INTRODUCTION

Born to lead a literary crusade away from a sterile romantic tradition toward the presentation of the South in a realistic manner, lightened by irony, Ellen Glasgow built the necessary bridge between the world of Thomas Nelson Page and the world of William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty and Tennessee Williams. As a social historian of Virginia, she is indispensable to American literature. Without her, there would have been a gap in American fiction, particularly where it concerns the South, for none of her contemporaries gave such an accurate picture of the South.

The period before and immediately after the Civil War witnessed the works of competent writers among whom Mark Twain, born on the fringes of the South, disparaged its manners and mores. The others, with a few exceptions had been content to write about plantation narratives, sentimental stories, rich in spurious nostalgia or local colour sketches of varying degrees of authenticity.

The body of material, which foreshadowed a "Southern Renaissance" was remarkable both for its diversity and for its coherence. This coherence emerged mostly from a sense of place that after the Civil War had become a major informing principle in almost everything that Southerners produced. Often that sense of place was two-fold, manifesting itself as consciousness of a specific location – Middle Tennessee, Southern Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, The Virginia Piedmont, or perhaps even a city, Charleston or New Orleans. But behind the writer's particular regional consciousness, there were intimations of a transcendent and controlling awareness of the South as a whole and the writer's identity with it. This sense of place was the consequence of the polarization between the South and the North which had precipitated the Civil War. The
aftermath of the civil war – a decade of Reconstruction that impoverished and embittered the populace, followed by political and economic discrimination and then the great depression – intensified this sense of place.

During the process of reconciliation between the North and the South, the press played a major role. The North, where the presses were, continued to publish idealized versions of life in the South before the war. Earlier, such writing came from the pen of Thomas Nelson Page whose sentimental fiction was popular throughout America. The southern readers, suffering from the sting of defeat, cherished this picture of the South, for the northerners too it provided interesting reading “as it was in contrast to Mrs. Stowe’s picture in Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852). Therefore, for a maximum period of the century after the Civil War being southern remained a source of pride for the writers of Virginia, Texas, Georgia and Tennessee, in whose fiction the images of plantation life benevolent whites and happy darkies become standard fictional fare and the blood and pain of actual war was pushed into darkness.

Till the last decades of nineteenth century, the social scene in the South comprised men who were agrarian in outlook and women who maintained their pride in domestic skills. Hunting, fishing, visiting friends and gossip, but never any far intellectual exchange, were their only past-time. For women, their conversation centred round the ever-changing family relationships and gossip. Closely associated with the business of family relationships was the matter of religion. Most of them considered themselves Christians though there were occasional free-thinkers. Among the free-thinkers, most of them were prepared to declare a church preference – Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist and Catholics – and discuss its merits. This continued to be the picture of the South until the I World War.
John Pendleton Kennedy, in his *Swallow Barn* (1832) made an ambivalent celebration of Virginian plantation life in which he portrayed the Cavalier virtues as pride in family and land, love of honour, respect for bravery and courtesy toward women. But Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) limited the disparity between the races and as a result his *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* (1880) was immensely popular. Though Harris led the way, it was Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922) who established the conventions of plantation fiction. These chauvinistic southern writers popularized the romantic myth in which the young men were invariably gallant, the young women beautiful and their negro servants content in the service of their benevolent masters.

Towards the end of nineteenth century sentimental romanticism gave way to a preference for realism that would prevail throughout much of the twentieth century. Even before Page, George Washington (1844-1925) a native of New Orleans, in his *Old Creole Days* (1879) and *The Grandissimes* (1880) portrayed the doomed life of Creole community unable to reconcile its proud heritage with the evils of slavery which that heritage had generated and fostered and his later work was increasingly polemical. Incensed by Cable’s disparagement of his region, Grace Elizabeth King (1852-1932) also from New Orleans, took up writing and achieved a measure of distinction for dealing with the difficulties of Creole families during the period of Reconstruction.

Kate Chopin (1851-1904) from St. Louis, who lived in New Orleans for sometime after her marriage, published her first novel *At Fault* in 1890, which dealt with alcoholism, divorce – a controversial subject for the time – and some remarkable sketches of plantation life. Her next publication, a collection of stories and sketches about plantation life published in 1894 as *Bayon Folk* established her reputation as a local colourist. In the following year, she wrote many stories portraying women ill at ease
with the social constraints imposed upon her. This collection of stories, *A Night in Arcadia* (1895) disturbed the readers who had a conventional bent of mind. Her second published novel, *The Awakening* (1899) portraying the life of a woman who for a time actually breaks through those restraints, created a furore.

Another local colourist from Tennessee was Mary Noailles Murfree (1850-1922) who wrote several realistic stories about the Tennessee mountain people in *The Tennessee Mountains* (1884). Her later work (historical novels and romances) was in the fashion of the day. Her reputation mainly rested upon her earlier works in which she displayed a talent for the delineation of character and an ability to portray the speech and mores of an isolated group of southerners, who might have been ignored.

Murfree's Kentucky counterpart, John William Fox Jr. (1863-1919) had an intimate knowledge of the mountain people of Eastern Kentucky and Western Virginia. All his stories, a series of collections, *A Cumberland Vendetta and Other Stories* (1896), "Hell fer Sartin" and Other Stories (1897), and *Christmas Eve on Lonesome and Other Stories* (1904), portray these mountain people in realistic terms. Besides these stories, he wrote sentimental novels too, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1903) and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1908).

There were some of the southern writers who dealt with their regions and prepared the ground for the major southern fiction of twentieth century. Older than these writers, both in age and merit, Samuel Longhorne Clemens (1835-1910), popularly known as Mark Twain, occupies a secure place in the history of southern literature. Though born in Missouri, he derived his subject from southern life and wrote masterpieces about life on the Mississippi, in his own inimitable style. His first work, based on his personal knowledge, was written as a memoir, in seven instalments
published as *Life on the Mississippi* in 1883. His earlier works, *Innocents Abroad* (1869) and *Roughing It* (1872) were also similar to his memoir - a memoir of a mature novelist of genius and presents the maturation of a literary artist who has learned to look beneath the surface that was presented by the local colourists and beyond to the timeless realities that make life meaningful. His two masterpieces, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) were recognized as classics of American Literature. The former, which Clemens called “a hymn to boyhood” was a hymn replete with discords and darker aspects of the world, which other writers omitted. The latter work, symbolizes in the inexorable course of the river and Huck's encounters along its way, paradoxes that have manifested themselves throughout Western humanity’s long progress toward domination of the globe. By making Huck a narrator, Clemens focuses the story on all mankind’s perilous advance towards self-realization. His deep penetration into human nature was his contribution to American Literature and his work is read without reference to local provenance. Like Hawthorne and Melville before him, and his contemporary Henry James, he opened gates for all the American realists and naturalists that would follow him. His work, like their work, belongs to no place and no time.

Two other eminent writers who dominated the latter part of nineteenth century were William Dean Howells from Ohio and Henry James from the East. Mark Twain and Henry James might be considered to represent extremes, in vulgar terms one proudly plebian and the other with equal pride patrician. Howell stood in the middle. Howell pleaded for realism in literature, a presentation of life neither worse nor better than existing. As the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1871 to 1881, he encouraged many new young writers, specially the local colourists. Henry James, a source of inspiration to
many young writers, including Ellen Glasgow, is represented by half a dozen or more novels of equal importance while Hawthorne, Melville and Mark Twain are remembered each for one master piece. Henry James' novels *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), *The Aspern Papers* (1888) belong to his major phase, whereas in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) he reached heights unscaled before.

The Renaissance, which marked the advent of realism in Southern literature, occurred in Virginia, prominently in Richmond. Richmond enjoyed a glorious history as the cultural centre of the southern states before the Civil War. Great political leaders such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, Peyton Randolph and Patrick Henry were connected to Richmond. During eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Richmond was the state capital and the capital of confederacy successively. With its industries, book firms and newspapers Richmond stood on par with New Orleans as a great cosmopolitan city in the South. Though it suffered devastation and a consequent enaceration of the city by confederate troops in 1864, neither its charm was lost, nor the vigour of its people diminished. With a good number of writers either born there or associated with it, Richmond continued to attract national attention. Among these, three women novelists stand prominent.

