In the five novels: The Deliverance (1904), Virginia (1913), The Sheltered Life (1932), The Romantic Comedians (1926) and They Stooped to Folly (1929) Glasycw has dealt with a single powerful passion of her protagonist. In The Deliverance Christopher's passion for revenge has taken complete hold over him, although finally it is subdued through pure love and Christopher attains deliverance from his agonizing trauma of hatred and revenge. Virginia Pendleton, the heroine of Virginia who has sacrificed everything that can be called hers in the service of her husband and children and has effaced herself for a lifetime, is in the end left with "utterable loneliness" and the realization of the immeasurable distance between herself and her husband Oliver. In The Sheltered Life we see the passion of an adolescent Jenny Blair whose sexual urge and infatuation bring a tragic end. In The Romantic Comedians Glasgow portrays
the "eternal man" as a "piece of driftwood in the sea of his own passions". They Stooped to Folly brings before us Mary Victoria's passion for social service. Mary takes too long to realize her folly.

Glasgow's commitment to an ironic view in her interpretations of Southern manners and morals has been evident through all her novels beginning with her earliest one The Voice of The People. In all these tragi-comedies Glasgow has dealt with the simple passions of the heart which operate in such a manner that they themselves become the substance of human drama.

Although The Deliverance depicts the historical period between 1878-90, and one of the transition novels from 1899 until the beginning of the First World War, the focus is entirely different. As regards the technique of writing, she has followed with confidence her own instinct rather than any established theory that her inner critic was the only proper guide for her. She did not pause to examine her method simply because she had not been aware of possessing a method. Instinct alone had warned her that a narrative should focus on a central character. She created a scene in which the characters
would appear as natural projections of the landscape. In The Deliverance all the impressions of the scene seem to be as primitive as the mind and heart of the main character, Christopher Blake who is over-powered by the passion of violence and by the primitive motives of desire and revenge. The theme as well as the background are animated by a romantic quality not only in the narrative but equally in the actual living. There is an unbroken sympathetic accord between Christopher, the main protagonist and his environment. Though denied of all inner harmony he finds peace and freedom only in communion with the soil which has moulded him and his race. When The Deliverance was first published many readers remarked that the pages were "drenched with the smell of tobacco".

In the character of Christopher Blake, Glasgow has put to test the strength of hereditary fibre when it has been long subjected to the power of malignant circumstances. She seems inclined to believe that environment more than inheritance determines character. But environment does not determine the tendency of innate impulses nurtured by tradition and legend, unless tradition is considered as a part of environment. Christopher's hatred
for Bill Fletcher is not of the will alone, it has been absorbed into his blood and inextricably woven through every nerve of his body. It can be torn out only by plucking out the secret root of his identity.

Glasgow has for the first and last time used an indirect method of narration favoured by Henry James, and has introduced Carraway, the attorney for that purpose. The ruffled road winding among the tobacco fields, the heroic figure of young Christopher, the burly figure of Fletcher, the farmer overseer, who has defrauded the Blakes of their heritage— all these are observed through the eyes and mind of the bewildered spectator. The whole chain of events large or small help to link together the connecting pieces of the framework. Instead of concentrating on a single subject in the early chapter, and reducing the minor persons to mere details in the setting, Glasgow lets the medium of Carraway's reflections endow each character with some degree of significance. Every incident and event, however important or unimportant is pushed into the main current of action. Even the loss of Mrs. Blake's yellow cat and the old Negro woman selling chickens to Fletcher have their part,
in the accumulation of episodes, in revealing the latent motives in the persons portrayed.

To Carraway the most wonderful thing is the intricate tissue of lies woven about Mrs. Blake's chair. She lives upon lies and thrives upon the sweetness she extracts from them. Events have shaken the world to its centre, but unaware as she is of the happenings of the world, she has not experienced so much as a sympathetic tremor of the changes in the world about her, she is as ignorant as a new-born child. She follows strictly the mid-Victorian ideal and there have been plenty like her in the Western World but in Virginia she seems to attain her finest and latest flowering. She appears, with equal fidelity to the part, both as Mrs. Birdsong in The Sheltered Life and as Mrs. Dalrymple in They Stooped to Folly. Glasgow sees in Mrs. Christopher not just one old woman blindly groping and nourished by illusions, but Virginia and the entire South, unaware of the changes about them. Most of them cling with passionate fidelity to the ceremonial forms of tradition.

Cynthia, Christopher's sister is made of the stuff of martyrs, and the dignity of her high resolve is her
one outward grace. To her life is something to be endured rather than enjoyed. She reminds us of Elizabeth Jane Fairfax in Hardy's The Mayor of Castorbridge. The saddest thing about her life is that she can find nothing worthy of renouncement. What she craves is the conscious dignity of a broken heart, some lofty memory that she may lean upon in her hours of weakness. The sole occupation throughout her life has been telling lies and planning all sorts of lies she can tell her mother about the house, garden, and so on. "I have lied for more than 20 years and I reckon I've lost my taste for the truth" (Del. 409).

Lila, Christopher's twin sister with a complexion of damask rose is quite different from both Cynthia and Christopher. She is the kind of woman, and they are rare, who does not have to have her happiness made to order (Del. 227). She has the stuff to make herself happy. She is both tender and tough. She is in love with Jim, the son of old Jacob who was once the most respectable of her father's labourers. She has decided to marry him. She protests, "I don't care about stations in life, nor blood, nor anything like that" (Del. 171). Weatherbys in
this novel and Revercombs in The Miller of Old Church belong to the same group.

In the world of Christopher who is caught between the claws of evil and violence, hatred and revenge, loneliness and resentment there is one civilized soul. He is Uncle Tucker Corbin who possesses profound wisdom. Life giving blood, as it were, flows in Glasgow's fictional world. There is no turning away from life. Uncle Tucker's true companions are General Archbald in The Sheltered Life; John Fincastle in Vein of Iron; Asa Timberlake in In This Our Life and Merryweather in The Miller of Old Church.

But uncle Tucker, according to Roux, is the first in Ellen Glasgow's gallery of civilized men; and more than an aristocrat by birth and class, he is an aristocrat of mind and soul.1

As against the character of uncle Tucker, Glasgow has portrayed a corrupt and wicked overseer, Bill

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Fletcher. He is hard and mean. If he cannot beg or borrow he would never hesitate to steal. As he grows old he becomes more and more stingy.

In her fifth novel The Deliverance Glasgow shows artistic growth through her technique. To some critics, however, the love between Christopher and Maria, Bill Fletcher's grand daughter seems improbable. But their love, as Glasgow has presented in the book does not only spring from the strange attraction towards hostile elements but also from one of those sudden romantic fires which occasionally inflame and consume the dry substance of actuality. We have also the example of passionate love between Romeo and Juliet, offsprings of families who were staunch enemies. Near the end of the novel Maria confesses her love for Christopher from the moment she has first seen him, and also that this love has hampered her married life with Jack Wyndham to whom she could give only her poor flesh. Like Nick Burr in The Voice of the People Maria too is endowed with lofty thinking low-born though she is. She has inherited qualities of honesty and reverence for good things. The lines she reads from the medieval "Quest of the Holy Grail" celebrate the renewal of spring and love, as well as the ability of lovers to
"call again to mind old gentleness and old service and many kind deeds that were forgotten by negligence". Maria's words have a magnetic effect on Christopher. She thus redirects him to his lost tradition.

