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"Fellow-craftsmen" : a study of the personal and professional relationship between Mary Johnston and Ellen Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

"Fellow-Craftsmen"

A Study of the Personal and Professional Relationship

between Mary Johnston and Ellen Glasgow

By Catherine Costantino

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Richmond in Candidacy

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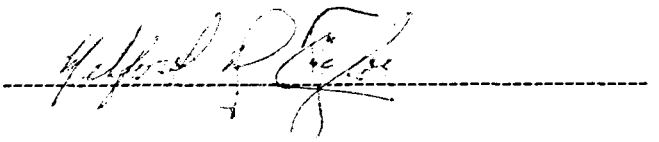
Biographers and critics tend to vary widely on the attention given to the personal, intellectual, and literary significance of the friendship between Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston. In this thesis, the author argues that the two women, obviously drawn together because of personal and professional similarities, shared intellectual interests, a passion for writing, and certainly nurtured each other's creativity. By providing extensive evidence from Mary Johnston's unpublished diaries, notebooks, and journals, as well evidence from the abundance of published and unpublished correspondence between the two women, this thesis refutes past critical assessments and establishes that the relationship between Glasgow and Johnston was indeed intellectual and significant rather than superficially social. This thesis makes the argument that Mary Johnston's own life and ideas, as well as the life engendered in her fiction, affected the life and literary career of Ellen Glagow, much as Glasgow's real and fictional lives influenced Johnston's.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.



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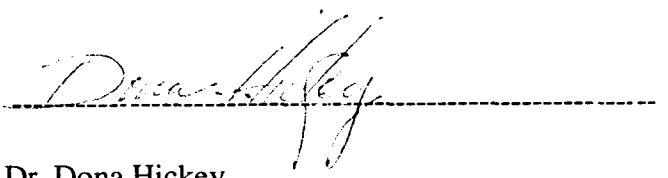

Dr. Dona Hickey

"FELLOW-CRAFTSMEN"

A STUDY OF THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARY JOHNSTON AND ELLEN GLASGOW

By

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B.A., Washington and Lee University, 1996

A Thesis

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Biographers and critics tend to vary widely on the attention given to the personal, intellectual, and literary significance of the friendship between Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston. Marcelle Thiebaux's book on Glasgow cites Mary Johnston only once in an extensive list of the writer's literary friends, while C. Ronald Cella's volume on Mary Johnston offers a mere sentence or two on the description of a social relationship based almost entirely on Richmond gossip, tea in the parlor, and occasional "genial discussions of ideas and books" (23). However, the feminist scholar Anne Goodwyn Jones, author of *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South*, and Mary P. Edwards, author of the brief essay "Tea and Metaphysics: Exerpts from Mary Johnston's Diary" in the *Ellen Glasgow Newsletter*, come closer to understanding the impact and influence the two writers had upon one another. Anne Goodwyn Jones asserts that their "shared intellectual excitement" and their "common bond of serious writing" engendered "a profound sense of closeness" between them (224). Mary Edwards, interested in this "intellectual excitement," merely suggested but undocumented by Jones, provides some evidence of intellectual discourse between the two authors with excerpts from Johnston's unpublished diaries held in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia. With concrete evidence from the diaries of something more substantial than "genial discussions of ideas and books," Edwards attempts to substantiate Jones's view that the relationship between the two women was indeed intellectual rather than superficially social.

This paper, heavily indebted to the insight, research and scholarship of Cella, Jones and Edwards, proposes to substantiate further the significance and intensity of the connection between the "fellow craftsmen" by providing more extensive evidence from the Johnston diaries, notebooks and journals,[1] as well as from the abundance of published and unpublished correspondence between the two women. I shall argue that the two women, obviously drawn together because of personal and professional similarities, shared intellectual interests, a common passion for writing, and certainly nurtured each other's creativity and significantly influenced each other's work. "The common bond of serious writing" referred to by Anne Goodwyn Jones, as well as the "shared intellectual excitement" (224) she describes, permeate the letters and journals of both authors; the commonality greatly overshadows the obvious differences in the authors' artistry.

Further, I shall argue that Mary Johnston's own life, as well as the life engendered in her fiction, significantly affected the life and literary career of Ellen Glasgow, much as Glasgow's real and fictional lives influenced Johnston's. At the same time, I will suggest that the presumed "profound closeness" cannot be ascertained absolutely by the available correspondence. Certainly, the letters suggest a strong intellectual connection and an affinity founded on commonality. This connection extended far beyond the reaches of the Richmond social circle. As it emerges in their letters and in Johnston's diaries, the

[1] The diaries of Mary Johnston, held in the Johnston Collection of the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia (Accession 3588), span the years 1906-1916. The diaries are divided into three distinct series and labeled Series A, Series B and Series C. Series A is made up of three "A Line A Day," five year volumes. Although written in ink, the entries are cursory and difficult to read; the penmanship is extremely faded. Series B, called *Her Book, and Her's Alone*, is a revised and greatly amplified memoir based on the daily entries of Series A. Series B is also inscribed in ink in three ledger- sized volumes. Series C is a typescript copy prepared by Elizabeth Johnston for the use of Mary Johnston's biographer. The typescripts were prepared from Series B through Aug. 31, 1909 and from Series A for 1910-1912. The majority of the

connection suggests an enormous amount about the carefully guarded and emotionally deprived nature of Ellen Glasgow, as well as the fact that her emotional needs were never fulfilled absolutely in her friendships with women.

I. Mary Johnston

In 1936, the year of Johnston's death, Edward Wagenknecht said that "twenty five years ago her romances of colonial Virginia were selling by the hundreds of thousands. Today she is neglected" (Jones 183). In 1998, if she is remembered at all, Mary Johnston is remembered for the tale of colonial Virginia, *To Have and To Hold*, or, more likely, for the two feature films made from the novel. Yet, in its day, Mary Johnston's novel received unprecedented, favorable reception. The unexpected success of the Virginia romancer's second novel elicited numerous reviews from contemporary periodicals and national newspapers. The *New York Times* called *To Have and To Hold* "original in plot, thrilling in its situations, strong and sweet in its character drawings, vital with its noble emotion, perfect in style" (Gemme 8). At the same time, *The Independent* asserted that Johnston "does not weary us with analysis of character; her people arrive with something to do, and forewith do it, with something to say and immediately say it. She is a master of incident . . ." (Gemme 8). *To Have and To Hold* astounded the market with sales of 60,000 copies in advance and some 135,000 in its first week of publication in March of 1900. The rewards for Johnston were both "tangible and intangible" (Cella 21). Royalties from *To Have and to Hold* earned her over $70,000, $50,000 of it within the

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quotations in this paper will be taken from Series C, but each quotation will cite the appropriate series, volume, and page number when applicable.

first year. Her publishers, confident of her talent and her appeal to readers, gave her advances of $10,000 or more for forthcoming works (Cella 22).

By the standards of the day, she was an extraordinarily wealthy woman. Her success brought her to Richmond, and undoubtedly brought her and her wildly popular novels to the attention of her contemporary, Ellen Glasgow. Mary's tremendous success brought financial security to the Johnston family. By 1905, the novelist was able both to maintain a comfortable home for herself and her family in Richmond, and to begin building an enormous estate known a "Three Hills" in the mountains of Bath County, just outside what is now Warm Springs, Virginia.

