CHAPTER III

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The term 'Southern Lady' is much-abused. She exists only in fairy tales and old romances. Glasgow deals with the stereotypes of female protagonists who move in a problematic and complicated world and live in an "enclosed" or "confined" space pandering to male ego, accepting meekly the societal norms and constrictions. Glasgow portrays the tyranny of the tradition and the docile Southern ladies who in their angelic goodness kept up the inherited ideals of service, pity, loyalty and self-surrender and who gave their lives to duty and love, and sacrificed themselves. Many women were victims of men as well as the die-hard members of their own sex who think traditionally and obey implicitly the dictates of the patriarchal society.
Often Glasgow depicts the male as the hunter who inflicts pain and cruelty, and betrays the woman. Women and animals are the hunted. The greatest difficulty for a woman is to reconcile her inner needs and aspirations with society's or her man's requirement of a feminine nature. In *The Descendant* Glasgow portrays one such noble woman who selflessly sacrifices her talents for the sake of her lover. In fact the main focus is on the hero Michael Akershem, the bastard child of a country wench and a dissolute aristocrat who abandons her. As Glasgow is bent on projecting her favourite theories of heredity and environment in the formation of personality, she traces the life of Michael Akershem, his peasant heritage, his lack of social grace, his capacity for hard work, his pursuit of success, his brilliant career as a famous radical editor, his moral and physical disintegration, his reckless manslaughter,
imprisonment, sickness and death. Only in the second half of the novel Rachel Gavin is given importance.

Rachel Gavin who has been related to the aristocratic New York Van Dams, was reared as a Southern lady. But this spirited brunette who has an independent streak in her opts for freedom and leaves home for a Bohemian life in New York. Setting up a small studio apartment, she pursues her artistic talent as a painter. With total dedication, she proceeds to create a masterpiece of her large canvas of Mary Magdalen, without realizing the life of the fallen Mary becomes symbolically the pattern for her fall and regeneration.

Rachel's meeting with Michael in a small restaurant leads to Rachel sketching him as John the Baptist. Finding her attractive, Michael courts her. Rachel is initially
hesitant to accept love for, she is sure it will interfere with her work. Her reluctance comes out forcefully in her prayer thus:

Only let me live for my work.
I ask so little, so little; I only ask to work — work — work. Steel my heart, make me cruel, hideous wicked — anything — but leave me my work. (D 115).

Moreover her teacher admonishes her, "A woman is not like a man — a man may have many interests, a woman but one, or they are all worthless". When love enters the heart of Rachel, it is the beginning of her decline as an artist. Succumbing to Michael's charm, she accepts him but refuses to marry him as she does not want Michael to betray his doctrine of
free love. She has been brought low by her position as Michael's mistress and is snubbed by Van Dams.

Rachel has believed herself to be emancipated. "She had once been heard to remark that she occupied a position in the most advanced flank of the New Woman's crusade" (D 82). In fact she is as ignorant as the most advanced of her sex. Glasgow says, "... she was leveling her guns at shadows and making a fierce onslaught upon mere phantom foes. ... She has not learned that the enemy of woman is neither God, Man, nor Devil, but her own heart" (D 82).

Love destroys Rachel's creative ability. Rachel sacrifices her career and ruins her reputation for Michael, but his ardour cools off and he grows indifferent to her. He begins to meet the intellectuals of
the city and he fancies Anna Allard who does social work in the slums and lives with a crippled niece. Though heart-broken, Rachel selflessly, pretending a change of heart, gives him up so that he can be free to follow his heart's desire. She who gives up her ambition and all other interests for love, now gives up love and proceeds with her work. She ekes out a living by copying designs for a dressmaker. Regaining her talent as a painter slowly, she is able to complete her Magdalen — her life's ambition. The acclaim of her teacher and critics indicates she has a bright future and she will go to Paris for further study in her field.

