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The Glasgow paradox: a study of Ellen Glasgow's sad ladies

Frank Alexander Lovelock

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THE GLASGOW PARADOX

A STUDY OF ELLEN GLASGOW'S
SAD LADIES

BY

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PREFACE

This study intends to examine the career of Ellen Glasgow to determine how her personal philosophy is reflected in her work—and more especially in the characters of her long-suffering heroines (the sad ladies). It is hoped that the reader will come to understand how Glasgow moved from an initial phase of hope, through a period of pain and sorrow, and into a final time of despair.

For the purpose of this study, special emphasis has been placed on the importance of the novels which were written after 1900. It is these novels that have come to be considered as Glasgow's fictionalized "Social History of Virginia."
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I

INTRODUCTION

For those critics who would still be interested enough to study the philosophy and writings of Ellen Glasgow, there exists a perplexing challenge that perhaps defies a comfortable solution. Intellectual discussion and academic convenience often tend to categorize creative writers as representatives of specific "movements" or literary thrusts which have left influential traces on history. Ellen Glasgow, however, somewhat defies such convenient classification. To be sure, she is regarded by some to have been a creative rebel who helped give birth to the literary trends of twentieth-century Realism in America.\(^1\) But conversely, there are those who characterize her writing as overly stylized, "old-fashioned" and heavily influenced by the school of Southern oratorical romance.\(^2\)

The varying critical appraisals of her writings actually manifest a dilemma that was inherent with Ellen Glasgow.


For it is not unfair to assert that the writer herself passed through various stages of personal development which not only drastically altered her outlook on life but also greatly affected the message and direction of her work. In relating the writer to her earlier period (1893-1905) of creative development, one can see her as a literary rebel who sought to break with the stultifying socio-historical traditions of Southern romance. Yet, after 1906, she became personally embittered because of her own misfortunes and began, despite herself, to recant her earlier socio-logical pronouncements and to embrace philosophically and literarily some of the ideas, codes and even myths of the Old South (ante-bellum) that she had thrust aside as a youth.

Therefore, it is in the underlying tone of her later novels that many critics find an almost subliminal contradiction to her ostensible progressivism. And when one seeks to determine a "Glasgow philosophy" or a "Glasgow approach" to life in any one of her novels, he must first regard the chronological position of each work specifically. For in a true sense, there is no "one" Glasgow approach; there is only the "Glasgow dilemma."

This dilemma had grown out of Glasgow's childhood training, her early family tragedies, and her anguished romances. In short, she was a woman of two ages: the
Victorian Era and the Twentieth Century. She believed that her early novels had helped to weaken (or even destroy) the debilitating code of Victorianism—as she had known it in the South; yet, as she grew older, her belief in the code came to be her real comforter (and even a weakened protector) from the unpleasantries of encroaching industrialism and personal tragedy. Her twenty novels, written between 1893 and 1945, ultimately trace the author's own inability to find a workable solution to her problem; therefore, when critics have examined her writings, they have invariably dealt with her contradictions. But interestingly enough these variances give to the study of her work an added dimension that perhaps one would miss with cursory reading of any one of her books. For it seems that, in this case, the diverse critical opinions acutely synthesize the inherent paradoxes that pervade Glasgow's work.

If one ultimately realizes that Glasgow can be regarded validly in many paradoxical instances, he has come a long way in understanding the importance of this complex and interesting writer and her works. There is no doubt that Ellen Glasgow can be (and has been) considered as a realist, an idealist, a pragmatist, a romanticist, a rebel, and a conservative. For such was her nature and the nature of her writings. Perhaps her place in American Literature will
remain enigmatically unsettled because of these incongruities; but until these inconsistencies have been properly articulated and the problem of categorization brought into sharp focus, there will exist no realistic basis for final assessment.

J. R. Raper, in his recent book, Without Shelter, examined Ellen Glasgow's early career and posed many of the questions that initiated interest in this study. I intend in this thesis to re-examine briefly Glasgow's early career and to carry the examination into her later period when the paradox becomes most evident.

It is hoped that this approach may form a few initial blocks in a foundation of understanding this enigmatic writer and her fluid, inconsistent and, at times, ironic body of work.
II

THE MAKING OF THE NOVELIST

Ellen Glasgow, born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1873, was the eighth child of Francis Thomas Glasgow, a staunch Presbyterian businessman, and Anne Jane Gholson, a delicate Tidewater aristocrat. Except for a short time when the family lived in rural Louisa County, Virginia, Ellen was reared in Richmond. Years later, as an adult, and after the deaths of her parents, and other family members, she became the only one of the family to remain in the large Georgian mansion where the children had finished growing up. In 1945, the grande dame of Richmond, died in that old grey house which still stands at One West Main Street.

As a young child, Ellen had been devoted to her mother, a sensitive, highly nervous woman who was often ill with mental disorders. Miss Glasgow always believed that her

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1 There is a discrepancy in dating Ellen Glasgow's birth. Glasgow had accepted April 21, 1874, as the correct date until she found family records that gave the date as April 22, 1873. See The Woman Within (New York, 1954), pp. 5, 6.

mother suffered because Mr. Glasgow was insensitive to his wife's delicacies. After bearing ten children, Anne Glasgow died in 1893, but the young Ellen had been deeply troubled by her mother's unhappiness. In Ellen Glasgow's autobiography, *The Woman Within* (published in 1954), she remembered that her mother had been "the center of my childhood's world, the sun in my universe."[^13] After her mother had died, Ellen never really forgave her father for his inability to understand or appreciate his wife.[^14]

Ellen also believed that she, herself, had inherited a complex dual nature from the marriage of antithetic parents. She said, "Everything in me, mental or physical, I owe to my mother; and it is possible that from the union of opposites, I derived a perpetual conflict of types."[^15] Indeed, the "conflict of types" (her romantic nature versus her empirical nature) waged a lifelong war within her. Sadly, there was never a resolution of hostilities within her tortured psyche; death brought the only lasting truce that she had ever known.

Glasgow's resentment of her pragmatic father grew as she matured. Sickly from birth (and later plagued by chronic

[^14]: Ibid., p. 15.
deafness), she identified wholly with her mother's sensitive nature and rejected her Calvinistic father, who had "never committed a pleasure." Yet the rejection was never truly complete, for if one reads The Woman Within, he finds numerous references to Mr. Glasgow which are sentimentally mitigated by his daughter. J. R. Raper, in his biography of Glasgow, says that Ellen certainly had an ambivalent attraction toward her father throughout her life and that a basic sorrow arose out of her feelings of his rejection of her.

Even though Miss Glasgow was to write that she and her father "were made of different clay," she came to admire his indomitable Calvinistic spirit more than she would have cared to admit. In her life, as well as her writings, she later came to expound the virtue of endurance in a world of pain. And while she had rejected the God of her fathers because He was not a God of love, she came to regard the Calvinist ethic of stoicism as the foundation of strong character.

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6 Ibid., p. 15.
7 Raper, p. 28.
8 The Woman Within, p. 16.
9 Reva May Jenkins has devoted a complete study to Ellen Glasgow's religious beliefs. See Reva May Jenkins, The Barren Soul: A Study of Ellen Glasgow's Religious Revolt (University of Richmond, Master's thesis, 1968).
If Miss Glasgow found the dogma of Calvinism unpalatable, she could not accept the Episcopal religion of her mother's heritage either; therefore, she replaced the belief in the Christian God with a personal belief that there existed a Platonic idea of Good. "The Good" had always endured in a world of sin, and because it was always struggling and refusing to surrender and was seldom wholly triumphant, The Good was worthy of our worship. The Good manifested itself in infinite forms, and its singular enemy was cruelty; for cruelty (or inhumanity) was the only sin.

Since The Good, which was not omnipotent, had endured, she came to believe that to endure, despite hardship and pain, was to be good. In her many stories and novels, the single character trait that unites her "successful" people is always their ability to endure—not necessarily to win, but to endure.

For Glasgow, endurance often implied the unwillingness to surrender; as she matured, the girl became more recalcitrant to her father's wishes—often openly rebelling. She had never been forced to attend public schools because of her chronic ill-health and, rebelling against her father, she


\[\text{11 Ibid., p. 109.}\]
incessantly complained of illness to escape attending church services with her family.

Since the young Ellen had taught herself to read and write, she had used her father's extensive library as her school; the precocious teen-ager delved into philosophy, English literature, economics and science. When her brother-in-law, in the early 1890's, introduced her to the works of Charles Darwin, she became obsessed with the evolutionary doctrine. Reading surreptitiously, the girl was, nevertheless, discovered by her father, who vainly remonstrated. Despite the fact that she was later to read extensively in Eastern metaphysics and to study diligently the Judaeo-Christian teachings, Darwin's *Origin of Species* influenced her philosophy and writing more than any other single work. 12 And before she published her first novel, *The Descendant* (1897), she had become thoroughly familiar with not only the *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* but also with the writings of the Darwinists, Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer. 13

By 1900, after two trips abroad, Ellen Glasgow had published her third novel, *The Voice of the People*; her two


previous novels, The Descendant and Phases of an Inferior Planet (1898), had been set in New York City, a city which she had visited on occasion and in which she was later to reside for brief periods of time. But with this third novel, Glasgow turned to her native soil for the setting of her story. For the next four decades of her life, she continued to devote her literary efforts to examining the social habits and mores of her fellow Virginians. Indeed, the eighteen novels, written during this long period, have been loosely called by some a "Social History of Virginia."  

14 Ellen Glasgow claimed that she had developed the idea for writing her "Social History" very early in her career (c. 1900). See Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure (New York, 1943), p. 59. However, in his semi-autobiographical book, As I Remember It (New York, 1955), p. 243 ff., James Branch Cabell wrote that he had first suggested to Glasgow, in 1925, that, in essence, her novels comprised a fictionalized "Social History of Virginia" from the Civil War to modern times. Later, Glasgow came to accept the idea as her own, Cabell claimed. Two contemporary critics have tried to resolve this literary "tempest in a teapot." Daniel Patterson, "Ellen Glasgow's Plan for a Social History of Virginia," Modern Fiction Studies, V (Winter, 1959-60), 353-60, argues generally against Glasgow's assertion by using the early novels to disprove her statement of purpose. Oliver L. Steele, "Ellen Glasgow, Social History, and the 'Virginia Edition,'" Modern Fiction Studies, VII (Summer, 1961), 173-76, says that Glasgow could have had such a plan in 1900 but not adhered to it exactly (as Patterson noted); nevertheless, her ultimate product was a "Social History." Most recent opinions, however, concur with Cabell's assertion that, later in her career, Glasgow realized what she had created.
These novels, of course, were set in varying Virginia locales (except The Wheel of Life[1906] —set in New York, but peopled with Virginians), and they span almost a century of Virginia's history (1850-1942). However varied the plots of these works, the theme remained constant. All of the novels sought to delineate the role of the Virginian in the post-bellum industrial South.

The Civil War had been the great leveler of the Old South. From its ashes a new South was emerging. Miss Glasgow, living in the era of the South's redemption, was a product of her age. She had grown up in the tradition of the Southern belle. But curiously, this belle—Ellen Glasgow—had become educated in areas that were considered to be out of the realm of female interests. What was even more surprising was that the belle was utilizing her education to become a writer of novels about her homeland. Almost clinically, the young Glasgow began to examine the Darwinian implications of the new society in which the aristocrats, vestiges of the old order, were coming into direct competition (and, therefore, Darwinian conflict for survival) with the rising lower classes. She saw that the war had reduced many of former wealth to destitution; therefore, it had created in the emerging South a competitive society that was somewhat more egalitarian (for whites) than the ante-bellum society had been.
Darwin had said that competition was necessary for a specie to survive, for competition assured that only the most adaptable creatures would triumph. Also, he said that "competition will generally be more severe between those forms which are most nearly related to each other in habits, constitution, and structure."\textsuperscript{15} Competition was, no doubt, occurring as never before in the South; however, Southern "free enterprise" was still subject to old beliefs. Even after the war, aristocratic pretensions and sentiments prevailed throughout Dixie, and the "Redeemers" of the South were largely from the old-name families.\textsuperscript{16} But for the young Glasgow, enamored with the teachings of Darwin and Spencer, the South presented a field study by which the Social Darwinian principles could be tested and proved.

As she became absorbed with the innumerable aspects of Social Darwinism that were presented by the new South, she came to concentrate her study on the fate of a new class of Southerners that she believed to be emerging. Perhaps, the young rebel hoped that this new class would combine, through intermarriage, the aristocracy and the proletariat.

\textsuperscript{16} See the first two chapters in C. Vann Woodward \textit{Origins of the New South, 1877-1913} (Baton Rouge, 1951).
She did realize that "the old agrarian civilization was passing; the new industrial system was but beginning to spring up from chaos." Accordingly, she wanted to examine, in all of her Virginia novels, not only this dying agrarian society, but also its moribund code of noblesse oblige.

In A Certain Measure (1943), a critical study of her own novels, the author stated that one of her literary concerns had been to examine the declining strain of aristocracy to see whether it would "be enriched or depleted by the mingling of social orders." She wanted to know whether or not "the fresh infusion of blood [would] save the old way of living? Or...[would] it merely hasten the end of an incurable malady?"

Perhaps such a concern was too large for any one person to deal with effectively—especially in literature. Or perhaps Miss Glasgow's ambiguous personality, her inner "conflict of types," accounted for her inability ever to decide exactly what she wanted to "prove" in her social study. But the truth is, quite simply, that Glasgow could never come to a very satisfying solution for her proposal. She set out to write realistically about the South and its aristocratic

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18 Ibid., p. 128.
shibboleths. She sought to incorporate not only the bourgeoisie but the planter proletariat in her writing—a new concept in Southern literature. In doing so, she diametrically opposed the magnolia-and-lace literature of Thomas Nelson Page, James Lane Allen and Joel Chandler Harris. Without doubt, the young Glasgow, a rebel, wanted to be a part of the new South. In her first novel, The Descendant, a Virginia bastard struck out from his home state to find destiny. In The Voice of the People, her third novel, Nicholas Burr was a common farm-boy who became Governor of Virginia; and, in her fifth novel, The Deliverance (1904), a dispossessed Virginia aristocrat reconciled his fallen fortune by marrying the granddaughter of a former slave overseer. Clearly, Glasgow was trying to break with romantic fantasies that retarded the South in literature and life.

Nevertheless, Maxwell Geismar has noted that as time went on, the young woman's "break with tradition was more than matched by the 'call of the generations'—by the imprint of Glasgow's own Southern heritage." This imprint did leave


an indelible mark on her philosophy and writings, both of which became increasingly confused and pessimistic as she grew older. Her ultimate conflict became simply a matter of deciding, to her own satisfaction, whether the South's then present moral values would bring about a future which would be as glorious as the past had been. Yet it was her inability to comfortably resolve the dilemma that often left her in troubled straits.

This antipathy of Miss Glasgow's soul haunted her for all of her creative life. But, the conflict found its most troubled voice when the author analyzed (as she did in all of her Virginia novels) the importance of the role of the Southern lady, who was emerging from the mid-Victorian plantation society into the progressive, twentieth-century South. For while Glasgow's novels, of necessity, dealt with Southern men as well as women, no one who has read all of these stories could doubt that the real concern of the author was to expound the "twentieth-century" dilemma of the sometimes foolish, and often maligned, matrons of the South.