Of the three Amelie Louise Rives (1863-1945) was the oldest, who wrote and published a number of romantic stories in a volume entitled *Brother to Dragons* and *Other Old-Time Tales* in 1888. Among her twenty-three novels, her third novel *The Quick or the Dead* (1888) was important for in it she introduced an element of psychological realism into her work. It opened a new vista different from the popular romances and local colour stories of the day.
Rives’ younger contemporary, Mary Johnston (1870-1936) was mostly known for her historical novels. Born in Buchanan, she stabilized her name in literary history of the South with her second novel *To Have and to Hold* (1900). In 1905, she moved to Richmond where she made friends with another Richmond born novelist Ellen Glasgow, with whom she participated in the suffragist movement and other feminist causes. After seven years, she left Richmond but maintained her friendship with Miss Glasgow. Two Civil War novels, *The Long Roll* (1911) and *Cease Firing* (1912) stand as a proof of her mature talent. the first novel deals with the war as Virginia knew it and the second presents the last days of the war in Richmond, with its devastating results. In all her sixteen novels, she vitalized southern past with her intellectual quest, a quality in which she resembles Ellen Glasgow who with her name, surpassed her in the eyes of the critics.

Ellen Glasgow was considered the precursor of southern renaissance. Edgar E. Mac Donald, in *History of Southern Literature* (1985) writes of the literary revival in turn-of-the-century Richmond. He identifies the most important writers of Southern Renaissance as Ellen Glasgow, James Branch Cabell, Mary Johnston and Amelie Rives, “who exhibit the first really important break with aesthetics, social attitudes, and community assumptions of the older, late – Victorian South and who speak with voices that are recognizably of the emerging twentieth century rather than the nineteenth” (264). The literature of ante-bellum South was mostly pre-occupied with historical romance in the style of Victorian writers. Most of the authors were influenced by British writers rather than by American writers. The impact of *The Spectator*, sentimental comedy, the novels of Richardson, Fanny Burney, the Gothic Romances which affected Poe and Hawthorne, the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins etc., could be seen in the fiction of women writers. Southern literature had travelled a long
way from romance to naturalism, realism being in the middle represented by Ellen Glasgow. Other than a few scanty sketches, there was no single novel with an adequate picture of Southern life, until her arrival on the literary scene.

Born on April 22, 1873, Ellen Glasgow was next to the youngest in a family of ten children. Her father Francis Glasgow was an able representative of the sternest and staunchest Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Calvinism. Her mother, Anne Jane Gholson, a highly emotional lady of exquisite sensibilities, was a representative of liberal, gracious, Virginia, Cavalier, Episcopal, Tide Water society. From her tender mother she received her soft qualities – sensitivity, sympathy, love of animals – while she inherited her strong determination and fortitude from her stern father.

Ellen Glasgow suffered from delicate health and actual illness throughout her life. Owing to her feeble constitution, she could not enjoy regular schooling, which ended in a very short period. But she feasted herself on a good number of books from her father’s library. Her learning was far superior to that of the education the young belles of Virginia were provided with. Besides fiction and poetry, she wandered freely in the areas of Science, History, Economics and Philosophy. She was keenly affected by the evolutionary scientific writings.

Despite her hampering affliction, her deafness which attacked her in her sixteenth year and with which she suffered through out her life, she was not an embittered recluse but had a very active social life. She made her debut at a St. Cecilia’s Ball in Charleston and enjoyed dances at Virginia Military Institute and the University of Virginia. As a mature lady, and distinguished novelist, she delighted in entertaining in her home at One...
West Main Street many literary persons and friends. She found pleasure in human society in spite of tormenting deafness which was mitigated only a little with a hearing aid.

Ellen Glasgow as a delicate child had a close affinity with her mother who protected her from the unsympathetic world. She loved deeply and admired strongly the many venerable qualities of her mother. She held her father responsible for her mother's depression and nervous exhaustion with which she ultimately died and which alienated Francis from Ellen. She disliked her older sisters, excepting Cary, for their ridiculing her early writing. She was very close with her younger sister, Rebe and older brother Frank though he was mostly a recluse. Though there was less intimacy between the two, her eldest brother Arthur extended his helping hand to her in her later years. Her personal relationships with the members of her family are important for they effected her writing to a great extent.

Besides her depressing deafness, there were many tragedies in Miss Glasgow's life from which she took refuge in writing. Her "first real sorrow" occurred in her seventh year with the quitting of Mammy Lizzy, her Negro nurse who took little Ellen out on long walks, and introduced her to many places in Richmond where Ellen observed many people of different classes. Her first sorrow left a vacuum in Ellen's mind. In her twentieth year Ellen met with a great tragedy in the death of her much adored mother. This was followed by the suicide of Walter Mc Cormack, Ellen's intellectual guide and Cary's husband. The tragic demise of Gerald B - with whom Ellen had been deeply in love for seven years, made her life a void. Then Cary, a source of moral strength to Ellen, wasted away through cancer. The penultimate in the series of deaths at One West
Main was Francis Glasgow in 1916, the last being Ellen Glasgow's, on November 21, 1945, at seventy two.

In her autobiography, Ellen Glasgow reveals her conviction that she “was unfitted for marriage” for a lack of “maternal instinct” and for fear that her increasing deafness might be inherited” (1954; 153). Though she never married, she “had had (her) casual romances and even a rare emotional entanglement” (Glasgow, 1954; 153). She calls her first love, “Gerald B” – in her autobiography. She met him very accidentally in New York, at one of her friend’s home. Though Gerald B – was a married man Ellen experienced an intense life of love for seven years from 1899 to 1906 till his death because of which she was thrown into piercing despair. She groped for peace in reading mystical philosophy and in this period she wrote *The Wheel of Life* (1906). Apart from a few engagements which did not last long, she had a most enduring relationship with a Richmond lawyer, Henry W. Anderson, whom she calls Herold S – in her autobiography. Being a Republican he had an active political life. Ellen met him in 1916 and they became engaged on July 19, 1917. Their highly emotional and intimate relationship was broken by World War I. Anderson, as a colonel in the Red Cross, went to Rumania, to direct the Commission to the Balkans. The scandal of his attention to Queen Marie reached Ellen and it consequently broke their engagement in 1919. Though their love never culminated in marriage, there was a continued friendship and regular correspondence between them. Ellen’s relationships with Anderson had a deep impact on her writing. The novels, *The Builders* (1919) and *One Man in His Time* (1922), written during the period of their engagement were coloured by Anderson’s political interest. Ellen’s impassioned disappointment over Anderson led her to create her strong women characters who learn to live without love or happiness.
Despite her bouts of depression, her deafness and the tragic events in the family, Ellen Glasgow had a taste of pleasure in her life, she held her writing as the upper most. In every two or three years she produced a book in addition to which, she had her wide travels, many professional acquaintances, loving friends and above all her cherished animals. After completing her first novel *The Descendent* (1897), but before its publication, she went to France, Scotland and England in 1896. Between 1896 and 1937 she crossed the Atlantic many times to visit Europe, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Italy and Switzerland and England. In England, she was happy to meet such literary giants as Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett who shared her interest and exercised an influence upon her fiction. She could not meet Virginia Woolf whom she greatly admired. In America, she had been to New York many times and she stayed there from 1911 to 1916, after Cary’s death. To escape the summer heat, she often resorted to the North, to Atlantic city, to spots in Connecticut or in Massachusetts. But it was Castine, a tranquil Maine coastal village, where she drove to regain her health after periods of illness. Among these places, New York appears many times in her fiction.

Ellen Glasgow believed that she was able to hide her real self, the wounded spirit, from the world. In her *The Woman Within*, she confesses “I was able to build a wall of deceptive gaiety around me” (1954; 139). Her refuge was in her writing. Her private room on the upstairs of One West Main was a witness to her pathetic suffering. There were nights when she would be “awakened by a drumming along the nerves to the brain, (...) in an upward march from the quivering muscles of my body” and fall a prey to “the ghost of some old unhappiness” (Glasgow, 1954; 213). From the heavy burden of melancholy she was relieved by her creative art.
Miss Glasgow's creative activity started even before she was seven. As she wrote in her autobiography, her first creation was “Little Willie and His Many Adventures” (1954; 36) around whom, together with Mammy Lizzy, her Negro nurse, she would spin many stories. Every night she went to bed praying “O God! Let me write books! Please, God, let me write books!” Her prayer was answered. (Glasgow, 1954; 36).