But once again Michael enters into her life, now a broken man, sick with tuberculosis. Michael shoots young Kyle, who was once his adoring disciple, for a verbal accusation and
ends up in prison. Contracting tuberculosis, he is released before completing his sentence. When he crawls back to Rachel, the forgiving Rachel, magnanimously takes on the job of nursing him. Her tender heart is touched when she sees the transformation of Michael:

He is a picture of pain and misery and wasted strength; she saw a dread of her and yet a need of her, a desire for solitude, like the desire of an animal that seeks the covert, and yet like the longing for a ministering touch. (D 272)

So she tends to the dying man and exults, "He is mine, mine for all the time!" (D 275). Ultimately the hunter perishes in the arms of his victim, still angry and unreconciled to his fate. But Rachel, his victim, the sensitive and selfless woman, though suffers in silence,
survives. Rachel is a success in Glasgow's terms. Rachel who gives up art for love, suffers, when she renounces love and turns her energy to art she becomes successful. Now in her triumph and new security she can afford forgiveness and pity for the sick. Michael's rapid fall indicates Glasgow is anxious to avenge Rachel than to bring Michael to self-realization. The eventual triumph of Rachel over her betrayer, her faithless lover seems to bear powerful personal significance for Glasgow.

In *Phases of an Inferior Planet* Glasgow once again chooses another artist as the heroine who is totally different from Rachel Gavin. Moreover, this novel also is mainly the story of the hero Anthony Algarcliffe whose life was ruined by Mariana Musin, the heroine. Mariana is the first of a series of light women who enslaves and leads men to their
downfall. Mariana is sensual, sentimental, extravagant and given to self-pity and sudden shifts in mood. Glasgow attributes her faults mainly to her background. Caught between a Presbyterian father and a Roman Catholic mother, Mariana chose for herself Episcopal Church. In adolescence, she avidly read Christina Rossetti and George Herbert and decorated her room with reproductions of Renaissance madonnas. Her frivolous romantic temperament made her think that she was in love with the photograph of a thief. Her dream is to become an opera singer, for which she trains herself and practices piano. Her obsession with music and theatre makes her seek a career as a soprano in a low-priced residential hotel in New York, which is the favorite haunt of all aspiring artists, journalists, critics and musicians. Her career in fact provides an escape from the dreary atmosphere of her home in Virginia.
In her New York apartment, she keeps a statue of Wagner, a constant reminder of her ambition. Though her intentions are serious and her attempts are genuine, her voice is too light to make a success of her career as a musician. But this sentimental creature has made a cult of music and keeps singing and flirting with the young men. Proud of her emotional capacity, she calls herself a Barbarian. In fact she is unstable and whimsical in nature. Though she is revolted by the ugliness of poverty, she has bouts of pity and generosity. Glasgow succinctly sums up this nature thus:

Mariana was famished for romance, but not for the romance of the street. She had an instinctive aversion to things common or of vulgar intent. Her unsatisfied
desire was but a craving of a young and impressionable heart for untried emotion.

(PIP 30)

Though flighty and frivolous, she is vivacious and charming. Moreover she has kindness for the lonely girls who come seeking a job in New York, like her. This makes her a great favorite at the hotel.

Anthony Algarcife is one of those people who are attracted towards Mariana. Algarcife a young orphan brought up by Father Speares, chose to pursue a career in Science instead of Theology, to the great disappointment of his mentor. This ascetic, serious minded youth is distracted from his work by Marianas's Southern charm. Mariana engineers several meetings on the fire-escape between their rooms in a deliberate attempt to
trap him. When she was called home to help her stepmother with the children, Mariana approaches Algarcife in tears. Moved, he impulsively declares his love for her and promises to marry her and rescue her. Glasgow in fact attributes this rash behaviour to his heredity. He compares Mariana to his mother and says, "My mother was a Creole. She came from New Orleans to marry my father, and died because the North was cold and her heart was in the South. You are my South, and the world is cold, for my heart is in you" (PIP 99). Algarcife is taken in by her Southern charm and mistakes it for Southern warmth. Abandoning his ambition, he writes pot-boiling scientific articles to sustain his family.

But Mariana who is hungry for glamour and excitement, feels deprived at not being able to own pretty things, to go to the opera, or to eat delicate food. She feels discontent
and restless. To her great horror, she discovers that she is pregnant. Her reluctance to bear the child comes out forcefully in the following words:

We are poor and it seems to me that it is wrong. I feel as if I had committed a sin - as if I were forcing something into the world to fight with poverty and discomforts. It may even hate us for bringing it. I almost hope it will die. (PIP 128)

Anyway, she goes through the unwanted pregnancy with resignation. But uncannily her wish is fulfilled that the ill-fated baby sickens and dies. Feeling guilty at her initial rejection, she feels listless and depressed. Instead of
bringing the husband and wife closer, this tragedy drives them apart. She becomes indifferent and silent and seeks solace in music. Her attitude destroys the marriage that finally she abandons Algarcife and accompanies a music comedy troupe on tour. The already over-worked Algarcife feels lonely and shattered, and in a desperate state takes to drugs and attempts suicide only to be rescued at the right time by Father Speares.