The centre of the book is Christopher Blake whose big muscular figure and the bitterest hatred add to the haunting effect of the scene. When we first see him through Carraway, his lustful looks resemble an evil deity and his laughter sounds brutal. His beauty appears to be "blackened and distorted" and more "sinister than ugly". Carraway finds himself in the presence of a great naked passion. Christopher's sole desire is to glut his hatred until it should lie quiet like a gorged beast. Frederick P. McDowell says that

his obsessive emotions generate a highly charged almost "Gothic" atmosphere; like his nearest counterparts in literature, Roger Chillingworth and Heathcliff.²

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² Frederick P. McDowell, Ellen Glasgow and Ironic Art of Fiction. 74.
Christopher, whose ancestors had owned the vast land is now the embodiment of a period in violent transition.

For more than two hundred years his people had been gay and careless livers on this very soil, among them all, he knew of not one who had gone without the smallest of his desires, nor of one who had permitted his left hand to learn what his right one had cast away. Big, blithe, mettlesome, they passed before him in a long, comely line, flushed with the pleasant follies that helped to sap the courage in their descendants' veins (Del. 175).

The time comes when Christopher feels that he is on the path of success - because Will, the grandson of Bill Fletcher who has been unknowingly saved by him reveres him like a hero-worshipper. At first Christopher discourages him but Will's insistent demand to continue their friendship prompts him to make Will an instrument in fulfilling his revenge upon Bill Fletcher. He thinks he will beat him through his own grandson whom he loves the most. And he succeeds in widening the breach between Bill
Fletcher and his grandson Will. Marcelle Thiebaux has rightly said that The Deliverance is

A pioneering achievement, the novel anticipates the more masterly novels of William Faulkner with their bitter tensions between poor-whites and decayed aristocrats.³

Glasgow believed in Good and she never lost her faith in it since it was rooted not in the mind alone but in the deepest source of her personality. Hence she shows how in the course of time, despite the success, Christopher gets weary and restless. He reflects on his dark and gloomy life. For an instant the light radiates and he faces the brutal truth in all its nakedness. He feels that he is a man debased by ignorance and passion to the level of a beast that he has sold his birthright for vengeance that has sickened him in the moment of fulfillment. He realizes that it is a human life that he has taken in his hand and destroyed it deliberately. He remembers Will, and recognizes that there has been no

evil in him, it has been only weakness and pathetic absence of determination. This awakening inspires him to hand over himself to the police and take over the crime of murder committed by Will upon himself. His obsession for revenge makes him suffer an agonising trauma, his passions however, fully subdued at the end. His reason and intellect are on a triumphant move and the idea strikes his head, "I may not sit with the saints, but I shall stand among the gentlemen" (Del. 448).

The Deliverance is more significant for its psychological penetration, for its probing into the complexities and intricacies of human nature. According to Frederick P McDowell,

If the complexities of a whole society in flux form the matrix of this novel, the complexities of a human soul engulfed in a great passion-revenge-form its core.  

With Virginia Glasgow reaches a keystone in her literary development by showing that she has finally shed

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4 Frederick P McDowell, Ellen Glasgow and Ironic Art of Fiction, 73.
the fetters of the Southern tradition of writing. The book is a satire on the traditional code of gentility that has in reality doomed women to severely restricted lives. It reproduces the period from 1884 to 1910 - remnant of an earlier culture that has contributed to Virginia's make-up and consequently to her tragedy.

The novel is set in the town of Dinwiddie (Pseudonym for Petersburg).

Human nature in this town of twenty one thousand inhabitants differed from human nature in London or in the Desert of Sahara mainly in the things that it ate and the manner in which it carried its clothes. The same passions stirred its heart, the same instincts moved its body, the same contentment with things as they are, and the same terror of things as they might be, warped its mind. (Vir. 14-15).

This Dinwiddie and Virginia, the heroine of the novel, are so intricately connected that in a sense the
beautiful Virginia is the beautiful Dinwiddie and the faded Virginia, the faded Dinwiddie.

It was as if the vividness of Virginia's interior truth had brought to life every person and every object, every house and street, that composed her surroundings (CM. 80).

Most of the advanced ideas in the late 19th century were bitterly opposed by the average Southerner who regarded them fearfully as Yankee or Foreign influences. C. Vann Woodward in his Origin of the New South notes this stubborn resistance to the intellectually new, "The South of the eighties was a bleak place for the young scholar". In the words of Oliver, husband of Virginia, "it was a quarter of a century since The Origin of Species had changed the course of the world's thought, yet it had never reached them" (Vir. 14).

Virginia Pendleton belongs to a town where almost every other well-bred or well-born Southern woman of her day is brought up with a view to paralyzing all her reasoning faculties. Her education is founded upon the
simple theory that the less a girl knows about life the better prepared she will be to contend with it. Knowledge of any sort except the rudiments of reading and writing, is kept from her rigorously as if it contained the germ of a contagious disease. Virginia humbly accepts the doctrine that a natural curiosity about the universe is the beginning of infidelity. After an initial ecstasy of marriage, her husband loses all interest in her. Her energies are absorbed by her young children, and the Victorian ideals of motherhood prevailing during the 1880s-90s in Virginia, preclude any further need for her fulfilment or self-realization.

Unlike Virginia, Susan the daughter of Cyrus Tradewell, is born with an inquiring spirit and can ask questions. She is one of those inexplicable variations from an ancestral stock over which naturalists contend. She is sensible and her natural intelligence has enabled her to see things clearly and precisely. At twenty she is free from impulsive judgements and from the disturbed anxiety of youth "she is not the sort of girl a man would lose his head over". She is a free spirit and "as free from coquetry as she is from the folderol of sentimentality" (Vir 101). I've a life of my own to live, and I'm
not going to let my happiness depend on how many times a
man looks at me" (Vir. 110).

Glasgow has presented a sharp contrast between two
good friends Virginia and Susan, both born in a community
which offers few opportunities to women outside of the
nursery of the kitchen. Remaining staunchly faithful to
the society and community she depicts, Glasgow examines
the potentialities and possibilities of a progressive
free woman. One is totally crushed by the cruel and
inhuman social code, whereas the other has the capacity
to rise above time and circumstances. Juxtaposing
opposite personalities what she wants to convey is
conveyed well. And the beauty lies in the fact that they
remain life-long friends. The personality clash or
diverse mental make-up or question of wave length does
not destroy their friendship and the bonds of their
hearts. Susan by asserting her individuality paves the
way for Gabriella in Life and Gabriella and Dorinda
Oakley in Barren Ground.

Glasgow seems more ingenious than in the previous
novels in presenting the minor characters of Virginia.
The portrait of Miss Priscilla Batte and Mrs. Peachy
belong to the old order which has still persisted in 1880. Their complacency, exaltation, narrowness of vision and uncompromising devotion to an ideal have passed from the race into individuals and through individuals back into the very blood and fibre of the race. It represents a culture in which all women who deviate a little from inherited norms of behaviour are immediately suspect, for example, Mrs. Payson, for her quick intelligence, Abbey Goode for her vigorous amiability, Susan for her active mind and Virginia's own children for their frank sophistication.

Glasgow's artistic maturity is evident in her brilliantly drawn characterization. All the characters are equally convincing. All of them, even the "flat" characters like Belinda, Mrs. Tradewell, Miss Priscilla Batte and Miss Willy Whitlow as well as multi-faced characters like Gabriel Pendleton, Cyrus Tradewell, Oliver Tradewell, Susan and Virginia herself behave as they are expected to. The character of Cyrus, Tradewell, "at once the destroyer and the builder" is foe of the feudal order and the beneficent force of the new industrialization. Though "a rich man - the richest man living in Dinwiddie" his household exemplifies the sordid
tragedy - not of poverty but of meanness (Vir 113). Glasgow has touched the negro problem and has shown the meanest and darkest aspect of it through Cyrus. He is possessed of the "primitive antagonism of race," the instinct which is older than civilization. The negress's words, "Am I not what you have made me? Have I not been what you wanted? (Vir 174), express her utter helplessness. Her looks suggest that Cyrus should have understood human nature rather than his finance. And Glasgow's ironical stroke becomes most pointed in Cyrus's words, "It's a pretty pass things have come to when men have to protect themselves from negro women".