She wrote in the same book, “at the age of seven my vocation had found me” (1954; 41). Her first writing was a prose allegory, “Only a Daisy” written at seven. Being satisfied with it she wrote a poem expressing her wish to be with the cloud. But she felt depressed when she listened to one of her older sister and her friends ridiculing the poem reading it aloud. She began to write secretly and never stopped until she was exhausted by age. Her long literary career covered a span of nearly half a century during which she had tried to trace a social history of Virginia through many transitional stages brought in by the advent of science and industry which had a profound impact on the social and moral orders of the society. Her deep insights into human nature and rich interpretation of life through her books elevate her work from the regional to the universal. Her oeuvre consists of nineteen novels, a volume of poetry, a collection of short stories, a collection of prefaces to thirteen of her novels, a number of articles, book reviews and essays, which were published during her lifetime. Her autobiography The Woman Within (1954) and her last work of fiction Beyond Defeat (1966) were published posthumously. In A Certain Measure (1943) a collection of her prefaces, she categorizes some of her novels under different groups according to the content: The series of novels concerning the Commonwealth are: (i) The Battle Ground (1850-1865), (ii) The Deliverance (1878-1890), (iii) The Voice of the People (1870-1898), (iv) The Romance of a Plain Man (1875-1910), (v) Virginia (1884-1912), (vi) Life and Gabriella (1894-1912);
the country group include: (vii) *The Miller of Old Church* (1898-1902), (viii) *Barren Ground* (1894-1924), (ix) *Vein of Iron* (1901-1933); the novel of the city embrace: (x) *The Sheltered Life* (1910-1917), (xi) *The Romantic Comedians* (1923), (xii) *They Stooped to Folly* (1924), (xiii) *In This Our Life* (1938-1939).

To avoid sentimentality and evasive idealism, she laid her setting in New York for her first two novels, *The Descendant* (1897) and *Phases of an Inferior Planet* (1898). But she came to realize that for every writer there is a country of the mind and that hers was “the familiar Virginian scene of my childhood” (Glasgow, 1943; 31). Hence, she confined herself to write of those scenes known to her as a child: Richmond; the borderland of the piedmont and Tide water regions around their “Jerdone’s Castle”; the Valley of Virginia; and the tidewater country. She studied the setting thoroughly before she veiled it in her novel to suit the time of her story. Thus, Queenborough in several of her later novels is Richmond, Kingsborough of *The Voice of the People* is old Williamsburg and Dinwiddie in *Virginia* is Petersburg: “My Dinwiddie was saturated with the breath of old streets and old houses. ( . . . ) The place in my mind had wholeness, solidity, the capacity for extension” (Glasgow, 1943; 85). The much-elaborately-described broomsedge, with its varied beauty in the changing seasons, is also taken from her childhood memories associated with their summer camp”, Jerdone’s Castle”. Her allegiance to her region, the South, specially Virginia was fervent: “I am a Virginian in every drop of my blood and pulse of my heart” (Ellen Glasgow, 1921; 46). As she decided to trace the social history of Virginia, she turned out to be the first writer of the modern South to give literary definition to the region in its post-Reconstruction times. “So I determined that I would write not merely about Southern themes, but a well-rounded social record of Virginia” and “my subject seemed to me to be fresh” (Glasgow,
Ellen Glasgow arrived on the literary scene when the current literary fashion was to extoll sentimentally antebellum life and the survival of its influence after the war. Typical writers of the age like Thomas Nelson Page and Francis Hopkinson Smith portrayed only the superficial lives of the upper class Virginia family, with little real
penetration into their psychological, social or moral implications. Southern literature was pre-occupied with historical romance in the Victorian style of writing. It had travelled a long way from romance to naturalism, realism being in the middle, represented by Ellen Glasgow. Though certain aspects of Southern life were faithfully mirrored in John Pendleton Kennedy’s (1795-1870) *Swallow Barn* (1832) and William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870), *The Golden Christmas* (1852), until the arrival of Ellen Glasgow, there was no single novel with an adequate picture of Southern life. Ellen Glasgow’s series of novels on “social history” of Virginia from 1850 to 1940 give the nearest approach to a complete portrayal of life in the South. Miss Glasgow was disgusted with “the formal, the false, the affected, the sentimental, and the pretensions, in Southern writing” (1943; 8) and she was equally displeased with the reading public for avidly desiring “a sugary philosophy, utterly without any basis in logic or human experience” (*Reasonable Doubts*, ed. Raper, 1988; 123). Being a realist, she revolted against the literary trends of her time. She believed that a realist had to “illuminate experience, not merely transcribe it” (Glasgow, 1943; 14). Dorothea Lawrence Mann glorifies Ellen as “the only Southern woman who dared to champion the intellectual freedom of her sex” (1928; 23). The South of Ellen Glasgow was in a state of flux with epoch-making developments. Women were breaking their barriers and the women suffragist movement was gaining momentum. The advent of science, dominated by Darwin, Democracy and Industrialism shook the very foundations of the social structure which caused the fall of aristocracy and the rise of common man.
Ellen Glasgow made an authentic recreation of her milieu in her work. Yet, a life-time devotion to her craft and a quest for an abiding reality beneath the changing surfaces of life placed her beside the great authors of all time.

For those who would have literature to be an honest portrait of human experience and human meaning, Ellen Glasgow did her best to write about Southern experience as she actually observed it. The historian C. Vann Woodward comments on her wide variety of themes: “When eventually the bold moderns of the South arrested the reading and theatrical world with the tragic intensity of the inner life and social drama of the South, they could find scarcely a theme that Ellen Glasgow had wholly neglected. She had bridged the gap between the old and the new literary revival, between romanticism and realism” (1951; 436). Determined to satirize the foibles of Southern society, she dealt with the dominant subjects – the declining aristocracy clinging to its haunted past, love and marriage, the place of woman, the true relationships existing between parents and children and between the sexes, racial tension, the earthiness of poor whites and the arrogance of the landed old families. Though she touched on crime, alienation and despair, she did not examine their deeper consequences as the younger Southern writers did. Her characters emerge from harrowing experiences with inconsistent, cheerful optimism. James Branch Cabell remarks that her novels usually contain “the last cry of romance” and close with “a light in the sky or in somebody’s eyes”. In addition to it, Glasgow after “supplying her Virginians with trials and defeats and irrevocable losses, yet almost always manage(s) to end, somehow, upon this brave note of recording her people’s renovated belief in a future during which everything will turn out quite splendidly” (1947; 236-237).
Within the scope of her major theme, the social history of Virginia, Ellen Glasgow deals elaborately with the plight of women. Her women are usually stronger than men, possessing a deep sense of felt life. Commenting on this preoccupation, Cabell thought, she had done a “complete natural history of the Southern gentle woman, with every attendant feature of her hair and general habitat most accurately rendered” (1930; 18).

Ellen Glasgow shows the impact of wars – Civil War to World War II – on her women. While the superior woman becomes stronger and more competent, her shallow woman gives in to evil effects of the war.

Ellen Glasgow makes a clear distinction between the “womanly woman” of the traditional Victorian code and the “new woman” of the twentieth century. She has an ambivalent feeling for the former. Although she was critical about the tragic suffering which the traditional woman endured, she deeply admired their finer qualities. She deplores the loss of charm in the modern women. But she establishes sympathy with the rebellious daughters, those female characters who try to exist outside of tradition. She appreciates their grit. Her ideal woman is a responsible, intelligent woman who has something to occupy her mind yet who still retains an aura of Victorian grace and a lady-like dignity.

Besides these two types, Glasgow’s fiction contains a whole range of female types in various roles – grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, fiancées, mistresses. She understands the ill effects of the patriarchal system either making the women suffer or morally distort them so that they maltreat others, like her tyrannical lady invalids.
Betrayal of love is the common injury inflicted upon women in Glasgow’s fiction. Her women pay very dearly for indulging in love. Being “finished with love” becomes an ideal for most of her heroines. Though such heroines do not find satisfaction in their relationship with men, they find consolation in the company of another woman. She has no sympathy for the passive woman who believes, her life is fulfilled only in the service of man. They do the usual feminine jobs – domestic work, decorating, nursing, teaching, dress-making, selling in a shop or serving as lady’s companion or a secretary.

Ellen Glasgow renders a faithful picture of Virginia at a particular epoch, with its terrain, history and manners. While satirizing the foibles of the Southerners, she thoroughly examines the lives of women, a theme which runs as an undercurrent throughout her fiction.

Ellen Glasgow’s brilliant literary career was chiefly moulded by her wide reading. Her early reading and writing were done secretly as the Southern code would not approve a lady to indulge in them. She acquainted herself considerably with the 18th and 19th century novelists, particularly Fielding, Jane Austen, Scott and Dickens. By the time, she became a professional novelist she had completed reading “every celebrated novel written in English” (Glasgow, 1943; 16). The Bible and Shorter Catechism filled her early childhood. She read and enjoyed the tragedies of Shakespeare and the poetry of Dryden. She had also read Balzac, Flaubert and Maupassant. In the words of Blair Rouse,

From Balzac and Flaubert she received her impetus toward the depiction of Virginia society in fiction, especially the areas of that life hitherto neglected; the lines of the lower middle class, the rural working classes and the Negroes. (1962; 28).
She read Henry James intensively. Following Henry James to his source, she had arrived at Flaubert and Maupassant. She had received much of her art from them.

I had learned from Maupassant the value of the precise word, of the swift phrase, of cool and scrupulous observation (Glasgow, 1954; 126).