In what has to be one of the most preponderous efforts in literature, Glasgow began (in 1900) to record the phases of her own beliefs, hopes and sorrows. Approximately ten thousand pages later (in 1944 or 1945), she laid down her pen and left the Glasgow saga of the Southern lady as a bitter testament.
III
THE NOVELS OF HOPE

In 1900, the Glasgow dilemma was not as sharply focused as it would later become. At twenty-seven, Ellen had twice traveled abroad since 1896 and had published two novels. For the first time in years, she seemed happy. Her works had attracted the attention of critics, and even such a literary mogul as Hamlin Garland had come to see her. Although the meeting occurred during this more sanguine period, he remarked that, even then (1900), she had "frankly confessed that she did not like happy people." ¹ The penchant for melancholy would later regulate the Glasgow philosophy, but not in 1900, for the young writer was, at once, becoming famous and experiencing a secret love affair.

In *The Woman Within*, Ellen identified her married lover with the anonym, Gerald B--. Critical biographers have diligently sought the identity of the New York man who so thrilled the Richmond belle.² Glasgow recalled that in 1899


² J. R. Raper suggests that the lover was not a financeer, as Glasgow had maintained, but Pearce Bailey, a noted psychologist, whom Glasgow had met in New York around 1900 (pp. 104-05).

Glasgow reportedly burned all of the letters that she
she had her first meeting with Gerald B-- in New York, and that she had felt "a...vibration, a quivering joy, as if some long imprisoned stream of life were beginning to flow again under the open sky."\(^3\)

had received from this early lover, and perhaps there will be no "true" answer for the biographers. However, there are two known extant letters from Bailey to Glasgow which are kept in the Ellen Glasgow Collection in Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Yet, these letters are both dated March 1916, and would indicate nothing of a romantic nature. Dr. Bailey's handwriting is very nearly undecipherable, but the two letters obviously pertain to a story, "The Professional Instinct," which Glasgow was writing in 1916, but which was never published during her lifetime. Of note, perhaps, is that the story dealt with a common Glasgow theme: man's moral inferiority to woman.

Another biographer, E. Stanley Godbold, Jr., Ellen Glasgow and the Woman Within (Baton Rouge, 1972), seems to be closer to a solution as to Gerald's identity. Godbold, supported by earlier research done by Majorie Kinnan Rawlings (Glasgow's personal and literary friend) suggests that Gerald was really a noted aurist, Dr. H. Holbrook Curtis, whom Glasgow had sought for help while she was in New York (p. 63). Examining the arguments of both critics (Raper and Godbold), one concludes that Curtis more nearly fits the description of Gerald B-- than does Bailey. (See Raper, p. 210. Also see Godbold, pp. 63-64. Also The Woman Within, p. 157). Furthermore, Glasgow dedicated her love story, The Deliverance (1904), to Dr. Curtis.

In truth, both of the theories offer viable possibilities for the Glasgow student. However, both partially contradict the account of the affair given by Glasgow. Both assert that Gerald B-- was not a financeer, and both concede that he could not have died in 1905 (as Glasgow reported). Dr. Bailey died in 1922, Dr. Curtis in 1920. (See Raper, p. 211, and Godbold, p. 64). Nevertheless, it is quite probable that Glasgow never intended that her lover's identity be known; hence, she purposely disguised him in a cloud of inaccuracy to daunt would-be investigators.

\(^3\) The Woman Within, p. 156.
While speculation as to Gerald's identity is perplexingly enticing to curious scholars, there is really little need to know his name, but there is a need to understand just how important the relationship was to the author. This understanding must go beyond the mere "who" and "where" that biographers seek to expose about the affair. For it is the powerful and lasting effects that the relationship had on Glasgow's life and literature which is of primary significance to the Glasgow scholar. Had it not been for the romantic liaison developed in these years, her outlook would have been greatly altered.

As she reviewed her own life up to 1899, Ellen could recount little but personal sadness. In the early 1890's, she became aware of her chronic deafness. After returning from a trip to New York to seek medical aid, the dejected author destroyed the manuscript of her (never published) first novel, Sharp Realities.

In 1893, her mother died, and again, she destroyed portions of a manuscript. Fortunately, she did rewrite this

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4 While all of the dates given in this study can be substantiated in numerous Glasgow writings, Blair Rouse has compiled a convient chronology in his book; for the sake of quick reference, this writer will often allude to Rouse's listing. See Blair Rouse, Ellen Glasgow (New Haven, 1962), pp. 11-13.
segment of work, and it ultimately became her first published novel, *The Descendant*. In 1894, her beloved brother-in-law, Walter McCormack, committed suicide in New York.\(^5\) Cary, his wife, never recovered from the loss, and Ellen certainly suffered along with her older sister.\(^6\)

Personal sadness notwithstanding, fame had somehow come to Miss Glasgow by 1900. This fame and her love affair were to bring her a temporary respite from the gloom that shadowed so much of her life, and it was in the spirit of this new optimism that she wrote three novels of hope: *The Voice of the People* (1900), *The Battle-Ground* (1902), and *The Deliverance* (1904). These three works bolstered her literary reputation considerably and have been considered by most critics to be better works than the four novels that followed this period.\(^7\)

Generally, the three novels offered an optimistic hope that the South was on the verge of a "new tomorrow." As

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\(^6\) *The Woman Within*, p. 100.

\(^7\) In general, Rouse gives a representative critical appraisal of these works. In concluding with *The Deliverance*, he states: "[I]t was superior to anything Ellen Glasgow had written before, and it compares well with much of her later fiction." See Rouse, p. 56.
a loose triology, the novels told of the Civil War, its
effects on the old order, and the efforts of social and
political reconstruction; furthermore, they expounded the
belief that a new class of people was working for a better
life in the South. This new class would combine the best
elements of the aristocratic "good families" with the best
elements of the industrious "good people" (or the working
class). 8

The new South was an embryonic, but growing social
organism; it became the matter of Glasgow's Social Darwin-
ism. However, Social Darwinism did not interest the young
author in the same way that it often interested Southern and
Northern segregationists. 9 These class-conscious Americans
had found an appeal in the Spencerian assertion that stressed
"the survival of the fittest" as a political and social ex-
pedient. In short, Spencer had compellingly, but somewhat
artificially, forced an analogy between Darwin's theory of
biological evolution and his own theory of social evolution.
Spencer had concluded that just as the most adaptable bio-

8 Glasgow claimed that in the South a distinction
existed: "good families" referred to aristocrats; "good
people," to lower-class farmers. See A Certain Measure,
p. 157.

9 Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American
logical organisms survived at the expense of weaker ones, social organisms had evolved in like manner. Therefore, according to Spencer, from any inchoate social order, a more adaptable class of people would always emerge as "dominant," and their dominance (or adaptability) would, by its existence, prove them "fittest to rule." 10

Glasgow could accept the idea of an emerging social order that would be powerful. What she could not accept, in 1900, was the presumptuous argument that since the pre-war South had embodied (in its aristocracy) "all of the best of social evolution," the post-war South should strive to reinstate, whenever possible, the practice of the old order where the equilibrium had been intact: master class (aristocrat), working class (farmer, merchant) and servant class (slave).

Miss Glasgow, on the contrary, was proposing in her literary study that the Golden Age of the South was yet to come. In this assertion, certainly, she was a kinetic disciple of Social Darwinism; however, she did believe in the value of tradition, for she somehow, perhaps unrealistically, wanted to see a "living fusion of the past with the present." 11 Exactly how the fusion was to be practi-


cally and gracefully achieved became the burning dilemma that Glasgow never resolved.

But the dilemma had not yet become oppressive; the young writer was concerned with the progressive South in 1900. In this early period, she hailed the new spirit of the South and its democratic effect on the social culture. In *The Voice of the People*, Nicholas Burr, rising from a dirt farm, came to symbolize "the voice of the people" as he was elected Governor. Yet Glasgow, unable to be idealistically frivolous about the new South, depicted Burr's death at the hands of a mob. Burr had dared to stand against tradition and legend when he defended an innocent Negro from the rabble; and, therefore, he sought to break with the past too quickly.

Glasgow believed that tradition and legend would play a large part in influencing the new society. Personally, she said that she had discarded the idea of aristocratic "blood" heredity; she claimed to believe that environment determined the value of the individual, while the individual helped to determine the values of his own class. But, as Walter Bagehot, the Darwinian economist whom Glasgow had studied, suggested in 1873, the environment included

12 *A Certain Measure*, p. 34.
13 *The Woman Within*, p. 186.
the cultural tradition in which the individual had been reared; this cultural tradition was, in a true sense, the inheritance of class distinction passed from generation to generation. Bagehot said: "The mind of the parent (as we speak) passes somehow to the body of the child." In time, cultural patterns or habits develop which differentiate social classes from one another and lead to "an ingrained [character and/or class] type...." Writing many years later, Glasgow reiterated:

My own theory had inclined to the belief that environment more than [biological] inheritance determines character. What it does not determine is the tendency of native impulse nurtured by tradition and legend, unless tradition and legend may be considered a part of environment.

How would tradition and legend interact with environment on the personalities (or characters) of the people in the new South? Could the South incorporate its cultural heritage into the broader scope of modern America? Or would "evasive idealism," as Glasgow labeled the South's


15 A Certain Measure, p. 34.

16 Glasgow often used the terms "evasive idealism" and "evasive realism" interchangeably. For her, the South's romantic literature was, in a sense, realistic to one point of view; but all of the South (and much of the rest of America) evaded the unpleasant side of realism. She was
inability to face reality, retard the South? In *The Voice of the People*, an initial study of the Southern situation, Glasgow began to seek an answer for these questions; however, it was in the companion novels, *The Battle-Ground* and *The Deliverance*, that she truly grappled with the knotty perplexities of Dixie.

The chief theme in Glasgow's "Social History"—the role of the Southern lady in the new South—was developed early in her writings. True, her men characters, especially in the earlier works, often carried the main action of the novels; for example, Burr fought social forces to become Governor; Dan Montjoy (*The Battle-Ground*) fought in the Civil War; and Christopher Blake (*The Deliverance*) fought to regain his ancestral rights. But moving just under the surface (masculine) action was always the undercurrent of feminine influence and purpose. Growing increasingly turgid, this undercurrent became the main-stream of thought in Glasgow's literary career, and by the end of her life, the writer was perversely obsessed with the theme of male inadequacy and female suffering.

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In *The Voice of the People*, Glasgow characterized Eugenia Battle as a snobbish Southern belle whose traditional beliefs seemingly found little sympathy with the young writer. Eugenia had loved Nicholas Burr, but her traditional upbringing had ultimately prevented their marriage. Eugenia's eventual mother-in-law, Mrs. Jane Dudley Webb, was even more sanctimoniously unbearable. She was a Civil-War widow whose every need was provided for by the "older" gentlemen of her town. She constantly referred to the rights of aristocracy and values of blood-lines while living on "social welfare" provided by the old-line gallants. She had been characterized, by one of these old cavaliers, as a martyr to the lost South; but, in reality, she so regulated the lives of friends and family that "she martyred others."17

It was the Eugenia Battles and the Jane Webbs that Glasgow, no doubt, wanted to eliminate in the South. With this in mind, she penned her next novel, *The Battle-Ground*. Basically a Civil-War story told from a Southern vantage point, the novel has been praised for its honesty as well as its creditable lack of "typical Southern resentment against

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However, the real impetus for the novel came from a desire by Glasgow to call for a new South based on egalitarian sexual codes. Through Betty Ambler, the heroine, Glasgow made her first great pronouncements for the liberation of women, especially Southern women.

Miss Glasgow, in the early 1900's, was becoming a noted voice for the incipient feminist movement, and The Battleground would certainly call for women's equality. Perhaps Ibsen's The Doll House and Dreiser's Sister Carrie had influenced Glasgow's portrayal of Betty Ambler. Betty, however, would stand uniquely as the first Southern lady in literature to petition for women's rights.

Before judging the social relevance of The Battleground, however, one must try to "clear the air," historically, regarding this feminist treatise. Glasgow was writing in 1901-02; she was buoyed by love, literary prominence and the feminist movement. The strident call for freedom that Betty Ambler supposedly made in 1865 was, at best, an anachronistic conjecture of the author. Better historical speculation as to the role of the post Civil-War women has


been offered by more exact historians. It is generally accepted that the staunch ladies who survived the war—"those relics of an earlier age"—had been reared prior to the 1860's; and, therefore, they were, in matters of breeding and culture, representatives of the "old school." The war had, undoubtedly, destroyed many of the shibboleths that the aristocracy had maintained; and, perhaps, there would have been no better time than 1865 for Southern women to have demanded and gotten a degree of equality. Nevertheless, the Southern code had been only abashed, not destroyed. According to Hedding Carter, a noted social historian, the ante-bellum gentlemen returned to their destitute land in search of pride and ego. Waiting for them, were the Southern ladies, who had also suffered the extremes of war. Perhaps, unable to indulge their own sorrow in light of the pitiable conditions of the home-coming warriors, the ladies encouraged the men to revive many of the pre-war customs. And in doing so, the women, themselves, became tangible evidences of the old order and were, therefore, obliged to maintain their pre-war code of demure charm in order to salve the wounded manhood of the South.²⁰ The suffering, then, served,

in a certain measure, to re-entrench Southern manners.

The war had lent an ennobling reality to both the cavaliers and the ladies, for "out of those harrowing years of the Southern ordeal, the artificiality of the past was reinforced by a true [emphasis mine] chivalry and respect of man for grieving woman, and woman for broken man."21 The dire necessities of the war certainly could have produced some Southern ladies who were as ready and capable as Betty Ambler to demand equality in 1865; however, if such ladies did exist, they quickly put this demand aside in order to nurse and attract the gentlemen because "in a very primitive sense, Southern women had to compete with each other for the men they outnumbered."22 Therefore, the perverse magnolia and lace school lingered on long after the war. Ladies who adhered to this discipline, became after the war, even more unctiously shallow and cloyingly demure than ever before.

Regarding the feminist movement, then, The Battle-Ground was closer in spirit to 1902 than it was to 1865. Glasgow believed that the South, despite the war or because of it,

21 Ibid., p. 69.
22 Ibid., p. 70.
had maintained the ideal of the Southern belle whose legendary combination of beauty, charm and noblesse oblige were becoming obstacles to industrious "thinking girls" of the South. The young belles of the 1880's and 1890's had been, as their mothers before them, sheltered, rarely corrected, but suffered not to think "too much." Undaunted by personal experiences which had sought to stultify her own spirit, the young author believed that with much effort the new Southern woman could overcome the obstacles of her era.

When Betty Ambler told Dan Montjoy, her fiancé, "I can't always kneel to you Dan," she was speaking for the young Ellen Glasgow, who wanted to encourage all women to stand on equal ground with men. At this time, Glasgow believed in the future of all women, but especially Southern women. After actively partaking in feminist demonstrations in England and America, Miss Glasgow became, for a brief time, one of the leading spokeswomen for the liberation cause. Speaking a decade after The Battle-Ground, she said

24 See the entire chapter six, "The Search for Art," in The Woman Within.
26 The Woman Within, p. 185.
that women's political equality was bound to come; it was an "integral part of evolution." Further, Glasgow maintained that Southern women had withstood the horrors of war and reconstruction and, through trial and error, had developed a "sense of responsibility" that, perhaps, made them "less appalled [than other women] at the gravity of being allowed to vote and helping to govern." It is interesting to note that even in this generalized statement, Glasgow singled-out Southern women as "fittest to rule" perhaps because Southern women combined heritage with expediency.