Out of gratitude and with a sense of obligation, Algarcife becomes a clergyman, a role originally envisioned for him by his patron. He becomes a successful clergy in New York, building up missions in the Bowery. His justifiable anger at Mariana is turned upon himself that he is driving himself towards self-destruction with heavy work. He has renounced love for a woman and consoles himself
by looking after the poor, the ailing and the outcast.

But fate intervenes that Mariana enters into his life once again after eight years. He learns that she has been married to an Englishman and divorced. After going through amorous adventure and remaining the toast of the city, she has come back ill, unhappy, helpless, with a tarnished reputation. Seeking his forgiveness, Mariana once again pursues him till he softens towards her. After initial reluctance, the magnanimous Algarcife accepts her and even plans to give up his ministry. But the delicate health of Mariana worsens. Suspecting his loyalty, she rises too soon from her sickbed and walks to the church and, dies of pneumonia. Till the last, this hypersensitive woman with her unreasonable emotional demands causes only problems to others, remains a burden and dies a premature
death due to her wilful nature, though Algarcife partly shares the blame. The whining, pleasure-seeking, selfish Mariana could only be compared to a colourful butterfly which flits from flower to flower or a moth which goes towards the light bent upon self-destruction. Her hopes and desires thwarted, this frustrated woman ventures into foolish adventure and gets scorched. Mariana remains a typical example of an inadequate ineffectual woman who solely exists to attract men and destroy both ultimately.

The Battleground is a historical novel which depicts the slow transformation in Virginia. The Civil War in fact is the beginning of a new era where the evasive idealism of the ante-bellum South has given way to a mature way of life in keeping with the realities of the modern age. Though the story deals with the Confederate army and the war,
love and bravery are the main themes. Though the story traces the destiny of the inmates of Governor Ambler's family and Major Lightfoot's family, Betty Ambler and Dan Mountjoy occupy the centre stage.

The process of change is never immediate and sudden. It is always slow and gradual and it creeps imperceptibly over the people. Dan Mountjoy's initial attraction towards Virginia Ambler's quiet beauty bears ample testimony to this fact. South is not yet used to head-strong woman like Betty Ambler. Hence the popularity of Virginia Ambler, the calm, well-mannered sister — a typical Southern lady of the clinging type. It takes long years of war and lessons in humiliation before Dan, a typical Southern male to accept a courageous and independent woman like Betty. Glasgow's portrayal of Virginia's inconspicuous
marriage with Jack Morson, her pregnancy, her illness and sudden death when she goes in search of her wounded husband behind the lines shows the novelist has deliberately limited her role to an ineffectual woman moulded by patriarchy in order to highlight a formidable woman like Betty. Glasgow ridicules the ante-bellum Southern lady in the portrait of a minor character like Aunt Lydia who nurses flowers and teaches the little Negro slaves Catechism, embracing implicitly Saint Paul's opinions on women. Dressed in black and saturated in propriety, she indulges herself only in literary romances.

Laura Wilde, the heroine of The Wheel of Life burns with the flame like Glasgow's early heroine Rachel Gavin. She is a poetess who lives quietly with her eccentric aunts and uncles in the seclusion of Grammercy Square. Through her close friend Gerty Bridewell, the
sophisticated fashionable lady in New York, she meets her cousin Arnold Kemper, the virile man-of-the world who becomes the main cause of her undoing. Laura succumbs to his charm, sacrifices her creativity and even changes her life style. Kemper who keeps pleasure as the chief purpose of his life, introduces Laura to his new way of life. Laura too tries to compete with other women in dress and manners, heedless of the warning of her friend, the worldly Gerty. Adams, an editor of a literary periodical who nurses a secret love for her in his heart is saddened by the sacrifice of her art when she reveals her intentions not to write verses but to live her life fully:

I want to be, to know, to feel. I want to go through everything, to turn every page, to experience all that can be experienced upon the earth. (WL 238)
Laura, who led a cloistered existence, buried away in the grave old house mantled in brown creepers, is shaken from her former resolution to remain "pure" and "apart". She longs for experience and wants to taste everything. But there are implicit warnings against matrimony in the lives of her closest friends. Her friend Gerty considers marriage not as contentment but as a battle, all the time, every instant. She feels that she is bound to the wheel. Her partner Perry is consistently unfaithful. The other wretched couple is Connie and Roger Adams. Here the wife is unfaithful while the husband suffers patiently. Roger in fact warns Laura, "It may be that you will arrive finally at the knowledge that all life is forfeiture in one way or another, and that the biggest thing in it is sometimes to go without" (WL 238-9).
Laura Wilde is loved by another young Southern playwright St. George Trent. He mistakes Laura’s poetic appeal for love. He is too young for Laura to take seriously. So, she gently lets him down and he soon turns his attention to the pretty but untalented writer Christina Coles.

Of the three men who loved her, Roger Adams is a withdrawn and saintly type. Laura has always respected him but she is not attracted towards him. In her passion for Kemper she is like a captured bird. Without coquetry, she loves him sincerely. Her genuine simplicity forbids flirtation that Kemper agrees to marry her. But he lacks her inwardness and they have nothing in common apart from their mutual attraction. When Laura comes to know that he has spent an evening with his former mistakes, Madame Alta, an opera singer, she rejects him in anger. Soon she
weakens and gets reconciled. Again she is horrified when she sees in Arnold’s room, the new portrait that has been painted by Arnold – the painting of Madame Alta, the figure of the wrestler and the male nude. Madame Alta’s arrival at that moment and leaving a note for Kemper infuriates Laura so much that she burns the note and hides the fact from Kemper in spite of her guilty feelings. Her wishful thinking results in a dream in which she rescues the letter from the fire and Kemper forgives her, kissing the burnt hand. But to her great confusion, at the end of the dream, the face changes to that of Roger Adam. Glasgow indicates here the future in which Laura will turn to Roger for help.

Suppressing her guilty feelings, Laura gets ready for the wedding, buying beautiful clothes to make this “wren” a bird of paradise. Every now and then she voices her
misgivings about this marriage. Three days before the marriage when Kemper confronts her about the undelivered note, Laura admits her jealousy and lack of trust. For the first time, it dawns in her mind that this marriage is impossible. "The thought that she was fighting for the freedom of her soul rushed through her brain, and at that instant, had he laid his hand upon her, she knew that she would have thrown herself from the window" (WL 436). She is like a trapped wild bird who was so far helplessly beating its wings in the fowler's net. The instinct for flight is so strong that she flees into the night, takes a ferry and finds shelter in Adirondacks, away from the city. She seeks the help of Roger on the eve of her wedding. Though Roger loves her sincerely, he feels that it is a woman's support Laura needs at present and sends Gerty who as a woman can understand her better.
Neither philosophy nor religion matters now in the supreme agony of life, but sincere love.

Though Gerty rushes to help her, Laura speaks of herself as "dead". She seems to have drained of all her energy and enthusiasm for living. She has no feelings and no concern. Since her work has failed her, she sinks into apathy. After a healing period of withdrawal, she responds again, not to the city, not to her bosom friends but to Nature. She is resurrected by a little blue flower:

... this essence of the flower came suddenly in contact with the dead soul within her bosom, while she felt again the energy which is life flowing through her body ... she felt her soul to be one of substance, not
only with God and the stars, 
but with the flower and the 
child in the street as well. 

(468-9)

Glasgow indicates the way in which Laura is 
going to shape her future. Though the faithful 
Roger proposes to her, she rejects it, 
saying it is too late and devotes herself to 
charity work. Though she meets Kemper, he 
leaves her completely unmoved. Laura hopes to 
find the secret of happiness in service and in 
relinquishment of desires.

