CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The development of Ellen Glasgow (1873 -1945) as a person and as an artist was not haphazard or accidental. Everything in her life was guided from within in a certain direction on account of her irresistible urge to seek the solutions to certain questions that arose in her mind from the early age of seven.

Aristotle says while talking about the freedom of will:

We cannot directly will to be different from what we are, (but) we can choose what we shall be by choosing now the environment that shall mould us, so we are free in the sense that we mould our own character by our choice of friends, books, occupations and amusements.¹

Ellen Glasgow chose to be a novelist. In choosing novel writing as her occupation she selects the best medium of expression for the interpretation of the experiences of life. For it was the most natural and suitable medium of expression for her temperament and outlook. As she herself says:

I became a novelist before I was old enough to resist, and remained a novelist because no other enterprise in life has afforded me the same interest or provided me with equal contentment.  

At the age of seven or eight she was well-acquainted with English literature and with English history, as it was her father's habit to read aloud to his children every evening. Since they had their own library her taste was already formed. She did not know the multiplication table but she knew the names of all the heroes and heroines of the Waverley novels. And she was well-read in the tragedies of Shakespeare.

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One of the few intellectual advantages of her youth was the faculty with which she discovered ideas at the moment she needed them, for she had never approached literature by way of college courses in English. Books had been for her one of the vital elements of experience, not a thing apart, not classified facts. Great novels, as she had come upon them either in youth or in later years had unerringly revealed the human mind and heart as they were affected by the deeper realities. She saw that the novel contains the breath of life. She found illumination falling straight on the subject. What she wanted was an interpretation of life, and she cared only for expressing herself in the novel form. She did not approve of drama as a suitable form of expression. She did not permit even the dramatization of her novels. In an interview she said:

No, I never had the desire to write a play. I like the flow of the novel. It is the best expression of the people and the times. The drama cannot comprehend all the life as it is to-day. A large canvas is needed to picture the greater complexity. The greatest drama was written in times when life was far more simple than it is
now. The novel alone can take in its flow all of this complexity. I am ardently interested in the form of the novel. Its technique is more real.  

Glasgow drew her own criterion from Henry Fielding and believed that great fiction was great truth-telling, and the true novel was not merely a good story well-told, it was history illuminated by imagination. She also believed that the constructive novelist, the novelist who really interpreted life never ignored any fact of life. Instead he would accept them and build upon them his creative world. He would perceive the power of the will to control destiny. He would know that life is not what you get out of it but what you put into it.

Her contemporary James Branch Cabell suggested that she was a social historian and Glasgow gladly accepted her role as one ideally suited to be an objective observer of human life in Virginia. The publication of the Virginia Edition of her novels gave her the opportu-

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3 Ellen Glasgow, 'The Novel as Voyage'. Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 121.
nity to prove that the label of "social historian" was justly deserved.

She had read with as much interest as if it were a novel itself, every treatise on the art of fiction that appeared to her to be promising. That veritable branch of letters shared with philosophy the favourite shelf in her library.

She learnt many things about writing but when it came to actual writing she evolved her own theory and that was relying upon intuition, and the inner voice: 'this is not right' or 'something ought to be different'. She explains:

For my own part, and it appears, however far I stray, that I must still return to "the highly personal statement", the only method I have deliberately cultivated has been a system of constant renewal. If novels should be, as Sir Leslie Stephen has said "transfigured experience", then I have endeavored whenever it was possible to deepen experience and to heighten what
I prefer to call illumination, to increase my understanding of that truth of life which has never become completely reconciled with the truth of fiction.

As a very small child, not even seven, she recognized that pain could cut deeper than pleasure, that the edge of pain was rougher and more twisted. This recognition was the outcome of the experiences she had at a very young age, of both delight and distress. Of course all children have contradictory experiences of pleasure and pain but it was all different with Ellen Glasgow. An average child would forget or be indifferent while in her case these experiences remained deeply rooted in her being all her life. Watching the beauty of spring from her window (much of her time was spent at her window) and at dusk the old lamplighter going by on his evening round, and the lighted lamps looking like rows of pale daffodils, gave her great delight. She had learnt to recognize beauty and wonder with a heart replete with joy. But this was not to last long. For a little later, on one occasion, absorbed in her play she heard the

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* Ellen Glasgow, 'One Way to Write Novels' Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 156.
scream of pain and sound of stones flung and falling, and to her bewilderment she saw that it was a dog being chased by boys and men. She had seen what it meant to be hunted, and the sight created tormented hatred of merciless strength and heartbreaking pity for all the helpless victims of life. The other tormenting incident which lay deep in her memory was the struggle of an old Negro, Uncle Henry, when he was brought out from his cellar and put into the wagon belonging to the alm house because he was penniless, half-witted and old. His repeated cry "Don't put me in!" brought a flood of misery over her. She felt lost and hopeless.

In Ellen Glasgow there was a fine combination of a "compassionate heart" and an "inquiring mind." At a very young age the mono-syllable why! why! was on her lips so often that her father would pay her a new penny to stop asking questions. Her escape from hostile circumstances came in summers when the family used to go to Jerdone Castle, an estate of some seven hundred acres. It was a kind of paradise for Francis' (Glasgow's father's) youngest children. Ellen was like an encaged bird as she ran across the yards and field. The love for natural things was second only to her sense of enduring kinship.
with birds, animals and all inarticulate creatures. She and Mammy knew every tree by name.

She was a very sensitive, thoughtful and imaginative child haunted by the strange sense of exile which visits the subjective mind when a person is unhappily placed. When her Mammy left soon after her 7th birthday she experienced a deep sense of loss and bore it to the end of her life.

Glasgow's childhood was rich in a sense that she had a good opportunity to develop her interest in nature; inarticulate plants and animals became more real to her. The natural surrounding of Jerdone farm was a good compensation against her inability to attend school. She also had the good fortune of knowing interesting and lively personalities who told her stories which would sharpen her inventive and imaginative mind.

Glasgow's interior world was thickly woven around recollections. But they had no part in the remote, hidden region of the mind. In that spiritual world she wandered free, wild and a rebel. She loved solitude which is not dependent on any external stimulus. It was in this
solitude that she began to understand the necessity of living with herself as she was, as she actually was. It afforded her freshness and freedom to be, to go, and to function as she liked. On the farm, she felt free, alive within and even felt happiness. Even her writing was done out of doors. When she was not playing there was always a book in her hand. She was born with a genuine passion for words and rhythms. She had read more English poetry at a young age, than she could assimilate. In those days poetry possessed her. But why she chose to write prose instead of verse she herself never knew. She explains:

The truth is that I began being a novelist, as naturally as I began talking or walking so early I cannot remember when the impulse first seized me. Far back in my childhood, before I had learned the letters of alphabet, a character named Little Willie wandered in the country of my mind, just as every other major character in my novels has strolled across my mental horizon. When I was not expecting him, when I was not even thinking of the
According to her own account, she was but seven when she wrote her first story, Only a Daisy. Barely one short page in length, the story was a milestone in the life of the author. Mammy was gone and with her Little Willie (an imaginary character) had vanished from her imagination. The upshot of it was that Ellen began to create a private world of the mind in which there were characters she could possess and force to be her companions. Uncomfortable in the real world, she created a new world more to her liking. Her earl in the story approved absolutely of the daisy, whereas her real childhood friends had sent her away with her story. She revealed a motivation for writing and a self-image that stuck with her for the rest of her life.

The one permanent interest, the single core of unity at the centre of her nature was beginning to shape itself and harden. And she constantly asked herself, why were the things what they were? Why did God let people and animals suffer when He could prevent them by a word or

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5 ibid., P.153.
gesture? Her infant sense of justice protested the agony of the Cross, the despair of Judas, and the avenging torments of the damned.

Furthermore she was the offspring of parents who were unlike each other in mental and physical characteristics. Her father, a man of sterling integrity ..., and unshakable fortitude, accepted literally the most barbaric texts in the Scriptures from the fall of Adam to infant damnation. Whereas, her mother, magnanimous to a fault, would have divided her last hope with any spiritual beggar. Ellen was barely a child when she found herself confronting the knowledge of good and evil in her limited world. She had seen by this time not only the joys and sorrows of human life but also the joys and sorrows of that vast and imperfectly understood animal world. The fate of animals in a hostile universe had demolished all the theological dogma she had inherited and she realized that she could not believe in many things her elders believed. She was only ten when she told herself with a kind of cheerful desperation,
If I am damned, I am damned and there is nothing to be done about it.°

From this conflict she tended to believe not only in the souls of men, women, children and animals but in the souls, too, of trees, plants, and of winds and clouds, and thought that by some miraculous performance, all the countless multitude of souls would be taken care of in an infinite heaven.

She never lost this faith since it was rooted in the deepest sources of her personality, and her vague religious instinct leaned toward a distant trust in some spirit, or divine essence which many poets and philosophers have called Good (which was the most pure and the highest part of the Whole). But her inquiring mind was never at rest. She sought the answers regarding the working of the all-powerful Providence and she wondered whether it was merely concerned with the special fate of mankind or whether there existed some consciousness superior to ours in an infinity of universe. But she did

° Ellen Glasgow, 'I Believe'. Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 230.
perceive the signs of an actual presence of goodness, explicit or implicit in nature or in civilization.

Still the question lingered in her mind about Good. She questioned herself. Was this Good a spirit or an immanence, indwelling and all pervading, though not all powerful? Or was it merely to be one of those inevitable results of biological expediency which have accompanied the slow process of evolution? Despite her faith in Good she could not believe that goodness was rewarded in the present world or in some problematical heaven and nobody knew about the world hereafter. In the world of nature, goodness had too often gone down before the cannibal necessities, nor had it appeared constantly victorious among the utilitarian morals of civilization. The affairs of life had compelled her to recognize the limitations of Good and the more obvious limitations of Truth. However, she continued to revere this power as the one and only one principle deserving of worship, not because Good is omnipotent but because though lacking in omnipotence, it has endured and survived in the struggle with evil, whether or not evil is inseparable from the nature of life on Earth.
Thus in the beginning, her heart more than her mind was left unsatisfied by theological dogma. She, like George Santayana, Spanish born American poet and philosopher, had been repelled in youth by the moral equivocation which seemed to pervade the best-thought-of-philosophers. Years afterwards when she began a comparative study of various religious creeds, that yearning was not appeased. Her intelligence and reason enabled her to invent her own eclectic doctrine to make life meaningful and worthwhile. She read many scriptures, some in translations, but few religious figures and fewer religious creeds appealed to her individual blend of inherited and acquired characteristics. Of them the ineffable dim figures of Christ, the Buddha, and Lord Krishna affected her deeply and she did recognize that to reach them in their roots, to search for them either in spirit or truth, the right thing would be the imposing systems of theology which had borrowed their names and often rejected their natures. The pattern of society as well as the scheme of things thus appeared to her false and malignant. She felt that there must be some other way to live. She was bound to find some untrodden path to truth. She must reject her father's tradition and his terrible Jehovah who had brought her to this low state.
Never would she surrender! She would dream dreams and search for happiness with the tools that were at her command.

She had already completed her readings of Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, R. L. Stevenson and Victor Hugo. Now she moved on to history and philosophy. Whatever she could find in her father's library she read including The Westminster's Confession. But the books were scarce and she had to read what she could get rather than what she wanted. In this situation Cary, her sister was a great source of hope and security. Cary was possibly the most brilliant of the Glasgow children. Her husband Walter McCormack was a young man of great intelligence and of a hypersensitive nature like Ellen herself. Cary and Walter were the only people to share her innermost life. Walter McCormack gave her a subscription to the New York Mercantile Library. The books that came from New York were the works of German scientists and philosophers like Schopenhauer, Kant, Schelling and Haeckel. The books included English novels and Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Glasgow dipped recklessly into it despite a warning that the forbidden 15th chapter would undermine her faith. She desperately hoped that the
meaning in life might be found from the pages of the books that came to her from New York.

