CHAPTER I

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America is the New World which is pictured as an Arcadia, a new Eden, a kingdom of Heaven on earth where uninhibited by the restraints of older society, a man could practice his trade or his religion with freedom and control his political destiny. The image of America as a Promised Land is developed over the years. Herman Melville captures the essence of America thus:

And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people — the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world... God has
predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance guard, sent on through wilderness of untried things to break a new path in the New World that is ours. (qtd. in Donaldson:11)

But in this New World, the South emerged as a nation within a nation. It was considered as the nation's economic step child. Albion Tourgee, in his novel *A Fool's Errand* spoke of North and South as two nations powerfully separate and distinct:

North and South had been two households in one house — two nations under one name. The
intellectual, moral, and social life of each had been utterly distinct and separate from that of the other. They no more understood or appreciated each other's feelings than John Chinaman comprehends the civilization of John Bull. (qtd. in Donaldson:155)

The South was traditional, autocratic and pastoral and the North was progressive, liberal, industrial and urban. The white Southern code was feudal, chivalric and paternalistic. The code-ridden society laid emphasis on status and ritual. The Southern sense of family, roots, the notion of identity coming from where one lived and the complex social patterns made South a recognizable entity. The South as a viable social and cultural unit is based on the typical Southern
qualities such as religious orthodoxy, strict racial subordination and traditional outlook in general. South is a region where cruelty and barbarism are unaccountably mingled with romantic charm and quaint aristocratic pretensions.

It is easy to trace throughout South, which Allen Tate calls "Uncle Sam's other province", a fairly definite mental pattern and a social pattern — a complex of established relationships and habits of thoughts, sentiments, prejudices, standards, and values. Ante-bellum Southern aristocracy had set standards of polite society. Its essential character was its way of life and its attitude towards life. The generations of good breeding and quiet living made them rooted in traditions of family honour, public responsibility, self-respect and contempt for lying and cowardice.
It is easy to slip into an idealization of the Old South. But not all lived up to the ideals of their class. Family tradition is strong in South but it no longer determines the standard of social conduct. It is wrong to tinge the Old South with a roseate glow and picture it as composed of the fine old aristocracy whose homes are ever filled with light and laughter, and whose prosperous fields are tilled by happy, loyal and contented slaves. Proud, brave, honourable, courteous, personally generous, loyal, swift to act, effective in action — such was the South at its best.

Disturbing issues, upsetting conditions, unpleasant factors have intruded into their lives leading to violence, intolerance, aversion and suspicion towards new ideas. An incapacity for analysis, an inclination to act from feeling, an exaggerated
individualism, a too narrow concept of social responsibility, attachment to racial values and a tendency to justify cruelty and injustice in the name of values, and sentimentality have been its characteristic vices.

Southerners, Jonathan Daniels said, are "a mythological people, created half out of dream and half out of slander, who live in a still legendary land" (Rubin 169). There is the romantic plantation myth of gentility on the one hand and the obverse abolitionist plantation myth of barbarity on the other. The Sunny South versus the Benighted South as it were. Old habits of thought die hard, and old stereotypes abound. The view that South as a strange land filled with a peculiar people still lingers. A disdain for the South seems to be woven into the fabric of Northern experience that they considered the South as tacky, dowdy and unfashionable. But for more
than a century, the South has been the seed bed of population and cultural styles for the rest of the country. The intensity of the new rage for things Southern evinces more than just a taste for the exotic. There is a haunting suspicion that South harbours some ancient virtues. As novelist James Dickey says that the people have seized on things Southern "because they feel that South has preserved . . . individuality of region as well as person and has not been homogenized to quite the extent of the rest of the nation. People want those differences" (Rubin 171).

It is not that the South has escaped change. The South also has been engulfed in the cross-currents of change in the mid Nineteenth century during the Civil War and later in the Reconstruction era. Since 1945, the South too has experienced what the historian Charles P. Roland calls an "improbable
era" (Rubin 171) of new things, when this region faced the consequences of the Civil Rights Movement, the break up of one-party system and the emergence of economic prosperity due to new industries. In 1970s' there was a burgeoning "Sun Belt" along the Southern border of the United States.