Glasgow portrays in Gerty, Connie and 
Aunt Angela the other types of Southern women 
who are unrealistically blind to their 
potential, weak or meek. Gerty, a great beauty 
is completely involved in a passionate life. 
She is a slave to her body, anxious about her 
wrinkles, diet and clothing. Connie is
unstable, shallow baby-faced, given to hysterical depressions. She needs stimulation of affairs and cocaine. Aunt Angela occupies the other end of the scale. Having disgraced the family by yielding to a lover, at twenty, she has condemned herself to the life of a solitary prisoner within four walls. Her “silent magnanimity has become expression of a reproach too deep for words” (WL 23). Her scorn for men makes her shun the entire community of male. Glasgow draws this martyr to the Victorian code thus:

Cold. White and spectral as one of the long slim candles on an altar, still beautiful with an indignant and wounded loveliness, she had become in the end at once the shame and the romance of her family.

(WL 23)
Glasgow ridicules the eccentricities of the other aunts Mrs. Payne and Mrs. Bleeker, the sisters of Aunt Angela. Mrs. Payne with her rude eccentricity and acidity and Mrs. Bleeker with her plump plainness and commonsense are drawn as comic characters with nothing to recommend. Even Laura's mother Mrs. Wilde is presented as all emotion, untempered by reason she is described as "a little white moth". Though she is over-emotional and commits suicide with an over dose of medicine, her husband seems to be the cause. This blame on the husband echoes Glasgow's reaction to her father's role in her mother's melancholia.

**The Romance of a Plain Man** shows the new industrial and financial powers rising from the working class of urban Virginia. It captures the changes in society where the landed gentry subsisted in genteel poverty and new men of humble origins came to the fore. It
narrates the rags-to-riches rise of a plain man Ben Starr who marries an upper-class girl Sally Mickleborough. Sally's mother Sarah is pictured as an abused wife who is driven away by her drunken husband after a bitter quarrel. She goes out in a storm with her small daughter and takes shelter with the Starrs. The cute little girl in her white clothes and red shoes makes an indelible impression on Ben that he gives her a red geranium from his mother's box. But to the girl from an aristocratic family, he appears "common". He labours to become worthy of her by gaining wealth and importance. General Bolingbroke, a Civil War leader who has become a business tycoon helps Ben to climb the ladder of success. He starts his life as a grocery boy sorting apples and then becomes a messenger boy in a Tobacco Works. Becoming the General's assistant in the railroad management, he works hard to reach the position of the president. Though he improves himself by self-
education, he is still awkward at dancing and light talk. At Sally's dance, he could not socialize properly. When he falls flat on the dance floor, he confesses to Sally his struggle to rise above the common. But he departs when he overhears the comment, "Yes, he is a magnificent animal, but he has no social manner" (RPM 153).

Ben shyly courts Sally, who is now orphaned and is staying with her grandmother and two spinster aunts. The aunts represent "moth-eaten tradition", the aristocracy at its most arrested point. These ladies guard their past as they guard their ancient furniture. In their view, worldly success, even good character can not make up for social inferiority. So they entertain Ben with great reluctance. He wins Sally's love by rescuing a horse from being whipped by the drunken driver and pushing the carriage himself. Sally and
Ben are bound together by their love for animals, a bond closest to Glasgow's heart. Sally who is a collector of strays, entrusts to Ben's care first a yellow cur and later a kitten.

Despite opposition from the aunts, Sally marries Ben and accepts his awkward minor brother President, and his brittle sister Jessie, because she loves him. Hardships befall the pair. In a crash, Ben is ruined financially and Sally is forced to share his poverty. In fact she takes it gallantly and happily. He is more important to her than her new-born baby. After a period of poverty, and Ben's sickness, he foolishly speculates with Sally's money and loses again. She does not even blame him. She comes through with her upper-class fortitude, taking in fine lace to launder and making desserts to order. When Ben sinks himself wholly in his work, to rebuild
his fortune, he neglects Sally totally. The sensitive lady becomes desperate. In uncertain health, disconsolate Sally takes up hunting and riding dangerously, with her cousin George as her constant companion. Her marriage slowly disintegrates, culminating in the death of her baby. But a vague spinal malady which Sally contracts makes Ben come back to his sense. As she needs constant and daily care, Ben makes the ultimate sacrifice of giving up the presidency of the rail road which was his life's ambition. It seems as if Glasgow's heroes find the physically incapacitated women more lovable than the strong figures. In fact Sally has always appealed to Ben because of her helplessness. Initially she appeared to Ben like a little white kitten pursued by boys. Once again, it is her weakness which brings Ben back to her.
Sally, with her long heritage of passionate principles and lovely manners "her power of sustained sympathy, of sacrifice" (RPM 372) represents the best of the old South. Glasgow admits, "Yet, if I invented Sally, she was in a measure at least, a mingling of all those characteristics we used to think of as especially Virginian" (WW 74). Ben's mother Susan is a typical Glasgowian plain woman. Clad in a gray wrapper and shawl, this hollow-templed woman is always anxious-eyed, she is of that class who spends their days at washtubs and ironing boards. Full of tart comments about women's lives, she yet sinks down, overstrained and over worked, and dies by her stove. Ben's step mother is described as a doubtful blonde from whom he runs away. Glasgow portrays in the person of aunt Mitty the righteous conventions of the Southern woman. She refused to marry her fiance, the General, maintaining that his obligation was
to the woman he disgraced, and remained a spinster the rest of her life. The General takes up an ante-bellum Southern position on feminine sweetness and self-denial. Marriage is full of sacrifice and a man likes to feel he is marrying a woman who is fully capable of making it.

