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The Hero's Journey in the Novels of Caroline Gordon.

Sandra M. Lavin

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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THE HERO'S JOURNEY IN THE NOVELS OF CAROLINE GORDON

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col.

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The Hero's Journey in the Novels of Caroline Gordon

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of English

by

Sandra M. Lavin
B.S., Florida State University, 1966
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1971
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Abstract

Caroline Gordon says that her novels constitute "one story": "the life and times of the hero." Miss Gordon's novels evolve as a kind of spiritual epic, with the hero at the center appearing in several guises: as agrarian patriarch in Penhally (1931), None Shall Look Back (1937), and The Garden of Adonis (1937); as sportsman in Aleck Maury, Sportsman (1934) and frontiersman in Green Centuries (1941); as self-conscious spiritual alien in The Women on the Porch (1944), The Strange Children (1951), and The Malefactors (1956); and as man and divine being in The Glory of Hera (1972). The hero reveals his heroic stature in his combat with Death. In the early novels—in which he reflects in part the hero in American literary tradition who is known as the "Southern Gentleman"—he meets death by war, suicide, and murder. In the later novels he encounters death in his alienation from wife, friends, and creative faculties, and his story evolves into a Dantean drama of salvation. In fact, the realization of the Divine becomes the special burden and the glory of the Gordon hero. Miss Gordon focuses on the hero who is afflicted by the spiritual malaise characteristic
of modern man in his rejection of the spiritual realm of God and the social realm of men. Using Christian myth and Catholic Church history, she conceives of a modern hero who confronts his spiritual void, who becomes a paradigm of modern man experiencing the modern spiritual malaise. For Miss Gordon, Christian charity or love embodies the ultimate human awareness. Her hero must come to realize caritas. Envisioning a movement out of the modern spiritual wasteland, Miss Gordon eventually conceives a hero who knows the glory of Christianity: the possibility of redemption. He experiences the glory through a descent into the dark recesses of the soul and a subsequent total experience of humility. He grows from outer awareness to inner awareness, slowly and painstakingly coming to know that there is a larger realm, the realm of God. Seeking ultimate spiritual awareness, the Gordon hero requires the aid of the feminine consciousness. With the family circle as the center from which the hero responds to life, the feminine consciousness as heroine assumes the role of spiritual guide. Both hero and heroine, in their struggles to know themselves and recognize their failings, participate in the greater drama—the struggle to achieve the divine. The last novel of the Gordon chronicles, The Glory of Hera, is set in the twilight region of Greek myth and prefigures Christian myth.
The evolution of the Gordon hero concludes as Heracles ascends to Mount Olympus (heaven).
Chapter One
Introduction

According to Caroline Gordon, if we are to read serious fiction, we must "try to understand what the fiction writer has accomplished." If we "do this intelligently," she says, "we must not only make an effort to put ourselves in the place of the author but actually try to follow in his footsteps." The reader must participate in the creative process through the discovery of what that process is. Of her own work Miss Gordon observes, "My stories, I think, are all one story, and as yet I hardly know what the plot is." She states that "like most fiction writers, I seem to spend my life contemplating the same set of events. Each novel is what I make of these events." In this sense all of Miss Gordon's novels contribute to her "one story," which, she says, embraces "two branches of a lifelong study: the life and times of the hero":

There is only one true subject for fiction, as every folk tale or fairy tale or good novel shows us: the adventures of a hero or heroine--that is, the story of what happened to some man or woman who, through answering the call to adventure which constitutes the action of the story, comes to stand out from his or her fellows as a remarkable person.
If the person in question does not answer the call to this particular adventure he or she fails to qualify as a hero—and there is no story. The essential characteristics of the hero remain the same through the ages. Nevertheless he appears before us in myriad guises and almost every age has a favorite hero—that is, a man who in his person seems to unite and portray certain trends of that age.

Miss Gordon's hero appears in various contexts: the Southern patriarchal society, the social-psychological milieu of modern technological society, Christianity, Catholic Church history and the lives of the saints, and Greek myth.

In Miss Gordon's early fiction, the hero reflects in part the hero in American literary tradition who is known as the "Southern Gentleman." Described by Theodore Gross as a figure "who functions as a kind of social hero," the hero as Southern Gentleman derives his identity from the historical consciousness of the Southern writer. Allen Tate has said, "The use of history as the source or matrix of typical actions is not unlike the 'history' floating in the background of Oedipus Rex and Oedipus at Colonus. The action takes shape out of a vast and turbulent cloud of events...." He adds, "The 'legend' of the South, like the immense praxis of the legend of Oedipus, was there for writers of genius to reduce to a great variety of forms: Faulkner, Porter, Gordon, Young, Warren, and Lytle, all began with the legend, in varying degrees of awareness of it, for it was the given thing to which there was no alternative." What Andrew Lytle
has said about the South and the mythmaking process is more specifically applicable to Miss Gordon's conception of the hero:

Now the South was a mixed society, and it was a defeated society; and the defeated are self-conscious. They hold to the traditional ways, since these ways not only tell them what they are but tell them with a fresh sense of themselves. Only defeat can do this. It is this very self-consciousness which makes for the sharpened contemplation of self. It is comparable to euphoria. The sudden illumination made life fuller and keener, as it made life tragic. But it stopped action. The very heightening of self-awareness made for a sudden withdrawal of the life force.6

The source of her intense, lifelong concern with the heroic, Miss Gordon has said, lies in her own deep self-consciousness of the Southern historic consciousness:

I might as well say here that all the members of my family seem to me to have been cast in heroic mold. If I felt otherwise, I don't suppose I'd be interested in telling, as best I can, the story of their lives, which, of course, is also the story of my own life.

They had to be heroic. Everybody of whom I shall speak at any length in this chronicle led a life in which he was pitted against odds so desperate that only the continual exercise of heroic virtue could have sustained him. I, myself, cannot remember a time when I was not aware that life was a desperate affair, at best, and lying awake at night or early in the morning, I used to ponder how it came to be the way it indubitably was. As I recall, I came to the conclusion when I was around four years of age that the world had been created as a plaything by a group of men, who, tired of sporting with it, had gone on to other pleasures, leaving it to roll on the way it would. Such, at least, was my infantile version of the primitive theology... under the name of Deism... to which, under other names, members of my family, as far back as there are records of their doings, have adhered. Or, at least, such was my nocturnal version of that theology. By day I subscribed to the notion commonly accepted in
my part of the country that we lived the way we lived and suffered certain deprivations as the immediate result of a general catastrophe—the Civil War, or, as we called it, "the war." Things would have been different if we had "won the war." We had not won and they were as they were. An unfortunate state of affairs but one which would not be mended by complaints. I think that is of great advantage to a child to be brought up by people who have this attitude towards life. The examples of history are salutary, if grim. In this world the right does not always triumph. It is dangerous to expect that it will. The consciousness that one belongs to an "oppressed minority" stiffens the moral fibers against the strains to which they will be subjected later on. As a child, I felt that the fact that the South had lost the Civil War was a calamity for the South. When I attained my majority and began to read history for myself, I came to the conclusion that it was a calamity for the whole world.  

Like their creator, Miss Gordon's representations of the hero know defeat, and their actions and inactions are influenced by this knowledge. Through her versions of the hero, Miss Gordon extends her awareness of existence beyond the confines of the Southern experience to an acute awareness of the fallen state of modern man. The awareness begins with a focus upon the hero who is afflicted by the spiritual malaise characteristic of modern man. He is modern in the sense in which Hannah Arendt defines the modern man: one who has defied God and the heavenly realm of the Father of man and has turned away from the earth and the realm of all living creatures. Proud in his conception of self as creator, modern man creates, in Miss Arendt's words, test-tube life, artificial life. He fails to perform the one action that Jesus
taught: goodness in word and deed. He fails to create life based upon the goodness, which is charity or love of humanity. The public illustration of this goodness, Miss Arendt says, is charity.\textsuperscript{9}

After her conversion to Catholicism in 1947, Miss Gordon focuses upon man's rejection of the spiritual world and failure to be charitable. Using Christian myth and Catholic Church history, she conceives of a modern hero who confronts his spiritual void, who becomes a paradigm of modern man experiencing the modern spiritual malaise. For Miss Gordon, Christian charity or love embodies the ultimate human awareness. This awareness or caritas the Gordon hero must come to realize. He must follow the single social commandment of Christ cited by Paul: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Rom. 13:8-10). Envisioning a movement out of the modern spiritual wasteland, Miss Gordon eventually in her stories conceives a hero who knows the glory of Christianity. The glory is Christianity's offer of redemption. Her hero experiences the glorious possibility of redemption through a descent into the dark recesses of the soul and a subsequent total experience of humility. Having had this experience, he undergoes the lifelong process of growth and maturation Jung describes as "individuation."\textsuperscript{10}

The Gordon hero grows from outer awareness to inner awareness; he slowly and painstakingly comes to know that there is a larger realm, the realm of God.\textsuperscript{11}
Seeking ultimate spiritual awareness, the Gordon hero requires the aid of both the feminine and masculine consciousnesses. For Miss Gordon the essential drama of life lies in the varied interaction between a man and a woman. The family circle provides the center from which the hero responds to life. The novelist explains:

The primary aim of the fiction writer is to make his readers feel what a contemporary critic has called "primitive astonishments," and I do not know where the fiction maker is to find these astonishments if not in the family circle—that microcosm which, coming into being through the union, as it were, of two alien worlds, the masculine and feminine consciousness, constitutes an inexhaustible reservoir of drama, since it reflects the agonies and blisses resultant on the union of two lovers and the rebellions of sons and daughters against their fathers and mothers and the yearnings of fathers and mothers over their children in an innumerable variety of complications. The playwright novelist who neglects the drama inherent in these emotional complications does so at his own peril. In fiction, as in real life, people are known by the company they keep: that is, are defined by their relations to other people.

Each of Caroline Gordon's novels presents the dramatic conflict between the masculine and the feminine consciousness. At the center of the families—of the myriad connections of Allards, Llewellyns, Fayerlees, Merriwethers, and Maurys—are the masculine and feminine consciousnesses, or the eternal conflict between the masculine and the feminine. Within the family circle the feminine consciousness as heroine assumes the role of spiritual guide. Outside the family circle the feminine consciousness as siren assumes the role of temptress.
The Gordon hero's task is to recognize the spiritual. As he struggles to affirm self and meaning in life, the heroine enhances the struggle by focusing upon the quality of the struggle. The inner conflict becomes paramount as the drama comes to reflect with increasing intensity, in the words of Tate, the "indispensable lesson that the art of fiction begins with inner conflict." Quality of life becomes the hero's concern and quest. That quality is realized, if briefly, only through the guidance of the feminine. Heroism, described by Cedric Whitman as "the search for the dignity and meaning of the self," the essence of which is the embodiment of "that mysterious union of divine and human," can be achieved only with feminine guidance. From the Christian perspective of the novels, the physical labor of the masculine is enhanced by the *caritas* exemplified by the feminine. Both hero and heroine, in their struggles to know themselves and recognize their failings, in their conscious despair, participate in the greater drama—the struggle to achieve the divine. They enact the roles of "the first models," the archetypes, as they attempt to establish their integrity as individuals living in a given time and place. In the last novel of the Gordon chronicles, *The Glory of Hera*, set in the twilight region of Greek myth and prefiguring Christian myth, the hero is "first model." His evolution is complete as he enters the realm of the divine.
Prior to his ascension, however, the hero continues to reveal his heroism through concrete interaction with concretely rendered men and women, gods and goddesses. The individual, not mankind in abstraction, is always Miss Gordon's concern.

Viewed as a single story, Miss Gordon's novels appear to evolve as a kind of spiritual epic with the hero at the center appearing in several guises and becoming ever more complex as the epic unfolds. Miss Gordon's vehicle for revelation of character and, ultimately, for the attainment of the heroic, is the hero's "combat with Death." The novelist explains the combat:

A hero--any hero--spends his life in combat with the common, the only enemy, Death. When a man is faced with death, energies which he was not aware he possessed are rallied in the effort to preserve the life which, until that instant, may not have seemed as precious as it truly is. War, which, now under one disguise, now another, pits man against his arch enemy, Death, has always provided a favorable climate for the growth of the hero, as well as for the study of his ways and deeds. The novelist, like the soldier, is committed by his profession to a lifelong study of wars and warriors.

. . . the heroes may be compelled by Powers some of us cannot even name to go on fighting until they are accorded immemorial rights.

. . . the one record which the hero in every age has prized more than any land or gear or gold he may come by as the result of his feats of prowess [is] recognition of the fact that he has proved himself a hero in the only way in which a man can prove himself a hero. In combat.16

In the early novels, those written before Miss Gordon's conversion to Catholicism, the hero encounters death primarily in physical ways. War, suicide, and murder claim
lives in *Penhally* (1931); war dominates in the Civil War epic *None Shall Look Back* (1937); actual murder and murder by bankruptcy destroy lives in *The Garden of Adonis* (1937). Accidents, illness, and weakening faculties that circumscribe the hero's sporting activities take their toll in *Aleck Maury, Sportsman* (1934); Indian wars and family disasters occur in *Green Centuries* (1941). In the novels the inward passage begins in the physical and literal senses, the hero performing according to the "heroic principle" as defined by Dorothy Norman. He is the "great creative life-force" whose task is "to function in constantly dynamic, positive accord with past, present, future; to live in terms of and preserve what is life-enhancing; to discard and dismantle what is not." The hero comes to embrace death rather than life. In the face of disintegrating society, the integrated individual, the agrarian patriarchal figure striving to impose order upon chaos, chooses death over chaos. With *The Women on the Porch* (1944), Miss Gordon shifts her perspective on death from the predominantly physical and literal to the spiritual. Spiritual death comes in the hero's alienation from his wife and his creative faculties. Estranged from his wife and envisioning himself in a wasteland, the Gordon hero comes to recognize in himself a spiritual void or wasteland.

In the novels written after Miss Gordon's conversion,
the hero clearly reflects two mythologies, the classical and the Christian. He comes to express the truth of myth through his actions. He follows the journey which Mircea Eliade describes—a journey through suffering and death to new life, after which the hero either embraces Death or transcends it.18 Miss Gordon's story evolves into a Dantean drama of salvation. Unlike the modern hero as described by Andrew Lytle—"the modern hero follows mythi­cal truth even if theological heresy, for he, the hero, must forever repeat his sacrifice"19—Miss Gordon's hero seeks atonement in the Christian tradition. As Joseph Henderson points out, the Christian story is closed; it differs from classical myth with its cyclical pattern, in which the hero, figuratively and/or literally, continually dies and is reborn.20 There is no eternal return in Christian myth. In the Christian mythology a final act is reached, Judgment. Beginning his journey in despair, the hero links hands with another seeker who also comes to a spiritual crisis in the middle of life: "In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost." Miss Gordon's concern in her depiction of the hero as spiritual alien is his Dantesque development as he seeks his way through the dark wood to self-discovery and divine revelation. In The Strange Children (1951), the hero probes the spiritual condition of himself and those
around him; and in *The Malefactors* (1956) he confronts the depths of his spiritual condition and begins his ascent toward a reconciliation with himself, with others, and with God. Now a self-conscious spiritual alien, the Gordon hero consciously seeks the guidance of the feminine consciousness that he has so long avoided. With the final work, *The Glory of Hera* (1972), the spiritual motive of the hero becomes manifestly clear. Half mortal, half god, in combat with his mortal, profane nature and striving for the divine and immortal, he seeks the Redemption revealed by Christianity. Finally, the hero attains Joy.

With *The Glory of Hera* Miss Gordon, through her hero, affirms her position among those writers who attempt to "find expression for something which has never yet been mastered." Although his philosophy of letters and the literary life is not Christian, Edmund Wilson may be said to describe the spiritual ambience of a writer like Caroline Gordon when he says:

The experience of mankind on earth is always changing as man develops and has to deal with new combinations of elements; and the writer who is to be anything more than an echo of his predecessors must always find expression for something which has never yet been mastered. With each such victory of the human intellect, whether in history, in philosophy, or in poetry, we experience a deep satisfaction: we have been cured of some ache or disorder, relieved of some oppressive burden of uncomprehended events. This relief that brings the sense of power, and, with the sense of power, joy, is the positive emotion which tells us that we have encountered a first-rate piece of literature.21
The joy reflected in Miss Gordon's final vision of the hero, however, goes beyond that taken in her craft. Stemming from the religious vision of the novelist, it is the Joy inherent in Christian belief. The realization of the Divine becomes the special burden and the glory of her hero.

To trace the hero's development in Caroline Gordon's fiction, we will view him as he appears in his several guises in the novels (taken in chronological order except for Aleck Maury). Chapter Two will discuss the hero as agrarian patriarch as portrayed in Penhally, None Shall Look Back, and The Garden of Adonis. Chapter Three will discuss the hero as sportsman and as frontiersman as portrayed in Aleck Maury, Sportsman and Green Centuries. Chapter Four will discuss the hero as self-conscious spiritual alien as portrayed in The Women on the Porch, The Strange Children, and The Malefactors. Chapter Five, focusing upon The Glory of Hera, will present Caroline Gordon's comprehensive vision of the hero as man and as divine being.
Notes


3 Gordon, How to Read a Novel, p. 171.


5 Allen Tate, Intro., The Hero With the Private Parts by Andrew Lytle (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), pp. xiv, xvi.


9 Miss Arendt's stress in the passage is on the "worldlessness inherent in good work" (p. 76); the good figure is a religious figure and a lonely figure.


12 Gordon, How to Read a Novel, p. 207.


15 Caroline Gordon, Keynote Address, SCMLA Convention, Dallas, Texas, 29 Oct. 1976. Miss Gordon used the expression in her response to the question, "Why do you teach mythology?"


19 Lytle, p. 190.


Chapter Two

The Dispossessed Patriarch

The hero of the early novels of Caroline Gordon is a man who, in Allen Tate's words, has "achieved a unity between his moral nature and his livelihood," and who finds that unity in jeopardy. Miss Gordon begins her depiction of the crisis of the spirit of modern man through her hero as he loses the traditionalist relationship with the land, symbol and source of his unity, and, consequently, his identity with it. In Penhally (1931), None Shall Look Back (1937), and The Garden of Adonis (1937), she presents the successive stages of the hero's dispossession from the land, dramatizing the hero's struggle to retain the land and the ramifications of the loss of the land beyond the immediate story and regional circumstances. In Penhally Miss Gordon provides an overview of the hero's dispossession from pre-Civil War days through the early twentieth century. In None Shall Look Back she elaborates upon the first two sections of Penhally by focusing solely upon the Civil War years, employing myth in the Homeric model of the soldier. In The Garden of Adonis she elaborates upon the third section of Penhally by focusing
upon the thirties era and economic factors in a man's displacement.

Miss Gordon's early hero is represented by the hero-patriarchs, Nicholas Llewellyn (Penhally), Fontaine Allard (None Shall Look Back), and Ben Allard (The Garden of Adonis), and by their descendants John and Chance Llewellyn (Penhally), and Rives Allard (None Shall Look Back). For them, all of a man's being--name, family, livelihood, ethics, morality--comes from the land and the ancestral home, both equally sacred. Although land and home are legal possessions, they are not regarded by their owners as property but as trusts placed in their care. Thomas Jefferson may have voided primogeniture, but in Miss Gordon's Southern patriarchal society it still pertains. Thus the reflection of Nicholas Llewellyn in Penhally:

"My house. . . . He had never, upon his word, thought of it as his house before this day. But he was his father's eldest son. The house was his, and the land, the original six thousand acres and the Robbins tract which his father had bought just before he died."

In each novel a feminine figure shares the hero's concern for the land. Through her heroines--Lucy, John's wife, Emily, Chance's fiancée (Penhally), and Lucy, Rive's wife (None Shall Look Back)--Miss Gordon reveals the inner spirit of the hero. Foil to the heroine is the woman who seeks only self-gratification at the expense of others
and at the rejection of tradition and family. The two figures, heroine and foil, illuminate Miss Gordon's double perspective: her regard for the traditionalist past and the patriarchal family, her anticipation of modern rootless society.

*Penhally*, the first of Miss Gordon's novels, introduces the family group that appears in each of seven succeeding novels and establishes the author's concern for the hero and the heroic. The dominant family is the Llewellyn-Merriwether connection, with its collateral lines, the Crenfews and Allards. Divided into three parts, *Penhally* consists of three stories, each one dramatizing a man's relationship to his home, each one revealing the heroic stature of a man.

The first story, covering the years 1826-1866, is that of Nicholas Llewellyn, proud owner of Penhally. Ironically, Nicholas, in a fit of anger, initiates the loss of the ancestral home. He disowns his brother Ralph, who decides to build a separate home for his family, and wills Penhally to John Llewellyn, a young distant cousin. John, in turn, must pass the land on to his eldest son. John's story, the middle section of the novel, relates the deterioration of Penhally. Beginning in 1900 but going back in time to cover the South's decline through the Civil War and especially during Reconstruction, the story progresses, in Ford Madox Ford's words, "forward
in action and back in memory." The third story is that of Chance, John's grandson. The brief account moves forward in time, every action leading to the sale of Penhally and the violent dissolution of the family. Throughout, the land dominates the consciousness of the major characters.

In the first story we immediately learn through Nicholas Llewellyn of the multiple significance of a particular plot of ground: "Passing the big sugar tree he tapped it smartly with his cane. It must be rotten at the heart by this time, though it did not sound hollow. It had been an old tree when little Sister Georgina--dead twenty years ago in August, 1807--no, 1808--made her doll's playhouse between its roots . . ." (p. 1).

The trees surrounding Penhally give it an almost primordial aura: "Too many trees, all around the house. There had been from the time it was first built on its lawn in among the virgin forest trees." The sense of tradition associated with trees is maintained in the face of forces representing disruption and dissolution. Nicholas thinks of his brother Ralph, a cause of change within the family structure, who maintains a sense of tradition: "Even Brother Ralph--who had broken up the family with his new-fangled ideas, building for his bride a house of red brick, the doors and windows painted white--even Brother Ralph had built his house on a lawn with around it,
already growing, twenty-three oaks, not one with a trunk smaller than a man's body, . . . " (p. 2). By planting oaks, symbols of solidarity and continuity, Ralph continues a family tradition. He, too, carries part of the past into the present. But Nicholas has the strong desire to preserve the land intact: "His father had come out here and bought land in order to maintain them [the family] as they had maintained themselves in the old days in Virginia. He intended to hang on to it as long as he lived, and when he died he'd see to it that it wasn't parcelled out in hundred-acre tracts among Ralph's children and grandchildren. Land was no good to anybody that way. You might as well give it to the first beggar who came along the road" (p. 27).

However, time and circumstances heighten a basic condition of all life—change—and complicate the attitudes and feelings of the men associated with Penhally. Ralph modifies his traditionalism when he becomes politically conscious at the time of the Civil War and sacrifices his possessions for the Southern cause, equipping military companies with arms and gear and furnishing "a horse to any man who could not mount himself." His sacrifices are totally unacceptable to his brother Nicholas who believes that Ralph will "beggar himself . . . one way or another" before he dies. Nobody need think "he, Nicholas Llewellyn, would make a fool of himself in the same way" (p. 90).
The problem inherent in the brothers' positions on the war does not have a solution. Miss Gordon gives us the dilemma of history. Life does not remain static, for outside forces enter, forces that even if initiated by men grow beyond the control of men. In the Civil War both Ralph and Nicholas are fated to lose. Indeed, history yields a tragic irony for Nicholas. The right of primogeniture that he upholds ultimately brings Penhally into the possession of a descendant who sees it only as a commodity. What Ralph loses through war, Nicholas loses through dogmatic adherence to a tradition. The very people he sees as responsible for the upheaval of the traditional way of life—"Irresponsible, these new-fangled politicians, landless men, with nothing to lose and everything to win" (p. 94)—are the ones who will most benefit from his actions. The formerly landless become the corporate owners who value land in dollars not family. In effect, a "secularization" of the land occurs; man acts, in the words of Hans Küng, as a "free agent" without concern for the past and for the "spheres of human life."5

In the second story in Penhally the Civil War dominates the lives of the characters and determines the immediate fate of Penhally and its people. Nicholas continues to control the lives of those connected with Penhally, but he cannot control the personal and physical
outcomes of the war. He prevents John from marrying Alice Blair, a Virginia relative, when he says, "I haven't got anything against her personally... It's her blood... I don't want my property to go to any of her blood..." (p. 181). (But Alice Blair's son, Douglas Parrish, eventually will own Penhally, as part three of the novel reveals.) John marries Lucy Llewellyn, Ralph's daughter, who comes to believe that John does not "desire" her. Mistaking his weariness from the war for his seeming lack of desire, Lucy turns from John, and the two lead a life devoid of love. At the end of his story, John, reflecting upon his marriage and his son's death, sees "his own personal misfortunes monstrously shadowed in those of the nation. It had been a time of debauchery and carnival. He had followed in the newspapers the trial of a president of the United States for treason..." (p. 196). Deprived of a close family relationship, and even of his civil rights for having been a Confederate soldier, John Llewellyn is a man wearied by personal misfortunes. Having endured all defeats, he faces the ultimate personal misfortune in his realization that his son's death was a suicide. John's role throughout is to endure. The implication is that the hero defeated in love and in war is to endure. Miss Gordon provides no alternative for her hero.

In *None Shall Look Back* Miss Gordon continues the
dramatization of the relationship between a man and the land and of the plight of men in war. Limiting her story in time to cover the years of the Civil War, she intensifies the struggle of the hero to retain his home and, thereby, his identity.

Divided into four parts, *None Shall Look Back* recounts the fate of the Allard family. Part One opens with the festive gathering of Allards--immediate family, to remote kin--and friends at Bracketts, the ancestral home. The focus is upon youth, particularly the two principal figures, Lucy Churchill, orphan granddaughter to Fonatine Allard, patriarch, and Rives Allard, Georgia cousin to the Kentucky Allards. The approaching war generates romantic excitement among the young, but the possible tragic consequences of war are forecast at the conclusion of Part One with Lucy's sobering realization about life: "What a precarious business life--and particularly love--is and how impalpable the forces which make success or disaster." Like John Llewellyn and his kin, Lucy and the Allards, microcosm of the South--its people and history, are to realize that unhappiness in defeat may be the only way of life, at least for them. Part Two begins in the year 1862 in the midst of war. Rives, now a less youthful, more experienced man, is a scout under General Forrest. Lucy and Rives marry; Bracketts burns at the hands of pillaging Yankee soldiers;
Fontaine Allard suffers a stroke during the invasion of his home; and Lucy and Rives travel to Georgia to meet his family. The section concludes with Rives and Lucy planning a home that is never to become a reality. The third part of the novel, the most intense, recounts the cumulative tragedies of war. Death follows upon death, and the final scene depicts the dissolution of a family and a way of life. Mrs. Allard, daughter Cally, and wounded son Ned return to Bracketts. Ned, explaining the reason for the return to the land that remains, reveals the intense feelings of the defeated for their homeland: "'I reckon the land's still there,' he said. 'The Yankees couldn't burn that and they ain't strong enough to cart it off'" (p. 337). Jim Allard, crippled son who could not go to war, his wife Belle, a merchant's daughter, and Love, frivolous orphan granddaughter, remain in town. The two ways of life the characters pursue—the agrarian and the mercantile—intensify the division within families and reflect the divided society that is to come in the war's aftermath. Part Four of None Shall Look Back is concentrated in action and in time and limited in characters. The focus is upon Rives and Forrest, with a brief look at Rives and Lucy's last moments together before he joins his regiment. Rives is killed, and, in the last chapter, the focus shifts to Lucy. Now embodiment of home and family, Lucy receives
word of Rives' death and knows that her life is shattered. She looks out upon the land and senses the loss of an entire society, of the dispossession of a society. Both the land and the people who lived on it have been destroyed. But the land remains central in the lives of the characters even in its destruction.