Although Johnston is all but forgotten by contemporary critics, her background deserves some attention here primarily because of its relevance to the connection soon to be developed between herself and Glasgow. The biographical and autobiographical material available on Mary Johnston, albeit sparse, reveals some interesting similarities and differences between Johnston and what we know of her highly acclaimed contemporary. This is especially obvious in the circumstances under which each woman began her literary career and the intellectual commonalities that later drew them together.

Mary Johnston, daughter of John William and Elizabeth Dixon Alexander Johnston, was born in Buchanan, Virginia in 1870, three years before Ellen Glasgow was born in Richmond. Her father, a cousin of Confederate General Robert E. Johnston, studied law in Lexington, Virginia, but interrupted his career at the age of twenty-two to enlist as second lieutenant in the infantry, CSA. During the war, he fought at Fort Manassas and at Vicksburg, was wounded three times, and eventually rose to the rank of

major of artillery. After the war, he resumed a law practice at home in Buchanan, Virginia, married his Scots-Irish wife, and then served in the Virginia legislature. Active in the economic reconstruction of the South, Mr. Johnston became president of the James River-Kanawha Canal Company as well as president of the Georgia Pacific Railroad Company. At the time of Mary's birth, John and Elizabeth Johnston lived in Buchanan, Virginia. Mary, the eldest of the six children, was an extremely frail and sickly child constantly wrestling with various illnesses, particularly the frequent and debilitating headaches caused by an eye problem left undiagnosed until adulthood. Unable physically to sustain formal schooling, Mary received her education at home from a governess and, like Glasgow, read voraciously from her father's extensive and impressive library.

Mary Johnston was, as she declares in her autobiographical diaries, a "dreamy, self-centered child and girl," but, in actuality, her childhood was tragically brief (Quoted in Nelson 73). In 1887, her mother's death in childbirth forced Mary prematurely into the role of the domestic head of the household. C. Ronald Cella asserts that "Mrs. Johnston's death profoundly affected both her husband and her daughter, particularly in establishing a special relationship which developed out of shared grief" (16). At sixteen, Mary willingly assumed responsibility for her five younger brothers and sisters and graciously fulfilled the role of companion to her father. She accompanied him on many travels to New York and abroad required by his work, and their years together fostered feelings of loyalty, respect, and love that strongly influenced Mary's personal and professional life. Her recollected love and admiration for her father differs greatly from the relationship between Ellen Glasgow and her father who, as she asserts in *The Woman*

Within, "gave his wife and his children everything but the one thing they needed most . . . love" (15). Perhaps it was because of this security and affection, an affection foreign to Glasgow, that Johnston was able to mature without nagging bitterness regarding her health and the tragedies she suffered and endured as a child and young adult. Throughout her career, Johnston's familial responsibility and assumed maternal duty took precedence over work; throughout her life, she continued to live with and provide for her sisters, Eloise and Elizabeth, and her invalid brother Walter.

Lawrence G. Nelson, one of Johnston's very few critics, asserts that her hard experience in practical management did not change her essential nature; "despite the tragedies endured, and her own physical frailty, fact and dream were both alive and real in her" (73). Although Mary Johnston read an enormous amount of history from books borrowed from her father's library, poetry and romance were always her passion. She adored storytelling and, like Glasgow, revealed her talent for composition at an early age. In his essay "Johnston and the Historic Imagination," Nelson tells a story from the Johnston diary of the young seven-year-old Mary riding past a wood, gazing into it "dreamily" when the magical words *therein my love lieth* suddenly sprang in her mind. She emerged as a hopeless romantic early in her career.

In a similar fashion, Glasgow describes her own artistic beginnings. Lying beneath an old elm and looking up towards the clouds, the young Glasgow sang to herself, "I would that I like the clouds could drift . . . quietly, happily onward" (*The Woman Within* 36, hereinafter *Woman*). Overjoyed with her own song, she exclaimed aloud, "But that's po'try!" Ellen's joy in her newly discovered artistic talent persisted

until she heard her sister reading her verse aloud in jest to a parlor full of Richmonders. Ellen's "skin felt naked and scorched, as if a flame had blown over it," and her art became her secret (*Woman* 37). Glasgow's autobiography expresses her anguish, bitter humiliation, and her persistent questioning of her art; she asks, "Was that the beginning of my secrecy, I have sometimes wondered. Was the sensitiveness I have always felt about my work rooted in the sharp mortification of that awakening?" (*Woman* 37) For Johnston, always unashamed of her art, the writing of romance became both a therapeutic relief from nagging illness and a pleasurable escape.

When the Johnstons moved from Birmingham to New York in 1897, Mary became very ill; confined to her bed, she read, studied, and fostered her creative talent while conducting the household affairs from her sickbed. She developed her creative talent and formulated what was to be the ideological impulse behind all of her writing. In *Her Book, and Her's Alone*,[2] the revealing unpublished autobiographical work somewhat similar in structure and style to Glasgow's *The Woman Within*, on one of several undated pages of Volume II, entitled "Memory," Johnston writes:

> In the enormous land of Letters the great region called Idealism was by nature my region. And I was born in the enchanted forest called Romance. It was native for me to begin, to continue, to write Romance. Nowadays it is spiritual I begin, as inexpertly as ever, to try to give body to, but when I began it was the straight forward romance, the romance that

[2] On the entry dated March 6, 1908 in *Her Book and Her's Alone*, Johnston expresses that "this is not a journal. It is but a place to put odds and ends of record, memory, reading and what not. I have often begun a diary and then time failed and the record lapsed. I'll not call it so pretentious a name, and so it may have better luck." As expressed earlier, *Her Book* is considered "Series B," and can best be described as a three volume, revised and amplified diary, or perhaps a memoir. Although it is inscribed in ink, it is extremely difficult to read.

> isn't ending either, of adventure, of tragic or lyric circumstance, of the love of man and woman.

Mary Johnston, "born into the enchanted forest called Romance," seemed to have a tendency, or a natural propensity, to avoid the tragic reality of the universe around her. Her imagination, filled with romance, Faerie-land and fantasy, starkly contrasted with the bitter, tragic, painfully realistic universe inhabited by Miss Glasgow.