The craving for possession, the singleness of desire, the tenacity of grasp, the dread of relinquishment, the cold-blooded determination to keep intact the thing which it had cost so much to acquire - all that was bound up in the spirit of Cyrus Tradewell, and all that would pass at last with that spirit from off the earth, was expressed in the gesture with which he held out the bit of paper to the woman who had asked for his help. "Take this - it is
all I can do for you, "he said, "and don't come whinning around me any more. Black or white, the man that commits a murder has got to hang for it (Vir 368).

Cyrus represents the primitive and the uncouth manners whereas Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel Pendleton, Virginia's parents, represent militant idealism. Both cherish the naive conviction that to acknowledge an evil is in a manner to countenance its existence, and both cling fervently to the belief that a pretty sham has a more intimate relation to morality than has an ugly truth. According to them to "take a true view" is to believe what is pleasant against what is painful in spite of evidence. Through Virginia's life the Pendleton idealism is set against the triumph of actuality.

She was possessed throughout this novel by that pre-established harmony between material and medium as Glasgow herself said in A Certain Measure, which is the one unqualified reward in the pursuit of a difficult craft (CM 94). From the pastoral idealism of Book I of The Dream, from its lush flower and light imagery and ecstasy of Virginia Pendleton we enter Book II of The
Reality when Virginia faces reality. For the first time after eight years of married life she realizes that everything externally is the same but the fact confronts her there as grimly as physical sore. And the evil strikes at the very heart of her love, since it is not life, but Olver that has changed.

Then the door opened; he came from the gloom into the pale gleam of light that shone in from the window, and with her first look into his face her rising joy ebbed quickly away. A new element, something for which neither her training nor her experience had prepared her, entered at that instant into her life. Not the external world, but the sacred inner circle in which they had loved and known each other was suddenly clouded (Vir 295).

And finally Book III — The Adjustment takes us into a silent acceptance of the facts of life by Virginia in a mood of resignation. Oliver's play is acclaimed by the people. The night of the show has been a wonderful night but through it all Virginia has felt the iron nails of
her crucifixion driven into her soul. She is crucified by Oliver's triumph. She realises the immeasurable distance between Oliver and herself.

Even if she called him and he came to her, she could not reach him. Even if he stood at her side, the immeasurable distance between them would not lesson (Vir 478).

Virginia's strength is the strength of passiveness, she can endure but she cannot battle. She has lost the energy of soul which once flamed up in her with her three days' jealousy of Abbey. The fighting courage, the violence of revolt has no part in her soul, she has been taught to suffer and renounce with dignity not to indulge in heroics. Her submission is the submission of a flower that bends to a storm. When her heart is bursting with the sense of something gone out of existence and with the realization of the irretrievable failure of love, a wan spirit of humour enters into her and the whole of her life seems to her ridiculous - and absurd. Glasgow has very artistically and realistically shown how Virginia's mind oscillates between reality and illusion. Head and heart are shown to be at war unceasingly, yet in a manner
which is unnoticeable. Hers is a mute suffering. She does not even for a moment assert herself, and at first sight would be taken as a person who lacks acute sensibility, yet as the reader reads between the lines he recognises her agonizing pain caused by her emotional obsession.

Frederick P.W. McDowell has rightly remarked,

Stylistically Virginia is one of Miss Glasgow's best novels especially in the briskly satiric passages.5

In her critical work A Certain Measure Glasgow explains the technique she has followed in this novel and reveals how people responded to it when it was first published.

In this book, the influence of the realistic school of fiction is still evident. I have followed that technique in fullness of substance and in accumulation of detail. Yet the ironic overtones, the relentless logic of events, and the applica-

5 ibid., P.126.
tion of modern theories in psychology, all these, I think, were in advance of the period in which I was writing "Such books may be true to life", complained one Southern reviewer, "but we should hesitate before placing them in the hands of our trusting wives" (Cm. 94-95).

Glasgow's career as a literary artist marks a continuous process of growth. In her tenth novel Virginia "truth of life" is portrayed with 'complete fidelity to life" in a "classic purity" of language. But as compared to her seventeenth novel The Sheltered Life, one feels that Glasgow's overwriting in Virginia makes it at times dull and hardly anything is left to the reader's imagination. Virginia would have been an artistically great novel had its author been more subtle and astute. Her stylistic acumen is evident in The Sheltered Life. It has a lasting charm, beauty and grace and Glasgow has been able to maintain in it a uniformly excellent style. Beck Clyde rightly states that with The Sheltered Life,
Glasgow has moved beyond the limits of psychological novel into universal art and has developed a timeless style.

In *The Sheltered Life*, Glasgow has employed two points of view and they are separated through the whole range of experience. Age and youth look on the same scene, the same persons, the same events and the same tragedy in the end. Between these conflicting points of view the story flows on as "a stream flows in a narrow valley". On the one hand there is the old man General Archbald, "Seeing life as it is" and on the other, his grand daughter the young Jenny Blair, "Seeing life as she would wish it to be". Glasgow has tried to interpret reality through the dissimilar mediums of thought and emotion. Besides, she has projected a shallow and aimless society of happiness - hunters who live in a perpetual flight from reality. Against this background of futility, is projected the character of General Archbald, a lover of wisdom, a humane and civilized soul. He observes dispassionately the stream of events, accepts whatever that comes in life and probes into his past.

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In contrast we have Jenny Blair Archbald, a charming and vital girl of nine with a propensity for pleasure. Right in the first paragraph of the book she asserts her individuality, "Mamma may call the Marchers lots of fun, but I'm different". She has composed the refrain "I'm alive, alive, alive, I'm Jenny Blair Archbald", and when she is alone and happy she sings it aloud.

This Queenborough novel is set in a period earlier than the others, beginning in 1906 and ending in the autumn of 1914, just after the out-break of World War I. The war has begun and men are killing each other for the highest possible ideals. Not only in the South but throughout the world things are changing. The anchor of men's lives, religion, convention, and social norms are fast crumbling just as is the case with the characters in the story.

The aristocrats, the Archbalds and Birdsongs of this novel illustrate the slow decline that comes to them. The description of the aristocrats by W.J. Cash in his The Mind of The South is apt:
Decay, as it came to them, came rather obliquely than directly, came, for long at least, and ironically, not so much through any even partial surrender to demands made upon them as through the inevitable consequences of their failure and refusal to surrender .... And if the majority survived, they commonly survived to a steadily declining estate.7

The smell in the Washington street symbolizes not only industrial change but also the invasion of ugliness and evil. One by one the old houses are demolished, the fine old elms are mutilated, furnaces from distance belch soot into the drawing rooms, newspapers casually read and dropped and the wind shifts on the banks of the river an evil odour springs up from the hollow. Despite all this, the two families, the Archbalds and Birdsongs, hold the breach between the old and the new order. They are sustained by pride and some moral quality more enduring than pride.

7 W. J. Cash, The Mind of The South Quoted by McDowell Frederick Peter Woll, Ellen Glasgow and The Ironic Art of Fiction 186-87.
Eva is in her middle thirties and married for twelve years to George Birdsong who is unworthy of her. As a queenly woman of rare beauty and charm she has become the crown of an hierarchical society. To General Archbald she is an emblem of humanity itself, "loving, suffering, hating, hoping, going into hospitals, coming out of hospitals, laughing and weeping, trying fruitlessly to make life what it is not" (SL. 144). When happiness fails her, she begins to live on her pride which wears better. Keeping up an appearance is more than a habit with Eva. It is a second nature" (SL. 19).