Even aunt Matoaca who entertains the new feminist thinking, endorses timidly woman's emancipation and campaigns for suffrage. She is considered "cracked" and in fact the General taxes her thus:

But what would you do with a vote, my dear Miss Matoaca, he protested airily. Put it into a pie?... A woman who can make your mince pies, dear lady, need not worry about her rights (RPM 77).
The menfolk feel that a woman does not need any other right, except the right to a husband. It is an edifying sight to see a woman bearing her wrongs beautifully. This refrain is taken up by even the humble figures in the kitchen. Mrs. Chitling who works in Ben's house says decisively thus:

I like a man that knows a woman's place, an' I like a woman that knows it too . . . what can she have, I ax, any mo' than she's got? . . . Ain't sweetness an' virtue, an' patience an' long-suffering an' child bearin' enough for her without her impudently standin' up in the face of men an' axing for mo'? Had she rather have a vote than the respect of men,
an' ain't the respect of men

enough to fill any honest

woman's life?

(RPM 64).

Glasgow fully makes us realize that Matoaca's liberality is a sham, a typical provincial attitude. This inspired spinster who collapses under emotional strain in her march is made to look hysterically ineffectual. Though Glasgow makes Sally say that women must have larger lives that they must not be expected to feed always upon their hearts, and let love fill their lives, in her life, love is allowed to return to fill her life. It is victory to the highly adaptable, graceful and loving Sally, who loved even in adversity, who bore everything with courage and gaiety.

Glasgow's **Virginia** was a last tribute to the vanishing ideal lady of the Old South rooted in tradition, and who had sprung from the dreams of Adam and still preserved in
religion and legends. Glasgow is sympathetic towards Virginia Pendleton as she had patterned her on her mother. Virginia exemplifies the flower of Nineteenth century Southern womanhood. This lovely young lady is born to be admired and to serve her husband and children without selfishness. She is tradition-bound that she has no thought of even questioning the code of her ancestors or the edicts of the church. Having been brought up by the well-bred, long-suffering mother Lucy, Virginia conforms to the expectation of the Southern society. In fact she emulates the pathetic cheerfulness of Lucy. Moreover she is trained in the circumscribed curriculum of Miss. Priscilla Batte's school which valued deportment more than scholastic achievement. Virginia studied in a school which subscribes to the "theory that the less a girl knew about life, the better prepared she would be to contend with it . . . . Learning was to be
kept from her as rigorously as if it contained the germs of a contagious disease" (V 22). Schooled in such conservative ideology, Virginia considers herself to have been made to give and to receive love.

Virginia is pictured as a clinging, sensitive woman who shows her tender heart when she goes to the public market with her mother to shop for chicken. Her abhorrence of cruelty to animals and horror of the blood reveal her softness. This brunette beauty dazzles the eyes of Oliver Treadwell, a rebellious young playwright. Her sweetness appeals to him more than the commonsense of his cousin Susan. With the archaic roots of her inherited belief in the sanctity of marriage, she marries Oliver and vowing to surrender her will to her man from the day of her wedding until the day of her death. The consecrated doctrine of a woman's inferiority to men is transmitted to
Virginia by her mother that she implicitly follows it. Virginia in all sincerity adores Oliver and serves him. With the coming of four children in succession and one dying in infancy, Virginia devotes herself to them and to her housewifery. In seven years, her utter neglect of her person makes her look dowdy, motherly and older than the well-dressed Oliver.

