The numerous Southern Women writers who emerged in the forties and fifties continued to write after the Civil War, and their influence is seen in the work of the women novelists who followed them. There is no sentimental strain in the stories of Kate Chopin, or in the novels of Ellen Glasgow, but few other Southern writers of fiction of either sex were wholly free from it.

Younger Southern writers like Ellen Glasgow, Mary Johnston and James Branch Cabel followed Cabel's lead and perhaps unconsciously pointed out flaws in gentlemen's code of behaviour. After them were to come Erskine Caldwell, William Faulkner and Lillian Smith. They have not concerned themselves with the planter gentry, except perhaps to portray them as decadent; what was most interesting to them was the poor whites and maladjusted persons of all classes.
Among the later 19th century writers of fiction, one often finds extreme religious conservatism, an unrestrained didactic impulse, and an emphasis upon the genteel rather than real. At the end of the century writers like Thomas Nelson Page, George Cabel and Joel Chandler Harris appeared. They ignored the trend toward naturalism which was sweeping the world's literary front. They continued to exploit the charming past and except for Cabel, they were generally blind to the rapidly changing region about which they wrote. They were badly out of touch with the main American literary endeavour.

This was the state of affairs when Ellen Glasgow came upon the scene. With her, romance yielded place to realism, and realism to naturalism. She had waged a one-woman battle against prudery and sentimentalism in fiction.

Glasgow was sick of sentimentality. She saw that in Southern fiction sentiment appeared invariably to degenerate into sentimentality. And after the little dust-storm stirred by her first book The Descendant she determined to write not merely about Southern themes but a well rounded social record of Virginia from the decade
before Confederacy to the beginning of the twentieth century. Her subject seemed to her to be fresh. It was untouched because Southern novelists, till then, were content to celebrate a dying culture. Yet the historic drama of a changing order and the struggle of an emerging middle class were set against the many personal dramas of individual frustration. It was the time when the world was full of fermenting processes of mutability, of development, of decay and of disintegration. The old agrarian civilization was passing and the new industrial system was but beginning to spring up from the chaos.

The tempo of transition was in the air, in the industrial uprising, in the whole psychology of an epoch. Glasgow found this tempo of transition to be a raw substance of realism, and she could see the perpetual conflict of motives. In technique, her only teachers were natural distrust of the easiest way and her natural sense of proportion and harmony. And novel by novel she learnt to write better and grew into a mature artist.

In Glasgow's novels there is a kind of combination of determinism and the freedom of will. It seems that Glasgow, like Zola, believed that determinism could be
distinguished from fatalism by the fact that it considered the human conditions to be alterable and improvable, for man is always free to make his choice. Glasgow states:

The longer I observe experience, the greater emphasis I lay upon determinism both in our beliefs and in our bodies. Regarding the freedom of will and regarding that doctrine alone, I suppose I may call myself more or less of a pragmatist.¹

She also called herself a realist, yet she wondered about the term "literary realism". She felt that "literary realism" was not an approach to reality, but a pattern of thought with no close relation to the substance of life. She found the solution after reading Tolstoy's War and Peace. Tolstoy made her see clearly what she had realized dimly, that the ordinary is simply the universal observed from the surface, that the direct approach to reality is not without but within. She also realized that:

¹ Ellen Glasgow, 'I Believe' Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts : 229.
One might select reality but could not impose on Reality (WW. 125).

Tolstoy was her master. And the "Principal heir of the realistic school of Tolstoy is socialist realism". Glasgow, as a social realist, possessed the accuracy of response to historical conditions. She has successfully portrayed the inner life of her protagonists who are organically connected with social and historical processes. From the beginning, Glasgow had resolved to write of the South, not in elegy, as a conquered province, but, vitally, as a part of the larger world.

Glasgow has endowed most of her characters with a kind of spiritual consciousness which place them on a higher plane. What is striking in her novels is the prime importance given to human character and certain perennial virtues. It is not that her protagonists are saints, or above normal. They are average human beings with all their foibles, frailties and follies, but they do recognize their drawbacks, though they may not be able to overcome them. Glasgow states:
I believe in evolution, though I do not believe that evolution must, of necessity mean progress. All change is not growth, all movement is not forward. Yet I believe that life on this planet has groped its way up from primeval darkness, and I believe likewise that in this blood-stained pilgrimage from lower to higher form, humanity has collected a few sublime virtues, or ideas of sublime virtues, which are called, truth, justice, courage, loyalty, compassion.2

Glasgow had to her advantage the richest source material that any author could wish for. It consisted of a whole state of the South and its history. The social range of Glasgow's character is far greater than that of most 20th century novelists. She not only examined every social group but also covered wide varieties within each of these. In the top ranks of the old hierarchy she showed aristocrats in their glory, such as Major Lightfoot in The Battle Ground, aristocrats in their

2 Ellen Glasgow, 'I Believe' Ellen Glasgow's Reasonable Doubts 242.
decline such as Beverely Brooke in The Ancient Law. She projected aristocrats of almost all time such as Judge Honeywell in The Romantic Comedians and also Asa Timberlake in In This Our Life who have been beaten by time. Among the lower-class there are the "poor-white" Burr family, the Starrs from whom Ben rises, the victims of Richmond slums, the village prostitute and the idiot son. And the Negro servants who are alive and convincing.

Committed to project everything in human experience that militates against custom, abstract order and even reason itself Glasgow has elevated individual existence over social norms, the dynamic vision over the static image. To read her novels is like watching the human drama with history passing across the stage before our eyes.

Glasgow, writing at the turn of the century, has been widely explored and her novels are analysed and interpreted at great length by critics. However, here is an attempt to examine her uniqueness in character creation which possibly has its roots in her eclectic doctrine derived through her reading of the "Wisdom Literature" of great Philosophers, Eastern and Western,
books of science and English as well as European literary stalwarts. It is difficult to pin-point any influence of any particular philosophy - Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian or Pagan - which could have moulded her basic ideas and beliefs as regards human character. Nor is it easy to trace the influence of any literary master either European or English in the development of her art and craft. It seems that she has adhered to what suited to her temperament and attitude, relied upon her own conscience and created her fictional world, peopled with a kind of awakened self with a capacity to choose. And by choosing - even by choosing wrongly, but with earnestness and struggle - they became new selves by their very act of choice. By their choice and their readiness to assume responsibility they make their existence felt as a value in itself.

Glasgow's literary career covers nearly half a century (1897 to 1942), but the historical period covered by her novels spans nearly a century (1850 to 1942). I would begin with her fourth novel The Battle Ground published in 1900, covering the historical period between 1850-65. The five novels discussed in this Chapter cover the first three decades of the century. An attempt is
made to show how in each novel the characters assert their individuality, how they draw their own portraits by all that they do. All these novels examine the individual in relation to society, how he seeks a sort of liberation from inherited conventions and yet has a sense of tradition deep down within. We can see characters who strive to locate their disinherITance in the course of history. In his search for self an individual has to stand both inside and outside his social milieu. He also has to live his elemental group-life of the actual world in which he has to obey laws laid down for him. Glasgow believed in the internal growth of man and her novels, whether they manifest a comic vision or a tragic one, invariably show that a man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself irrespective of his circumstances.

