

□ Contemporary
Literary Criticism

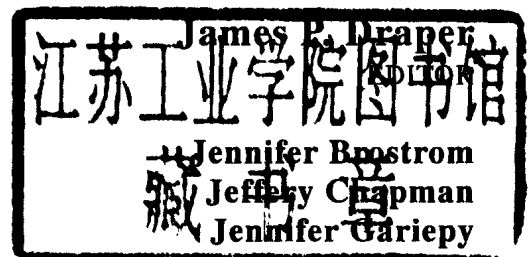
CLC

78

Volume 78

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Excerpts from Criticism of the Works
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and
Other Creative Writers



Christopher Giroux

Drew Kalasky

Thomas Ligotti

Kyung-Sun Lim

Brigham Narins

Sean René Pollock

Janet Witalec

ASSOCIATE EDITORS



Gale Research Inc. • DETROIT • WASHINGTON, D.C. • LONDON

STAFF

James P. Draper, *Editor*

Jennifer Brostrom, Jeffery Chapman, Jennifer Gariepy, Christopher Giroux, Drew Kalasky, Thomas Ligotti,
Kyung-Sun Lim, Brigham Narins, Sean René Pollock, Janet Witalec, *Associate Editors*

Joseph Cislo, Nancy Dziedzic, Margaret Haerens, Mali Purkayastha, Lynn M. Spampinato, *Assistant Editors*

Jeanne A. Gough, *Permissions & Production Manager*

Linda M. Pugliese, *Production Supervisor*

Donna Craft, Paul Lewon, Maureen Puhl, Camille P. Robinson, Sheila Walencewicz, *Editorial Associates*
Elizabeth Anne Valliere, *Editorial Assistant*

Sandra C. Davis, *Permissions Supervisor (Text)*

Maria L. Franklin, Josephine M. Keene, Michele Lonoconus, Shalice Shah, Denise Singleton, Kimberly F. Smilay,
Permissions Associates

Jennifer A. Arnold, Brandy C. Merritt, *Permissions Assistants*

Margaret A. Chamberlain, *Permissions Supervisor (Pictures)*

Pamela A. Hayes, Keith Reed, *Permissions Associates*

Susan Brohman, Arlene Johnson, Barbara A. Wallace, *Permissions Assistants*

Victoria B. Cariappa, *Research Manager*

Maureen Richards, *Research Supervisor*

Robert S. Lazich, Mary Beth McElmeel, Donna Melnychenko, Tamara C. Nott, *Editorial Associates*

Karen Farrelly, Kelly Hill, Julie Leonard, Stefanie Scarlett, *Editorial Assistants*

Mary Beth Trimper, *Production Director*

Shanna Heilveil, *Production Assistant*

Cynthia Baldwin, *Art Director*


Barbara J. Yarrow, *Graphic Services Supervisor*

C. J. Jonik, *Desktop Publisher*

Willie F. Mathis, *Camera Operator*

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, Gale Research Inc. neither guarantees the accuracy of the data contained herein nor assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions or discrepancies. Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984. 

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

All rights to this publication will be vigorously defended.

Copyright © 1994
Gale Research Inc.
835 Penobscot Building
Detroit, MI 48226-4094

All rights reserved including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 76-38938
ISBN 0-8103-4986-8
ISSN 0091-3421

Printed in the United States of America
Published simultaneously in the United Kingdom
by Gale Research International Limited
(An affiliated company of Gale Research Inc.)
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2



The trademark ITP is used under license.

Preface

A Comprehensive Information Source on Contemporary Literature

Named "one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years" by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 2,000 authors now living or who died after December 31, 1959. Previous to the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC*, therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially important to today's reader.

Scope of the Series

CLC presents significant passages from published criticism of works by creative writers. Since many of the authors covered by *CLC* inspire continual critical commentary, writers are often represented in more than one volume. There is, of course, no duplication of reprinted criticism.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or dramatic production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science fiction writers, literary and social critics, foreign writers, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups within the United States.

Format of the Book

Each *CLC* volume contains about 500 individual excerpts taken from hundreds of book review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning from the beginning of an author's career to the most current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other published writings that offer insight into the author's works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the generous excerpts and supplementary material in *CLC* provide them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

Features

A *CLC* author entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the author's name in the form under which the author has most commonly published, followed by birth date, and death date when applicable. Uncertainty as to a birth or death date is indicated by a question mark.
- A **Portrait** of the author is included when available.
- A brief **Biographical and Critical Introduction** to the author and his or her work precedes the excerpted criticism. The first line of the introduction provides the author's full name, pseudonyms (if applicable), nationality, and a listing of genres in which the author has written. Previous volumes of *CLC* in which the author has been featured are also listed in the introduction.
- A list of **Principal Works** notes the most important works by the author.
- The **Excerpted Criticism** represents various kinds of critical writing, ranging in form from the brief review to the scholarly exegesis. Essays are selected by the editors to reflect the spectrum of opinion about a specific work or about an author's literary career in general. The excerpts are presented chronologically, adding a useful perspective to the entry. All titles by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type, which enables the reader to easily identify the works being discussed. Publication information (such as publisher names and book prices) and parenthetical numerical references (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of a work) have been deleted at the editor's discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.
- Critical essays are prefaced by **Explanatory Notes** as an additional aid to readers. These notes may provide several types of valuable information, including: the reputation of the critic, the importance of the work of criticism, the commentator's approach to the author's work, the purpose of the criticism, and changes in critical trends regarding the author.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** designed to help the user find the original essay or book follows each excerpt.
- A concise **Further Reading** section appears at the end of entries on authors for whom a significant amount of criticism exists in addition to the pieces reprinted in *CLC*. Cross-references to other useful sources published by Gale Research in which the author has appeared are also included: *Children's Literature Review*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Something about the Author*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Drama Criticism*, *Poetry Criticism*, *Short Story Criticism*, *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, and *Something about the Author Autobiography Series*.

Other Features

CLC also includes the following features:

- An **Acknowledgments** section lists the copyright holders who have granted permission to reprint material in this volume of *CLC*. It does not, however, list every book or periodical reprinted or consulted during the preparation of the volume.

- In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale has also produced a **Special Paperbound Edition** of the *CLC* title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers and is published with the first volume of *CLC* issued in each calendar year. Additional copies of the index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index: it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the following year's cumulation.