Jenny Blair adores Eva Birdsong. She feels that she "ought to love her best of all" because it is Eva Birdsong who "puts the loveliest fancies into her mind", but she cannot do so. The secret she has nurtured since the age of nine has woven a magic tie between her and Mr. George Birdsong. This "magic tie" is stronger than affection and gratitude. She feels a "twinge of jealousy" when George is being soft and loving to Eva and asks her, "Shall I carry you? Are you able to walk?" (SL. 91), when Eva has fainted at the party at Goddards. A time comes in Jenny Blair's life when she feels intensely for Eva and for a while George disappears from her mind. She feels it
better to die than hurt Mrs. Birdsong and thinks in an "anguish of pity" that George must love her best. "Oh, I want him to love her best" (SL. 269). But this is very short-lived, because her infatuation for George is irresistible, and it does not let her think of propriety or impropriety, good or bad. She is obsessed with this infatuation and craves to appease her appetite of her flesh without any moral compunction.

By endowing George Birdsong with an irresistible charm of personality, Glasgow has made Eva's initial infatuation for him credible. Besides, George has certain good qualities of generosity and courage. As a boy he had shown a heroic courage by rushing into a burning house to save a Negro child named Memoria who years later was to become his mistress. General Archbald admires his qualities of generosity and courage. George has always stood by General Archbald whenever he has some financial difficulty. General Archbald has a soft corner for George. And he knows having much experience to build on, that even "loose-living" men are not all of one quality. It is not a simple question of merit. The diversity goes deeper, far down through the nature of man into nature itself. He feels that life would be more agreeable if
women could realize that man is not a monogamous animal, and that even a man in love does not necessarily wish to love all the time. It is difficult to agree with the General's views, as they tend to give license to the male of the human race. Possibly, they are not his views, but only an outcome of his ripe wisdom, or the outcome of a compromising attitude towards life, or a grieved utterance on the predicament of Eva who has a special place in his heart, who is more than a daughter to him.

As regards Jenny Blair's case George decides initially that he can go no further with her, he even tells her that he is as old as her father would be. But Jenny being a wild and vital, flirtatious and impulsive, and a self-willed person seems almost helpless in the bonds of mortal sensuality. Her obsession for this wild and foolish passion ultimately brings the final catastrophe. She is a victim of her egoistic instincts. As Geismar-Maxwell has observed:

George is more the victim of Jenny Blair's 'infatuation and his own
vanity' than of waning love for his wife.  

Both the title 'The Sheltered Life' and the end of the book are significant. The title is ambiguous, as the sheltered life does not provide shelter to any of the characters. Jenny Blair is not made aware of the hard facts of life. She is over protected and does not realise the moral obligations of the people around her. Similarly the "Code of perfect behaviour" prevents Eva from admitting to anyone her knowledge regarding her husband's disloyalty. As Alfred Kazin puts it,

she is intelligent enough to grasp the disastrous implications of her code. She was blindly committed to it.  

She shields her husband and shows her sympathies towards him when they are not needed. Her smile even makes George conscious of his guilt. He would rather avoid her than face her. Glasgow very subtly shows that

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8 Quoted by McDowell in Ellen Glasgow and Ironic Art of Fiction. (189).
9 ibid., P.188.
her sickness is an outer sign of "traumatic dislocation within". But everything has to come to its destined end, and the end comes to their false pretense when Eva finally shoots her husband. Her action implies that truth must be faced at any cost. What has happened to Eva Birdsong is substantially what Mr. Compson in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! (1936) describes as the fate of the southern gentlewoman in Eva's era:

Years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the war came and made ladies into Ghosts.  

Eva's predicament acquires universal significance in so far as mankind has since time immemorial suffered the traumatic conflict-between the inner world and the outer world, between imaginative reality and the kind of reality imposed upon them by social consensus.

The reader does question the morality of Eva's deed. Besides it seems totally uncharacteristic of her. Is it done in desperation, or is it done to teach a lesson to her husband, or is it a rebellion against her fate, or is

\[10\] ibid., P.187.
it to protect her young teenage friend Jenny Blair from further emotional and sexual entanglement with her husband and to make the relationship between two women significant? May be Glasgow sees a parallel between Eva's fall from idealism into terror and violence and the events of 1914 in the world at large. There can be more than one interpretation of what happens at the end, however the end is unexpected although dramatic.

Chase

Mary Ellen has rightly said, 

In The Sheltered Life the novelist's "best work", the characters reveal Glasgow's interest "not in why her people act as they do but in how they act". Its pathos is "restrained", its irony "cruel". Like Hardy, Glasgow is both objective and sympathetic in her treatment of the story. Few tragic endings have been handled more admirably ... in American fiction.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11} Mary Ellen Chase, "The Sheltered Life". Atlantic's Book-Shelf 150 (September) 1932:14.
Turning from Barren Ground to The Romantic Comedians is like turning from Hardy to Meredith, from The Return of the Native to The Egoist. This departure is one of the great tours de force of American literature. "This tragicomedy of a happiness hunter", Glasgow writes in A Certain Measure, was written as "an experiment for my private diversion". Barren Ground took three years of writing and had steeped her mind in the tragedy of life, whereas the comic spirit always restless when confined, began struggling against the barriers of its confinement. "It craved delicate laughter with ironic echoes" and "wished to move upon the lighter planes of reality." Besides, after her long apprenticeship to veracity, Glasgow had learnt that the truth of art and the truth of life are two different truths, hence she transfixed the wings of her comic spirit and pinned them down to an existence in fact.

She preferred the distilled essence of all Virginia cities to the speaking likeness of one. In the earlier novel The Romance of a Plain Man she verified with exhausting fidelity every detail of her setting, and her "realistic conscience forbade her to turn a maple into a mulberry tree". But now while writing the later novels
she never "hesitated to call a spade a silver spoon or mole hill a mountain". She learnt in the process of writing that "Sound psychology was more important and incidentally more interesting than accurate geography". Hence in three of her tragicomedies, The Romantic Comedians, The Sheltered Life, and They Stooped to Folly Glasgow exhibits a Southern and specifically a Virginian code of polite action, evasive idealism but they extend far beyond geographical and chronological boundaries and acquire universal and unlimited meanings.

If we consider the theme of the elderly man's pursuit of the youthful woman in The Romantic Comedians, there is nothing new about it, nor is it promising enough for extensive treatment. Moreover, the unhappy result at the final stage of the artificial union between age and youth, is not at all expected. But what Glasgow brings to the situation is significant. To quote Frederick P. McDowell, it exhibits her,

witty intelligence, insight into masculine delusion, perceptiveness as to the relationship between individuals, disillusionment and the post-war scene and knowledge
of the various facets of the feminine mind.\textsuperscript{12}

Not only in the South but everywhere throughout the world a whole civilization was disintegrating both within and without, codes were loosening and morals were declining, violence alone was strong enough to satisfy a craving for the raw taste of life, for the brutal ferocity of lust without love. In the absence of one binding moral code various forms of pseudo-faiths had replaced spiritual goals. For many twentieth century Americans a traditional code of manners and moral was replaced by a pragmatic code of action. In these novels which comprise her picture of manners Glasgow explores the meaning, for the Virginians, of a change in moral attitudes. She criticises the aristocratic society which protected barbarity, weakness, and greed in the name of tradition, but at the same time she could not accept its alternative - "The abandonment of all rule in human relationship".

