

Dictionary of Literary Biography

Volume 6:

**American
Novelists Since
World War II**

Second Series

Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Six

American Novelists Since World War II

Second Series

Edited by James E. Kibler, Jr.
University of Georgia

Foreword by William Targ

A Brucoli Clark Book
Gale Research Company • Book Tower • Detroit, Michigan 48226
1980

Planning Board for
DICTIONARY OF LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

John Baker
Richard L. Darling
William Emerson
A. Walton Litz
Orville Prescott
William Targ
Alden Whitman

Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Editorial Director*
C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr., *Managing Editor*
Richard Layman, *Project Editor*

Manufactured by Braun-Brumfield, Inc.
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Printed in the United States of America

Copyright © 1980
GALE RESEARCH COMPANY

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

American novelists since World War II.

(Dictionary of literary biography ; v. 6)

"A Bruccoli Clark book."

Includes indexes.

1. American fiction--20th century--Bio-bibliography.
2. Novelists, American--20th century--Biography.
3. American fiction--20th century--History and criticism. I. Kibler, James E. II. Series.

PS379.A554 1980 813'.5409 [B] 80-22495
ISBN 0-8103-0908-4

Foreword

Several years ago a common expression uttered in literary journals and public places was, mournfully: "The novel is dead." There were editors and writers in high places and low who believed this to be a fact. But they proved to be myopic. Because, while they solemnly declared that the novel had expired, exciting new novelists were emerging with healthy regularity. And publishers, even the larger conglomerates, were continuing to publish novels, and first novels, too—in both hard and soft covers.

The predecessor of the present volume together with the present work combine to offer ample evidence that the American novel and novelists are alive and thriving. There are problems, yes—industry and trade problems, market problems and distribution problems and cost problems. But the novelists are still alive and thousands of new novels—some first rate—are being published. Did not William Styron and Norman Mailer prove this just recently? Obviously they were not aware that the "novel is dead."

There is an abundance of creative ferment in the atmosphere. Small, new presses are proliferating; interesting new talents—first novelists—are blossoming on these frail but living trees. And while it is true that America has not produced a Grass, a Sartre, a Camus or Beckett, we do have Joan Didion, Toni Morrison, Elizabeth Hardwick, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and many others of striking quality. We also have in these pages ample assurance of a new body of risk-takers, stylists, nontraditionalists. Indeed, in the seventy biographies presented here we have the whole spectrum of writing talent.

Yet, despite all claims or wishful thinking, post-World War II in America has shown no signs of a genuine literary renaissance. It is regrettable that some of our leading major novelists are not as productive as one would like—not productive as was, say, William Faulkner. Nor alas, do we have anyone with Faulkner's immense gifts. Some of our star writers of fiction publish far too infrequently so as to almost vanish from the scene. One notable example is Paul Bowles. Henry Roth (*Call It Sleep*) is the prime case. Nor has any Melville or Hawthorne emerged in our time. But a renaissance (in reverse!) has come upon us, alas. The "product" consists of a low-level brand of writing, and an intense productivity unique in America. The vitality of the publishers who promote the stuff, joined by the motion picture and TV producers, is unparalleled in our history. Scores of novels, pure and homogenized, are pouring forth; fiction sordid and rancid; sex and sorcery-obsessed, sub-naturalistic, romantic, spaced-out, high and low schlock, horror and fright-wig fiction—all of these kinds of books are being written and published brazenly, but, in the main, by nonwriters. The audience for these books is not the literate reader; the books are espoused by the film and TV industry and foisted, with huge promotion budgets, on the sub-genre reader looking for ersatz romantic raw sex and space adventure, as well as terror and violence. Of course, none of these books has validity in terms of literature, any more than do the comic strips in newspapers. But they are books nevertheless, and they do affect the publishing statistics and appear on best-seller lists.

There are books of high distinction among the works in our post-World War II omnium-gatherum; some are downright masterpieces. Harriette Simpson Arnow's *The Dollmaker* might be so considered. Likewise Eleanor Clark's *Baldur's Gate*. Paul Bowles, author of four excellent novels and numerous other works, has as yet to garner the readership he merits, especially in view of the remarkable novel *The Sheltering Sky*, published many years ago but still a shining star in his bibliography. And then there is *Ratner's Star* by Don DeLillo, certainly deserving of pause and consideration. It is called, properly, "a red giant of a book." Mary Gordon's first novel, *Final Payments*, published in 1978, is a moving, powerful study, in part, of guilt and self-punishment. Mario Puzo's historic blockbuster of a novel, *The Godfather*, one of this century's most popular novels, has been both reviled and lavishly praised. There is little question in my mind (I was the publisher's editor of that novel) that it presents one of the most successfully realized central characters in all modern

Foreword

American fiction, a figure who has already had an enormous impact and influence on our literature and culture. Another sensational and shock-ridden book, a novel of high merit and importance, is Judith Rossner's fourth novel, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, which Pat McAlexander says "will have a place in American literary history because of its convincing, finely drawn portrait of the sexual and moral confusion of its time." Other remarkable and enduring novels by authors included in our pages here are from the pens of J. P. Donleavy, John Irving, and Jessamyn West.