Under Walter McCormack's tutelage she deserted her created world of Cowboys and Yankees and plunged into treatises on evolution and political economy. Guided by chance she found on the dusty shelf of a second-hand book shop a copy of Progress and Poverty by Henry George. She bought it, read eagerly the absorbing first chapters with their powerful analysis of social conditions. She was impressed by Henry George's review of the world's poverty. And her childish rage against social cruelty and injustice got melted into a more general conflict with the world's inhumanity. She read Adam Smith and Malthus. At eighteen she virtually memorised John Stuart Mill, and yearned for more philosophy. She became the only ardent suffragist, except her sister Cary, in their circle of acquaintances. She was radical when most of the people around her were conservative. By Walter McCormack's advice she studied Darwin's The Origin of Species until she could have passed successfully on every page. She was impressed by the all-embracing philosophy of organic evolution. At 21 she silently hoped that life would evolve upward, and she looked to the future and not to
the past. The Origin of Species became her favourite companion and in her own rebellious way Ellen read it to spite her father who offered her to pay to put the book away. Through her reading she was thrust prematurely into adulthood and confronted the realities of life before she was fully prepared to cope with them.

Science had failed her. She felt that a home could not be built on a skeleton. Religion had failed her. She could not rely upon phantoms. From the beginning her emotion and intellect were perpetually in conflict. Emotionally she was a believer, intellectually she was a skeptic.

The seven years' friendship with Gerald gave her great emotional strength but his death gave her such a shock that it appeared to her that it was a loss of sensation in every nerve of her body. After a period of death-in-life she slowly became alive again and took up the old search for reality. She turned to philosophy, not in the modern sense but as the ancient decreed pursuit of the highest good. She had read Plato long ago but now she wandered toward the Neoplatonists. She found a certain assuagement of sorrow by reading Enneads of Plotinus. It
enabled her to lose her troubled identity. Though she lacking the spiritual height of his flight of the alone to the Alone she was always grateful to that sublime mystic. Plotinus' own thoughts show some striking similarity to Indian religious philosophy. She looked for strength and found fortitude in the Meditation of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. "Many grains of frankincense on the same altar: one falls before, another falls after, but it makes no difference." The thoughts of this philosopher king have been considered by many generations some of the greatest of all times.

In the following years what Glasgow needed most was positive rest for the mind. She read the French philosopher Pascal who saw no salvation apart from the heartfelt desire for the truth, along with the love of God that works continually toward destroying all self-love. For her, Pascal's God known of the heart was not enough. She wanted to know her Absolute through reason as well. She could not satisfy herself with spiritual yearning or hard-bitten fact. In those days of despair she studied Kant, Schopenhauer and Spinoza. She found Hegel stiff in his style and vaguely metaphysical and could not read his work. Spinoza, the Dutch-Jewish
philosopher and the foremost exponent of the 17th century rationalism could not appeal to her as much as Schopenhauer. What she wanted was not to know but to live, to live in the mind but to live with certitude and with serenity, with reason in ascendant but still in sympathy with all animate nature. This was the point where Spinoza failed her. According to Glasgow Spinoza may have been blessed but he was not human.

The German philosopher Schopenhauer who ventured to call man the "metaphysical animal" appealed to Glasgow's mind. His The World as Will and Idea impressed her greatly. She found Schopenhauer more human and more satisfying to the mortal seeker of wisdom.

Despite reading the books of philosophy, the inborn vein of skepticism always prompted Glasgow to doubt everything she wished to believe. Later she also read Locke, Berkeley and Hume. But too much of philosophy possibly brought a feeling of loss or confusion. By that time she had known about the great religions of India. She studied the Upanishads and the Buddhist Suttas in the plain and prosy English of The Sacred Books of the East. Buddha, the figure of the Compassionate one, whose mercy
embraced all living things, regardless of race or tribe or species appealed to Glasgow's heart and mind very deeply. For her heart also grieved at the suffering of all articulate and inarticulate beings. Schopenhauer considered the Hindu invocation, "May all that have life be delivered from suffering" the noblest of prayers. Glasgow also agreed with what H. G. Wells said about Gautam Buddha:

The fundamental teaching of Gautam, as it is now being made plain to us by the study of original sources, is clear and simple and in the closest harmony with modern ideas. It is beyond all dispute the achievement of one of the most penetrating intelligences the world has ever known.

For Nirvana does not mean, as many people wrongly believe, extinction but the extinction of the futile personal aims that necessarily make life base or pitiful or dreadful.  

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In 1908 Glasgow made a pilgrimage to Italy, in the footsteps of St. Francis. She visited the pearl of all Italy, the Lower Church and the Upper Church of Assissi. When she left the sacred place she felt the memory of St. Francis flooded her soul with a spiritual radiance. But while going down the steep hill she saw a small skeleton of a horse, staggering under a lash as it dragged several robust Franciscan Friars up to the church. Her heart was grieved and she felt that St. Francis was one alone but the Franciscan friars were a multitude. For he too, though they had made him a saint, had failed to change human nature and human behaviour.

Her remark,

I liked human beings but I did not love human nature,

manifests her compassionate attitude and critical faculty. In Christ, in St. Francis and in Gautam Buddha she did not see the miracle of Godhead but a very special

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divinity. The spirit often stirred her to the depths of her being, but again the surface would harden, and her skepticism would be at work. She could travel only a part of the mystical way. She could love and worship but her skepticism agitated her faith which is a great source of inner strength for a mystic.

In the time of despair and distress she turned to mysticism and endeavoured to reach through intuition alone that absolute truth which is denied to intellect. Many-a-time she drew strength from Krishna in The Bhagavad Gita, from the Alone of Plotinus, and from Pascal's God known of the heart. On reading the 1896 edition of Annie Besant's translation of The Bhagavad Gita, she felt her karma or duty to be that of a seer or Brahmin. She was overwhelmingly impressed by the qualities of "serenity, self-restraint, austerity, forgiveness and also uprightness, wisdom, knowledge, faith in God" as attributed to a pure Brahmin by Lord Krishna in the 42nd sloka of chapter eighteen in The Bhagavad Gita. Her intellectual impulse had brought her a great distance from Spencer's praise of evolutionary self-interest to Krishna's warning, "If from egoism thou wilt not listen
thou shalt be destroyed utterly”, in the fifty-eighth sloka of chapter eighteen in The Bhagavad Gita.

Through her vast reading of scientific, mystical, transcendental books, books on political economy, evolution and environment, and fiction of great masters both English and European, she had evolved a world-view more appropriate to enhanced knowledge and the changed quality of sentiments. It was a world-view more in accord with the widening and developing knowledge of humanity. It was what we may call an embracing formula of life and its purpose. It seems that her purpose was to integrate science, philosophy and religion in relation to traditional ethical values and to the democratic way of life which stresses the dignity and worth of human personality. It appears that her quest was for a more intelligent interpretation of experience in the world about her. It involved two major considerations, firstly the knowledge of the nature of man himself and secondly the nature of man's social environment. Slowly she began to understand that a man’s religion or philosophy is as natural an expression of his identity as the colour of his eyes and tones of his voice. When he has not accepted inherited and traditional ways of living and thinking he obeys the
special compulsion of his education and environment. This learning manifests itself in the creation of Glasgow's characters.

Glasgow's reading enabled her to invent her own eclectic doctrine which moulded her life and works. It imparted to her the clear vision and understanding of the world she was depicting. During the process of writing which covered nearly half-a-century she cultivated a clear and impartial perception of the universe. In her novels she depicts something fundamental, universal and eternal about human nature. Her people are rooted to the ground, they are the sons of the soil, however philosophic or revolutionary they seem to be. e.g. Asa in In This Our Life; Mr. Archbald in The Sheltered Life; John Fincastle in Vein of Iron; Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground. These characters are not intellectuals or sham philosophers who would shut themselves in an ivory tower, or preach from the pulpit. In creating these characters Glasgow seems to have imbibed Schopenhauer's philosophy:

Nature really intended even learned men to be tillers of the soil, indeed professors of philosophy should be estimated accord-
Glasgow's novels propound the idea that the individual would manifest a natural excellence if freed from physical servitude and mental bondage to beliefs enforced by the Church and the state. They suggest that the individuals should not be used for purposes alien to humanity. Her characters distinguish themselves for the first time from those of her predecessors and most of the contemporary writers by their desire to be free, to investigate, to analyse, and to demonstrate their capacities in science, art, letters, and every branch of humanistic interest. To put in her own words,

This rare pattern of mankind has always attracted me as a novelist.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Ellen Glasgow, A Certain Measure : An Interpretation of Prose Fiction (New York : Harcourt Brace & Co. 1938) 39. Henceforth, the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form : CM
Her characters, one and all, are endowed with human worth and dignity. Some of them are strong enough to mould their destiny, like Dorinda in Barren Ground and Gabriella in Life and Gabriella. Others are weak like Virginia Pendleton in Virginia but possess the moral fibre, an essence of a human being and instinctive strength of innocence, the rest are average not outstanding in any particular field but possessing an understanding that there is no guide, no teacher other than one's own self to know the affairs of life, who know that "there is only he - his relationship with himself and others and with the world - there is nothing else." Her characters whether major or minor have evolved like their creator (Glasgow), their own theory, discovered their own path of truth and cultivated an understanding of what is actually taking place in their daily life inwardly and outwardly. Seeing the life not verbally but actually as it is, they have spontaneously transpired themselves. There is no set-up, system or ideology for them to follow. In trying to conform to an ideology a person has to suppress himself which ultimately brings stress and tension. Whereas what is actually true is not the ideology but what one is. What is meant is that they are not second-hand human beings. Their learning is first-
hand. They are left to themselves to decide about them. They are free to discover and learn about themselves, and when there is freedom, there is energy. Hence they have energy, more capacity, more drive, greater intensity and vitality. Having realized from living that they can depend on no outside authority in bringing about a total revolution or transformation within the structure of their own psyche, they follow their inner voice. In the process of growing they slowly overcome not only the false authority of tradition but also the authority of accumulated opinions and ideals. Life is a continuous flux and cannot be seen with the dead authority of yesterday. Every happening should be viewed with the mind afresh, full of vigour and passion. It is only in such a state of mind one learns and observes. For this, a great deal of awareness is required, actual awareness of what is going on within one's self. Glasgow's characters by and large possess this spiritual consciousness. Their growing process is like taking a journey of discovery into the most secret corners of one's mind. To take such a journey one has to travel light, without being burdened with opinions and prejudices and conclusions. Each progresses in his or her way following his or her truth.
For truth has no chalked out path, and that is the beauty of truth, it is living.

Glasgow was born with an innate sense of what is good and what is merely second best in any intellectual pursuit. The inherent sense of good and faith in good, though not all-powerful, possibly has led Glasgow to create an optimistic, affirmative and ethical world in her novels. In no novel is there a horrifying sense of morbidity which leaves the readers depressed and defeated. Behind all the heart-breaking, frustrating and tormenting incidents, there lurks a sense of hope. Her milieu presents the revolutionary (Michael in The Descendant) who wants to break away from the rigid traditions mostly inhuman, unenlightened, and dogmatic. He is the idealist who has to constantly struggle to maintain the equilibrium of what is practical, what is actual and what is ideal. He is not successful and dies in the end but his remarks reveal his dauntless spirit,

Self-taught he was and self-made he would be.¹¹

Further he says,

I like originality. There's only one thing
I like better and that's independence
(Des. 79).