What Glasgow tried to do in The Battle Ground was to write, not literally a novel of war but a chronicle of two neighbouring families, the Amblers and the Lightfoots, who had lived through a disastrous period in the history of the South. The Civil War is used as a background, merely as one of several circumstances which had moulded the character of an individual Virginian. And
for the first time in the literature of the South we see fictional characters as real persons. Glasgow states:

Directly, if incompletely, I borrowed from life many of the characters in The Battle Ground, it is true that I had seen none of them in the flesh; but even if the Major and Mrs. Lightfoot and Miss Lydia and Big Abel appeared only in my imagination, they were each and all in an exact and literal sense, real persons.  

Glasgow has vividly described the aristocratic household. It is quite amusing to witness the conversation between the governor and his wife, and the subtle stroke of their creator's irony. McDowell has rightly said that, in The Battle Ground

Miss Glasgow's conscientious realism and the symbolic requirements of art were in

---

fuller accord than they had been previously.  

You might have been President, had you been a man, my dear (Bt.G. 43).

says Governor to his wife. And she in turn replies

I am quite content with the mission of my sex. (Bt.G. 43)

And that incarnate "womanly woman" Mrs. Ambler says to Betty, "Women do not need as much sense, my dear. If the lord had wanted you to be clever, he would have made you a man" (Bt.G. 44-45).

In the beginning we are told about Betty's love for truthfulness and compassion. She grieves deeply when Dan is whipped on her account. Book I entitled Golden Years is a vivid picture of old aristocracy, its family life and the relationship between master and slave. Mr. Bennett, a conscientious tutor, from the north is deeply

---

4  

Frederick B. Peter Waller, McDowell, Ellen Glasgow and The Ironic Art of Fiction (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1963) 65.
moved by the wretched position of Mitty. To him a soul is a soul in any colour. To him it seems a survival of dark ages that one immortal soul should spend her life hunting for the spectacles of another. He has schemes for the uplift of the Negroes. But the dogs are run after when his pamphlet The Duties of a Slave Holder is distributed to Old Rainy-day Jones.

As against this Glasgow has shown us Betty's deep sympathy for Negroes. She is a true humanitarian and possesses a deep insight into things in their right perspective. She would tramp three miles through the snow to carry her gifts to the free Negro Levi who does not have a claim on the gift.

There was never a sick slave or a homeless dog that she would not fly out to welcome, bareheaded and a little breathless, with the kindness brimming over from her eyes (Bt.G. 72).

Her eagerness to know about Levi's life and wife, reflects her tenderest love for humanity. She is equally grieved or rather more grieved than Levi himself when she
knows that his wife was not dead but sold up the river.
The whole thing touches the deepest core of our hearts.
The same Betty at a young age could grasp the worth of Dan and his potentialities. She says,

You will be your best self - neither the flattering Lightfoot, nor the rude Montjoy
- (Bt.G. 169).

At the end of Book II of Young Blood we are told about the Virginians' great excitement over the commencement of the war. We are amused as we watch them taking the war just as a child's play or something like a fox-hunting game. The major remarks, "Well, well, it will be a pleasant little change for you". "Two weeks will be ample time" (Bt.G. 242). These remarks show how unrealistic and full of illusion they were in their sheltered world of aristocratic supremacy.

In Book III of The School of War we are introduced to Pinetop, who though completely ignorant, sounds quite interesting and inspiring, quite sound and sane when he says I ain't never owned a nigger in my life, and what's more, I ain't never seen that's worth owning" (Bt.G.
281). He is bubbling with love for the soil and will do anything for his "Ole Virginny". In the same section the description of the woman's part during the war demands admiration. Mrs. Lightfoot's words "I could give more than a wedding dress if the confederacy call for it, my dear", show her generosity and her love for her soil. (Bt.G. 291) She reminds us of Mrs. Jane Webb who wears a button cut from a grey coat and at the close of the war, points to it before a Federal Officer and says,

"Sir, the women of the South have never surrendered!" (VP. 114).

We have also an inspiring example of a delicate widow who has to send at the call all her sons to the war. "I gave them all gladly. I have kept none back" (Bt.G. 312).

It was exciting for all young and old alike, men and women, rich and poor, masters and servants. Glasgow, while writing about the transition does not forget to touch the important aspect of their roots in the Old South, and their inherited qualities and pattern of life.
The war as it were, serves the real purpose of schooling the individual. As the title of the third book "The School of War" signifies, Dan gets the best schooling during the years of war. He grows internally and learns the valuable lessons of life. His old childish petulance is gone forever. In its place he has become aware of a kindly tolerance which softens even the common outlines of his daily life. Until he comes to know Pinetop he has in the lofty isolation of his class, regarded the plebeian in the light of an alien to the soil, not as a victim of the lavish society in which he himself has moved, a society produced by that free labour which had degraded the white workman to the level of the serf. "At the instant the truth pierced home to him, and he recognised it in all the grimness of its pathos" (Bt.G. 384). A ray of light strikes his mind that the consciousness of a hard-fought fight is but the common portion of them all, from the greatest to the humblest on either side. "As for him, he had done his duty like his comrades in the ranks, and by what right of merit should he have raised himself above their heads?" (Bt.G. 416). Now he wants to act as per his newly acquired knowledge and insight. He says, "The war is over, and you are your own master, Big Abel, you don't belong to me from this time..."
Finally at the end of the novel when Big Abel and Dan are approaching home they pass by free Levi's cabin. They hear the sound of the steady falling of a hammer and catch the red glow from the rude forge at which the old negro works. Levi's cabin is still standing erect and unaffected by the ruin and disaster brought about by the war, as a preserver of human dignity and human freedom.