Citing Contemporary Literary Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in the Literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted in books:

¹Anne Tyler, "Manic Monologue," *The New Republic* 200 (April 17, 1989), 44-6; excerpted and reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Vol. 58, ed. Roger Matuz (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1990), p. 325.

²Patrick Reilly, *The Literature of Guilt: From 'Gulliver' to Golding* (University of Iowa Press, 1988); excerpted and reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Vol. 58, ed. Roger Matuz (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1990), pp. 206-12.

Suggestions Are Welcome

The editor hopes that readers will find *CLC* a useful reference tool and welcomes comments about the work. Send comments and suggestions to: Editor, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Gale Research Inc., Penobscot Building, Detroit, MI 48226-4094.

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpted criticism included in this volume, the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reprint rights, and Anthony Bogucki for assistance with copyright research. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Detroit Library, Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library Complex, and the University of Michigan Libraries for making their resources available to us. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reprint material in this volume of *CLC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN *CLC*, VOLUME 78, WERE REPRINTED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

The Advocate, April 7, 1992 for an interview with Dorothy Allison by Bo Huston. Reprinted by permission of Dorothy Allison and the Literary Estate of Bo Huston.—*The American Poetry Review*, v. 12, November-December, 1983 for "The Contradictions of Frank O'Hara" by James Breslin; v. 19, July-August, 1990 for "Comment: The Feel of a Century" by Marianne Boruch. Copyright © 1983, 1990 by World Poetry, Inc. Both reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*The Antigoniish Review*, n. 47, Autumn, 1981 for "Roch Carrier's Bicycle" by Alexandre L. Amprimoz. Copyright 1981 by the author. Reprinted by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Book World—The Washington Post*, October 1, 1989; October 6, 1991, May 3, 1992. © 1989, 1991, 1992, *The Washington Post*. All reprinted with permission of the publisher.—*Booklist*, v. 86, August, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by The American Library Association.—*Books in Canada*, v. 15, May, 1986./ v. 8, November, 1979 for "Budding Breasts, Brooding Beasts" by Wayne Grady; v. 11, February, 1982 for "Je me souviens" by Wayne Grady; v. XX, November, 1991 for "Innocence and Experience" by Wayne Grady; v. XXI, April, 1992 for "A Celebration of Difference" by Janice Kulyk Keefer. All reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*boundary 2*, vs. VI & VII, Spring & Fall, 1978. Copyright © *boundary 2*, 1978. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The Canadian Forum*, v. LXI, February, 1982./ v. L. September, 1970 for "La Guerre, Yes Sir!" by Mark Levene; v. IV, July, 1971 for "Floralie, Where Are You?" by Mark Levene; v. LIV, May-June, 1974 for "They Won't Demolish Me" by Barbara Godard; v. LIX, September, 1979 for "Lunar Gems" by Michael Benazon; v. LIX, March, 1980 for "Petites, Tragedies, pour Adultes" by Jon Kertzer; v. LXVII, December, 1987 for "Carrier's Road" by Jeannette Urbas. All reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*Canadian Literature*, n. 50, Autumn, 1971 for "Uses of the Grotesque" by Ronald Sutherland; n. 80, Spring, 1979 for "Carrier's Fiction" by David J. Bond; n. 104, Spring, 1985 for "Reading Carrier's 'The Nun Who Returned to Ireland'" by Michael Darling; n. 109, Summer, 1986 for "Silence into Sound: The Riddle of Concentric Worlds in 'Obasan'" by Erika Gottlieb; ns. 122-23, Autumn-Winter, 1989 for "Roads & Arteries" by John Lennox; n. 127, Winter, 1990 for "Broken Generations in 'Obasan'" by Mason Harris. All reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*Chicago Tribune—Books*, September 9, 1990 for "Failure to Connect" by Diane Cole. © copyright 1990, Chicago Tribune Company. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*College English*, v. 26, November, 1964 for "Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible'" by Henry Popkin. Copyright © 1964, renewed 1992 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Renewed 1992. Reprinted by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Commentary*, v. 24, July, 1957 for "Fantasist of the Ordinary" by Alfred Kazin. Copyright © 1957 by the American Jewish Committee. Renewed 1985. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Concerning Poetry*, v. 16, Spring, 1983. Copyright © 1983, Bureau for Faculty Research, Western Washington University. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Contemporary Literature*, v. XXIII, Winter 1982; v. XXXII, Summer, 1991. © 1982, 1991 by the Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reprinted by permission of The University of Wisconsin Press.—*Faith and Reason*, v. VII, Winter, 1981. © Christendon Educational Corporation 1981. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Fantasy Review*, v. 8, March, 1985. Copyright © 1985 by Carol Sherr Hand./ v. 10, January-February, 1987 for "The Suspense Novel as Oriental Food" by Bill Collins. Copyright © 1987 by the author. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*The French Review*, v.