In the old ante-bellum South there occurred a transformation. The nation which rested everything on agriculture and slavery threw off the habits of the past and set out to pursue industry and commerce, and multi-crop agriculture. It has welcomed manufacturers and the spirit of Laissez-Faire Capitalism. The shift from rural to urban made a dent in their way of life that they could not hold on to their fundamentalism in religion, racial subordination any longer. The stratifications, pieties and the closed social order had given way to the new dispensation with complex social
patterns. The new road, mass communication and automobile put an end to the rural isolation and brought South closer to the American mainstream. In spite of the considerable economic gains, poverty characterized the rural South that it still remained a colonial tributary to the North. During the great Depression of 1930 the South faced many hardships and withstood. The industrialization of Dixie (South) got into high gear during World War II. The defence industries which mushroomed gave a boost to the nation's economy. Moreover military and naval installations were set up due to its mild climate. South experienced a boom time as never before. The machanized and modernised agriculture acquired a new name "agrobusiness" and it contributed to the wealth of the South. While many took pride in the rapid progress it has made, some were cautious about the change.
Edwin Mims in his work, *The Advancing South: Stories of Progress and Reaction*, declared:

Freed from the limitations that have so long hampered it, and buoyant with the energy of a new life coursing through its veins, the South will press forward to a new destiny. (qtd in Rubin:10)

South moving closer to the American industrial ideal made Stark Young write in *I'll Take My Stand*, "We can accept the machine but create our own attitude toward it" (qtd in Rubin:22).

The growth of industry in the South had been due to many causes — lower labour costs, proximity to raw materials, available factory sites and buildings, favourable tax laws, depression in agriculture and the increase in population. It lifted the South
from the mire of agricultural stagnation and stopped the cries of the disadvantaged and the discontented. Mass ignorance is removed by improvement in education. The New South of free labour, economic enterprise and nimble transportation brought fresh air which dispelled the old vapours. But in certain aspects South could not change. The religious obscurantism and racial prejudice still remained the same. Contrary to the social and economic changes, the ethnic and cultural differences stubbornly remained the same. Still the South retained a sense of roots. But they had felt a release from the burden of Southern history, an escape from poverty, the sense of defeat and failure and the guilt of racial oppression. The chastening experience of the Civil War has distilled a wisdom born of suffering. A clear break through has occurred that for the first time national leaders have
emerged from the South. James Dickey captures the position of the South in a nutshell thus:

I think that the South is pointing the way to some new kind of future for this country and I think . . . that it will be good thing for the South to lead, at least for a while and may be for good; to set the trends and furnish the leading politicians and the leading writers and the leading artists. We've got plenty of them down here. This is the most fertile literary region that has ever existed in this country. (Rubin 172)

This hopefulness is a trait endemic to the South. Historian F. Nash Boney also
corroborates this fact saying, "This vibrant optimism absent from so many cultures in history, was always present in America and was especially obvious in the South" (Rubin 172).

The fervor of nationalism and emotional optimism which came to the peak at the birth of the confederacy ended in the holocaust of Civil War. The hopeful Southerners who saw no real limits to their own and their nation's destiny felt frustrated for a while with their ambitions thwarted and their region's future clouded. But out of the ashes there arose, like the phoenix, the old spirit of optimism. With the old elan, with the passionate crusading spirit, the unarmed mob of every race and sex without servitude has risen to the fore as the "New South". The stubborn optimism which is embedded in their culture has made them defy the national despondency and inertia. This time, their fight is against the
obsolete customs and traditions of the past era. As Boney says, "... Southerners are once again the confident shock troops for the nation they have so powerfully and permanently influenced from the very beginning" (Rubin 174). The Southerners are ready to prove, "Virginia was founded not on a cloud of tobacco smoke but on a vague but vigorous confidence in the future" (Rubin 172). With their sheer energy, ambition and aliveness, the Southerners have to face a new problem of how to reconcile economic development with the quality of life. They have to carefully avoid the kind of progress which might turn the South into a modern wasteland. As they had cast off the burden of the old Southern history, they have to be cautious not to rush headlong into a rapid progress which might turn sour and lead them only to despair.
In the war the United States had won. The South had lost and suffered economic oppression during and after the Reconstruction. The South had fought in the battle and had endured the accompanying desolation. It had known agony but it had gained a myth. It was the myth of the past. The Southern society has supported itself through difficult times by cherishing the memory of Southern heroism and Yankee injustice and the dream of what might have been if the South had prevailed. Southern intellectuals and artists were divided among themselves. While John Esten Cooke and Thomas Nelson Page defended the Old South as the most perfect of all civilizations, Henry Grady and Walter Hines Page called for a new political and social structure based on new values contrary to those held earlier. But the views of both were simplistic and they failed to realize the essential complexity of history and human condition. As a result, Southern
literature of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century was generally inferior to that of the Renascence.