She learned from Maupassant a precise and epigrammatic style and from Tolstoy a transcendant mature vision of life. Her accidental reading of War and Peace affected her “as a revelation from heaven, as the trumpet of the judgement” (1954; 125). She was convinced that being truthful to art meant being faithful to one’s own inner vision. Her reading included Turgenev, Chekhov and Dostoevsky. Despite Miss Glasgow’s ample acquaintance with French and Russian literature, it was British literature which had exercised a sweeping influence upon her writing.

(...) she may have derived her idea of what a novel really was far more from the nineteenth-century English novelists than from the French. Upon her British models she shaped most of her fiction before Barren-Ground, but even this novel and others which follow it are not free from the influence of the Victorian novels she read (Blair Rouse, 1962; 28).

Among the British writers. Dumas, the Brontes, Jane Austen, Proust, Virginia Woolf, interested her. But she made it clear very early that she did not wish to write a Howell’s novel or a Henry James’ story. Her reading was not confined to literature alone. As a sign of protest against her father and his values she read “radical” books which were “forbidden” for a Southern lady. She gives an ironic picture of the type of education imparted to the traditional lady in Virginia. She acquainted herself with Economics, Science and Philosophy. At Mr. Jefferson’s University, an old friend of her, Dr. George Frederick Holmes, Professor of Political Economy, gave her a chance to study Economics. In the seclusion of his study, he gave her a private examination on Economics and she passed with distinction. She knew her John Stuart Mill by heart and had a fair knowledge of Adam Smith, Sir Henry Maine, Malthus, Walter Bagehot and
Henry George. She read the histories of Lecky and Buckle. Her reading of Gibbon’s history and Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* caused great distress to her father who could not tolerate her unbridled pursuit of knowledge. Darwin exercised a strong influence on her mind as well as her work. His hypotheses – his theory of evolution and survival of the fittest – considerably interested her. As she tells in, “I Believe”, the broader synthesis of implications and inferences attracted her more, “On this foundation of probability, if not of certainty, I have found – (...) a permanent resting place; and in the many years that have come and gone, I have seen no reason, by and large, to reject this cornerstone of my creed” (*Reasonable Doubts*, ed. Raper, 1988; 237). Her interest in philosophic exploration led her to Schopenhauer, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and later to Nietzsche and Herbert Spencer. She took delight in Marcus Aurelius but rejected Spinoza’s too intellectualized world of spirit. She read Oriental poetry and religious works with pleasure but showed little inclination toward mysticism except for an occasional interest in manifestations of the supernatural. Though she read widely in political economy, she was not explicit about her own political theories. She dealt with politics in *The Voice of the People, The Miller of Old Church, One Man In His Time* and *The Builders*. Through Nick Burr in *The Voice of the People*, she expressed her admiration for Jeffersonian principles.

Encouraging Miss Glasgow’s reading, Cary and Walter McCormack sent her a subscription to the Mercantine Library in New York and she felt “the doors of a new
world were flung back" (Glasgow, 1954; 90). From her early reading in Political Science and Economics, Ellen Glasgow developed very liberal, even "radical" views. But her radicalism was only a spirit of rebellion against custom, sentimentality and especially cruelty. From her reading, she "craved for truth that was concrete and indestructible" (Glasgow, 1954; 89). Though she took interest in feminism it was only for a short time. Her life long interest lay in humane social activity.

Miss Glasgow's whole life had been an untiring search for the abiding truth of life. In her novels, she recorded the revolution in the economy and mores of her native state from 1850, a decade before the Confederacy to 1940, a period after the end of World War II. As part of that record, she also recorded a revolution in the conceived roles for women. Ellen believed that her father's double moral standards depressed her mother who ultimately succumbed to death. The plight of woman confined by social conventions made her a rebel at heart, against her father, and against the literary tradition of her times, and being so she created an illegitimate poor-white from Virginia, Michael Akershem, as her protagonist in her first novel *The Descendant* (1897), Michael goes to New York and becomes editor of a radical journal. The heroine Rachel, is a Southern girl who studies painting in New York -- art symbolizing liberation in a male-dominated society. Rachel is loved and betrayed by Michael who returns to her only to die in her forgiving arms. The novel has two of her recurrent themes; the rise of common man and the betrayal of woman. Rachel bears signs of her strong women who appear in her later novels, *The Wheel of Life* (1906), *Life and Gabriella* (1916), *The Builders* (1919), *One Man in His Time* (1922), *Barren Ground* (1925), *Vein of Iron* (1935) and *In This Our Life* (1941). *The Descendent* is the first fine fruit of a precocious intellect.
In her second novel, *Phases of an Inferior Planet* (1898) she studies the institution of marriage with its social and moral implications. Marianna Musin is another Southern heroine who comes to New York seeking fulfillment as a singer. She meets Algarcife, a young biologist and a rebellious non-conformist. Their marriage is wrecked by poverty. Marianna leaves him and he becomes a priest celebrated for his rebuttals to a series of anonymous anti-religious articles of which he too is the author. Ellen Glasgow’s irony against male double-talk is evident. This novel holds out promise for the author’s growth as a skilful interpreter of the modern age. Louise Collier Willcox is all praise for the novel, “One of Glasgow’s most powerful books, one can find only in *Wuthering Heights* its parallel in depth of knowledge of the human heart” (1904; 17).

From Miss Glasgow’s disgust for the sentimental portrayal of the dying past arose her plan to trace the social history of Virginia which covered a transitional period from Civil War to World War II. With this novel, she comes back to her native place for her setting. *The Voice of the People* (1900) is the first in the series of novels dealing with the social history of Virginia. It is a faithful panorama of Southern life and character, Ellen Glasgow contrasts the aristocratic-democratic Williamsburg, the former capital of Virginia, with the plebeian-dissembling-aristocrats Richmond, the latter-day capital. Nicholas Burr, a poor white, grows to political power, struggling to attain the Jeffersonian ideal of a state based on merit rather than privilege. Dudley Webb is his political opponent, an unenlightened exemplar of the old power structure. Eugenia Battle loves Nick but marries Dudley Webb, representing Ellen Glasgow’s divided love for the nobility of the past but her scorn at the blind worship of it. This novel is a masterly study of social and political conditions.
In 1899, Miss Glasgow fell in love with Gerald B—and the love lasted for seven years, until his death. The novels written during period—*The Battleground* (1902) and *The Deliverance* (1904)—show a marked difference in her treatment of love as in these two only, among the early novels, the hero and heroine are united towards the end of the novel. *The Battleground* shows the effects of Civil War in Virginia. The war deprives the aristocrats, the Lightfoots and the Amblers of everything. Major Lightfoot’s grandson, Dan Montjoy quarreling with his grandfather joins war. Governor Ambler dies defending the South. His daughter Betty faces the poverty and hardships caused by the war. She awaits Dan and assures him all her support to build their future. Betty is one of the courageous heroines of Ellen, foreshadowing her later strong women. The novel also shows Miss Glasgow’s growth in artistic fullness with each book. It is stronger and more mature in finish.

The next novel, *The Deliverance* (1904) presents the reversal of social order due to the civil war. The aristocratic Blakes are deprived of their wealth by their overseer Bill Fletcher. But Old Mrs. Blake, blind and crippled, is never told the truth that they are living in the overseer’s cottage. Christopher, her son, drudges on a piece of land for their subsistence while his sister Cynthia slaves in home. He is delivered from his hatred for Bill, by the love of Maria, Bill’s grand-daughter. Miss Glasgow denounces materialism, the root of all evils and professes forgiveness and fortitude. In Mrs. Blake she portrays the post-war South, which still cherishes its glorious past. She introduces a new theme in this novel; the heart breaking tragedy of a generation of youngmen of natural force and charm deprived of all educational opportunity and left to face the world not only without means but without training.
The ecstasy, enjoyed by Ellen Glasgow for seven years suddenly came to an end in 1905 with Gerald B.'s death. She recalls that “period of death-in-life” during which she “became insensible, ( . . . ) with an anesthesia of the mind and the heart” (Glasgow, 1954; 167). She searched for personal consolation and re-orientation in the books of both Western and Eastern philosophers, Upanishads and Bhagavadgita. She found writing an antidote to experience. The novels written during this period - the *Wheel of Life* (1906) and *The Ancient Law* (1908) exalt the spiritual life and love above any consummation. The heroes Adams in the former and Ordway in the latter are married to women whom they dislike but to whom they are faithful. The theme of love as transcendent of selfish passion is repeated in her later novels. In a review, Isaac F. Marcosson praises Ellen Glasgow’s “profound depth” of understanding and the “bigness of her grasp of life” as seen in *The Ancient Law* (1908; 53-54).