II. Ellen Glasgow

Born in 1873 the eighth of ten children, Ellen Glasgow "came into her family at a time of financial stability but emotional stress" (*Woman* ix). Her father's strict Scotch Presbyterianism and her mother's precarious health created an uncomfortable, "inhospitable atmosphere for any sensitive child growing into young womanhood" (*Within* ix). Like Mary Johnston, the frail and sickly Ellen Glasgow lost her mother when she was only twenty, and it was at this time that her own encroaching deafness threatened to isolate her within her family and from the world at large. Glasgow's early life was marred by tragedy upon tragedy, well documented in *The Woman Within.* Walter McCormick, her brother-in-law, killed himself when he was twenty-six; Ellen's brother Frank killed himself when he was thirty-nine; her beloved sister Cary, Walter's widow, suffered tremendously and eventually died of cancer in 1911. Perhaps these tragedies, though they occurred later in her life, enabled Ellen to perceive her childhood solely through a lens tainted by sadness. In contrast to Johnston's recollected magical, romantic idealism, Glasgow recalls in *The Woman Within:*

> Youth is the season of tragedy and despair. Youth is the time when one's whole life is entangled in a web of identity, in a perpetual maze of seeking and of

finding, of passion and of disillusion, of vague longings and nameless griefs, of pity that is a blade in the heart and of "all the little emptiness of love. (283)

Glasgow's autobiography demonstrates, as do the majority of her novels, the author's recollective return to the perpetual disappointments of childhood, to the sickness suffered by herself and others, and to the grief endured. Throughout her autobiography, Ellen Glasgow suggests that the "intolerable years" gave her, "when they passed, a deeper sense of creation. A more penetrating insight into experience, a truer knowledge of what the heart can endure without breaking" (241). Unlike Mary Johnston's autobiographical journal, Ellen Glasgow's autobiography defines self, more or less, and certainly strength, by the almost unbearable suffering she endured. She believed, and indirectly expressed, that a miserable childhood and a miserable life served as the foundation for true creative genius. Ellen Glasgow defined herself as a victim of fate, of circumstance, and of universal cruelty acting upon her to a greater degree than anyone else. Certainly Glasgow did not choose her lot in life; but, having been dealt this hand, she admirably made the most of her misery without rising above it. From these life experiences, defined by sadness and loss, Ellen created her fictional, bitterly tragic world that reemerged in novels like *The Sheltered Life*. Hardened by personal tragedy, Glasgow's fiction so developed with a bitter edge of realism. In contrast, the dreamy, self-centered Mary Johnston engulfed herself in and protected herself by a fictional world of fantasy and romance. In life she reached out to comfort and nurture those in need, so as to comfort herself. Clearly Ellen Glasgow found something comforting in Mary's strength, her imaginative vision, and her naturally nurturing demeanor that inevitably would draw her to the woman so unlike herself in many ways.

It is interesting to note that it was precisely this generous, nurturing instinct that first brought Mary Johnston into Ellen Glasgow's Richmond circle. From the evidence in the surviving records housed in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia and the research done there by the Glasgow scholar J.R. Raper, it appears that Cary Glasgow McCormack, Ellen's beloved sister, became an ardent friend of Mary Johnston before Ellen Glasgow ever got a chance to know her. Cary's friendship with the novelist most likely was instigated by Mary's Richmond cousin, Coralie Johnston. Mary Edwards writes that "both Ellen and her sister became an integral part of a special circle which also included Rebe Glasgow, Carrie Coleman, Berta Wellford, and Mary's cousin Coralie" (2). Edwards accurately notes that Johnston's diaries indicate the social nature of the developing friendship circle, "the ever present cup of tea, the trips to the theater, excursions to the tobacco factory or to Hollywood Cemetery, small talk of clothes and vacations" (2). But Mary's connection with the Glasgow sisters seemed from its onset to strike a different, somehow deeper, chord. Some of the earliest evidence of the overwhelmingly affectionate friendship between Johnston and the Glasgow sisters can be found in the correspondence between Mary and Ellen's ailing sister Cary. Mrs. McCormack's letters to Mary Johnston reveal that Mary was deeply concerned about her friend's poor health, and that Mary "seemed to evoke a particularly strong maternal feeling from her friends . . ." (Jones 222). In a letter dated March 22, 1907, Cary writes to Mary:

> Oh my dear and beloved Mary, there is never a memory of you that is not dear and honourable—dear to me and honourable to you . . . I have always seen, felt and clung to the big, broad woman you are—and you have helped me. I have

> missed you sorely—and I yearn for you . . . I have been and I fear that I am ailing—as soon as a nurse can be gotten I believe they intend putting me to bed for rest and care—You will read between the lines all my poor heart wants to say and my feeble brain may not . . . I put my hungering spirit arms around you . . . shall think clearer soon. (Quoted in Raper 222)

It is not a huge surprise, after reading a depressing, pathetic, and frightening letter such as this, that Ellen Glasgow yearned for intellectual stimulation as a diversion from the oppressive sickness that must have been invading the Glasgow home during Cary's illness. Not surprisingly Mary Johnston could, and in the near future would, offer Ellen the intellectual stimulation she longed for, but hopelessly lacked, in the mundane and in many ways superficial world of tea, gossip, hats and dresses. But at the onset of their relationship, it appears that Ellen herself longed for the comfort and support so graciously provided by Mary Johnston to her ailing sister.

III. Correspondence

At some point in 1904, presumably during the summer months, Glasgow and Johnston began to correspond with some frequency. Throughout this regular correspondence, which extends through the late fall of 1906, Glasgow writes to Johnston with passion and persistence. The letters served as an emotional outlet for Glasgow who, striving for realism in her fiction, seemed to put little of herself and her personal emotion into her novels. The letters form, in a way, a journal of that emotion. There are twenty-one letters written to Mary Johnston by Ellen Glasgow in the Mary Johnston Collection at the Alderman Library. Unfortunateiy there are no surviving letters written by Johnston during this period, but Glasgow's many references to Johnston's letters serve as evidence

that the correspondence was not one-sided. Apparently the first letter in the Johnston-Glasgow correspondence was one from Ellen, written in the summer of 1904 when Mary was evidently ill:

> My dear, dear Mary:
> Though I haven't bothered you with letters there hasn't been a day when I haven't thought of you with tenderness and affection. We have seen so little of each other and yet I know you so well and the place you have in my heart is a very deep and real one. Since I have heard that you are beginning to grow stronger and better it has lifted a positive weight of anxiety from my mind. Do keep it up, my friend, there is so much in the power of will . . . Cary writes that you have been "goodness in itself" to her . . . (Quoted in *Letters* 44)[3]

Again, on February 3, 1905, Glasgow writes to Johnston:

> You have been so much in my thoughts, dear Mary, since you went away, and there seems to be a big slice taken out of our surroundings . . . I shall never forget the last talk I had with you before you went. You looked so much like a little child and there are moments when one seems almost to see the soul of one's friend shining through the delicate flesh. The people I love best, I love for their spiritual quality, for it shows me God, somehow, and I hunger for him even when I am least positive of his being underneath us all. (*Letters* 45, 46)

Although Glasgow had not known Johnston for very long, she clearly felt drawn to her for the same reasons her sister did—this "spiritual quality". In the same letter written on February 3, 1805, Ellen claimed, "When I first came to know you, I thought I could never

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This letter, and others that follow, is quoted in *The Letters of Ellen Glasgow,* Ed. Blair Rouse, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958. From this point forward, it will appear parenthetically as *Letters*, followed by the appropriate page number.

come quite close to you—that your reserve would be too great, and I am very thankful that I have found at last that there was a way through it" (*Letters* 45, 46). In Mary's presence, Glasgow saw something of herself: the reserve, the caution, the suffering. Yet, at the same time, Glasgow saw in Mary a certain strength and the capacity to endure that she desperately wanted to claim.