At the time of Southern literary Renascence the South still gloried in its own peculiarity and clung to its sectional identity because the Southern society was homogeneous, agrarian and religious still. Their fiction dealt with the threat of freedom posited not by black tyranny, but by an inflexible white Southern frame of mind which upholds the slavery of caste, indicating that the South was permanently addicted to slavery in one form or another. With the entry of the Northerners, the Southern whites now felt that they were the slaves. Nothing had really liberated the mind of the South.

In the end of Nineteenth century poets like Henry Timrod and Sidney Lanier made
significant contribution to Southern literature. Henry Timrod in his Ode Ethnogenesis predicts the spread of Southern influence around the world. His Ode The Cotton Boll celebrates the South's most important product and prays for victory over the North. His Ode sung at a grave-decorating ceremony honoring the Confederate-dead is his best work. Sidney Lanier's Science Of English Verse is a pioneering document in the local-color movement. Some of his poems deal with economic problems of the South. His Ode Corn recommends diversifying to boost the South's economy. The artist according to him, should be socially oriented.

In the early Twentieth century the South did not have great literature to boast of. Keeping the cultural aridity in mind, H.L. Mencken called the South, "the Sahara of the Bozart". In 1917, he wrote:
Alas for the South! her books have grown fewer; She never was much given to Literature.

(qtd in Walker:156)

But several writers with their promising works, soon gave the lie to Mencken. By the 1930s, the South had become the most productive literary region in America. For a long period there was only bombast or silence. South had no great aesthetic pretensions initially that Allen Tate wrote, "There never was a profession of letters in the South"(qtd in Couch:186). But soon, the situation was remedied. After a rude shake-up, there was a great awakening, a new Southern literature, as a separate manifestation. Southern literature in its indigenous character with its native distinction came to the fore. It forms a virile part of the living body of American thought. The new spirit in Southern letters has made it modern. The South saw the emergence of single writers of great distinction like James
Branch Cabell, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Paul Green, Julia Peterkin, Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Ellen Glasgow. To the great pride of South, three of the most significant literary groups in the Twentieth century America were centered here — The Fugitives, the Agrarians and the New Critics. The South, as Randall Stewart observed, had become suddenly a "nest of singing Birds" (qtd in Rubin:262). Even Allen Tate changed his opinion, for, South gave a backward glance the result of which is Southern Renascence, a literature conscious of the past in the present. They tried to find the meaning of the past, to discover or reconstruct some viable relationship to the Southern tradition as it differed from that of other sections of America. Cleanth Brooks summarizes the specific characteristics of South in *The Southern Renascence: A Traditionalist View* thus:
. . . a feeling for the concrete and the specific, an awareness of conflict, a sense of community and of religious wholeness, a belief in human imperfection and a genuine and never wavering disbelief in perfection, ever developing as a result of human effort and planning; a deep-seated sense of the tragic, and a conviction that nature is mysterious and contingent. Any attempt to harness nature and make it a servant of man will always be doomed to failure. (qtd in Rubin:263)

This is the ground in which the Southern artistic promptings took root and flourished.
The rise of Modernism in the South is the rise of Liberalism which was transforming Southern institutions much for the better. At this time the writers were trying to reinterpret the social and political traditions. Lively and serious works from the Southern pens subjected Southern culture, history, region, men and women to an intense scrutiny. The "Yankeefied" civilization which was once agrarian and anti-industrial excited literary activity that Southern Literature is well launched upon a productive period. The Southern writer articulates or transmits naturally to his art the qualities that belong to him as a Southerner. It is easier to recognise than define the Southern character. The qualities which emanate from the metropolis urge him in one direction while his sense of loyalty to his own tradition pulls him in the opposite direction. To produce a literature that is "modern" and expressive of South, while
in the same breath, to repudiate the Southern past is a difficult task. To express himself and at the same time deny himself — that is the dilemma of the modern Southern writer.

