**Garner, Hugh (1913-1979)**

Hugh Garner was a British-born Canadian writer, journalist, and editor. His fictional writings reflect on the experiences of marginalized individuals, echoing his own early experiences of poverty and unemployment.

Garner and his family moved from Batley, England, to Toronto, Ontario, when he was six years old, and settled in the working-class neighbourhood of Cabbagetown. The Great Depression forced Garner to leave high school in search of work to support himself and his family. He held a wide variety of jobs, working as a bicycle messenger, a factory labourer, a newspaper copy boy, and even riding freight trains across North America to pursue short-term and seasonal farm jobs. Politicized by these experiences, Garner volunteered in the Spanish Civil War, serving with the Abraham Lincoln Battalion of the communist International Brigades. After the Fascist victory in 1939, he enlisted with first the Royal Canadian Artillery and then the Royal Canadian Navy in World War II. With the war’s conclusion he returned to Toronto where he made a career of his writing, managing to support his wife, Alice Gallant, and their two children, Barbara and Hugh Jr., by publishing short stories, novels, plays, radio and television scripts, and articles, and through his editorial work at *Saturday Night Magazine* and *New Liberty Magazine*.

In his fiction, Garner wrote in a social realist style deeply engaged with proletarian and socialist causes and tropes. His oeuvre depicts the experiences of working-class characters of different ages, genders, races, ethnicities, nationalities, and abilities from across North America. Garner was outspoken about his reliance on publishing to support his family and the fact that this career path required a populist approach, in which he wrote for a variety of audiences and venues. While he published in mainstream magazines, literary journals, and local newspapers alike, he is perhaps best known for his *Bildungsroman* *Cabbagetown* (first published in a truncated form in 1950, then published in full in 1968), which traces the protagonist’s early experiences of the Great Depression to his arrival on the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War. Garner also took an innovative approach to publication, revising many of his works of short fiction into radio and television shows, plays, and book collections. One of these collections, *Hugh Garner’s Best Stories* (1963), earned him the Canadian Governor General’s Literary Award for Fiction.

**List of Works**

Novels

*Storm Below* (1949)

*Cabbagetown* (1950; revised and expanded 1968)

*Waste No Tears* (Jarvis Warwick, pseud., 1950)

*Present Reckoning* (1951)

*Silence on the Shore* (1962)

*A Nice Place to Visit* (1970)

*The Sin Sniper* (1970)

*Death in Don Mills: A Murder Mystery* (1975)

*The Intruders* (1976)

*Murder Has Your Number: An Inspector Dumont Mystery* (1978)

*Don’t Deal Five Deuces: An Inspector Dumont Mystery* (with Paul Stuewe, 1992)

Short Stories

*The Yellow Sweater and Other Stories* (1952)

*Hugh Garner’s Best Stories* (1963)

*Men and Women* (1966)

*Violation of the Virgins and Other Stories* (1971)

*The Legs of the Lame and Other Stories* (1975)

Plays

*Three Women: A Trilogy of One-Act Plays* (1973)

Autobiography

*One Damn Thing after Another! The Life Story of a Canadian Writer* (1973)

Other

*Author, Author!* (1964) (magazine articles)

**References and Further Reading**

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Fortin, M. (date unknown) “Hugh Garner: The ‘One Man Trade Union’ of Publishing,” *Historical Perspectives on Canadian Publishing*, McMaster University Library. URL: http://hpcanpub.mcmaster.ca/case-study/hugh-garner-quotone-man-trade-unionquot-publishing-audio-recording

Kennedy, M. P. J. (1989) “The Short Stories of Hugh Garner: Ground-Level Realism within the Canadian Short Story Tradition,” Diss. Ottawa: University of Ottawa.

Stuewe, P. (1984) *Hugh Garner and His Works,* Toronto: ECW Press.

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