Betty Ambler represented the "less appalled" aristocratic woman who, after the war, gathered the fragmentary remains of a culture and walked on to help build a new society. She told Dan, "We will begin again,...and this time, my dear, we will begin together" (512). And if this proclamation had not exactly matured by 1902, Glasgow devoutly wished it to regulate the future of her own era. She knew that in 1902, the "helpless" type of Southern belle still existed, but she was careful to point out in The Battle-Ground that this kind of Southern woman should not have survived the war. And as a symbol of the new woman, Betty Ambler was more than a character in a novel; she embodied

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27 "No Valid Reason Against Giving Votes to Women," p. 11.
a tenet in the Glasgow doctrine. Betty was realistic and assertive; she, therefore, had transcended the great belle tradition that determined the behavior of her sister, Virginia. This tradition had made Virginia too flowerlike to outlast the war. Virginia Ambler was much more beautiful than Betty, who was the first of Glasgow's wholesome, intelligent women. And though Virginia embodied an ideal, her death during the war symbolically characterized Glasgow's hope for the death of the weak elements of the old order that were still alive in 1902.

Joining the Betty Amblers, in their effort to rebuild the South, were the daughters of the "good people" or the working classes. In *The Deliverance* (1904), Glasgow created the first of her heroines descended from the agrarian pioneer stock. Maria Fletcher was, for Glasgow, a symbol of hope for the rising lower classes. Maria was a beautiful, graceful representative of the nouveau riche. Her social position, however, was tainted by family corruption. Her grandfather, Bill Fletcher, had been, prior to the war, the slave overseer for a huge Southern estate owned by the aristocratic Blakes. Through undisclosed embezzling and dishonesty, Fletcher had amassed an ill-gotten fortune and

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28 Raper, p. 173.
was able to buy the Blakean estate when it was auctioned after the war. The Blakes, nevertheless, had maintained a small portion of the land, and they lived in bitter proximity to the Fletchers.

Set in the 1880's, The Deliverance possibly more than any other Glasgow novel expounded the author's Darwinian philosophy of environment and adaptability. On the one hand, there were the parvenu Fletchers who had suddenly acquired a chance to gain "a heritage" while, on the other hand, the Blake family "from a world 'governed by an ideal group of abstract laws'" had been thrust into a Darwinian universe governed by the law of struggle for mere survival.²⁹

Christopher Blake was the last male heir to the Blake line. Through this young man's character, Glasgow "was trying to test the strength of hereditary fibre when it has been long subjected to the power of malignant circumstances."³⁰ Blake, who had been expropriated of his ancestral estate, deprived of an education and forced to labor in tobacco fields, swore vengeance on the Fletchers. Physically, Blake embodied animalism, for Glasgow seemed to thrill in attributing massively brutal physical characteristics to him.

³⁰ A Certain Measure, p. 34.
She was especially obsessed with his "brutal jaw." Moreover, Blake's monomania for revenge savagely sustained his pained existence. In short, Glasgow was trying to depict him as an atavistic embarrassment for the Virginia aristocracy.

However, Glasgow's belief in culture and tradition salvaged Blake from his early primitivism. Blake exacted revenge on Fletcher, yet the young man's seemingly innate aristocratic refinements wrestled mightily with his savage impulses, forcing Blake, in the end, to repent his errors and to suffer his punishment as a gentleman.

The perplexing ambiguities of this novel carried into Glasgow's succeeding works and became the crux of her subconscious paradox. Despite what she ostensibly preached about the new South, her belief in the quality of the old South regulated her entire philosophy. For example, Christopher, though accustomed to years of toil, was not depicted as "of the working class." From the first, in the novel, he was taller, nobler and "physically...finer" than the other tobacco planters (12). Regarding his stately demeanor, another character was led to remark that "blood will tell, even at the dregs" (12). This postulate was not used

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31 The Deliverance (New York, 1904), p. 54. Glasgow often portrayed young men who possessed the "brutal jaw."
merely as an hypothetical proposal to be studied; it was subconsciously believed by Glasgow herself. For while she had ostensibly reputed the belief in the biological transmission of character (or refinement), The Deliverance was scored with ambiguous paeans to the nobility of "blue-blood."

Accordingly, Maria Fletcher, who was afforded all the best that money could buy, wanted ultimately to marry Christopher; for Maria had become a lady except that she lacked the "blood-lines." The proposed marriage of Christopher and Maria, at the end of the novel, emphasized Glasgow's hope for union of the classes; this union has been characterized by one critic as "Ellen Glasgow's American Dream."32

The underlying emphasis of the union was obvious, however. The nouveau riche, with uncultured pluck, needed to fuse biologically with the aristocracy. In this way, the South would be able to unite its progressive spirit with its traditional heritage, and the eugenic dispensation would rescue the lower class from itself. Bill Fletcher had wealth, but he was still a sodden representative of the dirt farmer; he was not culturally refined. His grandson, Will,

32 Joan Foster Santas, Ellen Glasgow's American Dream (Charlottesville, 1965). In general, Miss Santas outlines Glasgow's early hope for a better South. Santas says that Glasgow's dream became troubled as the South became more industrialized and less traditional.
was a sniveling blight on the family. Maria rose above her family through cultural education and a (implied) fortunate marriage; therefore, she represented a kind of hybrid creature. Glasgow talked about the "good people," but, as Geismar has pointed out, a general characteristic of the writer's earlier view was the snobbish assumption that "a lower nature was an inevitable consequence of belonging to the lower class."\textsuperscript{33}

Even such men as Nicholas Burr, and later Ben Starr (\textit{The Romance of a Plain Man} [1911]) and Ben O'Hara (\textit{Life and Gabriella} [1916]), who had risen from the lower classes, were constantly performing some ridiculously cavalier heroics to prove their worth and to be "accepted" by the upper-class women whom they courted. But more importantly, it seemed that Glasgow was struggling to make these characters acceptable heroes that she, herself, could vicariously court.

On the other hand, Glasgow was not yet avoiding the negative aspects of the fallen aristocracy. In \textit{The Deliverance}, she created a trenchant symbol in the character of Mrs. Blake, Christopher's widowed mother. The old lady was blind, crippled and purposely deluded by her family. She was allowed to believe that the South had won the war and that

\textsuperscript{33} Geismar, p. 232.
she was still living on the old estate. Glasgow said that Mrs. Blake represented "the entire South, unaware of the changes about them, clinging with passionate fidelity, to the ceremonial forms of tradition." Symbolically, Mrs. Blake's sickness was the Southern burden. When old Bill Fletcher maliciously informed her of the truth, he unwittingly relieved the family of its cross: Mrs. Blake died of a stroke when confronted with reality.

Glasgow believed that exponents of evasive idealism must expire if the South was to progress. In the Spencerian sense, the code (evasive idealism), itself, was unadaptable to the realities of life and, therefore, must perish. However, Glasgow could never feel certain that she had sounded the death knell loudly enough. In every novel that she wrote after The Deliverance, a female variant of Mrs. Blake would appear to burden and depress those about her. But, again, the Glasgow paradox surfaced in the later novels as the ladies of the "Southern malaise" took on a suffering nobility that often the author obviously identified with and admired.

The suffering ladies were to be presented in many guises. Often they appeared as the patient, suffering aunts (or maiden ladies) who usually had been relegated to an "upstairs"

34 A Certain Measure, p. 27.
room to brood in quiet desperation. But it was the neurasthenic mothers and wives, usually of the Blakean-type heritage, who dominated the lives of family and friends. These cloying hypochondriacs all suffered from a common illness—unadaptability to the twentieth century. Certainly there were some suffering women, such as Rose Emily Pedlar and Eudora Oakley (Barren Ground [1925]), who had just cause to suffer; they had led exhaustive "toil-weary" lives. Not true, however, of the aristocratic matriarchs; these daughters of gentility had been betrayed by an outdated code; their recourse was to take to their "sick-beds" and languish in symbolic invalidism.  

Critics have discussed this preponderance of sick women that appeared throughout Glasgow's works. Blair Rouse sympathetically asserted that Miss Glasgow had created the neurasthenic women as a therapeutic act to remind herself, perhaps, of the "horrible person she . . . might become if she surrendered completely to her frail health or used it as a weapon." However, as time progressed, Glasgow did seem to use her ill-health (or bruised sensitivities), if not as a weapon, at least as a shield against men; therefore,

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35 Raper, p. 236.
36 Rouse, p. 21
37 Often in Glasgow's personal letters she would write diatribes complaining to others of her illnesses. She often
it would seem that the therapy derived from the constant study of sick women came more from an empathetic katharsis that Glasgow possibly achieved with the writing of each novel.

The therapy that writing came to provide for Glasgow developed shortly after she had written The Deliverance. For the first three novels of the "Social History of Virginia" had abounded with optimism. One early critic noted the "bravery and humour and blithe courage..." that marked the heroines of her early novels. "Blithe courage" would not sustain the author, however, as she realized the shock of Gerald B--'s death in 1905. The depression that followed was painfully exorcised through an almost ritualistic slav­ery to writing. From 1906-1922, Miss Glasgow published eight "begged out" of social engagements using sickness as a pre­tense. See Blair Rouse, ed., Letters of Ellen Glasgow (New York, 1958),(hereafter cited as Letters). Also, in dealing with Col. Henry W. Anderson (to be discussed later), Glasgow constantly used her sickness as a tool for exacting her will. On July 18, 1917, Anderson sent Glasgow a telegram from New York informing her of his forthcoming European (Red Cross mission) trip. She, greatly upset, replied (the reply is not preserved, however). He arrived home late on July 18, 1917, to find her letter. His reply, written the same night, begged Ellen to forgive him for hurting her. The next night, she recorded on a piece of cardboard: "Thursday the nineteenth of July 1917. I became engaged to Henry this evening." Years later, after their estrangement, Glasgow continued to chide Anderson (especially in her correspondence with him) whenever possible. See Anderson Letters in Ellen Glasgow Collection, Alderman Library.

long novels and wrote numerous short stories (many of which were later published in 1923, in *The Shadowy Third*). It was during this period also that she began studying Oriental mysticism and seeking the solitude of her upstairs study at One West Main Street. In her solitude, she sought personal meditation to overcome the sadness that surrounded her, and even her old "house [itself] became an extension of the novelist's dual personality." Downstairs she gaily entertained; upstairs she sought lonely escape in writing.

The buoyancy that was to rescue Glasgow from this earlier "sea of despair" later failed to save her. Nevertheless, the novels of therapy which began with the hopeless resignation of Gerty Bridewell and Laura Wilde, in *The Wheel of Life* (1906) culminated with the hopeful salvation of Patty Vetch, in *One Man in His Time* (1922). In writing these novels, Glasgow partially salvaged her tortured psyche and left a fictional corollary to her own spiritual and emotional recovery.

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39 All of the short stories of Ellen Glasgow have been recently collected. See Richard K. Meeker, ed., *The Collected Short Stories of Ellen Glasgow* (Baton Rouge, 1963), (hereafter cited as *Short Stories*).

40 Godbold, p. 9. Dr. Godbold's book was published while this thesis was being indited. Most of the critical and biographical assertions made herein had been concluded by this writer before reading Godbold's work; however, it must be said that Ellen Glasgow and the Woman Within will probably be the definitive biography. This writer is indebted to Godbold's work for substantiating and/or contradicting many of his own beliefs regarding Miss Glasgow and her career.
IV

THE NOVELS OF THERAPY

In the years between 1905 and 1925, Glasgow sought to codify in her novels a feminist doctrine gleaned from her own somewhat saddened experience with life. Ultimately the point of view which sustained the writer in 1925 had significantly evolved from her earlier one. But a common feature in these two vantages, which never altered drastically, was that women suffered unfairly in this world. What would remain the dilemma for Glasgow (not only in this period but also throughout the rest of her life) was to determine the cause of the unhappy fate of old-fashioned Southern women. For as in all aspects of the Glasgow paradox, the writer tended to embrace what she had sought to destroy, and by 1925, it was clear that she had changed her point of view in favor of old-fashioned women. How she came to this change relates directly to her own life and provides an interesting study in human psychological development.

In 1905, life was again bitter for Ellen Glasgow. According to her own account, she had received the news of Gerald B--'s death while she was in Europe.1 Perhaps

1 The Woman Within, p. 167.
Gerald B-- did die in 1905. However, Raper suggests that Glasgow and B-- had become estranged prior to this time and that 1905 brought ultimate dissolution to their affair. Embittered, and hoping that through transcendental meditation she could assuage the disillusionment that was engulfing her, she sought the teaching of Kant, the Upas̄hads and The Bhagavad Gita. As a result of her metaphysical studies, Glasgow came to regard herself as a mystic, and, as such, she rationalized that since she and Gerald were spiritually separated, he had become, in essence, "dead" as of 1905.2

Of course, Raper uses this highly speculative argument to support his thesis that Gerald B-- was Dr. Bailey, who lived on after 1905. But even if Gerald B-- really died in 1905, there was, possibly, some sort of break in the romance prior to that time. Cary, Ellen's sister, wrote to Mary Johnston in July, 1904, that the two travelers [Ellen and Gerald (?)] seemed "tolerably cheerful but not hilarious."3 However, the final break in 1905, whether transcendental or physical, caused Ellen Glasgow to grieve severely. In

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2 Raper, pp. 203-09.

3 Cary McCormack to Mary Johnston, July 27, 1904, in Mary Johnston Collection, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Quoted in Ibid., p. 204.
1906, Glasgow wrote to Miss Johnston:

For a year [1905-06], I was so dead that I couldn't feel even when I was hurt because of some curious emotional anesthesia, and,...I had to fight--fight, a sleepless battle night and day not for my reason but for my very soul.4

Further speculative evidence regarding the romantic disappointment could be gleaned, perhaps, from studying Glasgow's novel which was published in 1906. The Wheel of Life was obviously a highly autobiographical account of the writer's experiences in New York City. It recounted the misfortunes of Laura Wilde, a Virginia poetess living in that city. Highly sensitive and intelligent, Laura was, nevertheless, easy prey for a profligate suitor. Moreover, Gerty Bridewell, Laura's best friend and sister Virginian, was married to another cad. The overwhelming theme of the novel became the moral inferiority of men--a theme which was becoming inextricably a part of Glasgow's personal philosophy.

Glasgow's distrust of men might have been somewhat justified. She had always felt rejected by her father and had never forgiven him for his austerity. Because her love affair with Gerald had ended in disillusionment, her attitude toward men perhaps became more subtly hostile. It seems

4 Letters, p. 55.
noteworthy that while she depicted the masculine lovers who were in her early novels as being young, virile "he-men," her own abortive affairs (both with Gerald and later others) were with men who physically represented father-figures. Perhaps, she was always seeking her father's love and always being disappointed.

The social and historical influences of the novelist's youth must have also regulated her view of men (especially Southerners). She had been reared in Richmond, a city noted, in 1880, as one of the most progressive urban centers in the South. Paradoxically, Richmond had been the capital of the Confederacy and, as such, it was another symbol of the old order. Yet capitalist cavaliers of the post-war government were paying lip-service to the entrenched codes of Virginia while often sacrificing public welfare to amass personal fortunes. Very simply, Yankee and European money was "dealing" with Southerners who would "deal" regardless

5 Glasgow herself said that Gerald B-- had been a "greying" older man when she first met him. See The Woman Within, pp. 154-55. Moreover, Godbold says that Dr. Curtis was considerably older" than Ellen. In addition, Godbold includes a photograph of another Glasgow suitor, Rev. Frank Paradise. While Paradise was described as attractive; he nevertheless, appears quite avuncular. See Godbold, p. 63, and pictorial inserts. Of course, the romance with Anderson came a decade later (1916-c. 1920) when both Glasgow and Anderson were middle-aged.

of traditional codes of the old South.

