



The Dollmaker by Harriette Arnow

From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Erica Bauermeister

In the opening scene of *The Dollmaker* a rough-hewn, uneducated woman performs a tracheotomy on her dying son, guided only by her love for her child and rural common sense. Thus we are introduced to Gertie Nevells, one of the most amazing women in literature. Gertie is a powerful, compassionate woman, a wood sculptor, a mother who talks to her daughter's imaginary playmates. Her one dream is to buy her own farm in the backwoods of the South and live there with her husband and children. But World War II intervenes, and as a good wife she must take her children and follow her husband to Detroit, where he has been put to work in a war factory. In the city, Gertie fights desperately to keep her family together and maintain their rural values, but it's a hard fight and even her flowers seem to know it: "There was something frantic in their blooming, as if they knew that frost was near and then the bitter cold. They'd lived through all the heat and noise and stench of summertime, and now each widely opened flower was like a triumphant cry, 'We will, we will make seed before we die.'" A big book, full of vividly drawn characters and masterful scenes, *The Dollmaker* is both a passionate denunciation of industrialization and war, and a tribute to a woman's love for her children and the land. From: Amazon.com