Nicholas Burr in Glasgow's The Voice of The People is the natural companion of the earlier tragic rebel Michael in The Descendant. He says:

I don't want to be like you pa! I want to be different

and he could manage to do so. He exhibits a Nietzschean self-reliance, "a regard for daring for its own sake" Glasgow's own youthful intellectual interest and her "radical" attitude toward religion are reflected in her second novel, The Phases of an Inferior Planet. Ethically and philosophically an idealist, Algarcife in the after years of his life, evolves a Gothean morality of integri-

parentheses along with an abbreviated form : Des.

22 Ellen Glasgow, The Voice of the People (New York : A. L. Burt Co. Publishers. 1902) 35. Henceforth references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form : VP
ty and renunciation without admitting to himself its possible Christian basis:

it is good for a man to do right, and to leave happiness to take care of itself.\textsuperscript{13}

In the same novel Mariana later agrees with Ardley that

life is a continuous adjustment of the things that should be to the things that are (PP. 236).

In \textbf{The Deliverance} Glasgow has dealt with the simple passions of the heart, and the main figure Christopher Blake is the embodiment of a period in violent transition. His hatred is not of the will alone, it has been absorbed into his blood and is inextricably woven in every nerve of his body. One might tear it out only by plucking up the secret roots of his identity. Against this very forceful and intensely passionate main figure

\textsuperscript{13} Ellen Glasgow, \textit{Phases of An Inferior Planet} (New York and London: Harper & Bros. 1898) 316. Henceforth, the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form: PP.
we have the subsidiary characters like Uncle Tucker and Aunt Saidie representing average, normal persons, and his self-effacing sister, Cynthia. Glasgow's seventh novel, The Wheel of Life was written when she was seeking an antidote to experience, "a way out of herself". The expression of her ascetic philosophy through the central character of the novel, Adams, has much to do with the oriental philosophy of renunciation.

In renunciation was there, after all, not the loss of one's individual self, but the gain of an abundance of life.14

The Romance of a Plain Man is a literary interpretation of the new order in the South and creates the impression of an authentic unwritten history. Its hero Ben Star born of a lower class, a good man who is among the new aristocrats, knows his intrinsic worth as a human being and casts judgement on his own self,

14 Ellen Glasgow, The Wheel of Life (New York: Doubleday Page and Co. 1906) 244. Henceforth the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form: WL.
I stand or fall by my own worth and by that alone, - I ask no favours, no allowances even from her.\textsuperscript{15}

Her next novel \textit{The Miller of Old Church} combines Glasgow's feeling for the soil and her interest in manners. It represents the most successful fusion of these two major preoccupations in her fiction, though she was to develop each of them separately with more distinction in her later books. Its heroine Molly, though wild and untamed, and a child of mother earth, has something of high-mindedness who retorts,

I'm a thing of freedom, I can't be caged.\textsuperscript{16}

In her next novel \textit{Virginia}, there is a continuous flow of undertones of a refrain, "the pathos of life is

\textsuperscript{15} Ellen Glasgow, \textit{The Romance of a Plain Man} (New York : Doubleday, Page & Co. 1926) 203. Henceforth the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form : RP.

\textsuperscript{16} Ellen Glasgow, \textit{The Miller of Old Church} (New York : Doubleday Page & Co. 1911) 253. Henceforth, the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form : MC.
worse than the tragedy." The larger conflict is not with tradition, it is rather deeper because it becomes the eternal warfare of the dream with the reality. Glasgow in this novel points out that ancient or modern, the lot of Virginia Pendleton is not at all uncommon or new. But what matters most in this novel, is that there is always time, the arch-antagonist, pursuing, engulfing and finally breaking down her resistance to fate. Virginia is more than a woman - an embodiment of forsaken ideal - almost a legendary figure - yet the striking thing is that she wears the spiritual radiance that invests the innocent victim of sacrifice. Life and Gabriella makes the complete and final departure from that great tradition. Although Gabriella was merely a decade younger than Virginia, a whole era of change and action, separated the two women. Gabriella, possessed of energy and independence, and blessed with a dynamic philosophy, is in some measure at least the symbol of an advancing economic order. Her words,
After all you can't become a victim unless you give in, and I'll die rather than be a victim. 17

reveal a complete contrast to Virginia. In One Man In His Time, Glasgow through the Culpeppers, Margaret Blair, and John Benham scrutinized the inadequacies of social order which "never doubted anything that was old and never discovered anything that was new." Gideon Vetch, the last of Glasgow's political leaders, is, like her first public hero Nicholas Burr, a man of the people only in his origins. Like Burr he is devoted to ideals which please no faction, and like Burr he is murdered while pleading as a peacemaker in a factional strife. Barren Ground her fifteenth novel, possessed an added dimension, a universal rhythm more fluent than any material texture. Under the lights and shadows there is the brooding spirit of place and under the spirit of place, there is the whole movement of life. Dorinda is universal, she exists wherever a human being has learnt to live without expecting joy, from material things and wherever the

17 Ellen Glasgow, Life and Gabriella (New York: Doubleday Page & Co. Garden City New York 1916) 201. Henceforth the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form: LG.
spirit of fortitude has triumphed over the sense of futility. Her words,

\[\text{I will not be broken,}^{10}\]

reveal her dauntless spirit. Glasgow's next three novels, *The Romantic Comedians* (1926), *They Stooped to Folly* (1929); and *The Sheltered Life* (1932) deal with the frailties and foibles of men and women (chiefly the former) attempting the varieties and vagaries of Romance. Judge Honeywell in the *Romantic Comedians*, for all his position, is a character to chuckle over, not to admire or censure. He is the victim of his own unreasonableness and foolishness. As one critic has remarked,

\[
\text{the story is the illusion of perpetual youth, and Judge Honeywell is man eternal} \]

(CM. 223).

Mr. Virginius Littlepage, hero of *They Stooped to Folly*, parallels Honeywell. He is happily married to the regal

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10 Ellen Glasgow, *Barren Ground* (London: Virago Modern Classics 219, 1986) 367. Henceforth, the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviated form: BG.
and loving Victoria whose straightforwardness is quite in contrast with his pretentious morality. His brother Marmaduke Littlepage is also drawn in complete contrast to him. "He was a free spirit, and never had been twisted into a conventional shape." An artist and embittered romantic as he was, he had discovered that it was not only rational but logical to dislike human nature and yet like human beings. In the last of the three, The Sheltered Life, Glasgow depicts Jenny in the opening chapters as the antithesis of the female characters Jo, or Meg or Amy; she instead insists in her right to individualism.

I'm different, I'm different .....I'm alive, alive.....

In the structure of the novel, Glasgow expertly reflects the culture she is dissecting. For the character who holds power is David Archbald, Jenny's grandfather, General David Archbald, a lover of wisdom, human and civilized soul but a lonely spirit, meditates,

19 Ellen Glasgow, The Sheltered Life (New York : Hill & Wang : A Division of Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 1938) 3. Henceforth the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with abbreviated form : SL.
The truth is, however much we disguise it, that a Red-Indian lurks in everyman we call civilized (SL. 186).

His life as Glasgow says manifests "the effort of one human being to stand between another and life", and "represents the tragedy .... of the civilized man in a world that is not civilized." Many central themes from earlier novels reappear in Vein of Iron her last but one novel. The themes of individual determination in conflict with social pressure, of the importance of establishing personal belief, of endurance of generosity, of family traditions and loyalties, of romantic love and love beyond that, and of the artistic struggle for fruition are effectively welded into the principal narratives of John Fincastle and his daughter Ada. Glasgow very clearly says that characters with the vein of iron survive. The whole Fincastle family is endowed with courage and fortitude. The stream of the narrative flows on and downward through the metaphysical consciousness of John Fincastle, from the practical mind of Aunt Maggie, and from the flashes of insight that illumine Mary Evelyn's reflections and Ada has all the advantages of this rich inheritance. Her grandmother would admonish her,
Remember, my child, that you have strong blood .... Never let it be weakened. Thin blood runs to wickedness.\textsuperscript{20}

With her final novel, In This Our Life Glasgow returns to the city and its hostility. Though her affirmations in this final work often appear dusty, even battered beyond recognition, she insists that she intended them to stand for certain victory. Presumably victory for tradition, sometimes called "plain civilization." Roy is heard saying over and over

I want something to hold by. I want something good.\textsuperscript{21}

Here is that special aspect of youth of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Her father, a thinker and an observer, accepts life as it comes with a philosophic bent of mind, though he is not a hero, yet he does not surrender.

\textsuperscript{20} Ellen Glasgow, The Vein of Iron (New York : Harcourt Brace & Co. 1935) 21. Henceforth, the page references to quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with abbreviated form: SL. UL.

\textsuperscript{21} Ellen Glasgow, In This Our Life (London : Jonathan Bedford Square. 1941) 379. Henceforth, the page references to the quotations from this book are given in parentheses along with an abbreviation form : IL
The study of her novels make one feel that Glasgow wanted to create a world where people inhabiting it would constantly exert themselves to act as per their inner compulsions, giving supreme importance to their subtler self. One tends to believe that for them there is no greater God than their self, Atma, as it is called in Hindu philosophy. Her characters can be distinguished by their vein of iron, robust common-sense, a spiritual or inner life force directing them towards continuous growth, toward a continuous quest for identity of self. This inner force has an intangible essence which cannot be defined explicitly. But one detects in her characters the power to endure the unendurable, tenacity to survive, courage to fight, and also the emotional, imaginative and spiritual energies rudimentary to character growth. It is true that her protagonists do not attain perfection, the ultimate Salvation - Nirvana - as stated in the oriental teachings of Gautam Buddha or Lord Krishna, they are on the right path. Their endeavour and energy to free themselves from the bonds of desire, to cultivate disinterestedness and detachment from emotional clinging and their devotion to duty are striking.
So far, reference has been made to Glasgow's conflict within her own self and her groping toward an unattainable meaning in life through her imaginative world. An attempt will be made here to assess her status as a novelist of a unique kind and to show how the process of writing nineteen novels transformed her from an apprentice to a mature artist, both as regards the form and the content of her novels.

The process exhibits initial excitement and intuitive zeal to do something great in a manner of an idealist or iconoclast, as it becomes obvious in the first two novels *The Descendant* and *Phases of an Inferior Planet*. The process also shows realization of impediments and difficulties in coping with the great task. It also manifests the solitary pattern of learning from within that runs through it, and the mastery achieved in due course.

The novel having a close resemblance to daily life in psychology, environment and time scale proved the most appropriate medium of expression for Glasgow. It became a vehicle for an agreeable voyage of discovery. For the novel is perpetual quest for reality, the field of its
research being the social world, the material of its analysis being always manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul. It gives a great scope of marching forward by merely turning within. It has been said:

The novel is a great discovery: Far greater than Galileo's telescope or somebody else's wireless. The novel is the highest form of human expression so far attained.\(^2\)

Why? Because it is incapable of the absolute. Everything in it is relative to everything else, if that novel is art at all. Glasgow did possess this art, and the passion to discover truth. She created her fictitious world as a semblance to the real world. She gave her mind, her heart, her nerves, her eyes, her whole being to find out the way of life, to see what actually is, and to go beyond it.