The Voice of The People, Glasgow's third novel, shows Glasgow's intellectual development and her progress towards plot and characterization. She has learnt through technical discipline, to body forth her ideas with artistic surety. It manifests the writer's knowledge of human nature and her solid hold on average human nature. Without shirking the sterner realities of life Glasgow has observed "the values and proportions of real life", and has presented a faithful picture of Southern life and character. She states:

While I was writing The Voice of The People I spent many months in old Williamsburg which was my Kingsborough. I
knew the place; and I came to know every buttercup in spring on the courthouse green. I knew well also the originals of Judge Bassett, of General Battle, of Miss Chris and of Marthy Burr. Amos Burr, I had known not once but many times; and I owe to his Kingsborough prototype my knowledge of the peanut in every stage. (C.M. 61-62)

Book I of Fair Weather at Kingsborough opens with the "eternal" calm of aristocratic life and its indifference to change. But the discordant forces which develop later in the novel germinate right in the first chapter when Judge Bassett, the Jeffersonian Democrat of the most enlightened sort is stirred by Nick's announcement that he does not want to be a farmer like his father but a judge. Enlightened, though he is, at the back of his consciousness lurk the automatic traps of the class-ridden mind. He feels that Nick should grow up to be a farmer rather than a judge. "Stick to the soil, my boy" (VP. 7), he advised. Glasgow, here, very skillfully suggests the underside of benevolent paternalism, represented by the Judge's "helpless and half-conscious arrogance of class". But at the same time Judge Bassett
believed in a certain code of conduct. When Nick wants to borrow the books from him, he for an instant looks at him blankly but soon his hospitality and gentility assert themselves, and he waves him courteously in the room: "Walk in, walk in, and take a seat, I am at your service" (VP. 8)

The entry of Nicholas Burr in his house is "hopelessly modern into the helplessly past". For a while the judge gets a little irritated at the boy's obstinacy, but becomes his life-long patron and the first book he chooses for him is Henry Maine's Ancient Law.

Nick is convinced about one thing that he will not be like his father whose planting is never on time and whose implements are never in place. He is aware of his father's lack of desire to know things, and resents that his father has never tried to break the barriers of his ignorance.

Nick is very sad that though the teacher at public school has told him that he is far ahead of his years, his people have taken him away from the school to work in the field. But to his good luck the judge makes arrange-
ments to have him tutored with his own son Tom, Dudley Webb and the Battle Children. He is also accepted by Juliet Burwell in her Bible class, and Nick is the only one low born amongst all the aristocrat children.

General Battle's code of Southern hospitality is noteworthy. To the mild complaints against his aunt of Miss Chris and the protestations of Eugenia his loving daughter, his invariable warning would be "She is our guest, remember what is due to a guest my dear". "It is the right of a guest to determine the length of his stay, and as a Virginian, my house is open as long as it has a roof over it" (VP. 65). Battle's sister Miss Christina who arrives a few days after his wife's death takes no time to have a complete hold over the management of the family affairs. By some subtle law of the influence of the energetic spirit she assumes at once the right of authority, from the master of the house to the field hands in the "quarters", all bend to her regenerating rule. Both Christina and aunt Griselda Grigsby, the complaining old maid and a perpetual guest in Battle's household have an authoritative air and a touch of individuality. Aunt Griselda's bitterness and eccentricity, Christina's unchallenged authority, her love for her
brother's children, Eugenia's sweet childhood, the General's generosity, his Virginian hospitality and aristocracy - all these combined create an impression of an integrated family life. This sort of family bond and loyalty - is a bond which promises a sense of security and saves one from a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness.

Glasgow has taken great care to express certain virtues that humanity has evolved. The beauty of her art lies in the fact that without being the least didactic or imperative she projects them by endowing her minor characters with those virtues. Jane, the widow of Dudley Webb, though a minor character is appealing and impressive because of this very aspect. Jane lives with her head held high even in adversity. "There is dignity in every inch of her" as regards her personal pride, but she is hopelessly class conscious. Had she not been rigid in her aristocracy she would have been a noble person. To her it is folly to educate a person above his station, whereas the judge believes that men make their own stations. With all his humanitarian attitude and enlightened mind his attitude towards women is cynical and displays male supremacy. He thinks that women cannot be
expected to look at things coolly as men do. All the men in the book, the general Tom Battle, Judge Bassett, Mr. Burwell think in the same manner about women.

Glasgow thus portrays real human beings. By juxtaposing their merits and demerits, she has made them more human. Possibly, through such portrayals, Glasgow is hinting that the overpowering influence of custom or heredity or environment on individuals prompt them, or sometime force them to act or not to act in the manner they act or do not. We find here the combination of determinism and naturalism.

The character of Eugenia is convincing. She behaves in the manner which is expected of her. Though she possesses inborn goodness she lacks a certain depth of character. She loves animals and is sympathetic towards Negro girls and boys. It is innate in her, or at least prior to her sense of class. But an over-protective environment and an easy life appear to have become deterrents in the process of maturity. Her family affection interferes with her instinctive sympathy or compassion. Her family pride and class-consciousness become instrumental in ending her relationship with Nick.
But at the same time her marriage to Dudley Webb proves a matter of convenience and adjustment in absence of genuine love. For, her need for affection, for the "assurance of human companionship" remains unsatisfied and exceedingly intense. Her marriage to Dudley is indeed a retreat from reality. For fifteen years their union lacks a passion and survives on some force, "like the claim of kinship - quiet, unimpassioned full of service."

Eugenia is not a career woman. She cares for material happiness and not for fulfilment. She has learnt the wisdom of acceptance and fate has rewarded her not by yielding to her what she has called her heart's necessity but by fitting her heart to the necessity that is already hers.

Nicholas Burr has made his choice and it is a product of his free and untrammelled will. He feels that nothing is better than to strive and to win, to surmount all obstacles by the determined dash of ambition, to rise from obscurity to prominence. He possesses an eye that is trained to detect the values of circumstances and an ability to adjust to them. Through his work at Jerry Pollard he learns to adopt a practical approach, and can understand the after-war period in its right perspective.
He sees that men and women in a better position than his have accepted such a livelihood as his. He understands the dignity of toil, of honest work well-done. He has learnt that a man who is not content to do small things well, will leave great things undone. Experience has been his best teacher and helps him to rationalise his predicament thus "His life might not be such as he had planned it - whose was? (VP. 161) "Success read back words spelt, and work was his inheritance - a heritage of sweat and labour" (VP. 161). He has his periods of depression when desire seems greater than duty, and of exaltation when duty seems greater than desire. What is important, is, he has been doing his work thoroughly well, whether he loves or hates it.

This poise which Glasgow's characters show is a remarkable feature of their personality. This sort of mental make-up seems to have emerged from their creator's dialectic and eclectic doctrine, and from the conviction that one's mental make-up, or mind, or attitude towards life, whatever one may call it, is the moral fibre of one's character. Something very much like this has been propounded by Lord Krishna in The Bhagavad Gita
Yogah karmasu kaushalam.\textsuperscript{5}

Yoga is skill in action. Yoga is evenness of mind in success or failure, possessed by one who is engaged in the performance of his proper duties.

And further he says,

Sahajam Karma Kaunteya
Sadosam api na tyajet,
Sarvarambha hi dosena
dhumena' gnir iva vrthah

One should not give up the work suited to one's nature, O son of Kunti (Arjun), though it may be defective, for all enterprises are clouded by defects as fire by smoke.\textsuperscript{6}

Nick's aspirations are high. He is not a person to be content with mediocrity. He wants to make the best of

\textsuperscript{5} The Bhagavad Gita Chapter II Verse 50. Trans. S. Radha Krishnan (Bombay: Blackie & Son India LTD. Blackie House, 103/5 Walchand Hirachand Marg, 1975) 120.