Ellen Glasgow could no longer walk on the path of metaphysics. “On that road, one could travel by faith alone and there was no faith in the light that was guiding me ( . . . )” (Glasgow, 1954; 176). She began to read the works of Berkeley, Locke and Hume and returned to her social history of Virginia with renewed vigour. Having treated the Civil War, the reconstruction and the rise of common man, she now concentrated on the new industrial and financial powers rising from the working class of urban Virginia. In *The Romance of a Plain Man* (1909) she shows the family ties in relation to the economic status. Ben Starr, the hero, goes far from his wife Sally's love as he grows richer. Among the aristocrats these relationships are more of shallow nature. She further examines the true values of the institution of marriage. Ben and Sally’s marriage represents an ideal blend of the Old South values and the new South culture. She tries to arrive at a meaning of life. “My single motive was to analyze the enduring fibre of
human nature, under the law of continuity and the sudden impetus of dramatic occurrences” (Glasgow, 1943; 67). Ben Starr rises from poverty to become the President of a railroad. He marries Sally, from aristocracy. During his financial crises, he is morally supported by Sally whom he neglects. He sacrifices an opportunity to reach his life’s goal – to become the President of the railroad company – to win back Sally’s love. As Frederick Taber Cooper puts it, dealing with the theme of unequal marriages, *The Romance of a Plain Man* is the author’s “most thoughtful, most mature and altogether biggest novel” (1909; 618).

*The Miller of Old Church* (1911) makes a companion study of the earlier one with the same themes - the decadence of the aristocrats and the rise of the hard-working middle class. This is the last novel to deal with the emergence of common man and romantic love. Molly Merryweather is an illegitimate child of an irresponsible aristocrat and a lower class woman. The betrayal of her mother by her aristocratic father embitters Molly who violates traditional bonds but ultimately marries Abel Revercomb, the aristocrat miller. Ellen Glasgow focusses on the conflict between traditional roles for women and the reality of a woman’s emotional life. This novel marks the development of Ellen for it gives her a way to combine the study of class change with the study of woman’s role in the custom-bound South.

With two contrasting novels centred on the role of women in the modern world, Ellen Glasgow completed her sequence of novels of the commonwealth. In her later fiction, she presents and illuminates the lives of the frustrated and the neglected. Among those *Virginia* (1913) is one of her most important novels. As Godbold writes, “In the early twentieth century, aristocratic young gentlemen were allowed to bypass the old code of honor, but young ladies still were expected to endure a useless and unhappy life.
The fate of the ladies was to Ellen Glasgow more tragic than the moral degeneration of the gentlemen" (1970; 260 & 261). In *Virginia* (1913) and in *Life and Gabriella*, the role of woman in a changing society is thoroughly examined. Both the protagonists are from aristocratic class with a contrast in natures. While Virginia is the vanishing Victorian lady, Gabriella represents the 'new woman'. Miss Glasgow’s veneration for the past makes her present a sympathetic picture of Virginia, modelled on her mother, though originally intended for an ironic portrayal. In her essays "Woman’s Suffrage (1909)", "Feminism (1913)" and "Some Literary Woman Myths (1928)" (*Reasonable Doubts*, ed. Raper, 1988). She discusses the plight of the womanly woman, the masculine ideal. Her concern for the Southern women who need sufficient freedom to express themselves, becomes one of her major themes in her later fiction.

The growth of southern woman from a passive traditional lady to a more courageous woman, liberating herself from the trite conventions which denied her an opportunity to develop her personality as an individual to the fullest possibility, passing through different phases forms the basis of the present study. The novels chosen are *Virginia* (1913), *Life and Gabriella* (1916), *Barren Ground* (1925), *Vein of Iron* (1935) and *In This Our Life* (1941). *Virginia* (1913) marks a turning point in the career of Miss Glasgow for it presents a glimpse of change in her attitude towards her career. Until this period, though basically a realist, she depended on romantic plots or vividly romantic
characters as her vehicles for cultural criticism. With Virginia she had gone beyond romanticism by rendering a realistic picture of a proper Southern lady who believed that marriage is her ultimate goal and a solution to all problems, never realizing that marriage creates more problems than it solves.

As part of her social history, Ellen Glasgow made a study of every class and stature in her previous novels. With *Virginia*, she concentrated upon the forms and lives of Southern aristocratic womanhood and the social forces which moulded the “ideal” lady in the Victorian fashion. The existence of an ideal lady is limited to love, marriage and motherhood. Virginia marries Oliver Treadwell, nephew of Cyrus Treadwell, the financial master of the town, a man of all vices associated with materialism. Untrained and unable to give her intellectual companionship and moral support in the hour of his need, Virginia loses Oliver. Her daughters sympathise with her but show no concern. It is only her son, Harry, who comes back to take care of her.

Ellen Glasgow wrote this novel in New York, where she stayed from 1911 to 1916 after Cary’s death. *Life and Gabriella* (1916) is a companion to *Virginia*. Like Virginia, Gabriella is also a traditional lady but in a modern garb. Born a decade later to Virginia in the same society, she refuses to accept her genteel poverty and be a dependent on her relatives. She defies tradition, even breaks her engagement to Arthur Peyton, an aristocrat but ineffectual gentleman, to work in a department store. She marries George Fowler of New York, attracted by his physical charm. But his interest in wine and other women shatters her happiness. George leaves her after fathering two children. Working in a dress making establishment of Madam Dinard and assisted at home by Miss Polly Hatch, a seamstress from Virginia, Gabriella takes care of her children and in-laws. She meets Ben O’Hara, a self-made man, living in the apartment below her. Repelled by his
crudity, she rejects his proposal, cherishing still Arthur Peyton’s love in her heart. When George Fowler returns to her, broken in health, Ben O’Hara takes care of him until his death and funeral. Her visit to Richmond disillusions her of Arthur Peyton who remains static amidst total change. She rushes back to New York in time to meet Ben O’Hara who decides to leave the place for good. Though Gabriella entertains a few characteristics of traditional lady, she frees herself from the shackles of custom, emerges as a new woman and achieves victory. Miss Glasgow, in this novel, offers a graphically true picture of a woman’s growth through changing fortunes.

Ellen Glasgow returned to Richmond during her father’s sickness of which he died in January 1916. Her meeting Henry W. Anderson, a Richmond lawyer physically charming and refined in manners whom she calls Harold S – in her autobiography, was a turning point in her life. His political views and aspirations interested her as they opposed another entrenched institution in the South, the Democratic Party. Ellen’s literary popularity and her strength of mind attracted Anderson. They were engaged in 1917 and together they wrote The Builders (1919): Caroline Meade, a trained nurse, engaged to take care of Letty, daughter of David Blackburn a successful manufacturer and political aspirant, understands David’s noble qualities better than his wife Angelica, the selfish and evil natured woman, who ruins her husband’s reputation by spreading rumours. In this novel also Ellen Glasgow treats love above physical consummation.

Henry Anderson had left Richmond to work as a Colonel in the Red Cross, in Rumania. The news of his attention to the Queen of Rumania broke Ellen’s heart who consequently broke her engagement to him in 1919. She attempted suicide but “life would not release (me) her” (Glasgow, 1954; 240). She began another therapy novel, One Man in His Time (1922), in which she tried an ideal blend of past nobility with
modern vitality. The death of Gideon Vetch, the sympathetic governor of Virginia, who rose to power by his sheer personality despite his lack of education and the failure of Benham, his political opponent, drive the young Stephen Culpepper to find a solution to the political problems. In his marriage with Patty, Gideon’s daughter, Ellen explores the marriage between different classes.

Ellen Glasgow, subjected to a great depression by her traumatic love affair with Anderson, emerged a mature woman and artist. Her philosophy and art coalesced into the writing of her next successful novel *Barren Ground* (1925), “Years before, when I began *Barren Ground*, I knew that I had found a code of living that was sufficient for life or for death” (Glasgow, 1954; 271). Falling out of love, “a blissful tranquility” (Glasgow, 1954; 244) was bought at the cost of all emotion and Dorinda Oakley is a plain reflection of her. Though the main focus is on woman’s courage, strength and her stoic endurance in the face of onerous life, Ellen Glasgow also portrays a true picture of Southern society with different levels of people and the significance of the land in Southern culture. *Barren Ground* is Ellen’s masterpiece, glorifying the woman’s strong vein of iron which helps her to achieve a meaning to her life.