She started by denying something absolutely false. She rejected the traditional approach to life and art not merely as a reaction but because she could understand the stupidity and immaturity of it. She could reject it with tremendous intelligence and was not frightened to do so. When she began her first book The Descendant she was striving more for art and ideology than an inspiration as she was a beginner. She asked herself: Why did not people rebel when they had nothing to lose? She wanted to discover what it was that kept the poor in their place. She wondered whether it was merely the pressure from without or a more demoralising pressure from within. She did away with the early Christian belief that poverty was eternally blest. For two years she had been working on The Descendant but she had not yet found herself. She was still in search of truth, or at least some philosophy which would help her to adjust her identity to a world she had thought hostile. She was burning with one craving,

How could one live on without a meaning in life? (WW.89)
According to her fortitude alone was not enough. Though overwhelmingly preoccupied with ideas to understand life she did not follow any of the great masters either of fiction or of philosophy. Nor did she isolate herself meditating about the affairs of life. She could observe that nobody could live by himself or herself. Everybody lives only in relationship to people, things and ideas, and by studying this relationship both outwardly and inwardly one can understand life and its complexities. Every other form of understanding is merely an abstraction. And the beauty of the novel lies in the very non-capability of treating the absolute and the abstract. Everything in it is relative, every commandment that ever issued out of the mouth of God or man is strictly relative: adhering to the particular time, place and circumstance.

She also knew that ideas would not come to her if she went out to hunt them, they would fly if pursued. Therefore while writing she let her intuitive and imaginative faculty work their way, and then applied her reason. And her native instinct warned her unfailingly This is not right! That word will not do! (WW. 94).
She was not concerned with any propaganda. Her prime interest was to present life as it was. Above all things she wanted to know the truth of life. In her eagerness to test experience, to be many-minded, as well as many-sided she often lost her ground and grasped vainly at shadows. Yet in that eagerness there was a vital impulse, energy and intensity of purpose.

With Glasgow the inquiring faculty and creative faculty had been perpetually at work spinning an imaginary universe of earth, sun and moon, which seemed more real than actual. Sometimes these two faculties worked together in harmony. At other times, they seemed to break apart and there followed a break for months when one or the other lay dormant. But by both temperament and outlook she shared the artist's slant with nuances rather than that of the scientist's with analysis. And so everything that happened to her in the material or immaterial sphere became in time the property of her imagination and passed into her work as a novelist.

There is mystery in the abstract and it always fascinates the inquiring mind, but Glasgow could discern that a sense of fulfilment could be achieved upon the
shifting surface of experience. As an artist and a novelist of realism she held a rational code and also tried to dip into the obscure seas of her consciousness. She could perceive the distance that divides the inner self from the external world, the distance between the observer and the observed.

In seeking alike the known and unknowable she was trying to discover the laws of her inner being, and to establish her own inner harmony. To resolve the conflict with the outward things and forms one needs to know one's internal sphere. And this, according to her, was a source of indispensable knowledge for a novelist of reality. This indicates that even a "realistic" novelist must use the inner world to counterbalance the world of environmental forces. As she writes:

While I imagined that I travelled into space, I was, in fact, merely turning round and round within the area of my own consciousness.²³

²³ Ellen Glasgow, 'I Believe' Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts. 238.
Her words prompt us to believe that her imaginative world was in communion with the world of reality. For awareness of one's conditioning brings an understanding of the whole of consciousness. Consciousness is the total field in which thought functions and relationship exists. And when one is aware of the total consciousness there is no friction, no conflict, and the mind is at peace. Seeing the totality alone frees the mind, the voyage of living and learning comes to a rest and that is why the title A Voyage into Self.

In the course of the journey of life and during the process of writing she could discern, however dimly, that beneath the ambiguous maze of ideas, a protective barrier was forming between her identity as a human being and a scheme of things which appeared hostile. The dual conscience within her, that union of the Calvinist with the Episcopal was dying slowly. She could not put in any doctrine her entire trust but she discovered that not until one learns to live upon the wide open sea of impersonality can one really begin to live with one's entire being. While writing her last novel In This Our Life her health was failing. She was suffering acute pain. But after pain there was no shadow of fear or
shrinking. She felt a warmth of an unutterable sense of fulfilment. She grew out of the limited personal immortality, a limited separate ego. She experienced the peace, not the peace of possession but a sense of infinite reunion with Unknown, Everything or Nothing... or with God. Whatever it was, whether Everything or Nothing, it was surrender of identity, (of which Lord Krishna talks in The Bhagavad Gita XVIII. 73) It was an experience of enlargement and a complete illumination of being. Near the end of her life when she was in almost constant pain she did not lose gaiety. She could laugh at her own tragedy. But as always she felt the vast impersonal anguish of life more deeply than her small personal misery. In that painful experience she discovered that the life of the mind alone contained an antidote to experience. Just as it is said in a sanskrit maxim

 Mana eva manushyanam karnam bandha
 mokshayoh.24

meaning, it is mind only that makes one bound or free.

She had the satisfaction that she had lived the life of her choice. And so long as she kept from haunting anyone else she had lived as completely as it was possible.

Only those who are intensely sensitive and are born with a philosophic bent of mind like that of Gautam Buddha (563-483 B.C.) the compassionate one or Ramkrishna Paramhansa of our time, possess sensitivity of a strange transference of identity. Their hearts deeply grieve at the suffering of other creatures. The agony and suffering of other people become a source of their mental unrest which ultimately make them either ascetics or creative artists.

Glasgow was intensely sensitive and imaginative as a child. The intensity diminished as she grew older, but she always felt the vast impersonal anguish for the sufferings of the helpless and the inarticulate. Her philosophic quest became a part of her imagination and expressed itself in her work as a novelist. Through her work she discovered a "more steadfast serenity in fortitude than in any dubious faith." She was cautious and intensely personal while talking about life but confident about the art of writing.
In the two World Wars she saw the eternal conflict between human beings and human nature. It was not the killing from which she recoiled. She knew that sometimes killing was necessary but there was never a time when God or man, or the god invented by man requires a libation of cruelty. God was replaced in her philosophy by a "distant trust in some spirit, or divine essence, which many poets and philosophers have called the Good". Her experience and voluminous readings imparted her a broader tolerance of the unseen and the unknown. In spite of her disdain for the "erratic quality of human nature", she could see slowly evolving from the mind of man "ideas of sublime virtue, which are called truth, justice, courage, loyalty, compassion, and they are not "imposed by a supernatural decree." She believed in social justice, in peace on earth and goodwill toward men as an ideal to be pursued for a fairer order. But according to her the approach to a fairer order lay not without but within, and the true value of life could be measured only, as it borrowed meaning, from the things that were valued above and beyond life. She thought that the two most enduring satisfaction in life were the associations with one's fellow beings in friendship and love and the faithful pursuit of an art or profession.
Before we examine Glasgow's works it is imperative to have an idea of the soil in which Glasgow was born and bred. As Bagehot says:

A writer must have a life of some place and some time before he can have one for all space and all time.25

No individual or for that matter, no work of art can be properly assessed in a void or in isolation of its environment. It is true, however that the chief end of a work of art is to create life. There does exist a secondary obligation which demands that fiction or any creative piece will reflect its age. As Mark Twain has rightly said:

There is only one expert who is qualified to examine the souls and life of a people.

25 Ellen Glasgow, 'Elder and Younger Brother' Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 170.
and make a valuable report — the native novelist. This can be applied undoubtedly to Glasgow’s works. We get a clear picture of the antebellum Southern Plantation life and of the new South from her fiction. Being a Southerner she gave us in Allen Tate’s phrase “knowledge carried to the heart”.

Her predecessor Mark Twain and his contemporaries painted a “composite” picture of life in the South. It contained some memorable portraits of Southern men and women, black and white, and some fine pictures of Southern backgrounds. But there were large and important aspects of Southern life which have little or no part in the total picture. The Southern writers of fiction had much to tell us of life in Virginia, Georgia, Louisiana, Kentucky and Tennessee, but they had little to say about the Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, and Texas. For example, Joel Chandler Harris, John Easten Cooke, Thomas Nelson Page were interested primarily in the Old South. Even when they were writing about the New

South, their characters were chiefly types that belonged to the old regime, their ex-slaves were house servants, not the far more numerous field-hands and the families of old soldiers were shown to be struggling with poverty in an alien political and economic order. These novelists almost ignored the yeomen farmers, who formed a great bulk of the white population, who were to form the rising middle class and a dominant force in Southern democracy. They gave us a highly idealized picture of Southern life in a nostalgic and romantic mood. If a novelist treated the relations between the races realistically, he was likely, as George Cable discovered, to find himself denounced as a Southern Yankee.

Coming to the novels of Ellen Glasgow, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner one finds in the foreground those character types who remained in the background in the novels of James Lane, Allen and Thomas Nelson Page. It was a movement from romance to realism and from realism to naturalism. We may say that even the twentieth century novelists have their blind spots, their aversions, and their illusions, though they are difficult for us to recognize.
It is generally conceded that a majority of the best American writers of modern times are Southerners. It is also generally recognized that the richest vein of literary materials in this country are in the Southern states, yet paradoxically the South had long been and still is subject to greater misrepresentation in fiction than any other genre. To understand this unhealthy situation it would be essential to know the story of its development. And the best way to begin is by freeing our minds from prejudice of two correlated legends those of the Old South and the New South.

The Old South of the legend in its classical form was a sort of stage piece out of the eighteenth century, wherein gentlemen move soft-spokenly against a background of rose gardens and duel grounds. They would perform gallant deeds and impress lovely ladies, and never for a moment would lose that exquisite remoteness which has been the dream of all men and the possession of none. Its social pattern was manorial and its civilization was that of the cavalier. Its ruling class was an aristocracy coextensive with the planter group. They were often entitled to quarter the royal arms of St. George and St. Andrew on their Shields. And in every case
descended from the old gentlefolk who for many centuries had made up the ruling class of Europe. They stayed in large and stately mansions. Their estates were feudal baronies, their slaves quite too numerous to be counted, and their social life a thing of Old World splendour and delicacy. This was a world polished, mellow and poised, wholly dominated by ideals of honour and chivalry and noblesse.

In Glasgow's fourth novel The Battle Ground there is a vivid picture of the Virginian aristocracy. Major Lightfoot is a hot Secessionist but a gallant gentleman. The Lightfoot menage is a bower of antebellum bliss. Each member of the menage follows a favourite occupation. The Major reads again and again the essays of Addison and the poems of Horace. Aunt Lydia, dressed in black and saturated in propriety indulges herself in literary romances. Shakespeare's Mercutio and Scott's Rob Roy provide glamour in her limited world. Dan Montjoy is chivalrous and generous. And the scene that best represents the antebellum aristocracy is the christmas party at the Amblers.
But beneath these there was a vague race lumped together indiscriminately as the poor-whites, very often, in fact as the 'white trash' or 'Cracker'. They were the non-slaveholding masses of the South. In the strict sense they were merely the weakest elements of the old backcountry population. The gulf between them and the master classes was impassable and their ideas and feelings did not enter into the make-up of the prevailing Southern civilization.

This special rural class had never been treated by any one before Glasgow in fiction. And according to Glasgow the term 'poor-white' was historically and socially inapplicable. The Abernethys, the Greylocks, the Pedlars, the Elgoods mentioned in Barren Ground had never slipped into the shiftless class of the share croppers or "poor-whites". According to her explanation these farmers, though 'land-poor' had owned and always owned, every foot of the impoverished soil which they tilled or left untilled, on their farms. They belong to a social unit which though it has been consistently ignored alike by Southern literature and tradition, has borne a liberal part in the making of Southern history. In Virginia, this class was known as 'good people' a label that
distinguishes it from the aristocratic estate of "good families". A fair number of these "good people" were lineal descendants of English Yeomen. They mingled with a thin scattering of Germans who had arrived later on the flood tide of immigration. The ancestors of the Abernethys and the Pedlars had felled trees and built log cabins and withstood the red man on the Virginian frontier. Some of them had followed the westward trail of the Indian, and had won back step by step, the vanishing border beyond the Shenandoah. They had fought in the French and Indian wars throughout the revolution, and they had stacked their muskets for the last time at Appomattox. In pioneer days, they were the men in buckskin, they were the lone fighters and the lone hunters. And from the beginning to end they were inarticulate.