\textsuperscript{6} The Bhagavad Gita Chap XVIII Verse 48. Trans. S. Radhakrishnan 368.
his fate. His words "I should say that he who is content with less gets nothing", (VP. 207) remind us of J.R. Lowell who has said, "Not failure, but low aim is crime".

As a politician Nick is an idealist. Above everything he loves truth. "If the party I have served were doomed to annihilation and a lie could save it, I would not speak it" (VP. 305). His personal life is ruined and he feels that his public one should remain vital. Success has come to him by the absolute oneness of his desire. He has lost Eugenia but he is not unhappy about it, not because of indifference, but he has learnt the lessons that all great men learn that happiness is but one result of the adjustment of the individual needs to the eternal laws (VP. 361). He exhibits a Nietzschean self-reliance.

At the height of his career he is senselessly killed by one of a lynch mob at Kingsborough when he prevents the mob from entering the prison for a Negro offender. In Nicholas' catastrophic death before he can make his principles prevail, Glasgow shows the failure of populist reforms in Southern politics in the eighties and nineties. Although he is a democrat, he represents like the populist, the agriculture interests. His tragic death in
defiance of a mob can be traced to the compulsive need felt in the South to maintain white supremacy under a strictly one-party system. The tradition he has challenged, in a way has triumphed over him. His death also implies that Virginia was not mature enough to accept Nick Burr. It was too narrow, too stultified, too static to provide a suitable public role and satisfy his personal sympathies for others at the same time. He has been in office for less than a month, and three times within a week he has been called "The man with the conscience!" (VP. 346). But it is all to be short-lived, for he has been acting against the general political current. He, an idealist, determines that the governorship should cease to represent a figurehead, and rightly or wrongly he remains the man of the hour. He is not "much of a politician". Eugenia rightly says, "The first lesson in politics is to lie and love it, and the second lesson is to lie and live it," (VP. 353) which is quite against the nature of the lover of truth. According to Marion K. Richards,

the theme, if we are to take the ending seriously, seems to be that destruction is assured to the single-minded seeker of
truth. Truth can best be followed by the men free from emotional entanglements! 

In The Miller of Old Church again, the theme of struggle of the lower class to rise to the high position is tackled. But more than anything else - plot or theme - Glasgow's sanity of outlook, her humanity, and sense of humour are evident. According to Marcell Thiebaux the novel makes an important turning point in Glasgow's growth as a novelist. It is the most confidently written, the most unified of the early works in terms of character and society. Her canvass of characters is large in this novel and everywhere a reader feels the surging and pulsing forces of life. Each one of her characters possesses a veritable quality of human nature. And the town of Old Church entitles him an independent existence. At the inn of Betsey Bottom town folks gather and their genial talk serves, as it were, as a chorus weaving a rich music of commentary about the protagonists. Old Reuben Merryweather, Molly's grandfather is a person who has cultivated a capacity to endure the worst evils of

---

7 Marion K. Richards, Ellen Glasgow's Development As a Novelist (Mouton: San Jose State College 1971) 63.

slavery. There are a few blameless yet suffering beings on whom nature has conferred a simple wisdom of the heart which contains a profounder understanding of life than the wisdom of the mind can grasp. Reuben is one of these. "Sorrow had sweetened in his soul, until it has turned at last into sympathy" (MC. 215). He anticipates General Archbald in The Sheltered Life. Like him Old Reuben has not had what he wanted, all the other he never wanted that have made up his life. Nothing in all seventy years has been just what he desired. Yet, the sight of the birds in the apple trees stirs his heart. Given the choice he wouldn't care to live over again but all the same he is happy at the end that he has been a part of the spring and has not missed seeing the little green leaves break out in the orchard.

Jonathan Gay who represents the old aristocracy believes in the epicurean philosophy. He is shallow and selfish without any sense of compunction. He has committed himself to impulse right from his boyhood. In the course of his life, with increasing sensitiveness, he knows that he should go on desiring the good while he compromises with the pleasanter aspects of evil. He
reminds us of Duryodhan, the protagonist of the Mahabharat who says,

Janami dharmaṃ na cha me pravrutihi
Janami adharmam na cha me nivrutihi

Though I know what is good I can't act accordingly, and even while knowing what is bad I can't abstain myself from it.⁹

Yet at the end in the last moments of his life he discovers himself. He dies like a mystic or a great saint who has grasped the eternal truths of life. He finds himself "in the midst of an incalculable vastness and delight". It is a sudden illumination which elevates even a sinner of the basest kind. To reach a sublime height, the duration of time does not count. It is the intensity and the radiating force of illumination that works and one is elevated. Hinduism which propounds the theory of rebirth gives a great importance to the thoughts, or the state of mind at the time when the soul departs. To a cursory reader or to a matter-of-fact person, this sudden change in the thoughts and feelings at the last moments

⁹ Pandav Gita
of a person's life would seem incredible or absurd. To some critics this change in Jonathan Gay at the last moments is unconvincing, whereas, others have attributed it to Glasgow's philosophical and spiritual reading, while, some others have preferred not to pass any judgement and not to mention it at all. McDowell says:

In this sensitivity to the violence which often attends social decay, Miss Glasgow, once again seems to have anticipated a preoccupation of later Southern writers. Expert also is Miss Glasgow's handling of a modified stream-of-consciousness technique when Gay, in his few minutes of reprieve after the shooting, becomes fascinated with approaching death and reviewing his past, recognizes the triviality of his life.10

But life is made up of moments, and moments do count. There comes a moment in life which becomes a turning point in the life of an individual. We have the

10 Frederick Peterwell, McDowell, Ellen Glasgow and Ironic Art of Fiction 109.
famous example of the great epic writer Valmiki who turned out to be a great Rishi from a raw, uncouth and ordinary hunter. Possibly Glasgow envisages the effect of association in Gay. Jonathan Gay, epicurean as he is likes Molly tremendously. He is intelligent enough to discern certain qualities of Molly, specially her quality of independence, her self-confidence and inner strength. Her infinite variety was inexhaustible and irresistible. Association with her creates in Jonathan Gay a distaste for the side of life which had once offered a rich allurement to his senses. Molly seems to him unattainable and wrapped in a myriad-coloured veil of his young illusions. Jonathan's words "I'd be a better man to-day if I'd known you sooner, Molly", reflect his awareness of his own flaws, and also the wide gap between the two. With all his wickedness there was a terrible kind of religion in him - like a rock that is buried under the earth - and he wanted to save his soul-alive before he passed on to judgement (MC. 174).

Glasgow in The Miller of Old Church portrays six to seven women, all of them individuals, each different from the other and each unique in her own way. In their characteristic uniqueness they seem to be real, flesh and
blood human beings. Watching their actions and reactions we are transported to the rustic surroundings of Old Church.

