Wrong of Toronto, whose Anglican family had produced distinguished Canadian educational, political and social leaders for three generations, began to travel through sub-Saharan Africa as secretary of the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa. Throughout the thirties and until her death in 1948 she covered tens of thousands of miles and constantly expanded the range of her materials. She was vitally interested in encouraging African writers who would work in their own languages as well as readers of all ages, and her

interpretation of her responsibilities went far beyond any narrow mission-oriented definition. Hers was a much different sphere of influence from Oliver's or Wrong's. Her long-time companion, Margaret Read, was an anthropologist with a special interest in the roles of women and children in African societies. These concerns became Wrong's as well. Her family's prominence meant that she had valuable connections to officialdom wherever she went, and she became a respected voice in the promotion of education for both men and women throughout Africa. After her death a number of prominent men and women in Africa and England set up the Margaret Wrong Prize, to be awarded to African writers. Both Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, leading writers of post-colonial Nigeria, were among its recipients.

The "modernizing men" of Brouwer's title refers to the gradual but inevitable effect of the work of these women and others like them on male colleagues, both western colleagues in the missionary enterprise and Indians, Koreans, and Africans. Traditionally, women missionaries' work had been considered to be primarily for women and too often had been restricted to women only. Brouwer's three women were leaders among those who pushed back the boundaries: they were secure in their training and professional skills and they blazed their own trails and trails for those who followed them. Men in the mission fields and in bureaucratic officialdom finally had no choice but to follow them: progressively, if often grudgingly, their professionalism, dedication, and success were acknowledged and emulated.

Brouwer has done meticulous research for this book, including travelling to India, Africa, and Korea to gather first-hand information about the work these women did and the legacies of achievement and good will they left behind. Her Appendix I lists the personal interviews she

conducted for each woman and her end-notes and bibliography alone constitute a remarkable resource for future scholars. From the beginning, she makes it clear that her book is not to be thought of as biographical; however, inevitably, there are occasional vignettes from her subjects' lives or quotations from their letters that leave the reader wishing for more. Each of these women was remarkable for her own or any day: each of them is well worthy of a separate biography and should be so honoured. Each of them left accounts of her life's work which would provide excellent biographical source material. This volume adds a considerable dimension to our record of Canadian women's contribution to the broadening and professionalizing of the missionary endeavour.

## **LINKING SEXUALITY AND GENDER: NAMING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA.**

Tracy J. Trothen  
Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press,  
2003

REVIEWED BY CATHERINE  
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*Linking Sexuality and Gender: Naming Violence against Women in the United Church of Canada*, should be of interest to any one concerned about the influence of religious discourse on the formation of social policy in Canada. Trothen, a feminist theologian and ethicist, creates an historical account of why it took so long for the United Church to name violence against women as a moral issue requiring church action. She draws on official Records of Proceedings to re-construct the church's approach to human sexuality and women's roles in the