

Hugh Garner



Photo courtesy [Cabbage-town people](#)

[Hugh Garner](#) was born in Yorkshire in 1913, came to Canada as a child, and grew up in poor parts of Toronto during the Great Depression. In the Dirty Thirties, he bummed around Canada, the US and Mexico, riding the rails, as men did then, catching free rides.

He was a prolific journalist, novelist, reviewer and short story writer. In addition to a hundred short stories and seventeen books, he also wrote for radio and television. According to [Marc Fortin](#) of Queen's University, Garner was "argumentative," but also "respected for his ability to produce controversial and timely pieces."

Garner led a life of gritty adventure. A socialist who called himself a "one-man union," Garner portrayed working-class Ontario in a realistic style. He acted on his convictions by volunteering to serve in the Spanish Civil war. Later, he also served in World War II.

In Garner's beautifully drawn short story "Hunky," a young Polish labourer with lofty dreams works on a tobacco farm in southern Ontario. Hunky is seen through the eyes of his co-worker George, a deeply flawed narrator--a middle-aged alcoholic too weak to fight directly against the injustice he sees practiced on Hunky, although he strongly disagrees with it. Workers being victimized is a typical Garner theme.

Novels include *Storm Below* (1949) and *Cabbagetown* (1950). Over [The Silence on the Shore](#) (1962), the author quarrelled with Jack McClelland of McClelland and Stewart. Later he moved on to other publishers. A collection of his short stories won the Governor General's Award in 1963. He died in 1979.