The statistics in *Variety* will show that *entertainment*, inspired and supported and stimulated by the film/TV tycoons, is the genre most frequently seen in the best-seller lists. America, in its "cottages," flats, penthouses, and seashore mansions, is literally now a factory, a General Motors of fiction. But all the numerous seven-figure sales made from these books, books bearing shock, eroticism, and terror in bronze, silver, or gold embossed paper covers, have not spelled death to the Serious Novel, which continues to be published and recognized and respected in the main. These men and women of authentic literary talent and intent are continuing in the tradition of Literature.

—William Targ

Preface

This volume supplements *American Novelists Since World War II*, First Series, further documenting the growth of a body of literature still in the making. It was noted in the foreword to the earlier volume that the years since the second world war have been extremely active ones for American novelists. The seventy entries published here demonstrate further just how active these years have been and how vital the novel form remains. Series one gathered most of the novelists best known by the general public and literary critics. Many of the novelists included here have not yet been accorded extensive public recognition; but there has never been a firm correlation between literary merit and contemporary public acceptance, and authors included here may be more deserving of acclaim than certain of those championed by the literary establishment. Most of these writers are still alive and writing, some of them only beginning promising careers. A knowledge of their work is integral to an appreciation of our living contemporary literature.

The purpose of the entries in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to provide reliable information about the professional careers of literary people. Emphasis is placed on biography and a synthesis of the critical reception of authors' works. Bibliographies of the authors' writings and the critical writings about them are selected. The lists of books at the beginnings of entries are intended to give an overview of the subjects' book-length work in all genres; major books are included, but ephemeral works such as chapbooks or pamphlets are normally omitted. Primary bibliographies at the ends of entries are selected to include works other than original book-length writings, such as screenplays, translations, and contributions to books and periodicals. The most useful books and articles about the authors are selected for the secondary bibliographies. If there are significant public collections of an author's papers, the information is listed at the end of the entry.

Acknowledgments

This book was produced by BC Research.

Nadia Rasheed was the in-house editor.

The production staff included Mary Bruccoli, Joyce Fowler, Timna Gainey, Sharon K. Kirkland, Cynthia H. Rogers, Karen L. Rood, Robin Sumner, Cheryl A. Swartzentruber, Theodora J. Thompson, and Lynne C. Zeigler.

The editor would like to thank the following individuals who have been particularly helpful in forming this book: Ernest Bufkin, James Colvert, Warren French, George Garrett, Martha Hale, Evans Harrington, Bert Hitchcock, William Koon, Warren Leamon, Stanley W. Lindberg, and Louis Rubin. Jacquelyn Price and Walter W. Ross III did the necessary library research with the valuable assistance of the following librarians at the Thomas Cooper Library: Michael Havener, Donna Nance, Jean Rhyne, Ellen Tillett, Gary Treadway, Joyce Werner, and Beth Woodard. Photographic copy work for this volume was done by Pat Crawford; and assistance in locating photographs and other illustration material was provided by the *Louisville Courier Journal & Times*, the University of Denver Office of Institutional Advancement, the University of Georgia Libraries, and the University of Kentucky Libraries.

The following photographers generously allowed us the use of their photos: Peggy Bach, Wally Bowen, Geraldine Brooks, Richard Byrd, Charne, Robert T. Coleman III, Nancy Crampton, Richard De Combray, Dana Durst, Joel Gardner, Bernard Gotfryd, Erich Hartmann, John Hubbard, Shyla Irving, Jill Kremenz, John LeBaron, Jacqueline McCord, Rollie McKenna, Dan Moore, Mark Morrow, J. S. Peck, Antoinette W. Roades, Matthew Rolston, Robert Satter, Max Schaible, Larry B. Stevenson, Angus Stewart, Thomas Victor, and Gabriel Penn Warren.

Finally, grateful acknowledgment is due the subjects of entries in this book who were kind enough to read their entries for accuracy. Without the assistance of all these people, this book would not have been possible.