Sarah, Abel's mother is a staunch puritan. From the days of her infancy she has displayed a power of self-denial. All her life she has laboured to make people happy and the consequence of this exalted determination is a cowed and resentful family. And she tries to compensate the loss of joy of human relationship in her devotion to flowers. She feels vaguely that happiness in some mysterious way is related to sin. To her the ecstasy of Abel for Molly is positively immoral.

Blossom, Abel's sister being foolishly credulous leads herself to utter helplessness. She presents a complete contrast to Molly who has abundant self-reliance and clear sightedness. At the same time Blossom does possess pride and dignity. When she is betrayed by Jonathan she says, "I don't want anything from him. I don't want to live with him" (MC. 411). She has learnt from experience and has acquired the dignity and quietness of the soul. She does possess an ability to see the things objectively when she is emotionally not involved.
She suspects that the root of Abel's inexhaustible patience, as regards Judy, lies in his remorseful indifference.

In Judy Hatch Glasgow has created a woman who is just born to suffer. She is of a morbid temperament and all her decisions are taken in utter desperation. She has a hopeless passion for Mullen, the rector, becomes hysterical over the rector's leaving for a new post, almost drowns herself and has a miscarriage which leads to death. Judy suffers not due to the actual unkindness of men but due to an amiable kindness which can hurt more deeply.

Both Angela, Jonathan's mother and Sarah possess opposite qualities, yet they remain typical women who have their way, one by emotional exploitation, and the other by her stern moral ideas. Angela surrenders all her rights in order to grasp more effectively all the privileges. She is beautiful, delicate, and clinging. Her eyes, features, and her plaintive gestures, have an irresistible appeal to the emotions.
Kesiah, Angela's sister is completely effaced by her sister's charm, and the rough edges of her character never appear on the surface. In her youth though a talented artist, she could not go to Paris to accomplish her art just because she was born a woman, and could not marry due to her ugliness. The spirit that combats has never been hers, nor the courage that prevails. She has always yielded to and stepped into the vacant place by choice. But at heart she is good and possesses a good fund of common sense and she realises that the sordid realities of life are not less closely woven into the fabric of existence than are the romantic illusions.

Equating the simple rustic life with the ideals of peace and goodness, Glasgow uses Abel Revercomb's environment to explain his personality, his actions, and his philosophy. Abel Revercomb manifests the potentiality of the working class. He is a strong, simple man whose face has "something of the beauty of the desolate landscape" (MC. 11). He lives in rapport with nature and conducts himself with dignity in his daily affairs with the farmers who come to his mill. According to Kesiah he is a rather extraordinary character. To Mr. Chamberlayne
he is quite well educated. All the Revercombs have been strait-laced and honest.

Of all Glasgow's characters in The Miller of Old Church the most fascinating character and the centre of interest is Molly Merryweather. She is a "small vivid creature, with a sunburned colour and changeable blue eyes that shone almost green in the sunlight" (MC. 12). Solomon gives a true account of her character, "she's soft enough, so my wife says, where sick folk an' children an' animals are consarned, but she acts as if men war born without common feeling's of natur an' didn't come inside the Commandments. It's beyond me how a kind-hearted woman can be so onmerciful to an entire sex" (MC. 12). She is a friend to every woman. She never thinks Judy Hatch unattractive. She grows to love Aunt Kesiah and she is the only person in the novel to recognise Kesiah's worth. She knows how the energy of her desire is crippled. She even offers her help in looking after the store. Kesiah knows about Molly's bad reputation. She is known in the town as a coquette but as they know each other Kesiah perceives that beneath the coquetries there is a will of iron. When Blossom is put in an utterly helpless situation Molly gives succour out
of an abundant self-reliance. In their embrace the relation of woman to man is suddenly dwarfed suddenly by an understanding of the relation of woman to woman (MC. 410). Linda Wagner rightly says:

the innovation in this novel, so far as relationships are concerned is the emphasis on friendship among women.11

However, the most fascinating aspect of Molly's character is not her generosity, or loyalty, unselfishness, but her love for freedom. In her volatile spirit and in her vivacity she surpasses even the brilliant and enchanting women of Shakespeare. She crowns her womanhood with human pride and dignity. "I'm a thing of freedom. I can't be caged" (MC. 253). With her robust common sense she has been able to perceive the broad distinction of class and has detected two minute variations of manners between Jonathan Gay and Abel. She knows instinctively that Gay is a man of the world and Abel a rustic but this does not change her conviction that it is Abel, not Gay, she loves. At times she feels like going into Abel's arms.

but she knows herself fully well and she prefers not to succumb to passions. Because she knows that the sense of bondage will soon follow, he being a man will try to dominate and for her there will only be a woman's struggle for the integrity of personality. "I am very fond of him but I want to live - to live" (MC. 256), she said raising her arms with a free movement to the sky.

At the end Molly and Abel unite. In their marriage Glasgow has not sacrificed anything for a happy ending. Both of them have often quarrelled and reconciled. Finally in being away from each other both of them have grown. Abel's rough edges have grown smooth. The gentleness from which Judy has revolted, brings Molly's heart back to him with a longing comfort. Molly, not in words, but with her subtler communion of sense conveys to him, "I am to be loved, but never possessed, for, like the essence of desire, I elude forever the conditions of mortality" (MC. 362) And she comes to him for ever, not fair and flirting, but ardent and tender as she has become.

Both the novels The Miller of Old Church and The Romance of a Plain Man cover the period from the mid-
eighteen-seventies to the first decade of the 20th century, Glasgow has dealt not only with outward and inward processes of change but also with the differences between rural and urban communities. Without being sentimental she has tried to delineate opposite manners of living. She has stated,

"My single motive was to analyze the enduring fibre of human nature under the law of continuity and the sudden impetus of dramatic occurrences (CM, 67)"

And she worked out her method to meet her needs and except for the first invigorating inspiration of the great realists, she was content to write of life as she herself had lived or observed or imagined it to be.

The Romance of a Plain Man opens in the year 1875, and at that period the upward swing of recovery from the Civil War has scarcely begun, and Richmond is still bearing all the external signs of a devastated region. In The Voice of the People Glasgow has portrayed the effect of social recovery in the provinces and Nicholas Burr has been made a part of the general transition, and his
plunge into politics has been handled objectively. In The Romance of a Plain Man her approach has been from within outward and the book is an authentic rendering of unwritten history. The community in which Ben Starr lives and the people who move about him appear to acquire vividness and the place he lives in seems to have the lingering charm of the old culture. But in The Miller of Old Church and The Romance of a Plain Man Glasgow has shown the retreat of an agrarian culture before the conquests of industrial revolution, and also the slow and steady rise of the lower middle class. A time of change as it is, it is also a time of opportunity. Once again power is defying Jeffersonian theory and adopting Jeffersonian policy. The average man at last is in the saddle, and since average men form the great majority, democracy has already begun to march with a banner.