The South with all its multiplicity had its tap root in the Old South. Its primary form can be determined not so much by industry as by the agricultural condition of the past. In her novels Glasgow dealt specifically, with the post-Reconstruction years but she never entirely escaped the Old South way of looking at things. By 1850, the year with which she began her social history The
Battle Ground, those who had amassed wealth were regarded as aristocrats in the eyes of their fellow Virginians. They were known by their attachment to the plantation system that was run by slave labour, their participation in politics, and their imitation of the English gentleman. They had a strong sense of pride, a spirit of chivalry, a rigid code of honour, the ability to command men and reverence for their ancestors. They hated competition, and desired strongly to educate their offspring in either England or Virginia. Like feudal lords, they made laws for the isolated plantation over which they ruled. For political and economic directions as well as for the patterns of their daily life their eyes turned to England. The Battle Ground opens with majors, colonels, beautiful belles and faithful slaves wandering through columned mansions but before the novel ends all these illusions are stripped away.

In A Certain Measure Glasgow explains that in the Old South, this inherited culture possessed grace and beauty and the inspiration of gaiety. Yet it was shallow-rooted at best, since, for all its charm and its goodwill, the way of living depended, not upon its own creative strength, but upon the enforced servitude of an
alien race. Not the fortunes of war, not the moral order of the universe, but economic necessity doomed the South to defeat. In the coming industrial conquest, the aristocratic tradition could survive only as an archaic memorial.

A typical Southerner was an exceedingly simple fellow, a background pioneer farmer, or an immediate descendant of such a farmer, a direct product of the soil as the peasant of Europe was. This simple rustic figure was the true centre from which the Old South emerged. In Barren Ground Glasgow has created a replica of such a rustic figure in the character of Nathan Pedlar. In fact it was the frame which contained the essence of the Southern mind. Invariably his fundamental attitude was marked by self-interest and was self-asserting. The close pressing throng of his fellow-men, rigid class distinctions, the yoke of law and government bore upon him with a crushing weight and thwarted his self-centered activities. Glasgow comments,

the civilization of the old South was one in which every member, white or black, respected the unwritten obligation to be
amusing when it was possible and agreeable in any circumstances (CM. 136-37).

Interestingly the Old South, may be said, in truth to have been almost innocent of the notion of class in any rigid and complete sense. It does not mean that the Old South was an egalitarian society in the sense that U.S.S.R. was. Everybody in the South was aware of, and habitually thought and spoke in terms of a division of society into Big Men and Little Men. But this was with strict reference to property, power and the claim of gentility. Little opportunity existed for the average man in Pre-war Virginia. William Wart observed:

However they may vaunt of equal liberty in church and state, they have but little to boast on the subject of equal property. Indeed there is no country where property is more unequally distributed than in Virginia.27

Another important thing about the plantation system was that it was based on slavery, and since slavery was a vastly useful system and could be made to pay only in rich soils, it had left some sort of land and some sort of subsistence. It had thus exempted a slave from all direct exploitation and sometimes (as slave) he waived all claim to his labour. It also left his independence unimpaired. So long as this "Peculiar Institution" prevailed, a slave thought, he might rest there forever, secure in the knowledge that his estate in this respect would never grow worse, and he could spend his life after his fashion, as completely a free agent as the greatest planter of the country. Over the greater part of the Old South this system existed and this applies specially to Virginia where the plantation group was firmly united.

There are instances in Glasgow's novels as in the life of many of the aristocrats of Virginia of aristocrats who earned their livelihood as judges or lawyers, but often retained their farms to provide for Negroes who were their farmer slaves as well as for themselves. When they moved to the towns they took their Negroes with them as hired servants and made every effort to encourage them to vote conservatively. Judge Bassett
in The Voice of the People a gentleman "secure in the
inalienable affability of one who is not only a judge of
man but a Bassett of Virginia", personally provided the
livelihood of his black servants, and at the same time
paid for the education of Nick Burr, the son of a poor
white farmer who was determined to get ahead. Similarly,
in The Romance of a Plain Man a man of the Big family who
had invested his wealth in tobacco and rail-roads used
his position and financial stability to boost the lower
class Ben Starr into a position that eventually equalled
his own. The aristocrats did not suspect that in return
for their paternalistic benevolence they would reap a
gradual loss of power in politics and business. Nor did
they dream that one day those whom they had befriended
would consider themselves their social equals.

The thin distribution of the population over vast
reaches of the country, the virtual absence of distinc-
tions of law and government except in their primary
stage, and the fact that at every turn a man was thrown
back wholly upon his own resources - all these combined
to give his native ego the widest scope and to spur it on
headlong growth.
Glasgow's *The Battle Ground* gives us an exact idea of the confederate soldier. His assertion of ego, laid great stress on the inviolability of personal whim of which the essence was boast, vocal or silent, on the part of every Southerner that he would "knock the hell out of whoever dared to cross him." This characteristic is of the utmost significance, for its corollary was the perpetuation of the tendency to violence. This Southern individualism as eventuating in violence was rooted in pride. It reached its ultimate incarnation in the confederate soldier.

Among the confederate soldiers there was a gentleman who wore his aristocratic heritage proudly in battle, an aristocrat who refused to become an officer even though his class entitled him to the rank, and an illiterate mountaineer Pinetop who went to war purely out of devotion to his native state. It was not the need to defend slavery but "the instinct of every free man to defend the soil". Here, in the rank and file Glasgow wrote,

men who considered themselves aristocrats marched on a level with men who did not
care whether or not they were plebeians (CM. 22).

The individualism which had been so basic for the psychology of the Old South was preserved intact. But by the time of the Civil War, a tangible class awareness and a vague but real notion of the general social interest had begun to confront it. By 1885, men were arising in the land to denounce it. And by 1900 they began to see the class awareness clearly.

The nineteen year old Ellen Glasgow began her first novel The Descendant during this period, and her major theme was the rise of the middle class as the dominant force in Southern democracy. Along with her protagonist Michael Akershem, who echoes Carlyle and Ibsen, Glasgow was convinced that

customs like garment wear out and lose their original usefulness, and like garments require to be discarded for a more advanced and more suitable order (Des. 75).
The Descendant is the story of an able young man who, because of his background and eager mind, finds himself estranged from those about him and becomes a force for social change. The same theme appears again in The Voice of the People, The Romance of a Plain Man, The Miller of the Old Church, Life and Gabriella, The Ancient Law and The Builders. The rise of the middle class and the class awareness held interest for Glasgow as late as 1922.

The South would retain the old primitive feeling and outlook of the frontier. Many of the Southerners in 1900 would see the world in much the same terms in which their fathers had seen it.

Glasgow shows in her novels the changes in Virginia in the attitudes of life from the time of Civil War to the Second World War (i.e. from 1850 to 1942). Her social chronicle of Virginia examines the story of the decline and fall of the aristocracy in three parts. During the Civil War and Reconstruction, the foundations of aristocracy were shaken and their majestic Greek columns began to crumble around their feet. In The Battle Ground which covers the period 1850-1865, she shows the charm and
grace of pre-war aristocratic existence and also the less attractive actualities of that culture. She includes people who are so largely neglected in Southern fiction, the poor-whites both the worthy and villainous, and the free Negroes as well as slaves. The more inhumane aspects of slavery, however, are not omitted. In one scene of The Battle Ground a low-class white man viciously whips a slave and is reprimanded by his aristocratic neighbour. In the beginning of the novel the reader is given a glimpse of a wagon load of slaves on their way to be sold because their master has died. The stereotype of the faithful and well-treated slave who was a part of Glasgow's white aristocratic heritage and environment is also very much there.

Negro characters are presented as people who love their masters and take pride in occupying the higher social levels within slavery. For example, Big Abel, the faithful slave of Dan Montjoy in The Battle Ground is amiable and obedient, but he has his own pride and feelings. He is proud about his position as a body servant and in the clothes he gets from his master. His feelings for Saphiry a Negro slave are seen in his persuasion to his master to buy her so that he may marry
her. At the time of war he deserts his wife and planta-
tion to go into battle with his master. And when the
master is wounded in the battle he takes of care of him
like his blood relation. Big Abel is conscious of his
social position as a body servant. This is true even of
most of the house servants, "I ain' mix wid no fiel
hans", grunted Cupid the butler to his white masters.

Culturally speaking in the hierarchical society of
the Old South there was no place for writers. Lawyers and
preachers and overseers and house servants fitted in the
niche God had ordained for them. There was no niche
reserved for the artist or the writer. It was a society
in which earning one's own living by writing was not
acceptable. Most of the ante-bellum Southern writers who
eventually made a name for themselves, studied for one of
the professions and practised law or medicine for a time.
The Virginian novelist William Caruthers (1800-1846) was
a doctor. John Esten Cooke (1830-1886) practised law
before the War and wrote his novels between the visits of
his clients. Philosophy, like heresy, was either suspect-
ed or prohibited. One is reminded of Glasgow's words:
It was an era when people not only respected the genteel tradition but even enjoyed reading about it. After forty years I am able to recall with amusement that The Descendant was mildly praised or censured by William Dean Howells because of its "intensity" - or was it "vitality"? - Whereas in another, though less eminent quarter the harmless little work was attacked, not without violence, alike because it quoted "the Philosopher Schopenhauer who was wanting both in reverence for god, and chivalry to women", and because it bore upon its title page "the impious assertion, attributed to Haeckel that man is not above nature, but in nature (CM. 10).

Leaving Jefferson aside, the whole South produced, not only no original philosopher but no one as well to set beside Emerson and Thoreau, no novelist but Poor Simms to measure against the Northern galaxy headed by Hawthorne, Melville and Cooper, no painter but Allston to stand in the company of Ryder and a dozen Yankees, no poet deserving the name save Poe - only half a Southerner. There were men in the Old South of wide and sound learning and with a genuine concern for ideas and
sometimes even the arts. There were doctors, lawyers, country school masters, persons who, on a humble scale, sincerely cared for intellectual and aesthetic values. But in the aggregate these were hardly more than the exceptions which prove the rule. In general, the intellectual, and aesthetic culture of the Old South was superficial and uninteresting, borrowed from without and worn as a political armour and a badge of rank, and hence not a true culture at all. The pursuit of knowledge, the writing of books, the painting of the pictures, the life of the mind seemed an anemic and despicable business, fit only for eunuchs. "Why", growled a friend of Philip Pendleton Cooke, Virginia aristocrat and author of the well-known lyric "Florence Vane".

Why do you waste your time on a damned thing like poetry? A man of your position could be a useful man.  

The reason lay in Southern life and psychology. The Southern world was basically an extremely uncomplex, unvaried and unchanging one, its political and economic

organisation was reduced to its simplest elements. Hence, complacency was the hallmark of Southern society. Masters and masses alike were sunk in the deepest complacency, feeling of irritation, any discontent and conflict were not seen, and consequently no tendency to question. As Glasgow writes in The Woman Within

Everybody was happy. Nobody wished to be different (WW. 103-104).