LII, April, 1979. Copyright 1979 by the American Association of Teachers of French. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Journal of Canadian Fiction*, v. I, Summer, 1972. Reprinted by permission from *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 2050 Mackay St., Montreal, Quebec H3G 2J1, Canada.—*Judaism*, v. 28, Fall, 1979. Copyright © 1979 by the American Jewish Congress. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Kirkus Reviews*, v. LVI, October 15, 1988; v. LX, November 1, 1992. Copyright © 1988, 1992 The Kirkus Service, Inc. All rights reserved. Both reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Locus*, v. 24, March, 1990 for “The Bad Place” by Edward Bryant. © 1990 Edward Bryant. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*, July 11, 1982; March 8, 1987; December 6, 1987; June 23, 1991; March 21, 1993. Copyright 1982, 1987, 1991, 1993, Los Angeles Times. All reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, v. 40 February, 1971 for a review of “The Dark Symphony” by Joanna Russ. © 1970 by Mercury Press Inc. Reprinted by permission of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and the author.—*Michigan Quarterly Review*, v. XXV, Summer, 1986 for “Charles Baxter and the Art of Forgiveness” by Greg Johnson; v. XXVII, Summer, 1988 for “Believing the Story: Three Recent Novels” by Bret Lott; v. XXX, Spring, 1991 for “‘Over and Over’: Seven Books of Contemporary Poetry” by Jonathan Holden; v. XXX, Summer, 1991 for “Glimpses, Surfaces, Ecstasies: Three Books of Short Fiction” by Terry Caesar. Copyright © The University of Michigan, 1986, 1988, 1991. All reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*The Midwest Quarterly*, v. VII, Summer, 1966. Copyright, 1966, by *The Midwest Quarterly*, Pittsburgh State University. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Modern Age*, v. 29, Spring, 1985; v. 29, Fall, 1985. Copyright © 1985 by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Inc. Both reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Modern Drama*, v. 10, December, 1967. Copyright 1967 Modern Drama, University of Toronto. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The Month*, v. 23, May, 1990. © The Editor 1990. Reprinted by permission of the editor of *The Month* magazine.—*Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, v. XXI, Spring, 1988. © Mosaic 1988. Acknowledgment of previous publication is herewith made.—*The New Criterion*, v. X, January, 1992 for “Othertimes, Otherwheres” by Donald Lyons. Copyright © 1992 by The Foundation for Cultural Review. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly*, v. VI, Winter, 1983. Copyright © 1983 by Kenyon Hill Publications, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The New Republic*, v. 174, May 1, 1976; v. 206, June 29, 1992. © 1976, 1992 The New Republic, Inc. Both reprinted by permission of *The New Republic*.—*New York Magazine*, v. 25, January 6, 1992. Copyright © 1993 K-III Magazine Corporation. All rights reserved. Reprinted with the permission of *New York Magazine*.—*The New York Times*, February 8, 1953 for “Journey to The Crucible,” by Arthur Miller. Copyright 1953 Arthur Miller. Renewed 1981. Reprinted by permission of International Creative Management, Inc./ August 24, 1987, September 4, 1990, August 10, 1992. Copyright © 1987, 1990, 1992 by The New York Times Company. All reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The New York Times Book Review*, October 4, 1987; July 2, 1989; October 21, 1990; July 5, 1992; August 16, 1992; February 14, 1993. Copyright 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993 by The New York Times Company. All reprinted by permission of the publisher./ April 28, 1957. Copyright © 1957, renewed 1985 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The New Yorker*, v. XXVIII, January 31, 1953. Copyright 1953 by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. Renewed 1981. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*The North American Review*, v. 275, December, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by the University of Northern Iowa. Reprinted by permission of *The North American Review*.—*North Dakota Quarterly*, v. 55, Fall, 1987. Copyright 1987 by The University of North Dakota. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, v. 12, 1984 for “The Fate of Doing Nothing Right” by Ross Feld. Copyright © 1984 Poetry in Review Foundation, NY. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*The Polish Review*, v. XXVII, 1982. © copyright 1982 by the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Publishers Weekly*, v. 234, November 18, 1988; v. 234, December 23, 1988; v. 237, March 2, 1990; v. 238, March 22, 1991; v. 239, October 19, 1992. Copyright 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992 by Reed Publishing USA. All reprinted from *Publishers Weekly*, published by the Bowker Magazine Group of Cahners Publishing Co., a division of Reed Publishing USA.—*Quill and Quire*, v. 58, March, 1992 for “Staking Out Literary Turf” by Sandra Martin. Reprinted by permission *Quill and Quire* and the author./ v. 51, March, 1985. Reprinted by permission of *Quill and Quire*.—*Renascence*, v. XXIX, Summer, 1977. © copyright, 1977, Marquette University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, v. 34, Winter, 1980. Copyright © 1980 by the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Sageetrieb*, v. 10, Spring & Fall, 1991

for an interview with Robert Creeley by David L. Elliott. Copyright © 1991 by the author. Reprinted by permission of David L. Elliott.—*Saturday Night*, v. 85. Copyright © 1970 by *Saturday Night*. / v. 102, October, 1987 for “Heartbreak Road” by Mark Abley. Copyright © 1987 by *Saturday Night*. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*The Sewanee Review*, v. LXXXV, Winter, 1977; v. XCVII, Summer, 1989. © 1977, 1989 by The University of the South. Both reprinted with the permission of the editor of *The Sewanee Review*.—*Studies in Canadian Literature*, v. 12, 1987 by “Speaking the Silence: Joy Kogawa’s ‘Obasan’” by Gary Willis; v. 17, 1992-93 for “Carrier’s French and English: ‘Yoked by Violence Together’” by Paula K. Kamenish. Copyright by the authors. Both reprinted by permission of the editor.—*Studies in Short Fiction*, v. V, Fall, 1967; v. 23, Fall, 1986. Copyright 1967, 1986 by Newberry College. Both reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, v. 7, Fall, 1982. Copyright © 1982 by *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Theatre Arts*, v. XXXVII, October, 1953, for “Arthur Miller Discusses ‘The Crucible’” by John Griffin and Alice Griffin. Copyright 1953, renewed 1981 by Theatre Arts, Inc. Renewed 1981. Reprinted by permission of the authors.—*The Times Literary Supplement*, n. 4218, February 3, 1984 for “The Plunge into Chaos” by Geoffrey A. Hosking. © The Times Supplements Limited 1984. Reprinted by permission of the author. / n. 4429, February 19-25, 1988; n. 4572, November 16, 1990; n. 4663, August 14, 1992. © The Times Supplements Limited 1988, 1990, 1992. All reproduced from *The Times Literary Supplement* by permission.—*Time*, New York, v. 134, July 24, 1989. Copyright 1989 The Time Inc. Magazine Company. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Twentieth Century Literature*, v. 29, Spring, 1983. Copyright 1983, Hofstra University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*VLS*, n. 106, June, 1992 for a review of “Bastard Out of Carolina” by Vince Aletti. Copyright © 1992 News Group Publications, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the *The Village Voice* and the author.—*The Wall Street Journal*, v. LXXIV, February 5, 1993 for “The Intricate Patterns of Young Man’s Life” by Richard Locke. Copyright © Richard Locke 1993. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the author.—*West Coast Review of Books*, v. 16, February-March, 1991. Copyright 1991 by Rapport Publishing Co., Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Western American Literature*, v. XVII, August, 1982; v. XXV, August, 1990. Copyright, 1982, 1990, by the Western Literature Association. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—*Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, v. III, Fall, 1962. © 1962, *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*. Renewed 1990 by The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reprinted by permission of The University of Wisconsin Press.—*The Women’s Review of Books*, v. VI, July, 1989 for “The Uses of Adversity” by Liz Galst; v. IX, July, 1992 for an interview with Dorothy Allison and Amber Hollibaugh.; v. IX, July, 1992, for “In the House of Childhood” by Amber Hollibaugh. Copyright © 1989, 1992. All rights reserved. All reprinted by permission of the respective authors.—*World Literature Today*, v. 54, Winter, 1980; v. 64, Autumn, 1990. Copyright 1980, 1990 by the University of Oklahoma Press. Both reprinted by permission of the publisher.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN CLC, VOLUME 78, WERE REPRINTED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Allison, Dorothy. From *Bastard Out of Carolina*. Dutton, 1992. Copyright © Dorothy Allison, 1992. All rights reserved.—Alter, Iska. From *The Good Man’s Dilemma: Social Criticism in the Fiction of Bernard Malamud*. AMS Press, 1981. © 1981 AMS Press, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Altieri, Charles. From *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry During the 1960s*. Bucknell University Press, 1979. © 1979 by Associated University Presses, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Auslander, Philip. From *The New York School Poets as Playwrights: O’Hara, Ashbery, Koch, Schuyler and the Visual Arts*. Lang, 1989. © Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. New York 1989. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Bentley, Eric. From *What is Theatre? Incorporating the Dramatic Event and Other Reviews: 1944-1967*. Atheneum Publishers, 1968, Limelight Editions, 1984. Copyright 1953 by Eric Bentley. Reprinted by permission of Limelight Editions.—Blew, Mary Clearman. From “Mo-nah-se-tah, the Whore, and the Three Scottish Women,” in *Norman Maclean*. Edited by Ron McFarland and Hugh Nichols. Confluence Press, 1988. Copyright © 1988 by Confluence Press, Inc. All rights reserved.—Brooks, Stan. From “A Mutation of a Science Fiction Writer,” in *Sudden Fear: The Horror and Dark Suspense Fiction of Dean R. Koontz*. Edited by Bill Munster. Starmont House, Inc., 1988. Copyright © 1988 by Starmont House, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by