The focal image that embodies all aspects of the heroic in *None Shall Look Back* is the war hero as exemplified by General Nathan Bedford Forrest. In Forrest Miss Gordon not only sees the South's commitment to the ideal of a traditional society--its devotion to the gentleman's code of honor and conduct--but also the evil of this. General Forrest is the patriarchal planter as soldier-hero, daring and skillful. He is in the literary tradition of the Homeric hero, an Ajax who, as Cedric Whitman describes Ajax, is presented "primarily as a hero among heroes, a fighter shoulder to shoulder with friends, mighty yet modest."¹ Forrest is also a businessman of his era, a slave trader. In her depiction of him, Miss Gordon concentrates the ambiguities of the Southern self-consciousness.²

The General first appears in *None Shall Look Back* as Colonel Forrest in a scene in which he holds a brief clandestine meeting with some young college men, including Rives. Rives Allard, age nineteen, hearing the persuasive Forrest, thinks:
No, it was not a question of slavery--his own family, for instance, did not think it right to own slaves--and he did not understand all this business about the tariff. He thought with a kind of obstinateness that he had that it was really just as that Colonel Forrest said. Our country had been invaded--it did not matter on what grounds the invaders had come. . . . the country had been invaded. Men were wanted for her defense. He was glad to go. (p. 25)

Colonel Forrest is not only a striking, powerful figure to a young soldier like Rives. He commands the attention and awe of his superiors. Miss Gordon's portrayal of his first appearance in battle underscores the force of the man:

The cavalrymen came on, yelling and brandishing their sabers. The leader who was a good hundred yards in advance of his men, halted on the very hillock which the Federal general had just vacated. As if realizing that this was a vantage point to be held, he pulled his horse up and sat for a moment breathing hard and looking about. This black-haired man in the prime of life seemed to be in a very ecstasy of fury. His whole face was deeply flushed and the veins in his temples were so swollen with blood that they seemed about to burst. His eyes, grayish-blue, large, ranged restlessly back and forth in his head. Sitting on his trembling horse there on the hill he looked like a wild beast suddenly balked of its prey.

At that moment he [General Pillow] caught sight of the discontented colonel of cavalry galloping toward the center. General Pillow rode out to meet him. As he approached he saw blood dripping from the saddle skirts and at the same time caught sight of the cavalryman's sleeve which was half torn away. "Wounded, Colonel?" he asked in concern.

The Colonel shook his head. "Horse got hit but he's all right. Still going, anyhow." And he fixed his stern gray eyes impatiently on the leader.

Forrest's horse had been shot out from under him. A shell crashing through the horse's body just behind the rider's leg had torn the already wounded animal to pieces. The rider, disentangling himself,
went forward on foot. He was splashed with blood and his overcoat had fifteen bullet holes in it, but he was uninjured. Placing his hand on one of the bloody gun carriages he threw back his head and yelled with triumph. His men yelling too gave him back his own name: "Forrest! Forrest!" Then still hysterical with joy they ran about over the field, gathering up the arms of the enemy's dead and wounded. (pp. 99-103)

Miss Gordon provides another perspective on the patriarchal-soldier figure in Rives Allard. In the relationship between Forrest and Rives, she depicts the character of the war hero: one who both leads and follows and adheres to a soldier's code of endurance and bravery. By not succumbing to heroic pretensions, Rives and Forrest further enhance the heroic image.

When the story opens, Rives is one of the young cavaliers, albeit a very shy one. As in the case of Forrest, his character emerges as the war progresses. Maturing under the stress of battle, Rives becomes a patriarchal warrior in his own right. Like Forrest, he manifests the traits of the Homeric hero through his *aidos*—his "responsibility to others," his motivation through his sense of duty, and his daring. In his role as scout who crosses enemy lines, he earns the respect of the soldiers. He is in the tradition of a Patroclus who recognizes the plight of his men and desires to help but who "loses all sense of human limit" on the field, and of an Achilles who becomes "death-devoted." The specter of death, which haunts both Forrest and
Rives, permeates Miss Gordon's vision at the story's end. Lucy looks upon Rives' face and sees death: "The light coming in at the window illuminated his features: the high, aquiline nose, the eyes set in their deep hollows, the stern mouth. In the moonlight they were like marble. The kind of face that might be carved on a tomb" (p. 357). From the death of Jeffrey Forrest until their own ends, Rives and the General wear the signs of death evident to all but themselves. Rives' reaction to a soldier's criticism of Forrest--"Be killed. That's what he wants. Be killed"--is, "He's got the right, . . . Every man. Got the right. To get killed" (p. 319). In the final battle scene, Rives' "death-devotion" almost parallels that of the archetypal Homeric hero. When the soldiers break lines and flee before the Union forces, Rives grabs the flag from the color bearer and rides to the front. Mortally wounded, he falls to the ground, still clutching the flag. Forrest then takes up the flag and assumes the symbolic role of hero-warrior whose destiny is death: "Death. It had been with him, beside him all the time and he had not known. . . . But they had all known. Hood, Bragg, Buckner, Floyd, His Excellency. . . . Those men who weighed and considered, looked to this side, to that. They had whispered their constrained 'No's' not to him but to that dog, Death. They had seen Death there at his heels, at Chickamauga, at the Cross Roads, at Franklin, even at Donelson . . ." (p. 375).
Protecting his home, Rives accepts death and even the destruction of his home. Some cannot make such acceptances. Fontaine Allard suffers a stroke as he witnesses pillaging Yankee soldiers destroy his home:

They had stopped bringing things out and all stood watching the burning house. The smoke rolled low so that sometimes they saw nothing, and then licked by the wind a great flame would rise and tower. Mrs. Allard saw one, a fiery mass that seemed to have fingers to tear the house apart. She watched the dividing walls melt away and suddenly saw glowing logs, a cabin, it seemed, burning inside the house. She touched Cally's arm. "The old house," she said quietly, "the original old log house. See it burn."

Cally did not answer. She was looking at her father. One of the men had taken hold of a marble-topped table and was dragging it farther away from the heat. Fontaine Allard saw him and went forward. He had picked up one end of the table when he turned a bewildered face, said something indistinct that sounded like "My child," then fell face downward. His wife heard his head strike the marble slab and ran toward him. (p. 159)

But Rives, although almost overwhelmed by the devastation of human lives in war, endures it—even the realities of an improvised hospital:

He mounted the steps. There was, surprisingly, nobody in the hall, but a half-open door on the right revealed rows of cots arranged hospital wise. There was the smell of blood and purulent matter in the room, a gabbling of high voices.

Rives stepped up into the room, went down the runway. Bandaged legs. Heads. Closed eyes. One man whose face was a welter of dirt and blood put out a hand, maliciously, it seemed, to stay his progress.

The man threshing about on the bed, moaning, had an enormous arm, swollen darkly red and blistered, where it was not hidden by scraps of filthy bandage. The odor from it was living evil. It crouched above the bed on angry feet, made forays into the room.
Rives thought: Nothing like it on the battle field. He stepped back. (pp. 270-271)

As the men meet their deaths in defense of their homeland in *None Shall Look Back*, the wives and mothers experience more than the soldiers the inner reality of Mr. Allard's simple description of war: It "is a terrible thing." As Nicholas Llewellyn notes, they, the women, are "the first to feel it if the roofs of the old places [fall] about their heads" (p. 7). As they begin the reconstruction of family patterns, the women are conscious of living not only in a defeated but a changed land. In their consciousness, they strive against a dispossession that is inevitably going to be the fate of the Southern family.

The wives and mothers realize, moreover, that the fate of their way of life has its internal as well as its outside sources. Speaking before the end of the Civil War about her niece's announcement of marriage to a southern merchant, Cally, Fontaine Allard's eldest daughter, says:

"He [the merchant] didn't go to war. That tells the tale." She bent a sombre gaze on the girl. "There's just two kind of people in the world, those that'll fight for what they think right and those that don't think anything is worth fighting for. Old Man Bradley don't care about anything but making money. And he's got all his money in United States bonds in a Cincinnati bank. The talk is he's traded in contraband cotton and I don't doubt it. . . ." She got to her feet, looking old and tired. "They say we're losing the war. I reckon if we do people like him'll rule this country. You may be glad, Miss, that you married a Bradley. . . ." (p. 340)
In the last scene of the story, Lucy, having learned of Rives' death and preparing to return to Bracketts, conveys the sense of alienation that comes with the dispossession of a people. She looks out upon the Georgia scene and envisions the changed Kentucky land: "The sun dropped behind the pines. She watched the light go from the sky and knew that when she saw the green fields of Kentucky again they would be as alien as the gullied, pine-clad slopes outside the window" (p. 378). A "new South" is emerging, one dominated by those who "didn't go to war," those of the mercantile trades.

Chance (Penhally) and Ben Allard (The Garden of Adonis) represent the last of Miss Gordon's Southern patriarchal heroes whose identities stem directly from land ownership. They become the dispossessed. The precipitating factors in their dispossession are historic and economic: the law of primogeniture and the rise of agri-business. Moving toward her portrayal of the spiritually alienated modern hero, Miss Gordon employs myth in The Garden of Adonis not as Homeric model for her hero—the warrior figure—but as enveloping mood and pattern. The ancient rites of tending the land and honoring the gods are presented as corrupted by modern circumstances. That is, the modern gods to be honored—bank notes and rich, insensitive proprietors—are indifferent to the workers and to the land. In her portrayal of
Chance and Ben, men living in the twentieth century, Miss Gordon envisions death for those who retain the last vestiges of the patriarchal society and its values. Both the hero and the land are destroyed.

Chance Llewellyn, last of Nicholas's descendants to occupy Penhally, is the keeper of the rite, the tiller of the soil, who witnesses and embodies the total loss of the ancestral home. Through his elder brother Nick and Nick's wife and acquaintances, Chance encounters the ennui and sheer recklessness of a life based upon money. He naively believes that he can remain distant from the moneyed society. But the New South overwhelms him, and he is destroyed.

A sign of corrupting change is in the attitude toward the Negro expressed by the new Southern society. Once an integral part of the family, the Negroes are now regarded by people like Nick's wife Phyllis as "machines." They are all right as long as they work smoothly, but Phyllis has "no use for them when they break down" (p. 212). Phyllis regards ordinary people of all kinds as machines that must function for the good of a greater machine—that amorphous ever-illusive "Society" of the tabloids, Congressional Record, and sociological studies—and for the good of the comforts of others. The sterility lies in the death-dealing rather than life-giving actions of the actors and, on a larger scale, of the business world.
Miss Gordon depicts further change through the businessman's attitude toward land. Land has value according to the standard of profit or efficient use. Chance illuminates the point as he reflects upon his business arrangement with his brother, a banker:

He was thinking that he would be better off if Nick did not insist on carrying his confounded business methods into farming. He had wanted to farm Penhally on shares, giving Nick as owner of the land one-third of whatever he made. But Nick wanted things on a business basis, so they were a firm: Llewellyn & Llewellyn. It had been a piece of generosity on Nick's part, or at least Nick had been influenced by generous motives, when he made the suggestion. But he had been losing money for three, four years now. . . . (p. 217)

Miss Gordon underscores her illustration of a changing society in the attitude of the absentee owner toward the land. The attitude is totally incomprehensible to Chance who tells himself that "he would not live as Nick lived for any amount of money. The fellow couldn't even get out on Sunday to look over his own land!" (p. 219). Nick's loss of identity with the land underlies his decision to sell the Llewellyn ancestral home. The buyers are Mr. and Mrs. Parrish. Son of Alice Blair and, therefore, possessing a remote family connection with the place, he is a history buff who finds Penhally an object of curiosity, a kind of museum piece. She, a wealthy northern woman, sees Penhally and the surrounding acreage as ideal for a hunting retreat. For the local populace, foxhunting is a foreign sport, but they are intrigued by the novelty
and the display of money that comes with it. Chance says:
"Nick, though he talked non-committally, was in reality
swept off his feet by her magnificent plans. The big
thing about it, he said, would be the contacts. . . .
Contacts with Eastern capital was what he meant. He sup­
posed that was the way business--big business--was done.
In club rooms, on golf courses. . . . Then, of course,
there was the money . . ." (p. 267). Chance suddenly
realizes the total futility of any protest he may make
against money:

A hundred thousand dollars sounded like a lot of
money. Nick said that they could never hope to have
such an offer again, even if land doubled its pres­
ent value. He supposed not. And if Nick was ever
going to sell, this was the time. It was strange,
but it had never occurred to him--until this came
up--that Nick would ever consider selling the farm!
He had never even thought of such a possibility un­
til that day, when, looking from one to the other
of their flushed faces he had known that this woman
would sooner or later have the land . . . to do what
she pleased with. . . . (p. 268)

Mrs. Parrish, wealthy, seeker of things with which
to amuse herself, wins the land and, in a sense, some of
its people. She destroys others. Chance sees her as
capable of destroying life: "The gigantic woman's hand
might have been swinging out to uproot the big sugar tree,
or demolish that whole row of ragged cedars . . ." (p. 256).
Perhaps Chance's perception of her is exaggerated, but
Mrs. Parrish is a destructive force. In her indifference
to the disruption of lives caused by her whim for a new
playground, she stands in total contrast to the one positive feminine figure in the story, Emily.

Emily, who, as Chance's wife, would assume the care of Penhally, views Penhally as family history and trust. Rather than change any of it or alter the lives of those who live there, she would make the needed adjustments: "She would just have to live there, stepping around the old lady the way he and Cousin Ellen and Cousin Cave did. Emily had laughed at him. She loathed housekeeping, she said. She could not see why they wouldn't all get along beautifully. She was going to read Greek in the mornings with Cousin Cave, and in the afternoon she would ride over the place with Chance. She would even play euchre in the evenings with the old ladies if they wanted her to . . ." (p. 235). Emily's sensitivity to people and to distinct established ways of life extends to the Negro. In sharp contrast to both Phyllis and Mrs. Parrish, Emily responds to the displacement of the Negroes who had been given a "good price for their property" and the subsequent despair: "... she had been all week trying to comfort their washerwoman, Keziah. Keziah, a woman of fifty, had foolishly given her son a deed to her cabin and two acres. He had sold the place over her head. She had had to go to live in a house on Baseball Hill, but she sat in the Kinloch kitchen for two or three hours every day, talking about a peach tree that she had had in her backyard--a
'stump of the world.' It had been for years the wonder of all Vinegar Bottom, but had disappeared now under the machines that were levelling all that ground . . . " (p. 244). Money, machines, and Mrs. Parrish level the land and the lives. Emily, as counterpart to the hero, gives us the effects in human conditions and feelings. Through her, Miss Gordon dramatizes the personal and emotional effects of change.

Through Chance, Miss Gordon dramatizes the intense feelings for the land that characterize the patriarchal society. Chance is not bound by family history and the attendant burden of a responsibility to that history, and he certainly does not possess sentimental attitudes toward peach trees. But he does possess the patriarchal spiritual identity with the land itself:

That day last summer when he had stood there beside her, pointing out the different fields, she had understood, for the first time, really how he felt about this place. He had no sentimental feeling about the house, or about the fact that his people had lived here for several generations. It was the land he loved, the very particles of the red clay--she could not even remember the name now. Only two per cent of the earth's surface was like that, Chance had said. He was proud of the fact that the Llewellyns had their share of it! Once, driving to town along the Ridge road, he had pointed out to her where the geological formation changed, where the good land gave out and the bad land began. You could see--even she could see--that the land was different. On one side of that invisible line red clay and on the other a lighter clay with little pieces of rock crusted in it. Conglomerate, he had called it . . . scornfully. (p. 246)

Chance is a spiritual as well as family descendant
of Nicholas Llewellyn, one who works the land and keeps it in trust for his descendants. He possesses the sense of family obligation that is essential to the retention of the land and to tradition. Chance explains: "The Penhally tract was as large as it was because his old great-uncle Nicholas had been fanatical about keeping the property together" (p. 232), and he elaborates upon the almost spiritual quality in entailment:

There was something about entailing property. It made a man feel that he was not really the owner, or at least that he had heavy obligations to his successor. He had noticed that about his grandfather. He was sure that the old fellow—and he was the best man of the whole caboodle—had never regarded himself as owning a stick or stone. When he made any changes on the place, cut down a piece of timber or anything like that, he would say, "I think that will be all right," reflectively, as if he were appealing to the verdict of somebody else. And he had made his son, Chance's father, entail the property on his eldest son as soon as he came of age. . . . (p. 233)

But entailment is an act out of the past, a past that cannot control the future. The full irony of the entailment of Penhally is realized in the twentieth century when a new and alien man receives trusteeship. The traditionalist in the guise of Chance is powerless to prevent the loss of Penhally. Nick, banker and city dweller, inherits Penhally and regards the inheritance as ownership; he possesses land that can be sold for a profit. Chance, although legally a partner in the working of the land, is the one who holds the land in trust for future tillers, be they Llewellyns or not. It is
the land itself that Chance wishes to preserve. The act of entailment that was to perpetuate life comes to destroy it.

In the final scene of the story Miss Gordon under­scores the point made in the opening scene--that internal forces contribute to the destruction of a way of life and that those forces are the most damaging physically and spiritually. She dramatizes Chance's rage at the sale of Penhally and at the pretensions and corruptions of those involved in the sale. Returning to the farm on its opening as an exclusive hunt club, Chance thinks of the people dispossessed of a home--of Cousin Cave to Emily's home, of his grandmother, Miss Lucy, to an apartment. At the club he sees the curiosity that Penhally has been turned into and hears the innocuous voices of the party­goers as they wander about the house. Somewhat inebriated and deeply frustrated, he turns upon his brother, seller and symbol of the changed Penhally, and commits the ul­timate act of violence, fratricide. In the act Miss Gordon renders the symbolic end of Penhally by means of sale into a dramatic, all-encompassing action. She seems to imply that the loss and destruction were fated and that annihilation is to be the fate of those traditional figures who retain identity with the land. On a larger perspective, the implication is that all the positive moral values of the Old South are to be annihilated and
replaced by the social values of a New South. Not the tiller of the soil but the merchant is to possess the land and determine its fate and the fates of those associated with the land.

In *The Garden of Adonis* Miss Gordon elaborates the vision of death and destruction devoid of any sense of redemption that characterizes the third part of *Penhally*. Locating the story in the same time and place as that of Chance, she presents the Allard family in its violent disposssession from the land. The novel comprises several stories. One story is Ben Allard's. Allard, neighbor and cousin to Chance, is the patriarchal figure, a poor but aristocratic farmer who is attempting to ward off foreclosure of his property. The second story centers upon Allard's daughter Letty. Searching for happiness and meaning outside the self, alien in her home through her rejection of it—the farm's remoteness and the "old ways" of its people, she becomes involved in an adulterous affair. The third story, interwoven in Letty's, is Jim Carter's. Carter is the married man whom Letty loves. He is a Southerner who has superficially retained his "Southernness"—the specific pronunciation of his name—but who has married a manufacturer's daughter for money and who fails to be honest with himself and in his relationships with others. The fourth story concerns Ote Mortimer, a young, poor white tenant farmer on Allard's
land. Ote functions as foil to Allard; his story is the first introduced. The juxtaposition of Ote's tale and Allard's emphasize the weaknesses and the strengths of the two social classes, poor white and poor aristocrat.

As in Penhally, Miss Gordon shows the agrarian life undermined by the crumbling family structure. Letty detests the farm, and her brother Frank dedicates himself to a white collar job in the city. Forces outside the family also contribute to the demise of the agrarian life. Ben Allard stubbornly clings to old farming methods and is incapable of realistically facing the failure of some of the methods. Nor is he capable of comprehending changing economic conditions in farming. He fails to realize that foreclosure is not just a remote possibility but an imminent actuality. He must show a profit if he is to keep the bank from foreclosing on his property. Through Allard, Miss Gordon dramatizes the destruction of the patriarchal society when profit measured in dollars wins in the struggle for land. In her drama of the dispossession from the land, no Horatio enters to tell of the lost potential. No Fortinbras enters to restore order. Instead, the machine, literally a mower, continues to level all—man and property and, by implication, any hopes of the survival of the patriarchal or the yeoman farmer.

Taking the title of The Garden of Adonis from Frazer's The Golden Bough, Miss Gordon indicates the underlying
direction and implication of the story. The relevant passage in Frazer reads:

These [the gardens of Adonis] were baskets or pots filled with earth in which wheat, barley, lettuces, fennel, and various kinds of flowers were sown and tended for eight days, chiefly or exclusively by women. Fostered by the sun's heat, the plants shot up rapidly, but having no root they withered as rapidly away, and at the end of eight days were carried out with the images of the dead Adonis and flung with them into the sea or into springs....

Women do not tend the gardens in the story; rather, through dramatic renderings, they become indirectly responsible for the destruction of the garden and of human life. When young Ote is rejected by his primarily pleasure-seeking and desperate, pregnant girl friend, he releases all his rage upon Ben Allard. Neither man receives support from the woman in his life. Allard, widower, has a daughter who stays away from home for such long periods of time that she doesn't know the names of the people on the farm. Letty isn't, as her father says, winsome like her mother. She isn't, as her sister-in-law says, like her brother Frank—dedicated to family and work, albeit banking and not farming. She is as Jim Carter describes her in a comparison with the town prostitute: "Letty was a lady and Babe wasn't, but their attitude towards life was much the same. It was being up against it—in different ways—that had hardened them both. Letty was hard, all right, he thought, ..." (p. 223). Letty's hardness is a form of self-pity, a result of
waiting for life to come to her rather than acting upon life. When she finally does take initiative she does so in an adulterous affair. That the affair is conducted in part in Ben Allard's home is beyond Allard's comprehension. When Allard does become suspicious, he decides to appeal to the honor of Jim Carter. The word and the conduct it implies are almost extinct in the lives of Letty and Jim, applicable to Ben Allard but not to them. Perhaps the greatest sense of the estrangement between Letty and her father, between men and women, if one may consider the two as Miss Gordon's representatives of the feminine and masculine consciousness, comes in Letty's sudden realization of her father's humanity. Ben Allard is lonely:

He was listening intently to what Cousin Rock was saying but his eyes meanwhile darted from face to face about the table as if while he were listening to one person he did not want to miss what anybody else was saying. She realized suddenly that this was a great occasion for him. "It's the first time he'd had company in the house for months," she thought. "It's like Aunt Pansy says: he never sees anybody but poor white folks and niggers unless Chance Llewellyn or somebody rides over to ask his advice about something. He's lonely. That's why he talks to the dog. . . . I never thought of his being lonely before." (p. 114)¹³

A sense of loneliness pervades the entire story, the shallowness of the characters contributing to the pervasive sense of destitution. Miss Gordon's one noble character is Ben Allard, a man of the land alone on his land. Without the moral and social support of family, he faces
the incomprehensible problems brought about by an institution whose workings are foreign to him—the bank. He is almost an anachronism, a man attempting to live in the twentieth century according to nineteenth-century ideals.

A traditionalist in every respect, Allard is a direct literary descendant of the earlier patriarchal heroes, Nicholas Llewellyn and Fontaine Allard. In a scene that is most indicative of her attitude toward the patriarchal figure, Miss Gordon reveals Allard's delight in and total devotion to the care of his home:

He jumped out of bed. He rose always in the mornings with a sense of adventure. There were so many things he wanted to do and no day was ever long enough to get them all in. This morning, for instance, he wanted to walk over in the big field while it was still cool, to look at the new clover. He had not seen it for three or four days. As he dressed he kept thinking of it. He was not a man to run after new-fangled ways. To raise enough corn for his tobacco had been enough for him. But he had taken to this new clover like a duck to water. He had liked the idea of it when Chance Llewellyn had first told him of it. He had enjoyed preparing the ground and sowing it and had watched it grow with pleasure. Rarely indeed had he grown a crop that so delighted him. (p. 288)

The delight he feels is short lived, for he must face the threat of foreclosure. Allard is to lose his land, and thereby, his independence, his sustenance; he is to lose his life source and meaning. In a scene that anticipates a surrealistic scene in The Strange Children, Miss Gordon delineates the "devouring tide" of the bankers as Ben imagines it:
He had, of course, expected that always, or at least for the last ten years. But it had never been now, this spring. It had always been the next spring or the next. One crop away, anyhow. He had been so dazed by the thought that the thing so long expected was at last upon him that he hadn't been able to follow what Simpson was saying. He had just sat there whittling—his hands had moved mechanically all that time—and in those few minutes, whittling on the sassafras stick, he had known what it was to lose the farm. Yes, he had seen it, felt it drop away from him acre by acre until he stood up, a naked, landless man. A curious thing. As if the man in the gray overcoat had waved his hand and a sea had crept up. He had watched it spread. The north field first, the meadow adjoining, then the woods and last of all this south field in which they sat. He had, he supposed, been clean out of his head, for a few seconds. At any rate he had been strangely occupied in wondering what would become of himself and Woodward and Simpson [the bank- ers] when the land was gone out from under them. Yes, he had pictured them retreating before the devouring tide, climbing the fence, setting foot on Bill Browder's land, moving on, on. It was then that he reached out and, touching the cedar bough beside him, was surprised to find it as solid as ever under his hand, as prickly, as brittle. (pp. 15-16)

Primogeniture and greed lead to the loss of Penhally; poor crop yield and foreclosure lead to the loss of the Allard farm. Underscoring the somber tone of The Garden of Adonis, foreclosure provides the abstract, dramatic image of Ben Allard's fate and initiates concrete action. Concepts and policies conceived in the minds of men, Miss Gordon seems to imply, can yield concrete, tragic results in the lives of people. The foreclosure seems inevitable. Ironically, the cedar bough, "as solid as ever," that Allard grips to bring him out of his trance and temporarily stay the loss of his land reappears as a "stout oaken
piece" in the hands of Ote Mortimer. The symbol of the temporary hold on the land becomes the death weapon. The field of clover, symbol of continued ownership to Allard, means a lost girl friend to Ote. The income from the cutting of the second crop of hay is not to be realized. As in Penhally, Miss Gordon presents the violent conclusion in quick, short scenes: Ote, conscientious, hard-working farmer, having lost his Idelle to a moonshining Buck Chester with money in his pockets, kills Ben Allard. The act is impulsive, what sociologists would probably call a "crime of passion." Allard, too late to prevent his daughter from an adulterous affair, assuming he could prevent it, unrealistically holding to a code of non-involvement in the affairs of the poor white, and adhering to a code of conduct rendered almost irrelevant in the face of changing social mores, comprehends none of the emotion fomenting about him. Dogmatic in farming methods—he will not cut the crop early as Ote wishes—he loses his life. Only the land remains—sepulchre for Ben Allard. The final scene is one of violent, meaningless death. The love between a man and a woman that, in a patriarchal society, should foster life has degenerated into a sensuality that violates the human heart and results in violence. The physical, psychic, and spiritual shocks lead to annihilation.

Miss Gordon leads the hero-patriarch, the tiller of
the soil, to this point of annihilation in an alien world. The masculine is destroyed and the feminine is rendered helpless or corrupt. Chance Llewellyn and Ben Allard, obedient to a particular code of conduct and a way of life, are destroyed by their loyalties. Ben and Chance link hands with two others among Miss Gordon's literary family, with Rives and Fontaine Allard--those who cannot accept change. This is one implication of their deaths. There is a still more pervasive sense behind the implication. A tragedy in the classic sense results in both Penhally and The Garden of Adonis. The good suffer, Fate requiring a "pure victim obedient to God." In the case of the patriarchal figures, the men are obedient to a particular way of life. It seems that in Miss Gordon's fictive world the only alternative for those seeking goodness is Death. If life is to become the alternative to death, Miss Gordon must assume another perspective. She does so to some extent with her renderings of the hero in the guise of sportsman and of frontiersman.
Notes

1 Allen Tate, "What is a Traditional Society," in Collected Essays (Denver: Allan Swallow, 1959), p. 303.

2 Thomas Daniel Young provides one interpretation of the title: "None Shall Look Back is the title of one of Caroline Gordon's novels. It must be considered ironical in this sense: we are all looking back constantly, to discover what we are and why." Thomas Daniel Young, Floyd C. Watkins, and Richard Croom Beatty, eds., The Literature of the South (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968), p. 601.

3 Caroline Gordon, Penhally (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 3. All references to the work will appear in the text.

Hannah Arendt's definition of property reflects similar thinking: Until the modern age, property meant "to have one's location in the particular part of the world and, therefore, to belong to the body politic, that is, to be the head of one of the families which together constituted the public realm." The Human Condition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 61.