The South witnessed a rapidly accelerated growth in literature. Its literature is large, various and amazingly rich. The makers of this new literature differed widely in their points of view and interests. They showed a marked tendency to react to the new atmosphere. They exhibited an enormous freshness when they were moving towards a clear-eyed view of the Southern world. But some still tried to revive and fully restore their identification with the old South which they had regarded as a Theocritean idyll. They romanticised the Old South as the Arcadia.
In the first half of the Twentieth century a group of sixteen poets known as the Fugitives contributed greatly to Southern Literature. John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren shared a keen sense of Southern heritage and favoured literary regionalism. "Deploring the sovereignty of materialism of modern American life and the alienation it imposed on the artist, they prized the securities of a tradition in an age of dissolving values" (Walker 163). Laura Riding was a regular contributor to the magazine The Fugitive. Her works are concerned with profound issues. Many Fugitives supported the Agrarian movement of the 1930s and contributed to the symposium, I'll Take My Stand. The Agrarians were centred on Vanderbilt university in Nashville, Tennessee. They, with John Crowe Ransom in the lead launched an intellectual protest against materialism. Rooted in humane
values, they had abiding belief in individual liberty and respect for law, and the primacy of the individual over the state. They rebuked dehumanization and materialistic acquisitive society. They called for a restoration and reassertion of the South's small town and rural community and its integrity. They called upon the youth to resist the industrial gospel and pointed out the old agricultural community as exemplary, of a harmonious, non-exploitative human relationship to Nature. They wanted them to hold on to these concerns and enhance them amid growth and change. They were worried about the preservation of the human virtues of the Southern community in the face of an impersonal industrial juggernaut. They did not want the South to become an undistinguished replica of the North. They supported the ecological battle against further rape of the land. They were considered impractical visionaries. But they were prophetic in their
warnings about the perils of dehumanization. The Agrarians re-endowed Nature with an element of inscrutability. They sought to put the man back into Nature and to give God back his thunder. As author of *The New Criticism* and editor of *The Kenyon Review*, Ransom was one of America's most respected literary men. Donald Davidson's poetry is not very competent but his personal integrity and devotion to letters as a Professor of English at Vanderbilt University, exerted a strong influence on others. Allen Tate raised *The Sewanee Review* to international prominence. His poem *Ode to the Confederate Dead* is a symbolic meditation on the modern Southerner's sense of emotional distance from his own past. Tate is not for his critical elegance. Robert Penn Warren was a versatile and vigorous Fugitive. He has been instrumental in raising the standard of literary appreciation. His essays are useful collections of applied criticism. Though he
lives in the North, he has remained a Southerner revisiting the South often. The eternal return is as much a part of his own life as it is of the lives of his characters. He is an idealist who knows that he must be empirical in approach. He has written ten novels and most of them are historical. Boorstin praised Warren for "his feelings for the promise and the frustration of American life" and for depicting in his work, "the comic, the violent and the tawdry as well as the grand and heroic" (qtd in Walker:167).

Homeward Angel was his best autobiographical novel. Erskine Caldwell attracted a wide readership with his "grotesque" novels. In God's Little Acre and Tobacco Road he mixed sex, violence and rural degeneracy. Faulkner belonged, all his life, to the South. He was brought up in Oxford which, under the name of Jefferson became the locale for much of his fiction. With his novel Sartoris he discovered that his own "little postage stamp of soil was worth writing about"(qtd in Walker:158) and embarked on the creation of his mythical Yoknapatawpha County. He pictures the moral decay of the old South and the erosion of its traditions by the secular values of the modern age. In his popular novels like Absalom, Absalom! The Sound and the Fury, Light in August and As I Lay Dying he showed how the destruction of the old South released hitherto suppressed forces of disorder and how the old
Southern order of dignity and principle was replaced by cynical materialism.