permission of the publisher.—Broughton, Irv. From an interview in *The Writer's Mind: Interviews with American Authors, Vol. III*. Edited by Irv Broughton. The University of Arkansas Press, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by Irv Broughton. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Carrier, Roch, and Silver Donald Cameron. From an interview in *Conversations with Canadian Novelists*. By Silver Donald Cameron. Macmillan of Canada, 1973. © Donald Cameron 1973. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of Silver Donald Cameron.—Cook, Albert. From *Figural Choice in Poetry and Art*. University Press of New England, 1985. Copyright 1985 by Brown University. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the University Press of New England.—Fischman, Shelia. From "Translator's Foreword," in *Floralie, Where Are You?* By Roch Carrier, translated by Shelia Fischman. Anansi, 1971. Translation © 1971, Shelia Fischman. Reprinted by permission of Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, Don Mills, Ontario.—Gassner, John. From *Theatre at the Crossroads: Plays and Playwrights of the Mid-Century American Stage*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960. Copyright © 1960, renewed 1988 by Mollie Gassner. Reprinted by permission of Holt Rinehart and Winston, Publishers.—Gray, Amy Tipton. From "R'lyeh in Appalachia: Lovecraft's Influence on Fred Chappell's Dagon," in *Remembrance, Reunion and Revival: Celebrating a Decade of Appalachian Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Appalachian Studies Conference*. Edited by Helen Roseberry. Appalachian Consortium Press, 1988. Copyright 1988 by the Appalachian Consortium Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Hassan, Ihab. From *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary Novel*. Princeton University Press, 1961. Copyright © 1961 by Princeton University Press. Renewed 1981 by Ihab Hassan. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Helterman, Jeffrey. From *Understanding Bernard Malamud*. University of South Carolina Press, 1985. Copyright © University of South Carolina 1985. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Huftel, Shelia. From *Arthur Miller: The Burning Glass*. The Citadel Press, 1965. Copyright © 1965 by Shelia Huftel. All rights reserved. Reprinted by arrangement with Carol Publishing Group.—Koch, Kenneth and Voice of America. From an interview in *American Writing Today*. Edited by Richard Kostelanetz. The Whitston Publishing Company, 1991. Copyright 1991 Richard Kostelanetz. Reprinted by permission of Kenneth Koch.—Kogawa, Joy. From *Obasan*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1981. Copyright © 1981 by Joy Kogawa. All rights reserved.—Lee, Nicholas. From "Manifestations of the Feminine in Solzhenitsyn's 'August 1914'," in *Studies in Russian Literature in Honor of Vsevolod Setchkarev*. Edited by Julian W. Connolly and Sonia I. Ketchian. Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1986. Each contribution copyright © 1986 by its author. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission the author.—Love, Glen A. From "On the Sublime and the Beautiful: Montana, Longinus, and Professor Norman Maclean," in *Norman Maclean*. Edited by Ron McFarland and Hugh Nichols. Confluence Press, 1988. Copyright © 1988 by Confluence Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with the permission of the author.—Massie, Elizabeth. From "Femmes Fatales? The Women Protagonists in Four Koontz Novels," in *Sudden Fear: The Horror and Dark Suspense Fiction of Dean R. Koontz*. Edited by Bill Munster. Starmont House, Inc., 1988. Copyright © 1988 by Starmont House, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Miller, Arthur. From *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*. The Viking Press, 1957. Copyright © 1957, renewed 1985 by Arthur Miller. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.—Molesworth, Charles. From *The Fierce Embrace: A Study of Contemporary American Poetry*. University of Missouri Press, 1979. Copyright © 1979 by the Curators of the University of Missouri. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Moramarco, Fred. From "Pieces of a Mirror: Robert Creeley's Later Poetry," in *Robert Creeley's Life and Work: A Sense of Increment*. Edited by John Wilson. The University of Michigan Press, 1987. Copyright © by The University of Michigan 1987. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Morrison, Michael A. From "The Three Faces of Evil: The Monsters of Whispers, Phantoms, and Darkfall," in *Sudden Fear: The Horror and Dark Suspense Fiction of Dean R. Koontz*. Edited by Bill Munster. Starmont House, Inc., 1988. Copyright © 1988 by Starmont House, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Northey, Margot. From *The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*. University of Toronto Press, 1976. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.—Stuart, Dabney. From "'What's Artichokes?':" in *The Fred Chappell Reader*. St. Martin's Press, 1987. Copyright © 1987 by Fred Chappell. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission of St. Martin's Press, Incorporated.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS APPEARING IN CLC, VOLUME 78, WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