4 Ford Madox Ford, "A Stage in American Literature," The Bookman, 74 (December 1931), 375.

5 The definition of secularization meant here is related to that provided by Hans Küng in On Being a Christian, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 29: "... today it seems that not only certain items of ecclesiastical property, but more or less all the important spheres of human life—learning, economics, politics, law, state, culture, education, medicine, social welfare—have been withdrawn from the influence of the Church, of theology and religion, and placed under the direct responsibility and control of man, who has himself thus become 'secular.'" In emphasizing the emergence of secular man in the context of Miss Gordon's works, I refer to the figure devoid of religious and spiritual feelings. Allen Tate provides
the historical perspective: "The Southern frontier was not a locality, but an economy and a social structure, a culture . . . which has lasted into our time and which we can observe in the Snopeses and Varners, frontier types corrupted by access to the money economy of the plantation system." "Faulkner's Sanctuary and the Southern Myth," in Memoirs and Opinions 1926-1974 (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1975), p. 148.

6 Caroline Gordon, None Shall Look Back (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 66. References to this work will appear in the text.


8 The self-consciousness of the South is a condition noted by many. Robert Coles writing in the late 1960's commented, "The region has an intactness all its own; no other group of states has ever banded together, tried to separate itself from the rest of us and to become another country. The South's 'way of life' goes back far in time. . . . Moreover, black and white alike, there, had known the defeat that persisted for decades after Appomattox, the defeat that goes with poverty, the defeat of slavery and peonage, the defeat of a collapsing agricultural economy brought to many thousands of 'small farmers.'" Farewell to the South (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1972), p. 130. One also recalls Caroline Gordon's words on the consciousness of defeat, Chapter One, p. 3, Andrew Lytle's, Chapter One, p. 2, and Allen Tate's, "The outlines of the Southern myth shift and vary with one's degree of self-consciousness" ["Faulkner's Sanctuary and the Southern Myth," (in Memoirs and Opinions 1926-1974, p. 151)]. Each of the opinions collectively represents the meaning intended by the term "self-consciousness."

9 Whitman, Homer and the Homeric Tradition, p. 171.

10 Whitman, p. 201.


The entire discussion of change reflects the words of Diony, heroine in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' The Great
Meadow (New York: The Literary Guild, 1930), p. 128: "In the opinions that were passed back and forth Diony knew that the war had brought changes to the minds of men, old laws falling away and new customs taking their places." The context is the Indian wars during the American Revolution, but the thought is applicable to the realizations made by many of Miss Gordon's characters during the Civil War. In the larger sense, the words state a universal fact--war means change.


13 The division between the rural and the cosmopolitan is not simplistic. One can also sympathize with Letty, for the farm life can be constraining: "She wondered how it would be if she never married, just stayed on in this old, moldy house with her father, making occasional visits to Baltimore and Louisville. But the visits would grow fewer with the years. . . . People didn't want an unattached girl around forever, no matter how pretty or pleasant she was. No, she thought, I'd have to quit going around and get interested in something. That was the phrase her grandmother always used. Cousin Matty at Peacholorum was interested in chickens and took prizes at fairs with Buff Orpingtons or was it Plymouth Rocks" (p. 116). Letty is a kindred spirit to Alice Blair of Penhally, pretty, young, aimless, and looking for a husband among or through the aid of remote kin.

14 Louise Cowan's comments on the reconciliation of opposing forces in Caroline Gordon's works are applicable here. Mrs. Cowan writes that the novels "dramatize the feminine and masculine principles in a devasted society that cannot surrender itself to love and integration, where death is the over-arching enemy." "Aleck Maury, Epic Hero and Pilgrim," in The Short Fiction of Caroline Gordon: A Critical Symposium, ed. Thomas H. Landess (Dallas: University of Dallas, 1972), p. 10.

15 The phrasing is Simone Weil's; the context is a discussion of the transmission of sin from generation to generation "until it strikes a perfectly guiltless person who suffers all the bitterness of it." The examples include Sophocles' Antigone and Aeschylus' Eteocles and Orestes. Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks, ed. and trans. Elisabeth Chase Geissbuhler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 10.

16 Louise Cowan sees the "surface" of all of Miss
Aleck Maury (Aleck Maury, Sportsman, 1934) and Rion Outlaw (Green Centuries, 1941) respectively symbolize the Gordon hero as sportsman and frontiersman. The two men are active individuals whose identities are inextricably bound to the natural world, which for them is a continuing source of delight and discovery. Solitary and obsessed figures—Maury, committed to the pursuit of sport, and Outlaw, committed to the discovery of virgin territory—each experiences the most intense kind of despair: a total loss of meaning in life. Each becomes acutely aware that man is mortal and cannot be entirely self-sufficient and self-serving, and that the source of greatest meaning in the temporal world lies in human relationships. The hero's journey to self-awareness through an active, adventurous life constitutes the essential story in Aleck Maury, Sportsman and in Green Centuries. It is the subject of the following discussion.

According to Miss Gordon, the character of Aleck Maury is the dynamic realization of a three-day talk between her and her father, upon whom the character of
Maury is based.2 Unselfconsciously pursuing a life style unique unto himself, Maury is devoted to the sports of hunting and fishing. In his story, told in the first person, he traces his life from his first hunting experiences as a very young boy through adolescence and young manhood, into marriage and family life, on through his painful experiences as a widower. When he concludes his story, he is an elderly man physically unable to hunt but still entranced by the sport of fishing. Maury relates all events in his life to the two sports, even to his profession as teacher and to his marriage. He recalls his first teaching assignment through association with the fishing in Spring Creek and the hunting trips with Jim Fayerlee, and his first year of marriage through association with hunting: "Joys, like sorrows, come not single spies. It was in the first year of our marriage that I acquired Gyges [a bird dog] whose history rather than my own must occupy the next few pages."3 Second in importance to sport for Maury is classical learning. The classics attract him to his wife Molly: "I thought that I would like to hear Molly Fayerlee read those lines [from the Odes of Horace]" (p. 83). For Maury, the "democracy" of sport and the rigors and self-discipline of sport and classical learning provide a pattern of behavior and a sense of personal integrity. He describes his Aunt Vic as one who possesses the "real grandeur of
soul" of one steeped in classical learning and Catholicism and who lives the virtues inherent in both (p. 55).

Maury's story begins with his recollection of the sensations he felt when he saw a hunter riding to the hounds:

It was mid-morning in early fall. A bright crisp day with a wind stirring. I had heard since early morning the hallowing of hunters and the baying of hounds, had even distinguished the clear bell-like note that was famous in the neighborhood and ejaculated as I had heard negroes ejaculate a hundred times: "That's Old Whiskey. Ain't he telling them." But the music of the hounds and the cries of the hunters had gone on so long that they had receded into my consciousness and had become a part of the day, like the sunshine. I had been engaged in watching two jaybirds quarrelling on a high limb of an oak when a noise in the pasture made me start. A single rider was emerging from a clump of old-field pines at the far end and was pushing his horse straight across the field for the woods. Even in his straightaway dash he saw me, a small, lone figure there on my stump. He swept off his cap and waved it, the round-and-round motion of a boy twirling something on a stick, then disappeared into the woods. I was left alone on my stump with the quarrelling jays. (pp. 5-6)

Maury is introduced to hunting by Rafe, husband to the family cook. Rafe is the first of the dedicated hunters that Maury is to know. Maury describes him:

The outkitchen, a comfortable two-room building, was always full of negroes. . . . Nancy, our fat, motherly cook, moved about in front of [the fireplace], tending her vessels. And sitting in the corner, smoking his pipe, his dog at his feet, would be Rafe, her husband. He was a giant, nearly seven feet tall and correspondingly broad. I thought of him as a sort of Cyclops: he had only one eye, which some trick of my imagination always transposed to the centre of his forehead. . . . I asked Nancy once how Rafe lost his eye and she said scornfully that "he poked it out on them old brambles." I don't doubt
that this was so. He was a headlong hunter and would stop for nothing when his dog was on a trail.

He had a special way of talking to me when no one else was by. It was the talk of one hunter to another, comments, mostly on the qualities of his dog, Ming. Rafe was pre-eminent in that community not only as a keen hunter of both possums and coons but as the owner of Ming. For Ming was acknowledged the best possum dog in that county. (pp. 6-7)

Maury gives his ultimate tribute to Rafe in a single sentence: "I think that life, the life of adventure that is compacted equally of peril and deep, secret excitement, began for me in that cabin [the outkitchen] when I was about eight years old" (p. 7).

At twelve Maury goes to live at Grassdale with his Uncle James, Aunt Vic, and Cousin Julian. The deciding factor in Maury's stay at Grassdale is, for the father, that Victoria Morris is the "Best Greek scholar I ever knew, woman or no woman" (p. 28). The years spent at Grassdale yield a special knowledge of the hunt and the hunter's code. They also provide Maury's first direct encounter with the temporal nature of life:

There is one other incident that comes back to me out of that far-away past and comes back with a sense of fatality tinged with sadness: the day the horse fell with Uncle James. He was a fine, full-blooded man and as he grew older he got heavier and heavier until finally it became a problem for him to find a horse that was up to his weight. He'd convinced himself against his better judgment that one of Old Bet's colts, a stout four-year old, could carry him. He tried her out one day at the beginning of the season. She pranced and curvetted around the lot a few minutes, then sank slowly to the ground... Uncle James extricated his foot from the stirrup and stood up. I had expected an outburst of profanity--
he was a hot-tempered man—but he rose without a word and walked out of the lot and back to the house.

Julian and I stood there and watched him go.

... I stood there, a boy of fourteen, and I realized that man comes up like a weed and perishes. I had seen old people around me all my life but I had never thought of them as growing old. They were born like that, without teeth, or deaf, or turned simple in the head like Old Cousin Lawrence. But Uncle James—Uncle James, who was always first in the field, had got too heavy to ride, might never ride again! Foreboding rushed over me. The decay of the faculties came to everybody, would come to me, to Julian, to the very little negroes squatting on the fence rails. I could not bear the bright sunshine, the blue rime. I turned and went in the house. Uncle James was in the library, reading Peter Simple. I got a book and sat down beside him. It was Sir Izaak Walton's Compleat Angler, his description of twelve artificial-made flies, "to angle with upon the top of the water." (pp. 48-49)

The incident involving Uncle James is prophetic. Later a much heavier and older Aleck Maury is forced to give up hunting because of the strain on his legs and his considerably lessened power of endurance.

While at Grassdale, Maury experiences another significant incident in his education as a sportsman. A visiting Englishman, Cecil Morrison, teaches him to fly cast: "I smile now, remembering the crudeness of the contrivance and yet that September afternoon was one of the most important days in my life; it was the first time I ever cast a fly" (p. 51).

The knowledge, spirit, and camaraderie of the sporting life at Grassdale is summed up by Maury:

He [Uncle James] shook his head and going back to the house that day he observed that a man—a sporting
man he meant, of course—might observe every day of his life and still have something to learn. I think that day marked a cycle in my life. Striding along beside him, listening to his half-absent words, I was fired with a sudden, fierce desire. I looked around me, at the wheat fields where I knew quail were feeding, at the woods beyond that were full of squirrels. The woods, the squirrels, the very insects on which the quail were feeding, all withheld their secrets from me. I wanted to know more about them, to follow that strange, that secret life. To this day that desire has never left me. I never walk through the woods or stand beside a body of water without experiencing something of that old excitement. But on that day, when I walked beside my Uncle James, a raw country boy of thirteen, without even my powers of observation formed, I had a long way to go. (p. 57)

For Maury, life at Grassdale becomes the critical, decisive factor in his life. He would be a sportsman.

Throughout his initiation into the sports of hunting and fishing, Maury is influenced by places and people. Expressing feelings similar to those of Nicholas Llewellyn, Chance, and the Allards,5 he provides an explanation of the feeling for place: "There are, I imagine, certain regions—they need not be the one in which he was born—that seem to be made for a man or he for them, so that only when living in such a place can he come into the full play of his faculties. The country around Merry Point, the half a dozen farms surrounding the old manor of Woodstock, was like that for me, and even to this day I like in imagination to go back and dwell on the landscape" (p. 88).

Certain people are special. Rafe rouses the "instinct for sport," but Mr. Jones the miller perhaps exerts the
greatest influence upon Maury. Through association with and reverence for Jones as fisherman and local authority on fishing, Maury becomes an active sportsman engaged in the pleasure and knowledge and discipline of sport. His moment of greatest pride occurs when he is able to "add to that learned man's store of information" (p. 22). His observation is that suckers like bacon. Jones translates the observation into "They like salt," and gives a young Maury the formula for sucker bait. In this conversation, Maury links hands with an earlier angler, Izaak Walton's angler. Together, Maury and Jones reflect the art of angling that the Angler expresses: "For angling is somewhat like Poetry. Men are to be born so--I mean with inclinations to it, though both may be heightened by discourse and practice; but he that hopes to be a good angler must not only bring an inquiring, searching, observing wit, but he must also bring a large measure of hope and patience and a love and propensity for the art itself." Maury's dedication becomes a devotion, a sacrament.

Maury's education as a sportsman is accompanied by his education in the classics. Discussing his father, he says, "He gave us [four older sisters and Maury] all the rudiments of a classical education but beyond that he paid very little attention to us" (p. 4), adding:

I attempt to recover still other seasons of my childhood, particularly the time between my eighth and eleventh years. It comes back to me, this period, always as early fall and against the same background.
I am walking slowly along the road that lies between Oakleigh and the store. The road is red and is bordered on each side by pine woods. There are no other wayfarers upon it. I pace along, not muttering to myself, yet my steps are set always to the same rhythm: "Arm virumque cano/Troiae qui primus ab oris...."

My father has undertaken my education—I have just begun reading the AEnid. I imagine my father's methods of teaching would horrify modern pedagogues. He made no attempt to lead me gently along the path of learning. It was clearly understood that it was he who was doing the favor, not I. Indeed his manner constantly implied that he would concern himself with me only as long as I came up to a certain level. I could not tell when I was doing well but I knew when I was in danger of falling beneath his notice by a cool impatience, almost scorn, that crept into his manner. I wish I could reproduce the tone of voice in which he said, "That, sir, is the dative."

I do not know whether his method—if it could be called a method—would have been successful with another kind of boy. It was successful with me. I learned, I know now, readily. We read all twelve books of the AEnid that winter. (pp. 14-15)

The manner of study gave Maury a command of the classics and later led to his first teaching job. The pleasure afforded by the study of the classics is continual, as Maury reveals in his reflection on his early teaching days. The school day began with Latin because "it was pleasant to start the day with sonorous rhythms," and once was interrupted because of the sounds of the Latin prose:

Once I remember a neighbor, John Ferguson, riding by on his way to town was halted by the sound coming from the schoolhouse, like a hive of bees, he said. He came in, and, taking the book from my hand, read aloud to the class for an hour Cicero's Letters to Atticus, then putting the book down, mounted his horse, and jogged off down the red road. I remember looking after him and thinking that he would have made a better schoolmaster than I, but he had inherited land and had no need to teach for a living. (p. 84)
The actions of Jim Ferguson reflect the spirit of the classicists and indicate the mutual admiration among classicists that Maury later explains: "The doctor and I became fast friends. He loved me, he said frankly, for the Greek. In those days a mutual admiration of the classics cemented many a friendship. The men in the community who had any love for the classics gravitated together as do exiles in a strange land. And indeed it was as if they belonged or at least had access to another country than their own, so potent is love of the Humanities. It has seemed to me sometimes that the neglect of the classics has contributed to the savagery of our times" (pp. 167-168). As a classicist he asserts the tradition of the dignity and superiority of man.

Fishing, not the classics, however, sustains Maury in the one major crisis in his life, the death of his wife. When Molly dies suddenly from a brief illness, Maury's sense of self is severely shaken. He confronts his own mortality. Looking back on his life, he sees his limitations. His reactions to his personal crisis and subsequent action illustrate the measure of the man, the measure of his personal heroism.

When Maury confronts his life, he discovers what has made his life meaningful:

It was still light when I went out. I sat there until nearly midnight and during those four or five hours I engaged, I imagine, in more introspection
than in all the rest of my life put together. I knew suddenly what it was I had lived by, from the time when, a mere child, I used to go out into the woods at night hunting with a negro man. I remembered—it must have been when I was about eight—looking up in black woods into the deep, glowing eyes of the quarry and experiencing a peculiar, an almost transfiguring excitement. I had experienced it for the first time that night long ago in the woods at Oakleigh and I had been seeking and finding it, with mounting excitement, ever since. I had known from the first that it was all luck; I had gone about seeking it, with, as it were, the averted eyes of a savage praying to his god. But I had brought all my resources to bear on the chase. I had used skill and caution—nobody but myself knew what patience I had always expended on my careful preparations for my sport... Delight... I had lived by it for sixty years and now it was gone and might never come again... I knew now what it was I had always feared: that this elation, this delight by which I lived might go from me...

The clear-headedness was gone. I felt old and tired... I looked around the silent room whose furniture, even, in the last few weeks had taken on an alien air, and told myself desperately that I could not face that. I could take, I had taken my share of Fortune's blows, but there were some things I could not face. (pp. 223-225)

With the loss of delight goes all meaning and activity, the two inextricably bound. If Maury is to regain life, he must again find its source. The source is activity: "When I woke in the morning—and I believe this is the strangest thing that has ever happened to me—I had a plan. It was not much but it was something to hang onto and in my new, humble frame of mind I was genuinely grateful for it" (p. 225). Maury decides to breed fish, regaining a sense of purpose or meaning in life in the process. The implications of his humbling experience are intriguing
for the consideration of the character of the sportsman and of the hero.

Maury continues as priest in the natural world, only now time is of the essence: "But I felt—and this in itself transfigured the day for me—the old, desperate desire for time, more time" (p. 226). He covets time and is defensive about its use. When he is asked to go on a walk "to kill time," he stands "there too astounded even to answer. . . . I was annoyed to reflect that anybody could think that I, Alexander Maury, could need to kill time" (p. 264). Maury doesn't have any time to waste, as he makes clear when he sees a fellow sportsman: "Ninety years old . . . It seemed a great age, not as old as I once would have thought it but far beyond the Biblical three-score and ten which I suddenly realized was all I ever allowed myself. Well, a man who reached the age of ninety had achieved something: he was free from the fear of approaching old age. It was already here. One might return then, in a sense, to the timelessness of childhood. Every day would be a gift from the gods and it would be a man's plain duty to enjoy it" (p. 245). All life, for Maury, is a "gift from the gods." The integrity of life makes the gift even more precious and enhances the integrity of the man.

Leading a life of action dependent upon careful observation of the natural world and deriving intense
pleasure from participation in nature's rituals, yet cognizant of his mortality, Maury, who is a deist, overcomes his despair. By doing so he seems to tell us that a man can control only so much of his life, can philosophize only so long before he must return to the actual job of living. Thought, for Maury, must be channeled into action. It is through action that a man defines himself and provides meaning for himself. To make life an intellectual exercise is, for Maury, to render it inert. He thinks of his historian son-in-law and a possible reaction to the family Uncle Sam: if the two met, Uncle Sam "might have been clapped into a museum" (p. 276). The sportsman lives a particular way of life that follows a time-honored tradition, and, in Maury's case, he follows the way of life imposed by family tradition. That is, he adheres to the values of the sportsman and of the extended family. He does not impose a tradition or attempt to restore it. Maury would not build a home in antebellum style. He leads a life of action based upon a personal integrity derived from family and self. Action possessed of integrity and meaning promotes life and is the very essence of life. This is the implication of Maury's return to nature.

In Rion Outlaw, protagonist in *Green Centuries*, Miss Gordon again focuses upon the hero engaged in the active life of the outdoorsman. Like Maury, Rion confronts the
source of his life. Pursuing the frontiersman's life, he engages in the active life but in much more sobering and less-rewarding terms. Stepping back in time, so to speak, for a longer perspective of history, Miss Gordon presents her hero in all his complexities. As readers we journey with the hero and encounter the ironies of his existence and of life. The result is an awareness of the spirit of the pioneering people. Their unassuming natures, indomitable courage, and their intense suffering—the task appointed the hero according to Miss Gordon—qualify them as heroic.

Green Centuries was published in 1941. Although no reference is made to World War II, one may speculate that the war and its devastation of human lives contribute to the troubled conclusion of the novel. The hero comes to question his pursuit and the meaning of any quest: Does the pursuit of a goal lead only to self-destruction? Is the seeking spirit who is motivated by curiosity and with the intention of doing good fated to destroy the self in the process? Miss Gordon provides only partial answers.

Green Centuries is set in the 1770's. The main plot recounts the journey, the settlement, and the personal life circumstances of the Outlaw family, and the Indian conflicts on the frontier. Rion Outlaw, his wife Cassy, her brother Frank, and a younger brother, Archy Outlaw, leave the Yadkin area in North Carolina to establish a
new life in the Watauga region in Tennessee. The immediate motivating force for the move is political. Rion and Frank belong to the Regulators and are about to be arrested for their subversive activities against the Crown. The larger, more encompassing inspiration for his move is the frontier spirit. Rion, having been told of the constellation Orion, identifies himself with the "mighty hunter." His story and the general structure of the novel are based upon the myth of Orion. The subplot is the story of the Cherokee Indians told from the viewpoint of Dark Lanthorn, wife to the Cherokee chief, Atta Kulla Kulla. Archy Outlaw, who is captured by the Indians and later chooses the Indian life, provides the link to the Indian story. Miss Gordon's juxtaposition and final interweaving of the two stories--settler and Indian--yields a sensitive, ironic view of the American frontier and the people who settled it.

Rion Outlaw, friend of Daniel Boone and acquaintance of Harmon Husbands and James Adair, possesses the prejudices of the frontiersmen. When his brother is captured by the Indians and then adopts the Indian life, Rion is totally incredulous. A white man does not adopt Indian ways. A man of great physical strength and endurance coupled with courage, Rion is the pioneer who provides for and protects his family and neighbors. But as seeker of virgin territory, Indian fighter, fugitive from law,
family man, settler, trader, renegade, scholar-recorder, land-defiler, Rion presents a figure more comprehensive and complex than that of the settler. In his association with Orion he becomes a symbol of the insatiable questing spirit.

The constellation Orion outlines a hunter. In the myth of Orion the hunter loses his beloved, Aero, after having insulted her while inebriated. Not able to find her, he goes to Crete and lives there as Artemis' hunter. His days end there when Artemis, in a jealous rage, slays him. When Rion, hunter and seeker of new land, first hears the myth of Orion, he identifies solely with the hunter aspect. Through his wife Cassy he comes to a more comprehensive and acute awareness of the myth.

Cassy knows the insatiable spirit of the hunter. To herself she says, "He can't ever be satisfied, . . . . He's always got to be going on" (p. 176). Cassy's words are almost a foreboding, for Rion, the seeking spirit, is possessed of a kind of tunnel vision that fails to see anything but future conquests. Ever moving forward, Rion finds himself isolated in motion without meaning. Miss Gordon presents him as one who fails to value the past and the present and, thereby, destroys past, present, and future. Rion's situation is revealed as he contemplates the constellation Orion following his wife's death:

When he was a boy on the Yadkin he used to like to think that he took his name from the mighty
hunter, and out in the woods at night or coming home from a frolic he would look up and pick out the stars: the hunter's foot, his club, his girdle, the red eye of the bull that he pursued ever westward. . . . His father had come west across the ocean, leaving all that he cared about behind. And he himself as soon as he had grown to manhood had looked at the mountains and could not rest until he knew what lay beyond them. But it seemed that man had to flee farther each time and leave more behind him and when he got to the new place he looked up and saw Orion fixed upon his burning wheel, always pursuing the bull but never making the kill. Did Orion will any longer the westward chase? No more than himself. Like the mighty hunter he had lost himself in the turning. Before him lay the empty west, behind him the loved things of which he was made. Those old tales of Frank's! Were not men raised into westward turning stars only after they had destroyed themselves? (pp. 468-469)

There is another dimension to Rion's discovery of the paradox of the quest--the violation of others. In his pursuit Rion violates a human heart, Cassy's, by committing adultery. Cassy, protectress of the home, dies spiritually when she discovers the adultery: "She thought of what a long time it would be before it [the sun] slipped behind the western rim and then she thought of all the rest of her life to get through and she sank down, whimpering, on the doorstep" (p. 441). Rion knows that his marriage is ended: "He knew that it would never be the same again between them and all that day he had gone about feeling an immense weariness, as if somewhere far off, so that he only heard her faintly, she was still screaming that terrible scream" (p. 446). Like the "mighty hunter" he reveres, Rion betrays the feminine spirit. But not just the hunter is at fault in the betrayal. Like her literary
counterparts of the earlier novels, Cassy responds to her rejection by withdrawing from family life. When she lies dying from pneumonia, she and Rion are able to admit their mutual feelings and profess their love.

The reconciliation scene underscores the irony inherent in the life of quest. Shortly before Cassy dies, Rion overhears part of a conversation:

"I'm going. I've made up my mind to that." Jim Robertson raised his head and looked off towards the mountains to the west; then his eyes came back to Hubbard's face. He nodded his head slightly. "I'll go with you, to look the land over anyhow."

"If you do you won't ever come back," Hubbard said. He threw his hand out towards Bays Mountain. "None of these little fifty acre coves. It's all level. . . . A man can get him a thousand acres and all of it flat as the palm of your hand. . . ."

All level, as far as the eye can see. The last time Daniel Boone had been in this house he had been talking about a new land. This one was Cumber Land, down below the Kentuck road. Judge Henderson had transferred his operations there and was trying to start a new commonwealth. (p. 467)

When Cassy dies, Rion is left to contemplate the myth he has been pursuing. His story ends in self-doubt and loneliness.

For the reader of Caroline Gordon, Rion's story raises questions about the hero and the quest. Her hero seems to destroy himself in his appointed task, yet his self-destruction seems to be a part of the intense suffering he must bear. His heroism lies in his daring to rise above the ordinary. But when the hero aspires to be a part of the heavens, to live among the gods, he risks
mortality. Ever at the heels of the hero, in one form or another, is, as General Forrest said, "that dog death."\(^{16}\)

Does one, then, engage in a quest only to be destroyed? If the destruction is inevitable, why does one continue or even begin? For the hero, death is life-ending, action-stopping. In his pursuit he meets death and is subdued. From this point on the hero in Miss Gordon's canon has the choice to function in the natural world, consciously performing within the limits that he now recognizes are man's. He is still active, but his actions take on the urgency of time. He must complete his specific role before Death appears. The hero does not transcend death, he confronts it and lives with its presence. This is the position of Aleck Maury. The only alternative to Maury's position is death.

Each of the heroes from Nicholas Llewellyn to Rion Outlaw confronts death in terms reflecting his particular circumstances and era. Nicholas sees the devastation of family and home by war, and the disintegration of a way of life that preserved the civilities and gave meaning to words such as honor and dignity. These are the losses seen by Mr. Allard (and Carrie) in *None Shall Look Back*. These are the losses that embrace defeat and make the consciousness of defeat the basis for a way of life in which one endures.\(^{16}\)

Rives Allard and John Llewellyn are soldiers whose
entire lives are devoted to the Southern Cause. For them life ends with the defeat of the South. Rives dies the soldier's death on the battlefield, but John lives to endure spiritual defeat. Having lost his wife's love because of his world-weariness and thereby indirect psychic rejection of his wife, a kind of spiritual violation of a person, John meets total death of spirit when he realizes his son's death was suicide. The South defeated, friends dead, a wife and son who chose death, these make up the death-in-life world of John, a world in which wounds compound wounds. The scene is one of the bleakest in the world of the Gordon hero. For the hero who does not choose death, only the Greek concept of endurance remains as an alternative to the bleakness of death. One reconciles oneself to a life of sorrow and pain.

For Ben Allard and Chance death is literal and violent. Ben dies at the hands of his angry, frustrated young worker; Chance kills his brother in a sudden fit of rage mixed with a sense of impotence caused by changing life conditions. Both acts are violent and meaningless, stark renderings of the plight of men and a region under the control of forces that they cannot comprehend. The machinery of economics becomes the juggernaut rolling across the land and leveling lives. The unholy alliance of men and machines and money dominates all sectors of life. For those who do not comprehend such a world and
who refuse to be a part of such a world, the only alternative seems to be death. The tragic irony in the life of a Ben and a Chance is the violent and complete reversal of good. Those who feel deeply about the land and its people serve to destroy both, serve the forces of destruction and destroy themselves—the potential agents of good. The implication conveyed is that the hero cannot become an advocate of violence, nor can he remain immune to change, nor can he deny changes that are occurring. Death as a waste land or literal death, these are the choices.