There were many Southerners in Virginia who regarded slavery as injustice and an outdated thing but lacked the courage to ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm. Before approaching disaster and difficulty, pleasure became not only a diversion, but a way of escape.

Glasgow gives a glimpse of Major Lightfoot's attitude toward the war. He greeted the beginning of the war with merriment.

"There's nothing like a few weeks of war to give one an appetite", Major Lightfoot said to his grandson. He had an odd feeling that it was all a
great fox hunt they were soon to start up (Bt.G. 242).

In the Southern society there was hardly any encouragement or freedom for literature of either protest or of escape. Only the slave, the poor-white, or the woman who had forgotten modesty may have felt inclined to protest, and they were as dumb and sterile as the profession of letters.

The artistic inheritance was lost upon a race that had constantly confused emotions with ideas and mistaken tradition for truth. What the South remembered was a lavish, vital, distinctive society which we may call an archaic civilization.

Among the Southern novelists of the past there had been an absence not of characters, not of passion, but of a detached and steadfast point of view. It lacked not only a clearness of vision but a firmness of outline. The fault was not with the material, but in the novelist's inevitable lack of perspective.
After the surrender at Appomattox, many Southerners looked at their devastated region and correctly surmised that it would be difficult to make a living by ploughing the Southern soil. Without capital, credit or land they realised the inherent problems of survival. The pressures of poverty demanded that some kind of work must be done if they were to earn even a meagre income. Under these conditions many Southerners sought to gain an income by writing because it required only pen, ink and paper. They attempted to make a living by producing pot boilers which violated all standards of literature. Many wrote to justify the South in the past thirty years of the nation's history. Some of them saw that contemporary northerners were writing the history of the Old South and the Civil War, and they were spurred to write to counteract a view of the past intolerable to Southerners who were developing myths about their beloved region.

Of these Southerners, in the immediate post war period, the writings of Sidney Lanier and Paul Hamilton are worthy of note. At the end of the nineteenth century writers like Thomas Nelson Page, George Cable and Joel Chandlier Harris appeared. They were the most typical writers of the period. They ignored the trend toward
naturalism which was sweeping the world's literary front. They continued to exploit the charming past and except for Cable, they were generally blind to the rapidly changing region about which they wrote. Glasgow's The Battle Ground is infinitely superior to the extravagances of John Easten Cooke's Sarry of Eagle's Nest or the gentle sentimentalities of Thomas Nelson Page. Where Coke created museum knights without armour riding about Virginia Fields and where Page idealised most of the humanity out of his characters, Glasgow created people who, while representative, are individual human beings and not simply "Cloth horses". Her people are persons rather than mere personalities. When the era of progress came, no Southern muckrakers appeared to write about the evils of the industrialized age or the short-comings of American democracy. These writers were so badly out of touch with the mainstream of American literary endeavour that Henry Mencken was able to say in 1917 that the South was an intellectual and literary desert from which came no great literature, art or music.

This was the state of affairs in the South when Ellen Glasgow came upon the scene with her first novel The Descendant (1897). Her place in the history of
American literature is unique in a sense that her writings mark a complete break from the writings before her.

She was the first writer of stature to emerge from Richmond, Virginia, and in many respects a heroic figure. However, the younger writers who realised her worth in their later days, were reluctant to admit that this imperious novelist had pioneered anything. But she was the first realist in the nineteen hundreds who had waged a one-woman battle against prudery and sentimentality in fiction.

Adopting the method of the realist and applying it to a modern critical approach to the materials of her region, Glasgow succeeded in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth in bringing intellectual rigour and critical precision to her examination of the South. Her literary career covering almost half a century began with *The Descendant* (1897) and ended with *In This Our Life* (1941), but looking to history in the semblance of fiction it covers a period of almost a hundred years. For her fourth novel *The Battle Ground* (1902) deals with Virginian life from
1850 to 1865 and the last In This Our Life (1941) presents the South in 1938-1939.

What Glasgow concluded from the examination of the South throughout her long career was that,

The South needed blood and irony. Blood it needed because Southern culture had strayed too far away from its roots and the earth; it had grown thin and pale; it was satisfied to exist on borrowed ideas, that copy instead of create. And irony is an indispensable ingredient of the critical vision; it is the safest antidote to sentimental decay (CM. 28).

All along from 1900 onwards Ellen Glasgow had of course been exercising her irony on her native land, but at the same time it is to be noted that the other Southern writers born between 1880 to 1910 were quite enthusiastic to change the status of the writers. They were conscious of the fact that they were establishing the profession of letters in their region. And there was a great upsurge of writing in the South, and it produced
more writers and more good writers than any other region. At least a dozen have international reputation and dozens more on whom one would depend for enlightenment and entertainment. The list is the longest in fiction. Ellen Glasgow, James Branch Cabell, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Stark Young, Caroline Gordon, Thomas Wolfe, Katherine Anne Porter, Erskine Caldwell, Julia Peterkin, Margaret Mitchell, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner and others. Among the younger generation - all of them born since 1916 - are Peter Taylor, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote, Flannery O'Connor, William Goyen, James Dickey and William Styron.

It is essential to have at least a brief acquaintance of these writers to assess their contribution to the literature of the South which itself was an extravagant, vivid and a more-than-life-sized land. Not only that, the South was one solid explosion of dynamite, that is the impression one gets from the Southern books of the late 1920s and early '30. This remarkable flowering was part of the general literary renaissance taking place in many parts of the country. The situation in the South was special because of the consciousness of its writers of their task. However much the new Southern writers might
differ in their approach to their material and regardless of what faults they might still display, nearly all of them had decisively escaped from the Old Southern urge to turn the country into a Never-Never-Land. Nearly all of them stood, intellectually, at least, pretty decisively outside the legend, and to cast light on the Southern social scene and direct attention to the social problems of the South. Thus, they were able to contribute to the region its first literature of bulk and importance.

But before examining the flowering of Southern literature it is necessary to know the reasons behind it, and also the Southern legends. In the commentaries of the late twenties various reasons were given for the literary awakening. First was the active sense of tragedy and evil possessed by the Southerners as being the only Americans to have suffered a military defeat - indeed to have known the violent despoilment of their homes. Thus, in its knowledge of death and grief, the South had a deeper and more profound source for its arts than did any other region. In William Faulkner, the South had a prime example of a writer who plumbed the most fearful depths of this source. Secondly the Southerners felt a sense of having lost a 'precious object' because of the gradual
demise of the Southern tradition and hence the "backward glance" of the bereaved Southern writer after World War I. Thirdly the passive nature of the Southern society, its rural backwardness, its lack of nervous hurry-and-go provided them ample scope without losing a community feeling, to produce an intellectual work of real richness and depth. Edmand Wilson commented in 1928:

It is perhaps the only section of the country where the educated classes possess at once enough cultivation, existences sufficiently, unhurried and intimate enough share in the life of their communities to produce intellectual work of real richness and depth.29

A fourth cause was alleged to be the influence of the industrial and social revolution loosely labeled the "New South" with its worship of mass education, science, modernism, commerce and progress.

As mentioned before, the basic conflict arose from the difference between the legendary and the actual in the Southern social history. These conflicts of opinion in the 1920s and 30s divided the Old from the New, the Conservatives from the Liberals. What differentiated the Agrarians from other traditionalists was their disdain for the sentimental, and romantic attitude which once helped to nurture this legend of the paradise, the evil which the north destroyed. However, their revolt against sentimentalism did not include a revolt against the tradition itself.

In their idealized picture of the Old South the Agrarians never depicted the Negro as objects of human exploitation. As Page remarks:

The worst of it was that the stationary condition indicated by generations of illiteracy had long been the general condition. The forgotten man was content to be forgotten. He became not only a dead weight but a definite opponent of social progress. He faithfully heard the politi-
cian on the stump praise him for the virtues that he did not have.\textsuperscript{30}

It was believed that the Old South disdained all forms of disruptive progress which hindered its organic tradition. Its leaders discouraged industry, science and commerce.

In reality, the leaders of the Old South were willing to utilize anything, whether backward labour, or advanced machine that would bring the greatest profit in the shortest time.

Some literary magic worked as soon as the Southern novelist forgot that he had been born, by the grace of God, a Southern gentleman. And Southern literary endeavours reached a higher plateau in the 1880s, when more competent writers took up their pen, and it terminated into a flowering of a literary renaissance in the twenties and thirties.

Although these Southern writers wrote successfully of Southern Customs, scenes and traditions, they did not

\textsuperscript{30} ibid., P.76.
produce lasting masterpieces. Their most important contribution was to set the stage for later Southern writers by demonstrating the permanency of Southern theme in literature. They paved the way for the more able writers of the twentieth century who surely had a wider audience because of the northern reading public's acceptance of these earlier writings.

The cause was there, for them, they loved the defense of their region but also acknowledged its shortcomings. The best defense was to tell the whole truth. So thoroughly did they do it that the novelists like Faulkner and Caldwell were thought, in their home states to be defaming rather than defending their kin. Even writers like T.S. Scribling and Ellen Glasgow were castigated by Davidson for "producing Southern versions of what New York thought was wrong with the South". In other words, he meant that these writers were engaged in a literary betrayal of the South.

As time went by, however, the writers tended to modify their views in the direction of realism, the tendency to idealize the old South had gone steadily on. It could be observed plainly in such books as Allen
Tate's The Fathers, Caroline Gordon's None Shall Look Back and in Stark Young's So Red The Rose. Caroline Gordon (1895) belonged to the generation of writers who spent at least part of their youth in Paris. Miss Gordon had great reverence and respect for the masters of fiction like Flaubert, James and Ford Maxdox Ford. For the most part she wrote about the relationship of man and woman. Ideally she seemed to say, a woman should give herself to a man wholly and without question, and he should not betray her faith. Glasgow also dealt with the man and woman relationship in several of her novels. But Glasgow's women manifest, for the first time, a new kind of awareness. Glasgow gives her woman a dignified status of an individual. Almost all her women characters either major or minor show a distinctive spark which make them at least interesting. Rachel in The Descendant got recognition through her independence and talent as a painter. If in Virginia Pendleton, in Virginia "the feminine ideal of the ages", is accomplished, Gabriella, in Life and Gabriella may be viewed as an example of the emancipated female. Gabriella by the gradual winning of her freedom marks a complete contrast to her previous counterpart Virginia Pendleton. Gabriella and Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground possess the strength to mould
their destiny and go beyond their circumstances. Whereas Ada in Vein of Iron shows the positive energies of the life-urge itself. The hardiness of the pioneers is infused in her spirit. And her Grandmother Fincastle, a living example of the pioneer virtues, is self-sufficient and commanding. This progressive trend in the psyche of women characters reaches its height in Roy in the last novel In This Our Life. Roy's abrupt dismissal of her father's values such as duty and responsibility, and the need to act in accordance with a sense of personal integrity leaves one stunned. But her revulsion against hypocrisy, her truthfulness, her honesty and her hatred of sentimentality generate respect.

Southern novelists, generally, the Agrarians for example, were not much affected by the turn to Negro life and theme in the 1920s. Glasgow divided her Virginians into three groups, the first group included all Negroes. At the other end of the spectrum are the aristocrats before the war and after the war. In the middle are all whites. To Glasgow, the Negro was neither a threat, nor a phenomenon begging for thorough investigation. No major character in her novel is a Negro. But she was aware that their presence made up a significant part of a Virginian
life, and she dealt with that presence in each of her novels. Glasgow drew her portraits of Negroes in Virginia with sufficient honesty and presented the problems of race relation in Virginia for almost a century. She did it with insight and sympathy but always without commitment to their cause or hope for their future.