Photograph by Jill Posener: p. 1; © Miriam Berkley: p. 15; Dust jacket of *First Light*, by Charles Baxter. Copyright © 1987 by Charles Baxter. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.: p. 20; Front and back covers of *La guerre, yes sir!*, by Roch Carrier. © 1968 by Roch Carrier. Reprinted by permission of Éditions internationales Alain Stanké Itée: p. 48; Cover of *La céleste bicyclette*, by Roch Carrier. Reprinted by permission of Éditions internationales Alain Stanké Itée: p. 68; Cover of *The Hockey Sweater and Other Stories*, translated by Sheila Fischman. © 1979 House of Anansi Press Limited. Reprinted by permission of the publisher: p. 76; Cover of *De l'amour dans la ferraille*, by Roch Carrier. Reprinted by permission of Éditions internationales Alain Stanké Itée: p. 86; Cover of *Midquest: A Poem*, by Fred Chappell. Louisiana State University Press, 1981. Reprinted by permission of Louisiana State University Press: p. 94; Photograph by Bruce Jackson: p. 118; Photograph by Jonathan Williams: p. 133; Photograph by Elsa Dorfman: p. 150; © John Flanders, courtesy of Joy Kogawa: p. 164; Photograph by Gerda Ann Koontz: p. 196; Courtesy of Jean Maclean Snyder: p. 220; Photograph by Norman Maclean, courtesy of Jean Maclean Snyder: pp. 234, 239; © Jerry Bauer: p. 247; Photograph by Fred W. McDarrah: p. 287; Photograph by Kenward Elmslie: p. 330; Cover of *Second Avenue*, by Frank O'Hara. Totem Press/Corinth Books, 1960: p. 363; Henrick Smith/NYT PICTURES: p. 378; Photograph by Zhores Medvedev: pp. 386, 395, 400; Rex Features: p. 408; UPI/Bettmann: p. 419; AP/Wide World Photos: p. 428.

Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Dorothy Allison 1949-	1
<i>American novelist</i>	
Charles Baxter 1947-	15
<i>American short story writer</i>	
Roch Carrier 1937-	35
<i>French-Canadian novelist</i>	
Fred Chappell 1936-	90
<i>American poet</i>	
Robert Creeley 1926-	118
<i>American poet</i>	
Joy Kogawa 1935-	164
<i>Canadian novelist</i>	
Dean R. Koontz 1945-	196
<i>American novelist</i>	
Norman Maclean 1920-1990	220
<i>American essayist</i>	
Bernard Malamud 1914-1986	247
<i>American novelist; entry devoted to The Assistant</i>	
Arthur Miller 1915-	287
<i>American playwright; entry devoted to The Crucible</i>	
Frank O'Hara 1926-1966	330
<i>American poet</i>	
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn 1918-	378
<i>Russian novelist</i>	

Dorothy Allison

1949-

American novelist, short story writer, poet, and essayist.

This entry provides an overview of Allison's career through 1993.

INTRODUCTION

Allison is best known for *Bastard Out of Carolina*, a novel about a young girl growing up in rural South Carolina during the 1960s. As with her other works, particularly *The Women Who Hate Me* and *Trash*, *Bastard Out of Carolina* has garnered widespread praise for its realism, vivid characterization, and laconic prose.

Allison was born in Greenville County, South Carolina. A self-labeled "lesbian-feminist" and incest survivor, Allison incorporates events from her life into her work. In 1983 she published a collection of poems, *The Women Who Hate Me*, which was well-received, despite objections to its graphic depictions of lesbian sex. *Trash*, Allison's next work, comprises fourteen interrelated short stories that describe a woman's attempts to escape painful childhood memories. In "River of Names," for example, the narrator recalls episodes of sexual abuse and domestic violence as well as suicides of family members. A few of the stories from this collection, including an expanded "River of Names," appear in the novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*.

Bastard Out of Carolina centers on Ruth Anne Boatwright, nicknamed Bone by her family. She grows up surrounded by a close-knit extended family, among them Granny, the rough-talking family matriarch; Aunt Raylene, a strong and independent lesbian; and Uncles Earle, Beau, and Nevil, hard-drinking, violent men whom Bone adores. Central to the novel is Bone's relationship with her mother Anney and stepfather Daddy Glen. When Bone first meets Daddy Glen, he is gentle and loving towards her and her sister Reese. After he marries Anney, however, he becomes violent and begins sexually molesting Bone. Scared and ashamed to tell her mother, Bone endures Daddy Glen's cruel beatings and repeated rapes for the next five years. When Bone is thirteen years old, Anney discovers her husband raping Bone and becomes enraged. Moved by Daddy Glen's pleas of forgiveness, however, Anney decides to remain with him, leaving Bone in the care of Aunt Raylene.

Critics have lauded *Bastard Out of Carolina* for its realistic characters and sensitive depiction of incest and family violence. Allison's descriptions of Bone's sexual abuse and feelings of betrayal have garnered the most attention. Vince Aletti observed: "Allison casts a savage, unblinking eye, . . . describing the terrible knot of violence and eroticism without ever slipping into soft-core voyeurism or shocked prudery. . . . 'I made my life, the same way it



looks like you're gonna make yours—out of pride and stubbornness and too much anger,' Aunt Raylene tells Bone. It's that volatile combination that saves Bone and gives *Bastard* an extraordinary pent-up power."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

The Women Who Hate Me (poetry) 1983; also published as *The Women Who Hate Me: Poetry, 1980-1990* [revised edition], 1991
Trash (short stories) 1988
Bastard Out of Carolina (novel) 1992
Skin (essays) 1993

CRITICISM

Kirkus Reviews (review date 15 October 1988)

[In the following review, the critic describes *Trash* as "uneven, sometimes shocking fiction."]

To quote from the author's preface, [*Trash* is] about a girl who grew up in a white southern milieu of poverty and brutality and "became the one who got away" is "not biography and yet not lies . . . [but] condensed and reinvented experience of a . . . working-class lesbian, addicted to violence, language and hope."