As a mother she is perfect. But as a mental companion to Oliver she barely exists at all. Her goodness is a trial. Her self-sacrifice is a bore. She is simply anachronistic in the life of a man of intellect. Her domesticity irritates Oliver. Her solicitude is cloying. The bloom of passion is off the marriage and it palls on Oliver. When Virginia is nursing her child afflicted with diphtheria, Oliver joins an excursion to Atlantic City. Virginia, with her
gnarled work-worn hands, is the exact replica of her mother and the line of other Southern women before her, a participant in the immemorial pang of motherhood. Due to domestic chores, she closes the door definitively on her youth, before time that Oliver looks for stimulus elsewhere.

Virginia has offered him her whole life. She is so sweet-tempered that she does not even permit herself to be jealous of Oliver's interest in Abby Goode. Her upbringing makes her so docile that she does not show anger or hostility even when she comes to know of Oliver's affair with the actress, Margaret Old Castle. Virginia is like a moth, bound to destroy herself in the flame of love:

Had Aristotle himself risen from his grave to prove to her that blind craving
when multiplied by blind possession does not equal happiness, his logic would have been powerless before that unconquerable instinct which denied its truth. (V 3)

At thirty, Virginia feels that her life is over. Oliver takes this heroically unselfish woman for granted and lives selfishly going after success. Virginia has laid her youth down on the altar of her love while he used love to feed his egoism. When the children were small, Virginia was totally occupied with them. Her sole pleasure with Oliver consists of supplying his food and watching him eat it. Her children, having outgrown their need of her, are indifferent to their faded mother. Her daughter Lucy, the feminine charmer filled with worldly ambition tries to further her social status by marriage.
Virginia and her other daughter Jenny's bond is ruptured due to her intellectual pretensions as a "new woman". Managing their lives independently, they are cold to Virginia. Her son, the sophisticated Harry, though bored with her is sorry for her. Faced with the empty nest, the submissive Virginia feels helpless. The spirit of proud sacrifice has been bred in the bone of Virginia that she grants Oliver a divorce and willingly remains in the hell of her own doing. She tries to go back to her past by revisiting the garden of her girlhood, the scene of her youthful happiness. Being a typical Southern Woman, she sits at home and waits not for the return of her husband but for the return of her son from Oxford.

Though cruelly used, Virginia stands for morality, beauty and tradition of the South. The gracious but foolish Virginia is victimized and has been defeated but not
destroyed. Devoted to ancestral ideals of virtue and altruism, Virginia upholds these to her own detriment. The Southern civilization has nurtured in her, the will to be polite and to deny her self. The principle of sacrifice has, through heredity and training, been infused in her blood. Her vital energy has been deflected, by precept and example, into a single emotional centre. In this sacrifice, the woman is abeled by male vanity. Oliver has never considered Virginia as an individual but as an incentive or an appendage to the dominant man. He sees woman as dependent upon man for the very integrity of her being.

Glasgow ironically presents the common view that women live entirely for love while men do not. Moreover all life is for man and only a few radiant years are given to a woman. Man is never too old to love, to pursue and capture any woman he wants, while the woman
lives loyal and unhappy. Thus patriarchal culture, religion, principles of female education and Southern gentility conspire against Virginia and devours her. Glasgow comments on Virginia thus:

For Virginia was more than a woman; she was the embodiment of a forsaken ideal. Already, when I wrote of her, she was beginning to pass into legend . . . . But, in passing she still wore the spiritual radiance that invests the innocent victim of sacrifice. Her only armour was goodness, and her fate was that almost inevitable martyrdom which awaits pure selflessness in a world where self-interest
Glasgow has portrayed other Southern women like Susan Treadwell and her mother Belinda Treadwell. Susan, unlike Virginia, is endowed with much commonsense. Though the independent Susan is set as a foil to Virginia, both of them share a deep friendship. Belinda Treadwell who is querulous, slovenly and pathetic is not loved by anybody. Apart from them, this community is peopled with some spinsters. Miss. Priscilla Batte is qualified to educate young ladies not because of her spelling and information but because of her family and impeccable morals. The eternally cheerful Miss. Willy Whitlow, the village seamstress is full of gossip, though helpful. On the whole, this novel faithfully depicts the Southern women with their ideals of self-denial, service, loyalty and sacrifice.
Glasgow's novel *Vein of Iron* uses her favourite phrase and tests the resistance of this vein of iron to outward pressure and measures the exact degree of its strength. In this, Glasgow reaffirms old values and the strength of ancestry, and emphasizes identification with the Virginia Countryside. Clergy man John Fincastle's daughter Ada Fincastle from her childhood identifies herself with a mouse, a creature doomed to be trapped. She reflects on a child's game of judge and jury that she plays often, in which she is always on trial for her life. She often thinks about the suffering of the idiot boy Toby Waters at the hands of the teasing children. Her reflections are her uncanny premonitions of what will happen in her future.