\textsuperscript{12} Frederick Perry McLeod, Ellen Glasgow and ironic Art of Fiction, 163.
The Romantic Comedians presents a small group of people - Judge Honeywell, his sister Mrs. Bredalban, his dead wife Cordelia, his beloved of 37 years of age, Amanda Lightfoot and Mrs. Upchurch and her daughter Annabel - who exist in a special kind of interdependence. These people are linked not only with one another but with dramatic unities as well. They are full, round, animate, and capable of extension. None of them creates an impression of an artfully invented puppet. They are subconsciously created human beings who speak and act in response to the springs of character and controlled by some arbitrary power, called destiny. All these imaginary people are painted with a great degree of realism. Judge Honeywell is scarcely more convincing than is Altrusa.

Right from the beginning we are amused and struck by Glasgow's ironical style. The character of Judge Honeywell emerges from line to line with subtle strokes of Glasgow's irony. We laugh at him and at the same time feel sympathetic to see him entangled in a web of deceptions weaved by his illusions and false image regarding himself. Polygamous by instinct, like other men, he had confined his impetuous desires within the temperate zone of monogamy (3). With all his legal
learning and his heroic virtues, which are numerous. Judge Honeywell is afflicted with the common infirmity of a sensitive ear and the oil of adulation is as soothing to him as it is to most men in their established position.

He is "A great lawyer but a perfect fool" in his sister Edmonia's view. He no longer desires the statuesque virtues of the eighteen eighties. He no longer desires to be understood as the eighteen eighties understood him. He desires the very things that are not good for him, the excitement of novelty, the ringing challenge of youth.

In his marriage with Annabel there is ecstasy but there is terror also in the violence of his longing, because with the passion of adolescence he combines presently the tormenting suspicion of age. In the course of time he feels that Annabel, like youth itself, is a source of frustrated impulses and fruitless desires. She is, nonetheless, the last thing on earth he would consent to relinquish. Masculine blindness and evasive idealism of culture conspire to keep him ignorant for too long a time of the truth.
At the end, when Annabel goes away with Dabney Birdsong, the youthful husband, he realises that he should not have married Annabel, "I at least ought to have known", he replied, "This is why I can't rid myself of the blame. This is why I shall assume the responsibility" (RC. 322).

His efforts to persuade Annabel to change her mind, however, show the height of his foolishness. He acts in desperation of hope against hope and makes himself absolutely ridiculous. Finally, he gives her up quietly, bowing to the inevitable. It is fatuous, he knows, it is abject surrender of every masculine prerogative.

Judge Honeywell remains polygamous by instinct all his life. After his return from New York he falls ill and when he recovers from his illness, he looks at his nurse and feels the stirring of spring once again in his blood. "There is the woman I ought to have married!" (RC. 345). He acts as per his innate nature which is called "Prakruti" in Sanskrit, and we are reminded of the Sanskrit maxim:

\[ \text{Na Pranate prakruti vikruti jayate hetu ka\text{\-}manam.} \]
There is no alteration in the innate nature of man even at the last moments of his life.\textsuperscript{13}

Meaning thereby that all persons behave as per their innate nature till the end. Frederick P.W. McDowell remarks:

In the emotional life, we are to gather that wisdom is hard to come by and that reason cannot regulate to any clearly defined end the pressure of instinct. The human beings all too often begin anew the same futile activity which had previously brought disaster. Miss Glasgow thus indicates that life follows cyclic as well as forward propulsion.\textsuperscript{14}

The "apocalyptic light" which flood the final scene has a significant meaning. "Under its spell, the Judge

\textsuperscript{13} An anonymous Sanskrit maxim Subhashit Ratna Bhandar (Ahmedabad : Sastu Sahitya Vardhaka Karalaya, Bhadra).

\textsuperscript{14} Frederick P.W. McDowell, Ellen Glasgow and Ironic Art of Fiction. 165.
will probably pursue once again the same round of fugitive enchantment and final dissolution".

Glasgow's juxtaposing of pathos and humour is more poignant because Annabel takes the Judge only as a convenient means of escape from poverty, while the judge thinks of her as a source of a life-renewing energy. For the first time, as a writer, she adopts the comic vision but she very artfully shows how the judge's obsession for Annabel causes indignity and embarrassment and brings to the novel tragic overtones. At times the judge's judgement whispers that there always remains the serene and the ample pleasure of the closing years of one's life, if only one can be content to grow old. Yet he feels passionately, while he winces under the admonition that he can find no relish in the compensations of old age.

Glasgow also shows the cunning of human intellect to invent excuses or a defense mechanism which are truly self-deceptions to hide or to justify one's impulsive frailties. Judge Honeywell has no idea that he would do anything so absurd as falling in love with a girl of Annabel's age. "What he felt, while her face drifted away from him, was the yearning to be kind and warm and
benevolent, to give happiness to all the soft little things whose lives had been ruined, or at least saddened, by unprincipled scamps" (RC. 60). He thinks this to be a noble deed. Human intelligence can make ignoble things appear noble and selfish deeds unselfish. In spite of the knowledge of propriety and impropriety, in spite of being aware of certain norms, he is deceived not by any outside forces but by his passions, his instincts and impulses and in turn they overrule his sense of discrimination.

At the end the feeling of resignation comes - of course, too late, but it saves him from bitterness, and therein lies its value. Till now he has blindly pursued the dictates of his ego, though unconsciously aware of the hollowness of his relationship with Annabel. He being unable to accept the reality continues living in the illusion till it slips away entirely from his grasp.

The other characters in the novel also show Glasgow's consummate skill in characterization. The novel is pervaded by the spiritual presence of dead Cordelia, Judge Honeywell's wife, an example of a "perfect woman". She becomes conspicuous though physically absent, by her strong influence on the judge's values and habits. Even
after his marriage with a younger and more engaging woman he still inquires from settled habit "What would Cordelia think?" (RC. 252).

Amanda Lightfoot, "a pattern of pure womanhood" has lost her place from the judge's heart though he was madly in love with her once. The judge does not have any regard for her fidelity nor has her beauty any spell over him. Mrs. Bredalbane, "a confirmed hedonist" is a twin sister of Judge Honeywell. She is an intrepid woman of liberal views and loose behaviour. She is deaf alike to whispers of conscience and the thunder of tradition. Both the brother and sister play the reverse roles of the generally accepted relationship of men to women. In this novel the brother - the man is bound by convention and the sister - the woman - is emancipated. Julius Rowan Kapel states;

Edmonia Bredalbane is the most extraordinary character Ellen Glasgow ever created. With four husbands and other company, she echoes the wife of Bath (as the Judge and Annabel do Chaucer's January and May), but since she has the "courage of appetites", ...
she speaks with a boldness more like that of Shakespeare's Edmund, from whom Glasgow may have taken her name.15

Mrs Upchurch, Annabel's mother is the repository of common sense. She takes the practical view of her poverty-stricken situation. It is she who drags Annabel to marry Judge Honeywell just because he is rich. She being a pragmatist, believes in the compensations life offers. She lacks the courage of Edmonia and Annabel to live by experience or desire.

Annabel represents a "Youth in arms against life". Like Glasgow's other young women she not only demands the right to be happy but also has the courage to criticise traditional women who have sacrificed their happiness and have suffered in silence. She is Glasgow's new woman. Her statement "Love isn't everything" (RC. 287) reminds us of Gabriella, Dorinda Oakley and Roy. Annabel tells her mother, "If men have become morally flabby, women like you and cousin Amanda are to blame" (RC. 138). "It isn't

my fault that you are all such unconscionable liars." (RC. 138) This is an echo of Glasgow's own hatred for false sentimentality and ideals. Joseph Collins states:

The Romantic Comedians attacks a theme rarely attempted by a novelist: "What Conrad did for youth, Glasgow does for age". In her direct but subtle narrative Glasgow shows that she "knows the pathology of love as well as psychology".