At college, on scholarship, Allison "met the people I had always read about: girls whose fathers loved them—innocently; boys who drove cars they had not stolen." Her strongest stories, including the wrenchingly painful "River of Names," explore the intersection of her two worlds and show a narrator haunted by childhood memories of sudden death, unremitting yet casual violence, and bitter contained rage; she hides much of this past from her lovers, but it emerges in the form of lies, funny southern stories, an inability to love, a resort to wild sex (sometimes graphically described), alcohol and physical fights as distraction and escape. The result is an intimate glimpse into the tormented heart of a survivor. There's almost enough power here to make one want to overlook the weaknesses: most of the stories go on too long; the author, who has previously published poetry, sometimes chooses moments and ideas too small to satisfy as fiction; the slice-of-life stories that provide realistic portrayals of contemporary lesbian-feminist society are workmanlike but not compelling.

Uneven, sometimes shocking fiction, then, from a writer of promise, beginning to claim her history and her voice.

A review of "Trash," in Kirkus Reviews, Vol. LVI, No. 20, October 15, 1988, p. 1484.

Publishers Weekly (review date 18 November 1988)

[In the review below, the critic briefly assesses *Trash*.]

In 14 gritty, intimate stories, Allison's fictional persona exposes with poetic frankness the complexities of being "a cross-eyed working-class lesbian, addicted to violence, language, and hope," rebelling against the Southern "poor white trash" roots that inevitably define her. Bridging the bedrooms, bars and kitchens of its narrator's adult world, and the dirt yards and diners of her '50s South Carolina childhood, this magnetic collection [*Trash*] charts a fascinating woman's struggle for self-realization and acceptance through a sensual, often horrific tapestry of the lives of women to whom she is connected. In the mythically resonant early pieces, the conflicts of her foremothers, like Great-grandmother Shirley, "the meanest woman that ever left Tennessee," embody a grim legacy of drudgery that presages the seeds of her own rage and cavernous hunger, later finely played out through various love affairs. With a keen feel for the languid rhythms of Southern speech, Allison (*The Women Who Hate Me*) masterfully suspends the reader between voyeurism and empathy,

breathing life into a vast body of symbolic feminine imagery.

A review of "Trash," in Publishers Weekly, Vol. 234, No. 21, November 18, 1988, p. 74.

Allison's ability as a craftswoman of short fiction is exceptional. Rarely have I read such unsparing narrative, dense and gritty with realism, crackling with anger, pulsing with uncompromised sexuality.

—*Patricia Roth Schwartz, in a review of Trash in Belles Lettres, Spring 1989.*

Liz Galst (review date July 1989)

[In the following excerpt, Galst favorably reviews *Trash*, praising in particular the work's emotional power.]

Of all the tales of women's survival I've read recently, Dorothy Allison's *Trash* is by far the most riveting. Hers is the kind of fiction that doubles as autobiography, or vice versa. But her work is so honest that it doesn't really matter which genre it falls into. *Trash* is a collection of stories about a poor white Southern woman's decision to confront the violence, poverty and pain of her existence, and in the face of all of it to embrace her class, her culture, her lesbian sexuality. I sometimes found Allison's style clunky, but her stories cut to the core. Don't be misled by the title. This is no pulp romance; it's an analysis of what it means to be expendable in this country, and what it takes to pick yourself off the junk heap.

Get ready for a rough ride. The introduction, "Preface: Deciding to Live," and the first story, "River of Names," laid me out for a week. Allison says in "Preface":

After my childhood, after all that long terrible struggle to simply survive, to escape my stepfather, uncles, speeding Pontiacs, broken glass and rotten floorboards, or that inevitable death by misadventure that claimed so many of my cousins; after watching so many die around me, I had not imagined that I would ever need to make . . . a choice. I had imagined the hunger for life in me was insatiable, endless, unshakable . . .

Like many others who had gone before me, I began to dream longingly of my own death.

I began to court it.

"River of Names" is a litany, a recitation of the violence that pervaded the lives of the narrator and her flock of cousins. "My cousin, Tommy, eight years old as I was, swung in the sunlight with his face as black as his shoes—the rope around his neck pulled up into the sunlit heights of the barn . . ." "Lucille climbed out the front window of Aunt Raylene's house and jumped. They said she jumped. No one said why." "Almost always, we were

raped, my cousins and I. That was some kind of joke, too. *What's a South Carolina virgin? 'At's a ten-year-old can run fast.'*"

In that story the narrator is unable to admit her own pain to anyone but herself; but others of Allison's characters learn, finally, to shout theirs out loud. In "**Don't Tell Me You Don't Know**," the narrator is confronted by her Aunt Alma, her mother's oldest sister, who shows up on her Northern doorstep. As a younger woman, Alma somehow managed to sustain her sister and her niece through the most difficult of times, and it's the narrator's belief in the power of these women that has kept her alive all the succeeding years.

But this belief is also what's kept them apart. As they play pool together in the living room, Alma, acting as proxy for her sister, begins to hound her niece. Why hasn't she had children? After exploding at her aunt as her aunt has exploded at her, the narrator explains at last:

Some people never do have babies, you know. Some people get raped at eleven by a stepfather their mama half-hates, but can't afford to leave. Some people then have to lie and hide it 'cause it would make so much trouble. So nobody will know, not the law and not the rest of the family. Nobody but the women supposed to be the ones who take care of everything, who know what to do and how to do it, the women who make children who believe in them and trust in them, and sometimes die for it. Some people never go to a doctor and don't find out for ten years that the son of a bitch gave them some goddamned disease.

Through this confrontation she comes to see that even the combined strength of her mother and her aunts was not enough to protect her. Then and only then is she able to reconnect with their powerful, sustaining love.

I was deeply touched by nearly every story in *Trash*. Whether she's writing about family, lovers, or the violence of poverty, Allison's emotions come sailing through her work. That's not always easy for me as a reader. There were times her anger and disdain frightened me; times when her narrator's lost sense of self and all-consuming pain were too much like my own. And times, too, when I thought I might drown in sentimentality. But *Trash*, honest and gripping, is a challenge to readers and writers everywhere. (p. 15)

Liz Galst, "The Uses of Adversity," in *The Women's Review of Books*, Vol. VI, Nos. 10 & 11, July, 1989, pp. 14-15.