In somewhat darker spirits, perhaps due to Cary's failing health, Glasgow writes to Johnston again on August 15, 1906:

> My dear Mary:
>
> . . . . It's strange, Mary, isn't it, that I who have comparable health and strength to work and play and wander about the earth and make friends and enemies if I choose (who can hold to a hardly bought philosophy even in tragic moments)—that I who have all these things should possess so little of a happy instinct for life that today at thirty-two, I could lie down quietly and give it up . . . . but forgive me, dear, forgive me—I didn't mean to say such things to you and I am ashamed. (*Letters* 53)

Here Glasgow's fragility is revealed; she seems for a moment to let down her carefully constructed guard. In September 1906, Glasgow asks Johnston, "May you lend me a little of your courage . . . dear, when my strength gives out again. . ." (*Letters* 56). In these letters, a reader can sense Glasgow's honesty, a genuine outpouring of fear, anxiety, and suffering. The letters serve a purpose for Glasgow as a means of casting off the powerful emotion held within herself onto a receptive, caring, but still distanced listener.

Glasgow wrote to Johnston several months later in September of 1906, "We suffered in different ways—each of us saw at the end of her road the mouth of hell—and

each of us turned and struggled back to life—you along your steep path and I along mine. It is something to be thankful for that now at last our roads may run a little into one" (*Letters* 56). The letters represented here indicate Glasgow's recognition of a fellow-sufferer, as well as a recognition that Johnston's warm, nurturing personality complemented her own needful one. Glasgow recognized the similarities between Johnston and herself as well as the differences. In a letter dated as early as February 3,1905, Glasgow wrote:

> You are so different from me in many ways and particularly in as much as you keep your impulses so firmly in hand while mine carry me breathlessly away. And you have such courage, and suffering, which makes me impatient and ready to rend the universe, has given you strong and peaceful composure. Well, well, do you remember the Buddhist proverb—"There are many paths down into the valley, but when we come out upon the mountains we all see the self-same sun." The broad roads are not quite together, but a little of the same spirit is lighting each of us on our ways and it is this that draws us, I hope, together, and will keep us to the end. (*Letters* 46)

Glasgow clearly longed for Mary Johnston's strength and "peaceful composure" in the face of suffering and hardship.

Ellen Glasgow's initial connection to Mary Johnston seems to be the mutual concern for Cary; but the connection between the two authors persisted and strengthened with Glasgow's realization that Johnston could also provide comfort and support in difficult times, as well as much needed intellectual stimulation. Once inside Glasgow's circle, the "genial conversations of books and ideas," as their discourse is inappropriately

named and thoughtlessly dismissed by casual critics, obviously transformed into something significantly more substantial.

IV. Johnston's Critical Misrepresentation

Mary Johnston was not simply an idealistic romantic and a nurturing mother-figure, although she clearly played those roles from time to time. Johnston, like Glasgow herself, was an aggressive artist with a passion for writing and, at the time, a literary force that Glasgow did take seriously. Johnston knew well the type of novel she wanted to write and assertively proceeded. In *Her Book and Her's Alone* Mary Johnston stated that she "cared deeply for poetry" and she that "cared for history," and so fostered and utilized her so-called "historic-imagination." She explains that she "was born with the historic sense, the historic imagination. The sense of waves, of currents of direction; the sense of process" (Quoted in Nelson 74). From many childhood influences, Johnston acquired knowledge of the nature as well as a knowledge of the consequences of war; she felt a sense of loyalty to the region and to the cause for which her father had so valiantly fought. Johnston's interest did not lend itself towards the stagnant glorification of a time lost and never to be regained, but she did put a tremendous amount of emphasis on the importance and significance of one's ancestry. In her diaries she later wrote, "all times are to me my own time, I have the sense of continuity . . . ancestral life is nothing more or less than the love of the whole" (Quoted in Nelson 74). However, Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston, growing up under similar circumstances, developed very different ideologies regarding the environment and the traditions surrounding them, as well as the

ways in which they wished for this particular environment to be portrayed in their fictions.

Although she was a busy woman with many responsibilities to her family, Mary Johnston's success with her early novels allowed her freedom "to follow the writing schedule she preferred over the years . . . rising early and writing until the others were awake" (Cella 23). Mary Johnston certainly found ample time to write; she sent story upon story to various New York publishers. If a story was rejected once, it was destroyed immediately (Taylor 67). In the course of her thirty-six year writing career, Mary Johnston published several plays, twenty-odd short stories, and twenty-three romance novels including *Audrey* (1902), *Croatan* (1923), *The Slave Ship* (1924), *The Great Valley* (1926), and *The Hunting Shirt* (1931). *Hagar* (1913), a novel which I shall return to in this discussion, "came in the middle of a long, prolific, and varied career" (Jones 184). It proved to be Johnston's only true "feminist novel" and the one that comes closest to revealing "the truth of the inner life of its author" (Jones 184). The later novels, for example *The Silver Cross* (1922), tended towards a strange, unique mysticism. The experimental quality of these works, the way in which the characters are seen "through a kind of opaque mist," proved significantly less popular than her earlier novels of colonial Virginia (Jones 185). This trend toward mysticism and the psychic dimension unfortunately were not well received; her once tremendous popularity faded. What remains significant about the Johnston canon is its breadth as well as its diversity. It illustrates the work of a multi-faceted writer and intellectual thinker with an evolving consciousness and vision of the world around her.

After the publication of *To Have and To Hold*, while the author was in her literary prime, the Civil War novels, *Cease Firing, The Long Roll, Drury Randall*, and *Miss Delicia Allen,* afforded her the most favorable, as well as unfavorable, critical attention. The series was certainly well read, envied by some, and cherished by the author of *Gone With the Wind.* After reading *The Long Roll*, Margaret Mitchell claimed she "couldn't possibly write anything" on her own book. She continued, "I felt so childish and presumptuous for even trying to write about that period when she had done it so beautifully, so powerfully—better than anyone can ever do it, no matter how hard they try" (Jones 184). Margaret Mitchell's praise of *The Long Roll,* as well as similar commentary on Mary Johnston's other romance novels of the South, can be seen as part of the reason that critics and biographers today unfairly associate Johnston exclusively with other antebellum and Reconstruction writers and antiquated romancers. Because of this association, she tends to be dismissed rather than considered a significant literary figure. Mitchell's praise, although enthusiastic and genuine, places Johnston within a post-Reconstruction, patriotic tradition of Southern writers that sought to defend the South, "to shore up its pride at home, and to justify itself before the world" (Cash 3). But, Glasgow also wrote about the South during the Civil War, although, unlike Johnston, she is not associated with this patriotic, self-justifying tradition.

It is interesting to note, as Johnston does in her own diaries, that on February 14, 1906, Ellen Glasgow gave Mary an autographed copy of *The Battle-Ground*, her only Civil War novel, published in 1902. It is very likely that Johnston then was prompted by Glasgow's gift to begin her extensive research for her own novels on the war.

Nevertheless, because of these novels, Johnston is grouped frequently with southern writers who wrote works that represent "supreme glorification of the old regime," a tradition about which Ellen Glasgow had an enormous amount to say (*Reasonable Doubts* 72). For example, in C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South*, Mary Johnston is labeled a "Southern romancer" who "came of an old family . . . which had been prosperous in antebellum days" (431). Woodward dismisses all these Southern romancers for their over-abundant patriotism and supposed uniformity; he argues that "if the Southern aristocracy lacked literary defenders in the days of its dominance; it had no dearth of them in the days of adversity, when the culture was in ashes. For almost in one voice the romancers spoke in vindication of the society, ideals, and values of the ancient regime" (432).