Only Aleck Maury confronts death and then lives within its limitations. By pursuing the active life of the sportsman in the presence of death, he answers the final question raised about the quest: Why pursue the quest? The answer is to enjoy the days granted a man. But this answer is not sufficient for Rion. Unlike Maury who focuses upon the natural world immediately around him to sustain his spirit, Rion is drawn toward unexplored frontiers. But Rion comes to doubt the validity of his quest. Neither Maury nor Rion transcends death, for neither moves toward the world of the spirit as represented by Christianity.

Transcendence cannot follow until the hero becomes contemplative man in a specifically Christian manner. Instead of the ethics derived from the social realm of the landed gentry and the soldier or from the natural
world of the sportsman, the heroes in Miss Gordon's later stories embrace the virtues of faith and good works in the Christian sense. In the succeeding novels, The Women on the Porch, The Strange Children, and The Malefactors, the hero self-consciously recognizes that he is a spiritual alien. Let us turn to Miss Gordon's version of the hero as self-conscious spiritual alien.
Notes

1 Louise Cowan in her essay "Nature and Grace in Caroline Gordon," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction 1 (Winter 1956), 16, writes, "The constant set of events in all the novels revolves around man and woman, caught in mortality and seeking self-realization. Woman attempts to find fulfillment in love, whereas man looks to some aspect of 'the world.'"

2 A statement made by Caroline Gordon in a conversation with the author after her address to the SCMLA Convention in Dallas, Texas, 29 Oct. 1976.

3 Caroline Gordon, Aleck Maury, Sportsman (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 110. References to this work will appear in the text.

4 Two incidents record the aging of the hunter: failing vision that leads to the wearing of glasses and a right leg that remains cramped (p. 174); failure to keep up with a young sportsman--"I had hardly got my breath. If I had been out alone I would have sat down on the nearest log to smoke a pipe while I took my bearings. But after all it was Tom's day. I had been fool enough to come out with a man thirty years my junior. I would have to try to keep up with him" (p. 246).

5 See Chapter Two of text, pp. 13-16, 31, for the views toward the land.


8 See Chapter One, p. 3, for Miss Gordon's comments on deism.


I view Maury as an Odysseus figure in the novel in his emphasis upon thought and action. He is also an Odysseus figure in his view of reality as Cedric Whitman describes it in a discussion of Homer's Odysseus: he "sees reality as the situation or problem before him." Homer and the Heroic Tradition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 175.

9 Brainard Cheney, in his article "Caroline Gordon's Ontological Quest," Renascence, 16 (1963), 7, comments on the technique: Miss Gordon "steps back in history, so to speak, to take a longer view of the American Experiment."

10 In How to Read a Novel (New York: The Viking Press, Publishers, 1957), p. 171, Miss Gordon comments on the need for suffering by the hero. In a discussion of her family, the South, and the hero she writes that to have suffered is good, for to grow up in a world without knowing that right does not always triumph is "dangerous." "Cock-Crow," The Southern Review, 1 (1965), 557. See Chapter One of text, pp. 3, 8.

11 The incident is described early in the story: "Rion looked up until he had located the constellation, Orion. He often looked for it since the time Frank Dawson had told him that he took his name from it." Green Centuries (1941; rpt. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 16. References to the work will appear in the text.

13 The style of the characterization is Jamesian as Miss Gordon describes the method: "His [James'] people reveal themselves to us gradually--the way people reveal themselves to us in life." How to Read a Novel, p. 124.
I use the term "land-defiler" because of the irony of westward expansion. Seeking virgin land, the man who enters it becomes the unwitting catalyst of its settlement and, so often, its ruin.

14 The rejection may occur because of a soldier-husband too weary to respond to family life (John's wife in Penhally); in a situation where, unable to express love to the one truly loved, the woman responds to the love of another (Lucy in None Shall Look Back); and it may occur because of death and war (Penhally and None Shall Look Back). Loneliness is the overwhelming feeling that the women must contend with. Those who cannot are symbolized by the figure of the aged woman sitting in a rocking chair and literally rocking away her life.

15 Miss Gordon states the point: "A hero--any hero--spends his life in combat with the common, the only enemy, Death." "Cock-Crow," 558. See Chapter One, p. 8.

16 Miss Gordon, speaking at a meeting of Southern novelists at Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia, 28 Oct. 1960, referred to the awareness of defeat among Southern writers: "I think we have some awfully good Southern writers and I believe one reason they are so good is that we are a conquered people and we know some things that a person who is not a Southerner cannot envisage happening." Quoted in Frederick J. Hoffman's The Art of Southern Fiction, p. 6.

The attachment to place that dominates in the characters of the plantation patriarch and his kindred spirits reflects Miss Gordon's particular affiliation with the Agrarians. Richard Gray explains: "What she cherishes . . . is the idea of order that she finds expressed in the image of the old plantation--an idea immediately applicable, as she sees it, to any time or place. Order, decorum, ceremony--a system of external references by which the inner life must be carefully guided: these for her are absolutes." "Back to the Old Plantation: The Recovery and Reexamination of a Dream," The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 153.

The Greek concept of endurance is particularly evident in Sophocles' play Philoctetes. In the play noble suffering is the fate to be born by those who bear the greatest burdens. One is to endure one's suffering in a noble manner.

Frederick P. W. McDowell views the novels as a movement from emphasis on human limitation to emphasis on Christian orientation. Caroline Gordon, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 1966), p. 29.

Also, see Chapter Two, note 16.
Chapter Four
The Hero as Self-Conscious Spiritual Alien

Miss Gordon's version of the hero as self-conscious spiritual alien--represented by Jim Chapman (The Women on the Porch, 1944), Steve Lewis (The Strange Children, 1951), and Tom Claiborne (The Malefactors, 1956)--depicts the Dantesque spiritual journey of one alienated from family, place, and his own creative center. At the start of his journey he cannot say with Odysseus:

I cannot think of any place sweeter on earth to look at.
. . .So it is that nothing is more sweet in the end than country and parents ever. (11. 28, 33-35)1

The initial task of the Gordon hero as self-conscious spiritual alien is to become fully aware "that nothing is more sweet in the end than country and parents ever." His search for a place called home becomes a search for self.

Inaugurating his search in the world of men, he begins to delve more deeply into his being. Intensifying his inward search, he grows in spiritual awareness, gradually recognizing and accepting his human limitations. He
is transformed from a figure sulking over personal misfortune into a figure who contemplates his relationships with others and finally acts upon his thoughts. In the process, he moves to the spiritual and communal realm of the Christian. His thoughts and actions begin to look to the faith and good works of the Apostles. His eventual movement is from self-awareness to an almost mystical union with the spirit of God-in-man. Beginning with her depiction of Jim Chapman and culminating in her treatment of Tom Claiborne, Caroline Gordon designs her concern with the spiritual to permeate her entire vision and craft as a novelist. She focuses upon action in thought and spiritual torment. However, Miss Gordon does not forsake her emphasis upon place and family. Rather, she increases their psychological and mystical dimensions, thereby anticipating the totally mystical realm of her last work, *The Glory of Hera*.

In *The Women on the Porch* Miss Gordon amplifies the role of the woman in the creation of the spiritual hero. Set in the shadows, much of the action occurring between dusk and dawn, it is a tale of estrangement, isolation and desolation.

The story concerns Catherine and Jim Chapman, estranged because of his infidelity. Catherine, fleeing from her discovery of his adultery, journeys from their
apartment in New York City where he is a history professor to her ancestral home, Swan Quarter, in Tennessee. Living at Swan Quarter are her relatives, the women on the porch of the book's title. The women are Aunt Willy, a middle-aged woman whose entire life has been spent taking care of an infirm mother and who attempts an active, independent life through the showing of her Tennessee Walking Horse; Catherine Lewis, Catherine Chapman's matrernal grandmother, paralyzed and seemingly feeble-minded but who is actually preoccupied with the memory of a lost love suffered during the Civil War; and Daphne Passavant, cousin to Willy, an object of curiosity and ridicule because her husband left her on their wedding night. All lead passive, desolate lives, blending into the grayness of Swan Quarter and its environs. Through the lives of the three women and a rather desperate liaison with a younger man emotionally crippled by an unloving mother, Catherine comes to realize that her retreat is not an answer to her problems. She does not become one of the women on the porch, a woman without love. Most important, she discovers that she does not want to be a part of the gray, passive existence that Swan Quarter now represents: "The house was filled with an immense quiet. The people who had inhabited it were all gone away or sitting in rooms, tranced in silence." ² Neither the agrarian life--the ancestral home, now in its material and spiritual
decline—nor the progressive, industrial city is the answer. Not places or things or hobbies or retreat but people provide the means to self-renewal, to regaining one's sense of life-commitment.

Catherine Chapman is the modern counterpart of Lucy and Cassy, women who meet the rejection of their husbands and retreat into their wounded pride and hearts. However, Catherine's retreat is not a flight from pain that ends in death but a personal penance and purgation that leads to a sense of renewal. The penance involves a retreat into the self that reveals her role as spiritual guide. Miss Gordon presents her heroine's task in a dream that Catherine does not fully comprehend:

She had descended, with another woman, into a long, dark tunnel. A man, whose relationship to her was not defined, had walked between them, resting a hand on the shoulder of each. The hand was cold. That was because the man was dead, or had been dead and now, called back from the grave, hovered between life and death. Ahead of them in the vast, shadowy tunnel other people were busy with certain operations. When they had finished those operations, the man would be consigned to another grave, from which, it was hoped, he would rise. But in the meantime he walked beside her and kept his frail, intolerable hand on her shoulder. She was about to shake it off when somebody on a-head called back to her that she must be vigilant, that the man's safety depended on her alone. (p. 183)

Catherine does not know at this point that her husband has ended his affair and is seeking her, "the embodiment of all that was desirable" (p. 286) as he realizes when he sees her. She almost prevents a reconciliation, a sense of renewal, by her almost overriding desire for
revenge. Unlike her literary predecessors, she does not assume a passive existence. After reflecting upon her marriage, which she sees as "only a long straining to live up to what her husband demanded of her" (p. 192), she decides to marry Tom Manigault. She decides to have their affair end in marriage because she would live in the country and lead the life that she thinks she was "made for," the life she says she has "always missed" (p. 193). But Miss Gordon does not allow her heroine such an evasion from her marriage.

In Miss Gordon's concept of family both man and woman have responsibilities to meet. If the essential unity, the family, is to thrive, both sexes must meet their respective tasks. When the roles are jeopardized by inner personal forces and/or external social or economic forces, the characters encounter spiritual crisis. When the crisis is so intense that a corruption of the role and spirit occurs, the family unity and individual identity are violated. When the war disrupts the traditional roles, a Fount Allard is rendered incapacitated and his wife and daughter assume the duties of patriarch. When frontier hardships take lives, a Cassy temporarily forsakes her role as wife and inadvertently acts as catalyst in her husband's infidelity. For the majority of the players, pride becomes the dominating factor in human relationships, thereby prohibiting binding and growing relationships.
In twentieth-century life the crisis between a man and a woman becomes more intense and mutually destructive; both figures lose direction and alienate themselves from themselves and from each other. Catherine thinks in terms of revenge: "Later, when I can think, I will tell him that I want a divorce and will make up a story that will deceive even him. That will be my revenge" (p. 40). The actual course that she takes is to tell him of her affair.

Jim Chapman, a scholar who has been using his teaching duties as an excuse for not writing for the past several years, is the first of Miss Gordon's modern alienated men. Miss Gordon makes his spiritual alienation immediately apparent in her introduction to him. He is a translator of Dante and, as he assists a young scholar, he is startled by the passage,

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost.

I cannot rightly tell how I entered it, so full of sleep was I about the moment that I lost the true way. . . .

(p. 83)

Chapman, as the story reveals, is in the middle of his life's journey and is experiencing an intense personal crisis. The crisis involves his own sense of alienation and is reflected in his faltering marriage and in his acute sense of rootlessness. A Middlewesterner, he considers himself rootless: "Middlewesterners springing out
of the rich, black loam of the prairie, are always on their way somewhere else. ... I never felt at home but once in my life, he thought. And that was in that room over on Eighth Avenue" (p. 110). In that room he had buried himself in writing a history of Venice. Later, married and teaching history, he finds himself in an essentially meaningless existence. He has not been faithful to his wife or to his scholarship.

Chapman's integrity lies in his intellect and in his sensitivity to the elements that destroy the quality of life. He sees the destructiveness of the city and modernity exemplified in the emptiness of the "wordmen": "It is the words. They have grown light and anybody can pick them up. There are too many of these wordmen and now they can fly and they cloud the skies over the ocean and a man on one continent has less chance of communicating with another than when the letter was brought by sail ..." (p. 278). Existing in the midst of such emptiness, Chapman seeks a source of meaning. He decides to regain some personal integrity by joining the war effort. He will travel to Italy to speak to a nobleman "known to be inimical to Fascism" and pass their conversation back to the State Department. And he will attempt to see Catherine before leaving the country. That he is engaged in the war effort is a modification of Miss Gordon's continued emphasis upon meaningful if fated work. Of the war Chapman
thinks, "I was too young for the last war and am too old for this war. But I wish I was one of them, for it is something, in this life, for a man to know where he is going, even if the appointment is with the minotaur" (p. 286). His immediate appointment is with Catherine, an appointment that may also be fateful.

Both Jim and Catherine Chapman undergo a spiritual crisis. In the dim recesses of Swan Quarter both confront their darker sides. Neither has been able to hear the inner voices of the spirit found in silence. Instead, no voices have been heard—in the city Jim reflects, "But the silence, after all those years, gave back no sound" (p. 111). Or, the voices are speaking in conflicting ways. Catherine recalls the presences she felt as a child living in Swan Quarter:

The presences had been then only companions whom one could not conveniently address. After she became a woman they had seemed at times to menace or at least to prophesy evil. Four nights ago their voices had driven her out of the house, into the fog, into the arms, she recalled, with a secret smile, of her lover. This morning, as she walked in the bright, scarcely stirring air across the lawn towards the women on the porch the presences spoke in the tones they had used in childhood, but so compellingly that she stopped and with a quick, sidewise turn of the head, looked behind her. There seemed actually to be a stirring of the air all about her, a gentle, continuous murmur that would have resolved itself into speech had there been an ear fine enough to catch it. . . . they were not here to warn or implore. Their voices were kind, their aspects gay. If they moved under the trees it was to dance. (pp. 191-192)

Her immediate reaction is to deny the presences as "her
own mood, coupled with the fine weather, that made everything wear so kind an air."

The silence of Swan Quarter almost overwhelms Jim, however, and drives him out of the house. Having just attempted to strangle his wife because "he wanted only one thing, not to be alone in the abyss into which her words [Catherine's statement of her affair] had plunged him" (p. 300). Looking back at the house, he extends its reflections to his own condition: "'An old, unhappy house,' he thought, 'a prison, but no part of me. No part of me,' he repeated, staring surprised, between the dark plumes of a poplar up into a sky where a little brightness still lingered. 'I do not belong anywhere. There is no place anywhere that is a part of me'" (p. 303). Swan Quarter sharpens Chapman's feelings of rootlessness. Recalling his near disaster, he finds his thoughts taking on a supernatural aura. Confronting the "horror" of his act, he leaves the house and encounters its history. He envisions the phantom ancestor who brought the evil or the curse to the primeval forest and begins conversation. His concern is the land:

"The land is cursed. It is an old land, ruled by a goddess whose limbs were weary with turning before ever Ireland rose from the sea. An ancient goddess whom men have wakened from an evil dream. . . ."

"It is No Man's Land," he said. "That is the enchantment. The land will turn brittle and fall away from under your children's feet, they will have no fixed habitation, will hold no spot dearer than
another, will roam as savage as the buffalo that now flees your arquebus. And the demons will not have the grace, as in ages past, to assume half-human forms, but will retain their own inhuman shapes! Sticks, stones, pulleys, levers such as Archimedes devised, will have voices, show frowning visages. And your children, languid, pale, their members withered, will bow down before them and when they speak their voices will not be heard for the inhuman babble of their gods. I tell you," he cried and heard the thin, minatory shriek rise and float above the quiet trees, "I tell you this tree, whose boughs, gleaming, led you to this stream, felled, its heart reft out, will have a voice, will utter cries louder than any you can utter. Cleena," he cried, and hearing the name, old and forgotten before he came into the world, stretched his hands out to the dark water: "Cleena, he will not listen!"

But the man in buckskin had laid his morsel of flesh down and was rising. He put out his hand. The pack was on his back. He moved, rifle in hand, towards the stream. (pp. 308-309)

The ghostly companion leaves, ignoring the warning, and Chapman stumbles among the leaves, falls, and sleeps. Trying to tell the frontiersman of death, of the rootlessness that the land fosters, he fails to stop him. He fails to stop time and to control or prevent a future. His attempts to control life and time are futile and yield frustration and one near murder. When he awakens, he returns to Catherine.

The return marks the return to life and the acceptance of the unknown factors and possible failures in life. Fearing human contact and the rejection that may ensue, he approaches warily. He sits beside her on the porch step and thinks, "There was not much to be lost now, but he would have to listen. If he were not so weary he would get up now and leave the house. It would take effort"
He does stay, and he does listen to Catherine who tells him that her romance with Tom Manigault has ended.

The succeeding mundane actions—the gathering of wood, the brewing of coffee—serve to bring Catherine and Jim together. In their clean, well-lighted place they hold the world at bay and experience a closeness afforded by the simple ritual of making coffee. The spell is broken by the entrance of Aunt Willy who tells of the electrocution of her prize horse, Red. And the day breaks in upon the scene: "She moved into the middle of the room. In those few minutes day had broken. The morning light, flooding the room, made the lamplight pallid. Suddenly, from the yard, a rooster crowed" (p. 315). Their temporary refuge entered by the outside world, Catherine and Jim end dark nights of soul-searching.

Chapman assumes his traditional role as husband and directs Catherine. She is to remain with him. Together they will confront life and what it has to offer: 
"... Chapman took her by the shoulders and made her stand quiet beside him. 'Let her [Aunt Willy] alone,' he said. ... 'Come,' he said, and heard all the echoes stir in the sleeping house. 'We will bury him [Red] as soon as it's light. Then we must go''' (pp. 315-316). The world they are about to enter is one in chaos, for the Germans are bombing England and world war is about to
break. Their personal war, however, is ended. Together they will meet the outside forces of the world and their inner agonies and triumphs. This is the final inference to be drawn.

The *Women on the Porch* concludes without any real sense of a spiritual renewal let alone a sense of redemption. Rather, there is a muted sense of a beginning. Catherine and Jim Chapman discover loneliness and personal failings, and they penetrate their respective lonely and alienated conditions. Humbled by their knowledge of their humanity, their fallibility, and their need for each other, they commit themselves to each other and, thereby, to active, meaningful life. They enter the world. Their knowledge and their agreement to enter the world together provide their salvation. They are willing to risk life rather than accept death—to be one of the women on the porch, to retreat into cynicism, or to lose selves in liaisons devoid of love. The conclusion suggests that of *Paradise Lost*, of fallen man and woman braving the world together. The Dantean journey to a beatific vision is a conclusion yet to be realized by the Gordon hero. At this point in the hero's evolution, the Gordon hero and heroine begin the journey toward the spirituality of Christian love that their literary descendants pursue still further.
The Strange Children, as Louise Cowan has noted, inaugurates "a new stage of artistic productivity" for Miss Gordon. In this work Miss Gordon's religious perspective becomes apparent. The epigraph--"Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speakth vanity . . ." (Psalm 144)--indicates the religious or spiritual view that permeates the story. In the story, as Louise Cowan has also noted, people worship nature not "God of nature," but in each character, "and successively less mute, is the cry, 'Rid me and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children.'" Everyone in the story is seeking a religious experience, but, according to orthodox Catholicism, the ways taken are the ways of vanity--love affairs, intellectual pride--and of the unorthodox--snake handling practices of the Holy Rollers. Only one figure is orthodox in his approach to the religious experience--the Catholic whom Miss Gordon envelops in the mystical silence of the contemplative as exemplified by the Trappist life.

The Strange Children is the story of Steve and Sarah Lewis as told through the mind of their eight-year-old daughter Lucy. All action, which is primarily cerebral, takes place at Benfolly, the Lewis's restored Southern home on the Kentucky-Tennessee border. Here, Steve Lewis and his wife Sarah, Aleck Maury's daughter, hold open house to the strange children who are identified succinctly
in the book's epigraph. The Lewises are also included among the strange children.

While Steve attempts to write an account of the Grant-Lee maneuvers, he and his family are visited by Uncle Tubby, poet-intellectual who has just sold the movie rights to his 5,000-line Civil War poem, and by Isabel and Kev Reardon. Isabel, undergoing a mental breakdown, and Uncle Tubby, who does not apprehend her condition, have an affair and eventually flee Benfolly. Kev Reardon, an enigma to the group, remains. A recent and devout convert to Catholicism, he is not one of the strange children who speak vanity. Rather, he is a kind of mystical center who both repulses and attracts those around him. The one most attracted is young Lucy. Also present is the MacDonough family, poor white tenants on the Lewis property who are actively engaged in preparation for the annual Brush Arbor meeting to be held in an area just below the main house. Mr. and Mrs. MacDonough, according to the tenets of the Holy Roller religion, have been "Saved." He lives a life that Steve Lewis describes as "one long Eucharist." The MacDonough family, husband, wife, and children, Lucy's occasional playmates, provides Lucy's single contact with spiritual life.

With Lucy, Steve and Sarah Lewis come to experience the mystical. Before doing so, they must, like David in Psalm 144, reach out to God in humble supplication. Their
spiritual progress is complicated primarily by Steve's intellectual arrogance. A scholar pursuing his own private thoughts, Lewis fails to reach out to people as people. He is self-centered as his wife sharply accuses him: "... you never would have thought of [giving the cook a hot toddy for her toothache] because you don't think about anybody but yourself, all day long and half the night . . ." (p. 72). He is, like his literary predecessor Jim Chapman, a man devoted to ideas at the expense of genuine human relationships.

Miss Gordon constructs her story upon contrasting elements: the worldly and the otherworldly approaches to happiness taken by the characters; the stances of the skeptic and the mystic toward people and religion; the Holy Roller and the Catholic religious practices. The worldly matter of infidelity contrasts with the otherworldly concern of a spiritual crisis; Steve Lewis, skeptic, contrasts with Kev Reardon, mystic; and the more literal and physical approach to belief of the Holy Rollers contrasts with the almost mystical approach of the Catholics as represented by Kev Reardon. The tension between the polarities increases as the story progresses and is never completely resolved.

In a kind of surrealistical vision, Lucy sees the spiritual corruption in the Benfolly world:

"Minnesota," Lucy thought, "Laughing Something, a place where Minnehaha might have lived, only if
you asked them they would say she lived somewhere else." Her mother wasn't talking about a place, anyhow, but about that lady. Even at the moment of uttering the name her lips drew a little away from it. That meant that she didn't like the lady. But she wouldn't come out and say so. She and the others would talk around and around her--she was this way and that way and they wondered why she wasn't some other way. None of their friends ever quite suited them. You would think they were crazy about a person but the minute he turned his back they were on him, tearing him to pieces. Somehow he never looked the same afterwards. She closed her eyes in order to see more clearly the green sward that surrounded the house littered with the dismembered bodies of visitors: a head tossed into the honeysuckle vines, an arm draped on a stalk of yucca, a pair of legs that had collapsed on the path that went down to the river. Sometimes after they had spent hours taking a person to pieces they would turn around and put him together again, but some of the people they just left lying there. Why, they were all over the lawn! (pp. 29-30)

Lucy understands that both parents are caught up in the gossip of a superficial world. However, Sarah is not entirely alienated from her traditional role, preserver of family, and is still sensitive to the spirit of others. Steve Lewis is not.

The means to the hero's awakening of compassion and spirit is Kev Reardon. Reardon is first introduced by Uncle Tubby in the context of idle gossip. He is a wealthy expatriate who, with his wife Isabel, was usually surrounded by "about four dozen people staying in the house" (p. 27), who had too much and therefore "he never seemed to have anything to do," and who now has undergone a seemingly inexplicable religious conversion. Tubby has a Freudian explanation for Reardon's conversion to Catholicism: "The
psychiatrists say that he has no father-image to pattern himself by. That's why he's moved back into his father's villa at Toulon. Even got his father's old butler back. Opened up the chapel that's on the place. Has what amounts to a resident chaplain, for he's hand in glove with the local curé. I must say the fellow's interesting. One of the foremost Patrologists in France, but one can get enough of his society. Kev has Mass said in his chapel every morning, and they sing the offices, too" (p. 37). He also has been viewed as a "pretty puzzling case" of "latent homosexuality." Steve Lewis, anticipating the stronger anti-Freudian views in The Malefactors, rejects such explanations: "I don't believe that." A rational man, he attributes the conversion to a car accident. The accident killed two people and seriously bruised Isabel. Reardon saved her life by crawling to a nearby spring and returning with water. Seriously injured himself, he risked further injury by obtaining the water. The heroic act is characteristic of Reardon, as Tubby explains: "I never knew any fellow had more nerve than Ken Reardon. After all, he got his Croix de Guerre for drawing enemy fire" (p. 38). With these comments and speculations, Uncle Tubby announces that the Reardons are in the neighborhood.

Reardon is visiting a Trappist monk in Bardstown. The linking of Reardon and the Trappists provides the early clue to his character and gives him a certain
credibility. It also indicates the increasingly Catholic point of view emerging in the story. A quiet man, Reardon reflects the Trappist code of silence. Thomas Merton, who lived at Bardstown, has explained the silence of the contemplative: "And he [a lay brother in the abbey of Aiguebelle] was living pretty much the way they had lived before him, fasting, praying, reading, keeping silence with his tongue in order that the depths of his mind and heart might be free to seek God—the silent, secret, yet obvious presence of God that is known to the contemplative and unknown to anyone else: not so much because it is unintelligible as because its very excess of intelligibility blinds us and makes us incapable of grasping it."^10

A silent, preoccupied man, Kev Reardon is an enigma in the world of Benfolly. The adults talk about him but fail to perceive his spiritual identity, and Lucy has no standard by which to know him:

What was it about him that made her feel that she would not dare to ride into town with him alone?
Was it his dark eyes that nearly always had such an odd brightness, or was it because he was so silent? Her father was silent, too, a great deal of the time, but with him that was absentmindedness; he was thinking his own thoughts and didn't care about anybody else's, her mother said. Sometimes she or her mother had to shake his arm to get his attention. But whatever Mr. Reardon was thinking about it was not himself; he listened every time anybody else said anything. He listened to what they said, but all the time he was thinking about something else, too. What was it, she asked himself, what was it that he was always thinking about while he sat there, listening to them talk? What was it that he never could stop thinking about, no matter how hard he listened? (p. 204)
Reardon's preoccupation is not the intellectual preoccupation of Steve Lewis; rather, it is that of the contemplative religious who exists in two worlds—the temporal and the spiritual. Reardon does listen to people; he does not reject others for his personal convenience or out of arrogance. His silence stems from his spiritual consciousness. He reflects the knowledge that one cannot be a truly spiritual being if one does not listen to the inner voices of the spirit. To hear demands silence. Reardon is like the monk Thomas Merton describes: "For the monk searches not only his own heart: he plunges deep into the heart of that world of which he remains a part although he seems to have 'left' it. In reality the monk abandons the world only in order to listen more intently to the deepest and most neglected voices that proceed from its inner depth." The brightness of Reardon's eyes that Lucy notes and attributes to his silence also reflects his spiritual consciousness and private knowledge. Relative to the action of the story, he possesses a knowledge unknown to the others: Isabel's precarious mental state. The active dramatization of his spiritual light and knowledge comes through Lucy in her relationship to him.

