



2017 Inductee
to the
South Carolina
Academy of Authors

“Christmastime,” the first short story published by Sumter native Arthenia Jackson Bates Millican (1920-2012)—internationally known fiction writer, essayist, poet, educator, humanist—appeared in *The Sumter Daily Item* when she was a sixteen-year-old student at Lincoln High School.

By the time of the publication of her premier short-story collection, *SEEDS BENEATH THE SNOW* (1969), her work was being compared to that of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Zora Neale Hurston, and Thomas Hardy. In her convincing local-color narratives—by turns disturbing, touching, humorous—of the daily lives and strivings of rural and small-town African-Americans in the South, Millican was hailed as following in the tradition of Hurston, Richard Wright, Ernest J. Gaines, and Alice Walker. She published additional works of fiction (*The Deity Nodded*, 1973; *Such Things From The Valley*, 1977) and her stories were carried in such periodicals as *Black World*, *Obsidian*, and *Callaloo*. Her critical and learned essays, and her poetry, appeared in various scholarly and popular journals.

Millican was educated at Morris College (B.A., 1941); Atlanta University (M.A., 1948), where she studied with Langston Hughes; and Louisiana State University (Ph.D., 1972), where she wrote her dissertation on James Weldon Johnson. Beginning in 1942, she went on to spend a lifetime teaching English—first in high schools in South Carolina and Virginia, and then at Morris, Mississippi Valley State University (Itta Bena), Norfolk State University, and Southern University (Baton Rouge), from which she retired in 1980. She returned to Sumter in 1992. A permanent collection of her papers is held by USC’s South Caroliniana Library. The AJBM Literary Foundation was established in 2008 to preserve the legacy of her achievements as a writer.

Fellow South Carolina Academy of Authors inductee Nikky Finney (2013) has characterized Arthenia Bates Millican, her one-time Sumter neighbor, simply as “a brilliant scholar of African American Literature . . . utterly incredibly brilliant.” -Thomas L. Johnson



Arthenia J. Bates Millican