Contents

Foreword	ix	Jesse Hill Ford (1928-)	100
Preface	xi	<i>John Alvis</i>	
		Gail Godwin (1937-)	105
		<i>Carl Solana Weeks</i>	
Harriette Simpson Arnow (1908-)	3	Mary Gordon (1949-)	109
<i>Glenda Hobbs</i>		<i>John Auchland</i>	
Wendell Berry (1934-)	9	Ben Greer (1948-)	112
<i>Gary Tolliver</i>		<i>George Garrett</i>	
Paul Bowles (1910-)	14	Davis Grubb (1919-1980)	117
<i>Lawrence D. Stewart</i>		<i>Edwin T. Arnold</i>	
Janet Burroway (1936-)	21	A. B. Guthrie, Jr. (1901-)	122
<i>Elisabeth Muhlenfeld</i>		<i>Ben Merchant Vorpahl</i>	
Frederick Busch (1941-)	25	Earl Hamner (1923-)	127
<i>Donald J. Greiner</i>		<i>George C. Longest</i>	
R. V. Cassill (1919-)	33	Barry Hannah (1942-)	131
<i>Charles Harmon Cagle</i>		<i>Charles Israel</i>	
Fred Chappell (1936-)	36	Elizabeth Hardwick (1916-)	133
<i>David Paul Ragan</i>		<i>Joseph J. Branin</i>	
Eleanor Clark (1913-)	48	John Hersey (1914-)	137
<i>Stanley W. Lindberg</i>		<i>Sam B. Girgus</i>	
Pat Conroy (1945-)	55	Edward Hoagland (1932-)	144
<i>Robert M. Willingham, Jr.</i>		<i>James A. Hart</i>	
John William Corrington (1932-)	59	William Humphrey (1924-)	148
<i>James D. Wilson</i>		<i>James W. Lee</i>	
Harry Crews (1935-)	65	John Irving (1942-)	153
<i>Allen Shepherd</i>		<i>Hugh M. Ruppersburg</i>	
Borden Deal (1922-)	69	Shirley Jackson (1919-1965)	161
<i>James R. Waddell</i>		<i>Martha Ragland</i>	
Nicholas Delbanco (1942-)	72	John Knowles (1926-)	167
<i>Alan Cheuse</i>		<i>Robert M. Nelson</i>	
Don DeLillo (1936-)	74	Tom Lea (1907-)	178
<i>Frank Day</i>		<i>L. W. Denton</i>	
Peter De Vries (1910-)	79	Harper Lee (1926-)	180
<i>William R. Higgins</i>		<i>Dorothy Jewell Altman</i>	
J. P. Donleavy (1926-)	83	Andrew Lytle (1902-)	183
<i>William E. Grant</i>		<i>James Kilgo</i>	
William Eastlake (1917-)	95	David Madden (1933-)	192
<i>Mary Ellen Brooks</i>		<i>Thomas E. Dasher</i>	

Contents

Frederick Manfred (1912-) <i>Joseph M. Flora</i>	201	Wilfrid Sheed (1930-) <i>Walter W. Ross III</i>	294
D. Keith Mano (1942-) <i>Frank Day</i>	208	Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-) <i>Edwin Gittleman</i>	296
Jack Matthews (1925-) <i>Bin Ramke</i>	214	David Slavitt (1935-) <i>George Garrett</i>	313
Peter Matthiessen (1927-) <i>John L. Cobbs</i>	218	Elizabeth Spencer (1921-) <i>Peggy Whitman Prenshaw</i>	320
Cormac McCarthy (1933-) <i>Dianne L. Cox</i>	224	Mark Steadman (1930-) <i>William Koon</i>	327
James A. Michener (1907?-) <i>A. Grove Day</i>	232	Hollis Summers (1916-) <i>Carol C. Harter</i>	330
Marion Montgomery (1925-) <i>Thomas Landess</i>	237	Anne Tyler (1941-) <i>Mary Ellen Brooks</i>	336
Berry Morgan (1919-) <i>Martha Adams</i>	241	Gore Vidal (1925-) <i>Robert Graalman</i>	345
Toni Morrison (1931-) <i>Nancy Carol Joyner</i>	243	Alice Walker (1944-) <i>Thadious M. Davis</i>	350
Howard Nemerov (1920-) <i>Carl Rapp</i>	247	Joseph Wambaugh (1937-) <i>David K. Jeffrey</i>	358
Josephine Pinckney (1895-1957) <i>James E. Kibler, Jr.</i>	250	Jessamyn West (1902-) <i>Bill Crider</i>	362
Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) <i>Nancy Duvall Hargrove</i>	259	Joan Williams (1928-) <i>Gail M. Morrison</i>	367
Charles Portis (1933-) <i>Michael E. Connaughton</i>	264	John E. Williams (1922-) <i>Craig Werner</i>	371
Mario Puzo (1920-) <i>James B. Hall</i>	268	Wirt Williams (1921-) <i>Sung Gay Chow</i>	377
Judith Rossner (1935-) <i>Patricia Jewell McAlexander</i>	272	Donald Windham (1920-) <i>Robert M. Willingham, Jr.</i>	380
Budd Schulberg (1914-) <i>Richard Fine</i>	275	Larry Woiwode (1941-) <i>Michael E. Connaughton</i>	387
Mary Lee Settle (1918-) <i>George Garrett</i>	281	Contributors	393
Irwin Shaw (1913-) <i>Walter W. Ross III</i>	289		

Dictionary of Literary Biography

**American Novelists
Since World War II**

Second Series

Dictionary of Literary Biography

HARRIETTE SIMPSON ARNOW

(7 July 1908-)

SELECTED BOOKS: *Mountain Path*, as Harriette Simpson (New York: Covici-Friede, 1936); *Hunter's Horn* (New York: Macmillan, 1949; London: Collins, 1950); *The Dollmaker* (New York: Macmillan, 1954; London: Heinemann, 1955); *Seedtime on the Cumberland* (New York: Macmillan, 1960; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1960); *Flowering of the Cumberland* (New York: Macmillan / London: Collier-Macmillan, 1963); *The Weedkiller's Daughter* (New York: Knopf, 1970); *The Kentucky Trace: A Novel of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1974); *Old Burnside* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977).