Lucy, whose name signifies light, is the agent of sight. Her namesake is St. Lucy, the virgin who filled her lamp with oil when the other virgins did not, and who, with her "oil of gladness," the lighted lamp, symbolizes
a soul in a state of grace. As St. Lucy prepared for the state of grace, so, now, does Reardon; so also does Lucy, who as she grows in the knowledge of Christ will, like St. Lucy, provide light for others, specifically her father, albeit a flickering light because of the hesitancy of the receiver.

Lucy's vision is limited by her age, but not by the skepticism of the adults. She accepts the happenings of the world, the spirit, and the imagination. She believes in Mrs. MacDonough's sanctification. When she tells her parents that Mrs. MacDonough has "seen Jesus flying through the air on wings" (p. 45), they attempt to dismiss the vision because Mrs. MacDonough "had a child before she was married." Unlike her parents, Lucy does not react to people according to social standards but through innate feelings for the goodness of a person. By doing so, Lucy enhances her own goodness and innocence.

Lucy also intuits the romantic liaison of Tubby and Isabel. In her reading of Undine, a story of a water spirit personified as a beautiful girl who gains a soul through love and with a plot that illuminates the actions of Tubby and Isabel, she links the worlds of the imagination and of reality and contrasts the states of adultery and spirituality. Undine, by La Motte-Fouqué, whose description--a man who looked for Christiandom "united and vivified by a fresh age of chivalry"--informs the
tale, underscores the tension between the pagan and the religious strivings within men.\textsuperscript{13} It also emphasizes the need for the religious in life. In \textit{The Strange Children}, Uncle Tubby, pleasure seeker, opposes Kev Reardon, a lay religious, in pursuing Reardon's wife. Unaware of Isabel's deteriorating mental state, Tubby believes that he is rescuing Isabel from an insensitive husband who is lost in religious eccentricity. Isabel is in the position of Undine prior to Undine's marriage. Undine says to the priest: "To have a soul must be a delightful thing, but a fearful thing too. Would it not be better--tell me, sir, in God's name--would it not be better to have nothing to do with it?"\textsuperscript{14} The answer in the tale is no, for without a soul there cannot be "genuine love and honour."\textsuperscript{15} Childlike, Isabel, who assumes the manner of Lucy by wearing the same colors and adorning her hair with a garland of flowers, pursues a state of pure pleasure that can only bring about destruction. In her state, she cannot give genuine love. And Tubby is not a chivalric knight of honor but a man involved in an adulterous affair. The pleasure Isabel and Tubby seek is an illusion, without substance. As in the tale of Undine, sorrow will result. Because people do have souls, so the implication is in both tale and novel, people must behave with the consciousness of morality. People must not violate the hearts of others.
Lucy's vision is particularly limited by conflicting attitudes toward religious experiences and by lack of knowledge. Lucy reveals the conflicting attitudes in her thoughts of the religiosity of the MacDonoughs as opposed to that of her parents:

Her father quoted the Bible almost as much as Mr. MacDonough did, but it sounded different on his lips: The Christ of the New Testament, the Jesus of the Second Gospel, the Coptic something. . . . Her mother talked to her about God sometimes, usually when she was worked up about something. Like that time her mother thought that she had told a lie about going in swimming and had come and sat on the side of her bed that night and told her that she needn't mind owning up that she had told a lie, that God already knew it; he knew everything. . . . It didn't sound like the same God, though. Or maybe it was just that the MacDonoughs were closer to Him. She wondered whether their being so poor had anything to do with it--or so dirty. (p. 109)

The Bible is a living reality for the MacDonoughs, an historical work for Steve Lewis, and a means of chastisement for Sarah. When Lucy steals a crucifix she dramatizes her attraction to the mystery of religion. Reardon has left his room, and Lucy enters:

Something white and black and shining lay under the book. She took it up in her hand--a cross carved out of ebony, with an ivory figurine fastened upon it: Jesus on the Cross. She turned the crucifix sideways. . . . She turned the crucifix in her hand. The eyes glowed at her. . . . Her hand closed tightly over the crucifix. . . .

. . . She waited until the calf bawled again and went noiselessly to the dresser and taking the top off a lacquered box marked GLOVES shoved the crucifix under a heap of handkerchiefs. As she replaced the lid she became aware that somebody was watching her in the mirror. She stood still to meet the strict gaze. The girl had on a yellow dress. . . . she had not known that her own eyes could hold such an expression. She stared back. The expression in
the grey eyes did not change. It was as if the girl in the mirror did not know that it was she, Lucy Lewis, who was looking back at her. (pp. 101-103)

The cross is an alien object to Lucy, and stealing is such an alien action that she does not recognize herself in the mirror. Lucy succumbs to a temptation, and in so doing she is forced to consider her integrity. Steve, too, will be forced to look inward but in more absolute terms.

A basic facet of Lucy's character lies in the assumption that concerns of the spirit must go beyond the realm of pure intellect. The following exchange between Steve Lewis and Kev Reardon illustrates the point. Lewis addresses the intellect and Reardon the spirit. The passage is important to the increasingly religious emphasis not only in The Strange Children but in the succeeding novels.

[Sarah asks] "I know Adam fell, but suppose he hadn't fallen? Would he have gone on living on earth or would he eventually have been taken up to Heaven?"

"He was already in Heaven," a voice said.

They all looked at Mr. Reardon. The little, smiling, bright-eyed man was looking at the glass of wine that he held in his hand. He gave it a shake, as if the tiny splash of the red wine on the side of the glass made whatever he was looking at easier to see, before he set it down and glanced about him. He saw Lucy and smiled. "He was already in Heaven," he repeated. "God came and talked with him every day. That is being in Heaven."

"Oh . . . ?" Mama said. "That's being in Heaven, is it? I never knew that before."

He nodded. "I didn't, either," he said, "Until recently. We have a friend who lives in the same town that we do who instructs us. He has explained a great many things to me that I never knew before." "Is that Father DuFresnay?" Daddy asked. "He's immensely learned, isn't he?"

"I've never asked him a question that he wasn't able to answer."

"He's a wonderfully lucid expositor," Daddy said. "I don't know about such things," Mr. Reardon
said. He looked as if he had been going to say something else but had changed his mind. He said again: "I don't know much about those things, Steve. I was already converted when I met him." (pp. 120-121)

A discussion of St. Martha and her area of France ensues, with Lewis drawing parallels between Christian myth and the Brito-Martis myth of the Phoenicians. At one point he insists upon the legendary quality of the story of the saint. For Lewis, stories of the saints and sacred history in general should be subject to the scrutiny of the intellect and not to the unverifiable feelings of the heart.

Lewis begins his spiritual awakening in rather dramatic circumstances. He expresses a heightened sensitivity to the spiritual in man in a game of charades. In the game, Tubby assumes the role of a priest, an act Reardon interprets as sacrilegious: "He [Tubby] said Dominus vobiscum! That was sacrilege" and "A priest is higher than the angels" (pp. 156-157). Lucy already dismissed from the room by Reardon, the game ends with Isabel going into hysterics, and Reardon, shielded by Steve from Uncle Tubby, conducting her to her room. Lucy's dream concludes the chapter and indicates the gradually changing position of Steve Lewis, that he does see the chasm before him yet has not halted his progress toward it. The forest imagery, anticipating the cave imagery in The Malefactors, reflects the wayward yet seeking soul of the hero:

She [Lucy] slept at last and dreamed that all the people in the house were setting out on a journey. . . . It was through a forest, such as the
Knight Huldbrand had wandered in, but the road was not plain and every now and then they stopped, not knowing which way to turn. Her father went first—and this was a curious thing—he did not walk as he did every day, with his head bent, his eyes on the ground, but held his head high, not looking where he set his feet, and would not listen to her mother when she pointed, saying that the trail went this way or that. Mama left him standing at the foot of a great tree and went on alone, saying that she knew that this was the way. When she came back her hands were full of white flowers. He would not look at her or her flowers, but standing, his head still high, pointed to another way down which Mrs. Reardon and Mr. Reardon and Uncle Tubby were coming. Mrs. Reardon was all in white, and she walked slowly, as she had walked into the parlor for the charade, holding out before her the great silver tray from the sideboard in the dining room. Uncle Tubby and Mr. Reardon kept pointing to what lay on the tray: Captain Green's head. There was no blood on it anywhere; it was as white as bone. The lips kept moving. When Uncle Tubby and Mr. Reardon heard the sounds that came from the lips they cried out and ran away, but Mrs. Reardon kept walking slowly forward and the trees got thinner and you saw that this country they were walking through was no real country at all, only the brink of a great chasm into which they would all fall if they did not turn around and go back the way they had come. (pp. 163-164)

In the episode of the Persiad party which concludes

The Strange Children, a greatly subdued Steve Lewis experiences a heightened awareness of eternity and of the unknown. He becomes a visionary in the sense Miss Gordon has described the visionaries of Flannery O'Connor: he experiences a "moment of vision," a moment of insight. His vision concludes the story, uniting the several elements of the story—the romantic fairy tale of Undine and its tragic consequences in the real-life version of the tale, the ritualistic and fatal act of a Holy Roller in religious
ecstasy, the return of a crucifix, and the humbling of self through revelation.

Shortly before the vision, Steve and Lucy find themselves waiting for Reardon, who is in confession. For Lucy the entire situation is a mingling of awe, the unknown, and the real. Lucy is sitting in the car with her father waiting for Reardon to emerge from the village's Catholic church:

Lucy stared at the arched door. When it had opened a moment ago it had been on darkness, but something bright had glinted through the gloom. The altar, probably. She, herself, had never been in a Catholic Church—except in France and she had been too young then to remember what she had seen, except sometimes when it all seemed as if it might come back to her at any moment, . . . Was Mr. Reardon praying in there at the foot of the altar or just talking to the priest? And what was he saying?

She laid her hand on her father's arm. "Daddy, what's he doing in there?"

Her father started and fixed her face with unseeing eyes. His own face, in that instant, was so haggard, so drawn that she thought she knew how he would look when he was old. "God knows," he said and groaned, so loud that a Negro man, starting down the path to Vinegar Bottom, paused and stood still in the bright light to stare at them. (p. 272)

Perhaps too much can be read into Steve Lewis's words and groan, yet the Negro man serves to confirm the depths of the groan when he stops in the full light of day and listens. Lewis does not understand Reardon's faith. The darkness, in this instance, is not the darkness of a soul removed from God. Rather, it is the darkness of the unknown world of Spirit. In the Catholic sacrament of Confession, the confessor confronts his own darkness and the
incomprehensible vastness of Spirit, seeking the Light of the Spirit, seeking grace. To achieve grace is to achieve communion with God. Not yet able to transcend his despair through hope, Lewis is beginning to feel the burdens of the seeking, religious spirit. Confirmation of this view comes in his moment of vision.

In the last scene of the story the point of view shifts to Steve Lewis and away from Lucy. Earlier Lucy had dreamed about the fate of her family and had consciously speculated about the end of the world: "Mr. MacDonough believed that God put the moon up there in the sky and that she would stay there, cold and silver, till he took her down. But Uncle Tubby thought that she had already left her place and was moving toward the earth and some day would strike against it and shatter into a million pieces. Where would they all be then and what would happen when the moon and the earth broke against each other?" (p. 105). Now Lewis takes on the burden of such speculation and from a larger perspective. An adult, he must bear the responsibility of the revelation of Spirit, for spirituality involves faith, action, and intellect. Looking up at the stars, he confronts man's mortality and the almost overwhelming concept of eternity:

There was his own sign, Scorpio: "House of Death--unless a man be re-born." . . .

He passed his hand over his brow. He eyes went to the house below where a single lamp glowed murky. There a man still lay at the point of death. He told
himself that it would have been no great matter if that man had died tonight, for all men, it appeared to him now, for the first time, die on the same day: the day on which their appointed task is finished. If that man had made his last journey tonight he would not have gone alone, but companioned by a larger presence, as the friend standing behind him had been companioned when he, too, lay at the point of death, in a strange country and in a desert. But all countries, he told himself wearily, are strange and all countries desert. He thought of another man, the friend of his youth, who only a few minutes ago had left his house without farewell. He had considered him the most gifted of all his intimates. Always when he thought of that friend a light had seemed to play about his head. He saw him now standing at the edge of a desert that would be featureless, his eye sockets blank. Stephen Lewis thought of days, of years that they had spent together. He saw that those days, those years, had been moving toward this moment and he wondered what moment was being prepared for him and for his wife and his child, and he groaned, so loud that the woman and the child stared at him, wondering too. (pp. 301-303)

Steve Lewis finally does see. He recognizes the loneliness and mortality of man and the unknown factors that shape existence. Once again he groans so loudly, realizing the implications of his vision, that others hear. This time, in the shadows of the night, his wonder is shared. Now in darkness because he cannot know the future, he consciously shares in the human situation. With his wife and child beside him, he recognizes the limitations of men and the precariousness of life. He senses a "larger presence," and he, we may assume, will work through his "appointed task," whatever that task is. He will fulfill that task conscious of the "larger presence." Accepting uncertainty and mortality, he seems
prepared to meet his fate and to accept it. He now realizes two essentials of religious faith: awareness of the frailty of self and awareness of the need for faith or trust in a power outside the self. In so doing, he reflects the shifting spiritual awareness of Miss Gordon's hero. He accepts his fate in a Christian way, through faith. The next stage of the hero's journey to a direct religious commitment requires a closer look at that chasm which Lucy saw her father walking toward.

The Malefactors begins almost literally where The Strange Children ends. Steve Lewis in the last sentence of his story wonders "what moment was being prepared for him and his wife and his child," and Tom Claiborne, hero in The Malefactors, wonders in the opening passage of his story where the years were bound. Seeking his "life role," Claiborne pursues the religious implications of the question of his destiny and searches for his spiritual center. Doing so, he comes finally to follow the directive by Jacques Maritain used as the epigraph of The Malefactors: "It is for Adam to interpret the voices that Eve hears." Claiborne conducts his search on two levels, the concrete world of human relationships and the metaphysical world of the spirit.

The Malefactors is Miss Gordon's most overtly Christian tale. It dramatizes the spiritual conversion of its
hero in the journey motif of Dante. In the story three groups of people, temporarily suspended in time, seek to achieve unity of being both as individuals and within their vocations and family circles. All are pilgrims of a sort who assist the hero in his search for his spiritual center. The hero, one of the malefactors of the book's title, is like the two malefactors next to the crucified Christ. He both flees from and seeks Christ. In order to pursue his search for Christ, he must see himself as a malediction and come to know the Christ of the Passion as Simone Weil has explained that dimension of Christ:

After the Resurrection the infamous character of his ordeal was effaced by glory, and today, across twenty centuries of adoration, the degradation which is the very essence of the Passion is hardly felt by us. We think now only of the sufferings, and of that vaguely, for the sufferings which we imagine are always lacking in gravity. We no longer imagine the dying Christ as a common criminal. St. Paul himself wrote: "If Jesus Christ be not risen, then is our faith vain." And yet the death on the Cross is something more divine than the Resurrection, it is the point where Christ's divinity is concentrated. Today the glorious Christ veils from us the Christ who was made a malediction; and thus we are in danger of adoring in his name the appearance, and not the reality, of justice.

He must also assume the Christian's role as Jacques Maritain has defined it. He must oppose "as much as possible the progress of evil, and to accelerate as much as possible the progress of good in the world." Some of the pilgrims in The Malefactors know their roles in life, others seek them, and a few avoid them.
Initially, the hero, through his intellectual arrogance, prevents or inhibits the spiritual development of his group and avoids those who do good, who possess spiritual consciousness. Only after his descent into the depths of his being, initiated by recollections of family history and current marital problems which culminate in an adulterous affair, does he realize his humanity and that of those around him. Walking through a maze of natural, mechanical, and religious symbols, he finds his role as masculine force, as leader. He comes to realize that quality of life is the concern of men and is dependent upon relationships with people. He comes to realize his need for friendship and love. His journey to these realizations and to a unity between his moral nature and livelihood is, like Dante's, long and arduous.

The three groups of characters in the novel can be viewed as three forces: the feminine, the masculine, and the supernatural. In the first group are Vera Claiborne, wife of the protagonist, Sister Immaculata, a realistic dramatization of active faith and intellect, and Catherine Pollard, Catholic convert, a lay sister in her living faith and good works. The three reflect the passion and love of Christ; they are the feminine guides to the spiritual center of life. They offer love and understanding and lead Claiborne to the "sacred marriage with the anima." The fourth feminine figure is Cynthia
Vail, mistress to Tom Claiborne, perpetrator of self-destruction and self-deception. Collectively, the four women present man's potential for greatness and his potential for self-abasement and denial of all that is good.

In the second group of characters in *The Malefactors* are Tom Claiborne, poet, skeptic; George Crenfrew, psychiatrist and cousin to Claiborne; and Max Shull, artist. With the exception of Sister Immaculata, all gather at Blencker's Brook, the Claibornes' expensive, restored Pennsylvania Dutch home located fifty-five minutes from New York City. They are gathered for a fair--actually, a party for Vera's prize bull--to be held on the Claibornes' three hundred-acre farm. A clash between the proponents of the latest scientific breeding methods and those who uphold the traditional methods of breeding occurs. As in *The Strange Children*, Miss Gordon constructs the story upon opposing forces that create tension between elements in the plot and within and between characters: the scientific mind versus those who uphold traditional methods of action; the man of reason versus the mystic; and those who despair versus those who hope, who possess faith in a divine being.

A third group of characters in *The Malefactors* consists of three persons who are deceased when the story opens: Horne Watts, a poet; Quintus Claiborne, Tom's father; and Carlo Vincent, Vera's father, an artist.
Both Watts and Quintus Claiborne have died by suicide. Present in the minds and conversations of each of the principal characters, these three persons are central to Claiborne's conversion. They force him to explore the past and reflect upon a future that must evolve from the present. Shadowy figures who gradually reveal their identities and meanings to Claiborne, they lead him to look into the abyss of his spiritual depravity.23

A transplanted Southerner, Claiborne was a young man studying law when a small inheritance enabled him to leave his native Tennessee and move to Paris to pursue his writing. During his editorship of Spectra, a poetry magazine put out with a friend for five years from "a rat-infested basement on the Ile Saint Louis," he published "his sensational poem which brought about a revolution in English poetry."24 While in France he met and married Vera, whose parents were also expatriates. After his return to New York he gave up editorship of the magazine, and he and Vera moved to Blencker's Brook. Now forty-seven and having lived at Blencker's Brook for twelve years, he is no longer writing. The muse is silent.

If Claiborne is to have meaning in his life as a poet, a creative artist, and as a husband, he must seek the sources of meaning in his life--his identity through the identity of his family and friends. He must assume the role of Adam and interpret the voices of his feminine
counterpart. In Jungian terms, he must make the journey into self, "the mythic journey into his own unconscious to find his true, deep self in order to become sane and creative again." He must experience, in the words of Joseph Campbell, the glory of spiritual growth "which is achieved through the agony of breaking through personal limitations." Recognizing the religious context of the story, one is reminded of Saint Augustine's definition of evil as the absence of Good and feels compelled to say that the hero must journey through the world of his creation in which goodness is absent. Only then can the feminine voices--family, marriage, home, friends, faith and humility--be heard. Only then can the hero accept human frailties in himself and in others and respond to life. Claiborne's ultimate objective is spiritual wholeness. He must experience the silence of spirituality, of genuine contemplation, that Kev Reardon before him experienced and Steve Lewis sensed. The voices of the spirit demand silence. To hear the voices he must first rid himself of the voices of "Strange Children," and then begin his search.

Claiborne's immediate search within the family circle is for a reconciliation with his wife. Having lost her trust, he reflects the eternal problem central to each of the Gordon heroes. Like his literary ancestors, he has abdicated the masculine role and its
responsibilities. The result is disorder, a floundering marriage. Before he recognizes his need for Vera, he experiences emptiness in estrangement, self-abasement in a loveless affair, despair in the realization of the loss and violation of a human heart, and desperation in hopes for forgiveness. The story, in effect, presents what Joseph Campbell describes as the problem today: "rendering the modern world spiritually significant . . . making it possible for men and women to come to full human maturity through the conditions of contemporary life." \(^{27}\) In his search, Claiborne realizes his need for Vera and for people and, as poet, for the muse. He conducts his search in increasingly religious terms, emphasizing that religious consciousness and secular life are interrelated.

Relocated Southerner and former expatriate, Claiborne finds himself a part of a closed, cosmopolitan group of friends. His recollections of his Southern heritage emphasize the group's superficialities and his misunderstanding of the members. They also provide the natural symbols that enhance the two levels of his search: a copper beech, representative of permanence and stability in a seemingly superficial world, and a cave, symbol of the journey inward to a spiritual center.

Natural symbols serve the telling of the story and locate the hero in time and place. The copper beech located on Blencker's Brook and under which Claiborne
rests, hoping for the Muse to speak, is Claiborne's link with the past: "He raised his head and stared at the copper beech tree as if he could find the answer there. He had always loved this tree for its bronze-colored leaves. It had for him associations that no other tree on the place had. When he had first come to live here, there had been a hammock slung between that tree and a young maple. It was that summer that he gave up the editorship of Spectra, . . ." (p. 7). It is also a link with antiquity, a reminder of Presences, and a reminder of failing creative energies:

That summer he often lay on his back in the hammock under the beech—for as far back as he could remember it had fascinated him to lie on his back and look up into depth on depth of leaves. Vergil tells us that a mighty elm tree stands at the entrance to Orcus, its branches hung full of dreams. In those days he had felt that those dusky boughs harbored Presences. Sometimes they had seemed to suffuse the whole garden with light. He had only been waiting for them to speak. And even when there were no signs, no tokens, he had not neglected to do them reverence, but had prayed—in his fashion—to Aeschylus, to Sophocles, to the Florentine, to Baudelaire, who had prayed—to Poe! But something had gone wrong. They had not spoken now in a long time. God have mercy on my poor soul! he thought, . . . . (pp. 8-9)

Later in the day he sees a changing image: "A servant was placing a tea service on a small table under the copper beech tree. . . . That woman, Cynthia, there on the bench. Something black swayed at her feet. Was it the shadow of a tree trunk or the wavering walls of a chasm? It crept on across the grass and she set her cup in her
lap, her eyes staring straight ahead. Did she know that her bench stood on the lip of a chasm? And Molly Archer, in the blue-green dress that so set off her gilt hair, and Ed Archer and Max, they were all poised on the chasm's edge. A tilt of the hand could send them hurtling over. It would be easy, he thought" (p. 68). It is Claiborne who falls.

A variation and elaboration of the forest symbolism in The Strange Children, the chasm associated with the copper beech first appears as a cave. It is perhaps the most pervasive symbol in the story, initially providing the setting for Claiborne's inward journey. Later, a church grotto provides the setting for Claiborne's spiritual conversion. Claiborne recalls a cave in his boyhood neighborhood and the maze it presented: "It is hard to know which way to go; the room has more passages opening off it than a man has fingers on both hands" (p. 269). Just as he found it "hard to know which way to go" in the cave, so now he finds it difficult to gain direction in life.

The cave is also the central image in a recurring dream that Claiborne experiences and relates to his cousin:

Claiborne took a drink. "In the cave at the foot of Long Mountain, George. You remember the time we were in there and you took your cap off and the light struck that place and we saw what we would have fallen into if we'd taken one more step?"
George nodded slowly. "I was so weak I had to go and sit down awhile."
"I couldn't sleep that night for thinking about it," Claiborne said. "It was the same place, George... My father was sitting there, waiting for me!"
"Waiting for you?"
"To keep me from going over the edge."
"Had he been there a long time?"
"All my life," Claiborne said with a sob. "George, he'd been there all my life!"
"How did you get into the cave?"
"The same way we went in the first time. Pushed the laurel aside and crawled till we got to the creek. It was just like it was when we used to go there. The earth was damp along the banks of the stream but dry as dust everywhere else... You remember how cold and dry that dust used to be, George?"
George said, "Yes... Were you alone?"
"You were with me, at first, but you went away."
"Was anybody else there?"
"Horne Watts!" Claiborne said. "He was running along ahead of us, and there was another fellow..." He paused to stare at his cousin. "It was Carlo Vincent! The other fellow was Carlo Vincent, but I never knew that till this minute." (p. 273)

Through his recollection of the dream and the cave, Claiborne experiences a shock of recognition. He recognizes the central figures in his dream, those running to the abyss. The recognition is integral to a second, earlier shock of recognition that reflects the spiritual realm toward which Claiborne is moving. A stable becomes the symbol of his inward journey:

Claiborne, as soon as he entered the stable, had sustained a shock of recognition. It had seemed to him a place he had been in before or a place toward which he had been traveling for a long time. The feeling of recognition was so strong that he had felt an ache in the pit of his stomach. He had moved restlessly about the room... He had felt himself impelled to lay his hand on some of the objects. They held, he felt, some secret that
he was on the point of discovering. At the door he had turned back for one last look, asking himself: What is it? What was here? What is still here? . . .

Later, as he walked back across the fields with the others, a voice—the voice that spoke to him so often that, at times, his life seemed to him no more than a despairing dialogue with a companion, an opponent who would not, who could not, who could never even be imagined as ceasing to speak—that relentless voice had said: "That is the way you'd like to live. That is the way you want to live." He had acknowledged the desire, telling himself, however, that it was only a passing fancy. (pp. 85-86)

The rural locale provides the setting that conveys a sense of order and simplicity, both addressing the spirit of the discontented Claiborne. The words recall Catherine Chapman's expressed desire for peace. In the stable, Claiborne, too, senses a simplicity and order that provide stability and an escape from life's complications. The scene anticipates the later setting, a chapel, in which he undergoes the final stage of his conversion and where he expresses his need for Vera.

Shortly before a final revelation of the spirituality of his wife, Claiborne enters a chapel and confronts Catherine Pollard:

It was seven when he entered St. Eustace's chapel. . . . At first he thought that there was no one else in the church. Then he saw the dark mass beside one of the pillars of the nave. The large woman raised her head and got at once to her feet. "Shall we go outside where we can talk?" she asked, and started moving up the aisle. [He learns of Catherine's prayers for him and of his wife's Catholicism. To the latter he responds:] "I didn't know that," he said. "I didn't know anything." And he saw the crypt deep in the ancient earth of Auvergne and the woman, on her knees before the statue of another woman, a statue
carved out of black wood, God knows how long ago or by whose hands, whose glittering eyes were said, on occasion, to exude tears, and thought again, No. I didn't even know what she was doing when she was praying in that church. A wife is subject to her husband? She had been subject even in her secret. (p. 311)

The passage also indicates almost imperceptibly a profound change. When Catherine and Claiborne talk, they emerge out of the darkness of the chapel into the light of the day. Claiborne is literally re-entering the reality of the world as he gains in knowledge of self and of others. He is also acquiring the light of spiritual awareness. His progress is like that of Dante as Allen Tate has explained it: from inner darkness of men to the inner lightness of God; from the outer darkness of God to the outer light of man. 28

The setting, St. Eustace's chapel, also links the symbol of the cave and its connotations with another major natural symbol, the bull. 29 The bull is introduced at the opening of the novel. We learn of it and the fate to be held in honor of Vera's prize Red Poll. Vera is president of the Red Poll Breeders' Association of the Atlantic Seaboard States because, as Claiborne comments cynically, "It's a good thing to have these offices filled by rich men but if you can't get hold of a rich man a rich woman will do" (p. 10). The bull is not worth much as an animal to the more knowledgeable Claiborne: "'Muley cows' they had been called in his
youth, on the farm in Tennessee. If his wife had taken the trouble to consult him when she began raising cattle he would have suggested another breed." Later we learn of the probable reason for Vera's independence in her venture. George tells Claiborne that "a woman has got to have something to do. And I can't see a woman married to you getting all worked up over raising money for the symphony or being a Grey Lady" (p. 282). He also reminds Claiborne that there are no children. To this Claiborne responds, "I never thought about her wanting a child." The bull is an animal to be tended by a caring Vera; it is, by implication, a surrogate in her affections. It also serves to awaken Claiborne to the needs of his wife.