With infinite patience over pattern and texture Glasgow has adapted in this triology the style to fit its subject. It is "neither soft and spongy nor so hard and brittle that it will flake off into epigrams". Christopher has rightly said that The Romantic Comedians "is one of those phenomena curiously rare in America, a really witty book". Her "acid elixir" is

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applied with wisdom and humanity, judgement and perfectly crystalized skill.¹

The traditional concept of woman as an inspiration occupied an immovable pedestal from Richardson to Glasworthy. It was overthrown by the bold modern idea of woman as an impediment since women tried to seek their emancipation in every walk of life. This inferior idea of woman as an impediment is born of the irregular union between democracy and disenchantment of certain old belief. It is discovered that the traditional concept of woman as an inspiration has many advantages, over the contrasting concept of woman as an impediment, especially for man because he considered her merely as an object to satisfy all his needs. The cult of woman as an inspiration never lost its safe and honoured position in masculine enterprise. But many masculine ideals have withered and died in the novel since Clarissa. After Jane Austen, the "delicate iconoclast", the romantic tradition has been slowly blighted by frost and drought.

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¹ "The Romantic Comedians", The Saturday Review, 30 October, p. 255; 1926: p. 255
Since World War I a number of exalted illusions have suffered an eclipse, and male disillusionment with female virtue has invaded the whole area of modern prose fiction. In They Stopped to Folly Glasgow deals with the concept of the "ruined" woman. It seems that in this novel she is bent upon breaking the primal commandment, "He for God only, she for God in him", the masculine reason has clung firmly. It is the subject she needed the most. And the comedy revolves around the ruined woman in three different periods of time and space. Aunt Agatha, Mrs. Dalrymple and Milly Burden, all three of them come lightly and quickly each in her own age and fashion bearing her unchangeable name. According to Glasgow Mrs. Dalrymple is the presiding genius among them. She is the perfect bloom of that chivalry in which the Southern lady has so profusely flourished and fallen.

After arriving on the theme Glasgow has circumscribed both time and space and the book covers a period of six months. The fable of the ruined woman continues to provide the recurring motif and the scope of the narrative has widened to include other aspects of time and space.
The echoes of the war and especially of post-war psychology are audible even in remote Queenborough, the symbol of all Virginian cities. One feels that the war has destroyed many illusions. Family life is disrupted. In Queenborough as elsewhere the tone of manners ring hollow; there are many sounds but few human voices, men laugh more but smile less than they have done when codes were more strict and conduct simpler.

Mr. Virginius Littlepage, hero of the novel, represents the modern man who fears action; nonetheless he desires the things that only action can win. Conformed in tradition he moves uprightly in a vacuum of effortless motive. He is more of a spectator in the novel due to his "inadequacy" to act and due to his infirmity of will. As he is inherently fair-minded with a sympathetic and generous nature, he renders the truest picture of an age in which he is destined to live. He is a reflective kind of a person. At times he feels that a burden of futility pours like shower of ashes into his soul. He wonders, "what is the meaning of it all? Where is it leading? What else is left in life after you have had happiness?" (SF. 72). He has had, it is true, other blessings. All the favours that society holds in esteem has been his without
effort. Honour among men, wealth, love, yes, he supposes he has had love but joy he has never known in its fullness. His spiritual consciousness and sympathetic nature enables him to see things fairly. But deep down he feels that something is missing in his life. "Yes, I've missed it, whatever it was that would have meant happiness. I've missed it in life" (SF. 104). Yet, he does not know what this fulfilment is that he has desired more than all else, and has lost without ever possessing. "Was it merely that, with the rest of mankind, he had missed the ephemeral flower of delight" (SF. 104).

Virginius Littlepage is sympathetic to his secretary Milly Burden whose lover Martin Welding has gone to the war. Milly has not heard from him for a long time. Virginius is genuinely ready to do whatever he can. And he writes to his daughter Mary Victoria who has gone to The Balkans to inquire about Martin Welding. But a deed done with good intention sometimes brings bad results. Incidentally, Mary Victoria and Martin Welding fall in love and they get married. Virginius feels betrayed. He experiences moral pangs and considers that it is his duty to help Milly Burden. While thinking about her he remarks "The truth is that the world has never been fair to
women. Men have never been fair to women" (SF. 107). His concluding episode with Mrs. Dalrymple, his fascination for her show him as an individual human being torn between tradition on one side and his heart's longing on the other. In his case the former wins over the latter. Virginius,

like T.S. Eliot's Prufrock has learned to assume the appropriate masks for the usual circumstances of his life, but the reader can pierce through these for a look into Mr. Littlepage's soul.18

His brother, Marmaduke is a rebel and has quite opposite views of the institution of chivalry. Marmaduke who has lost one leg and the whole body of idealism in the war zone has returned to Queenborough, chiefly because as a cripple and a poor artist, there is nowhere else he can go. As an embittered romantic he has discovered that it is not only rational but logical to dislike human nature and yet to like human beings. This is an echo of Glasgow's own words in The Woman Within:

18 *House of Blairs*, Ellen Glasgow 107.
No, I liked human beings, but I did not love human nature (WW. 80).

As an important point in the dispute over heredity and environment, one might contrast the conformity to type of Virginius with the eccentric variations of his brother Marmaduke. On the one hand we have the conservative forces of society and moral order, on the other the international latitude and the unbridled temperament of an artist. Marmaduke a "modern painter of outrageous nudes in primary colours" is one of Ellen Glasgow's true civilized men.

In Virginius's equivocal attitude towards his brother, Glasgow analyses the complexities and inconsistencies in human nature. Being conventional Virginius judges his brother by his own standard and disapproves of Marmaduke as a man "obviously designed to be an enemy of society". However, he is drawn towards Marmaduke because he is free of the fears that have caused him to yield "to other people's ideals". He knows that his brother has enjoyed life more than he has, and that he "chose wealth, security and steadfast position", while Marmaduke "gave all things in exchange for the liberation of spirit".
But Marmaduke, he saw with disapproving envy, had not compromised, had not waited for the opportune moment. He was shabby and untidy and disreputable but he was also a free spirit. He had never been twisted into a conventional shape. "Isn't there at least a grain of truth in his charges"? Virginius asked himself gloomily (SF. 100).

Marmaduke is predominantly the artist-iconoclast, but his humanity enlarges his soul and modulates his external cynicism. His sympathetic understanding and generosity become evident when he champions Milly as a courageous woman. He manifests Glasgow's own attitudes and values when he rebels against the hypocrisies in a formalized morality and reflects her desire to make more human, comprehending standards prevail.

The novel exhibits Glasgow's expert delineation of feminine types. Aunt Agatha, Mrs. Dalrymple and Milly Burden each represents in turn a once popular style in American mores. In the eighteen nineties Aunt Agatha still lingers on as a surviving specimen of her variable
though permanent species. Mrs. Dalrymple represents the reining beauty of Queenborough after a decade. With Milly Burden who has discovered that "being ruined is a state of mind" we meet "immoderate youth in revolt, and the latest perhaps, the final version of the favourite sport both of kings and commoners" (CM. 243).

Mr. Stark Young and Mr. Carl Van Vechten have included Victoria in the small group of difficult yet successful women characters in fiction. Victoria is one of Glasgow's naturally frigid women who are secretly satisfied that conventions require them to be passive. According to Frederick P.W. McDowell, her lingering death, while to others she seems in apparent health, is one of the most skilfully realized aspect of this novel.

Her friendship with Lousia Goddard rises to the highest point in her narrative. Glasgow states:

It is seldom in modern fiction that a friendship between two women especially pure and unselfish friendship, with both women loving the same man has assumed a prominent place (CM. 245).
It seems that Glasgow, though not a committed feminist is tremendously interested in the full development of women as human beings. In the literature of the world, we come across few instances of selfless friendship between two women. In The Miller of Old Church Glasgow has done something innovative by showing the sympathetic understanding between Molly and Blossom.