Harriette Simpson Arnow is best known for her novel, *The Dollmaker*, in print almost continuously since its publication in 1954. Few novels so movingly and unsparingly dramatize the anguish of the dispossessed rural poor trying to retain their values and integrity in a violent urban environment. Without the sentimentality that mars some other novels about forced migration, *The Dollmaker* chronicles the attempts of its heroine, Gertie Nevels, a hulking Kentucky hill woman, to preserve her family, her creativity, and her pride in her hill heritage. An acknowledged masterpiece, *The Dollmaker* has overshadowed Arnow's other fiction, which is yet to be assessed as fully.

A masterful storyteller who uses traditional narrative form, Arnow feels that her desire to tell stories, or write fiction, was kindled as a child, when she heard her parents and grandmothers spin tales about her forebears from before the Revolutionary War. In her parents' strict, religious home in rural Kentucky, writing was considered frivolous and impractical; Arnow was expected to follow family tradition and become a teacher. Secretly she wrote

short stories during high school and college—two years (1924-1926) at Berea College and two years at the University of Louisville, where she received a B.S. degree in 1930. Two years of teaching after graduation persuaded Arnow that the profession was not for her. She quit and decided to devote more of her time and energy to writing. In 1934, at twenty-six, she scandalized her family by moving to a furnished room near the main library in Cincinnati, where she could read the "great novels" and try to write fiction. She supported herself with odd jobs and worked for the Federal Writers' Project. Her first publications, "A Mess of Pork" and "Marigolds and Mules," were short stories that appeared in 1935 in the little magazines of the 1930s. Written in terse, evocative prose revealing a perfectly attuned eye and ear, both stories demonstrate the skill at characterization and at depicting shocking violence that distinguish her later novels. National recognition came in winter 1936 when the prestigious *Southern Review* published "The Washerwoman's Day," a story that foreshadows *Hunter's Horn* (1949) and *The Dollmaker* in its searing criticism of narrow piousness.

In March 1939 Arnow married newspaperman Harold Arnow. Tired of city living, they turned to farm life in southern Kentucky. A daughter, Marcella, was born to them in 1941. In 1944 they moved to Detroit, where Harold Arnow took a job with the *Detroit Times*. A son, Thomas, was born in 1946. They settled in their current Ann Arbor, Michigan, homestead in 1950.

Arnow's early years were shaped by the small town of Burnside in Pulaski County, Kentucky. There she attended school and watched the steamboats and railroad transport passengers to or from Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Miami. The other world that attracted Arnow most, though, was not the cities, but the primitive hills east of her home. Her first prolonged stay with the hill people who were to become the primary subjects of her fiction occurred in 1926. To earn enough money to resume college she boarded with a family in a remote corner

Harriette Simpson Arnow

of Pulaski County and taught in their one-room schoolhouse for seven months. In her first novel, *Mountain Path* (published in 1936 under her maiden name, Simpson), she tells the story of Louisa (Arnow's middle name) Sheridan, a college student-teacher who finds herself similarly situated in feud country. The full-bodied characters and Arnow's acute portrayal of their harsh yet emotionally rich lives reveal the depth of her bond with the hill people and their effect on her imagination.

More than merely providing a privileged look at life deep in the backwoods, *Mountain Path* dramatizes a universal struggle central to Arnow's more distinguished, later fiction: the confrontation between the individual conscience and society, whether it be family, community, or the wider political, social, economic world. *Mountain Path* asks whether Louisa can overcome her upbringing, and begin a life in tune with her deepest instincts and values.

Enthusiastically received by reviewers and readers alike, *Mountain Path* established Arnow as a writer of considerable talent. Alfred Kazin called *Mountain Path* a superb book "of its type"—a regional novel about Southern mountaineers. He praised Arnow's authentic characterizations and her "spiritual indignation," congratulating her for resisting the "spurious lyricism" and complacency that characterize many novels about Southern highlanders. He perceived that Arnow's novel departs from the overused literary conventions of "mountain fiction" established in the nineteenth century. Like many of these earlier novels, *Mountain Path* does depict backwoods Kentuckians feuding and moonshining, and a young city woman teaching school in the mountains. But while the heroines of earlier, popular novels by Lucy Furman and Charles Neville Buck try to uplift the ignorant "hillbillies," reasoning them out of their feuds, Louisa learns to appreciate her hosts' values and even considers eschewing her career plans to begin life anew among them. By insisting on the tag "Kentucky" or "regional," Kazin had implied that Arnow's novel has a limited appeal. Arnow's focus on her characters' freedom of choice and moral responsibility, however, seems to surpass the limits of any provincial literature.

Hunter's Horn persuaded most critics that Arnow was more than a "regional novelist." A best-seller, it also won best novel of 1949 in the *Saturday Review* national critics' poll amid such formidable competition as Orwell's *1984*. Critics consistently lauded Arnow's characters, her artful, "effortless" prose, and what Malcolm Cowley calls her "poetry of

earth" in describing her characters' connection to their land.