Dorinda Oakley, a young brunette of twenty one, living at Pedlar Mill, falls in love with the young doctor Jason Greylock, already engaged to Geneva Ellgood. Learning her pregnancy and Jason’s marriage with Geneva, the disillusioned Dorinda leaves for New York where she meets with a fortuitous accident leading to her miscarriage. During her two years’ stay there, she learns new methods of farming and returns to Pedlar Mill after her father’s death. With the help of Nathan Pedlar, a successful farmer and merchant whom she marries later, she establishes a dairy and achieves control over broomsedge. Her victory is complete when she buys Jason’s
property at auction and takes care of him in his abject poverty of both health and wealth. Though she pays heavily – with the loss of emotion – she emerges to be triumphant. Dorinda, like Ellen Glasgow, is happy for having “finished with all that” (Glasgow, 1925; 500).

By pouring out her tormented heart in Barren Ground and by making Dorinda victorious, Ellen felt relieved of her psychological burdens, caused by the tragic end of her love. Regaining her natural sense of humour, she was able to mock at the tragic weaknesses in others in a lighter vein, the same weakness with which she was bitter in Barren Ground. Being concerned with the social and moral codes of her society, she perceived that World War I accelerated the disintegration of the civilization. She exposes the decay with an urbane comic spirit. Judge Gamaliel of The Romantic Comedians, a lawyer of sixty five, after the death of his wife is eager to marry Annabel Upchurch, twenty three years old. Though Annabel marries him for financial reasons, she elopes with a man of her age. The disappointed judge enters a hospital to die but takes fancy for a young nurse.

Ellen Glasgow observes a steep fall in moral standards of the people, which result in their affected manners. She probes into the psychology of men and women and doubts, “whether the recently fallen standards which had once so gallantly withstood material destruction, would ever rise again over the lost provinces of the spirit” (Glasgow, 1943; 237). Her unfaltering interest in the woman leads her to examine the place of “ruined woman” in a society dominated by the man, no better than her, but hides his reality under the garb of gentility. In They Stooped to Folly (1929) she draws the ironic contrasts involved in the “ruin” of three women of different generations. Virginius Littlepage, a lawyer and a Virginian gentleman, knows his mind wandering in the
forbidden areas but never tries to violate the moral code of his society. He is surrounded by three “ruined” women of three generations: Aunt Agatha Littlepage, jilted by the man she is engaged to, is a recluse in her room; Mrs. Dalrymple, involved in a scandal loses both her husband and lover; and Milly Burden, loved and betrayed by an unstable youth Martin Welding, never feels guilty of violation of code as it happens in the other two. Virginians. Littlepage, witness of the changing mores, entrusts his daughter, Mary Victoria, a zealous social reformer, to find Martin in Europe. She finds and marries him to ‘reform’ him, much to the consternation of all. The disillusioned Milly shakes off her emotional bonds.

Ellen Glasgow, observes the foul odour spreading both figuratively and literally under the influence of industrialism. With superb irony blended with compassion she exposes the “evasive idealism” of the aristocracy represented by Eva Birdsong, a traditional lady who victimizes herself in an attempt to embody the Southern code. Jenny Blair, her neighbour girl takes fancy to her husband George Birdsong from her childhood. Jenny, in her ‘dangerous innocence’ never realises the harm done to Eva, when she flirts with the profligate George. Eva, ultimately finds her own self and shoots George as she sees Jenny in his arms. In George Achbald, Jenny’s grandfather, Ellen studies the tragedy of a civilized man in an uncivilized society, with its changing social and moral order. He is drawn against “a shallow and aimless society of happiness hunters who lived in a perpetual flight from reality” (Glasgow, 1943; 203). Ellen observed that America’s entry into World War I disturbed the social and moral code of the society to a large extent.

In 1932, the Great Depression occurred. Ellen was more concerned with her financial security than her literary fame. She was given the necessary help by her brother
Many events that occurred in her life went into her next autobiographical novel *The Vein of Iron* (1935). Against many turbulent events and social upheavals caused by the Depression, she traces the protagonist, Ada Fincastle’s development from a young girl to a mature woman. She believed that in her novel she had shown how religion, philosophy, love and simple human relationships were not the things that enabled man and traditions to endure but a stoic fortitude, a vein of iron, helped the survival. Ellen Glasgow tests the strength of this vein of iron in three generations of Scotch Irish people who have naturally inherited this quality. Ada stands the test and wins her life with no loss, unlike Dorinda.

John Fincastle, a Presbyterian minister, loses his place as he turns a philosopher. His heresy is a terrible shock to his mother, who has lived by the stern tenets of the Presbyterians faith. Ada his daughter, from her childhood loves her neighbour boy Ralph Mc Bride. Janet Rowan, the spoilt daughter of the rich merchant and industrialist Mr. Rowan, traps Ralph into marriage. After six years of unhappy married life, they get separated. Ralph comes to Ironside, their village and enjoys a tryst for three days on Thunder Mountain before he joins army. Ada’s illegal conception drives her grandmother nearer to death. After Ralph’s return, they move to Queenborough to eke out their living. John gets a teacher’s post, Ada gets employed in a department store and Ralph serves as a salesman in an automobile shop. Ralph’s affair with their neighbour Minna ends with an accident which drains their savings. Owing to the Great Depression they lose their jobs. John Fincastle returns to Ironside, to their manse to have a peaceful death. Ada and Ralph who come to attend his funeral, decide to remain there and try a new beginning.
Ellen Glasgow's next novel *In This Our Life* (1941) was written between periods of severe illness, twice affected by heart attacks. She went almost into the mouth of death, which she even enjoyed (Glasgow; 1954; 289). She watched the chaotic conditions into which the society was thrown by the World War II. In this novel, she projects an analysis of the modern mind and temperament in a single community (Glasgow, 1954; 249). She makes a study of a woman under the impact of the breakdown of tradition and weakened morals. The bewildered Roy, the protagonist, exclaims in anguish, to her father for something to hold by. Asa Timberlake, her father, assures her an anchor to be found in the future. Ellen emphasizes the need of virtues for a man to stand firm in a stormy civilization. She also examines the psychological problems a man would face being unable to adjust himself with the disastrous disproportion between his expectations from life and the oppressive realities he confronts. In this novel, Miss Glasgow is mainly concerned with the frustrations of Asa and Roy Timberlake who are defeated by their unworthy marriages.

Asa Timberlake, drudging in a tobacco factory, once belonged to them, is married to a hypochondriac wife Lavinia who delights in tormenting him. Lavinia's uncle, William Fitzroy, a materialistic man of despicable qualities, but a business tycoon, spoils Asa's younger daughter Stanley who does not resist his avuncular interest, for his valuable gifts. The spoilt Stanley elopes with her sister Roy's surgeon husband Peter Kingsmill on the day of her engagement with Craig Fleming. Roy and Craig, struck by same kind of misery come closer. Peter, unable to meet Stanley's extravagance, commits suicide. Stanley is 'consoled' by her uncle with a gift of a sports car and a negro chauffeur, Parry Clay. Driving the car at a high speed, Stanley kills a child but the family protects her by making Parry Clay, an aspirant to law, a scape goat. Asa, unable to bear
the injustice done to Parry, forces Stanley to confess. Though Parry is released, his dreams are crushed permanently. Roy perceives Craig's interest in Stanley and leaves him. In her frustrated mood she goes out in storm and meets a stranger in a park. She does not hesitate to spend the night with him. Next morning, she returns home to take her things and exclaims desperately to her father for something to hold by. Ellen Glasgow closes the novel on an optimistic tone with Asa's assurance.

Ellen Glasgow, seeing that *In This Our Life* is not understood in the right perspective, wanted to clarify herself. She wrote a short sequel *Beyond Defeat* during 1942 and 1943 but it was published posthumously in 1966. The novel relates the consequent events in Roy's and Asa's lives. Asa leaves for "Hunter's Fare", a place which belonged to his dead friend and a place which he loved most. Roy gives birth to Timothy who represents a hopeful future. Lavinia dies marking the death of aristocracy. Roy is the only person who survives the dying tradition with her courage. Ellen Glasgow gives a final picture of the woman in *Beyond Defeat* - sympathising with and celebrating her dear virtues - courage and fortitude.