Johnston herself did not speak in one voice, much less the voice of her male contemporaries. In Woodward's literary history, the diversity of Johnston's work clearly is disregarded; Johnston remains undistinguished from the tradition of Page, Harris, and Cable. On the other hand, Lawrence Nelson indeed did recognize the diversity of the Johnston canon. He attempted to give the diverse collection uniform shape by suggesting that her work, as a whole, could be characterized thematically by her effort to reconcile the "poetic" with the "historic imagination." The Civil War novels constitute, for Nelson, an "authentic embodiment of the Southern Myth" of the "gallant, absurd, proud, foolish, bookish, chivalric, ignorant, sentimental, nostalgic, pastoral, artless Doric Dixieland, with its love of rhetoric, its devotion to family, and its obsessive addiction to tradition, sentiment, piety, and violence" (76; 101; 89-90). But even this undirected, hodge-podge

of literary terms unfairly, perhaps simplistically, casts Mary Johnston off as a representative of the moribund glorification of, or at least the obsession with, the old regime. If this is the tradition the obviously multi-faceted novelist supposedly embodied, it is not surprising that critics and biographers tend to de-emphasize the significance of her role, literary and personal, in Ellen Glasgow's life and career.

Ellen Glasgow publicly, and vehemently, separated herself from this tradition and spoke out strongly against it. She asserts in *A Certain Measure:*

> I had resolved to write of the South not sentimentally, as conquered province, but truthfully, as part of a larger world. I had resolved to portray not Southern 'types' alone, but human beings, and to touch, or at least feel for, the universal chords beneath regional variations of character. Because I distrusted, with reason, the entire Southern scene in fiction, and, especially in the prevailing nostalgic note in which it was commemorated, I had tried, in youth, the long distant view and the unknown approach to my subject. (152-153)

But, as asserted earlier, Mary Johnston, "born with the historic sense," had resolved to write of the South in terms of its process, progress, and continuity, as well as her nostalgic, sentimental pride in its heritage. Critics' casual dismissal of the significance of the relationship between Johnston and Glasgow stems from the fact that although Miss Glasgow "made Southern social tradition her subject, she was outside—and indeed, opposed to—the literary tradition of the South" (*A Certain Measure* 104). Glasgow spoke out against a tradition to which the majority of Johnston's own novels are undoubtably, though not exclusively, tied. Glasgow asserted that, with the exception of Edgar Allan Poe, there was no truly serious tradition of art in the South. She believed, as

she expressed in *A Certain Measure*, that the South was a region where "a congenial hedonism had established . . . a confederacy of the spirit," where "pride, complacency, . . . self-satisfaction, a blind contentment with things as they are, and a deaf aversion from things as they might be . . . stifle both the truth of literature and the truth of life," where "generous manners exacted that the artist should be more gregarious than solitary" (Quoted in Holman 104).

But, again, with these words Glasgow is not dismissing the work of her friend and fellow-craftsman. In the essay "The Novel in the South," an essay included in the collection *Reasonable Doubts,* Glasgow argues that Miss Johnston was not the stereotypical southern belle. She argues that Johnston

> appeared to wear her fancy dress with a difference. She also had grace, charm, and the delicate touch upon manner as distinguished from manners. Moreover, as her books proved, Miss Johnston is endowed with the courage of her philosophy and the mystic rather than the romantic vision. Like Margaret Prescott Montague, another sincere artist, she has steadily refused to compromise with reality. (74)

With these words, Glasgow acknowledges a quality to Johnston's fiction that critical interpretation and careless, irresponsibly sweeping categorization clearly disregards. Furthermore, there is evidence in the surviving letters and in Mary Johnston's personal journals that Glasgow did read, enjoy, and indeed find Johnston's novels worthy of serious contemplation and discussion. For example, in the letter written to Mary dated March 22, 1904, Glasgow writes:

> I have just read *Sir Mortimer* and after the resistless sweep and energy in the latter half I would think you would need to draw a long, slow breath. It is full of colour

> and poetry and quick action and it keeps wonderfully that peculiar golden light, as if of a warmer sunshine, which seems to linger on those days when we turn and look back on them. And Damaris is to me the most attractive of all your heroines—I like her in the love scene in the garden. (*Letters* 43).

And, ten years later in a letter dated November 1, 1914, Glasgow writes:

> I've just finished *The Witch,* and it is very fine, I think. You have a wonderful power of re-creating a period, and I feel the Elizabethan Age as vividly as if I were dreaming about it. It is a book of great nobility and thought. (*Letters* 63)

In *Without Shelter: The Early Career of Ellen Glasgow,* J.R. Raper makes an enormous amount of the differences between Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston, but provides little insight into their similarities and the intellectual nature of their developing friendship. Raper writes of Miss Johnston, "whose photographs reveal a petite, delicate, thin, fair beauty given to full-length white organdy dresses and wide-brimmed white organdy hats, came closer to the ideal Victorian southern lady" (202). According to Raper, in 1904, when Glasgow's novel *The Deliverance* made the best-seller list as had Johnston's own *To Have and To Hold* four years before, Ellen Glasgow "had no qualms" about establishing a friendship with Mary Johnston. With her book high on the national sales list despite its relatively subversive content, Ellen Glasgow recognized that she need not "subserve regional piety in order to hold her head up among southern writers" (Raper 202). But clearly Ellen Glasgow recognized more to Mary Johnston than "regional piety," a stagnant vision of the lost regime, or the deluded vision of the romancer. And, as the correspondence between the women unambiguously reveals, by this time their

friendship was already flourishing. Johnston was, in fact, a vibrant, interesting woman with an evolving view of the world around her, and Glasgow was drawn to her. Certainly, to dismiss casually Mary Johnston as the "ideal Victorian lady" and nothing more merely because of her delicate frame and petit stature, her organdy hats and organdy dresses, is a great injustice to the intellectually alive, vibrant, and, in many ways, progressive woman.

Raper does not dismiss Johnston entirely. He writes of her movement during the early 1900s "toward the intellectual rebellion, which mars her later books" (204). Raper affords no insight into the nature of this so-called "intellectual rebellion," nor does he recognize the significance of the intellectual nature of Glasgow's relationship with the dynamic, fascinating lady.

V. The Johnston Diaries

To give an example of the author's routine, and the possible source of her "intellectual rebellion," in her diary entry dated March 6, 1908, Mary Johnston casually records the books she read on a recent vacation in Nassau. She writes, or lists,

> I read in Nassau the following books:
> Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions*
> Wallace's *Darwin and After Darwin*
> Lecky's *Map of Life*
> Morris' *Earthly Paradise*
> Ellen Glasgow's *The Ancient Law*
> Conrad's *Lord Jim*
> Haeckle's *Riddle of the Universe*
> James' *The Wings of the Dove*

Bain's *The Senses and the Intellect*

Lady Burton's *Life of Sir Richard Burton*

McPherson's *Herbert Spencer* (Series C, vol. II, 1-2)[4]

Johnston's casual reading, an impressive combination of history, philosophy, and literary fiction, was not the recreational reading characteristic of the stereotypical "ideal Victorian lady" (Raper 202).