The bull also assists in the revealing of attitudes toward perpetuating life. On the one hand there is the proponent of nature and natural ways and on the other the scientific mind that explores improved methods of farming. A concrete issue in the story is artificial insemination. The advocate of artificial insemination lists all the reasons for the method, the ultimate being the superior calves that will result. The opposition, coming from one of the Dunkards present at the fair, says, "As a beast of the field I am with Thee all day. The cattle was put here for a picture of ourselves. It's up to us to guide 'em and use 'em, the way the Lord does us,
but only according to what's right. . . . It's against Nature. Cattle have got their nature, same as a man's got his nature. It's up to a man to respect it. . . . The money the calves'd bring ain't everything. A man has got to live according to Nature—if he lives right" (p. 66). The opposition also comes from Claiborne who threatens to shoot the advocate of science and from Vera who says, "... they do terrible things to bulls. . . . Keep them penned up all the time and give them things. . . . and they never see a cow. I'm going to try to get the S.P.C.A. to do something about it" (p. 91). Not science but the use of science for unnatural practices is the objection.

The image of the bull takes on a spiritual dimension through associations made with the legend of St. Eustace. Looking at one of Max Shull's paintings, "The Vision of St. Eustace," Claiborne gets into an argument with his cousin's wife. She asks, "I wonder why Max chose this particular picture to exhibit?" Claiborne replies, "Because it's got a bull in it. It's called 'The Vision of St. Eustace,' and the erection between the horns, Madam, is a cross, not a phallus. St. Eustace was a Roman general who was converted when the stag he was hunting turned at bay and he saw Christ hanging on the cross between its horns" (p. 42). Marcia's next question, "Can't the cross be a phallic symbol?" is perhaps too obviously Freudian,
perhaps too revealing of an impatience by the author with simplistic interpretations of life. The question and Claiborne's impatience in his responses underscore the abuses of misused or overestimated science and are clearly religious in implication.

Catherine Pollard provides the full spiritual significance of the legend. She recalls that the day of the fête is the Feast of St. Eustace and responds to Claiborne's question about the legend: "'He [St. Eustace] refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods so they threw him and his family to the lions.' ... who lay down and licked their feet?' She nodded. 'What did they do after that?' 'They made a bull out of brass and shut them all up in it and burned them to death'' (p. 78). The words anticipate, and perhaps precipitate, a vision that Claiborne has later in the day. He looks upon a young bull "slowly ruminating and gazing incuriously ahead of him," and thinks of the red heifer and her daughter in the stall across the way, joining all in his vision: "... this table which at any moment might be caught up and transported at the rate of God only knew how many million miles an hour to be set down inside a great, brazen mechanism, shaped, perhaps, like a bull, in which he and his wife and their guests and everybody else they had ever known would be reduced to ashes--or some other utilizable product" (pp. 113-114). Instead of being
sacrificed for God, they, the people in Claiborne's vision, are to be sacrificed for science. The implication of the secularization of life becomes more concrete with the words of Sister Immaculata. She draws a parallel between the world today and Siena in the fourteenth century: "He [Marsiglio of Padua] writes about the same thing they write about today: the self-sufficiency of the natural man and the exaltation of the state that always goes along with it. Existentialism we call it today" (p. 239).

The legend takes on additional meaning for Claiborne and furthers the story when he, after having separated from Vera, meets Max Shull. The artist tells about his latest work, a commission for a mural of the Legend of St. Eustace. Claiborne responds in his usual flippant fashion. But, when he sees the artistry he responds as an artist: he "slowly put his hand out and sketched in the air the movement of the four standing figures. 'I don't see how you ever brought that off,' . . . 'I want to congratulate you. It's the damnedest thing I've seen in many a year'" (pp. 248-249).

The final reference to the bull occurs shortly before Claiborne's reconciliation with his wife. The scene returns the bull to its natural setting, one suggestive of the piety associated with simple agrarian life and without the troubled sense evoked by the earlier agrarian
scene: "The other man suddenly leaned forward. The bull had turned around and was moving slowly toward them. The links of his chain glittered as they slid over the grass. His red coat gleamed almost as bright in the rays of the morning sun. There was a figure moving beside the bull, as slowly as if it too were tethered to a stake driven deep into the ground—a man who wore black skirts that fluttered as he walked. 'It's Father Emmett,' the old man said. 'Comes out here every day and says his prayers, walking up and down by that bull'" (p. 288). Earlier in the story an elderly Dunkard saw the bull in a spiritual light; now an elderly priest walks beside a bull and utters his morning office. Claiborne is slowly seeing the religious life and those living people who serve as Christ's servants: "they [Catherine Pollard and her workers] look on each and every one of them [the derelicts and the retarded] as Jesus Christ" (p. 289).

To consider the final natural symbols, blood and flowers, and their relationships to the other symbols and the conversion, we must focus upon the principal movers of the story. These movers are the three deceased figures and the feminine guides.

Contemplating the people in his life, Claiborne moves beyond the concern for place in seeking his identity. His identity is to come from the family and friends. With the aid of his cousin George Crenfew, he comes to
realize the identities of the shadows in his recurring dream: Horne Watts, poet; Carlo Vincent, painter; and Quintus Claiborne, a continual source of his son's displeasure and even contempt. He also comes to realize more about the character of his father and the possible meaning of the dream. In the dream the poet and the painter leap over the cliff and the senior Claiborne shows the bodies to his son. George Crenfrew offers a possible interpretation of the actions:

". . . I think it's a warning."
"A warning! . . . From whom?"
"Your father. I take it he was waiting there to warn you not to take that particular road."
Claiborne laughed. "A hell of a fellow to be giving advice! I've got myself in a jam, all right, but it's nothing to the jams he was in all his life."
"Maybe that's why he's warning you. Knows what he's talking about." (p. 275)

At this point Claiborne sees his father only as one who is "A roisterer and whoremonger and never did an honest day's work in his life," one who could not possibly give worthy advice. Claiborne's recollection is far removed from that of George who says, "He taught me about the heroes" (p. 276). The earlier reference to the elder Claiborne's expression at death now possesses meaning. Claiborne, looking upon his father's face, "found it necessary to avert his gaze from his face, . . . because he looked unhappy" (p. 49). Perhaps the father was telling his son not to despair, not to live a life of unhappiness; perhaps this was the meaning of his warning. Certainly
George does not recall the unhappiness nor only the dreary episodes in the elder Claiborne's life. A few talks later Claiborne is able to interpret his father's significance in terms of the hero, of Herakles and Amor and Psyche who demonstrated that "Love is blind." Claiborne realizes this adage in his own life: "Love is blind! All the time I was thinking what fools they were—they all knew me for what I am. George, Max, Molly, Ed, even Marcia, all of them knew me for what I am. Everybody but Vera. She didn't even know what was wrong with her father. [Carlo Vincent was insane, painting numerous nude drawings of himself, some grotesquely distorted, in the privacy of his studio and unknown to his family.] The poor fool! . . . The poor fool! Love is blind!" (p. 284). Having discovered a dimension of love through George and his father, Claiborne is now ready to act from positive, conscious desire. He is ready to seek Vera, "the only one who didn't know what I [Claiborne] was like all the time" (p. 285).

When Claiborne consciously seeks Vera he comes to realize that his interpretation of the expression "Love is blind" takes on a still greater meaning. People who have deep faith and who make a commitment to others do love blindly. That is, they love both the strengths and the weaknesses of others. This love is part of the caritas that Catherine Pollard exemplifies and helps Claiborne to perceive. It is also the quality of Vera's
love that Claiborne must realize before he can openly profess his need for his wife.

Catherine Pollard is Claiborne's spiritual guide, the one who hears his confession of ignorance and witnesses his humbling of self. Married to George Crenfew during their young, carefree days in Paris, she was known for her drinking, parties, and attraction to every new religious idea espoused, and who, according to Claiborne, used to ask questions at parties that "only God could answer" (p. 14). Now she dedicates herself to the communal farms and the "flophouse" in the Bowery that she has founded to serve the indigent. Obviously patterned after St. Catherine of Siena, she is the modern example of active faith and saintliness. Through her assistance Claiborne comes to an awareness of the spirituality within people, particularly within Vera, and experiences a personal vision. She introduces the Christian alternative to purely scientific-intellectual interpretations of phenomena and to misapplied psychiatry. Claiborne and Catherine are speaking in the following dialogue:

"We bought him [a statue of St. Ciannic] for the deer. Vera is very fond of them. Of all animals. That is quite revealing, isn't it? Don't the psychologists say that when we have an excessive love for animals we are worshiping the animal in our own nature?"

"I don't know," she said. "There's an Italian proverb that says that the man who isn't kind to beasts will not be kind to Christians either." (p. 80)

Catherine also emanates spirituality: "Her eyes, fixed
on his, had the same look that they had had a moment ago, only brighter. Their gaze seemed limitless. He felt as if he had been suddenly plunged into an element hitherto unknown. A voice said: 'Save me! You can!' He spoke to cover the sound, saying the first thing that came into his head: 'Tell me, is a Mass valid when celebrated by a drunken priest?'' (p. 80). Ever the malefactor who simultaneously seeks and flees salvation, Claiborne again denies the spiritual.

Ironically, Claiborne had been the instrument of Catherine Pollard's conversion:

"Do you remember when I gave you the manuscript of my novel to read and you told me I had no talent for writing and I asked you what I should do? You said, 'Anything. Get drunk. Join the Church . . . '!" She laughed. "You said, 'Join the Church.'"

"I spoke metaphorically, using the first words that came into my head."

"I know it," she said, . . . .

"But you had never thought of joining the Church—until I uttered my Tolle, lege!"

"I had never realized that what they said applied to me—until that day." (pp. 80-81)

Again, Claiborne responds in a superficial way, denying the spiritual. At the end of the story we learn that Catherine has been praying for Claiborne. One of her more dynamic instruments of prayer is Sister Immaculata: together they seek to guide him to the Unity at the center of all life and to the "sacred marriage within the anima."

Sister Immaculata is writing about Horne Watts and seeks the assistance of Catherine and Claiborne.
Claiborne's initial reaction to the Sister and to her study is mixed. He can respond to her as an intellectual and as a writer who follows the dictum, "why write a book if ye can't say something that's not been said before?" (p. 232). She is planning to title her work "Companions in the Blood," after a passage in the Divino Dialogo of St. Catherine of Siena--the passage that describes the attempt by people to find the origin of life, the "secrets of God." But he is uncertain how to respond to the spirituality that she conveys and that he senses: "She lowered her head and regarded him over the rim of her spectacles again, but abstractedly, as if he had not as yet engaged her full attention. He found himself glad that this was the case; she had an eye rather like a gamecock's, fierce yet clouded, as it were, by an inner light." Sister Immaculata believes that Horne Watts was seeking the Blood of Christ, thereby explaining his interest in magic and blood. Claiborne, however, attempts to dismiss the spiritual possibilities behind the poet's actions by citing the poet's homosexuality. After citing her own "weaknesses of the flesh," Sister Immaculata becomes impatient with Claiborne: "She said with something like his own impatience: 'And what makes you think that you--or I--are so much better than they were? When it comes to love, we're all like eunuchs in the presence of the Bridegroom. Husbands, wives, priests, monks, nuns... It's the Blood
that matters. Read this, will ye?' and she pushed toward him the folder marked BLOOD" (p. 237).

The passage that she gives to him to read is written by St. Catherine to Blessed Raimondo and needs to be quoted in its entirety:

Drown yourself in the blood of Christ crucified, and bathe yourself in the blood; inebriate yourself with the blood. If you have been unfaithful, baptize yourself again in the blood; if the demon has darkened the eye of your understanding, wash it in the blood. . . . Dissolve your tepidity in the heat of the blood, and cast off your darkness in the light of the blood. . . . I wish to strip myself of every raiment which I have worn up to now. I crave for blood; in the blood have I satisfied and shall satisfy my soul. I was deceived when I sought her among creatures; so am I fain, in time of solicitude, to meet companions in the blood. Thus shall I find the blood and creatures and I shall drink their affection and love in the blood.

As St. Catherine admonished Blessed Raimondo to become a visible member of the mystical body, so, too, Sister Immaculata admonishes Claiborne. She tells him, "It's easy to see ye're a man of parts. How ye'll shine once your true worth is revealed!" (p. 239). Claiborne responds by stating that he does not have "any theology," and then finds the sister's gaze, like Vera's and Catherine's, "too bright" and retreats into anger. He does not want women prying into the homosexuality of the poet. But Sister Immaculata has an answer to his anger and to his objection:

"It was the Humanity of the Word kept him there! [near the bridge, a rebuttal to Claiborne's comment that Watts could pick up sailors near the bridge], she said. "It's the Humanity of the Word is the
bridge between earth and heaven. And it has three steps: the feet that were nailed to the cross, the side that was pierced to reveal the ineffable love of the heart, and the mouth in which gall and vinegar were turned to sweetness. Horne ran to and fro among creatures like a madman, but he ran along the bridge too, else how could he have brought back the stones of virtue that he planted in his garden?" (pp. 241-242)

Ending her interview, she gives Claiborne one last thought to consider: "Who can tell what God will do? . . . All we know is that He is mad with love for His creature and drunk with desire for her salvation. When we flee Him fastest may be when He seeks us most" (p. 242). Then she tells Claiborne that he can start praying for Horne Watts. However, there are no prayers for anyone yet, for Claiborne is still among those who "flee Him fastest." The mysticism that Sister Immaculata presents to Claiborne both intellectually and spiritually is essential to his acceptance and understanding of the trio of players cast in a mystical shadow and to his understanding of the mystical aura of Catherine Pollard.

The almost mystical quality of Catherine Pollard is manifested in the final scene of the story as she guides Claiborne out of the church and into the world and to Vera. In her final appearance, Catherine Pollard illuminates and draws together all the religious images and thoughts that have been accumulating. She becomes, in effect, the living embodiment of the Passion of Christ and of St. Catherine of Siena. Miss Pollard is one who is poor
and lives among the poor, who knows worldly degradation. She, like Christ and His followers, is a malefactor in the sense of one who seems to be outside the norms of society. In terms of plot, she, like the saint, reconciles a schism—Claiborne and faith, and Claiborne and Vera, and she manifests that essential Christian beatitude, caritas.

The dual focus, self and community, physical and spiritual, saint and sinner, continues in the final vision of Catherine Pollard and her influence upon Claiborne. In the last scene of the novel Claiborne concludes a talk with Miss Pollard and prepares to join Vera. As the two emerge from the church in the bowery, he notices that "The flowers that she carried in her hand blazed scarlet" (p. 312). The image is striking. Like St. Catherine of Siena, Catherine Pollard works among the poor and the outcast. Like the saint, she possesses an image of God-in-man. Instead of holding the severed head of a martyr in her hands and seeing "God-in-man, as one sees the brightness of the sun, receiving the soul in the fire of His divine love," she holds scarlet flowers in her hand and witnesses the active love and faith of Tom Claiborne as he prepares to join his wife. At this point the central image of the book that emerges is the dual physical and spiritual image of the Blood. On one level is the mixture of water and wine to find the essence of life,
and on the other is the Blood of Christ and the resurrection offered to man through the Passion. The drama is, in part, in Stuckey's terms, the "enigmatic drama" of the "ancient, timeless struggle to preserve something of value." It is also the drama of the Christian life, people living in the manner of Christ. The final image of Catherine Pollard joins the two levels of the struggle in the climactic moment of the conversion. The full realization and actualization of the struggle by the hero culminates in the hero's, in Claiborne's, relationship with his wife.

Vera is both ultimate source and ultimate objective in Claiborne's search for love. An older and more aware person than Lucy of *The Strange Children*, she provides a stronger and more actively dramatic source of light than did Lucy. Vera is the way—the light, if you will—to salvation for Claiborne, but he does not see her as his life source. At one point he rejects her overt offer to help and to be happy. Vera knows that he can be happy, but he must find his potential for happiness. He cannot, as he does, simply declare, "All right, I will be!" He is also incapable of being happy in the larger Christian sense, of making a commitment to others. His unhappiness is both worldly and spiritual, and Vera is the source to both kinds of happiness.

Vera's spirituality, which even the unsuspecting
reader may fail to realize, is revealed throughout the novel. We learn early in the story that she wears a crucifix, which, according to Claiborne, has less religious significance than sentimental value: "She had worn the medal, night and day, for twenty years. It had been sent to her by her old nurse, Leontine, who was convinced that she had been cured of cancer by a pilgrimage made to the Black Virgin of Notre-Dame du Port at Clermont, a pilgrimage that he and Vera had made--for he had made the pilgrimage too, though reluctantly" (p. 91). The crucifix serves to remind Claiborne of the quarrels he and Vera have had since the beginning of their marriage. One quarrel in particular emphasizes his failure to perceive the spirituality of others and his own shallow intellectual pride:

She was so absorbed in her prayers that she did not know he was there. He had to kneel beside her before she acknowledged his presence by turning and dimly smiling at him. It seemed to him that she smiled at him only because he was kneeling beside her, and he was angered; she should have known that he was ready to bend the knee at any shrine that man had ever set up: Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Mohammedan. He had found some good in all of them--but he did not care to spend the whole day on his knees. They had exchanged some sharp words as soon as they had emerged from the gloom of the old church into the sunlight, and doubtless would have exchanged more if they had not had to hurry on to the hotel to telephone the Mortons. But the big modern hotel had provided them with a perfect omelet and an excellent galantine de veau. (pp. 96-97)

Interpreting Vera's smile as condescending, Claiborne shows his great sensitivity to his conception of himself
as an urbane man of reason. He will kneel at any man-made shrine, but, so the implication is, like Lewis in *The Strange Children*, he believes very little in the meaning of the shrine. Praying, Vera smiles, but Claiborne scowls and desires to leave the "gloom." Where Vera finds peace, he, feeling only the gloom of the dimly lighted grotto, finds irritation. At this point both Vera's spirituality and the spirituality embodied in the shrine are completely unrecognized by Claiborne. A Hemingway-esque retreat to good food and the companionship of friends is the solace for the agitated Claiborne.

In the same episode we learn that Claiborne is troubled by Vera's gaze, that "he had sometimes thought of her eyes as shedding a soft light--but it seemed to him now that they held a steely glint" (p. 90). The line clarifies Claiborne's earlier recollection of his first meeting with Vera: "A thin girl, with really remarkable eyes, but no beauty then or since. Why was it that when she turned her head and gave him a fleeting glance over her shoulder light seemed to blaze suddenly in a room where he had sat alone in the dark?" (p. 23). Whether soft and illuminating or hard and penetrating, Vera's gaze is one that Claiborne cannot confront. We learn that he has not been able to confront the demands behind Vera's gaze: "It is her eyes, he thought. I was always afraid of them, of that straight look that asked more
than I could give... I did not know what it would be like to have her look at me and ask nothing" (p. 303). He realizes that to have nothing asked of one is to be unloved. Then he learns of Vera's baptism in the Catholic faith and confronts his too-limited awareness of his wife. With the words, "I didn't know anything" (p. 311), uttered to Catherine Pollard as they emerge from the chapel in the final scene, he achieves the first step in reconciliation with Vera and with the spiritual life. In Catholic belief one must be reconciled with God and self before one can love. Knowing and accepting her faith and her spirituality, Claiborne now has the capacity to return to Vera. Humbly, without conditions, he decides to return to his wife, joining her at Mary Farm with her social wards. Where he had turned to an adulterous affair in the "middle of his life's journey," Vera, upon his rejection, had turned to social work as a resident on one of Catherine Pollard's farms. Claiborne will join her at the farm, thereby making the commitment to reaffirm his marriage.

Commitment to and not violation of the human heart: this act is the central act of each of the Gordon heroes. Claiborne, seemingly so far removed from all family and regional traditions and values, is the single hero out of Miss Gordon's canon to make the ultimate commitment to another individual in the totality of the Spirit. Jim
and Catherine Chapman realized only their need for each other, devoid of large spiritual implications. Steve Lewis, looking up in awe at the stars, continued the journey inward by feeling the burden of existence and experiencing humility before a sense of the spiritual. Only Claiborne moves beyond the natural world to the supernatural and experiences a vision that both diminishes and enhances his being. He experiences the miraculous in a vision of a human figure and realizes the potential for human goodness and love. He sees God-in-man. And he achieves his awareness and experiences his humility in the more encompassing Christian-Catholic context of love for others, good works, and faith. Most important, he moves from despair to love through hope. That hope provides his redemption in life.

The Malefactors concludes with the encompassing vision of Christian love, of caritas, acting in this world. Through caritas, a man, Miss Gordon seems to say, can discover and realize his worth. He can achieve communion among men. In the latest of Miss Gordon's novels, The Glory of Hera, the hero as archetypal man achieves communion with God and redemption in heaven.
Notes


3 Louise Cowan says that "the observable motif of withdrawal, flight, and death [of the earlier novels] is seen in this novel to have its roots in eternity," adding that in the Chapmans' commitment to marriage is "an unconscious perception that one has committed oneself for eternity in marriage." "Nature and Grace in Caroline Gordon," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 1 (Winter 1956), 23, 24.


4 I do not identify Jim Carter of The Garden of Adonis as hero because his tale is interwoven with that of the much more sympathetically drawn figures of Ben Allard and Ote Mortimer. W. J. Stuckey, Caroline Gordon (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 68, uses the expression "the paralyzed intellectual hero" in his description of Miss Gordon's modern hero.

5 Stuckey, in a discussion of Miss Gordon's themes and basic attitudes, cites "the traditional relationships between the sexes" and the attitude that man and masculine principles must be dominant or "disorder" results that concern the writings (Caroline Gordon, p. 137).

Miss Gordon, in her critical writing, stresses the "traditional relationship." See Chapter One, p. 6.
W. J. Stuckey says that Miss Gordon's question has always been, "How can I be saved from the abyss that yawns at the feet of every mortal?" Her responses to the question in *The Strange Children* and *The Malefactors* are "redemptive acts," not just metaphoric references to redemption but real redemption. He cites her lucid style, illusion of objectively created world, and appeal to history, cultural anthropology, and classical myth as the means of making the acts feel redemptive. Caroline Gordon, pp. 79, 80.

St. Augustine cites the psalm in a discussion of his desire for brotherly minds: "It is a brotherly mind that I would wish for, not the mind of strangers, not that of the strange children, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of iniquity; but that brotherly mind which is glad for me when it sees good in me and sorry for me when it sees bad in me, because, whether it sees good or bad, it loves me. It is to people like this that I shall show myself, hoping that in my good deeds they will be glad and in my evil deeds they will be sad. My good deeds are your work and your gift, my evil deeds are my faults and your punishments." The *Confessions* of St. Augustine, trans. Rex Warner, introd. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: The New American Library, 1963), X. 4., pp. 212-213. As the discussion shows, the one person who demonstrates the brotherly mind to the hero is Kev Reardon, embodiment of Christian charity and faith. St. Augustine's words are even more applicable to *The Malefactors*, a novel in which Miss Gordon surrounds the hero with brotherly minds.

The setting is patterned after that of the Tates' home in Clarksville, Tennessee. The house overlooks the Cumberland River; there is a legend that Lafayette spent two weeks in the house convalescing from illness suffered after his travels through the South.

Caroline Gordon, *The Strange Children* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1951), p. 45. All future references to this work will appear in the text.

Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), Prologue, xv. Caroline Gordon may not have read the specific work cited, but she undoubtedly is familiar with Trappist belief. Her specific reference to Bardstown is the basis for my assumption.


15 La Motte-Fouque, p. 59.

16 Captain Green built Benfolly before the Civil War. When Grant took the town, the Captain's body servant clubbed the Captain to death out of fear that he would have to remain with his master while all the other Negroes in the area were leaving. The two had been at the gate watching the Negroes leaving town.


18 Maritain's influence seems to be almost pervasive in the novel, as frequent reference to the writings of Maritain will show.

Walker and Robert L. Welker (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1964), pp. 161-179, provides a study of the novel and its relationship to Dante's *Purgatorio*. He says that *The Malefactors* is a rendition of "the actual experience not the mere fact of religious conversion," a novel in which Miss Gordon asks the reader "to assert the validity of the Christian experience by which she means the power of grace to operate in the natural order." By using real people as models, Miss Gordon is showing that "the possibilities of saintliness and malefaction have been as fully realized in our time as in any other." (pp. 161, 168).


22 The phrase is Ted R. Spivey's as it is used in Spivey's work, *The Coming of the New Man: A Study of Literature, Myth, and Vision Since 1750* (New York: Vantage Press, 1970), p. 26. In the mythic quest the hero undergoes the "sacred marriage with the anima who also guides him, thereby achieving symbolically the union of opposites that is the hallmark of the One."

23 Spivey cites the shadow as an important archetype for Jung: "an image that takes many forms but which always stands for the dark or inferior side of man that threatens the forward motion of the mythic journey" (p. 22).

Ashley Brown comments on the novel as a roman a clef: "...it is Miss Gordon's intention to place these characters from life in a fictional situation larger than the one they have actually occupied and thus to make them more than the subject of literary gossip" ("The Novel as Christian Comedy," p. 168). Stuckey identifies "these people" as the Tates, Dorothy Day, Hart Crane, Giorgio de Chirico (Caroline Gordon, p. 102).

Brown views Claiborne as "much the center" of the story as Lambert Strether and Dante in their respective stories (p. 163).

Quoted in Ted R. Spivey's *The Coming of the New Man*, p. 22.


27 Campbell, p. 388.


29 Ashley Brown cites the multiple symbolism of the bull: fecundity of nature; mechanical bestiality; the cult of Mithras that almost displaced Christianity; the brazen Minotaur; experimental science; and object to be respected as a part of nature ("The Novel as Christian Comedy," p. 168).

30 St. Catherine (1347-1380), a young woman from a prosperous family, joined the Third Order of St. Dominic at age sixteen and, after three years of self-imposed cloistered existence, entered the world to minister to the poor and the ill. Building an avid following, she became instrumental in resolving the schism that resulted in Pope Gregory XI leaving Avignon for Rome. She did this at the request of the city of Florence. She died attempting to resolve the Great Western Schism that was to last for seventy years. [Primary source: "Catherine of Siena," *The Saints: A Concise Biographical Dictionary*, (1958), pp. 107-108.]

Jacques Maritain in his discussion of coredemption--those who work in and for Christ are redeemed and become redeemers as well--includes St. Catherine among the saints who "knew" coredemption (*The Peasant of the Garonne*, p. 251). Coredemption becomes the dominant facet of Miss Pollard's character as the novel develops.

31 The character of Horne Watts is based upon that of Hart Crane, of whom Caroline Gordon has said, his poems are "full of highly charged religious symbolisms," "... his poetry was religious in tenor," and "In another age and another culture he might have been known, primarily, as a religious poet like, for instance, Gerard Manly Hopkins whose work he admired." "Robber Rocks: Letters and Memories of Hart Crane," *The Southern Review*, 6 (1970), 485, 486.

32 Stuckey draws parallels between St. Catherine and Blessed Ramon, and Catherine Pollard and Horne Watts, and Catherine Pollard and Tom Claiborne (*Catherine Gordon*, p. 102).
Ashley Brown views the chapel as "the illuminated cave toward which he [Claiborne] has tried to swim all his life" ("The Novel as Christian Comedy," p. 177).


Allen Tate in his essay "The Symbolic Imagination," first published in 1951, discusses St. Catherine of Siena and her letter to Brother Raimondo of Capua. In the letter the saint "recreates" the Blood "so that its analogical meaning is confirmed in blood that she has seen. This is how she does it:

Then [the condemned man] came, like a gentle lamb; and seeing me he began to smile, and wanted me to make the sign of the Cross. When he had received the sign, I said, "Down! To the bridal, my sweetest brother. For soon shalt thou be in the enduring life." He prostrated himself with great gentleness, and I stretched out his neck; and bowed me down, and recalled to him the Blood of the Lamb. His lips said naught save Jesus! and Catherine! And so saying, I received his head in my hands, closing my eyes in the divine goodness and saying, "I will."

Of her action Tate says, "St. Catherine had the courage of genius which permitted her to smell the Blood of Christ in Niccolo Tuldo's blood clotted on her dress: she smelled the two bloods not alternately but at one instant, in a single act compounded of spiritual insight and physical perception." St. Catherine had concluded her account of the incident with the words, "When he was at rest my soul rested in peace and quiet, and in so great fragrance of blood that I could not bear to remove the blood which had fallen on me from him" (pp. 430-431).

Stuckey, p. 141.