Publishers Weekly (review date 22 March 1991)

[In the excerpt below, the critic offers a mixed review of *The Women Who Hate Me*, briefly touching on Allison's thematic concerns and writing style.]

[Allison] writes poems that brim with emotion, sometimes focused and tender, but more often confused and enraged. The subject in this expanded edition of her collection of poems [*The Women Who Hate Me*] is Allison's lesbian-

ism. Although she mentions the freedoms denied her and her "sisters," the poet ultimately seems to care little for furthering people's acceptance of lesbianism. Indeed, she goes so far as to proclaim: "I do not believe anymore in the natural superiority / of the lesbian." The poet realizes, bitterly, that she has been unable to escape her past. Abused as a child, she seeks dominant lovers who like to play rough: "I have never been able to resist" a woman who "talks mean" and "makes shell-puckered hickey-bite marks." As a child, the poet's family was "despised," her mother called "*no-count, low down, disgusting*" for her affairs with various "uncles." Allison acknowledges that she is her "mama's daughter," with "at least as much lust / in [her] life as pain." The poet's imagery is explicit and jarring but her wordplay unpolished. Except for a couple of sentimental love poems, what takes precedence here is a sense of vengeance against all who "hate" her.

A review of "*The Women Who Hate Me: Poetry, 1980-1990*," in *Publishers Weekly*, Vol. 238, No. 14, March 22, 1991, p. 77.

Dorothy Allison with Bo Huston (interview date 7 April 1992)

[In the following excerpt, Allison parallels events in her own life with those described in *Bastard Out of Carolina* and discusses how her experiences have defined her sexual orientation and identity.]

[Huston]: What is trash?

[Allison]: That's me. I'm many generations trash. Trash is those people who keep their cars up on blocks and don't work for a living. We're the caricatures of the society—the laundry workers and whores of America. I come from bigoted, violent people; shotguns, beer, and pickup trucks. I was born in Greenville, S. C. The word *poor* doesn't describe it enough. I feel like I came out of a world nobody knows about, that maybe doesn't exist anymore.

You must have rather complex feelings about moving away from that home, escaping and surviving it.

God, yes. It's an amazing knot of shame, pride, and rage. Guilt too. That's the thing I tried to put in [*Bastard Out of Carolina*]. I love my family, but I'm terrified of them. It's a complicated love.

Do you find people get confused about what you're constructing as fiction and what is the truth of your own life?

People assume that fiction's real life—if you do it well. Good storytelling is convincing. Then it gets tricky about how explicit to be about your own experience. Particularly because so much of my story—and the story in my novel—is about incest and poverty.

I'm past 40 now, and it's taken me my entire life to figure out what happened to me as a kid. Because the things that you have to do to survive with some kind of sense of yourself, the emotional maneuverings, really obstruct accurate memory. So I'm not ever going to be convinced about the distinctions between fiction and reality anyway.

In terms of this book, there are a few things that are true

about my life. The first chapter, the story of how I was born and how I was named, is accurate. I was born in a car accident. My mother was unconscious for the first three days of my life, and my aunts named me and took care of me. I was registered a bastard in the state of South Carolina because the aunts didn't get the facts straight with the hospital. So that's how I learned storytelling; this was my aunts and my grandmother's favorite story to tell me. It had passion, excitement, nobility, and all that Southern pathos.

And it is true that I had a painful, difficult relationship with my stepfather, that he was physically violent, and that he raped me as a child. But the book is not autobiography. Rather, it is telling my emotional truth.

What is your relationship with your stepfather like now?

I've tried to maintain a matter-of-fact bluntness about the past. That's healthy for me. I mean, the greatest pain of my life has been that my mother stayed with my stepfather. She left him twice, but she went back.

But she knew he was abusing you?

She knew. My mother tried to control it, to contain it. And I cooperated with him in hiding it from her. When I finally moved away, I refused for years to go back and visit. When my stepfather started acting out violently outside the home, they put him on psychotropic drugs. They pay more attention when you're beating up some man in a parking lot than when you're beating up children at home. So he's been on medication for some time. But still, I can't be near him. Our relationship . . . it's been a lifelong blackmail.

You are very public as a leather S/M lesbian. How is the violent sexual abuse you endured in childhood related to your sexuality today?

I think that most of what everyone says about S/M is a product of their own obsessions and fears. I don't trust any theorists about it. I think sex is individual. For me, sexual power is about struggle and resistance. My sexual icons tend to be martyrs—people who grit their teeth and struggle to the end, you know? Like Joan of Arc. When I was in my 20s, I tried to renounce sex and be good, because it seemed to me that my sexuality was inherently sick and twisted, evil. The very things I needed in order to come were so horrifying to me, connected to the brutality of my childhood.

Then one day I just decided this is fucked. I thought, *I am not getting what I want. I am miserable. I am working myself to death. I'm sleeping with people who treat me terrible. What the fuck am I afraid of?* So I just threw up my hands and said, "OK, I am that evil person. I am that sick, twisted person they talk about, and I'm going to find out what that means." I discovered I loved bondage and started to make an effort to be healthy in my own mind about it.

I felt like a spy. During the daytime I was a nice, clean lesbian-feminist, living in a collective; at night I was a subterranean slut. That was the only way I could survive. This was 1975 or so, and nobody even used the term S/M. I was

dating older butch women who had no problem at all with the fact that I wanted to be tied down and fucked.

Did you feel conflicted: ideology versus desire?

For me, sex and bondage is safe—and powerful. But there was a lot of sexual ignorance among the lesbian-feminists [of the time]. And there was still a prejudice against sluts. I mean, nonmonogamy was officially part of the theory, but if you carried it to the extent of *enjoying* it . . .

Listen, I was into anonymous sex. I did not want a lover. I didn't want all the lesbian buy-a-house shit. I just wanted to fuck around. I believed that the best way to get to know a woman was to go to bed with her. The second best way was to take her by the throat and see what she did. So pretty much everywhere I've lived I've had a real bad reputation. But it has gotten me a lot of interesting dates.

Do you sense an expectation, based upon your book, that you will be some kind of spokesperson about incest or child abuse or lesbian sexuality?

Sexual honesty is an ethic in my life. But sexual revelation isn't necessarily important for other people. And I'll tell you right now, it's pretty damn tiresome having to explain what you do in bed all the time. The thing that makes me angry is the assumption that queers know more about sex than anybody else. We're supposed to be sexual experts just because we fuck around and are honest about it.