The Johnston diaries illustrate that Mary Johnston brought her knowledge from her own intellectual pursuits into the Glasgow home in Richmond during the winter months of 1906 and 1907. The passages demonstrate that the intellectual discourse was as casual for Johnston and Glasgow as Richmond gossip, the talk of the weather, and the blooming roses. In the diaries, Johnston flows easily, effortlessly, perhaps even nonchalantly, from one subject to the next. She demonstrates that this intellectual discourse was an important aspect of her interaction with her "fellow-craftsman" and served a great purpose in her professional life. The following passages suggest that the discourse is not particularly strained or affected; the words appear casually in what Johnston calls *Her Book, And Her's Alone* and obviously were not intended to substantiate, or verify claims of her intellectual pursuits. The passages emerge as simply a testament to natural curiosity and a propensity to read, and read voraciously, the most influential

[4] All diary quotations in this section are taken from the "Series C" diaries in the Mary Johnston Collection in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia. "Series C" is a typescript copy of *Her Book and Her's Alone*, or "Series B," in addition to portions of "Series A" for the years 1910-1912. The typescript copy was prepared by Mary's sister, Elizabeth Johnston, for the exclusive use of the author's biographer. Although significant portions of the original diary have been omitted in "Series C," the portions of the text relevant to this study have not been altered. Because of the difficulty I encountered reading Johnston's cursory and frequently faded penmanship, I made the decision to quote exclusively from "Series C" in this section of this paper. "Series C" is made up of three volumes; the first two volumes are paginated, but the third is not. Quotations taken from "Series C" from this point forward will cite series, volume, and page number, when applicable.

contemporary and classical texts, philosophical and literary alike, available to her. The entries also demonstrate that Johnston, at Glasgow's prompting, read and discussed Glasgow's own work. Cella suggests that the conversations regarding professional writing were "uncomfortable," but the evidence available in Johnston's diaries seems contrary to his assessment. In an entry dated November 10, 1906, Johnston first records the soon-to-be regular, intellectually stimulating conversation:

> Wrote all morning correcting the First Act of the Goddess of Reason. Alice Parker to luncheon; afterwards she, Amy McCullah, and I went to see . . . Everyman. . . went from the theater to the Glasgow's. Sat awhile with Cary and drank tea with Ellen and Rebe. Mr. Forsythe and a man from Philadelphia there. We talked of Everyman and of Irving, Thoreau, Alcott, Emerson, Mark Twain . . . Weather very beautiful—there is a microphilla rose in bloom outside.
> (C, vol.I, 1-2)

The following day, November 11, 1906, a Sunday, Johnston recorded:

> Rain, Elizabeth only to church. Ellen Glasgow came over at eleven and we talked until one. Her new book, the mood in which she wrote *The Wheel of Life*, Maria in *The Deliverance*, books in general, Kant, Schopenhauer, speculative philosophy in general, the woods, the sea, certain poets, the Adirondacks. . . she was looking well and pretty. Rested for awhile after luncheon, wrote to Mrs. Davis to know if she is ill. It has been so long since I heard from her . . . Lucy Coleman here for an hour . . . corrected some pages of my manuscript . . .
> (C, vol.I, 2)

With these words, Johnston hardly seems "uncomfortable" with the discussion of Glasgow's *The Wheel of Life* and Maria in *The Deliverance.* Again, to emphasize this

point further, and to stress that Glasgow and Johnston encouraged discussion of their professional lives, Johnston recorded on November 14, 1906:

> Straightened up and attended to things in general . . . rewrote letter to Houghton Mifflin declining the proposition for a cheap edition of the book. Mary McMullen and I put in a hard mornings work on the play revising and correcting. Read a few pages of Carlyle, luncheon, half and hour's rest, Ellen Glasgow came and brought me an autographed copy of *The Battleground* . . . (C, vol.I, 3)

As mentioned earlier, it seems likely that Ellen's gift of *Battle-Ground* encouraged Johnston to begin research on her own Civil War trilogy. Regardless, the discussion of their professional lives does not seem awkward or strained, but a part of their routine intellectual discourse. Again on November 24, Johnston writes:

> Worked hard all morning and rather liked what I did. At three came Ellen Glasgow and we talked for an hour as fast as we could talk—her work, my work, publishers, Boston, philosophy, Neo-Platonists, Marcus Aurelius, sundry novels, notably *The Garden of Allah* and *The Divine Fire*. Elizabethan poets, etc., etc. Luncheon. Rested awhile. Finished *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* Liked it very well. Read a good part of Robert Hichen's *Call of the Blood*, which Ellen bought. It is not nearly so good as *The Garden of Allah* . . . (C, vol.I, 8-9)

These talks were becoming frequent and were missed if they did not occur. On December 15, Saturday, Johnston records:

> Worked until eleven, then dressed and went to the tailor's, and by the Woman's Exchange looking for Christmas presents . . . Home to find that Ellen Glasgow had come for our "talk" but had missed me . . . (C, vol.I, 18)

Certainly, upon occasion, the talk between the two authors tended towards "genial conversation about books and ideas," as it was characterized by Cella (23). Frequently, the conversation seemed rather abstract and silly—filled with strange ideas taken from or based upon readings of Eastern philosophy and mysticism. For example, in the following day's entry dated December 16, Johnston records:

> I wrote awhile and then went to the Glasgow's. Tea. The talk full of association of colours and form with abstract ideas, numbers, months of the year, etc. To Cary, January dark red and tilted up hill! March, grey; June, green, etc. To me 3, 5, 7, 9 are distinctly feminine; 2, 4, 6, 8, masculine;--the Brahminical ideas of colours—red meant the earth, purple above it, etc., up to clear light. My fondness for purple—stained glass, heliotropes, the first shade of dawn, the spiritual colour. The colours of people's souls—according to Cary: likeness of people to flowers; Ellen like a pansy—a good comparison—we wound up on Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth. (C, vol.I, 18-19)

But, in contrast, the conversation between the two authors much more frequently turned to a concrete discussion of literature. From the evidence in the diaries, it seems that these discussions were in a sense therapeutic and aided Johnston's own creative process. For example, on January 2, 1908, Johnston records:

> A hard day's work correcting manuscipts and doing my own typewriting. Papers everywhere and the feeling that I had undertaken the Aegaean stable. This afternoon I went over to the Glasgow's for a little rest and relaxation. Ellen and I talked books; Webster, Ford, Congreve, Swift, Steele, and Addison, Chapman's Homer. Dickens, etc. Then we went into Cary's room. We talked Wordsworth, the Warm, and LaGrippe . . . Very charming out—soft and grey and all the sparrows chirping. After supper worked for several hours. (C, vol.I, 25)

Again, on February 8, 1907 Johnston records:

> I went to the Glasgow's for a cup of tea. We had it up in Ellen's room—Cary, Ellen, Berta and I. Book talk—John Addington Symonds, Leslie Steven, Walter Pater, etc; favorite pictures, Botticelli's *Venus Rising From the Sea* Ellen's favorite. For me, I keep a Seraglio—Walter Pater's reading of *Mona Lisa*, Alice Maynell, Owen Seaman . . . (C, vol.I, 37-38)