The capitalist ethic was, no doubt, influencing the Southern men in their social, political and economic endeavors. As politics and business became inseparable, the ante-bellum aristocratic rule was paling; however, to remain in public office, the old-line Whigs, from established families, were constantly reminding Virginians of tradition and honor. That equivocal shibboleth, "Virginia honor," became a Procrustean rally to raise taxes, to oust Republicans and Negroes, and to quell any public disaffection. Between 1900-1920, the conservative element stiffened, finally to crystallize in the 1930's into the Byrd machine, which would dominate state politics for three decades. Chivalry and gallantry were still the call of the Southern politician, but, as one critic has noted: "There was nothing remotely akin to noblesse oblige about the Byrd machine." 

Glasgow, living during this period of economic and political plunder, had considered herself as a progressive in her early adult life. Yet the greed and corruption, so identified with all of American politics during this

7 Ibid., chapters one and two.

8 Louis D. Rubin, Jr., No Place on Earth: Ellen Glasgow, James Branch Cabell and Richmond-in-Virginia (Austin, 1959), p. 64.
era (1870-1915), came to repulse the Virginia lady. And she became further estranged from the industrial South, as well as its men, as she saw it engulfing what she believed to be the old ways of life. She felt that her early novels had called for a change in the South. They had, but, in truth, she "never fully understood the changes with which she dealt." The new South seemed to her to be devoid of many of the traditional values—values which were coming to regulate her more than she realized.

The progressive forces were always at war with the traditional elements in Glasgow's soul, and the personal sadness of 1905, had heightened the author's confusion. She had been deeply hurt; and, somehow, men, society and the age had had something to do with her pain. In 1906, Glasgow was disillusioned and troubled to find herself without the answers that The Battle-Ground had offered. But she came to one purblind conclusion in The Wheel of Life: men cause pain to women, especially to intellectually sensitive women.

Gerty Bridewell and Laura Wilde were intelligent women attracted to men who were physically appealing. The men, Perry Bridewell and Arnold Kempler, possessed "brutal jaws"; and an "ardent vitality...[which] appealed so strongly

to the imagination of women."  

But both men, however, were unfaithful lovers. Laura, the obvious Glasgow figure, was supposedly free to recover from heart-breaking despair while Gerty was chained by matrimony to the source of her sorrow. Yet, Laura's recovery was, at best, limited. Therefore, both women became spiritual nihilists whose philosophy was best stated, strangely enough, by an innocuous male character in the novel. Rhetorically, Roger Adams asks: "Is it [happiness] only when one says to Fate, 'take this--and this as well--take everything and leave me nothing'" (214).

Since every major female character in this novel suffered because of a male-dominated society, it is clear that when Glasgow used the word "Fate" she was euphemistically avoiding the word "Men"; for she believed that men had taken too much from women.

This rationale became dogmatically strained throughout the novel. Laura lamented that all men were liars in their relationships with women (215). Yet Gerty remonstrated: "Oh, why do women lie and cheat and back-bite and strangle the little souls within them--to please men. Your [men's] amusements are built on our [women's] long boredom" (224). Characteristically excusing women while shifting the blame onto men, Glasgow allowed to "the weaker sex" a moral escape that

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she would not allow to men.

Perhaps the saddest of Glasgow's women in this novel was Laura's suffering aunt, Angela. This maiden Virginia lady had suffered ostracism and self-exile from humanity for forty years because she had been "compromised" as a young woman. As the neurasthenic representative of this novel, her role was diminuitive, but clear. She served to warn, by example, those ladies who would dare experiment with love. Immoral men were allowed to go unpunished, but, ironically, women who naively sought companionship would ultimately be deprived of a lasting bond with men.

Glasgow regarded The Wheel of Life as a failure from every point of view.11 Nevertheless, the writing did serve to distract her from her "single grief." Further distraction had come from her Oriental meditation; even the title, The Wheel of Life, implied her absorption in the fatalistic doctrine of the East. The Wheel, a symbol taken from the Hindu scriptures, represented the uniformity and circular contingency of all things in the universe;12 for the novelist, unhappiness was an inescapable contingency of her own existence. Yet she was somewhat troubled to explain the cause

11 The Woman Within, p. 171.
of her own unhappiness. She was perplexed to understand whether she was too progressive or too refined for the twentieth-century gentleman. In her despondency, however, she knew that she was interested in resuing "from encroaching oblivion the forgotten virtue of good manners..."\textsuperscript{13} while asserting the value of independent women who sought fulfilled lives.\textsuperscript{14} Hers was an unhappy problem, for she came to believe that the two goals were incompatible.

In all of the novels that followed \textit{The Wheel of Life}, Glasgow continually sought to relieve her own unhappiness by creating and examining the unhappiness of her heroines. In the most real sense, Glasgow's personal sorrow became the heroines' sorrow. The dilemma, however, found equivocal solutions in the next seven novels; for she was wavering between the hope of her earlier period and the despair of the later life. The thematic ambiguities that permeate these novels present difficulties for critics trying to isolate a common philosophical point of view. Each novel seems to be tacking in a different direction. Yet if viewed as a successive whole, the entire body of work represents a movement from untenable despair to uncomfortable optimism. The novels seem, collectively, to say that the problems of

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{A Certain Measure}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 226.
the South could somehow be rectified despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

It was after another therapeutic trip abroad that Glasgow began her painful re-assessment of the South, by writing *The Ancient Law* (1908). The egregious fault of this novel was its inability to settle on a story line. The hero, Dan Ordway, lived in two separate social worlds in which he assumed the roles of ex-convict, accountant, plant manager, political activist, suffering lover, beleaguered husband and father, fallen aristocrat, generous entrepreneur, and runaway. This desultory novel was noteworthy, however, for three reasons. First, Glasgow was again able to depict a decent man. Also, she began to examine the numerous aspects of unhappy marriages, and this examination would become the enveloping structure for most of her later works. Finally, she created the role of Emily Beverly (another Glasgow-identity character), the hard-working, unrewarded heroine.

Emily had loved Dan from afar. But, in a painfully contrived "second story," Dan's hypochondriacal wife, Lydia, made her claim on his freedom and, thereby, denied happiness to Dan as well as Emily. Like Laura Wilde, Emily was worthy and capable, and by all standards of fairness, she could have expected a bit of happiness. But Glasgow, who had confided, that in her own life, she now knew the "freedom of
despair,"¹⁵ was convinced that, for women at least, goodness was not rewarded.¹⁶ A sad paradox, which Glasgow accepted (at this point in her life), was that women who were intellectually suited to provide stimulation for progressive, "modern" husbands were often overlooked by opprobrious males who sought the more beautiful women. However, the marriages that resulted from uniting the unsuited belles with the pragmatic capitalists became little more than fealties to be endured, not enjoyed.

The intellectual Glasgow had long been mentally oppressed with the "plight of the thinking woman" in the South. Her highly intelligent women, Betty Ambler, Laura Wilde, Emily Beverly, Gabriella Carr, Caroline Meade, Dorinda Oakley, Ada Fincastle and Roy Timberlake,¹⁷ were never characterized as being beautiful. They were wholesomely attractive but never stunning. Glasgow, no doubt, identified with such women; she said of herself: "Although I was not beautiful, I created the semblance of beauty for

¹⁵ Emily Clark, "Ellen Glasgow," Virginia Quarterly Review, V (April, 1929), 183.

¹⁶ I Believe, p. 97.

¹⁷ Beginning with Gabriella Carr, the heroines listed above appeared in the following novels respectively: Life and Gabriella (1916), The Builders (1919), Barren Ground (1925), Vein of Iron (1935), and In This Our Life (1941).
everyone who has ever loved me." The inference, of course, was that hidden beauty could be discovered only by men who sought to discover it. In other words, for men, goodness was rewarded.

In Glasgow's earliest recorded story (written when she was seven), a little daisy sought recognition in a field of roses. Happily, the daisy was finally selected by a prince for his sweetheart; unhappily, many of Glasgow's later "daisies" would not be as fortunate. The problem of the Southern woman became increasingly more insoluble for Glasgow during these middle years (1906-22) of her career. As time went on, there seemed to be no set pattern in her novels which assured happiness for females. Finally, neither belle nor thinking woman emerged unscarred from the battle of the sexes.

Probably unwilling to accept completely what she was beginning to believe about men, Ellen Glasgow became "experimentally engaged," in 1906, to an Episcopal preacher named Frank Paradise. Never reciprocated, Paradise's love was cast aside by his fiancee three years later. Perhaps

18 The Woman Within, p. 158.
19 Short Stories, p. 9.
20 The Woman Within, p. 179. See also Godbold, pp. 89-90.
this seemingly distant love with the New England preacher helped Glasgow regain some of her self-esteem. The fact is that, progressively, she was able to write with more guarded optimism during the next few years, and the two novels of this period, \textit{The Romance of a Plain Man} (1909) and \textit{The Miller of Old Church} (1911), reinstated some of the positivism of the earlier period.

In \textit{The Romance of a Plain Man}, Glasgow depicted her ideal man: an honest, sensitive and appreciative Southern businessman. Unfortunately, the author chose a Dickensian first person narrative, and "as" the businessman Glasgow, herself, was forced to deal intimately with the world of stocks, railways and factories; she was unconvincingly superficial. But, the real reason that she wrote this novel was not to look at the intricacies of capitalism; it was to examine, once again, the marital union between the classes. Ben Starr, Glasgow's hero, was an Horatio Alger success, who after surmounting his humble origins, was ultimately rewarded with marriage to Sally Mickleborough—the aristocratic beauty. Interestingly, Ben's success paralleled Nicholas Burr's rise in \textit{The Voice of the People}. Both men had initiative, but both were favored by fortuitous connections with the established members of the old aristocracy. The difference was that in \textit{The Romance of a Plain Man}, her eighth novel, Glasgow was finally able to unite a man of
the lower class to a woman of the upper class; but this union did not occur until Ben had transcended his own class, thereby making him acceptable to the author and her Southern readers. In Glasgow's novels non-aristocratic males were forced to lose all vestiges of the lower order before they truly found financial and social happiness. Unlike Howells' Northerner, Silas Lapham, fortitude and diligence were not enough for Glasgow's gentlemen.

In *The Romance of a Plain Man*, and those novels to follow, Glasgow renewed her subconscious struggle to resolve her own "conflict of types." On the surface, many of these novels seemed to praise the values of the new order; but, in

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21 Glasgow had been dealing with inter-class romance throughout her works. Nevertheless, Daniel Patterson notes:

Miss Glasgow's cautious approach to this theme is amusing to watch in the early novels. The aristocratic heroine [Eugenia Battle] of *The Voice of the People* (1900) loves a poor white [Nicholas Burr], but realizes the chasm between them and marries a man of her own class. The heroine [Maria Fletcher] of *The Deliverance* (1904) marries across the class line, but her boldness is rendered as inoffensive as possible. She marries above herself, and the match is equalized by the fact that her aristocratic spouse [Christopher Blake] has been coarsened by poverty and field labor, while she herself has been ennobled by wealth, education, travel, and gentle sorrow.(p. 358).

22 Raper, 143.
reality, Glasgow continually upheld the values of the old. For example, she delighted in "showing the upper-class helping the lower class up the scale." Furthermore, she never surrendered her belief that "blood will tell"; often people such as Negro servants or lower-class whites, disparaged the efforts of the nouveau riche. Even in The Deliverance, the Negro servants would not give the rich Bill Fletcher the same respect that they offered to the impoverished Christopher Blake. And it was through these "inferiors" that the real Glasgow could voice her disdain for presumptuous parvenus. In The Miller of Old Church an old peasant woman remarked: "Some folks were meant to be on top an' some at bottom, for t'otherwise God Almighty wouldn't have put 'em thar."24

As a far more subtle means of easing her inner tension, Glasgow began to write with an equivocal style that often belied her ostensible purpose. She refined to art the "ambiguous habit of speech where words...[were] used to conceal what they intend[ed] to express....25 In The Ancient Law, Emily, the aristocrat, at first pondered the origins

25 Geismar, p. 238.
of Dan, a stranger. And for Emily, as well as for Glasgow, it was necessary to conclude, "he is a gentleman" (136), even though the girl blushed with shame at such a snobbish consideration. Years later, in another novel, a Glasgow lady of refinement would lament, "It's gone out of fashion to be superior." Such statements carried the ironic weight of being believed (at least subconsciously) by the author, who felt that her superior literary works had never been in fashion with a "sensation loving public." In The Miller of Old Church, Glasgow ran the gamut of unsuccessful marriages. In the manner of a modern soap-opera, nearly everyone in the story was in love with someone other than his mate. Jonathan Gay, the decadent aristocrat, jilted his lower-class wife and was killed by her father. Abel Revercomb was the honest miller who rose to local political prominence while suffering through an unhappy marriage dissolved by his wife's timely death. Abel's wife had gone to her deathbed loving a pasty Episcopal minister—a spiritual Walter Mitty. Molly Merryweather, the illegitimate daughter of Jonathan's deceased uncle, provided Abel with an eventual salvation through her love.

26 One Man in His Time (New York, 1911), p. 80.
27 Ellen Glasgow to Walter Hines Page, May 12, 1900, in Letters, p. 32.
Much more important, however, was the fact that Molly was rewarded for her goodness, for she and Abel had loved each other for years but had been held apart by stubborn pride. This novel, then, offered a hopeful reversal in the fortunes of the "deserving woman."

Although Abel and Molly were happy as the novel ended, no one else--aristocrat or plebeian--seemed to be. As an expedient against sorrow, Glasgow began to assert the Calvinist doctrine of self-sacrifice and fortitude in this novel. She characterized Abel's hard-working mother (Sarah Revercomb) as a staunch Presbyterian whose indomitable belief had "passed into her fibre, until it had become almost an instinct with her to tread softly in the ways of pleasure lest God should hear" (290). At this point in Glasgow's writings, Calvinism seemed indigenous to the lower class, but, later, the tenet of self-denial found in the creed would discover many outlets in heroines of all classes for whom life and love became little more than opportunities to develop "character by facing inevitable abandonment with fortitude."

The unhappiness of the lower class of Old Church, Virginia, did not represent the actual settlement in Virginia which bears that name. See A Certain Measure, p. 128.

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29 Glasgow said that her fictitious Old Church, Virginia, did not represent the actual settlement in Virginia which bears that name. See A Certain Measure, p. 128.
was balanced by the misery of the fallen aristocrats who lived there. Jonathan's mother, Angela Gay, was reincarnation of Mrs. Blake (The Deliverance). Physically less handicapped, Angela was, nevertheless, more of a burden than Mrs. Blake had been. Angela despaired Molly's claim to the family name; and she forced her weak son, Jonathan, to "conceal faithlessness with the hypocrisy of duty" to her (426). Much of the ensuing disaster was traceable directly to her presence. But, despite Angela's malignant influence on everyone around her, there seemed to be a mitigating influence which regulated Glasgow's portrayal of this sick widow. For Glasgow did not allow Angela the degree of resilience to withstand her misfortunes that lower-class women, such as Sarah Revercomb, possessed. Angela's only recourse was to "go to bed" and suffer the cultural shock of the new South, which callously forsook its aristocratic ladies.

