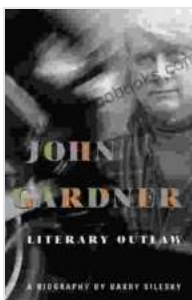


John Gardner: Literary Outlaw

John Gardner was a prolific and influential American writer whose work spanned genres and pushed the boundaries of literary convention. This biography explores Gardner's life and work, from his early years as a rebellious outsider to his later success as a novelist, poet, and teacher. Drawing on extensive research and interviews with Gardner's friends, family, and colleagues, Barry Silesky paints a vivid portrait of a complex and enigmatic figure.

Early Life and Education

John Champlin Gardner Jr. was born on July 21, 1933, in Batavia, New York. His father, John Champlin Gardner Sr., was a lawyer and politician who served as a member of the New York State Assembly. His mother, Helen, was a homemaker. Gardner had two older sisters, Elizabeth and Mary.



John Gardner: Literary Outlaw by Barry Silesky

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1420 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 384 pages
Lending	: Enabled
Item Weight	: 1.01 pounds
Dimensions	: 5.55 x 0.79 x 8.5 inches

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Gardner's childhood was marked by both privilege and adversity. His father was a successful attorney, and the family lived in a comfortable home in the affluent suburb of Pittsford, New York. However, Gardner's parents had a troubled marriage, and they divorced when he was 12 years old. Gardner's mother remarried a few years later, but her second marriage was also unhappy.

Gardner was a bright and curious child, but he was also a rebellious and difficult student. He was expelled from several schools before finally graduating from high school in 1951. After high school, Gardner attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. He majored in English and philosophy, and he graduated summa cum laude in 1955.

Military Service and Early Writing Career

After graduating from college, Gardner served two years in the U.S. Army. He was stationed in Germany, where he worked as a military policeman. Gardner's time in the army was a formative experience. He witnessed the horrors of war firsthand, and he developed a deep distrust of authority.

After leaving the army, Gardner returned to the United States and began his writing career. He published his first novel, *The Resurrection*, in 1966. The novel was a critical and commercial success, and it established Gardner as a major literary figure.

Gardner's early novels were often experimental and challenging. He explored themes of violence, sex, and death, and he used a variety of narrative techniques, including stream of consciousness and metafiction.

Later Career and Legacy

In the 1970s, Gardner's writing became more accessible and mainstream. He published a number of successful novels, including *October Light* (1976), *Freddy's Book* (1980), and *The Sunlight Dialogues* (1982). Gardner also wrote several books on writing, including *The Art of Fiction* (1983) and *On Becoming a Novelist* (1988).

Gardner died of a heart attack on September 16, 1982, at the age of 49. He was a prolific and influential writer whose work continues to be read and studied today.

Critical Reception

Gardner's work has been praised by critics for its originality, intelligence, and emotional power. However, it has also been criticized for its violence, pessimism, and lack of sentimentality.

In a review of *October Light*, critic Michiko Kakutani wrote that Gardner was "a writer of extraordinary talent and ambition" who "has created a work of art that is both disturbing and deeply moving." However, Kakutani also criticized Gardner for his "unremitting bleakness" and his "lack of faith in the human spirit."

Critic James Wood has praised Gardner's work for its "formal beauty" and its "intelligence." However, Wood has also criticized Gardner for his "moral nihilism" and his "lack of compassion."

Legacy

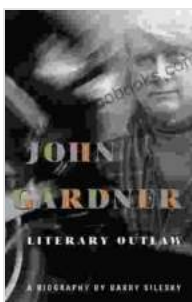
John Gardner was a prolific and influential writer whose work continues to be read and studied today. He was a literary outlaw who pushed the boundaries of literary convention and challenged the status quo. Gardner's

work is essential reading for anyone interested in American literature, postmodernism, and the art of writing.

Barry Silesky's biography of John Gardner is a comprehensive and insightful look at the life and work of this complex and enigmatic figure.

About the Author

Barry Silesky is a professor of English at the University of New Hampshire. He is the author of several books, including *John Gardner: Literary Outlaw* (2023), *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion* (2006), and *Modernist Poetics and the Novel* (1994).

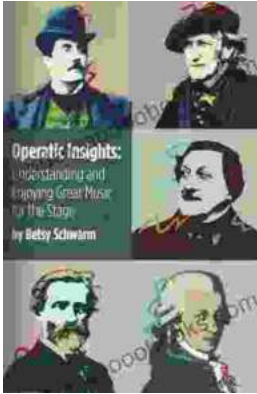


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