

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

century, Vivien Jones notes:

The new genre of reviewing ... underlies this commodity status: it helps the book-buying audience make choices by describing new publications; it also makes the subject-matter of those publications into a form of shared cultural capital, available for discussion by the eighteenth century's chattering classes.

Besides giving this reviewer pause for thought, Jones's comment is illustrative of the deeply interrogative approach of *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*. This scholarly book is a treasury of new essays on the social and material contexts of British women's writing in the eighteenth century. Edited with an introduction by Vivien Jones, the collection rigorously examines women's literature in the broadest sense of the term. The contributors discuss a range of writing, from novels, poems, polemical essays and political pamphlets, to "conduct manuals," legal documents, popular songs, periodicals and life-writing. The book further acknowledges the wide-ranging contributions of women to eighteenth-century writing; as such, writers like Jane Austen, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft are studied alongside eighteenth-century women scholars, printers, booksellers and readers.

Vivien Jones's introduction emphasizes the impact of the burgeoning commercial print culture on women's literacy and definitions of femininity. Across the volume, women's participation in all aspects of literary production is highlighted, and print culture is defined as being at once democratizing and gendered. The essays are characterized by a commitment to situate literature within larger social frames of reference. The book's overarching thesis is that the values and representations promoted or challenged in eight-

eenth-century women's literature and the circumstances affecting literary production are mutually constitutive. In spite of a general methodological commitment to cultural criticism, the contributors discuss a range of women writers, both "canonical" and obscure, and engage with such diverse yet connected issues as women's education, class, consumerism, morality and prescribed gender roles.

The collection is organized into two broad sections. The first part examines the way various cultural institutions contributed to the articulation of the "feminine." These essays deal with questions of female education, connections between gender and race representation, the legal system's protection and exacerbation of certain regressive ideas about women in society, and women's presence in the efflorescent print trade of the period. In many of these essays representative texts are used to illustrate arguments. Felicity A. Nussbaum's essay "Women and Race: 'A Difference of Complexion'," examines the theme of "complexion" in Sarah Scott's novel *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) in order to probe the insidiousness of sexist-racist discourses in eighteenth-century Britain. In the essay "Women's Status as Legal and Civic Subjects," which foregrounds the legal and monetary issues informing eighteenth-century women's writing, Gillian Skinner refers to Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) in articulating her thesis about the economic contexts of marriage. Other essays in this section use primary documentary sources to interrogate and challenge popular ideas that recur in eighteenth-century literary scholarship itself. The final essay in the section, Jan Fergus's "Women Readers: A Case Study," provides a fascinating discussion about the demographics of women readers in the 1700s based on a careful study of the records of two Midlands booksellers.

The second half of *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800*

largely addresses questions of literary genre and representation. It comprises an array of essays which emphasize what Jones terms "the differences among and within eighteenth-century women'[s]" writing. These essays describe the varied landscape of women's literature in the 1700s, highlighting the range of transgeneric texts produced by women writers. Isobel Grundy's essay "(Re)discovering Women's Texts" serves as an appropriate introduction to the second part of the book. In it she discusses eighteenth-century women's literature in terms of accessibility and canon formation. Other notable essays in the latter half of this collection examine women and poetry, women and theatre, and women and popular culture.

Vivien Jones, a senior lecturer in the School of English at the University of Leeds, has published widely on eighteenth-century women's literature. She has edited several books including *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (1990) and a Penguin Classics edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1996). *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800* is one in a series of "women and literature" collections published by the Cambridge University Press. The series includes *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, edited by Carol M. Meale, and *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, edited by Helen Wilcox. A collection dealing with the nineteenth century, edited by Joanne Shattock, is slated for publication in August 2001.