Glasgow presents this drama of external occurrences in The Romance of a Plain Man, and the mind of the narrator is used to show a revealing light on the general pattern of life. For the first and last time Glasgow has adopted the stratagem of the hero narrator. Perhaps she felt that the method contained almost insurmountable disadvantages even when it was employed by the great
masters of fiction. She probably even felt while engaged on the work, that for a woman novelist, it was mistake to let Ben Starr tell his own story. But she could not do otherwise.

Right from the age of nine Ben Starr's sensitivity has been stirred by the word "common" spoken by a girl of six, Sally, with whom he later falls in love and marries her. And the struggle begins to rise out of the class in which he belongs by birth. He decides to learn the meaning of the word "common" so that he may stop to be the unknown thing the word implied.

The lethargy which followed the war continued for ten years. And on Church Hill it seemed as if peace had been forgotten like the breast-works and the battlefields. The grip of poverty fiercer than the grip of the armies still holds them and some of the stately houses are abandoned. Ben, sturdy, for his age, sound in body, and inwardly not given to sentiment or softness of any kind finds himself an outcast, especially after the death of his mother, in the midst of the glittering world.
Ben Starr, after his father remarries, leaves the house and takes up work in a vegetable market. He has an inherent determination to do his best whatever he undertakes. And this single-mindedness of purpose brings him success.

To the possession of this trait, I can see now looking back, I have owed any success or achievement that has been mine - neither to brains, nor to chance, but simply to that instinct to hold fast which was bred in my bone and structure (RP. 71).

Glasgow has referred to the status of women in almost all her novels. Though not a committed suffragist, she had definite ideas about the dignity and pride of a woman. Her new women, such as Gabriella, Sally, Molly, Dorinda, never surrender to the men they love. And if at all they seem to do so, it is out of understanding and love, but by no means at the cost of their dignity and honour. Here in this book, The Romance of a Plain Man Miss Matoaca, Sally's aunt becomes eccentric in the course of her life. Her mind is all the time occupied with the rights of women, she is rather obsessed with
General Bolingbroke, out and out aristocrat just cannot tolerate her ideas. His remarks about Miss Matoaca, "She seems to think men are made just like women, but oh, Lord they ain't!" (RP. 130). "I tell you it's those outlandish heathen notions of hers that are driving us all crazy!", express male chauvinism.

To Bolingbroke a woman will look like an angel if she picks up the boots thrown at her by a drunkard husband. He believes that an unmarried lady has no business to know whether a man leads an impure life or not. He will not advise any man to marry a strong-minded woman who "instead of taking pleasure in giving up, begins to talk everlastingly about her honour".

Glasgow's ironical strokes are superb in the portrayal of General Bolingbroke. The pathetic contradiction about Miss Matoaca is that while she works for the emancipation of women she herself is the slave of an ancestry of men who oppressed women and women who loved oppression. Matoaca's remark as regards Ben Starr, "He is
a magnificent animal, but he has no social manner”, exhibits her strong class consciousness (RP. 153). Further when Ben and Sally decide to marry she says, “There are many different kinds of merit, I do not undervalue that of character, but I do not think that even a good character can atone for the absence of a family inheritance - of the qualities which come from refined birth and breeding” (RP. 202).

This shows the strong hold of class, custom and environment upon human beings. Glasgow must have envisaged that it is a long way for a woman to go to emancipate herself from tradition, and from a male dominated world by which she herself has been conditioned since time immemorial. Miss Matoaca’s remarks "The Blands have never needed to be taught", exhibit the arrogance of affluence and class consciousness, and "the claims of the family are not to be sacrificed to - to a sentiment" remind us of Eugenia Battle in The Miller of Old Church who also has a lot of family pride which interferes with her love.

But Sally is quite different. She speaks less but when she speaks her words are "like the prick of a needle
in a sensitive place. She has a knack of knowing and judging persons. "If I wanted an estimate of goodness, I don't think I'd go to the General as an authority", says Sally (RP. 270). Though Sally is born in a high family in her presence Ben can always feel that he is a strong man, because she admires him for his honesty and courage, while Bonny, her friend, can only see his outward roughnesses that he is a plain man and makes him conscious. Sally possesses gentility, grace, and compassion of noble blood.

When Ben's brother, President, a miner, who is rough, unclean and sheepish, enters their house when the party is in full swing, Sally feels no embarrassment, no hesitation, no shame. She welcomes him warmly, she is nice to Ben's sister Jessy - a person with no depth of character. When Ben is broke she is ready to face all the difficulties laughingly. She can be humorous about her own eviction. She is endowed with such a spirit that she faces life with cheerfulness and head held high. This gentle Sally can talk like a free and strong-headed person, do everything for her man but always maintains her dignity and honour. She is very keen on horse-riding and when Ben tries to stop her, she says "All of us have
an ambition, you know, women as well as men". She has thus inherited the good qualities of both the parents - gentility and nobility of the mother and firmness of the father.

Glasgow's deep insight into human nature helps us to see the subtle differences of the sexes. Ben loves Sally from the first moment, and to win her is the single ambition of his life. To attain her he must be rich and get her all that he can. But in his blind passion of being the President of South Midland - he forgets that it is not the money that Sally wants. He has fallen into the rat race, but Sally's going away, brings him to his senses. All the time his intellect tries to seek justification for what he has been doing. "I must justify her choice in the eyes of her friends. It isn't as if I were doing it for myself or my own ambition. I am really doing it for her - everything is for her. If I can hold on now, in a few years I'll give her millions to spend" (RP. 424-25). This is what men have been telling their wives. This is a man's ego. It also reveals Ben's constant aching struggle to prove himself worthy of Sally. He tries to compensate the adornment of external existence which he lacked, by money and material things. But Sally's true
love brings him back, and for the first time in his life he feels a contempt for mere wealth, for the position, which the amassing of wealth confers. He realises that in seeking to give money, he has, in reality sacrificed the ability to give the things that she valued far more. He feels sorry that he has refused to learn the finer values of life which Sally alone can teach. He realizes that the external is what he has worshipped. He also realizes that their real rift has come not from the accident of their different beginnings but from the choice that has committed them to opposite ends. They have been living separate lives under the same roof. When she has asked for bread he has given her pearls. With this realization the telegraphic offer of the presidency of the South Midland and Atlantic Railroad is thrown in the fire place. Marion K. Richard rightly remarks,

Miss Glasgow in *The Romance of a Plain Man* has moved from the sentimental religiosity of *The Ancient Law* to a kind of Horatio Alger, rags - to - riches plot with a
romantic conclusion that love is even better than success.12

Glasgow was intensely sensitive to the change that was taking place in the South in the beginning of the century. In the Battle Ground the change that was in the offing is hinted at. In the other three novels discussed in this chapter she has shown the slow but steady rise of the lower middle class and the retreat of agrarian society and the advance of industrial revolution. Simultaneously, with the issues like the status of women, man to woman relationships, urban and rural communities are also examined.