And even more convincingly, on February 26, Johnston enthusiastically, perhaps even passionately, records a day's events:

> A hard day's work. Finished revising Third Act, began upon Fourth. Looked over diagrams of steamers, read a little Goethe. Luncheon, rested, wrote. Ellen Glasgow, Rebe, and Coralie to supper and until ten afterwards. A pleasant talk together, mostly of books—Trollope, Jane Austen—*Pride and Prejudice* the general favorite, but mine is *Mansfield Park.* Mr. Collins, Elizabeth Bennett, the Bingleys, etc. Mrs. Norris, the Rushworths, the Crawfords—Byron, Shelley, Browning . . . Henry James—*The Ambassadors* my favorite—*The Awkward Age* Rebe's; Ellen thinks *The Turn of the Screw* most wonderful; to me it is unreedemedly ghastly,--a putrescent thing seen by a blue light—Howells, *A Modern Instance, Silas Lopham* his best. Henry James in Richmond. Sorry he didn't like it. Hawthorne *Mosses from and Old Manse* and *The Scarlett Letter.* None of us cared very much for *The Marble Faun* . . . Numbers of Dickens's characters. Five hundred characters in Shakespeare. Amours of Goethe, Rousseau, Byron, summer plans and clothes. Music. Ellen cares little for it. I have a barbarian and uncultivated enjoyment, Coralie a comprehension and enthusiasm. English shires—Rebe caring mostly for Suffolk because David Copperfield was born there. Hardy. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, etc . . . (C, Vol. I, 43-44)

The conversations the diaries describe are intellectual; frequently they revolve around literature, though not exclusively. On March11, 1907, Johnston writes:

> . . . Studied French, read Goethe and Spencer. Finished making notes for Mordicai's Richmond, lucheon, rested, read, then dressed and went to the Glasgow's. Ellen just back from Castle Hill. Cary on the sofa as usual, but bright and merry . . . Tea and talk. Greece and Greek art. Sicily. Africa. The desert . . . Sophocles, Eschylus, Euripides . . . (C, vol. I, 49)

During this time period, the diaries document a flourishing friendship, as well as an intellectual connection. The talk was not always so serious, however. For example, on May 12, 1907, Johnston records

> We talked of fashions when we were children, striped stockings, bronze boots, Roman sashes,--of the very remarkable trash we all read, *The Wide World, The Children of the Abbey, Home Influence,* and *Mother's Recompense,* etc., etc. (C, vol. I, 66)

After a summer traveling through Europe, and a hiatus in her daily recording, Johnston returned to Richmond and the Glasgows' parlor at the end of October, 1907. Their conversation on October 25, 28, and November 4 tended towards "Italy and Metaphysics" (C, vol.I, 85). After another break marking Johnston's travels through the Caribbean, the diaries continue with regularity from March of 1908 until May. Johnston and Glasgow have frequent conversation, conversation focusing primarily upon Spinoza, Kant, and Metaphysics, as well as Glasgow's involvement with the Richmond Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals. However, on May 7, 1908, Johnston writes that Ellen came over exclusively "to discuss plots and ideas" (C, vol.II, 15).

The diaries continue with less regularity, but nevertheless reflect the frequent intellectual conversations held through April 1912. I need not go further; though her diaries certainly extend for pages upon pages. The entries do not expose casual conversation about great books; they reveal an absolute obsession by women completely engulfed in the intellectual and fictional worlds created by infamous works influencing their own fictional worlds. Certainly, Mary Johnston brought as much to these "genial conversations of books and ideas" as she took from them; furthermore, these "genial conversations" could not have continued for as long as they did if they were, in actuality, as insubstantial as some critics and biographers have argued. Johnston and Glasgow fed off one another's knowledge, insight, and fascination with an entirely different world, one that proved as influential, or perhaps more so, than the physical world they actually endured. The Johnston diaries reveal a profound intellectual closeness—one that is based upon a common love, or passion, for literature and ideas traditionally restricted to the male sphere. In short, the "delicate, fair," seemingly "ideal Victorian southern woman" frequently mentioned by critics, is badly misrepresented. Mary Johnston's diaries reveal that she was, like Ellen Glasgow, a prolific writer, a voracious reader, as well as a dynamic and interesting woman who contributed greatly to the lives, the ideas, and the art of Ellen Glasgow.

VI. Conclusion

In addition, the intellectual discourse emerging within the pages of the Johnston diaries demonstrates the beginnings of the feminist consciousness in Richmond, specifically the then developing Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, in which, as Johnston notes in her diary on March 12, 1908, "Cary and Ellen" were "bound up heart and soul" (C, vol. II, 3). Ellen Glasgow's active involvement with the movement, however, was abruptly ended by the "crushing blow of Cary's illness and death in 1911" (*Within* 78). However, Johnston's own involvement did not wane, but persisted and escalated until she actually became the leading writer and a leading spokeswoman for the suffrage movement in the state of Virginia. It is interesting to note that it was during these years of frequent "genial discussions of books and ideas," that both Johnston's overtly "feminist" novel *Hagar*, published in 1913, and Glasgow's *Virginia*, published in 1912, had their beginnings.

Hagar is the story of a "dark little girl, of twelve years old, dark and thin . . . with her long white-stockinged legs folded decorously under her, her blue gingham skirt spread out, and her Leghorn hat upon her knees" . . . (2). What can only be characterized as a *Bildungsroman* begins in a fashion not unlike Glasgow's *Virginia*, which describes its leading young lady in a "white lawn dress . . .draped overskirt . . . and light blue ottoman ribbon" . . . (2). Glasgow describes her heroine, Virginia Pendleton, as having a beauty so striking that a reader might imagine that she "embodied the feminine ideal of the ages" and recognize that "to look at her was to think inevitably of love" (4). Virginia's first words in the novel are less than memorable; in fact, as a character, Virginia is less than memorable simply because she does embody all that is stifling about

the southern, beautiful, but silent, ideal. In contrast, Hagar's first words are spoken to her Aunt; in the novel's opening pages, the precocious heroine asks, "Aunt Sabrina . . . what is evolution?" (2) There is no point in elaborating the plots of the two books; suffice it to say that the characters Hagar and Virginia represent opposite, and indeed opposing, extremes of feminine consciousness. Glasgow's Virginia never grows, never matures, never breaks through the stifling world she has been born into. In contrast, Hagar rebels against her Virginian heritage, becomes a writer, travels to New York City, attends numerous suffrage rallies, and becomes—like the author herself—a primary spokeswoman for the Equal Suffrage Movement. Again, Ellen Glasgow and Mary Johnston fed off of each other's ideas, insights, and knowledge to produce very different literary results. *Hagar* illuminates Johnston's optimism and her evolving vision for her own future, as well as the future for all women. Glasgow's work expresses the oppression, the suffering, and the irreparable damage done by social convention.