Mary Victoria is different from her mother. She is hypocritical and a less appealing personality. She claims to be open-minded in the modern manner but she is actually less flexible in her sympathies than her old fashioned mother. She is very loud about her social service and duty of a social worker but she lacks the qualities of humility and depth of character essential in social service. She is rather shallow and vain. She is obsessed with the ideas of social service. And her father who has high hopes in her judges her only by appearances. Being of a kind and sympathetic nature he has missed to evaluate her critically. Consequently, he is highly disappointed in her. Elizabeth Monroe rightly states that her marriage to Martin is, in essence, a victory of the older morality over the new freedom advocated by Milly
Burden who has loved Martin passionately but indiscreetly. Milly Burden is the only woman who truly has the courage of her appetites. Victoria feels that she is "not so beautiful, not nearly so perfect in feature" as Mary Victoria, her own daughter is "but more human and certainly far more exciting". She is the kind of woman, "whose every act, every gesture is instinct with vitality."

Mrs. Burden, Milly Burden's mother who is neurotically religious reminds us of Mrs. Sarah Revercomb in the Miller of Old Church and Mrs. McBride in Vein of Iron.

Glasgow has achieved a "perfect and terrible detachment" from her materials. Her penetration, honesty and wit create a "satiric comedy which holds water". We do not see any truly significant conflict or any accountable theme in the novel but what Glasgow has achieved is remarkable. She has presented the multifarious facets of society. In the words of Van De Water, ... the novel is
a delicately scathing travesty on morals and mortals" superior to the works of John Erskine.19

The reader fumbles at Glasgow's motive in these five tragi-comedies. Only in The Deliverance can we pin-point her point of view. She has shown the triumph of true love over the brutal and violent passion of revenge and the protagonist Christopher is delivered from the claws of mortifying passion.

Virginia raises a question whether Virginia's sacrifice and dedicated devotion to her husband and children are worth their while. For a wave of despair like a mortal sickness has swept over her at the end. She feels that "Nothing remained except that long empty years for she had outlived her usefulness". But Glasgow is not a nihilist who would project Virginia's sacrifice as futile. At the end Virginia receives a heartening note from her son "Dearest Mother, I am coming home to you". She has saved her heroine who is on the verge of a spiritual death by evoking in her a capacity to smile at

19 FF Van De Water, "Some Novels Have Plot and Some Have Not". New York Evening Post. 17 August, 1929; P 6m
her misfortune. She has learnt that the only way to be happy, calm or composed in the face of disaster, despair or misfortune is to laugh at them. Virginia does not get anything from her husband, nonetheless, she grows emotionally. Humour which has been an element far from her personality, suddenly emerges from the depth of her personality. She grows hard with the implacable hardness of grief.

In The Sheltered Life the reader is not allowed to assess the significance of Eva's act of murder. But we can safely say that a constant pang arising because of George's liaison with other women is eradicated from the sheltered world she created for him. Glasgow, possibly, may have meant, "everybody gets what he or she deserves".

Judge HoneyWell in The Romantic Comedians remains in the illusion of perpetual youth. He remains polygamous till he lives. All his legal acumen and expertise are of no avail to get victory over his passions.

Glasgow's division of women into the fallen and the pure, into the nymphomaniacs and the angels, in They Stooped to Folly raises questions about what she is up
to. It seems that Glasgow wants to shake the very foundation of the concept of the fallen and the pure woman which is the creation of men, or the puritan virus. To quote Marmaduke:

What really runined poor Aunt Agatha - yes, and Mrs. Dalrymple, too - was not a fall from virtue but Victorian psychology. You - by that I mean public opinion in Queenborough and elsewhere - were inoculated with the puritan virus (SF. 165-66).

Louisa Goddard also, while speculating on the whole business of love comes to the final conclusion.

Nothing was worth all the deceit, all the anguish, all the futile hope and ineffectual endeavour, all the pretense and parade, all the artificial glamour and empty posturing, of the great Victorian tradition (SF. 258).
And now cool, composed, indulgent, self-contained Louisa watches with sympathy the liberal manners of the new century.

The only answer to woman's predicament, Glasgow visualises possibly, is that so long as there are "perfect" ladies to inspire, to control, to forgive them, men will be dividing them into the fallen women and pure women. Unless women become conscious of their honour and dignity as human beings and learn to forgo special rights they will have to undergo special responsibilities.

The novels discussed in this chapter show a steady progress of Glasgow as an artist. Whatever is missed artistically or not done properly in the earlier novels written before The Deliverance, is improved upon in The Deliverance, in Virginia, in The Romantic Comedians, in They Stooped to Folly and in The Sheltered Life which is her finest work. To quote "The Sheltered Life" exemplifies that ideal.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{20} "The Sheltered Life", Ellen Glasgow 114.
The Deliverance like other earlier novels was the product of Glasgow's intuitive understanding of her art. When she assessed her novels, at a later age Glasgow felt that one cannot become a novelist of character until one has lived for at least thirty or better still, forty years. She further said,

Had I been older and possessed of wider experience, I should have left out, or at least subordinated, the part that romantic love plays in the triumph of revenge. The book would have been stronger, I think, if I had narrowed down the range of the theme, and held it firmly to the bare anatomy of inherited hatred. Certainly the novel would have gained firmness of structure by this logical simplification (CM. 34).

In The Deliverance Glasgow wanted to construct a scene in which the human character would appear as a natural projection of the landscape. Between Christopher and his environment there is an unbroken sympathetic accord. In the absence of inner harmony he could find
peace and freedom only in communion with that soil which had moulded both him and his race. Looking from this point of view the design of the structure appears to be sufficiently logical. The movement runs consistently through the chain of occurrences, and the theme springs as the themes of so many novels of the soil have done, from some intrinsic values of time and place.

The theme as well as the background are full of a romantic quality but an effort seems to have been made to subdue it rather than emphasize it. Outwardly the novel has a semblance of romance, but romance with its feet on the ground. A harsh tone is employed to suit the personality of the main character. The dark and light shades are employed, but the illumination is not softened or diffused. Inwardly, the light of introspection falls on the troubled soul of Christopher.

With The Deliverance Glasgow soon discovered that the novel needed an avenue of approach through a mind that was distinct from the mind of the author. Hence Carraway, the attorney was introduced. And he always stood invisible at a little distance. This approach provided Glasgow a sense of detachment and enabled her to
create, a world which appeared credible. In the beginning, the pictures of the Blake family and the Fletcher family are drawn with detachment.

Glasgow avoided the melodramatic tone by making Christopher's hatred authentic by absorbing it into a natural setting of the novel. To Carraway, "he seemed as much a product of the soil as did the great white chestnut growing beside the road." In the same manner the emotional situations in the novel are controlled by relating and subordinating them to natural phenomena.

The novel is more gripping because of the alternate strands of the comic and the tragic. It embodies like Glasgow's other works her contention that "comedy and tragedy are blood brothers." For comic effect she has made use of her rustic folk who comment like the chorus and reminds one of Thomas Hardy.

Her comic verve and psychological insight, show a sure sign of the range and flexibility of her talent. The sense of form and of the structural requirements in the fiction, now attained show an evident contrast with the diffuseness of The Voice of The People and The Battle
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None of her novels before The Deliverance shows a unified point of view. She has chosen the indirect style of Henry James, and her awareness of the point of view is a sure sign of discipline. The absence of other aristocrats in The Deliverance suggests economy of narrative and dramatic structure.