Jacques Maritain writes that one must act as a Christian and that this is done through human relationships. He then explains that a Christian at mass must "be at one and the same time person and member"--distinct but not separate aspects. In commenting upon the temporal mission of the Christian today he gives a basic tenet of the Catholic faith. He writes that the expression "to transform the world" has come to mean "the good of the world itself in development" as end rather than "To transform the world spiritually by means of the Gospel, with a view to attaining the ultimate end, . . . the kingdom of God in the glory of the risen" (The Peasant of the Garonne, pp. 211, 219, 199).
Chapter Five
Heracles: The Archetypal Hero

Commenting on "The Southern Recovery of Memory and History" in The Dispossessed Garden, Lewis P. Simpson says that the art of the Southern storyteller and critic "reveals a search for images of existence which will express the truth that man's essential nature lies in his possession of the moral community of memory and history."¹

In The Glory of Hera Miss Gordon moves away from the images provided by the Southern landscape and the specifically Southern experience in historical time to seek images of existence in an Olympian landscape and "the unconscious memory" of sacred history.

Perhaps one may use a term from Jacques Maritain and call The Glory of Hera a work designed by a sense of the "pre-philosophical" age. Our "spontaneous" sense of "pre-philosophy," according to Maritain, is "like a gift of nature included in that indispensable equipment we call common sense, and which is concealed as much as it is expressed by everyday language."² Maritain says we must not denigrate those "primary notions [that are] the result of primitive intuitions born in the preconscious
of the spirit but which are at the roots of human life (when it is truly human). When everyone starts scorning these things, . . . such as good and evil, moral obligations, justice, law, or even extra-mental reality, truth, the distinction between substance and accident, the principle of identity -- it means that everyone is beginning to lose his head." Our pre-philosophical common sense depends upon our culture as well as nature, a culture imbued with a "two-fold" heritage: the Judeo-Christian tradition of divine revelation, and the Greek tradition of the "miracle" of reason. In conjunction with our inheritance of these "primary notions," we subscribe to the "ancient church belief" that man is born into a "state of fallen nature," from which he can only be delivered through the "redeeming grace of Christ." Redeemed, he enters "into the supernatural beatitude and the vision of God." Caroline Gordon sees the redemption in both faith and good works, but the intervention of grace is necessary. She holds that "grace is the operation of the intervention, divine intervention, in a human's life." The Greeks, Miss Gordon says, call grace "divine chance." When in the fifth century, according to Miss Gordon, the goddess of divine chance became identified with mere "luck," the entire Grecian religious structure came into question. A parallel situation has developed in modern times.
Miss Gordon, like her spiritual mentor Maritain, refuses the present-day questioning of the Christian religious structure because it does not place faith at the center of all life. Like her classical model of excellence, Aeschylus, she holds to faith. The Greek tragedian believed in a universal moral power and saw it expressed through Zeus. As W. K. C. Guthrie states: "Greeks carried the notion of a universal god considerably further than anyone had ever done before, and very nearly as far as anyone has carried since. So firmly were his supremacy and universality established that his name came to be used by poets and philosophers almost as the name of God might be used by a Christian or that of Allah by a Moslem. Aeschylus felt no incongruity in applying it to the great moral power which was his conception of God." The faith of Aeschylus informs the mythic construct upon which Miss Gordon fashions *The Glory of Hera*. She employs myth, in the terms of Mircea Eliade, as "a foundation of a structure of reality as well as of a kind of human behavior" that explains what, how, and why something happened. In doing so she presents a faith that stands in sharp contrast to modern gnosticism. This gnosticism may be defined, in Simpson's words, as "the belief that knowledge available to men (gnosis) can be used to change the very constitution of being."
In The Glory of Hera the author steps back in time and out of time into sacred time and the realm of memory. She describes her novel as "experimental, since the action takes place in the frontiers of the archetypal conscious mind--if there is such a place." Believing that certain elements of life are eternal, Miss Gordon chooses the Olympian myth to tell her story. Following the epic manner, she weaves a rich albeit thick tapestry of gods and goddesses and heroes--half men and half gods. The cataloguing of events, the repetition of genealogies, the varying points of view--first the gods, then the mortals, and the reporting of events "off stage," all underscore the epic subject. Her task of telling is great, for she cannot assume knowledge of the gods nor acceptance of religious beliefs by her readers. She is, in effect, presenting an alien belief through unfamiliar means to an uninformed audience. But, she has a story to tell, and there is a kind of desperation and urgency to the telling. Like Mr. Maury, aware of time and valuing every moment as a gift, she pursues the search for grace in a fallen world. Her concern is the "moral community of memory and history," and her means of order among chaos is religious faith. In the telling of man's search for grace, she is saying that redemption is a possibility for all men, if they seek it.

In The Glory of Hera the hero's story has two
dimensions: Greek myth and Christian myth. Through her chosen hero, Heracles, Miss Gordon fuses time past, present, and future, revealing man in search of order and meaning. In the hero's interaction with the gods, the story anticipates Christian myth: Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. Heracles is a hero who is both man and god, profane and sacred. His duality, with the stress on the divine, is the basis of the entire novel. In the humanity of Heracles lies his imperfections and his sacred potential. In his godliness lies his hope as a man and his resurrection as a divinity. Physically awesome, yet at times exasperatingly slow-witted, he is the son of Zeus. Therein lies his glory, for he is to be the savior of man. He is also the "glory of Hera"—of Hera's earthly domain and one who pays tribute to Hera. Through his service to the divine, and by divine intervention, he is to achieve redemption.

The Glory of Hera, divided into four books, presents the general events found in the writing of Apollodorus. Book I of the novel begins with the viewpoint of Zeus. It gives the genealogy of the gods and of Heracles and reviews Heracles' life to his banishment from Thebes. While Amphitryon is away on a military expedition, Zeus, in the guise of Amphitryon, visits Alcmene. The result of the night that lasts the length of three is Heracles. He is older brother by one night to Iphicles, son of
Amphitryon. Seventeen months later Heracles provides evidence of his divinity by killing the two giant serpents that have entered the nursery. First named Alcides for "Amphitryon's father and for me, who am Alcmene," he is renamed Heracles by Tiresias when discovered with the serpents: "As for you King Amphitryon, and your wife Alcmene, you will change the child's name from Alcides to Heracles—for he will be the glory of Hera." (His discovery of the meaning of his name becomes the underlying motivation of the story, as later discussion will attempt to show.) At eighteen, Heracles participates in games conducted in his honor. There he kills Linus. When Linus asks Heracles to show his archery skills by killing the two vultures in the tree, Heracles balks, rages, and turns upon his teacher. Unknown to all present, and only known intuitively to Heracles, the vultures are divine—Zeus and Athene in disguise. Heracles is acquitted of the crime by Rhadamanthys. Nevertheless, Amphitryon, seeking to protect others from Heracles' temper, banishes the hero to Mount Cithaeron to tend cattle.

Book II begins with a picture of the relationship between Heracles and the goatherd Aigipus. Their relationship ends when Athene appears before Heracles and instructs him to go to Helicon "to meet the robber herdsman" (p. 166). He enters the kingdom of Thespius as the
hero who will kill the lion that is stalking the cattle. During his stay he beds with forty-nine of Thespius's fifty daughters. The fiftieth, Macaria, becomes the virgin priestess in Heracles' temple to Zeus the Savior. The book concludes with Heracles leaving Thespius and meeting and disfiguring Erginus's messengers at the provocation of Hera's "piercing whisper": "The Minyan heralds! On their way to Thebes to collect the tribute due King Erginus" (p. 203).^®

Book III relates the actions most frequently sensationalized in popular retellings: Heracles' murder of his wife and children in a fit of madness induced by Hera; the hero's tremendous sorrow for his deeds; the directions from the Pythia that Heracles must serve King Eurystheus for eight years; and the twelve labors. The book concludes with the twelfth labor--the descent into Hades and the conversation with the shade, Meleager. Meleager tells Heracles of his sister, Deineira, and of his fear that she will never marry. Heracles promises to ask for her hand. Iphicles, relating the exploit to King Eurystheus, notes that Deineira's chief suitor is the river-god Achelous. King Eurystheus says, "Perhaps this river-god will destroy him. . . ." Iphicles, smiling, ends his narrative and the book with the response, "Let us say that Heracles will continue to destroy himself" (p. 374).
Book IV relates the final mortal self-destruction of the hero. The book opens with Deineira recounting her married life to Heracles, a life characterized by his long absences to engage in military exploits. She tells her listener that he, Heracles, is a rover "seeking to distract his thoughts from the tumult in his own breast" (p. 381). The immediate situation then witnesses the arrival of Princess Iole, prisoner sent to the palace by Heracles. The action seals his fate. Lichas, the jealous messenger, fabricates a story about Iole and Heracles. Deineira responds to the story by unwittingly sending a poisoned robe to her husband when he offers his sacrifice to Zeus. She believes that the potion, the blood of Nessus, that she sprinkles on the robe to be a love potion. Instead, it is the poison from Heracles' poison-tipped arrow that had killed Nessus. When Heracles dons the robe and offers his sacrifice to Zeus, he discovers that "the most glorious sacrifice he had ever offered his father Zeus" is himself. The robe clings to his flesh, tearing it from his bones when he tries to rid himself of the piercing pain. At his request a pyre is built, his body placed upon it and then burned by a shepherd. The book concludes with his ascension onto Mount Olympus. These incidents comprise the basic plot of Heracles' story.

The enveloping action focuses upon Zeus and Hera and activities on Mount Olympus. The opening chapters, almost
too dense with the telling and retelling of the gods' identities and exploits, establish the complication of the story. Zeus, knowing that he is to be challenged by Cronus for the throne, wishes to secure his position. To do so he must enlist the aid of a mortal. Speaking to his favored Apollo, he challenges Apollo's insistence on the abyss between mortals and gods: "Did it ever occur to you that the abyss might be bridged?" (p. 10). Zeus then retreats to the palace fashioned by Hephaestus to reflect on "a scheme for the redemption of mankind" (p. 88). Thus he provides the twofold motivation for the birth of Heracles. He retains his throne only through the aid of a mortal, and, acknowledged as "the Father of Gods and Men--that is to say, King of Heaven and Earth" (p. 27), he wishes to assist mankind. The obstacle to his plan comes in the guise of Hera. She will do everything in her power to thwart Heracles, venting her jealous anger first on Alcmene--prolonged labor--and then pursuing the hero throughout his adult life. Heracles' reactions to the gods, especially to Hera's animosity, and to men illuminate the moral nature of the hero, and, by extension, the moral nature of man.

Miss Gordon's story in its concern for the relationship between men and gods bears obvious similarities to Euripides' play *Heracles*. Where Apollodorus offers basic plot incidents, Euripides offers an enveloping moral
pattern or order. His principal focus in Heracles is upon the relationship between gods and men. William Arrowsmith, in his commentary on the play, explains the relationship in terms applicable to *The Glory of Hera*. He says that "Heracles, far from being deified in Euripides, is humanized as the condition of his heroism"; that "the Heracles is a play which imposes suffering upon men as their tragic condition, but it also discovers a courage equal to that necessity, a courage founded in love"; that Heracles "asserts a moral order beyond his own experience."²⁷

The Euripidean play presents Heracles as a man whose physical courage and spiritual courage are tested with every move he makes. His courage becomes the pivotal point around which all action and issues revolve. Beginning on the day of Heracles' return from the successful completion of the twelve labors, the play presents Heracles at the height of his success. He immediately confronts the desperate situation of his family who are to be killed by a usurping Lycus. Preventing their murders, Heracles finds his heroic stature and his jubilation diminishing with increasing intensity as the day progresses. He becomes the murderer of his family through a fit of madness inflicted by Hera, and undergoes and almost succumbs to despair. By the play's conclusion he is a severely humbled man indebted to his one remaining
friend, Theseus. Throughout the play his courage is tested. The role of man, one may deduce by way of the action, is to persevere. Theseus's words confirm this role: man must endure whatever reversals the wheel of fortune brings, for "all men are flawed, and so the gods, unless the poets lie," and even the gods do not protest their fates and, therefore, neither should Heracles. Whether deserving or undeserving of misfortune, the hero, man, must, as Heracles, "serve necessity" (1.1356). If necessity appears in the guise of a jealous Hera or wanton destruction--"she has destroyed/Hellas's greatest friend, though he was guiltless" (11.1309-1310), it still must be served. In fact, the choices are to despair or to take courage: "to persevere, trusting in what hopes he has,/is courage in a man. The coward despairs" (11.105-106). A man's single solace in life is friendship: "The man who would prefer great wealth or strength/more than love, more than friends, is diseased of soul" (11.1425-1426). Saying this, Heracles realizes his changed position from a man of godly physical courage to a man of moral courage who bears "unflinchingly what heaven sends" (1.1228).

At the beginning of the play Heracles promises Eurystheus to "civilize the world" (1.20); at the play's conclusion Heracles utters a proclamation that is much lesser in scope, much more profound in its ramifications
for the individual. Seeing the jealousy of Hera and the wanton destruction it levies, he looks at the havoc surrounding him and moves away from a belief in the gods of the poets—the gods of the poets are "poets' wretched lies" (1.1345). He decides to "prevail against death" (1.1351) by choosing life over death—suicide—and roots his decision in the world of men: "The man who cannot bear up under fate/could never face the weapons of a man" (11.1349-1350). To endure the unknown, one must also endure the known. Both require courage, and the sources of this courage are friendship and love.

The souls of men, the salvation of men as mortals in an unpredictable, unjust, changing world, is the concern of the play. The concern is manifested in the heightened, narrowed focus upon the family of Heracles—aged father, faithful and dignified wife, three young sons, and son-husband-father hero. It is also manifested in the attitude expressed toward the gods. The anthropomorphic Hera of myth is not and cannot be Divine, but she can be Necessity—the inexplicable events in life. Euripides presents a moral universe in which not the gods but men provide integrity of life.

Miss Gordon also presents a hero made human by his failings and by his immediate domestic scene. But her hero moves beyond that of Euripides. Miss Gordon reveals a man who suffers mentally and physically and who, to
paraphrase Arrowsmith, comes to a "courage founded in love" that is faith. The added dimension of faith is vital to the author's perspective, for the moral order that her hero asserts is that of the pre-philosophy described by Maritain and enhanced by the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity. As he moves from external considerations and physical feats to internal torments and spiritual growth, he moves from courageous man to noble man to spiritual man. The "further" reality that he comes to yield is not just the acceptance of life and its labors, of Necessity. His further reality is the acceptance of a spiritual power greater than any power that man possesses and the redemption of man through faith in that power. Ultimately, Miss Gordon's conception of Heracles goes beyond even that described by Farnell: "His [Heracles'] record reveals an evolution of ideas interesting for the history of religion; and as for the Greek world he was the earliest and most salient example of the mortal achieving divinity through suffering and toil, his career could serve as a theme for the ethical teacher, and could quicken in the average man the hope for a blessed immortality." The love for and among men that Heracles sees as sustenance in life and as a provision of order within a man and among men becomes the Love of God through the Incarnate Word that informs all men.
In *The Glory of Hera*, the inexplicable working of the Divine through men is illustrated in the relationship between Hera and Heracles. The hero, again, contends with Hera's animosity, but Hera is now a much more complex figure. On the level of plot, she causes mischief and misfortune. From the Euripidean perspective, she is necessity or fate, the problems that befall man and the tragedies that he must bear. Within the larger Christian prototype, she possesses a distinctively divine nature. She emerges as the overt means of adversity that confronts men in their quests for spiritual salvation—the tests of faith in the Divine. She provides the means or the trials that lead to self-knowledge. The last scene of the novel suggests her divine role in the life of the hero:

The huge cloudy gates were flung wide open. The younger Olympians, as well as many nymphs and satyrs, were streaming into the great hall. A long couch had been placed before the two thrones. The goddess Hera lay prone upon it. She wore no diadem. Under her flowing hair, her cheeks shone with a rosy hue that reminded Zeus of the days when they lay together upon the cloud that he kept floating about the top of Mount Ida. She seemed to be clad in parti-colored robes. But only the upper part of her body was visible. A large screen, embellished with representations of the loves of the gods, concealed the lower part. The goddess Artemis was bending over the Queen of Heaven, slowly intoning ritual words. Zeus recalled that Artemis, though a virgin goddess, was also the patroness of women in childbirth, and asked himself, with astonishment, what rite she could be enacting.

Hera turned her head and fixed her eyes on his face. They were very bright and seemed larger than usual. The look with which she regarded him was
fuller of love than any she had ever given him before.

He strode over to take her in his arms. She rose from the couch and moved forward to meet him, with, walking beside her, still caught in the swirl of her multicolored robes, the gigantic, grinning Heracles.

Joyous shouts, mingled with laughter, rang through the great cloudy hall. Zeus, standing between the Queen of Heaven and his latest-born son, smiled upon the younger Olympians. "Behold our son Heracles" he cried, and Hera, standing beside Heracles, smiled, too. "Our son all along," she murmured, but in a voice so low that only Hermes, who happened to be standing near the dais, heard what she said. (pp. 397-398)

Hera's "true identity" reveals itself in the goddess's words, "Our son all along..." She has always loved Heracles; his task was to discover that love through his labors both physical and spiritual. Pursuing the meaning of his name—the Glory of Hera, he first had to secure the land of Hera, Argos, for men. To become the glory of Hera as her son, as divinity, he had to learn the humility of men before a power greater than men. He became a malefactor, the scourge of other men and of his family, always living on the fringes of society even at the pinnacle of fame. He had to experience humility of soul at the height of arrogant physical power among men.

He learns through Hera's intervention that the way to salvation is through the gods and not through men or the self. When the nurse tells Hyllos that Heracles destroyed himself in learning the relationship of men to the gods, she reminds him that he, Hyllos, has a lifetime to learn the lesson of his father. The implication is that life
derives from the gods and must, therefore, be a tribute to the gods. Therein lies man's humanity and vulnerability; therein lies his potential for glory—a life of excellence for men and as a tribute to the gods; therein lies his salvation—faith in the Divine. Heracles' task has been to secure the land of the gods for the gods and for men who honor the gods.

In Miss Gordon's rendition of his tale, Heracles has the dual role of serving man and serving the gods. To serve he has to discover this dual task and act upon it. In his role he leads men to see that the spiritual is both in life and a transcendence. To purge "the seas of monsters so that men might live in peace" (p. 394) is a task both physical and spiritual. There were monsters destroying the land; there were also the monsters destroying men's souls. One is not to become a Eurystheus—so consumed by the fear of Heracles as a physical being and as a symbol of mortality that he retreats to a sanctuary only to discover that life and death pursue men no matter where they attempt to hid. Life means activity. For Heracles to "know what it was he knew" (p. 395), he has to actively seek life and thereby encounter death. Literally, the phrase means that Heracles carries about his own death in his poison-tipped arrows. In broader terms, it means Heracles' way to immortality is through death. To achieve immortality—salvation—one must go beyond the
advice of mortals to "the wisdom of the gods." As the nurse, the moral explicator of the text, tells Hyllos, "no one is wise but Zeus, and no will can prevail against his" (p. 395).

The lesson of Heracles rendered through the action and through the words of the nurse yields certain assumptions. Man's task is to find salvation by humbling himself before divine wisdom; he must recognize his mortality and work within its limits, yet ever striving for immortality, listening to and hearing the gods working through him. The hero's great task is to move beyond the sphere of men to a faith in a seemingly incomprehensible realm of the spirit. Caroline Gordon would call this realm Love, divine grace working through men.

For Miss Gordon's hero the immediate task in life is to establish order within the self. To do so means to go beyond the self to a faith in a greater power. The Power--Love--is the sole source of order and peace, and one must continually seek it and believe in it or lose one's way. Man's salvation is through caritas: this is the ultimate implication of the work. It is confirmed by the epigraph from St. Augustine: "My ignorance was so great that these questions troubled me. I did not know that evil is nothing but the removal of good until no good remains" (p. 398). Man, as he abandons caritas, as he removes himself from God who is Goodness, as he fails to love God-in-man
and God, becomes truly lost. Heracles, continually characterized as slow-witted or irrationally violent, has to overcome his ignorance that leads to evil and seek goodness. The task is arduous and lifelong, and it requires the aid of the ultimate spiritual power. In *The Glory of Hera* that power is Zeus.

The morality that Euripides' Heracles comes to realize through his misfortunes and his friendship with Theseus stems from Zeus for Miss Gordon's Heracles. The morality of the Greek world becomes analogous to the morality of the Christian world as Paul explains it: "Owe no debt to any one except the debt that binds us to love one another. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandment there may be are all summed up in this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13: 8-10). Where Euripides dramatizes the law of friendship or love through stoic acceptance of one's fate, Miss Gordon dramatizes the law in the positive and dynamic Christian spirit of hope. Such hope leads to redemption of body and soul. This larger spiritual perspective, which anticipates the Christian myth, has an ancient authority--Aeschylus.

The central moral issue in the plays of Aeschylus
may be stated as Right versus Wrong. The trilogy supports this view. In the *Agamemnon* the Chorus says,

> Not bliss nor wealth it is, but impious deed
> From which that after-growth full doth rise!
> Woe springs from wrong, the plant is like the seed--
> While Right, in honour's house, doth its own likeness breed.\(^{38}\)

In the *Libation-Bearers* the Chorus says, "For even o'er Powers divine this law is strong--Thou shalt not serve the wrong" (p. 126). In the *Furies* Athena tells the citizens,

> Let no man live
> Uncurbed by law nor curbed by tyranny
> in purity and holy dread
> Stand and revere. (p. 167)

The law comes from Zeus--"His law is fixed and firm" (*Agamemnon*, p. 72), and its transgression is "woe." For Aeschylus, a man, not the gods, is responsible for his sins. If the evil is inherited, as it is in the trilogy, each man in his time remains responsible for his performance, his reactions and actions. As Professor Kitto explains, what Homer knew, Aeschylus also knew--that "the quality of a man matters more than his achievement; that violence and recklessness will lead to disaster, and that this will fall on the innocent as well as on the guilty."\(^{39}\)

Wrong, then, afflicts all people, and each person is faced with the problem of learning how to cope with
adversity. The Chorus in *The Furies* provides an answer.

The way to follow in life is the way of moderation:

Know that the middle way  
Is dearest unto God, and they thereon who wend,  
They shall achieve the end.  
But they who wander or to left or right  
Are sinners in his sight. (p. 159)

One must be ever aware of "his sight" and law, law originating with "him," who is Zeus. It is Zeus to whom men pay attention and from whom men determine right--moral--action. The emphasis upon Zeus and law and Right is significant in Aeschylus and for *The Glory of Hera*.

The story of Miss Gordon's hero expresses the lesson that Aeschylus taught: the ultimate justice of Providence. The contending wills, particularly that of man versus the gods, are finally brought to work together and justice results through the grace of the gods. The grace bestowed by Miss Gordon's Zeus does not come from a god of the polis, however.

Aeschylus' Zeus, essentially monotheistic, becomes easily adapted to Christian interpretations by later writers. E. H. Pumptre notes the monotheism in reference to *The Suppliants*: "The passage [citing the unity of action and speech of Zeus] takes place among the noblest utterance of a faith passing above the popular polytheism to the thought of a sovereign Will ruling and guiding all things, as Will--without effort, in the calmness of a
power irresistible." E. D. A. Morshead compares the trilogy to Dante's *Divina Commedia*: "For we have in both, the same central idea, the succession, that is, of guilt, atonement, absolution." 

Caroline Gordon's conception includes both views—a monotheistic deity in Zeus and the succession of guilt, atonement, and absolution by the hero. The conception also involves a significant adaptation. Zeus is not the God of mankind, but he clearly resembles the position of the Christian God. Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer is called and characterized as Zeus the Father, with Heracles as Son and Saviour. Heracles, in his god-man identity, ultimately becomes a prototype of Christ. [At times the manner in the analogy is heavy-handed. For example, Heracles anticipates Christ's words when he says, "... you must give me leave to go about my father's business" (p. 198).] Zeus cannot be the Christian God, for as Allen Tate notes in his reading of Dante's *Commedia*, "There can be no symbol for God, for that which has itself informed step by step the symbolic process." 

Miss Gordon presents the Olympian genealogy filtered through her symbolic imagination. Allen Tate explains the process: "To bring together various meanings at a single moment of action is to exercise ... symbolic imagination; but the line of action must be unmistakable, we must never be in doubt about what is happening; for
at a given stage of his progress the hero does one simple thing, and one only. The symbolic imagination conducts an action through analogy, of the human to the divine, of the natural to the supernatural, of the low to the high, of time to eternity. 43 The action in The Glory of Hera may be conceived by Miss Gordon as taking place in the mind—that area of thought where men of all ages have linked hands in recognition of the universals that govern life, but the actions of the characters and the scenes are all rendered concrete. Mount Olympus and ancient Greece are concrete places in the story. We know where Heracles and the gods are and what they are doing, their story taking place in time and in space. The concreteness of the place is established in the opening lines: "On a certain afternoon—one of those which cannot be measured on any calendar devised by man—Zeus, the Father of Gods and Men, ascended to the highest peak of Mount Olympus" (p. 3). A few lines later the clouds are rendered as elements to be seen: "They floated in from every quarter. Some, shaped like pillars, were darkly purple and swollen with rain. Others were of a greenish hue, with yellow streaks zigzagging down their sides. In and out among the larger clouds, floated smaller clouds, gossamer thin sometimes, sometimes curled as thick as the fleece on the back of a young lamb." Although a bit garish to this reader's imagination, the
color is vivid, the texture sensed. Zeus and retinue may move in and out of historical time, but their whereabouts are always known. Heracles and his fellow mortals conduct themselves in historical-mythical time, the hero's story progressing from youth to manhood, through successive labors. As the Greeks anthropomorphized their deities, so Miss Gordon renders her Olympian populace and legendary figures in concrete, human terms. The action is "unmistakable." The conception behind the action is more complex.

Kitto's explanation of the process of creation of Aeschylus applies to that of Caroline Gordon: the playwright does not provide history as Shakespeare does but presents an idea. His aim is to present the significance of an act. In the Agamemnon Aeschylus takes the story and reconstructs it to fashion a play "about a certain conception of justice. . . . His framework is not the story, but his conception." Similarly, Miss Gordon takes a story and presents the significance of human action, but in relation to the world of spirit. Through Greek myth she shows the search for grace and the redemption that are central to Christian faith. Redemption is the hope of the Christian and of the novelist through her story. The hope lies in the capacity of man, in this instance, of Heracles, to turn away from evil and "to do good." Because the task demands supreme will to combat
the continuous forces of evil stemming from within man's imperfect being, only the truly heroic persevere in the struggle. The realization of virtue comes to permeate the struggle.

The virtue of Heracles--his excellence, areté as Kitto defines it: "excellence morally, intellectually, physically, practically"—resides largely in his struggle to know himself and to serve Zeus. The rendering of the struggle reflects the virtue of the novelist. She conveys the "superhuman virtues" required of the writer who, as Jacques Maritain explains, "probes human misery." For Maritain, "only a Christian, nay more a mystic, because he has some idea of what is in a man, can be a complete novelist." In this sense, in the probes of the fundamental presence of good and evil in the world, which means in man, Miss Gordon is a complete novelist. There is the mystical conception of man's redemption that underscores the action of the novel. There is also the mystical aura of Heracles in his search to know himself, to learn his relationship to the divine—to Zeus and to Hera.

The realism of the novel, stemming from its concern with morality, resembles the kind of realism Jacques Maritain calls "integral." Maritain explains: "An integral realism is possible only in an art responsive to the whole truth of the universe of good and evil—}\
pervaded by the consciousness of grace and sin and the importance of the moment." This is the realism of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus; this is the realism of Greek myth--the recognition of good and evil in the world and the attempt to come to terms with it. The moments selected by the dramatists capture the forces of good and evil in combat for a man's soul, meaning nature. Miss Gordon works from this tradition, focusing upon the struggle of man to overcome evil and seek good. The primary notions (cited earlier, see p. 114) become the central concern for each writer concerned with what it means to be human.