The New generation of Southern authors look at and within themselves and their region with critical discernment as well as passionate involvement. It is the Richmond writers like Ellen Glasgow, James Branch Cabell, Mary Johnston and Amelie Rives exhibited the first really important break with the aesthetics, social attitudes and community assumptions of the older South and speak with different voices. They questioned the old ways and the old messages. Their fiction reflected this cultural shift. The artists do not live in a vacuum and are compounded out of all their experience from birth. They cast light on the Southern social scene and direct attention to Southern social problems. In the earlier period, the focus was on the writers' struggle to know self and seek order and their attempt
to find a place in the literary world. But now the Southern writers addressed the tensions between families and between generations as a new South emerged. They dealt with the conflict between the world of the old and the new — the decayed gentility of the Old South and the materialism of the moderns. The modern South also brought with it new concerns about the roles of blacks and whites, the problems of prejudice in the South. James Branch Cabell wrote novels set in the mythical country of Poictesme. But they are laboured symbolic morality novels.

The literature of the South "can boast a substantial, earnest body of fiction which deals with the three major areas where the freedom/repression issue was most poignant: Colour, sex and the fate/free-will nexus" (Donaldson 153). The Civil War was a
watershed in the treatment of these three areas. The role and the self-confidence of women also expanded after the war, as women, who had tasted wartime opportunity saw to it that their daughters became assertive. Women novelists, themselves among the new women wrote with increasing authority on the freedom/repression theme, which concerned them as women and as human beings. "... Whether the woman takes the shape of Calamity Jane, the pistol-packin' Mama or the Puritan Matron, she is an assertive and dominant woman . . . ." (Donaldson 167). The new woman forms the fictional subject of many writers. Mary Johnston is known for her historical, sociological and war novels. She produced in all, twenty-three novels of them, fifteen, wholly or in part, deal with Virginia. Of them, seven deal with colonial Virginia and the rest explore the problems in the society after the war. Hagar is the suffrage novel. Hagar,
like Miriam in *Michael Forth*, fights for the emancipation of women. *The Wanderers* studies the changing relations between men and women. Mary Johnston never turned to the past to escape the problems of the present. In her thinking, the past controls the future, and the future remoulds the past. The present is only a link between the two.

The universe of novel was a phallocratic one, primarily focused on male issues and whatever pandered to the male ego. The *Dark Continent* inhabited by women was avoided. The Southern women writers wrestled with the issue of sexual equality in an attempt to retrieve the "lost voices". The search for identity had become a growing concern of the Southern woman not only because of the change in her gender role in Southern society but also because the Southerner was quickly losing or had lost her link to the past and her Southern
home. In her essay *Place in Fiction*, Eudora Welty refers to the sense of place as "the ball of golden thread" that is able "to carry us there and back and in every sense of the word to bring us home" (qtd in Weaks: 207) So long as women tell their stories of the South, then the South will remain a unique place. The women writers undoubtedly excelled in telling their stories and they kept the South alive by producing some of its finest literature.

The women writers wanted to enlighten the Southern male that his chivalrous pose was a sham, which is long overdue for public exposure. Ellen Glasgow's *Virginia*, Johnston's *Hagar* and Harrison's *V.V's Eyes* scrutinized the Southern belle to discover whether she is a victim or victimizer. Ironically, the three writers postulated that the woman is both. Ellen Glasgow is usually mentioned in the same breath as Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, for,
they were roughly contemporary. Willa Cather is from Virginia, but it was her youth in the Middle West and her later emotional affinity with the South West rather than her early home provided her with literary material. She searches for a beautiful and rewarding historical tradition as an anchor for the modern sensitive hero or heroine. Her use of the past is very different from Glasgow's rebellion against the past Virginian tradition of "evasive idealism". Glasgow's use of Virginia aristocracy can be compared to Edith Wharton's delineation of New York society. Wharton reiterates the story of the innocents destroyed by the social pattern but the heroines of Glasgow's serious novels achieve an individual triumph by defying tradition.

Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty and Flannery O' Connor are recognised as major fiction writers of the South, along with Ellen
Glasgow. Eudora Welty is a Southern lady of the sheltered past. There is a distinction between leading a sheltered life and a daring life, between living cautiously and thinking adventurously. She maintains that her daring thinking is dependent on the nurturing care her protected life provided. The novel which is elastic in form became the favourite of a realist like Welty. Fiction renders the visible world in concrete form. Welty grounded her fiction in the life, she observed in Mississippi. Its town and country side, its red clay and hills, its pine forests come alive in her works. Place in fiction is the gathering-spot of all that has been experienced. It serves to focus the vision of the writer. It also gives social accuracy to her novels. Welty gives each sensuous detail of the natural world and makes the place probable. Her ears caught the speech of a way of life, of a set of shared and subtly varied
social traditions, problems, human reactions as well as foibles and idiosyncrasies. Welty's art relishes the absurd and the incongruous that she presents a South which is eccentric and often backward. She is, indeed the supreme comic writer of the modern South. She is a natural humorist but a comparatively artificial tragic writer. She delights in the unpredictability of human nature. She writes with a deep understanding of the frustrated desires and thwarted ambitions of her characters. Her novels The Robber Bridegroom, Delta Wedding and Losing Battles are eloquent reflections on time, change and the threat of the outside world to an insular protected tradition. She demonstrates a breath of vision. She fuses myth with reality, keen social observation with fantasy. In addition to mythic fiction, her work falls within the category of psychological realism firmly grounded in place and character.
Carson McCuller is another Southern writer who could not separate herself from her homeland. She was bound to this particular region. She maintained that an author always reflects the region of her birth and cannot escape her geographical area with its voices and foliage, and memory. It was her conviction that few Southern writers could ever become truly cosmopolitan. She regarded all her major works as Southern. Her novels revealed her imaginative fecundity and her firm control over her subject. She had a broader understanding of people, their motivations and their relationships. "Racial fear and hatred, psychotic isolation and uncertainty about the norms and the significance of sexual expression produce the crises in her fiction" (Tripathy 92). Sexual deviation and violent sexual antagonism function in her work as a social fact. Her novels are full of freaks and imbeciles. They inhabit a world of suppressed
violence. "Violence is a regular inhabitant of McCuller's world, as witness the cripples strewn throughout her novels like mangled or rusted bits of machinery" (Buchen 20). In all her novels, there lies essential loneliness and inevitable isolation of solitary reapers. The Heart is a Lonely Hunter deals with social justice in relation to the Negro issue. Reflections in a Golden Eye is a naturalistic novel plumbing human passions. Member of the Wedding is a grappling autobiographical novel. Clock Without Hands is almost an existential novel. She deals with stark, abnormal and grotesque characters. An imaginary background is mixed with a realistic situation in her novels. She attributes the chaotic state in society to the absence of religion. Horace Taylor observes, "... The society has no substratum of faith to give its individuals a sense of belonging" (160).
Paradoxical elements are plenty — private and public, the individual and universal, love and hate, pain and joy, selfishness and sacrifice, past and present, and life and death. Thus her writing goes straight to the heart of its subject.

Flannery O'Connor is given to violence in fiction. An avowedly religious writer, she maintained that violence was necessary to shock modern man out of his secular complacency and lead him into an awareness of good and evil, salvation and damnation. Her novels *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear It Away* depicted characters haunted by God. She is another writer "with a fury against abstraction, against rationalism and scientific fact" (Ford 474). The conflicts between the individual and the society depicted in her novels reveal O'Connor's criticism of
the society and its premises. They "help to legitimize a fundamental challenge to mainstream values and to orthodox roles, including gender roles" (Janeway 355). Her work is the very epitome of Southern Gothic writing. It abounds in horrors and sensationalism. She projects a realistic world that in its local customs and manners is a microcosm of the larger human world. Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor and Richard Wright contributed to the image of a "Savage South".

Southern literature was predominantly white literature. In truth, the Southern Black and White experiences have a great deal in common. They share a common heritage — one characterized by a distinct sense of place and an awareness of the burden of the past, one which held family and religion at its centre and held a distinct preference for the concrete
to the abstract. Richard Wright suffered extreme poverty, humiliation, family discord and an exposure to violence and fear. In his novels, *Uncle Tom's Children*, *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, he documents their racial nightmare, the lynching and degradation.

Early women fiction writers regaled the readers with treacly sentimentality. Romanticism with its sentimentality and its polite shams is outworn. The Old South of abstraction is dead. In its place, emerging in literature, is the New South. The old traditions are no more. Realm of dreams, lassitude, pleasure, chivalry and the nigger no longer exists. New people and customs prevail. So the latest women writers had a shift in focus.