In Virginia Glasgow shows further progress in her craftmanship. In this novel the writing is perfectly controlled, and balanced between authorial involvement and detachment. All the three sections "The Dreams", "The Reality" and "The Adjustment" are balanced in length, and in nicely contrasted scenes and tone. The approach in Book I is indirect. Of the ten chapters, only two are narrated from Virginia's point of view, the other eight chapters are presented partly from the author's point of view as an omniscient story-teller, partly from Priscilla Batte's and partly from that of Oliver Tradewell. Like Carraway in The Deliverance Priscilla Batte is a Jamesian "interested observer", in the beginning. We know about Susan, Virginia and Oliver through her. In Books II and III, everything is registered through Virginia's consciousn.
Glasgow's characters in Virginia are symbolic in terms both of social milieu and moral value. Like Mrs. Blake in The Deliverance, Virginia's role for the South is well realized. In her qualities of "service, pity loyalty and sacrifice" she suggests the surviving pride of the post-war South, and in her defeat she hints at the declining prestige of the South. Her husband Oliver is to an extent a symbol of the "modern" recoil against Southern civilization. His adaptability to a new situation in his life with Miss Margaret Oldcastle shows his spiritual insensitivity.

All the characters in Virginia are equally inevitable for its structure. And all of them are equally convincing. They move freely and not impeded by social or ethical commentary on the part of their creator.

The influence on Glasgow of the realistic school is evident. The ironic overtones, the relentless logic of events and the application of modern theory in Psychology are quite in advance of the time in which Glasgow was writing. The ignoble Cyrus Tradewell and the coloured washerwoman are depicted with utmost veracity. Even Virginia is described with the sharp edge of truth but as
the novel advances irony gives place to "Sympathetic Compassion" in her case.

It should be noted that Glasgow's use of the modified stream of consciousness so common in the later novels was hinted at in Jonathan's reminiscences as death approached in The Miller of Old Church, in Ben Starr's musing in The Romance of Plain Man, and also in Virginia in the reflections upon life made by Cyrus, Oliver and Virginia herself.

About The Romantic Comedians Glasgow says that this novel is a happy marriage of form and idea. Her attention is diverted from external versimilitude to sound psychology. She has employed her satirical vein at her best. One feels that at times she surpasses even Jane Austen. Though Judge Honeywell is portrayed through the sharp edge of irony Glasgow's sympathetic touch is also seen when the Judge considers himself equally responsible for their marriage. She has saved Judge Honeywell from being merely pompous and grotesque. He is endowed to an extent with depth which shows her mastery in delineating the smallest details of emotion, anguish, doubt and terror.
He is shown to suffer while he continues to prop himself with vain delusions.

In the circumscribed world of The Romantic Comedians all the characters seem inevitable like those In Virginia and in They Stooped to Folly. The narrative also is one of controlled artifice. Glasgow's consummate skill is seen in characterization. Even dead Cordelia's presence is felt the way Honeywell is influenced by her opinions, held by her when she was alive.

Edmonia Breadlebone is Glasgow's most successful humorous character. With her laconic irony her remarks create the desired effect. As in The Romantic Comedians, part of the distinction of They Stooped to Folly lies in Glasgow's expert delineation of feminine types. Though there is no truly significant conflict of ideas or a commanding theme, They Stooped to Folly is remarkable for its depiction of the multifarious facets of social life in the South. All the characters possess a "credible attachment to their immediate milieu" though they are unable to command our fullest sympathy. Like Judge Honeywell in The Romantic Comedians the central characters, Virginius and Victoria Littlepage in They Stooped...
to Folly become subjects for Glasgow's sympathy and satire. McDowell appreciates the brilliant air of the mind in which the characters move, and states:

Yet with all reservations made, there is nothing in our literature, in wit and satiric gaiety quite like The Romantic Comedians and They Stooped to Folly. They constitute a brilliant evocation of contemporary civilization in Virginia, which has been elsewhere described as "aristocratic in manner, orthodox in religion, courteous in daily intercourse, and conservative in politics."\(^{21}\)

In The Deliverance Glasgow has deliberately contrasted light and dark tones in the novel. In this aspect of her technique Glasgow has evolved a more subtle approach. She felt that the light and dark tones should be incorporated into the texture of the prose itself. Hence tonal gradations in her later work are not so stark and melodramatic as they had been, to an extent in The

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\(^{21}\) Frederick Peter Wall McDowell, Ellen Glasgow and the Ironic Art of Fiction 183-84.
Deliverance and in her other earlier works. Instead of using light and dark for external effect, now she employed them to refract inward and to become an interweaving thread in the stream of the narrative, and in the souls of her characters.

In the beginning when the Archbalds and Birdsongs are in harmony with a social order which has lost its vigour partially, everything is shown to be bright, the Archbald Library, the Birdsong garden and the figure of Eva Birdsong. Later when Eva is suffering, her brightness fades. The lengthening shadows of autumn suggest immanent disaster and her beauty wanes. In contrast to the sunny Archbald library at the beginning, the twilight darkness creeps over the Birdsong Library when Eva knows about her final betrayal. The nuances of mood and emotions are caught in a luminous prose. Light and shadow become manifestations of a vibrant reality at the core of existence. The images of light in The Sheltered Life are thus dynamic in character rather than passively descriptive.

In the Sheltered Life two points of view of age and youth are employed. They proceed in keeping with the
unities of time and place, but are separated by a whole range of experience. Both General Archbald and his granddaughter watch the same events, same persons and the same tragedy in the end, but the reality is interpreted through the dissimilar mediums of thought and emotion. The stream of events pass before General Archbald and he remains permanently at the centre of vision, and in the opposite person (Jenny Blair) he meets the wide, blank gaze of inexperience. Through these two contrasting characters one can perceive the significance of their essential place in this theme of age and youth, of the past and the present.

Another important element in The Sheltered Life is the element of time. The flow of time is linked with the consciousness of the characters. The constant ebb and flow of time in its forward drive fascinates General Archbald who knows that he is nearing death. At 83 he contemplates his past. At this moment the stream of time seems to stand still. Certain golden moments of his life have a permanent place in his memory and will continue to be so at the time of his death. He reflects:
And what was time itself but the bloom, the sheath enfolding experience? Within time, and within time alone, there was life - the gleam, the quiver, the heart-beat, the immeasurable joy and anguish of being (SL. 109).

Both General Archbald in The Sheltered Life and Victoria Littlepage in They Stooped to Folly express the same desire, though to a lesser degree, as Quentin Compson in The Sound and Fury to pass beyond the temporal into the fixity of eternal. Glasgow has endowed General Archbald with a kind of tremulous sensibility possessed by Virginia Woolf's central characters, and through him she has tried to capture the illusion of time's permanence and change. According to Emily Clark,

The Novel's (The Sheltered Life) universality makes it rare among Southern fiction, its ending contains Glasgow's finest writing.22

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The novel exhibits a beautiful combination of skilful craftsmanship, originality of characterization and good plot. Glasgow's tone, timing and deftness of touch are combined to convey precisely the romantic novel.

The next chapter Idealism and Renunciation shows the thematic importance of Glasgow's novels. Where her art is concerned it shows Glasgow as a beginner, an amateur who is groping for the right technique: The novels under discussion in the chapter show a lack of subtlety and complexity of her later novels. The themes of the struggle of the disinherited or low-born to rise to a higher position and of woman's conflict between love and the pursuit of an art discussed in the first novel recur in the later novels. The Descendant and Phases of an Inferior Planet present the conflict between idealism and worldly wisdom or what we call pragmatism. The Wheel of Life and The Ancient Law are distinct from the other novels of Glasgow in the sense that they deal with freedom of the human soul, and the merging of the limited "I" (personal ego) into Universal consciousness.