Working from a particular moment in historical time and from Christian tradition, Miss Gordon moves her hero from a position of stoical endurance to the transcendent realm of redemption by means of grace. In this way she envelopes Greek myth with Christian myth and transcends time by moving her historical perspective into the realm of sacred time. Her hero's burden is to convey the fundamental of a man and his relationship to God. In an era conspicuous in its dearth of heroes, almost adamant in its gnosticism, Miss Gordon's basic belief in the spiritual life and the possibility of spiritual redemption for all men may emerge as almost too doctrinaire. Within the belief or conception is a challenge: How can man not believe in a Power greater than he. The means to
redemption, for Miss Gordon, is caritas—the special love that requires the giving of self to others in honor of and in duty to the Supreme Power. In effect, the challenge to the reader is the challenge of Heracles: to know the self, knowledge of self requiring two planes of search. One acts in the world of men, and one grows in spiritual awareness of the transcendent realm of the divine.

If Heracles is the conveyer of Miss Gordon's final vision, he may be regarded as the culmination of her developing story of the hero. The true Hero embodies grace. The divine within man, this is and has been Miss Gordon's concern. Now, through Heracles, we see the labors of all of her heroes. Her search for a representative hero has taken many turns. Not until The Malefactors does the significance of the divine acting within man become explicit. Activity in the world is insufficient as consolation when confronted with chaos or extreme loss. Rives Allard dies, Mr. Maury despairs and then takes refuge in more sport. The patriarchal figure, the war hero, and the frontiersman learn that life may yield only a sense of nothingness. Rion's final vision of losing one's self in the pursuit--the turning of fortune--attests to the ultimate bleakness of pure activity in the natural world. Nor is pure contemplation the answer, as the Gordon spiritual aliens learn. Odysseus-like in their
search for home or identity or meaning, the spiritual aliens must learn, as Telemachus did, that action must follow thought. In Miss Gordon's cosmos, the perils, the forces of evil, come from within the seekers. Only when they have the courage to confront themselves do they begin to live again. The expression the Greeks had for the experience of self-confrontation is agon. The Greeks conceived that the anguish of the struggle reveals the man. In no case, however, does the hero achieve an absolute answer, a happy ending in a fairy-tale style. This is the point at which Heracles and his story illuminate the entire history of the Gordon hero.

The task of the hero is to seek perfection, to seek grace outside the self. Heracles, a man-god of extreme passion, undergoes extreme tribulation. Son of Zeus, he suffers a cross—the burden to improve man and, in his human state, to know himself. In his search he may realize moments of grace, may experience beatific visions. Such moments mark the ultimate realization of the possibility of redemption. Miss Gordon's concern as an artist has been to render the moments of vision as viable experiences possible to all men who seek their identity.

The moments of vision in the evolution of the hero have become increasingly spiritual, both in manner and context. Mr. Maury discovers that he has pursued sport for the delight that it yields; Rives Allard sees that
Death is his only alternative in defeat and that a man possesses the right to die according to the code of the soldier and the gentleman; the Chapmans learn that land alone is insufficient for restoring the spirit and that their marriage is a sacred commitment and must be saved by their working together in their respective roles as husband and wife; Steve Lewis discovers that a particular and unknown fate beyond human control awaits each man, that there is a mystical dimension to life; and Tom Claiborne experiences the divine working of caritas in the lives of people and realizes that the potential for sainthood exists among men.

Because man is human, limited in time and in vision, he may see his hopes in terms of a war to win or a land to settle or a crop to raise. These goals are real and significant in the short view of history and in the span of one's life. In the larger perspective of, in Lewis P. Simpson's words, "the moral community of memory and of history" and of sacred time, the goal, as Heracles reminds all heroes, is to transcend the self and strive for the divine. The profane nature of man is to be confronted; the potential spirituality of man is never to be forgotten. This, it seems, is "the lesson of Heracles."

With Melville, Miss Gordon speaks of the shock of recognition which enables writers to link hand with writers of all ages. As a classicist, she links hands with
her master, Aeschylus, addressing the problem of good and evil within men. As a Christian writer--one who consciously reflects the fundamental beliefs of Christianity--she addresses an a-spiritual age. She tells her audience that spiritual heroes are possible. She goes even further. She tells us that we have the potential to be spiritual heroes and that we possess the means of our divinity if we search for them and listen to the voice of God. Her hero's odyssey ends in a vision of the Christian virtues: faith, hope, and charity. This final vision embodies the optimism of the saints and martyrs--the burden and the glory of the Cross. The lesson of Miss Gordon through her heroes is the lesson of the Cross. With this vision she concludes her Dantesque quest.
Notes


3 Maritain.

4 Maritain, p. 19.


6 Gordon, p. 63. In citing the excellence of James, Miss Gordon says, "'There's nobody like James. Only one writer--the great tragedian Aeschylus--nobody else.'"


9 Simpson, p. 76.

10 Mircea Eliade explains the concepts of "secular" and "sacred" times: for Christian and Archaic man "time is not homogeneous; it is subject to periodical ruptures which divide into 'secular duration' and a 'sacred time,' the latter being indefinitely reversible, in the sense that it repeats itself to infinity without ceasing to be the same time." There is a "profane duration of history" but not of "the liturgical time inaugurated by the Incarnation." *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, p. 31.
C. Hugh Holman, quoting Philip Wheelwright, provides a definition of the archetypal imagination: There is a type of imagination "that can properly be called 'the Archetypal Imagination, which sees the particular object as embodying and adumbrating suggestions of universality.' The possessors of such Imagination arrange their works in archetypal patterns, and present us with narratives which stir us as 'something at once familiar and strange.' They give concrete expression to something deep and primitive in us all." A Handbook to Literature 3rd ed. Based on the original by William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, (1972), p. 334.

Letter received from Caroline Gordon, 17 September 1972. Miss Gordon writes: "My latest novel [The Glory of Hera] published in February, has for protagonist the archetypal Greek hero, Heracles. It is doubtless motivated by Carl Jung's affirmation that the 'primordial motifs' operate as actively in the mind of modern man as in the mind of the ancients."

In a reference to Flaubert's play The Temptation of St. Anthony, Miss Gordon reveals a possible influence upon her particular approach in Hera. She states that the action of the play takes place "entirely within the hermit's imagination and soul. It is a dramatization of St. Paul's famous admonition 'Pray without ceasing.'" "Heresy in Dixie," The Sewanee Review, 76 (1968), 274.

Miss Gordon is continuing the "mythologizing process" noted by Richard Gray in "Back to the Old Plantation: The Recovery and Reexamination of a Dream," The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 173. He writes that the selecting and abstracting from historical past is done to create a value system for the present.

H. D. F. Kitto, discussing the Iliad, cites the universality of myth: "he [Homer] sees that there is a unity in things, that events have their causes and their results, that certain moral issues exist. . . . The divine background of the epic means ultimately that particular actions are at the same time unique and universal." The Greeks (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 55.

Perhaps Miss Gordon captures the essence of her choice in the quotation from Concerning the Gods by Sallustius that prefaces an excerpt from the novel: "'The things never were, but always are.'" "Cloud Nine," The Sewanee Review, 77 (1969), 591.

art and writes that "To understand the 'idea' in a work of art is therefore like having a new experience than like entertaining a new proposition. . . ." Her words are applicable to Miss Gordon's technique. The relating of the myth through the use of the conventions of the epic is an attempt to render the experience of belief or faith of the hero.

Janet Lewis, in her review of The Glory of Man, quotes Miss Gordon on "the lower pattern": "The lower pattern winds serpent-wise through the upper pattern of action [of a future autobiographical work] and deals with the archetypal world which the present day Jungians and the archaic Greeks inform us lies at the bottom of every human consciousness." "The Glory of Hera," The Sewanee Review, 81 (1973), 185.


Miss Gordon, a lifelong student of the classics, is well versed in Greek myth. She may not have consulted Apollodorus directly, but he provides the general framework against which her interpretation of the myths can be viewed.

Apollodorus recounts the episode briefly. (II. 61)

Caroline Gordon emphasizes the virginity of Alcmene and the mystery surrounding the birth, elaborating upon the event and linking it with the Virgin birth of Christ. Morinthos and Zeus discuss events leading to the conception and birth; from Alcmene we learn of the events and her feelings and confusion. The Glory of Hera (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), p. 131. All references to the work will appear in the text and in the notes by page numbers.

Apollodorus implicates Amphitryon in the episode: "According to Pherecydes, however, Amphitryon put serpents in the bed, for he was anxious to determine which child was his: when Iphicles ran away but Heracles stood fast, he knew that Iphicles was his own son" (II. 62).

The Glory of Hera, p. 131.

Apollodorus: Heracles is named by the Pythia at Delphi when he seeks advice after the killing of his children and two of Iphicles' children. (II. 72-73)

Apollodorus: A much younger Heracles kills Linus when Linus spanks him. He then provides his own defense, citing a law of Rhadamanthys--"that a person resisting
an unjust punishment was guiltless." Heracles is acquitted of the crime and sent to grow up among the herds. (II. 64)

19 Apollodorus: Heracles goes to Thespius when he decides to kill the lion of Cithaeron. While in Thespius's household, he sleeps with all fifty daughters but thinks that he is sleeping with only one. Popular interpretations of the episode have Heracles sleeping with all fifty in one night, an extraordinary feat for any hero or god.

20 Apollodorus: After the war with Erginus and with Heracles victorious, Creon gives his daughter Megara in marriage to Heracles. (II. 70)

Caroline Gordon: Megara and Heracles are married, several years having elapsed between the disfiguring of the messengers and the retaliatory move by King Erginus.

21 Apollodorus: Heracles does not kill Megara. After his twelve labors he gives her in marriage to Iolaus, son of Iphicles. Caroline Gordon is creating a domestic scene and would not include the episode. It is at this time, too, that Heracles takes the tripod from the Oracle, followed by three years of bondage. In The Glory of Hera the tripod is taken during his visit to Delphi made after the murder of his family.

One major deviation by Miss Gordon in her telling of the labors occurs with the story of the Golden Apples. Not Eurystheus but his wife, Arsippe, asks for the apples. When Eurystheus is given the apples he does not make a present of them to Heracles (Apollodorus, II. 121). Through repetition of reactions to Arsippe's request, Miss Gordon stresses the presumption of mortals. Prometheus cries, "How does a mortal woman aspire to possess them!" (p. 367). In Apollodorus Athene retrieves the apples because "it was not permitted by divine law to locate them anywhere else" (II. 121).

22 Apollodorus: None of the exchange with Meleager takes place (II. 122-123). Instead, the marriage to Deineira is a result of a visit to Calydon and the wrestling of Achelous in exchange for Deineira (II. 148). Miss Gordon continues to focus upon the domestic and the relationships between husbands and wives and not upon exploits.

23 Caroline Gordon does not offer the cataloguing of exploits that Apollodorus provides. Having fully established the character of her hero, she moves to the interior of his life rather than continuing an account of his external feats and focuses upon his spiritual redemption.
24 Apollodorus: The affair is presented as true. In both accounts Deineira does believe the blood of Nessus is a love-potion. Miss Gordon's emphasis is upon the father-son relationship between Hyllos and Heracles.

25 Apollodorus: "As the pyre burned, it is told that a cloud came underneath Heracles and lifted him up to the sky, with a crack of thunder. From that time he achieved immortality, and when Hera's enmity changed to friendship, he married her daughter Hebe, who bore him sons Alaxias and Anicetus" (II. 160).

26 As in Homer, a constant epithet for Zeus in The Glory of Hera is "the Cloud-Gatherer," and a constant prop is the thunderbolt.


Gilbert Murray provides another view of Euripides' Heracles: "In Euripides' Alcestis Heracles is a jolly, hard-drinking reveller but with a hero's magnanimity and power in the background, when needed. In the same author's Heracles he is a heroic figure stricken down by the hat of a Goddess, but rising, with difficulty to the almost intolerable ordeal of life afterwards. In later thought he becomes a savior of mankind, or is allegorized into a saint and a philosopher." Pref., The Wife of Heracles, being Sophocles' Play The Trachinian Women, trans. and explanatory notes Gilbert Murray, O.M. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1947), p. 10.

28 Heracles Euripides, III, 11. 1314-1315. All references will be cited in the text.

The admonition to endure tribulation echoes the words of Thomas à Kempis: "The whole life of Christ was a cross and martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy." The Imitation of Christ: In Four Books, ed. Rev. J. J. Leien, PH.D. (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1963-41), p. 129. Miss Gordon, no doubt, is very familiar with the work, a basic reader for Catholics.

There is no ascension in Sophocles' Trachinian Women, no deification. In fact, as Gilbert Murray points out, Heracles shows 'none of the characteristic Greek virtues, . . . . True he is the son of Zeus; that no doubt is the secret of his victoriousness, but it is no particular guarantee of moral virtue. . . . . In Sophocles as in Euripides the gods are often distinguished from human beings chiefly by their inhumanity, . . . ." Pref., The Wife of Heracles, pp. 10-11.
Miss Gordon's interpretation of Euripides is, I surmise by way of her novel, much more in accordance with that of Arrowsmith. The moral responsibility of a person is central to her interpretation of the Heracles figure; he cannot simply blame the gods or fate for his troubles.

In Sophocles' Philoctetes the suffering that yields a certain humility in a man is more evident. Heracles tells Philoctetes:

How many labors I did undergo
Enduring, immortality acquired,
As thou now beholdest. So I say to thee:
This suffering of thine thou must endure
That it may end in glorious victory.


Kitto explains the word Necessity in the context of Homer: In pre-philosophical Homer, order--Law--was behind things. Homer called it "Ananke, Necessity, an Order of things which even the gods cannot infringe. Greek Tragedy is built on the faith that in human affairs it is Law that reigns, not chance." He adds, "In Aeschylus, the Law is simpler [than in Sophocles' Oedipus]: it is moral law. Punishment follows Hybris as the night the day." The Greeks, pp. 176, 177.


Moses Hadas and Morton Smith also cite the evolving significance of Heracles: "he was actually revered by Cynics and Stoics as the prime example of a man raised above ordinary humanity by his services to mankind." By the fifth century he was "the great benefactor of mankind who devoted his life to cleansing the world of monsters. . . ." "Patterns of Achievement: Dionysus, Heracles, Theseus," Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies in Antiquity, Religious Perspectives, 13 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 22. In Miss Gordon's conception the monsters are both internal and external.

W. K. C. Guthrie notes of the Heracles figure that there is no Greek parallel, but that there are parallels in Northern sagas--Arthur, Rustum, and the Christian saints, p. 238.

C. Kerenyi elaborates upon Hera as archetypal image of the wife: "among the archetypal images of Greek religion Hera was the wife. . . . She before everyone of her periodically recurring weddings became a virgin, but afterwards she became once more that which is her most frequent epithet in the cult, 'Teleia,' 'perfect one.'
In marriage she attained perfection. Zeus in this connection was called 'Teleios,' 'bringer to perfection.' For the wife's perfection does not mean merely, or necessarily, motherhood, which is rather something normal inside every perfection, a condition deserving respect for its own sake. Perfection means the whole essential life of woman, its fulfillment by the man. Therefore, the lovemaking, which gives her such life fulfillment, means incomparably more for the wife than for the husband. And whenever fulfillment is attained by it, it is again a wedding, before which the wife is a girl." Zeus and Hera: Archetypal Image of Father, Husband, and Wife, trans. Christopher Holme, Bollingen Series LXV (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 98.

Thomas à Kempis illuminates the role of temptation and the struggle in the search for grace: "For he is not worthy the sublime contemplation of God, who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation. . . . Now divine consolation is given, that a man may the better be able to support adversities. And temptation followeth, that he may not be elated by the good." The Imitation of Christ, p. 118.

See note 31. The passage seems to reflect Kerenyi's view of Hera as wife. Artemis is, in a sense, preparing a rite associated with birth, for out of Hera's robes Heracles emerges. Hera's words "our son" confirm her position as wife and mother. She literally delivers Heracles to Zeus and with a look "fuller of love than any she had ever given him before."

Several scholars provide commentary upon the name Heracles. Among them are C. Kerenyi--Heracles: "the one who won fame through Hera" (p. 137), and the contributions to The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd ed., (1970), p. 498--"Heracles (cf. 'Diolecs'), 'Hera's glory,' i.e. probably 'glorious gift of Hera (to his parents),' is a typically human name." In the novel, the name is significant.

Kitto explains the Greek emphasis upon need for restraints: Because the Greeks saw man as important, the individual "had always to be reminding himself that Man is not God, and that it is impious to think it." A "self-confidence in humanity" was restrained by the individual's "instinctive religious outlook." The Greeks, p. 61.

That lesson may be the Greek maxim "Know thyself" as Kitto explains it, citing why Cyrus did not kill Croesus on the pyre: "he follows the Greek maxim 'Know thyself,' which means, remember what you are--a man, and
subject to the conditions and limitations of mortality" (p. 111). Cyrus comes to realize, as does Heracles, that nothing is constant in human life. This lesson Hyllos must come to learn. This is the lesson that Rion Outlaw of Green Centuries learned. (See the text, pp. 64-65.) Aleck Maury learned about the limitation of man and decided to live within those limitations and enjoy his circumscribed life. (See Chapter Three.)

37 From a strictly Greek perspective, immortality is often achieved only through death: "Typical of the limitations, even the contradiction of life, is the fact that what is most worth having can often be had only at the peril of life itself" (Kitto, p. 62). An Achilles chooses glory and a short life as opposed to a long life and mediocrity. The hero, in choosing the heroic way, does not choose heroism through a sense of duty toward others; "it is rather duty towards himself. He strives after that which we translate 'virtue,' but in Greek aretē, 'excellence'" (Kitto, p. 58).

From the Christian perspective, immortality is achieved through and equals salvation; one seeks life everlasting through and with God. In this sense I equate immortality and salvation.


39 Kitto, p. 64.


C. Kerenyi comments on the symbolism of Zeus: Zeus was equated with light because, "For the Greeks, light was the element of truth, as night was the element of
thieves" (p. 14). He also comments on the lack of a physical substitute for Zeus in the religious rites: "There existed for the Greeks, ever since they had had this religion, the god himself—a spiritual he who happened—apprehended or in the cosmos or in the life of men, acted in their ceremonies" (Zeus and Hera, p. 179).

43 Tate, p. 427.

44 Kitto, pp. 183-185.

45 Kitto, pp. 171-172.


47 Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry, p. 147.

48 Richard Gray, while respecting Miss Gordon as a writer, questions what he deems to be her limited vision or deliberately narrowed vision. He writes, in a discussion of her "plantation novels," of her "profoundly conservative form of Catholicism that rejects present circumstances as irremediable and finds perfection, if anywhere, only among those people who have retreated entirely from the world. The gentleman is then transformed into Christ; the black man, into the Black Man, or Devil; and the order of the old plantation, into the rituals and ceremony of the Holy Church." He feels no reason to elaborate upon the issue because her earlier fiction "tells us all we really need to know about the otherworldliness of her standpoint, and the unfortunate substitution it implies of the heroic and ceremonious for the human" (pp. 173-174).

I agree with Mr. Gray's comments on Miss Gordon's conservatism and emphasis upon the heroic and ceremonial. However, I disagree with the implication that all is static in her novels, and I hope that early discussions of her works—the "plantation novels" included—have illustrated the dynamic in her world. Moreover, I hope that the discussion of Hera has proved the dynamic evolution of the hero and the heroic. As readers we must remember Miss Gordon's directive (and personal desire) to read correctly. Her constants in the moral universe are those that provide integrity of life. She, like her Greek and French mentors, adheres to a belief in quality of life. For Miss Gordon, such a belief is almost an obsession. Acutely aware of the abyss, of chaos, she sees men teetering on the edge. A Christian, she adheres to Grace as the salvation of men.
Afterword

Caroline Gordon is currently at work on the second volume of her last novel, tentatively entitled *Joy of the Mountains.*¹ Like its predecessors, it will reflect what Louise Cowan has termed the upper and lower stories: the mythopoeic level--man's search for wholeness--and the allegorical. Comparing the structure of a Gordon novel to that of the Christian epic, she says the upper level "speaks allegorically of the progress of the soul; a glimpse of love and joy--what Jacques Maritain calls 'a flash of reality'--impels it on its quest. The obstacle to overcome is sin; the journey is toward grace, toward light out of darkness; but there is nevertheless a confrontation of the abyss. Woman is the mediatrix of grace in this journey, the Beatrice figure who impels and guides."²

Two excerpts already published from the double novel, *Behold My Trembling Heart,* and the *Glory of Hera* reveal two distinct story lines. In "A Narrow Heart: The Portrait of a Woman," published in 1960, and in "Cock-Crow," published in 1965, a slight extension of the first excerpt, Miss Gordon is autobiographical, revealing her precocious childhood when, at age four, she knew her vocation would
be that of a "storyteller" and when she first felt "the presences." Standing by herself in a room in the family home, she heard a cry and felt fear:

I have never known what that cry was or where it came from but I remember how that hoarse sound, speaking of some apparently unassuageable distress, suddenly sounded again in the room and how the shadows, which up till then had lurked in the corners, massed themselves as if about to sway forward. It was a long time ago but it sometimes seems as if I had all my life been standing in that darkening room, companioned only by shadows, shadows which, if I stood there, I kept at bay by the exertion of all my childish will, for I knew even then that their very existence betokened peril and that too close communion with them meant death.3

The shadows have been with her all her life. They appeared in her work—the women on the porch, Catherine and Jim Chapman, all felt the presences, and old Catherine Lewis kept "too close communion with them," thereby rejecting life and its attendant delight derived from meaningful human relationships. The shadows have also kept her faithful to her craft, her vocation. Of her characters she says, "They are ready to walk on to the stage of the imagination of any one of us [artists] the moment their cue comes; that moment when the word first spoken so long ago vibrates in the air we ourselves are breathing, when the head is uplifted by the same call, the step forward or backward taken at the same challenge. Every one of us has his ghostly company, of course. And they are all heroes. Being heroes, they all fight the same fight. They confront the powers of darkness. For that has always
been the task of the hero, the confrontation of the supernatural in one or other of those forms which men of every age have labelled 'monstrous.' To stray from the telling is to allow the presences to take mastery, is to destroy the creative life. The challenge, she says, is "that we recognize the true, the beautiful, the timeless under its accidental appearance." This challenge to the artist, for she is speaking of the artistic life, is continuous, recurring throughout life. Miss Gordon meets the challenge through her portrayal of the hero.

In "the last novel that [she] will write," Miss Gordon continues her focus upon the hero: "I am going to try to tell the stories of some heroes that I have known, heroes, who, for the most part, received the kind of anonymity I have described as their reward," adding:

As chronicler of the lives of some of these heroes--and I do not know where they can find another chronicler!--I want to make you see them as I first saw them. In every case I believe that I first saw the heroes and heroines in the same attitude and in the same place. Each one of them was standing on the edge of an abyss. An abyss so deep and dark that no human eye has ever penetrated it. And each one of them had assumed the attitude that every one of us instinctively assumes when we realize that our lives are being threatened. Each one of them has just realized that he confronts a mortal enemy and that, therefore, the ensuing struggle is to the death.

The first of the heroes chronicled is Heracles; The Glory of Hera is the published result. A second hero is to be "Jean Cauvin, son of Gerard Cauvin, bourgeois of Noyan, promoteur of the cathedral chapter, greffier de
l'officialité . . . " under his alias of Charles D'Espeville. In the excerpt published, "A Walk With the Accuser (Who is the God of This World)" [The Transatlantic Review, no. 31 (Winter 1968-9), 96-114], the central issue is Cauvin's theological position on the Trinity and Christ as eternal son of God. The opposition to his view comes from Michael Servitus whose theology says, Christ the son of the eternal God. Miss Gordon's craft appears in the meeting that she stages between the two men, the two traveling incognito, a meeting that historically never took place because Michael Servitus did not appear. They meet again sixteen years later, Servitus in his cell, arrested by the Inquisition through the testimony of Cauvin. In the third section of the excerpt, Servitus is burned, his last cry the recorded "Jesus, son of the eternal God, have mercy." Cauvin explains Servitus as "misguided" and then prepares to order his thoughts in case he is accused of throwing Servitus to the Papists. At one point in the story Miss Gordon has Cauvin say, "I cannot remember when I was not preoccupied with questions of good and evil" (106). In her portrait of Calvin, she gives us the zealousness of one intent on establishing the good by which all men must abide.

In Miss Gordon's novels, the issue has been the good and evil that men do but in the orthodox sense of a relentless seeking of knowledge of God, of seeing grace acting
in the world and seeking that grace. Miss Gordon elaborates upon the role of grace in her comments on the work of Flannery O'Connor, comments applicable to her own work:

"All her work is based upon the same architectural principle. . . . any good story . . . shows both natural and supernatural grace operating in the lives of human beings."\(^8\)

In another place she says that Miss O'Connor's "professional preoccupation" at the end was with the role of the prophet. She quotes St. Thomas of the *De Veritate* in which he says that prophecy "depends on the imagination and not the moral faculty," adding, "It is a matter of seeing."\(^9\)

She then quotes Sister Kathleen Freeley's summary of Eric Voegelin's concept of a prophet: "the idea of a person whose soul is atuned to the order of God, whether or not this order prevails about him."

As a storyteller devoted to her art, Miss Gordon has been "atuned to the order of God." Ever faithful to her art, she has been, in Jacques Maritain's words, "a good workman": "the artist, if he is not to shatter his art or his soul, must simply be, as artist, what art wants him to be—a good workman."\(^10\)

As a prophet, one who sees deeply, and as an artist, Miss Gordon gives us a Christian art, which, Maritain says, is "the art of redeemed humanity." Her heroes have moved to, in Maritain's words, the ultimate reality of "redeeming suffering."

In her final writings, especially from *The Strange*
Children through The Glory of Hera, Miss Gordon joins hands with the Catholic mystics, particularly St. Catherine of Siena (who influenced The Malefactors) and St. John of the Cross. She shares their sense of commitment to a life's task. In her case the task is her art. And she shares their intensity of vision. When in the middle of her life's journey, she sought, in her words, a cure for her "soul's sickness," she confronted the woman haunting her dreams, the "sybil" one meets if one has "successfully traversed some of the darker corridors of that subterranean world which each of us carries around with us." Miss Gordon is not a mystic; rather, she is a writer who, having spent a lifetime exploring the subterranean world through her fiction, now says, "I am looking forward to my interment with considerable impatience--for a reason which I will divulge at the proper time." She is not being morbid, melodramatic, or self-pitying. She is making the statement one can make who has conducted a life-long journey toward grace, ever cognizant of the looming shadows.

By dark of blessed night,  
In secrecy, for no one saw me  
And I regarded nothing,  
My only light and guide  
The one that in my heart was burning.

This guided, led me on  
More surely than the radiance of noon  
To where there waited one  
Who was to me well known,  
And in a place where no one came in view.
O night, you were the guide!
O night more desirable than dawn!
Beloved with belov'd one,
Belov'd one in Beloved now transformed!

from "The Dark of Night"^{13}
St. John of the Cross
Notes

1 The title appears as a descriptive note to the 1976 publication of Miss Gordon's excerpt, "The Strangest Day in the Life of Captain Meriwether Lewis As Told to His Eighth Cousin, Once Removed," in The Southern Review, 1 (1976), vii. The first volume is The Glory of Hera; together, the two volumes will constitute the long novel, Behold My Trembling Heart. Both title and original conception may be changed or modified by now.


6 "Cock-Crow," 559. Miss Gordon says that those men who stayed at home from wars and the women and the children who were defended "have been markedly slow to render the hero the homage which is his immemorial due," adding: This, I suspect, is because the men who stayed at home, for one reason, or another, did not employ their time properly while the hero was off at the wars. They have not considered what rewards should be his or how best to welcome him on his return. They have not recited his glorious deeds, pausing between recitals, to meditate on the mystery that sets him apart from his fellows. Rather, they have passed their time in arguments as to whether or not he really is a hero or speculations as to whether some merchant who, at the moment, is purveying shoddy
wares in the next county, or some wastrel asleep in a ditch, is not, after all, the man whose entrance into the town should be greeted by a procession and a band.

The excerpt on the life of Meriwether Lewis indicates that Lewis is to be still another of Miss Gordon's heroes. See note 1.

7 Gordon, "Cock-Crow," 561.


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Vita

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EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Sandra M. Lavin

Major Field: English

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Approved:

[Signatures of Major Professor and Chairman, Dean of the Graduate School]

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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