

sociologique de ce nouveau type d'exercice de paternité et de maternité ainsi que les nouveaux rapports sociaux de sexes qu'il suscite. Entre autres, le partage des soins exige du père une implication quotidienne auprès de ses enfants (à condition de ne pas tout déléguer à la nouvelle conjointe...). Cela diminue la surcharge de travail habituellement réservée aux femmes dans le cadre de la famille nucléaire. Ceci dit, l'ouvrage ne passe pas sous silence les nombreuses difficultés que rencontrent les parents qui ont adopté ce modèle d'éducation. On comprend la difficulté, voire même l'impossibilité, de répandre ce type d'entente, qui ne doit manifestement pas être imposée par les tribunaux pour fonctionner.

Symbole de l'égalité entre les sexes, ce modèle présente néanmoins des asymétries (toujours en défaveur des mères). Par contre, il favorise grandement la responsabilisation des pères quant aux soins des enfants, ce qui améliore le lien père-enfant tout en permettant aux femmes de partager leur traditionnel monopole des services domestiques invisibles. Comme quoi ce qui est bon pour les enfants peut l'être autant pour les parents!

Cet ouvrage nourrira la réflexion des parents en situation de rupture. Souhaitons que les législateurs tiendront compte des données recueillies par la sociologue dans leurs interventions et leurs décisions en matière de garde légal.

The Storyteller: Memories, Secrets, Magic and Lies

Anna Porter. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2000.

Time To Be In Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography

P.D. James. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf: 1999.

BY CLARA THOMAS

In the "Golden Years" of the '70s and early '80s, when Canadian Literature was flourishing as never before, Jack McClelland, "The Canadian Publisher," reigned supreme, and Anna Porter was his first lieutenant. Everyone who worked with her admired her easy friendliness, her publishing smarts—and her beauty. Everyone was also intrigued by the aura of mystery around her, a rumoured Hungarian childhood signalled by her slight and immensely attractive accent. Now she has unlocked her past for us, presenting in *The Storyteller* an engrossing account of her history—her family's and Hungary's. This is personalized and made into a remarkably suspenseful story by her presentation of its main character, the StoryTeller himself, her grandfather, Vili Racz.

In a way remarkably reminiscent of Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, where through his stories Christie Logan gave Morag Gunn her past and the past of her family, Vili, with his granddaughter Anna tagging after him as soon as she could walk, gave her a priceless gift of, as she calls it, memory, secrets, magic and lies. The lies rest within the inevitable distortions of memory and the considerable differences in various individuals' recollections of events. For instance, from time to time Porter's Aunt Leah applies a corrective spin,

or her own spin, to Vili's more full-blown tales. In general, however, the story is Vili's as told to Anna, filtered through her growing awareness, and finally treasured and restated for her daughters' maturity and her own family's historical archive.

In Laurence's work, Christie Logan was Manawaka's garbage collector and thus the repository of the town's secrets. When Morag came to live with him and Prin, his wife, he began to do for her what Vili did for the small Anna: he gave her the stories she needed, of her family and her ancestors. It is fascinating to see the same process in Porter's work, an ongoing process that quickly engages the reader and generates a real suspense. Of course, there is more than a little symmetry about the historic past of Hungary and the Racz family and that of Scotland and Morag's Scottish ancestors. Both have been at the mercy of marauding armies and both have been denied any constant nationhood.

Anna Porter has written three detective stories herself, and her leaning towards fiction shows itself strongly from start to finish in *The Storyteller*. She has indeed material in her family experiences that begs for the techniques of fiction: Vili, his lost estates, Olympic prowess, and universal popularity; his wife Therese, beautiful and long-suffering for Vili cannot resist extra-marital adventures; three beautiful daughters, each of them an adventuress in her own way. Sari was the eldest, who, with her husband decamped to Austria early in the war and later, much later, helped the family find sanctuary in New Zealand. Leah was the dedicated party girl who during the war became a truck driver, suffered and recovered from a horrendous episode of rape and always, through years of amorous adventures, did her best for the family. Puci is Anna Porter's mother who, with Anna, escaped Hungary to New Zealand during the Russian domination but not without hair-raising adventures including capture and jail as they

tried to reach and cross the Austrian border.