The story of a hill farmer's stalking of an elusive red fox, *Hunter's Horn* dramatizes a compulsion as consuming and as mythic as Ahab's hunt for Moby-Dick. Nunn Ballew's chase after King Devil, the fox who depletes the community's livestock and runs the families' hounds to death, begins as a combination



Harriette Simpson Arnow

of sport and expediency but grows into a frightening obsession that causes Nunn to wonder who is the hunter and who the hunted. His farm falls into disrepair, his debts mount as he spends all his money on two pedigreed foxhounds, and he risks losing the respect of his wife, his children, his neighbors, his preacher, and, he fears, God.

In *Hunter's Horn* Arnow further develops the theme she had explored in *Mountain Path*: the battle to resist external pressures and make choices based on one's deepest instincts and beliefs. As Nunn ignores his detractors and continues to chase King Devil, he appears to demonstrate a stalwart independence. But the true test of his self-reliance comes not with his obsessive pursuit of King Devil,

but rather with the decision he faces when his spirited fourteen-year-old daughter, Suse, becomes pregnant.

The novel's absorbing subplot focuses on Suse's dreams of getting an education and going north, thereby escaping the fate of most mountain women: having more children than they can feed. In a scene that illustrates Arnow's remarkable ability to sustain suspense and to cement the reader's sympathies with her characters, Nunn must decide Suse's fate before the assembled community. Almost against his will, the reader shares Nunn's anguish. Assured that her irreverent father will not bow to the prevailing notions of decency he has always scorned, an unashamed Suse is stunned and angered when he proclaims that his fire will warm no bastard: she must marry the baby's father. Nunn, nearly frozen with ambivalence and grief, wins back the neighbors' approval in exchange for his daughter's back and heart being "broke to the plow." Arnow's portrait of Nunn's conflicting loyalties demonstrates her ability to create male characters as palpable and as complex as her most arresting heroines. Few American novelists so genuinely dramatize the entangled bonds among family members, the joy and anguish of being born into a group.

The Dollmaker firmly established Arnow as a major American (not Kentucky or regional) novelist. Another best-seller, it too earned critical accolades, tying for best novel of the year in the *Saturday Review's* national critics' poll, topping Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart* and Faulkner's *A Fable*; it was a runner-up to *A Fable* for the National Book Award. Perhaps partly because most of the novel is set outside Kentucky, critics were less tempted to call the book "regional." But the power of Arnow's dramatization of the corrosive effects of living in a modern industrial society makes arguing over labels patently petty. "One is convinced, part way through the book," says Joyce Carol Oates, "that it is a masterpiece. . . . Critical examination seems almost irrelevant."

This riveting story of a family's migration during World War II from the Kentucky hills to a crowded housing project in Detroit centers on Gertie Nevels's efforts to hold her family together before and after she joins her husband in Detroit, where he has gone to work in a defense plant. An intimidating, self-reliant, inarticulate six-foot-four-inch craggy mountain of flesh, Gertie has an effect on the reader that matches her size. Heaped with details of how city life befuddles and splinters the uprooted family, the novel re-creates Gertie's overbearing world with claustrophobic precision.

Gertie's grappling with religious and social prejudice, labor strikes, economic insecurity, family strife, and her own faintheartedness raises questions about the ability of the human spirit to resist defilement and malaise in a modern industrial society.

More than just a naturalistic account of a family's disintegration, *The Dollmaker* is a richly symbolic, innately moral work of art. Gertie's wavering strength is reflected in the novel's central symbol, the man-sized block of cherry wood she whittles. Her deepest hope is that the man "hidden" in the wood will be the laughing Christ in overalls she has envisaged since childhood. But Detroit often forces her to choose between defending her artistic / spiritual integrity and feeding or protecting her family. Falteringly, guiltily, she advises two of her children to relinquish evidence of the "hillbilly" in them in order to "get along" with their Northern neighbors; she stops whittling for pleasure and agrees to carve tortured, blood-dripping Christ figures for grocery money. Later, a jigsaw replaces her knife as she churns out ugly, painted dolls on a family assembly line. Horrified, she discerns the shamed, repentant Judas lurking in the sweet-smelling, pure-grained cherry wood. Gertie discovers her own identity and destiny as the man in the wood betrays his.

The scene describing the death of Gertie's five-year-old daughter, Cassie Marie, best illustrates Arnow's power and distinctiveness as a writer. An innocent, disarming, creative character, Cassie has a bit of Huckleberry Finn in her and demonstrates Arnow's unusual ability to render children authentically. Mistakenly Gertie believes that Cassie's playmates' cries of "cuckoo" as they hear her talking aloud to her imaginary friend Callie Lou will harm Cassie more than the loss of Callie Lou. The novel's most memorable line is Gertie's telling the desperate, disbelieving Cassie, "There ain't no Callie Lou." But aware on some level that Callie Lou represents Cassie's pride in Kentucky, where Callie Lou was born, and Cassie's refusal to become assimilated, Gertie belatedly decides to let Cassie revive Callie Lou. As the immobilized child sits cradling Callie Lou on the railroad tracks, where she can avoid Gertie's rebuke, Gertie watches a train sever Cassie's outstretched legs. Gertie's hysterical search for Cassie as she runs to tell her forlorn child that it is all right to keep Callie Lou—"a body's gotta have somethen all their own"—her horror at watching the train lurch forward, and her descent into near madness afterward draw the reader unconditionally into Gertie's blurred, truncated world. Arnow's fluid

prose, her precise, startling details (especially Cassie's bloodied, dangling boot), and the horrific punch of her violence bespeak a master's command.