Another variety of Southern fiction carries on the nineteenth century tradition of 'Local Colours' writing, though in confrontation with realities of life. The stories of Eudora Welty, Jessy Stuart, Marjorie Kinnan Rowlings and Katherine Anne Porter, had hardly anything in common with the tepidities of a Miss Murfree or James Lane Allen.

Eudora Welty (1909) is at home in the Mississippi Delta region. Her fiction at its best abounds in characters, settings, vocal rhythms, and feeling which only she could create. And in her writing like that of Faulkner the sense of place is very powerful.

Two other Southern women writers go further in presenting characters whose oddity dissociates them from contemporary values and norms of behaviour. Carson
McCullers and Flannery O'Connor, while in no way specially feminists in their work, are critics not just of society but of its premises. Thus they help to legitimize a fundamental challenge to mainstream value and orthodox roles, including gender roles. They have moved further from the past than did Faulkner for whom the old myth of honour still colours the sky, still provides a contrast to the dislocation and disorder of life in the present. For Flannery and Carson McCullers, this order is not there at all, might never have existed.

What distinguishes the writing of Ellen Glasgow, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty and Carson McCullers, is that the everyday existence of women is being investigated for its significant value. Again and again in women's writing of this era, we note, first the descriptions of the dependence of women on men, second, their anger at their situation and at the same time, their acceptance of their lot. Rebellion is private sometimes as with Katherine Anne Porter's heroines, it gives women inner strength. They endure their fate because they are capable of separating their inner selves from it sufficiently. Welty's heroines are more likely to find happiness following a conventional marriage in a
conventional way, but when they do so, they belong to an earlier period. In Glasgow's novels we find a great variety of women. Her major women belong to all age groups from 17 to 70, from self-righteous women to ill-bred flirts. We are here concerned with three types though. In the first category there are women who are bounded to tradition like Mrs. ReverComb in The Miller of Old Church, Cynthia in The Deliverance, Mrs. Pendleton in Virginia, Mrs. McBride in Vein of Iron, and Mrs. Archbald in The Sheltered Life, Mrs. Burden in They Stooped to Folly. The women who struggle and gradually win their freedom, and prove their worth in the domain which was so far a monopoly of men, are Gabriella in Life and Gabriella, Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground. And thirdly the new women who assert their right to freedom, possess new consciousness of an individual's worth and dignity. They would prefer self-sufficiency to safety and face disaster to preserve their human dignity, such women are Milly Burden in They Stooped to Folly and Roy of In This Our Life.

Margaret Mitchell's Gone With The Wind (1936) is centered on the beautiful women and handsome men of the Plantation South, the nostalgia of bygone days, and the
efforts of a determined woman to rebuild her family estate after the destruction of the Civil War. While many events of the novel were depicted with considerable realism, the volume's underlying theme was romantic. Glasgow knew many years before Margaret Mitchel was old enough to say that the old life in the South had "gone with the wind". Glasgow also knew that after the society of the Old South, an entire way of life had been smashed. And there followed a long period of reconstruction during which people themselves persisted to battle with life and grappled with the complexities of human existence as they found in the state of Virginia. Glasgow made a determined effort to tell this long story honestly and realistically.

The twenties thus saw a rapidly accelerating growth which went along with, and in fact constituted a part of the same essential movement toward intellectual freedom. The new school of writers was intent on holding a mirror to Southern society. The prolific Southern members of the "lost generation" designed to reveal the South as they saw it. They displayed both ugly and evil as well as the unusual and the picturesque. They wrote of landlords, country-store merchants, hack politicians, demagogues,
decadent old families and a vast horde of nameless poor folk.

The end of the decade saw Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner tower into view almost simultaneously. Thomas Wolfe (1900-38) was born and grew to manhood in Ashville, North Carolina. His humour, vitality, originality and gusto along with a sense of grandeur helped him rise to portray the turbulent struggle of man in quest of himself.

Towering over the other major writers during the Southern literary renaissance was Faulkner. Between 1924 and 1926 he published two novels and a book of poems but none of them was well-received. When it occurred to Faulkner that his own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that he would never live long enough to exhaust it he began his writing career in earnest.

Faulkner was much more of a Southerner than was Wolfe. While Wolfe's Ashville could have been located in any region of the United States, most scenes in Faulkner's works could have occurred only in the South.
He created his own literary world in an imaginary Mississippi county Yoknapatawpha. The Yoknapatawpha chronicle encompasses three progressions. First, there is the county period of power and the catastrophe for both people and county at mid nineteenth century, second in the last decade of the nineteenth century the great landed families are toppled down, and finally, the chronicle deals at length with the twentieth century when new families took over the holdings and power of the former aristocracy. Like Faulkner Glasgow also through her nineteen novels displays these three stages of progression. What makes the novels of Glasgow and Faulkner interesting is their community relationship. It seems so powerful that it can override any other consideration. It is a literary art which is close to the lives and the common experiences of Southern life and history. It is a literary art which is only rarely elitist, which is both democratic and populist in spirit, which seldom lapses into imitation of national intellectual fashions, and bears the stamp of the Southern novel.

There is often hatred and anger in the Southern novel but one seldom sees the more usual contempt for all who are stupid, or ignorant or unwashed or invincibly
ordinary. Faulkner could find and celebrate humanity (and divinity) in the idiot, the pervert, the criminal; Ellen Glasgow too could display feelings of compassion and sympathy for the idiot and her frail persons. She even recognised the worth of Southern Negroes. She never used them for low comedy and sought to understand them as persons of significance with inner feelings that should be preserved in her creative history. It was not in the manner of fashionable contemporary literature, as anti-heroes, or any such, but as fully delineated characters. There are plenty of villains in Southern fiction, and because the South remains a predominantly Christian culture, evil, sin and folly are hardly ever absent from the Southern vision. But the Southern writer has not set himself up as a judge, and overseer of a hostile and absurd universe. In fact even the minor alienation of the artist (a very popular subject in American culture and European writing) has seldom figured very importantly in Southern writing. The Southern writers are anxious to be part of their community. Their identity and actions are defined to a considerable extent in terms of their membership within the community.
All novels are set in a place, as the saying goes, everybody has got to be somewhere. But what makes the oft-remarked sense of place in Southern fiction so important is the vividness, the ferocity even, with which it implies social and community attitudes. This is because the writer's own experience of a place has involved those attitudes so pervasively that for the writer to evoke the place is to confront the community's values. The peculiarities of Ithaca, Morgana, Yoknapatawpha, Altamont and Queenborough other such fictional communities, whose lineaments are drawn from their author's experience, are made to mean for the characters. The patterns of their daily life, the way the characters act, think, feel and imagine, that lead us to recognize the fiction as Southern. The particular and special ways in which such elements as place, language, a sense of evil, a historical consciousness, an attitude toward nature, or God, or tradition, or life are arranged, help its recognition.

Coming on the scene at the end of the nineteenth century Ellen Glasgow headed the several able writers of the Southern renaissance. She established herself as an unique novelist in American literature by pioneering a
novel of realism. Her critical mind could recognize that something was wrong in the mental state of the eighteen-nineties. She felt that the prevailing ideas, attitudes of her time, like American fiction were simply waiting to be examined, to be interpreted in terms of reality (by which she did not mean literary realism). She saw that the critics and public alike rushed to devour incredible romances placed in impossible countries. She felt that they were grown before they had had time to grow up, and had become victims of immaturity. All America had dropped back into adolescence in fiction, but in the South there was not only adolescence to grow, there was also an insidious sentimental tradition to live down. She revolted from sentimentality less because it was false than because it was cruel, it made people blind to what happened. She examined the attitudes, assumptions and judgements which the antebellum writers had pursued and expressed them through an appropriate artistic form. Though she exposed her region with her critical intelligence and ironic mode, her love for her native land, Virginia, was as deep and intense as ever.

Moreover, she also contributed to the American Fiction by depicting the life of the middle class. The
upper middle class in which the novelist finds most of his readers, is seldom interested in seeing its own life faithfully portrayed in fiction, even when it is done as expertly as in the novels of Howells and Jane Austen. It is far more interested in the doings of the rich and socially important than in the lives of the poor and the humble. In a discussion of "The National Element In Southern Literature" published in the Sewanee Review of July 1903, John Bell Henneman quoted with approval the passage which follows from a letter which Miss Marie Whitting, a minor Virginian writer, had written to him more than ten years before

There is a splendid opening for somebody in Southern literature - a field untouched so far as I know. I speak of the want of any adequate representation of typical Southern life today. We have stories of society folk who live in the South.... But who has told of the great middle class, the blood and fibre and heart and brain of the body corporate?... If such people exist, have they not their life and shall not some arise to see its pathos and its
beauty. The one Southern novelist who has on a large scale memorably depicted the lives of unromantic Southerners of the great middle class, urban as well as rural is Ellen Glasgow.31

Glasgow's middle class includes almost everyone except the Negroes and the aristocrats. Her middle class includes small farmers, persons of aristocratic ancestry who repudiated their heritage, the off-springs of marriages between one aristocratic parent and one from some lower strata of society, an occasional Presbyterian minister, lawyers and politicians. It includes the country-folk from the mountains, the valley, South side and Tide Water Virginia. As a class they are neither good nor bad; but among individuals vice and virtue abound.

From the bleak days of Reconstruction in Virginia, through the rise of a New South, to the malaise of industrial encroachment, she tried to reconcile the human heart to its imperfect environment. She similarly witnessed and recorded a revolution in the conceived

roles for women; while the scene was still Virginia, she echoed a struggle that was taking place everywhere in Western society.

The publication of her first novel The Descendant did not appease her. It was somewhat of a success and more of a little sensation. She wrote:

I wanted an art. I wanted a firm foundation. I wanted a steady control over my ideas and material (WW. 123).

She was thus steadily searching for the perfection of art. And without imitating any of the great masters of fiction like Henry James, Flaubert, Maupassant, she selected what suited her temperament and outlook. She evolved her own technique of writing and her sole guiding master was her inner critic. Her conscience would register protest against anything unconvincing,

Life isn't like this. Things don't happen this way (WW. 125).
She also realized through reading the great masters of fiction that

One might select realities but one could not impose on Reality. Surely the novel should be a form of art - but art was not enough. It must contain not only the perfection of art but the imperfection of nature (WW. 125).

Keeping this in mind she explored, in her fictional world the possibilities of good life through her protagonists endowed with certain virtues like courage, justice, fortitude. This study is an attempt to examine Glasgow's evolution as a person through experience in life, and as an artist through the medium of the novel. The process transforms itself into an eternal Voyage into self, an eternal quest for truth, which never ends till one attains Nirvana, Salvation, or Mukti - the ultimate freedom.

With Glasgow novel-writing became a mission. The study of her novels reminds one of Rainer Maria Rilke's words:
Whoever does not consecrate himself wholly to art with all his wishes and values can never reach the highest goal. He is not an artist at all .... Not as martyrdom do I regard art – but as a battle the chosen one has to wage with himself and his environment in order to go forward with a pure heart to the greatest goal, the one-day of celebration, and with full hands to give all successors of the rich reconciliation finally achieved. But that needs a whole man! Not a few weary leisurely hours.\textsuperscript{32}

Glasgow means more or less the same when she states:

The final word to be said of any activity will always be, I suppose, was it worth it cost? Well, the writing of fiction is worth, I imagine, exactly what digging a

ditch or charting the heavens may be worth to the workers, and that is not a penny more or less than the release of mind that it brings..... (once again one is reminded of her words) I became a novelist before I was old enough to resist and I remained a novelist because no other enterprise in life has afforded me the same interest or provided me with equal contentment.33

From the beginning Glasgow's inquiring mind was never at rest. As an artist she always groped for the right technique of novel writing, and in the process of writing nineteen novels she grew to be a mature artist, and acquired an artist's acumen in style. Simultaneously, as an individual she sought for answers that her questioning mind asked regarding the working of the all powerful Providence.