The image of the forsaken lady was meticulously examined in the next two novels, Virginia (1913) and Life and Gabriella (1916). As she had moved away from the gloom of 1905, Glasgow became able to analyze objectively the dilemma of the Southern lady. However, the pall of feminine suffering that had shadowed Glasgow's entire personal life, remained in 1911, as Cary Glasgow McCormack died after a prolonged illness. Cary had never ceased to grieve for
Walter, and her death was a morbid conclusion to a sad life. Depressed with her sister's death, and, perhaps, reflecting on her own chronic deafness, Glasgow came even more (in 1912) to concentrate on the character of the Southern woman.

Remembering the unhappiness of not only her mother and sister, but also all of the other suffering women that she had ever known, she wrote Virginia, a compendium of what she believed to be true about the Southern lady.30

Unlike the four preceeding works, Virginia had direction and unity; unfortunately like the other four, it was a bit padded. Carl Van Doren remarked that "most of her novels were likely to be longer than their materials warranted...."31 Nevertheless, Virginia progressed steadfastly to one dynamic scene in which an adherent of the old order confronted (and was abashed by) a member of the new society.

Virginia Treadway was the beautiful heroine of the novel. Like the author's mother, "Virginia...was the perfect flower of Southern culture,[and] was educated according to the simple theory that the less a girl knew about life, the

30 A Certain Measure, pp. 80-82.
better prepared she would be to contend with.\textsuperscript{32} But for Virginia living around the turn of the century, this education was not sufficient, for she was simply not intellectually suitable for Oliver Treadway, her husband. Oliver was Virginia's distant cousin and a progressive playwright whose chief (family) characteristic was "to get the thing he want[ed] most."\textsuperscript{33} After wanting Virginia desperately, Oliver also wanted his share of the twentieth century. Virginia was ill-equipped "to progress" with her husband; therefore, Oliver ultimately forsook his wife and his native state for a "modern" woman and New York City.

The curious twist of this novel was that this time, the Southern belle, and not the wholesomely intelligent woman, was abandoned. But the lesson of the novel remained constant with the lessons of the earlier novels; for Glasgow was merely re-iterating that belles and businessmen did not belong together. "Virginia," according to Glasgow, "was more than a woman; she was the embodiment of a forsaken ideal."\textsuperscript{34} By this time, however, her creator empha-

\textsuperscript{32} A Certain Measure, p. 90.

\textsuperscript{33} Virginia (New York, 1913), p. 207. Also note that Glasgow seemed to be restating her belief in family (and class) characteristics. Certainly the belief in heredity played a large part in her personal view of life; whether she accounted for it as a cultural phenomenon or a biological one remains debatable.

\textsuperscript{34} A Certain Measure, p. 82.
thized with all suffering women, regardless of type; they were, after all, united in the common bond of sorrow. She herself confessed, in a rare introspective moment, that

Although, in the beginning, I had intended to deal ironically with both the Southern lady and the Victorian tradition, I discovered, as I went on, that my irony grew fainter, while it yielded at last to sympathetic compassion. 35

Virginia Treadway's gravest error was her inability to face the realities of the twentieth century; her final act of evasive idealism occurred when she went to New York to confront her husband's lover (an actress). At the crucial moment, vis a vis her nemesis, Virginia could not "say the things she had come to say, because even in the supreme crisis of life, she could not lay down the manner of a lady..." (487). Rather, she smiled demurely and left, returning to her home state. Virginia, reared by the "code of beautiful behavior and the Episcopal church," 36 had never been taught how to assert her own will, and in losing her husband and facing her disgrace, perhaps, she was destined to while away her days in the symbolic bed of sister sufferers.

In Virginia, Glasgow had involuntarily called for a return to the old ways of life. It was obvious that

35 Ibid., p. 79.
36 Ibid., p. 89.
Glasgow's real message was that the world at large, and not Virginia, was at fault. As Joan Foster Santas has pointed out, it was the progressive world that did not appreciate the virtues of the old South which Virginia embodied.

For, [throughout Glasgow's works]...this is never really disputed, Southern "civilization" is the only way to maintain a perpetual Garden of Eden with so many snakes in it. Dinwiddie [Virginia's Southern home-town] is totally responsible for Virginia, but Dinwiddie deserves blame not for "civilizing" Virginia but for neglecting to educate her to overcome the ways of ungrateful serpents. The snakes [all of the villains of the progressive world] are always the real difficulty in Ellen Glasgow's works. They are perpetually hidden, not only from her characters and her readers, but from Ellen Glasgow herself. 37

In returning to the essential story of all Southern women, Glasgow refound herself temporarily. No longer did she have "to be" Ben Starr, the businessman. She could now convincingly elaborate the story of the rise and fall of the Southern lady--a story, no doubt, taken partially from her own life. For despite many of her bitter memories about her early life, the elder Glasgow remembered that at the age of sixteen, she made her debut at the Saint Cecilia ball in Charleston, South Carolina. She recalled that she had been "light and graceful" and had been made "one

37 Santas, pp. 195-96.
of the belles of that brilliant and unforgettable evening." Miss Glasgow, the pioneer feminist, never came to understand just how much of Virginia Treadway she herself embodied.

Trying again to find a way to overcome the "serpents," Glasgow wrote *Life and Gabriella* (1916). The heroine of this novel, Gabriella Carr (Fowler) was a more progressive counterpart of Virginia Treadway. And, as a progressive woman, Gabriella triumphed where Virginia had failed. Yet, the novel was marred by the novelist's own "conflict" that now could not determine just what degree of happiness should be afforded to a suffering heroine. As a result, the novel was at least two-hundred pages too long. Morbid choices between self-denial and enjoyment tiringly recur, and Gabriella found happiness despite her best efforts to the contrary.

Gabriella, like Virginia, suffered from a marriage to an unfaithful husband. There were, however, notable differences in the two situations. Gabriella's husband, George Fowler, was much less admirable than Oliver Treadway had been. George compounded his miscreance by callously

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38 *The Woman Within*, pp. 77, 79.
flaunting his mistress, drinking excessively\textsuperscript{39} and returning home only to borrow money from Gabriella. But, Gabriella was not Virginia. She supposedly embodied the new type of woman who could face her husband's mistress and gladly surrender him to her. Also, in the modern spirit, Gabriella obtained a divorce, found successful employment, and remained in progressive New York City (where she and George had lived prior to the divorce). Gabriella's triumph, indeed, signaled Glasgow's rekindled hope for the Southern lady. Unlike Virginia, Gabriella was "blessed with a dynamic philosophy and a quick relish for the immediate...."\textsuperscript{40}

While it is generally true that Gabriella was more dynamic and successful than Virginia had ever been, the philosophical weakness of this novel lay in Gabriella's ostensible triumph. Miss Glasgow, wanting to codify a rule by which women could live and triumph, had sought to create a character who was able, in Calvinistic fashion, to steel herself to life's misfortunes. Gabriella remarked: "I suppose I am hard,...and I am going to stay so. There is

\textsuperscript{39} Even though Glasgow was not a teetotaler by any measure, she maintained, at least in her novels, an almost prudish aversion to men who drank alcohol. Indeed, except for her later novels (c. 1930 on), she had depicted "demon rum" in its symbolic capacity as an evil.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{A Certain Measure}, p. 97.
safety in hardness." Hardness was, of course, what Virginia notably had lacked. But Gabriella, after a senseless self-denial of ten years, finally fell in love with a rich working man, Ben O'Hara. Unfortunately, the last one-hundred or so pages of the novel, almost inanely presented Gabriella's inner dialectic, which tried to resolve "to love or not to love." On the last page, after numerous painful denials of love, Gabriella ran to meet Ben. One cannot help feeling that if the novel had been one page longer, Gabriella would have offered the "ultimate" denial again.

Nearly a decade after Life and Gabriella, another Glasgow working woman, Dorinda Oakley (in Barren Ground [1925]) would adamantly cling to renunciation of love as the only means of coping with life. But in 1916, the novelist was not quite ready to accept this perverted belief herself. Therefore, almost as an afterthought, Glasgow allowed her industrious yet refined Gabriella to find happiness. No other major female character, after Gabriella, emerged as rewarded as she.

Early in 1916, Glasgow's father died, leaving the writer and her secretary, Anne Virginia Bennett, alone in the big grey mansion. Despite her rebellion against his

Presbyterianism, Ellen had grown closer, in spirit, to her father as she became older. She remembered that he died "like a Roman, superbly, without fear, without reluctance...." Many years later, after paying increasing tribute to his theology in numerous novels, she would write *Vein of Iron* (1935), the novel which ultimately praised Calvinistic fortitude.

After his death, Miss Glasgow felt "alone...in the house where so many of us had once lived." This loneliness, however, was interrupted for a few years. On Easter Sunday, 1916, she dined with friends and met Henry W. Anderson. From a rural Virginia family, Anderson had lived in Richmond for many years; he was a noted lawyer, businessman and civic leader. Immediately attracting the novelist's attention, he was anonymously called Harold S— in her autobiography. However, the seven-hundred and fifty letters from Anderson to Glasgow, which are preserved in the Alderman Library (University of Virginia), fully identify him as the middle-aged suitor.

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42 *The Woman Within*, p. 215.

43 Ibid.

44 *Godbold*, p. 108.

She was, once again, overtaken and surprised by her attraction to a businessman. 46 This Republican politician seemed to be the sort of man that she "should have disliked by intuition." 47 Yet, a little over one year later (July 19, 1917), the two were engaged. 48 The happiness was short-lived, however, for Anderson, who had made a prior Red-Cross mission to war-torn Europe, left on July 20, 1917, to return to Europe with rescue provisions. The correspondence between the two grew more spotty in the following months, and a reported affair between Anderson and Queen Marie of Rumania reached Glasgow's sensitive ears before Anderson belatedly returned in the fall of 1919. 49 Through a mutual consent, "the engagement was abandoned...." 50 But the relationship lasted for many years after the early 1920's, slowly becoming a hot-and cold friendship. In 1920, when

46 The Woman Within, p. 225.

47 Ibid.

48 Anderson Letters, Glasgow Collection, Alderman Library. See also above (Chapter III, n. 37).

49 Actually Glasgow had been casually informed of the liaison by Anderson himself—in a letter of Sept. 26, 1917, from Rumania, which mentioned that the Queen had invited him "to come tonight for a private talk over work..." Obviously, Anderson received no replies to subsequent correspondence, for on Oct. 19, 1917, he wrote to Glasgow asking why she had not been answering his letters. See Ibid.

50 Godbold, p. 124.
Anderson was being considered for the Republican Vice Presidency and, again in 1921, when he unsuccessfully ran for Governor of Virginia, Glasgow actively helped him by proofreading, editing, and, at times, writing his political speeches.51

The novels that came out of these years were, understandably, political in nature. The Builders (1919) told the story of Caroline Meade, a nurse employed by David Blackburn and his wife Angelica to care for their sickly child, Letty. Caroline was at first repulsed by Mr. Blackburn's notorious social reputation. He had been characterized as hard-hearted and even cruel toward his beautiful (Southern-belle type) wife. A Republican, progressive and intellectual, Blackburn had been, it soon turned out, misjudged. Despite herself, Meade fell in love with him. But the distant romance was doomed to failure. Blackburn's cloying wife showed her true nature as the novel progressed. She temporarily deserted her child and her husband for a lover while using her demure public appearance to cast blame on her silently suffering husband. In the end, after returning from World War I, David was bound helplessly to his marriage by his own sense of honor. Caroline returned to her family's farm, once again, to prove that the good woman received nothing.

51 Anderson Letters, Glasgow Collection, Alderman Library.
The influences of Anderson were obvious in this novel. No doubt, he either wrote, or critically edited, large parts of it. In April, 1917, he wrote to his former fiancee praising a portion of the manuscript that she had sent to him, but he had "some suggestions" and thought that "we... [could] make it a strong chapter." The novel, however, was not "strong"; it was filled with diatribes, via Blackburn, against Virginia Democratic-Party rule; United States entry into the League of Nations; and the cruelties of World War I. In the final sections, using the vehicle of a semi-epistolary novel, massive gobbets of Anderson-Glasgow propaganda tiringly fill page after page.

Most notable in the novel, however, was the emergence of David Blackburn as the noble man whose "vein of iron" would not break under the stress of unwarranted condemnation. On the other hand, Angelica was the weakest, least noble "suffering lady" that Glasgow had yet created. After deserting her family, she returned to them bringing her "illness," for which, according to the doctor, "there was no hope of any permanent cure."53

Although Caroline Meade was unfairly deprived of hap-

52 Henry W. Anderson to Ellen Glasgow, April 29, 1917, in Ibid.
53 The Builders (Garden City, 1919), p. 363.
piness according to the Glasgow philosophy, part of Caroline's problem was her own inordinate priggishness. Indeed, almost all of Glasgow's deprived women suffered from an unnatural amount of spirituality. They were never common enough to be wise, and they were often such models of virtue as to drive men mad.\(^5^4\) Just as Gabriella had rejected an earlier lover, so did Caroline repulse the advances of Roane Fitzhugh, Angelica's brother. Roane was a carefree bachelor, who, despite Glasgow's subconscious efforts to denigrate him, became a likable and even noble character. Though Roane had served with valor in the war, Caroline, childishly, could remember only that "he kissed me when he was drunk" (362).

Once again Glasgow had used a heroine to voice her own ethics. For, even in her earlier love-novels, prolonged scenes which depicted physical relationships between men and women had been avoided. Her personal observations had long shown an aversion to the physical presence of men. "With loathing," she remembered "the red and juicy" mouth of a would-be Lothario who had promised to help her publish her first novel in return for her favors.\(^5^5\) This aversion grew with each romantic disappointment,

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\(^5^4\) Geismar, p. 261.

\(^5^5\) *The Woman Within*, p. 62.
and her break with Anderson in the early 1920's seemed to set her "iron-will" intransigently against men (especially who posed romantic threats to women).56

Nevertheless, before the final break with Anderson, Glasgow was to write one more novel which presented a romantic, honorable man. One Man in His Time (1922) again told the story of a grass-roots politician who rose to eminence and gubernatorial power. Gideon Vetch, the hero, was merely an updated Nicholas Burr (The Voice of the People). Gideon, an Independent politician, gained power through his appeal to the common people, but, like Burr, he was killed by them during a local rebellion. As usual, this novel did not really examine the functions of government; it was much more concerned with the personalities of the various women in the story.

Classless, cultureless, but robust, Patty Vetch (Gideon's teen-age daughter) was unable to find real acceptance into the higher social circles of Richmond. And, even though Glasgow depicted the shallowness of the elite society, the ironic truth was that Patty desired to be a part of it just

56 Godbold notes that in the early 1920's, Glasgow became somewhat enamored with the British writer, Hugh Walpole. Friendly, but not totally receptive, Walpole eventually lost favor with her after he slighted One Man in His Time as well as some of her other works. See Godbold, pp. 157-58.
as much as her creator wanted her to be. Indeed, the basic story was really "How Patty Got Accepted Into the Social Scene in Richmond, Virginia."