However profoundly depressing are Gertie's gradual debility and defeat, *The Dollmaker's* world is not without hope. Nature, art, and a parent's bond with a child provide solace and meaning. But more encouraging is Arnow's conviction that other people are one's best resource. Arnow's belief that art is "for the masses . . . a mirror in which man sees his own image or that of his neighbor" is embodied in Gertie's belated, anguished realization at novel's end that she could have carved Christ in the cherry wood if only she had perceived her Detroit neighbors as models. Christ can live in the common man even in Detroit, a place Gertie imagined was hell on earth. The dirty, howling project children even keep Callie Lou alive after Cassie is buried beneath the Northern cemetery's artificial grass.

Arnow's talent for dramatizing Southern highlanders struggling against a recalcitrant, hostile environment finds rich expression in her two social histories of the settling of southeastern Kentucky and northern Tennessee, *Seedtime on the Cumberland* (1960) and *Flowering of the Cumberland* (1963). Often as gripping as her best fiction, they established her as a reputable historian. Her most recent book, *Old Burnside* (1977), combines a history of her home community with family memories.

Arnow's return to fiction in 1970 with *The Weedkiller's Daughter*, her only novel not focusing on the lives of Kentucky mountaineers, was inauspicious. Set in a Detroit suburb in the 1960s, the novel dramatizes the attempts of fifteen-year-old Susie Schnitzer to preserve whatever rudiments of uncorrupted nature remain in her seemingly plastic world and to keep her mind free of the racial and ethnic prejudice and hate that infest her home and community. *The Weedkiller's Daughter* is as potent a condemnation of postindustrial American values as *The Dollmaker*, but it lacks the captivating characters of Arnow's earlier fiction. An exception is an older woman who keeps a farm on the outskirts of town. Regarded as weird, she is dubbed "The Primitive." Her name is Gertie Nevels.

The Kentucky Trace: A Novel of the American Revolution (1974) comes closer to the power and immediacy of Arnow's earlier fiction. The hero, Leslie Collins, a backwoods rebel, is engaged in a struggle as demanding as his fight against British and Loyalist soldiers: he plans to rescue, then adopt, an abused, neglected infant. His plot to get the child is intricate, ingenious, and hilarious, demonstrating

Arnow's gleeful appreciation of that era's customs, rituals, and language.

Though Arnow has always had a modest, fervent following, she has only recently begun to receive consideration in the popular and academic presses. The essay that won her the most notice was Joyce Carol Oates's appreciation of *The Dollmaker*, first published in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1971 and later as the afterword to the Avon paperback edition. Oates's hailing it as "our most unpretentious American masterpiece" may have accelerated its republication. A volume on Arnow appeared in the Twayne United States Authors Series in 1974, and several essays have appeared during the 1970s in academic journals and popular magazines. Avon reprinted *Hunter's Horn* in paperback in 1979. But Arnow has yet to receive attention commensurate with her achievements.

A partial explanation is that she is often pigeonholed as a regionalist. "Regional" suggests to many that an author is preoccupied with documenting an area's dialect, customs, and picturesque landscape. Arnow accurately evokes her region; but like Faulkner, she dramatizes moral dilemmas that transcend geographical boundaries. Unlike Faulkner, Arnow has not been included in literary histories chronicling the literature of the South, for Kentucky, which did not secede from the Union during the Civil War, is rarely considered southern. Lately she has been noted as an Appalachian writer. She should be seen as an American writer with uncircumscribed appeal. *Hunter's Horn* and *The Dollmaker* have been translated into several foreign languages and have sold briskly.

Naturalism is another unfortunate label that may have stunted Arnow's reputation. Applied to *Hunter's Horn* and *The Dollmaker*, it suggests a doctrinaire narrowness. There was some justification for critics' labeling *Hunter's Horn* a naturalistic work illustrating "biological determinism." Like Suse, the fox Nunn chases is trapped by her body: King Devil turns out to be a female, caught because a belly swollen with pups slows down her flight. But Arnow's novels cannot accurately be termed examples of literary naturalism. Throughout her career she has been drawn to stories involving a character's struggle against political, biological, economic, and religious forces that threaten one's freedom or life. But her novels begin with characters rather than with theories, and her people are too strong and too individualized to fade insignificantly into the novel's background. Arnow acknowledges admiration for Zola's *Germinal*; but her characters

RACK LBB 64

ARNOW—219L—GAL. 64

middle room, so that Gertie and Clovis were alone in the room beside the kitchen. Still, she was conscious of the restless sleep of the children on the other side of the thin walls. They were all so close together it didn't seem decent. The whole place wasn't as big as either of the two main rooms at the Tipton Place.