Anna's account of her own wandering of the streets of Budapest during the days of Hungary's brief and cruelly suppressed revolution of the fifties is the climax of the book:

We walked the length of Rakoczi street each day, stepping around the piled-up stones, mangled street-car lines, burnt-out tanks and shells of cars. There were unclaimed bodies on the sidewalks and bits of other bodies on the street where tanks had run over and squashed them into pulp.... By All Saints' Day most of the bodies had been claimed. That night the city was lit by thousands of candles as the people mourned for their dead. In Kerepesi Cemetery there were thousands of new graves with hastily carved markers. Farmers did a great business selling white lilies from their horse-drawn carts.

From her early childhood she remembers her own father just once, when he appeared the Christmas she was six and quickly disappeared again. Her final story of finding him again in Canada decades later and her two visits with him before his death, neither of them satisfactory, is movingly told and all too believable. Families cruelly scattered by war and forced emigration are only too often fractured beyond mending.

P.D. James is currently one of England's best-known and best-selling detective story writers. In devising her early detective, Cordelia Gray, she was a pioneer in giving a young woman the central detecting role; Adam Dalgleish, now long established as her crime-solver, has become as familiar a name in the literature of crime as Inspector Morse, Albert Campion or Peter Wimsey. She has written her Memoir largely out of self defense and the protection of her own privacy. Having refused would-be biographers, she has ca-

pitulated to the wishes of her daughters and grandchildren, devising a novel structure for her reminiscences. She goes through an entire year (1997) keeping a Journal and taking off from her dated entries into a roughly chronological memory journey through her life. Her method allows her to move freely between present events, the publication of *A Certain Justice*, for instance, and all the obligatory publicity connected with it, the musings on her past and the development of her writing life that it brings to mind.

Although an accomplished fiction writer, she does not adopt the characterization techniques that make Porter's story so vivid, preferring to remain very much the centre of her own story, a hard-working, deeply conservative and extremely public-spirited woman in her late seventies. For thirty years she was a competent administrator in a variety of public service jobs, including hospital administration and positions in the Home Office, where her friendships with members of New Scotland Yard and the Forensic Science Service have been of inestimable help in researching her books. For almost all of that time she was a single mother responsible for two daughters, owing to the mental illness and death, in the early sixties, of her hopelessly war-damaged husband. Friends and family are very dear to her and public service is dutifully undertaken—in fact the book is amazingly full of occasions where she has spoken or presided, a laywoman and a devout churchwoman with a sense of service one usually associates with times past. In 1991 she was created Baroness James of Holland Park and has thereby extended her area of service into the House of Lords

Her family was anything but prosperous, existing perilously close to the border of real poverty, but always, she excelled in school. To her great good fortune, when she was eleven, her father who worked in the Income Tax Office, was transferred to Cambridge and she was enrolled

in the Cambridge High School For Girls. "My father found the 4 pounds which was the termly fee. For this I shall always be grateful." Since childhood, she says, she had wanted to write novels, and when the time was finally ripe, she simply began a detective story, attracted by its popularity, and also, importantly, by the structure it requires, a feature particularly attractive to her. *Cover Her Face* (1962) was far more of a success than she had dreamed possible and from then on, her avocation speedily became a vocation.

As an account of a wide variety of happenings in a year in the life of an author all detective story readers know and respect, *Time To Be Earnest* is interesting; but more than that, James's musings on the art and craft of writing are the really valuable part of her book:

Too many male crime writers, obsessed with violence and with the search for what they, a uniquely privileged generation, see as the gritty reality which they have never personally experienced, are portraying a world as nihilistic as it is bloody. Perhaps it is to the women we must look for psychological subtlety and the exploration of moral choice, which for me are at the heart of even the most grittily realistic of crime fiction.

Many such passages give *A Time To Be Earnest* its unique distinction.

Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800

Vivien Jones, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000

BY NATALIE NEILL

In her discussion of the com-modification of literature in the eighteenth