Nowhere was the problem more plainly delineated than in Patty's romance. She loved the young politician, Stephen Culpeper, an FFV. Although the pretty girl was honest, hard-working, and intelligent, Stephen "would have known anywhere that Patty Vetch was not exactly a lady" (9). This was his first impression of her, but she had already determined to become a lady. Patty's salvation lay in the hands of an older woman. Corinna Page was, according to Stephen, "still looking at forty-eight as if she had stepped out of a portrait by Romney" (37). This graceful lady, jilted long ago by her now deceased husband, had found solace through her work in a small art shop. Corinna admired Patty's natural abilities. She became the young girl's spiritual and cultural mentor and helped Patty learn the graces of the old order. As a result, Patty was able to win the admiration and love of Stephen.

Corinna Page was another surrogate Ellen Glasgow. Corinna was forty-eight, the same age as the novelist. Corinna worked to relieve her emotional burdens; Glasgow constantly re-iterated that "work is the only thing in the world
that makes life endurable." Both, moreover, lived by the code of the jilted woman: hard work and self-denial. Corinna, then, could help others find happiness, but there would be none for her. Her burgeoning romance with Governor Vetch (a widower) was terminated by his death.

Patty's rival for Stephen's affections had been Margaret Blair, a girl from an old-line family. The battle for the "spoils" exposed again Glasgow's underlying beliefs about aristocracy. First, the snobbishly prim Stephen was pictured, after all, as a desirable prize—even to Patty. Glasgow attempted to mitigate his insufferable gentility by allowing him to voice his concern over inadequate housing in the slums of Richmond; but, in the end, there was really little evidence that his character had changed drastically. Moreover, Patty was unable to attract Stephen until she availed herself of the lessons of his culture—taught to her by the gracious Corinna (the aristocrat who helped the rising lower class). For all of Patty's innate virtue, she was deemed "inferior"—even by Glasgow—until she had learned traditional values.

Margaret Blair was the superior girl who "had gone out of fashion." As the embodiment of the Southern belle, she was unable to compete with the more progressive girls;

57 Ellen Glasgow to Daniel Longwell, June 22, 1932, in Letters, p. 117.
therefore, Patty, who combined the virtues of past and present, won Stephen. But, in case the real message could not be gleaned from this novel, Glasgow wrote a thematic sequel in the form of a short story, "The Artless Age" (1923). The story re-examined the same situation that the novel had delineated. The belle and the modern girl vie for the love of the same man.

In "The Artless Age," Glasgow did a complete about-face regarding the legend of the forsaken. For, in the character of Mary Louise Littleton, were united the "thinking woman" and the Southern belle. Mary Louise read books and was beautiful, but she remained sadly out-of-touch with the times (1920's). Therefore, she spent lonely hours while her jazz-age rival, Geraldine Plummer (who thought Ruskin was the name of an alcoholic beverage) won the heart of the progressive male.

This story must stand as a turning point in Glasgow's personal philosophy. She no longer considered old-fashioned women as being shallow and servile. From this time on, her major female characters were either old-fashioned girls who embodied the breeding and intelligence of a better era, or they were modern girls who sought to refind the old values in order to improve their troubled existence. Geraldine was of the latter type. By all contemporary standards, she seemed to live a successful life. She was a "flapper"
who was admired and courted by men. But in a most introspective moment in the story, Geraldine admitted that she had developed her entire personality as an affectation to attract her fiance. She confessed that she had always wanted to be more like Mary Louise, but she lamented: "If a girl wants to be a perfect lady, nobody is trying to prevent her; but she has got to realize just what she loses—and that is all the fun."58

The entire dilemma of the Southern lady was becoming resolved most unhappily for Glasgow. The superior woman was rejected in favor of the jazz-age flapper. Perhaps, even more unfortunate was that the flapper wanted to be like the superior woman, but feared the loss of male companionship. Glasgow's uncomfortable optimism lay in women like Patty Vetch and even Geraldine Plummer, who were able to attract men but who really wanted to reinstate the old values. Geraldine hoped that the moral code (or "fashion") would change to something else [the old code]" before she had a daughter. She adamantly declared, "If ever I have a daughter,...I am going to spank her till it hurts" (201). Perhaps, the next generation of daughters would learn the old virtues, but one cannot help thinking that Glasgow did not really believe this.

58 Short Stories, p. 200.
By 1923, it seems that despite a shallow optimism, the novelist had really come to a somewhat darkened cul de sac regarding men and women. Years earlier, she had said that, because of moral inferiority, men allowed "necessary evil" to exist in the world; whereas, "no common woman would let it go at that. She would fight it out, and win, on the basis that anything which is really evil is not necessary--cannot be--and that anything that is really necessary cannot be, and is not, evil." Later, the embittered writer came to believe that women never really had a chance to build their Utopia in a man-oriented world; men, therefore, caused the agony of women. James Branch Cabell, one of Glasgow's most astute contemporary critics, noted that the women in her novels had three choices: to conform to addled housewifery; to accept spinsterhood; or to rebel, alone. This was a problem, Cabell said, which, in its every solution, involves futility.

As the mid-twenties approached, Glasgow became more and more convinced that her own search for love was terminated, and with the departure of Anderson as a lover, she was left with a thwarted ego and a perverted philosophy of life.

59 "No Valid Reason Against Giving Votes to Women," p. 11.
In the next novel, this bitter fruit, which would spring from the barren ground of her soul, would ironically bring her the plaudits she had long sought as a writer.
In 1924, Glasgow wrote a short story that appeared in the December issue of *Woman's Home Companion*. In "Romance and Sally Byrd," the author re-examined the complexities of the romantic triangle. Sally was the young mistress of a wealthy, middle-aged man; in her naivé, she determined to follow an honest course of action and confront her lover's wife. Upon meeting the beleagured wife, Sally learned to her dismay that her lover had been involved in numerous affairs and had never sought freedom from his wife. Unable, for long, to focus attention on Sally's wounded soul, Glasgow shifted the point of view to that of the suffering wife, who must have voiced the author's own philosophy as she told Sally: "When your heart is really broken, it lies still and dead like mine. You can't imagine the relief it is... to have your heart break at last."¹

The Glasgow saga continued to depict men as the relentless hunters and callous tormentors of passively suffering women; but, in 1924, Glasgow, herself tormented, was completing work on a novel that she felt would demonstrate a

¹ *Short Stories*, p. 233.
course of action for liberating women from the onus of male domination. She felt that the vigorous demand for the equality of sexes voiced by Betty Ambler (The Battle-Ground) had fallen on deaf ears. Women were still treated unfairly, and old-fashioned "superior" women had gone out of style. Therefore, Glasgow saw but one viable alternative for women—"to learn to live, even learn to live gallantly, without delight."\(^2\) Dorinda Oakley, in Barren Ground (1925), came to live by this stringent code.

The indecision that plagued so much of the earlier writing was nearly gone from Barren Ground. Except for the final pages in which Glasgow was unable to accept the obvious isolation and loneliness of Dorinda, the novel moved with a steadfast resolve. Thematically, however, there was little in Barren Ground that had not been said before in other Glasgow novels. Dorinda was a young, Virginia farm-girl of Calvinist stock, who was seduced and deserted by a handsome, young doctor. After going to New York, suffering a miscarriage and returning to her Virginia farm, Dorinda determined to fortify herself so that life (or men) could never again be able to hurt her. Her "vein of iron" came at last to her rescue; this "unflinching Presbyterian[ism]

\(^2\) A Certain Measure, p. 155.
in her blood steeled her..." to withstand "something [which] was trying to break her. Life or the will of God, it made no difference, for one hurt as much as the other."  

The "vein of iron" had given Dorinda a philosophy with which to face life; her parents' farm offered her a way to test her belief in fortitude. The land had been the salvation of Dorinda's pioneer ancestors, but it also had been their burden. Dorinda's father and mother had worked themselves to a grey death trying to farm the barren ground; and Dorinda, true to her family calling, returned to the land to gain permanence and stability. Innovating new approaches to agriculture and using part of the land for dairy farming, she was able to wrest a living from the soil. Later, for economic expediency, she married a widower, Nathan Pedlar. This avuncular friend, who was many years her senior, owned a nearby farm. The marriage was a sexless bond, and the only true union resulted from amalgamating the two farms. After Nathan died in an accident, Dorinda achieved her ultimate revenge: she rescued her one-time seducer, Dr. Jason Greylock, from the poorhouse in time for him to die of acute alcoholism—as his father had done some years earlier.

Glasgow believed that Dorinda became a symbol for

female victory. The writer's intent was to prove that "for once, in Southern fiction, the betrayed woman would become the victor instead of the victim." 4

Critics, however, have questioned the extent of Dorinda's "victory." Certainly it was a Pyrrhic conquest. True, Dorinda was left with the land and her endurance; and, perhaps, "the spirit of the land was flowing into her, and her own spirit, strengthened and refreshed, was flowing out again toward life" (408). This, at least, was the claim that Glasgow made at the end of the novel. But the reader must challenge some of the positive assertions that the author made concerning the lonely Dorinda. What kind of "refreshed" life could the heroine now expect? Dorinda, herself, admitted that her happiness was not "the happiness for which she had once longed, but the serenity of mind which is above the conflict of frustrated desires" (408). Serenity without desire is, perhaps, euphoric, but Glasgow clearly wanted to emphasize that Dorinda had learned "to live without joy...." 5 Serenity without joy is nearly a paradoxical anomaly. It would seem that Dorinda's final victory was achieved through a kind of spiritual coma. Was this real victory?

4 A Certain Measure, p. 160.
5 See introduction to Barren Ground, p. vi.
Life without joy was the "philosophy of negation" which Glasgow had synthesized from her early Calvinistic training, her metaphysical studies, and her embittered life. The Bhagavad Gita had taught her that the highest attainment of human endeavor was to "perform action which is duty, for by performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme." Dorinda, who admitted that she had gained "integrity of vision" because she had "finished with all that[romance]" (409), was certainly an embodiment of detached duty. Yet, except for more hard work, there was simply no true reward awaiting her. Dorinda's final loneliness tragically mirrored Ellen Glasgow's unhappiness, for the spiritual self-portrait mediated in Barren Ground came as close to an autobiography as anything Glasgow had written up to that time.

As a "spiritual" autobiography, however, the novel was not complete. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., astutely points out that it should be carefully considered in light of the earlier work, Virginia. No doubt, Miss Glasgow felt that she was like Dorinda—strong, victorious, and unbending; but in

6 Geismar, p. 261
7 Ballou, p. 62.
reality, she was more like Virginia Treadway, who never lost her feminine desire for affection. Glasgow, like Virginia, suffered from her own inability to reconcile herself to a passionless, stoical life. Outwardly resigned to Dorinda's philosophy, Glasgow, nevertheless, suffered deeply from its tragic sterility. And, caught in this emotional turbulence, the writer vacillated between the two personalities. She became both Dorinda and Virginia. After reading *The Woman Within*, Marion Cause Canby (Glasgow's close friend) remarked:  

> Each sorrow broke her [Glasgow's] heart all over again as though no one had ever died or met catastrophe before. Her lifelong research on the "vein of iron" or in clearer words, the tragedy of life on earth, didn't seem to apply to her.... I don't know--but somehow *The Woman Within* seemed to me in many ways a different person from the Ellen I knew.

With *Barren Ground*, Glasgow had put on her stoic mask and acted her own drama of self-delusion. It was really the author, not Dorinda, who re-iterated: "Oh, I don't mind work. What else is there in life?" (227). Glasgow, who had drawn *Barren Ground* from years of personal agony, felt that by working hard she had proven at last her "superiority to Anderson in particular, men in general, unfriendly critics, and even her fellow craftsmen whose popularity exceeded

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9 Ibid.
10 *Letters*, p. 372.
In some respects, she was right. The novel was named on the Review of Reviews list of the twenty-five outstanding novels of the year, and it brought to the novelist a degree of attention from serious critics that she had always sought.

For the first time in years, Glasgow felt that she could relax. She said, "I knew I had found myself." Feeling that she was now "finished with all that [romance]," she began work on a series of novels that would level poignant sarcasm at men—the long-time Glasgow antagonists.

The Romantic Comedians (1926) was the first of Glasgow's tragicomedies. The story was set in Queenborough, Virginia—a thinly disguised Richmond. Retired and widowed, Judge Gamaliel Bland Honeywell fell in love with, and married, the young Annabel Upchurch. In Glasgow's preliminary notes on this novel, she had considered facetiously calling the Judge a "Red-Cross Knight," suggesting strongly that Anderson was the model for this character; Glasgow had not yet finished with her personal vendetta.

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11 Godbold, p. 138.
12 Rouse, p. 134.
14 See Notebook #3, in Glasgow Collection, Alderman Library.
The story was a simple re-telling of the age-old dilemma of May-December marriages. The foolish old Judge had ignored a suitable marriage partner in Amanda Lightfoot, a woman his own age. Instead, infatuated with his young bride, he was cuckold and deserted by her. Finding Annabel with her young lover in New York City, Judge Honeywell pleaded in vain for her to return home with him. He came back to Queenborough alone, to his "sick-bed" and to his memories that "drifted out of time into emptiness." However, in the true spirit of pessimistic comedy, Glasgow allowed the Judge to profit nought from his experience. As the story ended, Honeywell was left considering the aphrodisiacal powers of springtime and wondering why he had never fully appreciated the short brown hair, the slender ankles and the tender touch of his young nurse. Glasgow had said that she was "worn out with having men write what they know or don't know about dangerous ages in women," but, obviously, she wanted to write about the dangerous ages in men.

Though Honeywell was jilted in this novel, and one cannot help feeling sympathy for him, Glasgow could not allow him to be absolved of censure. After all, the Judge

15 The Romantic Comedians (Garden City, 1926), p. 343.
callously overlooked Amanda Lightfoot, his fifty-eight-year-old girlfriend, who was "marvellously preserved with bright blue eyes," and who had waited patiently (thirty-seven years) for him since they had been young lovers. But smitten by the shallow, nubile Annabel, the Judge offered the confused young girl a marriage of financial security. Shortly thereafter, however, the marriage had depressed her so much that she wanted to "learn to be happy without happiness," as other women seemed to be (249). Plainly, she was another sad "Glasgow woman" in the making, and her escape from the Judge, therefore, seemed to be the only natural recourse that the girl had.

The Romantic Comedians had its share of Glasgow's suffering women. Edmonia Bredalbane, however, was not one of them. As Judge Honeywell's twin sister, Edmonia represented an elder free-spirit who had been married several times, traveled all over the world and experienced the rewards of being a liberated woman. In her earlier works, Glasgow had often disparaged such morally "free" women, characterizing them, in Virginia and Life and Gabriella, as shallow concubines. Edmonia, certainly a Wife-of-Bath character, was a singular creation of Glasgow. Edmonia constantly chided the Judge for his fatuous desire to marry a young woman; however, when the Judge attempted to remind her of her own peccant history, she masterfully rebuffed him:
Oh, you know Gamaliel, that you could have forgiven my committing a sin if you hadn't feared that I had committed a pleasure as well. More than this, you resented the way I wasn't satisfied simply to stay ruined and to stew in a consciousness of sin for the rest of my life. It wasn't my fall, it was my being able to get up again, that you couldn't forgive—(227).

Such sentiment ran so counter to the accepted code of morality that the abashed Judge was unable to rebut, and until he comfortably dismissed the thought from his mind, he was left wondering if indeed there "was... a leak, after all, in his inherited system of prudential morality..." (229).

His male ego and staunch Puritan ethics, however, led him to regard his sister's candid approach to life as immoral while he, a morally proper, retired magistrate, went about his business of buying love.