One Man In His Time is the last of the transition novels. If one looks for political solutions in Glasgow's fictional world one may get disappointed because Glasgow being an idealist was an anachronism in her world where most of the politicians were opportunists. And once again one is reminded of what Eugenia says to Nick, in The Voice of the People, "The first lesson in politics is to

12 Marion K. Richards Ellen Glasgow's Development As a Novelist 112.
lie and love it, and the second to lie and live it" (VP. 19).

But if one cares for human and ethical values, study of human nature, its complexities and subtlety, Glasgow would be a thought-provoking and stimulating writer. Because Glasgow as a critic of society was confronted with a basic problem of how to fuse abstract ideals with a political democracy in Virginia.

Like the other three novels, The Voice of The People, The Miller of Old Church and The Romance of a Plain Man, One man In His Time also depicts a member of the rising middle class. Gideon Vetch, one of "the poor white trash", born in a circus tent, who possesses, "the unconscious dignity of natural forces - of storms and fire and war and pestilence" (OT. 27). Because he never thinks how he appears, he always appears impregnable. He is a reformer and all he cares for is pushing on the idea. His reforms include pensions for the aged and for mothers, the government control of mines and railroads, a decent wage, an eight-hour workday, job for veterans, proper housing for the black and white poor. His supporters consider him the people's saviour and his
opponents distrust him. To his follower Darrow he is more than honest. He talks like an idealist, "The only remedy I have ever been able to see is to work not on conditions, but on human nature. Improve human nature and then you will improve the conditions in which it lives" (OT. 193). As a governor, Gideon Vetch lacked every public virtue except the human touch which enkindles either the souls or the imagination of men. His opponent Benham possesses both, the character of the patriot and the graces of the orator but lacks one "indefinable attribute which makes a natural leader of men" (OT. 248). Vetch can be with the strikers only half way. As long as their method of striking does not interfere with the rights of the public they are fair enough. But when it comes to raising the price of food and cutting off the milk supply, then he begins to think of the human side of it. The one thing he cannot forgive about people is that they never forget themselves, that they never think of anything except what they want. That angers him and he flies out. He is, like Nick Burr, killed in the end, for intervening in a quarrel during a strike meeting, by the very forces that put him into office. Gideon Vetch knew his fate. He said, "I am the loneliest man on earth. The loneliest man on earth is the one who stands between two
extremes ...... I am in the middle when I try to bring the two mill stones together they will grind me to powder" (OT. 221).

The other interesting and charming character is Corinna Page. She is in her late forties, has wealth, charm, courage and everything but the capacity to love. With her sincerity and fearlessness she embodies the American democratic ideal. Her forefathers had brought representative government to the New World. Corinna has derived from them her clear-eyed acceptance of life, her nobility of mind, her loveliness and grace. She can guide Stephen and Patty. Her advice to Patty, "But, my dear, we must be careful, you and I not to let our happiness depend too much upon one thing. We must scatter it as much as we can" (OT. 236). Her words remind one of Eva Birdsong's advice to Jenny Blair in The Sheltered Life. Corinna knows that her destiny is the destiny of the strong who must give until they have nothing left. Her courage and firmness anticipate Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground. She can think dispassionately as if she were merely a spectator. "yet, it is the weak, the passive, who get what they want in the end. I suppose, it is because they need it more. They have never learnt to do
without. They do not know how to carry about a broken heart" (OT. 298). She wonders whether Gideon Vetch, for all his matter of fact appearance is simply another political dreamer, another visionary without a definite vision. She is not so much troubled by the riddle of Vetch's personality as much by the fact that there is another mental world beyond the one she has lived in and this other world is filled like her own, with obscure moral and spiritual images.

Stephen Culpeper is passive, but critical and has developed the faculties of observation. He craves for something larger, something wider and deeper than the world in which his father has lived. After his return from the war he feels a sense of suffocation amidst the antiquated traditions of his family. Outwardly he takes up life as before but feels a deep revulsion from everything that he has once enjoyed and loved. In his nature, as in his environment two opposing spirits are struggling, the realistic spirit which takes things as they are and the romantic spirit which sees things as they ought to be. This blend of realism and romanticism is often found in Glasgow's characters. It presents the conflicts between the community and the individual,
between tradition and change, between age and youth, between philosophy and experience. In the post-World-War I atmosphere, he sees around him energy without direction, success without stability and martyrdom without faith, and an all-pervading mediocrity.

Patty, the Governor's daughter with whom Stephen falls in love is courageous and bold. She makes an effort to get the best out of life, and to learn things she has never known. She is resolved about one thing "whatever happens I am not going to let my life be spoiled", (OT. 256) and this she keeps in her mind like a line out of a hymn book.

Glasgow in One Man In His Time uses politics merely as the

flavouring to her feast. She studies human relationships with an air of a criticism.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\quad\) Gerald Gould. "One Man In His Time." Saturday Review 134 (2 September) 1922: 355.
and pictures the conflict between the new and the old order. According to Julius Rowan Harper,

Glasgow fails to keep her focus upon Stephen. This is unfortunate, because in him she has found a strong and objective representation of nervous disorders that the war and the pull between past and future, between reality and romance, had created in her own life. (She has left this story for Robert Penn Warren to develop in All The King's Men). 14

In her early novels, The Descendant, Phases of an Inferior Planet, The Battle Ground, and The Voice of The People Glasgow was beginning a solitary revolt against the formal, the false, the affected, the sentimental and the pretentious in Southern writing. She had no models. One question haunted her all the time "Why must novels be false to experience?" Hence she felt that she could not thrive or even breathe as a novelist in a funereal air.

The result of this inner turmoil was The Descendant, her first novel in which her central character presented a complete contrast to the stereotyped heroes in Southern fiction.

But she was unfamiliar with the modern analytical method, and was ignorant of the whole new world of critical theories emerging in the western world. She realised that just as a child must learn to talk and to walk, the instinctive writer must also know the first simple principles of his or her craft.

By 1900 she had learnt from the great masters like Balzac, Flaubert, and Maupassant and from every celebrated novel written in English that the external truth of the subject must depend upon the absolute fidelity of the treatment, and the supreme merit lay in the vision of the artist. Hence, what was vague in her mind became absolutely clear that the arrangement of material may have greater effect than the matter itself. She understood that a wrong slant of light, a false point of view, a person or object out of focus, and failure in perspective would mar the beauty of any landscape or any work of art. As a youthful writer she also learnt from those true
realists that there is a wide gap between the novel bearing a sincere emotion toward life and the novel depending on a sterile convention. From Maupassant she learnt the way of the swift stroke, of the clean cut, of the value of a deep penetration into experience. She admired Henry James who was much in fashion, and enjoyed his books which few of his admirers appeared to do. But she had no inclination, whatsoever to imitate him or anyone else.