The pattern of man's life in general shows that his first confrontation starts with society, which constantly curbs his impulses and desires. As he gradually learns to

33 Ellen Glasgow, "One Way to Write Novels" Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 160.
live in society, he becomes aware of his own strength and weaknesses, and the conflict between the two starts within his own self. As he grows, he develops certain ideas and ideals, and tries to live up to them and thus starts a conflict between his ideals and the ways of the world. If he is strong enough he learns to stick to his ideals. By the time, man approaches middle age, he has drawn certain convictions from his experiences, and he tries to mould his life as per his convictions and creates his destiny on the strength of his character.

Glasgow's own development at the personal level shows this progression. It is my contention that Glasgow's characters also develop on these lines. Hence instead of discussing Glasgow's novels in a chronological order, they have been grouped to show this steady process of growth under the title, Individual and Society (Chapter two); Obsession and Anguish (Chapter three); Idealism and Renunciation (Chapter four) and Character Is Destiny (Chapter five).

Being a social animal man has to confront society continually. Social norms and conventions put a check on an individual and make him a better social animal. Man's
self-interest encourages his evil tendencies but these are curbed and checked by the power of the social order. In turn, he learns that he has to adjust his individual needs to the demands of the social order. He also learns that by and large heredity and environment limit man's effectiveness as a free agent.

Ellen Glasgow shows a preoccupation with the conflict between individual and society. Hence, I have selected a group of novels in which her protagonists encounter this kind of conflict. The chapter entitled Individual and Society consists of a discussion of The Battle Ground, The Voice of The People, The Romance of a Plain Man, The Miller of Old Church and One Man In His Time. The chapter aims at showing how each individual thinks, loves, how he/she moves from reason to passion and folly and vice versa. It is an attempt to show how the social conditions of the protagonists - Don Montjoy, Nicholas Burr, Ben Starr, Abel Revercomb and Molly, Stephen Culpepper and Corinna - constantly compel them to modify their perspective of life.

Chapter III: Obsession and Anguish includes novels: The deliverance, Virginia The Sheltered Life, The
Romantic Comedians and They Stooped to Folly. In these novels the protagonists are obsessed with a single powerful passion which ultimately drags them to anguish and suffering. Almost all of them, Christopher Blake, Virginia Pendleton, Eva Birdsong and Jenny Blair, Judge Honeywell, Virginius Littlepage and Mary Victoria, seem to live in a climate where there is nothing like reason. Reason enriches man by sharpening his intellect and makes him capable of change through new experience. It does not let an individual alienate himself so absolutely as to sink him into isolation and fragmentation. Except for Christopher Blake, whose passion of revenge is subdued near the end, the road of reason is lost to all other characters, and they shut themselves off from others in stubborn self-will and live in agonizing solitude.

Chapter IV under the title, Idealism and Renunciation discusses the novels: The Descendant, Phases of an Inferior Planet, The Wheel of Life and The Ancient Law. The protagonists of the first two novels, Michael Akersham and Anthony Algarcliffe are idealists without any pragmatism. Michael is a pure idealist. He hates the system that protects oppression in the name of liberty and injustice in the name of law. He fails because he
does not know how far he can apply his ideals in day-to-day living. Anthony Algarcife, by temperament an ascetic, is a scientist by profession. He is devoted to the search of knowledge and condemns the pleasures of senses. He falls in love and marries but fails as a householder, because he is not practical enough to survive in the ordinary world. The prophet in him is always at the service of the people of his parish, but the scientist in him is always at war with the religious dogma he preaches.

Glasgow's quest for truth and search for the meaning in life was so deep-rooted and intense that she literally devoured a large amount of the "Wisdom Literature" of both the East and the West. In her pursuit of truth, she was most impressed by the Upanishads, The Bhagavad Gita and the teachings of Gautam Buddha.

Glasgow expresses her joy in achieving the calm of mind in her letter to Mrs Johnston, her close friend, who had been ill when she says:

Dear, you must set your face forward in earnest and keep always with me in this
"small old path" of Upanishads, "difficult to tread as the keen edge of the razor."

..... For the last year I have been happy for the first time in my life - happy not in the outward shadow part of me, but in my soul which is clear and radiant out of a long darkness.\[34\]

The Bhagavad Gita appealed to her most, probably because without any doctrinal principles, without any transcendental dogma of salvation, Lord Krishna imparts to Arjun spiritual wisdom. The Lord explains that the realm of spirit is not cut off from the realm of life. His teachings make one perceive that the universal reality and the individual self are identical. When the ego is annihilated, we attain perfect joy and blessedness.

Secondly, The Gita lays stress on the individual's freedom of choice, and the way he exercises it. After revealing the whole philosophy of life, Lord Krishna asks

Arjun to do as he chooses (XVIII.63). The whole teaching of *The Gita* requires man to choose Good by his conscious effort. There can be, however, many obstacles to this freedom of choice. Nonetheless, we have to bear in mind that the problem of man's freedom against fatalism has meaning only with reference to human beings. It has no application to plants and animals. We do not condemn the lion for its ferocity or praise the lamb for its meekness. Man is not a creature of instinct and desire only. He is endowed with reason and an intellect and that is why he is subject to moral judgement.

Thirdly, *The Bhagavad Gita* shows the path of peace and happiness. Glasgow's quest for truth found solace in the teachings of Lord Krishna according to whom our bondage and unhappiness consist in our dependence on things other than ourselves over which we have no control. Our peace and happiness should not depend on external forces. When we rise above it we can make spiritual progress and acquire peace of mind. *The Bhagavad Gita* shows an easy way of renunciation of the fruits of action for an ordinary person to acquire peace of mind. For devotion, meditation and concentration are more difficult than renunciation of the fruits of action.
And the latter destroys the sources of unrest and brings about an inner calm and peace which are the very foundations of spiritual life.

Roger Adams and Laura in The Wheel of Life and Ordway in The Ancient Law, seem to have understood this oriental philosophy of renunciation and detachment in life. Through them Glasgow treats the theme of renunciation, of the transience of desire, and "disenchantment of passion." Through struggle and suffering all the three - Adams, Laura and Ordway - have gone beyond their freedom to choose good, and have reached the higher freedom that transcends the chosen good. Roger Adams, inexhaustibly compassionate has realized that

In renunciation was there, after all, not the loss of one's individual self, but the gain of an abundance of life (WL. 244).

When Laura reflects on her act of burning the letter, the sudden illumination makes everything clear to her. She looks beyond the small personal emotion to the woman's soul and realizes that
to discern the soul is to feel not only tolerance, but pity for the flesh, and it appeared to her now that in that one moment she had ceased to be herself alone, and had shared in the divine wisdom which sudden light had revealed to her in her breast (WL. 417).

Ordway, too, in the end realizes that,

In the hour of his need it had been neither religion, nor philosophy, but the outstretched hand (of Bank's), that had helped, then his vision broadened and he saw that the body of love is one, the members of it are infinite, and it was made plain to him at last, that the love of Emily, the love of Alice, and the love of Banks, were but different revelations of the same immorality (AL. 483).

Adams, Laura and Ordway prove that by exercising one's choice properly, one can control all things, even the forces of nature, and that man's struggle, his sense
of frustration are not to be dismissed merely as errors of the mortal mind or as mere forces of destiny.

Chapter IV : Character Is Destiny analyzes the novels : Life and Gabriella, Barren Ground, Vein of Iron and In This Our Life. The protagonists of these novels are endowed with firmness of purpose, independence of character, and courage of living. All of them, - Gabriella, Dorinda, Ada and her father John Fincastle and Roy and her father Asa Timberlake - possess that faculty by which they make their presence felt. One just cannot ignore any of them. They possess a kind of spiritual consciousness with which they transcend the immediate, simple and unreflected existence by throwing away customs and traditions which are worn and outdated. All of them possess integrity of character. Each of them makes his/her choice - may be rightly or wrongly - yet with earnestness and honesty. And by choosing become his/her self that would not have been possible until the choice was made. Thus by choosing and assuming responsibility, all of them fulfil "the first principle of existentialism" to use Jean - Paul Satre's words. They mould their life according to their convictions.
As mentioned earlier the arrangement of the eighteen novels under the scheme mentioned, is to show Glasgow's growth both as a writer and as an individual. An analysis of novel after novel shows her steady progress towards completeness both as an artist and as an individual. A thematic study of the novels shows her increasing understanding of human relations, her penetrating insight into human psychology and her idealistic and philosophic bent of mind.

The first novel The Descendant narrates the life of Michael Akersham who is a pure idealist. He seems to be a novice in a practical world, a person driven by impulses and instincts. One may describe his idealism as knowledge without wisdom. Just as knowledge not combined with wisdom proves not only meaningless but destructive at times, similarly, Michael's idealism is in no way meaningful either to himself or to society in which he lives. One feels that it is wasted.

But when one comes to Asa, the protagonist of Glasgow's last novel, In This Our Life one finds a radical difference between the two. Though Asa never got what he wanted in life, yet through struggle and suffer-
ing he elevated himself, and placed himself in the category of those wise people who are a source of strength and solace to others around them. Without citing any great theories and principles of philosophy Asa could give the right direction to Roy when she felt the need. Both Michael and Asa witness the subjection of humanity to social and physical forces. But what makes the big difference between them is their attitude towards life. Novel after novel, one can see Glasgow's maturing vision in the delineation of her characters and in her point of view. In the process, both her approach and technique tend to become subtler and more complex. In her setting, she ceased to give much importance to the superficial truth of external surroundings. With experience her settings become an integral part of characters' moods, for example, the land becomes a metaphor, a living personality in Barren Ground. She also learnt to restrict her point of view which was variable in the early novels, The Battle Ground, and in The Voice of The People, whereas in Virginia and in Barren Ground, it is pointed and direct.

An interesting thing about Glasgow is that she had an ample source of material on hand, the whole of the
South and its history. She made the utmost use of this rich source and dealt with almost all aspects of life in the South including love and war and tackled them in a style "pure and flexible", suitable to her matter. Everything is done with an artist's acumen. The bulk of her eighteen novels shows that from the voluntary acceptance of apprenticeship to serve fiction, emerged a mature artist with a definite philosophy of life and a person with great strength. One is reminded of Nietzsche's words:

A spirit who wants great things, who also wants the means to them, is necessarily a skeptic. Freedom from all kinds of convictions, to be able to see freely is a part of strength.35

Glasgow was a skeptic. Yet there was nothing bitter about her skepticism. It was like watching the human drama and registering protest within, when the heart refused to believe. To quote her.

To return, then, to my creed, I believe that the quality of belief is more important than the quantity, that the world could do very well with fewer and better beliefs, and that a reasonable doubt is the safety-valve of civilisation. So I believe what I believe with an open mind. I am, I hope, ready to reject anything, or to accept anything that does not embrace the old infamy, cruelty. I am not frightened by systems. I am not frightened even by names, since I have been called almost by every name, except the right one, as far back as I can remember.36

Whatever Glasgow wrote, she did it with integrity and honesty. She was not interested in writing fiction as a trade, but as a form of art. As an individual, she believed that social justice, goodwill towards fellow-beings, and peace on earth, should be pursued as an ideal. Her novels amply prove these ideals and undoubtedly manifest an affirmative and positive view of life.

36 Ellen Glasgow, 'What I believe' in Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 221.