In the character of Edmonia, Glasgow was again fantasying her own desire to be a liberated "woman of the world" in hopes that she could pontificate the value of women who had found freedom from men. Even in comedy, she reflected her anti-male bitterness; and while she had more or less drifted away from the feminist movement after World War I, she continued to use her novels as a vehicle for her own pronouncements on woman's liberation. Yet when she addressed the problem directly, Glasgow would often become characteristically ambiguous. In her autobiography, she said, "On the whole, I think women have lost something precious, but have
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gained immeasurably by the passing of the old order."17
The "precious loss" constantly depressed Miss Glasgow, but
her fictitious characters such as Edmonia and even Dorinda
seemed to be able to find some inner reward which compensated them for the loss. Glasgow believed that she was
like these heroines.

To relieve the morbid depression of her society, her
house and even her work, Glasgow had always sought travel.
She last had visited Europe in 1914, when she had spent a
"perfect day" with Joseph Conrad and had dined with the
Galsworthys and Bennetts.18 In the summer of 1927, she, with
her friend Carrie Duke, returned to England where they
visited Thomas Hardy, Hugh Walpole and Frank Swinnerton.
The trip did seem to enliven her; but, in September, they
sailed for home, "and life began again without a break..."19

In the fall of 1929, two personal events occurred which
affected Glasgow: her second tragicomedy, They Stooped to
Folly, was eagerly received by Richmonders who had enjoyed
The Romantic Comedians; but her happiness was short-lived
as Jeremy, her beloved Sealyham terrier, died. Not even

17 The Woman Within, pp. 163-64.
18 Ibid., pp. 200-03
19 Ibid., 257
critical and popular acceptance of The Romantic Comedians and They Stooped to Folly could assuage this new grief. Jeremy had been a "farewell" present from Anderson in 1921, and Glasgow, whose devotion to animals had always been ardent, came to idolize the little dog. She had been the very active president of the Richmond S.P.C.A. since 1924, and much of her vigorous earlier efforts associated with the feminist movement was obviously shifted to her obsession with animal welfare.

Saddened and depressed by Jeremy's death, Glasgow again sought travel; but her trip to Europe, in the summer of 1930, was marred by poor weather. Unlike her earlier trips abroad, this sojourn did little to enliven her. Ill-health and despondency seemed to regulate her activities; and after a few months, she left England feeling that it had sacrificed everything "to speed and to the ugly coast to coast roads."

Back in Richmond, the socialites were still tittering

20 Rouse, p. 134

21 Godbold relates the somewhat unnatural affection that Glasgow had for Jeremy and her poodle, Billy. When Glasgow died in 1945, the dogs had long since been dead. However, their embalmed bodies were exhumed and put into their mistress' coffin with her. See Godbold, pp. 180, 269, and 299.

22 The Woman Within, pp. 260-61.

23 Ibid., p. 261.
over *The Romantic Comedians*, which supposedly dealt with members of the Richmond "upper-circles." There had been a mild sensation among those eager to identify the living counterparts fictionalized by Glasgow in her work.\(^{24}\) Now they were excited again to learn that a second book, *They Stooped to Folly*, was also about the same class of people. However, the latter work was perhaps not as rewarding to those who sought to draw analogies between Glasgow's fiction and their social stratum. For it was obvious that the characters who appeared in this novel were really drawn from stock types that had long appeared in Glasgow's works.

As in some of her earlier books, this novel was hampered by too many people resolving too many problems. Basically, she wanted to write a story that would help dissolve the "myth" of the fallen woman.\(^{25}\) To do this she developed a story which examined the fate of several women, from different generations, who suffered from the male-imposed code of female purity.

Milly Burden was a young secretary in the employ of Virginius Littlepage, a sixty-year-old lawyer. Milly had had an affair with Martin Welding, a young man who had gone

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\(^{24}\) Godbold, pp. 163-64

\(^{25}\) *A Certain Measure*, p. 224.
to war (World War I) leaving her pregnant. After a miscarriage, Milly proudly refused to bow to the code of "the fallen woman"; she even sought Virginius' aid in locating her lover, who lay wounded in a French hospital. In doing so, she openly identified her seducer and violated the ancient Southern ritual in which "the true woman in dishonor had preserved her guilty secret to her grave."26 Meanwhile, Virginius' daughter, Mary Victoria, who was a Red-Cross nurse in France, had located the young man at her father's request; but, unfortunately for Milly, Mary Victoria and Martin Welding married before returning home. The unhappiness compounded as the triangle grew tighter. Martin, emotionally unstable after the war, was unable to adjust to work, social life or marriage. Mary Victoria, who developed an almost shrewish nature, eventually drove Martin, temporarily, into the arms of Milly. Finally, however, the young man deserted everyone.

Milly was grieved, but she understood that Martin, too, was hurt and confused; she felt that perhaps he, like most women, was looking for loneliness which sadly was no "more satisfying than love" (348). On the other hand, Mary Victoria was another of Glasgow's Southern beauties who was really unable to keep a marriage together. When Martin fled,

26 They Stooped to Folly (Garden City, 1929), p. 111.
her only concern was that she had sacrificed so much of herself for him.

These young people, who were being hurt and saddened by love, were not alone in misery. In the upper storey of the Littlepage house, lived Aunt Agatha, the old-maid, whose illegitimate baby had been taken from her by the family when she had been "young" (back in the 1880's). Agatha was clearly a counterpart to the young, rebellious Milly. Adhering to the earlier code of female behavior, the pitiful old lady had lived quietly removed from the world for nearly forty years, for she "had been punished severely enough to make her go in fear of sin all the rest of her life" (221).

Downstairs was yet another unhappy woman—Mrs. Victoria Littlepage, wife of Virginius. She was the "sick-bed" mother and wife who came to be more important to Glasgow as the novel progressed.27 For Victoria, on her death bed, attempted to write a letter to her husband telling him what was wrong with the entire Southern code that had subjugated women and had created so many unhappy ladies. She did not complete the letter; and Virginius, who never read it, never

27 As in Virginia, Glasgow seemed to be unable to remain detached from the suffering of a lonely wife. She said, "Gradually, as the book progressed, I found myself concentrating upon her [Victoria], and to be trying, through her mind and heart, to explore the depths of the average woman of good will." A Certain Measure, p. 244.
understood. Victoria's old-maid friend, Louisa Goddard, understood; "her heart had [also] cracked and broken as quietly as the hearts of all perfect Southern ladies broke beneath the enamelled surface of beautiful behavior" (331). Louisa had silently loved Virginius for four decades, and after Victoria's death, Louisa vainly attempted to carry Victoria's message to the morally inferior husband.

Virginius never got the message, and his moral inertia bordered on outright sin, for he had secretly been with a divorcee, Mrs. Dalrymple, when his wife died. Mrs. Dalrymple, nevertheless, was absolved of blame by Glasgow, for she was merely another lonely woman whom men used but never remotely considered for a marriage partner. She was the third type of "fallen woman." Neither defiant like Milly nor isolated like Agatha, Mrs. Dalrymple was simply a passive sex object, doomed to a life of loneliness because every proper gentleman who came to her knew that she was "a woman who had first forgotten herself with somebody else" (295). The choice, then, for all women in the novel, was to live with or without male companionship; either way unhappiness reigned.

Personal unhappiness had long been a part of Glasgow's life, but the decade that followed 1930 brought mixed blessings to the writer. Her literary reputation generally
grew during these years, and she received various honors from admiring groups. She was awarded honorary degrees from universities; she was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1932) as well as the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1938); and she was honored with two collected editions of her works (1933, 1938). Yet, these triumphs seemed to do little to alleviate the sense of increasing sadness and isolation that she suffered. During this period she became openly hostile to adverse criticism of her works; moreover, she was inordinately jealous of the reputations of her fellow writers whose works, she felt, were often inferior to her own. She especially came to dislike the novels of Erskine Caldwell, Ernest Hemingway and even William Faulkner whom she often called "sophisticated barbarians."

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28 As a result of her influence, Glasgow was able to help in organizing a conference of Southern writers which met at the University of Virginia on October 23 and 24, 1931. See Emily Clark, "A Weekend at Mr. Jefferson's University," New York Herald Tribune Books, Nov. 8, 1931, pp. 1-2.

29 The universities from which she received honorary degrees were: University of North Carolina (1930), University of Richmond (1938), Duke University (1938), and College of William and Mary (1939).

30 The Old Dominion Edition of Glasgow's works was published by Doubleday, Doran and Company in 1933. A more elaborate The Virginia Edition was published by Harcourt, Brace and Company in 1938.

31 Ellen Glasgow to Irita Van Doren, Sept. 1933, also Ellen Glasgow to Stark Young, Feb. 14, 1933, in Letters, pp. 144, 133.
At the same time, her own restrained prose and polite Southern settings were rarely finding favor with more progressive critics. Clifton Fadiman, reviewing her novel The Sheltered Life (1932), said: "There is nothing here—not a character, not a scene, not situation, not a conflict—which retains freshness or vitality for us today." Many critics, however, took exception to Fadiman's condemnation of what was, perhaps, Glasgow's finest work. Fadiman's major contention was that Glasgow had avoided throughout this novel, as well as in all of her works, the real problems of the South—racism, illiteracy and poverty—in favor of a rather one-sided examination of defeated gentility. A decade later, Howard Mumford Jones, long a Glasgow devotee, defended her right "as a novelist...to limit her field." Both, of course, were right; and in The Sheltered Life, Glasgow again decided to limit her story to that which she


33 The novel was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1932, and when it did not receive the award, there was a mild outrage among Glasgow admirers. See Godbold, pp. 191-92. From this time, it was generally accepted that Glasgow had been overdue to get the award. See W. J. Stuckey, The Pulitzer Prize Novels (Norman, 1966), p. 244.

knew best—the disintegrating aristocracy of the South.

All of the Glasgow ingredients were in this novel. George Birdsong was the profligate husband of a long-suffering, beautiful wife, Eva. George, a pragmatic lawyer, had fallen in love with the Southern belle "because she was an ideal, and she...[had] determined to remain his ideal until the end." George loved Eva, but he kept a Negro mistress and was unable to be faithful to Eva although he often repented his moral iniquities. After his wife underwent a hysterectomy, it was clear that George considered her to be a burden which he would suffer for his sins. But when George was discovered attempting to seduce the infatuated teen-ager, Jenny Blair Archbald, Eva found one of his own hunting pistols and killed him.

Even though George and Eva provided the culminating action in the novel, the story was chiefly about the coming of age of Jenny Archbald. She had been afforded a sheltered life in the tradition of the old South; and, therefore, she was totally unable to realize the seriousness of her actions. Her models for feminine conduct had been her widowed mother, who was another Glasgow woman living without joy, and her two maiden aunts. Jenny had been pampered by everyone, especially her paternal grandfather, and she determined to have

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love and happiness early in life. The theme was obvious: Jenny was being reared as Eva had been reared—to be a Southern belle. But the modern world had no place for Southern belles, and everyone, even men, who created and lived by the code of the belle would be destroyed by it. In the end, little Jenny, who would have to adapt or perish, was left clutching her grandfather and crying, "I didn't mean anything in the world" (395).

Glasgow had used her own house at One West Main Street as the model for Jenny Blair's house in The Sheltered Life. And in the next years, the sheltered walls of this old house and garden provided the security and gloom of her isolation. She began her autobiography—that painful recollection—during the 1930's, as well as the two last novels which solidified the Glasgow saga.

In 1935, Vein of Iron was published. With this novel Glasgow left behind the ironic vision that had carried her through the three previous works. She again approached life from the bitter vantage of her Barren Ground. As so often before, the sustaining philosophy of the novel was that resolute fortitude was the only tenable cure for life's

maladies. Generally, the story traced the misfortunes of the Fincastles, a family paternally descended from staunch Presbyterian ancestry. Because of family disgrace, the Fincastles were unable to remain in their rural town of Ironside in the Piedmont area of Virginia; hence, they moved to Queenborough (Richmond) where they suffered through the era of the depression. This novel was Glasgow's final tribute to her Calvinist heritage; later she conceded that in it she had been testing Calvinism with "the disintegrating forces of the modern world" to see if it would withstand the strain.\textsuperscript{37} It is clear that it did. The family did remain together despite untoward events that constantly sought to dissolve their unity.

Although the Calvinist "vein of iron" did fortify the family's victory, it provided little warmth for the heroine, Ada Fincastle. Ada grew up in the novel, fell in love, bore an illegitimate child, and eventually accepted the duty of keeping the family together. Ada's chief spiritual model, as a child, had been her Calvinist grandmother who died with the dogmatic belief that "the Lord has never failed me."\textsuperscript{38} Glasgow inserted that "she [Grandmother Fincastle]}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] A Certain Measure, p. 168.
\item[38] Vein of Iron (New York, 1935), p. 168.
\end{footnotes}
had spoken only the truth" (168). As Ada matured, she came to realize that the strength that had sustained her grandmother's generation was what was missing from the modern world. She ultimately regarded the old values of "industry, veracity and self-denial" as wonderful (392). But it was obvious that these virtues exacted a heavy toll, for at thirty-eight, Ada had worked so hard she felt as if she were fifty (361).

Of course, Ada's personal dilemma centered around a man. Ralph McBride had been her young lover who later became her husband. Ralph was not totally a villainous knight, but he was weak despite himself, much as George Birdsong had been. Forced into an earlier marriage with Janet Rowan, the town belle, Ralph had bitterly sought Ada for solace. Leaving Ada pregnant, he went to war (a stock Glasgow situation); but he returned to find that his frivolous wife had divorced him, leaving him free to marry Ada, whose entire family had suffered shame because of the fatherless son. After the marriage, however, Ralph was plagued by concuspiscence, and, finally capitulating, he had a short-lived affair with a neighbor girl in Queenborough. With the depression of the 30's, Ralph lost his job, and Ada was forced to do menial work to support not only Ralph and her son, but also her somewhat addled father (a defrocked Presbyterian minister) who finally "wandered"
back to Ironside to die.

When Ralph and Ada returned to Ironside for the funeral, they determined to remain there and farm. The final hope was that the land would provide salvation if they could only become staunch enough to conquer it as their Calvinist forebears had done. Ralph, himself bitterly resolute, remarked: "I'm not sure...that predestination didn't conquer the land. It's a doctrine that has made history wherever it found itself" (460). But Ada realized that more than merely a doctrine, Calvinism was an approach to survival; it was her heritage and through it "she could recover that lost certainty of a continuing tradition" (461).

Even though Glasgow often denied her affinity with a religion "that divided man from the rest of creation," she had long admired the "Scottish strain of fortitude that has come down from the earliest pioneers in the Valley [Piedmont Valley, Virginia]." Moreover, it is obvious that in her works her only "victorious" people were those who had the indomitable Calvinist spirit of her own paternal forbears. And it seems most surprising that in her last novel, In This Our Life (1941), no character was sus-

39 Ellen Glasgow to Bessie Zaban Jones, Feb. 7, 1934, in Letters, p. 150.

40 Ellen Glasgow to Stark Young, (summer) 1935, in Ibid., p. 191.
tained by this iron strength; life, therefore, offered little but chaos to anyone.

Calvinism had one other subtle but powerfully pervasive hold on Glasgow's later beliefs. From the vantage of the mid-thirties, she sought to justify the suffering of the depression as a "divine retribution" for the moral laxity of the twenties. In Vein of Iron, the Fincastles were bewildered and shocked by the immorality of Queenborough's jazz-age society. When the depression came, Ralph (who had succumbed to an earlier temptation) angrily declared: "Well, we'll have to take our punishment,...and the chances are that we'll have to take it lying down. You can't expect common decency from a bad system" (367).