She shut her eyes and tried to think that she was there when Clovis fell quickly into a deep, satisfied sleep. She drowsed and dreamed of pines talking. The talking rose, became the roar of a fast through train, its screeching whistle rising above the roar as it neared the through street. This was followed at once by the tumultuous sound of its passing, so close it seemed in the very house. Amos and Cassie screamed out in fright, then as the sounds subsided they sank gradually into a whimpering half-sleep. There remained only the quiverings—the windows, the steel springs of the bed, the dishes, a chair touching the wall.

There came at last a silence so complete she could hear the ticking of the clock under the bed, and the snoring of Sophronie's children behind the wall of the girls' bedroom. The feeling that had followed her at times since she had got on the train came back in the silence—she had forgotten something, something very important. But what? She was sorting out the things she'd left behind when she found herself lifted on one elbow, listening.

Someone was moving about on the other side of the wall. She heard running water, the soft thud of a pot going over the gas flame, the creak and slam of an icebox door—breakfast getting sounds. Soon she heard the opening and closing of the outside door, and whoever it was did not come back. He had not taken time to eat his breakfast. He was most likely the husband of that Sophronie in the sleazy nightgown. She was too lazy to get up and cook breakfast.

She drowsed, but sleep enough never came to drown the strangeness of the bed or the closeness of the air. It seemed only a little while before she found herself listening again. A singing it was, in the alley now. Topsy he was, and a tenor, "They'll be pie in a sky—" A woman's voice cut him off, something like the girl Maggie's, but near crying, "Please, Joseph, please. Du neighbors—"

"Quitcha tucken," the man said, and a door on the other side of the alley slammed.

"Tucken." What was "tucken," she wondered. Then the door next her own was opened quietly, but slammed shut so loudly that Clovis turned in his sleep. She heard the opening of the oven door, the little whoosh of the lighting gas, then the opening and closing of the icebox door. A chair was pulled out followed by the hissing sound of the cap jerked off a bottle of something fizzy like pop. She heard a chair tip back against the wall, so close through the thinness seemed like she could feel it. She could see the man's chair leaning against the wall, warming his cold feet in the oven, as he drank from the bottle. She heard the soft clink of glass on steel as he put it down. But where had he been and why, at this time of night? She sat straight up in bed with wonder and surprise when the voice came, low, more like a sigh than a voice, "Oh, Lord, that moven line," for the voice was a woman's voice, Sophronie's.

The sounds on the other side of the wall or her own abrupt movement awakened Clovis enough that he mumbled sleepily: "Don't be afear'd, Gert. Th doors locks good."

"Oh, I ain't afear'd," she whispered. "It's that Sophronie. Why, she's jist got in home."

He clamped one ear against the pillow, put an arm over the other. "When else would a woman on th three-tu-twelve shift git home?"

Harriette Simpson Arnow

dwarf his, who are incapable of saying, as Gertie does in *The Dollmaker*, that she "caused it all."

In *Hunter's Horn* and *The Dollmaker* Arnow achieves the raw power of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), but without sacrificing style. At times in these long novels her meticulous reconstruction of a character's world is so detailed, so complete, that the reader can feel inundated and yearn for streamlining. These novels, however, can generate massive emotional power. Some episodes are forceful enough to be short stories: the riotous religious revival in *Hunter's Horn* recalls Twain's pointed satire of evangelical Protestantism in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The astonishing opening chapter of *The Dollmaker*, in which Gertie performs a tracheotomy on her baby with a twig and a knife as surgical instruments, has indeed been printed as a short story.

Arnow alone has rendered Kentucky highlanders fully and fairly, rescuing them from the literary stereotype of the lazy, suspicious, ignorant, manically violent hillbilly. Taking their dignity for granted, Arnow also avoids the passionate yearning for identification with the rural poor that betrays insecurity and condescension. In her long manuscript now in progress, she writes of a Kentucky farming family living near the Tennessee border, just southwest of the hills that spawned Gertie Nevels and her hardy, sinewy breed. Arnow's unique, obstinate characters, even in the face of economic ruin and spiritual exhaustion, will endure and prevail. With luck and justice, so should Arnow's place in American literature.

—Glenda Hobbs

Other:

Introduction to *Mountain Path* (Berea, Ky.: Council of the Southern Mountains, 1963);

"Some Musings on the Nature of History," *Historical Society of Michigan Publication: The Clarence M. Burton Memorial Lecture*, 1968;

"Personal Recollections," *Appalachian Heritage*, 1 (Fall 1973): 11-14.

Periodical Publications:

FICTION:

"Marigolds and Mules," *Kosmos*, 3 (February-March 1935): 3-6;

"A Mess of Pork," *New Talent*, 10 (October-December 1935): 4-11;

"The Washerwoman's Day," *Southern Review*, 1 (Winter 1936): 522-527;

"The Two Hunters," *Esquire*, 18 (July 1942): 74-75, 96;

"The Hunter," *Atlantic Monthly*, 174 (November 1944): 79-84;

"Love?," *Twigs*, 8 (Fall 1971): 1-15;

"Fra Lippi and Me," *Georgia Review*, 33 (Winter 1979): 867-875.