Well, as a pervert, I get that doubled. I get this constant labeling that because I'm open about being a pervert, I must have a secret knowledge about human sexuality. But all I really know is my own stuff. I don't have any theory of how incest shapes human life or a theory about sexuality. And my life's work is not sexual research. Personally, I need to know myself, *that's* life's work, figuring myself out. But I can't explain anybody else's life.

*There has been a lot of excitement about **Bastard Out of Carolina**. Was receiving such a large advance a source of pressure for you?*

It scared the living piss out of me. When the book was sold, it was only half finished. Basically, I had been telling this story, in short stories, for a long time. I wanted to write a book about a girl in a working-class environment who loves her family and is smart and powerful. Not the stereotypical damaged-victim kid. I wanted a strong, fascinating kid. And I wanted to be honest about what happens when that girl is subject to physical and sexual abuse.

I hate victim portraits. And I hate the pornography of victimization. Half of the incest books or family-violence books sell on sexual voyeurism. That's what I was afraid of when I got that much money—that they would try to push me to make it more sexy. It's very hard not to titillate when you're working with this kind of material, because American culture is consumed with it. That's one strength of queer literature, even when it's not successful: We're acknowledging sexuality, exploring it—not mystifying it. Let's face it, most of the published lesbian erotic literature is neither erotic nor good writing.

You've had a problematic alliance with the women's movement. Why?

In New York I was one of the organizers of the Lesbian Sex Mafia, which was specifically for perverse women. I was fascinated with anyone who had the courage to think of herself as perverse. I was part of quite a few groups—basically consciousness-raising groups for sluts. We'd get together and talk about dirty books, fantasies, fears. It was self-discovery. Also, I got a lot of good trade.

But that meant that I became visible and to some extent a target. The antiporn people saw our groups as collaborators with the pornographic empire. In 1982 I was presenting a paper at Barnard College and got picketed; they said I was an enemy of the people. The worst accusation, though, was that I was guilty of child sexual abuse because of the writing I was doing. That horrified me. Always there is this terror incest survivors have: that by telling your experience, you will betray or hurt someone else. That [feeling] is deep.

Your lover of the past four years, Alix Layman, is pregnant. What's that going to mean to your work and relationship?

Well, straight people have been doing it forever. They manage, so I figure why the hell not! (pp. 70-2)

Dorothy Allison and Bo Huston, in an interview in The Advocate, April 7, 1992, pp. 70-2.

A lot of [*Bastard Out of Carolina*] is based on real experience, but not the entire thing. The characters are modeled on members of my family and on stories I heard when I was growing up. But I made her, Bone, a stronger child than I was, and—more important—I gave her a way out. If the book had been autobiographical, it would have been a lot meaner.

—Dorothy Allison, in an interview with Lynn Karpen in *The New York Times Book Review*, 5 July 1992.

Jean Hanff Korelitz (review date 3 May 1992)

[In the review below, Korelitz offers a mixed review of *Bastard Out of Carolina*.]

Dorothy Allison, the winner of two Lambda Literary Awards for her short story collection, *Trash*, sets her first novel, *Bastard out of Carolina*, in Greenville, S. C., "the most beautiful place in the world." The bastard in question is Ruth Ann Boatwright, whose birth certificate must, by state decree and despite the determined campaigning of her mother Anney, bear the stamp "illegitimate." Ruth Ann, known as "Bone," is an observant and keen narrator, in love with her landscape no less than with the trouble and mess and wisdom of her wide family. Still, it is to the women in her family, particularly her many aunts, that Bone is drawn: "I liked being one of the women with my

aunts, liked feeling a part of something nasty and strong and separate from my big rough boy-cousins and the whole world of spitting, growling, overbearing males."

But Bone's circle of women must alter to admit the man her mother marries. Daddy-Glen is the ne'er-do-well son of a wealthy family who takes out his anger not on the wife he adores but on Bone, whom he alternately molests and beats. Throughout her childhood, she scrambles for self-respect where she can find it, even as Anney returns to Daddy-Glen over and over again.

Bone's relationship with her stepfather forms the core of the novel, but *Bastard out of Carolina* has a tendency to bog down in its own heat, speech and atmosphere. Allison has a superb ear for the specific dialogue of her characters, and Bone is a spunky and memorable heroine, but the book seems more often to meander than to move, lending its conclusion an air of inconclusiveness. Allison, abundantly gifted, will certainly go on to write better novels, and *Bastard out of Carolina* will just as certainly alert readers to her promise.

Jean Hanff Korelitz, in a review of "*Bastard Out of Carolina*," in *Book World—The Washington Post*, May 3, 1992, p. 11.

Vince Aletti (review date June 1992)

[In the following summary of *Bastard Out of Carolina*, Aletti praises Allison's clear and concise prose.]

The bound galleys of Dorothy Allison's debut novel came with a two-page author's letter that begins like this: "There are many books a writer can choose to write, only one or two a writer has to write. *Bastard out of Carolina* is the book I had to write. It is not a lesbian coming-of-age story, not a charming portrait of growing up poor in the South of the fifties and sixties. Rather it is a frankly harrowing account of family violence and incest."

But forget you ever read that. The Dorothy Allison who wrote that letter—peppered with stiff, stumbling phrases like "the possibilities inherent in our chosen families"—is simply not the same woman who wrote *Bastard out of Carolina*. Neither Allison is exactly an elegant stylist, but the novelist is a hell of a writer—tough and loose, clear and passionate, incapable, certainly, of such awkward book-jacket jargon. And *Bastard* is far from artless: Allison's construction, especially her balance of light and dark material, is deft, often witty; there's a no-nonsense assurance here that never once suggests first-novel bravado. Trimming the book of writerly fat and burning off all excess description, Allison's left not with fashionable minimalism but with the sinewy, measured drawl of a Southern storyteller.

Told from the point of view of Ruth Anne Boatwright, a scrappy, illegitimate preteen in Greenville County, South Carolina, *Bastard out of Carolina* is about a dazzling constellation of extended family with Ruth Anne's troubled household spinning out of control at its core. The Boatwright clan—a snuff-spitting Granny, three rowdy uncles, four independent aunts, countless cousins—both toughens