Critically speaking, Glasgow's work is vastly superior; it is a novel well developed around a central character's strengths and inadequacies, rather than a fundamental, philosophical idea. Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, Johnston's novel is interesting, provocative, and in many ways progressive. Certainly Glasgow's experiences during the years surrounding the writing and publication of *Virginia* were more than traumatic. Cary's death was absolutely devastating to the author. But, nonetheless, Glasgow did not find the strength in herself to develop a character that possessed the force to push through restricting conventions. Perhaps she felt that it was, at that point anyway, an idealistic, unrealistic dream. As mentioned earlier, Glasgow had

left the Equal Suffrage League entirely by 1915. In her autobiography, Glasgow claimed that she abandoned the movement because she lost all interest in it after the death of her sister Cary, and because she "secretly felt . . . [that] so long as the serpent continues to crawl on the ground, the primary influence of woman will remain indirect . . ."(*Woman* 187). Glasgow, unlike the somewhat idealistic Johnston, remained firmly dedicated to realism.

Although there is no concrete evidence to validate this claim, other than the fact that Glasgow had an early edition of *Barren Ground* sent to Johnston by her publisher, I would like to speculate that Mary Johnston's 1912 overtly "feminist" novel *Hagar* influenced Glasgow and her creation and development of the character of strength, Dorinda Oakley. On April 8, 1925, in response to Glasgow's gift of *Barren Ground,* Mary Johnston wrote:

> Dear Ellen,
> Page sent out copy of *Barren Ground.* I read it with avidity and then wrote how fine I thought it . . . I think it very good indeed, the best thing since *Virginia.* I like your broomsedge and life everlasting.
> Yours as ever,
> Mary Johnston

In *Barren Ground,* Dorinda Oakley develops as a character that embodies the strength and endurance that Virginia, and arguably Glasgow herself, had formerly lacked but desperately desired. Dorinda emerges as the first glimpse of feminine triumph in Glasgow's fiction. Whether or not Glasgow developed Dorinda Oakley with *Hagar* in mind is something upon which we can only speculate, but the relationship between

Johnston and Glasgow provided them both with ample opportunities for intellectual growth. In the years when they were frequently together and during the years when they seldom saw one another, the authors did not hesitate to discuss, and frequently share, their work.

The letters from Johnston in the collection at the Alderman Library extend from September 1929 to September 1932. These letters demonstrate frequent references to Glasgow's fiction. Johnston acknowledges the intensity and artistry with which the novels were written. Though her letters do not contain the same effusive, poetic language of Glasgow's earlier correspondence, they demonstrate a genuine respect and admiration for Glasgow's job well done. But it becomes increasingly obvious that the intensity of the authors' earlier correspondence has diminished considerably. From the available materials, it appears that the relationship between Glasgow and Johnston reached its height during the early years in Richmond from 1904 until 1911. The Johnston diaries, as well as the letters written during and around that time, reveal an intensity and a shared passion for intellectual pursuit. After 1913, however, Mary Johnston moved towards her mystical novels, while Glasgow became more and more embedded in the realism of her work. When the "Three Hills" estate in Bath County became Johnston's permanent home in 1913, the authors' paths inevitably diverged, and the intensity of their friendship waned. However, Johnston and Glasgow still corresponded, and the available correspondence reveals that Johnston was keeping up with Glasgow's work as well as her personal tragedies, great and small. For example, in a letter dated September 28, 1929,

Johnston writes to compliment Glasgow's latest book and to console her on the loss of a beloved dog:

> I have read "They Stooped to Folly" and I think you have done a very good piece of work. I am so sorry about Jeremy.—I dreamed of you the other night. I was in a house over against your house. It was night time, very quiet, very still. And I looked out of my window across to your window and saw that it was lighted—not a shiny light, but a light turned low, and I thought "Ellen is there, sorrowing for Jeremy!" but then the dream changed. But it was a very real one and has left a vivid scene of the night, the lighted window, and you.
> (Johnston Collection, unpublished letters)

Johnston writes again in a letter dated September 16, 1932:

> I finished *The Sheltered Life* about midnight, lying in bed, reading with the intensity with which it is written. It is a wise and moving book and a deeply artistic one. My gratulations and love always. . . .
> (Johnston Collection, unpublished letters)

Certainly, at one time, the two women were extremely close and strongly attracted to each other because of common interests an shared intellectual pursuit, but the intensity of the friendship remained only as long as Johnston supplied what Glasgow felt she needed, both intellectually and emotionally.

But, to return for a moment to the intensity of the relationship, in the following letter written to Mary Johnston, Ellen Glasgow exposes the nature of a friendship that was intellectual, literary, as well as overwhelmingly affectionate. In and of itself, the letter written March 22, 1904 exemplifies the assertion that the relationship between the

two women was one of mutual respect and admiration for each other as friends as well as accomplished, talented artists. This letter, the first of twenty-one in the possession of the Alderman Library, serves as a testament to this friendship:

> It is a far cry, my dear fellow-craftsman, from the gray skies and the naked poplars outside to the eternal summer of which your letter was overflowing, and I hope that the change has restored you all through—has "rested every hair of your head," as my colored mammy used to say. I have just read *Sir Mortimer* and after the resistless sweep and energy in the latter half I would think you needed to stop and draw a long, slow breath . . . . (*Letters* 43)

The first half of the letter reveals some obvious evidence concerning the friendship the women shared outside of the social conventions of the Richmond parlor. With enthusiasm and interest, Glasgow was evidently reading the work of her "fellow-craftsman," and she was finding Johnston's work worthy of contemplation and praise despite its differences from her own. The letter also suggests an ongoing dialogue between the authors regarding the actual process of writing. In the concluding portion of the lengthy letter, Glasgow writes " I would think that you needed to stop and draw a long, slow breath," acknowledging her own mental and physical exhaustion at any novel's completion, and marveling at the resiliency and endurance of Johnston. In the letter's conclusion, Glasgow continues to acknowledge the common bond between them and the seriousness with which they approach their work, disparate as it may be:

> Is your imagination working again, I wonder, and can you really let it lie idle—or are you mentally exhausted and aweary of pen and paper as I have been for months? Those systematic hardy workers who go on day after day with never

> a pause are the ones I envy—they must escape the fret and fever of sudden spurts and inevitable reactions. Intuition tells me that Coralie is downstairs, so I'll leave you for her in a minute. It was nice to hear from you. I feel that I shall be as glad as possible to know you better—to stand within the gate. Yes, I dare say we are different in many ways—it will be interesting, don't you think, to learn how different. And the main thing, perhaps we both have.

The "main thing" Glasgow and Johnston share appears to be the insatiable drive to write, a passion inseparable from their identities.

In conclusion, in the time that Mary Johnston knew Ellen Glasgow, she contributed greatly to Glasgow's intellectual life, as well as to her emotional stability. The relationship made evident in the Johnston diaries and letters suggests something very particular about the friendship possible between women. For Ellen Glasgow, the friendship with Mary Johnston provided for her intellectual and emotional needs in ways that heterosexual relationships had proven that they could not. An intellectual avenue opened; Glasgow willingly opened her soul. Understanding and appreciating a woman like Mary Johnston, and recognizing the intensity of her connection to Ellen Glasgow, has provided an enormous amount of insight into Glasgow's life as it truly was and not necessarily how she wished it to be remembered.

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