At twenty Ada is engaged to Ralph Mcbride, But her anticipation of happy married life is doomed due to the domination of Ralph's
grim Calvinist mother. The weak-willed Ralph falsely accused of seducing Janet, is forced to marry her, giving up Ada and his intention of studying law. Jilted Ada feels like a hunted creature. She associates herself with a small bird seized by a hawk. Patiently she suffers. When the frivolous Janet leaves Ralph, Ada reaches for happiness and spends three days with Ralph in a mountain cabin. The resultant pregnancy and Ralph leaving for war in France make Ada return to her grandmother. Unable to inform Ralph about her situation, she bears the stony reproach of her grandmother and lives in ignominy. She has to face much more humiliation as an unwed mother. Though pelted with mud and taunted, she endures with determination and brings up her son Ranny, working as a saleswoman.

After the safe return of Ralph, misfortunes multiply. Ralph's drunkenness and
philandering add to their problems. To make matters worse, Ralph suffers a car accident. He suffers from an inferiority complex when he gets an ordinary job in a filling station and in a repair shop. Though drained of all her energy, Ada works hard and helps her family. Her life is that of a martyr. She knows that life has lost a sense of permanence, of continuing tradition. She realizes that the senseless change in the society in the name of progress can only lead to despair, strained human relationship, and loss of joy.

Too sensitive, Ralph indulges in self-pity while Ada insists that life is better than ever without love. But her gloating assertion that she as a woman is strong, while her man is weakly dependent sounds prim and quite unconvincing. Glasgow seems to emphasize that alienation is the inevitable condition of contemporary life. In this dislocated world,
one has to struggle for renewed self-definition. Scarred and grim, her protagonists denounce the moderns and seem to withdraw into a haven of inherited wisdom.

Ada's mother Mary Evelyn hailing from eastern Virginia is a delicately nurtured woman. This frail woman is destined to lead a life of deprivation and genteel poverty, married to John Fincastle. Uncomplaining, she lives with a smile which becomes a grimace of nervous exhaustion and she dies worn out. John Fincastle's unmarried sister Meggie is rightly endowed. She is industrious, religious and is moderate in everything. Ralph's mother Mrs.Mcbride is a Calvinist gone sour. Her religion brings her and her son only misery. She warps his outlook. Her greatest delight is hate. Filled with bitterness, she spreads unhappiness around her. As Rouse remarks, "she is duty degraded and religion distorted"(117).
In the female protagonists of all the novels discussed, Glasgow embodies the Victorian ideal. These novels study the Southern woman as tradition, training, and circumstances have shaped her. This woman looks to the past or to a man for her ideas, and feels, there is impropriety in a woman using her mind to think. This Southern female sees herself as different in all ways from men whom she seeks to serve but never to judge. Southern man has privileges and pleasures denied to a woman and the Southern lady accepts those differences implicitly without demur.

As an ideal lady, rooted in convention she does not examine the right or wrong of a situation, or even if she examines it, she does not voice it because she is emotional rather than rational. She is a silent sufferer who accepts unquestioningly her lot as inevitable. Her hopes and desires
thwarted, this weak-willed meek woman only wilts under pressure and goes down without putting up a brave fight against the vicissitudes of life. Even if she raises her voice, it is a feeble protest drowned in the loud noises of the circumstances. Even Ada, the woman with a vein of iron, stoically accepts life without love.

Thus this chapter is peopled with Glasgow's women who are victims, martyrs, unrealistically innocent, embittered, frustrated and disillusioned. They are blind adherents to the past, subservient souls who wasted their potentials. They are losers or traditional earth-mothers, in short puppets on a string.