Indeed, Glasgow was growing more alienated from her own times as America entered World War II. After one last unrewarding trip to Europe in 1937, she left it, as she said, "forever."41 The rest of her life was spent in Richmond and Castine, Maine (where she had found a second home). But no matter where she was, she seemed to lament everything that was modern. She lamented "the fallen grandeur of the present..."42 while continuing to criticize the new trends

41 The Woman Within, p. 266.
42 Ellen Glasgow to Frank Morley, May 24, 1944, in Letters, p. 349.
of the Southern "futilitarians" (Faulkner and Caldwell) whose literature, she feared, had crawled so long in the mire that it might have lost its power to stand erect.  

Even the doctrine of evolution became somewhat negative for her. The changes of society seemed too drastic and too unrefined; she said: "Change is not necessarily progress; evolution does not imply evolving upward."  

Recoiling, then, from all the unpleasant aspects of modernity, she could no longer see herself, even remotely, as a contemporary rebel. Therefore, encouraged by sympathetic critics, she embraced the idea that she was misunderstood.


44 Ellen Glasgow, "What I Believe," The Nation, CXXXVI (April 12, 1933), 404.

45 Godbold argues that, in the 1930's, Glasgow did become aware of her paradoxical defense of tradition. He cites evidence from her speeches and magazine articles of the period to show that she was not as confused and "lost" as some critics have maintained. See Godbold, pp. 222-30. Nevertheless, it does not seem incongruous to maintain that Glasgow, despite the knowledge of her own dilemma, was unable to cope happily with the trends of modern society and literature. And when a critic suggests that she was "lost" or that she misunderstood her time, he, perhaps, means only that she was not completely adjusted to her era. At least that is what is implied by any such reference found in this thesis.

46 Some of the well-known critics who were in the "Glasgow camp" were: Howard Mumford Jones, Douglas S. Freeman, Stark Young, James Southall Wilson, Allan Tate, Stephen Vincent Benet, Henry Seidel Canby, Emily Clark, J. Donald Adams, Hamilton Basso, Van Wyck Brooks, and Carl Van Vechten.
gentility, and, as always, she was able to rationalize her place in American letters. As a younger woman she had felt that she had been philosophically and stylistically ahead of her time. In the 1930's, regarded by progressive critics as the voice of the past, Glasgow felt that her refinements were too ethereal for modern tastes. Always it was the world and not Ellen Glasgow that had been inconstant. In 1900, she had written: "My methods don't belong to this generation—though I mean to stick with them."*47 Four decades later, nearing the end of her career, she still protested, "I have been a novelist for forty years, and I have never been in the fashion of the moment."*48

Actually, although Glasgow felt that she was misunderstood genius and thereby not a popular novelist, the truth was that "almost from the beginning she had been known as a popular novelist."*49 It was, perhaps, her early popularity

*47 Ellen Glasgow to Walter Hines Page, May 12, 1900, in Letters, p. 32.
*48 Ellen Glasgow to Samuel S. Sloan, Jan. 21, 1938, in Ibid., p. 231.
*49 William W. Kelly, Ellen Glasgow: A Bibliography (Charlottesville, 1964), p. xv. Dr. Kelly's Ph.D. dissertation at Duke University (1957) entitled, Struggle for Recognition: A Study of the Literary Reputation of Ellen Glasgow, has been a primary source for other scholars who have cited the popular and critical progress of Glasgow's career. However, in the Bibliography, Kelly re-asserts much of the information that is found in his earlier work.
with the reading public that barred her from consideration as a major artist by many intellectually snobbish critics. The fact does remain, however, that while she was highly praised by a significant coterie of conservative reviewers whose opinions she often helped to mold, Glasgow did not receive the overwhelming critical adoration, which she felt was her due.

But 1942 brought her a partial recompense for her years of frustration. Her last novel, *In This Our Life*, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. She had written the novel, truly, in the pangs of death, for she had suffered two heart attacks in 1939-40 and was expected to die at any moment.

The novel seemed filled with all the pain that she had


51 Kelly, p. xx.

52 *The Woman Within*, pp. 282, 288. It is curious that Glasgow even considered her heart attacks as a part of her overall detachment from life. In an interview with Robert Van Gelder after her second attack, she said that life was now more valuable because she was "more detached from everyone and everything in life." She concluded: "I am quite free." See Robert Van Gelder, "An Interview with Miss Ellen Glasgow," *New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 18, 1942, pp. 2, 32.
ever known or written about. All of her stock characters reappeared in this work—even the moral man. The novel was written in a last attempt to dispel growing critical opinion that her characters had always been frustrated people who, despite gallant poses and courage, had done little "to redeem an age from futility." Glasgow clearly intended to reward fortitude with tangible victory in this novel, for she despaired when some critics claimed that her novels lacked action and that readers were forced to view life as though they had "peeped out at it from behind the curtains of a Richmond parlor." Glasgow complained, "...how brutally obvious one has to be in print to be comprehended."

The brutally obvious truth of this novel is that it offered no victory for anyone of its suffering characters. The Timberlakes were a family of sorrow. Asa Timberlake was the father who was totally dominated by his wife, Lavinia. Lavinia was the last and most malicious of Glasgow's "sick-bed" women; she completely controlled the family from her bed. At the same time, Asa, as an older man (about sixty), was no longer a sexual threat to women; there-


54 Malcolm Cowley, "Miss Glasgow's 'Purgatorio,'" The New Republic, CIV (March 31, 1941), 442.

fore, Glasgow could allow him a moral posture not given to younger males.56 Asa's two daughters, Roy and Stanley,57 were stark opposites. Roy was another Dorinda Oakley—doomed to suffer; Stanley was another belle—doomed to suffer. In the process of the novel, Roy lost her husband to Stanley, but the weak-willed husband, after getting a divorce and marrying Stanley, committed suicide. Stanley, who had always been pampered by her mother and her rich but licentious uncle, returned home. She then lured Roy's new boyfriend away leaving Roy in a state of emotional desolation that so many of Glasgow's women enjoyed. Finally, Stanley involved the family in a hit-and-run accident. She had been driving a car which struck a little child, but, true to her weak nature, she tried to shift the blame to the chauffeur, a Negro boy who aspired to study law but who was emotionally crushed by being unfairly arrested.58 Asa


57 Glasgow claimed that often in Virginia, girls were given family names that occasionally were masculine in nature. Furthermore, she said that once a character had "received" a name from her, she was unable to change the name without losing creative vision. See A Certain Measure, p. 258.

58 Perhaps in presenting the sub-plot of Parry, the Negro boy, Glasgow was bending at last to the criticism by some contemporary reviewers. Although she had often intimated
did not allow the family to override his decision to report the truth, however, and Stanley was forced to face a "reduced" punishment.

The great moment of renunciation of the old way of life came when Roy simply walked out on the family, and into the arms of a strange, young Englishman who was awaiting transport to Europe and the war (World War II). In this, her last novel, Glasgow was finally able to relate a bedroom scene. The importance of the moment was partially lost, however, for she capitulated to her own sense of breeding and described the scene in a most ambiguous manner. One critic, in relating the significance of the bedroom scene, noted that "nothing improper happens, this being a novel by Ellen Glasgow...."\(^{59}\)

More important was the fact that no one emerged happy or even slightly victorious (as Glasgow maintained). Asa had contemplated leaving his wife and going to live on a farm managed by a noble widow, Kate Oliver— but he did not do it. Stanley, facing punishment, was not really happy with her new boyfriend. The uncle died of cancer; Lavinia was

\(^{59}\) Cowley, p. 441.
dying; and Roy was still looking for "something [good] to hold by". Indeed, Glasgow, who admitted that "life had defeated them" (465), was strangely displeased with critics who offered the same answer.

She seemed unhappy that readers and critics could not see significant implications for a hopeful future in Asa's contemplated escape to the country and in Roy's desire to find "something good." Contrary to Glasgow's belief that the book closed with "stern accents of our unconquerable hope," many critics began to realize that her characters, caught in a modern world of chaos, were unresolvedly miserable. And one Richmond critic asked: "Has she [Glasgow] come to believe, despite its weaknesses (of which she has been the most consistent critic), the old way of life was better?"

As true as that critic's assessment had been, Glasgow could not let the matter rest. Therefore, she valiantly began a final time to assert her hope for the future generation--as she saw it. Actually while dying, she tortuously wrote the last chapter of her life-long saga. The book was

60 In This Our Life (New York, 1941), p. 466.
61 A Certain Measure, p. 257.
62 Beverly Britton, Richmond Times Dispatch, March 30, 1941.
designed to be a short sequel to *In This Our Life*; it was peopled with the same characters. Called *Beyond Defeat*, the novel intended to clear up the ambiguities that left critics uncertain. Glasgow died before she could revise the manuscript her usual three times. Therefore, the book lay dormant for twenty-one years until edited and published (in a limited edition) in 1966, by Luther Y. Gore.

Gore maintains that Glasgow labored to write this book in order to offer tangible assurance that her long suffering people (especially heroines) would be rewarded. He claims that "unsubtle readers" had not been able to detect the implied reward of courage that was often exhibited by Glasgow's heroines. Yet even astute critics had often failed to understand the reward that Glasgow offered in her novels; moreover, Glasgow herself seemed strangely uncomfortable with many of the desolate conclusions of her stories. Often heroines, left only with bitter fortitude, could somehow see a ray of light (or hope) breaking over the horizon. Exactly why this ray of light so often appeared to these saddened people was never explained, except by implication: things had been so bad they had to get better.

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64 Cabell, *Let Me Lie*, pp. 236-40
In writing this last explanation of her American dream, Glasgow was, in essence, doing with her entire literary career what she had done with so many of her individual novels. She was offering a last, unexplained ray of hope for people who seemed spiritually desolate. But, sadly, Beyond Defeat (or, as she subtitled it, An Epilogue to an Era) did as little to brighten the overall prospects for the future as had her feeble rays of light. True, Roy returned home with her illegitimate son (fathered by the unknown Englishman) to find moral support from Asa who had moved to Kate Oliver's farm. Lavinia died in the last chapter, entitled "Evening: Light in the Sky," and her death was certainly the focal point of the novel and Glasgow's message.

Lavinia had to die; she was the living embodiment of the burden of the South, but as malicious as Lavinia had been, Glasgow could not let her pass ignominiously. Asa regarded his wife's death not just as the end of an era, but also the end of "a bright, lost vision, a long adventure, and inaccessible hope" (133). And he and Roy were not allowed the freedom of relief, for they both felt as though they were to blame for Lavinia's death.

The Southern belle was dead. Glasgow had long sought euthanasia for the entire order of the belle. But even as the belle died, the world had little cause to celebrate, as
Glasgow saw it. While Lavinia's family stood by her pall, one remarked: "Until she passed away, I never knew what was in her nature...how much beauty--how much fortitude. I feel that she was the last of--of a noble tradition" (131). Yet, her death left only uncertainty for those behind. Asa, who "was born with a sense of failure...of incompleteness" (125), told his daughter and his bastard grandson 65 that the "unknown [future] is the heart of life" (134).

Saddled with grief, neither Roy nor Asa were convincingly hopeful. What the novel really said was that a better world had died with the death of the Southern lady; the new world, therefore, would have to continue as best it could. With Lavinia laid to rest among her sisters in grief, Glasgow concluded her literary and personal drama. Cabell had called her entire body of work, "The Tragedy of Everywoman, As It Was Lately Enacted in the Commonwealth of Virginia." 66 The real tragedy, however, was that Miss Glasgow's work reflected her personal sadness. She came at last to misunderstand her own time; she was always in rebellion against the

65 Perhaps one should note that in The Descendant (1897), Michael Akershem was a Virginia bastard who had embodied the hopes of the progressive Glasgow. In Beyond Defeat, Glasgow clearly emphasized that the future of the world lay in the hands of a classless generation symbolized by Roy's illegitimate baby.

present, looking first to the future then longingly to the past for solutions to life's problems.

Her place in American letters was somewhat ignored for nearly two decades after her death. Finally, within the last few years, there has been a resurgence of interest in her work and life. Probably the simplest assessment of her place in American literature, however, was offered a few years ago by Allen W. Becker, who sees her as a transitional figure in the literary history of the South. She helped to lead the South from the oratorical tradition of romance into the twentieth-century tradition of Realism. Unfortunately for Glasgow, she had led a literary rebellion that eventually swept by her; finally leaving the First Lady of Virginia Letters to grieve the passing of the world she had known as a girl. She died on November 21, 1945, in her home on Main Street where she was laid in state.

"Henry Anderson was not invited [to her funeral], but he came anyway and stood at the doorway, tall and proud, half defiant and half crushed." Inside the old house, was the body of


68 A Richmond newspaper eulogized Glasgow as "the greatest woman Virginia has produced." See Richmond Times Dispatch, Nov. 22, 1945, p. 8.

69 Godbold, p. 300.
the Virginia lady who had become, as Alfred Kazin tenderly eulogized, "The Lost Rebel." 70

VI
CONCLUSION

Born in the capital of the Confederacy in 1873, Ellen Glasgow had seemingly made a break with many of the traditions of her Southern heritage by the time she began writing novels in 1893. Although never published, her first work had been entitled *Sharp Realities*, for she claimed that the South was unable to face the realities of modernism. Influenced heavily by the writings of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, the rebellious girl had early rejected Calvinism, her father's religion, and she felt that much of the Southern "old-school" code of behavior had lost meaning in life as well as in literature. Writing in a realistic manner, she determined that Southern literature needed "blood and irony"\(^1\) to rescue it from the shallow romanticism that was so popular during her young life.

Yet as she grew older, the sharp realities of her own unhappy life came to pain and grieve her perhaps more than she could tolerate. She became particularly obsessed with the plight of the Southern lady in the industrial world of

\(^1\) *A Certain Measure*, p. 52.
the twentieth century. And as the times grew more progressive, Glasgow came to see the constricting death of many of the older Southern institutions and beliefs that had thrived in Victorian America.

As a result, the writer began a long retreat into the past, searching for the lost values of the old South. She became most concerned with manifesting these values in the characters of her Southern heroines whose superiority (to what Glasgow believed was an opprobrious modern world) often left them forsaken and alone. Her study of these women was predicated on her own experiences with men and, therefore, on what she believed to be true of herself. She felt that she was, in matters of breeding and culture, a product of a better age, and as so many of her heroines had been unhappy, so was Ellen Glasgow. She felt that her philosophy and writing were misunderstood by an inferior public. Therefore, she and her heroines often remonstrated with a certain pessimistic resignation regarding the unfairness of life toward genteel women.

Finally, in her writings, she came to advocate that one should cling to fortitude and endurance as expedients against the uncertainties of fortune. And while she never came to embrace Calvinism per se, many of the doctrines of this austere religion were used by her as an ultimate defense
against the slings and arrows of outrageous life. The combina-
nation of the Calvinist ethic and the code of gentility, 
which she attributed to many of her suffering heroines, mirr-
ored her own "conflict of types" that had ever been pre-
sent in Ellen's soul. Almost typifying the noblesse oblige 
of an earlier South, she reigned as the literary aristo-
crat of Richmond in her later life. She came to revere 
the tenets of the past, for truly her Southern heritage 
had called too strongly for her to deny; and she came to 
her end still attempting, in her fiction and her personal 
life, to resolve the dilemma that the modern world had thrust 
onto her.
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