Gradually, she attained the art of the restricted point of view, which is not found in *The Battle Ground*. In this novel the subject is surveyed, not only through the eyes of the two central characters, but on several occasions, it is recorded in the minds of less prominent characters. She had not yet acquired the vigour of the single and direct curve of approach followed by her in *Barren Ground*.

In *The Battle Ground*, the point of view is more variable, and the curve of approach remains less direct (CM. 19).
Glasgow knew too well that the main end of the novel is to create life but also to fulfill its secondary obligation that fiction should, at least to an extent, capture the movement and the tone of its time. To fulfill this demand she had presented in The Battle Ground an undocumented history of human nature and the conditions under which it developed or by which it was modified, in related periods of time.

By the time she wrote her third novel, The Voice of The People, she had understood that literature like life, must spring from one's roots, and that it must contain the vital principle of growth. The Voice of The People shows a greater control over setting than character. Glasgow's style with its use, of a fresh sense impressions imparts the charm of Williamsburg in the 1880s, to the fictional kingsborough.

Along the verdurous, gray lanes the houses seemed abandoned, shattered, filled with shade. From the court-house green came the chime of cow-bells rising and falling in slow waves of sound. A spotted calf stood bleating, in the crooked foot path, which
traversed diagonally the waste of butter cups like a white seam in a cloth of gold. Against the arching sky rose the bell-tower of the grim old church, where the sparrows twittered in the melancholy gables and startled face of the stationary clock stared blankly above the ivied walls. Farther away, at the end of a wavering lane, slanted the shadow of the insane asylum (VP. 15).

She makes the natural scene an integral register for the moods of her characters. She uses her brilliant epigrammatic strokes in the portrayal of her minor characters like Mrs. Burwell and Mary Burr, Nick's stepmother.

Glasgow was still discovering for herself the simplest rules. Yet with infinite patience she set herself to overcome problems of technique. And as an aspiring writer she accepted a voluntary apprenticeship. The experience of writing the first two novels taught her that one should write the truth of life with a single mind and a single conscience. She thought it inevitable
that her book should concern itself with political changes that were taking place. And we have in The Voice of The People, Nick, the central character, the son of a "peanut farmer" and a "poor-white", the under-privileged of the age, thrusting upward to political authority all over the Commonwealth. The fictional Kingsborough is the prototype of old Williamsburg. The Voice of The People is thus the first work of genuine realism to appear in Southern fiction. Stuart P. Sherman states:

Miss Glasgow's democratic fight in realism is incarnate in the little red-haired hero of The Voice of the People. Realism crossed the Potomac twenty-five years ago going North (CM. 62).

In the process of collecting realistic data Glasgow realised that her historical conscience was involved even more deeply than her developing literary instinct. Hence she decided not to stick so much to the superficial truth of external surroundings. The review of Academy and Literature becomes very useful for an assessment of her achievement.
Though "both clever and very ambitious" and "never dull" the novel (The Voice of The People) includes too much of the "unimportant and unessential". Its local colour scenes trivialize the story ...... Her dialogue is, however, "life like and effective" and the sketches of black characters are excellent. "(One) is bound to accord to her that serious consideration which is only accorded to a serious artist".  

Hugh Walpole in his introduction to The Romance of a Plain Man admires her for the creation of character, for the leisurely construction of a whole world of people and places with a true philosophy behind them, and especially for never going in for short-cuts.

In The Voice of The People Glasgow portrayed the effects of social recovery in the provinces. The central character Nicholas Burr is portrayed from the point of view of a spectator. He is made a part of the general

---

25 Anon. Review of The Voice of The People. Academy and Literature 59 (18 August) 133-34.
transition, and his emergence in politics is handled objectively. Whereas in The Romance of a Plain Man the approach is a movement from within to the surface and as Glasgow says "The participant and narrator are combined". The impressions of the scenes and the whole surroundings set of circumstances are endowed with a more substantial actuality. The reading of The Romance of a Plain Man creates the impression of an authentic rendering of unwritten history. The community in which Ben Starr lives and the people around him are vividly portrayed. This is the only one of all Glasgow's novels in which she has attempted to reconstruct each precise detail of the old Richmond in the last quarter of the 19th Century. In no other novel has Glasgow used the first person narrative. The merit of The Romance of a Plain Man lies in the truthful record of the stubborn retreat of agrarian culture before the conquest of an industrial revolution, and the slow but steady rise of the lower middle class.

The Miller of Old Church is more dramatic than any other novels discussed in this Chapter. It is a rather curious mixture of romance and realism. Glasgow's canvas of character is large. The characters enact the author's social thesis without appearing to be manipulated
puppets. One would have to look ahead to Bernard Shaw to find a social critic who could present social philosophy with equal charm. A genial wit sparkles from numerous pages, and it serves the dual purpose of revealing character in a Chaucerian manner, as well as developing the theme. The Reverend Mr. Mullen's sermon on the "Womanly woman" and her place in life is a masterpiece of irony that remains unsurpassed as an indictment of male chauvinism. A large chorus weaves a rich music of commentary about the protagonists and in critical opinion Abel Revercomb, the miller emerges a stronger character than either Nick Burr or Ben Starr as a rising middle class hero.

Glasgow was never quite able to solve the problem of exactly what the new democracy meant for Virginia. At the end of her career she was given to a general indictment of modernity on ethical rather than political grounds. However, she once more tried to explain the meaning of the new democracy in One Man In His Time. One Man In His Time is supposedly the last of the transition novels before Glasgow found her true artistic mettle in Barren Ground. In terms of technique One Man In His Time is considerably more subtle than The Voice of The People.
But it suffers severely from a highly melodramatic plot. The pattern of character development used in *One Man In His Time* anticipates *Barren Ground*. The process of growth Glasgow hit upon in *Gabriella* takes the form of a romantic quest for a new self. The quest begins in each case with a clear indication that present reality is not enough. *Gabriella* succeeds in her quest, whereas Corinna and Stephen do not seem to know how to end the quest for Self once it is under way. And it is left half-way. Glasgow, probably felt that emotional and commercial success *Gabriella* sought would not satisfy either Corinna or Stephen.

*One Man In His Time* is weakened by the uncertain focus. But its groping for light seems earnest and profound. It possesses depth, characteristic of all Glasgow's novels except *The Builders*.

The next chapter *Obsession and Anguish* shows Glasgow's improved skill in handling her theme, her penetrating insight into characterization, and the subtle way of conveying her point of view. The protagonists obsessed with one powerful passion forget the road of reason and create either muddled situations for them-
selves and for others around them, like Mary Victoria in They Stopped to Folly and Jenny Blair in Sheltered Life, or become lone sufferers like Christopher Blake in The Deliverance and Virginia Pendleton in Virginia.