Ellen Glasgow articulated in her autobiographical books, *The Woman Within, A Certain Measure*, her letters and essays, her goal and achievement as a novelist. She was a conscientious craftsman who was confident of her achievement as a dedicated artist. In her foreword to *A Certain Measure*, she wrote: "( . . . ) to disparage an art one has attempted to practise since the age of seven cannot but seem a gesture wholly theatrical, what honest craftsman, regardless alike of the appraisal of critics and the indulgence of readers, would squander a lifetime upon work that did not contain for him a certain measure of achievement?" (1943; vii).
Miss Glasgow is the precursor to realism in Southern literature as she professed, in her *Letters* "(...) only realism of that period in Virginia was tinctured with romantic illusion. But, I have always looked through a veil of irony even in the days when all fiction wore fancy dress" (Glasgow, 1954; 70) - and is accepted by her critics. Marcelle Thiebaux writes, "(...) Glasgow renders the life of the Virginia region at a particular epoch, with its terrain, history and manners" (1982; 9). In *A Certain Measure*, she tells us her aim of presenting with fidelity and understanding a social history of Virginia from Civil War to World War II, "in the more freely interpretative form of fiction" (1943; 3), wherein the South would be seen "not sentimentally, as a conquered province, but truthfully, as part of a larger world." (1943; 152). Since, Glasgow was very familiar with the aristocratic society, she made a thorough analysis of the hardships of the upper-class during reconstruction in her earlier works and the shallowness of their human relationships during the later period, in her subsequent novels. Her record covers a broad spectrum of life with a few omissions like the details of urban labourers, tenant farmers or the problem of the Negroes in the South. The reason she professed was that she could not render what she did not know well (1943; 68). She sought to envisage her characters against the milieu with which she was herself so closely identified. With this social scene, Miss Glasgow successfully fused individual dramas of fruition or of frustration.

As a part of social history of Virginia, Ellen Glasgow reflected the tradition of her region and her own complex relation to it, as she believed that "all creative writing is an extension of personality" (1943; 112). Her skeptical attitude towards the Southern conventions which discouraged independent thinking and her own tormenting experiences and the traumatic effects of those experiences went into the creation of such autobiographical characters as Gabriella and Dorinda and adoption of a recurring theme.
from the first to the last – the need to renounce happiness in order to find it, as seen in the 
lives of Anna Allard in the first book and Asa Timberlake in the last. Yet she would not 
accept herself to be labelled as regional writer or her material as Southern, though the 
lives are projected against Southern background from 1850 to 1939. She writes in A
Certain Measure:

Wherever humanity has taken root there has been created (.) the stuff
of great novels; and this is true of the South in the exact degree that it is 
true of every other buried past upon earth (149).

She wanted to write of the South “as a part of a larger world” (1943; 52). She 
emphasized that the regional to be artistically effective, must go beyond the notation of 
local realities to provide a sweeping commentary upon human life. Her consistent 
purpose as a novelist was “to portray not Southern ‘types’ alone, but whole human 
beings, and to touch, or at least feel, the universal chords, beneath regional variations of 
character” (Glasgow, 1943; 152 & 153). Her novels are faithful transcriptions of 
experience and sustained interpretations of Southern life and manners. She believed that, 
“the true and only purpose of fiction is the communication of ideas, of feeling, of vital experience” (Glasgow, 1943; 260) and also “to illuminate experience and to interpret life 
“(Glasgow, 1943; 14 & 15). What is called regional aspect is “only the universal 
surveyed from a shifted angle of vision” (Glasgow, 1943; 153). Howard Mumford Jones 
rightly comments: “She has not written of Virginia life, but of human life in Virginia” 
(Letters, ed. Rouse, 1958; 335).

Assuming that any novel dealing with human life would possess a timeless quality 
which makes it a possession of any age, Ellen Glasgow writes, “(. . . ) the great novels 
have marched with years. They are the contemporaries of time” (1943; 116). For her, 
great fiction would possess “power, passion, pity, ecstasy and anguish, hope and despair
Ellen Glasgow, in her autobiography, reveals the formation of her “later theories of the novel as a mirror of life” (97). She observed the falseness in much Southern tradition” which she hated and hence she resolved, “I would write, (...) as no Southerner had ever written, of the universal human chords beneath the superficial variations of scenes and character, I would write of all the harsher realities beneath manners, beneath social customs, beneath the poetry of the past, and the romantic nostalgia of the present. (...) I would take as my theme those ugly aspects of life the sentimentalist passed over” (1954; 98). With this determination, she turned out to be the pioneer of realism in Southern literature. As a consistent realist, in the opening pages of The Descendant (1897), she presented the squalid life of rural farmers in a more somber tone than it had generally been painted in Southern literature. Similarly, she avoided sentimentality, the literary legacy of Victorian civilization. She wanted to strengthen Southern literature which had grown feeble by imitating European trends. “(...) the South needed blood and irony. Blood it needed because Southern culture had strained too far away from its roots in the earth; it had grown thin and pale; it was satisfied to exist on borrowed ideas, to copy instead of create. And irony is an indispensable ingredient of the critical vision; it is the safest antidote to sentimental decay” (Glasgow, 1943; 28).

Having resolved to be a realist with a purpose, she would “treat of the continual dissolution and renewal of social patterns, not in the south alone, but wherever man has
built his temporary habitation in a universe that is indifferent or hostile" (Glasgow, 1943; 61). She limited her work to the South and to Virginia mainly. From her deep knowledge of the place and the people she grasped the inner meanings of lives and from them she extracted universal meanings. In one of her letters, she writes, "knowledge, like experience is valid in fiction only after it has dissolved and filtered down through the imagination into reality" (Letters; ed. Rouse, 1958; 203).

That she is an artist to the core of her heart is firmly asserted by Ellen Glasgow in her autobiography: "I was born a novelist, though I formed myself into an artist" (1954; 41). Her gradual evolution into an artist, her interest in writing started very early in her life, at the age of seven. As she grew the seed of her art was watered and nurtured by her instinctive fastidiousness and her love of truth and excellence. Theories of art she grasped intuitively, "I may confess that spinning theories of fiction is my favourite amusement" (Glasgow, 1943; 190). She believed that a true novelist would find his material in the impressions made on his mind by the world around him. This born novelist would wait until the impressions are assimilated in his mind and take their own form with the help of intuition. She writes that a true novel, like pure poetry, can be created only after the long brooding season (1943; 190 & 191). She exemplifies this theory in her favourite novel Barren Ground. The germ of the novel lay in her mind for a decade until Dorinda "emerged from the yeasty medium with hard round limbs and the bloom of health in her cheeks" (Glasgow, 1943; 194).

Ellen Glasgow believed, art is a means to discover as well as express the meaning of reality and deeper truths of life. As the chief end of the novel is "to increase our understanding of life and heighten our consciousness" (Glasgow, 1943; 30), the artist would transform his novel into a "transfigured experience" — an experience deepened so
as to "heighten (...) illumination which would expose 'the burning realities (...) hidden beneath the quiet fortitude' of an intense life (Glasgow, 1943; 197). Such an artist would always "refresh and replenish his source", his material which is a sum total of the impressions made on his mind by every strong thought or experience. She felt, "Nothing I have learned either from life or from literature has been wasted" (Glasgow, 1943; 199).

After the long brooding, the material moulds its structure and characters evolve to take their own shapes, names and even points of view. Thus in *Barren Ground*, Dorinda's point of view decided the structure of the novel while in *The Sheltered Life*, the story flows on between the conflicting points of view of Jenny and General Archbald.

Ellen Glasgow professes that the characters or themes which walk into the visionary world have "a motive, or atleast an adequate reason" (Glasgow, 1943; 202). The character of General Archbald in *The Sheltered Life* represents "the tragedy (...) of the civilized man in a world that is not civilized. (...) the same tragedy was being repeated in spheres far wider than Queenborough. (...) it was through out the world that ideas, forms were changing, the familiar order going the beliefs and certainties (Glasgow, 1943; 204 & 205).

Miss Glasgow felt that a born novelist would remain "in a state of immersion" while at work on a book. He would pick up the right word with the help of intuition. She writes, "Often, when I have searched for hours for some special word or phrase, and given up in despair, I have awakened with a start in the night, because the hunted word or phrase had darted into my mind while I was asleep" (Glasgow, 1943; 206).

Ellen Glasgow believes that "Every literary craftsman who respects his work (...) remains restless and wandering in mind until, in the beginning, he has entered the right climate and, at the end has tracked down the right word" (Glasgow, 1943; 206). She was
found saying that she had never written the first word of the first sentence until she knew
the last word of the last sentence, though sometimes she might have to rewrite the
beginning (Glasgow, 1943; 207).

As a committed artist, Ellen Glasgow was convinced, that the writing of fiction
"which must be conceived with a subdued rapture" (Glasgow, 1943; 209), provides a
"release of mind" and "contentment" which is nothing less than any reward. (Glasgow,
1943; 207). In a letter to J. Donald Adams, she pours out her heart as a dedicated artist
writing in a materialistic time and place: "No one in the modern world is more lonely
than the writer with a literary conscience" (Letters, ed. Rouse, 1958; 211). Yet, her love
for her work was too strong to let her abstain from writing. She wrote to Stark Young:
"After more than thirty years, I feel lost when I try to absorb myself, even for a few
weeks, in other interests. I do find a satisfaction that keeps me alive, and I have never
expected any returns or rewards that were not restricted to the work itself" (Letters, ed.
Rouse, 1958; 159). She feels, no writer should sacrifice the "artistic integrity" for any
other value (Glasgow, 1943; 208). The writer requires "substantial ingredients" and "a
yearning to tell everything one has never known". She concludes that a writer needs to
"wait between books for the springs to fill up and flow over", preserve his impressions
and interpret life, keeping "the central vision of the mind, the inmost light, untouched and
untouchable" (Glasgow, 1943; 210). All her novels were written within an average gap
of two or three years.