NONFICTION:

"Language—the Key That Unlocks All the Boxes," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 30 (May 1956): 683-685;

"Reading without a purpose," *American Library Association*, 53 (November 1959): 837-839;

"Progress Reached Our Valley," *Nation*, 211 (3 August 1970): 71-77;

"Gray Woman of Appalachia," *Nation*, 211 (28 December 1970): 684-687;

"No Rats in the Mines," *Nation*, 213 (25 October 1971): 401-404.

References:

Barbara L. Baer, "Harriette Arnow's Chronicles of Destruction," *Nation*, 222 (31 January 1976): 117-120;

Wilton Eckley, *Harriette Arnow* (New York: Twayne, 1974);

Glenda Hobbs, "Harriette Arnow's Kentucky Novels: Beyond Local Color," *Kate Chopin Newsletter*, 2 (Fall 1976): 27-33;

Hobbs, "A Portrait of the Artist as Mother: Harriette Arnow and *The Dollmaker*," *Georgia Review*, 33 (Winter 1979): 851-867;

Joyce Carol Oates, "Joyce Carol Oates on Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker*," in *Rediscoveries*, ed. David Madden (New York: Crown, 1971), pp. 57-67; reprinted as "The Nightmare of Naturalism," in Oates's *New Heaven, New Earth: Visionary Experience in Literature* (New York: Vanguard, 1974), pp. 99-110;

Arline R. Thorn, "Harriette Arnow's Mountain Women," *Bulletin of the West Virginia Association of College English Teachers*, 4 (1977): 1-9.

Papers:

The Harriette Arnow Special Collection at the University of Kentucky in Lexington includes typescripts of eighteen unpublished short stories, an unpublished novel, "Between the Flowers," an early version of *Mountain Path*, near complete typescripts of *Hunter's Horn* and *Seedtime on the Cumberland*, a holograph of *The Dollmaker*, and correspondence.

WENDELL BERRY

(5 August 1934-)

- SELECTED BOOKS: *Nathan Coulter* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960);
The Broken Ground (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1964; London: Cape, 1966);
A Place on Earth (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967);
Openings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968);
Findings (Iowa City: Prairie Press, 1969);
The Long-Legged House (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969);
Farming: A Handbook (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970);
The Hidden Wound (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970);
The Unforeseen Wilderness: An Essay on Kentucky's Red River Gorge, text by Berry with photographs by Eugene Meatyard (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971);
A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972);
The Country of Marriage (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973);
The Memory of Old Jack (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974);
To What Listens (Crete, Nebr.: Best Cellar Press, 1975);
Sayings and Doings (Lexington, Ky.: Gnomon Press, 1975);
Clearing (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977);
Three Memorial Poems (Berkeley: Sand Dollar Press, 1977);
The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977).

Wendell Berry is a poet, novelist, and essayist whose steady literary achievement has earned him wide recognition both as an artist and as a spokesman for contemporary environmental concerns. Amid the more frequent and more widely ranging poetry and essays, his fiction has sustained a constant center, a native ground, where he explores the rich dramatic possibilities latent within the history of his singular subject—the small-farming tradition in America. Berry is preeminently a philosopher-poet who has wedged in the path of inexorable Progress the ancient, stable traditions of agrarian societies, based on an understanding of agriculture-as-culture, of farming as art and

religion. His designs are equally ancient and traditional as he engages both the *dulce* and *utile*. Indeed his novels are at times both lyrical and instructive as they explore a way of life less encumbered (though in its way no less complex) than that of modern society, while at the same time reclaiming the clear values and orderly disciplines of the older ways. Counseling mankind in the responsible ethics capable of forming a healing suture between man and nature, Berry's fiction reenters the moral tradition which brings together the interests of art with the evocation of right action in the world. By his own action, Berry contests the wisdom of America's westering impulse (which he describes as the "unsettling of America") and reminds his readers of the necessity for staying in place, for nurturing the resources others have often used and walked away from. "I am at home," his poetry declares. "Don't come with me. / You stay at home too." In both life and art, his constant search has been to find adequate expression for man's responsible relationship with a chosen place. Consequently, though America has had and continues to have its spokesmen for wilderness, Berry is distinctive for his formidable and unyielding literature of settlement.

Berry works and lives in his native Henry County on a small farm that rises steeply from the banks of the Kentucky River and stretches high on to rough hill country. The son of an attorney, who himself chose to practice just a few miles from his native farm, Berry also has returned home, but by a circuitous route, to Port Royal in north central Kentucky, some fifty miles from Louisville. Having studied at the University of Kentucky (A.B., 1956; M.A., 1957) and taught at Georgetown College in the late 1950s, he spent several years in California (1958-1960) at Stanford, first as a recipient of a Wallace Stegner fellowship for fiction and then as a lecturer (he returned as a visiting professor, 1968-1969). A Guggenheim Fellowship took him to Italy and France (1961-1962), and then followed two years of teaching at New York University (1962-1964). But in 1964 he returned to Lexington to become a member of the faculty of the University of Kentucky. The logical conclusion of this homeward movement, however, occurred the following year, when in 1965 he reentered his family's long history and association with the land (a tradition that began five generations earlier with his distant great-grandfather who had settled at Port Royal about 1803) by moving from Lexington with his wife, Tanya, and two children to the small farm he had bought at Port Royal, the Lanes Landing Farm.