Ellen Glasgow was a great lady of Virginia. She always felt that the South
offered the novelist richer themes than any other part of America — "depth and a tragic past and gay and gallant pessimism". She well knew the value of her vital contacts with "the oldest roots of our Republic" which were also "the oldest roots of democracy" and of her tie with the land itself (Wagenknecht 267). Her work was forward-looking and her range was wide. Taken together, her novels constitute a picture of Virginia. She had estranged herself from the inverted sentimentalism of writers like Caldwell and Faulkner. She was the kind of writer who knew how to employ the tradition she had inherited, rejecting whatever had become sterile and making full use of that which is still valid in it. The purpose of fiction, as she conceived it, was "to increase our understanding of life and heighten our consciousness"(qtd in Wagenknecht : 269). She did not want to be either a realist or a
romancer. She simply wanted to express *the* truth about human life, embracing both the world within and the world of external appearances. She rejected sentimentalism and was after "blood and irony" — blood means passion, warmth and vitality and irony is the safest antidote to sentimental decay. Her novels chronicle the social history of Virginia, offering a complete picture of the South in defeat, avoiding local colour and concentrating upon human impulses. The values of her fiction are those of a sceptical, urbane, tolerant, and highly civilized mind. She had revolted against the genteel hypocrisies of the South and clung to her hard-won liberty "not to believe" and "not to be glad". The critic Elizabeth Monroe feels that Ellen Glasgow's art only "appears to be objective" while actually being "oriented in her own skeptical and relativistic view of
life" (qtd in Wagenknecht: 279). Monroe admits that Glasgow tempers her "searing vision of disintegration with a vision of beauty blossoming in its midst, and with an ironic tolerance of good and evil as parts of a universal pattern" (qtd in Wagenknecht: 279). She was optimistic without being sentimental. Shelters, systems and civilization will be overwhelmed in time by the backward forces of ignorance, of barbarism and ferocity. But the Indestructible will of the world is towards life which will make mankind emerge from the ruins. Glasgow pictures that spirit in her novels.

Glasgow is a pioneer in the movement towards realism. In her feeling for landscape, for environment in general, for ways of speech and points of view, she is an unacknowledged master. "While she was out of sympathy with the crude industrialism that tends to dominate
some sections of the South, she could not work up any enthusiasm over a rural civilization dominated by hookworm and fundamentalism" (Couch 181). Glasgow has never been able to make up her mind to reject her South wholly or accept it wholly. She wavers. This wavering is the general predicament of many Southern writers. In Glasgow's mind too there is a painful choice between the progressive ideas and conservatism. Beneath the vivacious pictures of her Southern society, wit and pathos of her stories lurk a reproachful and disapproving voice. "The faults of her characters are not such as belong to human beings merely; they are faults of a Southern society that she looks at with un-Southern eyes and chastises even while she loves. She is torn between what her heart cleaves to and what her intellect has been persuaded to disapprove" (Couch 200). In Barren Ground lies a distaste for rural "backwardness". In Deliverance Glasgow uses
the blind Mrs. Blake, whose family has affectionately indulged her in the belief that the South conquered the North, to symbolize the old Virginia society that clings with passionate fidelity to the empty ceremonial forms of tradition. But she is not always critical or despairing in her rendering of Southern life. She has understood its weakness as well as its strength. Glasgow reveals her attitude thus:

what I am trying to make clear to you is simply this — that we can make a great future — a future worthy of Virginia's history, not by copying the past, but by lighting again and again our fresh torches by the flame of the old. (qtd in Couch: 177)
Her men characters are the weakest but she is not bitter about them; neither does she idealize her women. Though she has been called a feminist, this is true only in a qualified sense. She was no idolater of her own sex. She neither projected them as total victims nor as victors. If their happiness perished, their honour remained. The women are shown to have the power to endure and the intelligence to adjust themselves to live an undefeated life even under the most unfavourable conditions. Her women characters appear to be stoics. Her interest in women characters stems from the fact that she herself is a woman. Hence she will be able to portray, define or redefine the essential female qualities and the matrix in which they flourished or withered. Her interest is born from the fact that she is an ironist. She is amused by the differences between the traditional concepts of woman and her own
personal concept. She wrote about women because their complexity interested her. In her earlier novels, her focal point is male. Female characters became more significant and their philosophies central to her fictional world in her mature works.

Though Glasgow's art springs from a specific locality and shows her crusade against the formal, the false, the affected sentimentality of Southern writing, it is in the depiction of her women characters, she has established herself as an outstanding Southern writer of the era between the two world wars, thus occupying an unassailable position among the women writers.