Though Ellen Glasgow shared with Howell, her contemporary writer, some of her
views on her art of fiction – antipathy for romance, importance of character, fidelity to
experience, -- she resisted his "charm and influence" and considered his realism as "dull
gentility" (Glasgow, 1954; 141). She felt, the absolute fidelity of the treatment of
external world may be a part of reality but a true and firmer reality consists in the inner
vision of the artist. For her, an artist with an impassioned personal outlook on life, would stand in a poetic relationship to his subject. She understood that “truth to art in the end became simple fidelity to one’s own inner vision” (Glasgow, 1954; 125) after she read Tolstoy. In this emphasis on the realist’s subjective involvement with his material in order to understand their inner significance, Miss Glasgow comes closer to the ideas developed by another contemporary writer Frank Norris. These realists, including Ellen Glasgow, in their search for truth with a modicum of subjectivity, show the extent of influence they received from Darwinian concepts. Moreover, these writers were impressed by the nineteenth-century French novelists, whom Miss Glasgow called “the great realists”.

Miss Glasgow liked Henry James and followed him to his masters, Flaubert and Maupassant. She considered Maupassant a supreme craftsman. After a thorough study of him she came to a conclusion, “the novel should be a form of art – but art was not enough. It must contain not only the perfection art, but the imperfection of nature” (Glasgow, 1954; 125). From him, she learned “the value of the precise word, of the swift phrase, of cool and scrupulous observation”. From her study of him, she realized the virtue of “a style that was touched with beauty and yet tinctured with irony” (Glasgow, 1954; 126), and also the “delight in the rhythm and the minor cadences of English prose” (Glasgow, 1954; 127). From her French masters, she acquired a resolutely honest approach to experience besides a perception “that the assembling of material, the arrangement of masses” (Glasgow, 1943; 17) would impart the work a desired total effect. While writing her social histories, Ellen Glasgow received the necessary comprehensiveness and sympathy from Balzac. From those realists, those explorers of the heart, she perceived the gulf of difference existing between the novel of emotion
toward life and the novel celebrating a sterile convention. "This was literary realism", she professes, "It meant the way of the swift stroke, of the clean cut, of the deep penetration into experience" (Glasgow, 1943; 17).

Besides realism, Miss Glasgow's theory and practice of fiction had some resemblances to literary naturalism: milieu playing a role, a belief in the power of social laws, a sense that human nature is still in the bonds of primitive and eruptive forces, a conviction that Darwinian concepts underlie any modern world view, a conclusion that ethics is the essence of experience, an unshaken confidence in the individual force to break through inhibiting social conventions and a realization that heredity and environment play a vital role in limiting a man's effectiveness as a free agent. Despite her faith in the power of heredity and environment, she was a pragmatist with regard to the freedom of will. In her essay "I Believe" she expresses her recognition that the freedom of will, as a concept, serves a useful moral and social purpose:

The longer I observe experience, the greater emphasis I place upon determinism both in our beliefs and in our bodies. Regarding the freedom of will and regarding that doctrine alone, I suppose I may call myself more or less of a pragmatist. Indefensible in theory, no doubt that exalted error — if it be an error — appears necessary to the order of civilized man and seems to justify, on higher grounds, its long record of service as a moral utility. (Reasonable Doubts, ed. Raper, 1988; 229).

Like Hardy, Ellen Glasgow also believed that artistic effectiveness derives from a sympathetic understanding of life, giving more importance to the spiritual self of man. She agreed with him in his concept — that "character is fate" — in which the will may be considered one of the most influential of the forces which comprise fatality.

By reading Chekhov, Miss Glasgow realised the importance of inner vision modulating the actual experience. From Tolstoy she drew the precept that "life must use art; art must use life" (Glasgow, 1954; 125). She acquired considerable guidance from
her extensive reading in continental literature, to order her experience and capture the wider significance of the regional life which she depicted in her fiction.

Ellen Glasgow sought to give expression to her strong convictions through a deep study of lives around her. She discovered her abundant material ready to be exploited; close to her she felt, "the soil was deep and dark with a thick deposit of unused material," which the romancers of her time had scarcely touched (Glasgow, 1943; 30). Although she planned to write social history mingled with romance set in colourful milieu, in her early works, her focus was not on the descriptive detail of a romantic love or the recreation of a romantic milieu. Her chief emphasis lay on the psychological. By the time, she wrote *Virginia* (1913), she understood what an amount of effort was needed merely to prove "that things were not what they seemed and that they were in fact, seldom known by their right names" (Glasgow, 1943; 121). Despite the lucrative temptation to write for a popular audience, she faithfully pursued her endeavor to render with truth the experience she knew best.

Being concerned with the plight of woman, Miss Glasgow made herself a champion of woman's rights. For some time, she actively participated in the women's Suffrage Movement, with a hope that it would open possibilities for woman's development. She observed the crumbling orders of the society was due to the decay of aristocracy, development of Science which brought a radical change in the thinking of people, growth of Industrialism which facilitated the rise of middle class and the World Wars. These major events have had a devastating effect on the society culminating in the distress of women and the vulnerable sections of the society. Looking at the society in which she lived, Ellen Glasgow was seriously concerned with the many institutions that were supposed to stabilize it – gentility, marriage, family, human relationships. She
deplored strongly the shallowness that was existing in every phase of it. With her sharp but
gentle irony she exposed the foibles of her society. The comedies, specially, show how
antiquated and stationary the aristocrat remained and how imperative it was to replace him.
The novels in the heroic line pay attention to the poor white and his latent characteristics
which guarantee his eventual success. In many of her novels, the mental thinness, emotional
dryness and intrinsic weakness of the old feudal order is contrasted with the mind of the
poor white who rise to the high positions by sheer effort and vigour of character:

The chief strength of Miss Glasgow's novels lie in her untiring quest for the abiding
reality beneath the changing surfaces of life and a penetrating insight into human nature, the
root cause of many complex experiences. She found that inhumanity or cruelty and
indifference to suffering - which she called evasive idealism - are at the centre of sorrow in
human life. The society, being in a state of transition, destabilized the values of life. In her
essay "I Believe", Miss Glasgow observed that often goodness is not "victorious among the
utilitarian morals of civilization". Yet it is the "only principle deserving worship" ( . . . )
because "it has endured and survived in the struggle with evil" (Reasonable Doubts, ed.
Raper, 1988; 232). She deplores the growing materialism encouraging the disintegration of
civilization in which a truly civilized man finds life tragic. She dislikes the sacrifice of
goodness and noble virtues by man in his selfish pursuits of imponderable values. She pities
humankind suffering under the rule of universal anarchy. She felt, the spiritual
inadequacies of modern man have led to the defeat of the ideals embodied in the new
freedom. The only antidote to the chaos in the society is the establishment of a civilized
world. She firmly held the view that "the approach to a fairer order lies, not without, but
within; and that the only way to make a civilized world is to begin and end with the
civilizing of man" (*Reasonable Doubts*, ed. Raper, 1988; 243). She professed that such a state of civilization is possible only with the cultivation of "sublime virtues which are called truth, justice, courage, loyalty, compassion" (*Reasonable Doubts*, ed. Raper, 1988; 242).

Throughout her literary career, Ellen Glasgow strove for an ideal moral order in the society. But she was disillusioned by the sharp decline in moral order where man was at a loss of inner harmony and she ended by accepting some of the things she rebelled against in her youth. Besides, she also wanted to preserve the best in her tradition from contamination and abuse.

Born in a society that was dominated by patriarchy and hence denied any kind of freedom to women, Ellen Glasgow condemns vehemently the many flaws that were associated with the system. In all her novels, she realistically and intelligently dramatizes the defects of the cultural order which sanctioned the victimization of women. While the long suffering of her weak and inarticulate mother made her soft enough to be on the side of the weaker and less fortunate, she imbibed her father's fortitude and fighting spirit which would never allow her to succumb to any adversity. Her whole career has been an untiring search for a system of values which can connect family and community with women operating successfully in primary sustaining roles which they share with men without sacrificing their individuality.

*Virginia* (1913), *Life and Gabriella* (1916), *Barren Ground* (1925), *Vein of Iron* (1932) and *In This Our Life* (1941), the five novels chosen for study, embody her abiding interest in designing ways for strong and free women to earn fulfilling identities. Their fortitude, enabling them to achieve whatever success, is a measure of their spiritual strength.

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