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CULTURAL HISTORY AND FICTION
MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS AND ELLEN GLASGOW

BY

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THESIS
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Ellen Glasgow were novelists, not historians. Yet their works are valuable sources of information on the social and cultural history of the South in the period from the Civil War to the middle of the Great Depression.

Social historians draw on letters, diaries, municipal and business records, journals and newspapers as their sources. Archeologists reconstruct physical evidence. Contemporary observers whose personal and family histories are intertwined with the times often produce valuable insights in the form of autobiography, short story, poetry or novel. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Ellen Glasgow fit or belong to this latter category.

These two women had much in common. Both had a strong sense of place. Rawlings dealt with back-country or "cracker" Florida and Glasgow with post-Civil War Tidewater Virginia. Both women were keen observers of daily life. Each understood the role played by the traditions, by myth and legend, and by religious faith in her region.

Both were independent women who recognized and appreciated strength and resiliency in members of their own sex.
Each frequently chose strong, independent women as important characters in her books. Both were keen observers of nature and knew its effect on people and on the development of rural and small-town culture.

In choosing locales, both selected areas they knew well, areas that had either been ignored by social historians or treated according to pre-conceived notions. In Rawlings' books, especially, the place itself becomes almost as important as the people who inhabited it. Both writers knew instinctively that their worlds were rapidly vanishing. They wanted to convey an accurate record of their society before it disappeared. All the details are there -- what people wore and ate, how they earned their livelihood, how their homes were furnished, how children were educated and what they were taught, what people believed, how they worshipped, the impact of new ideas, how they accepted or denied change and how the past haunted the present.

Ellen Glasgow observed the social habits of post-Civil War Virginia and found they were based on conditions that no longer existed. The shock of the Civil War and Reconstruction had abated by 1870. Industrial growth, immigration from Europe to America, urban problems, new politics, new thought, and new science were changing the shape and flavor of the country. New history was being written,
yet books about the South, including those purporting to be history, still tended to cling to well-worn antebellum legends.

In 1897, a novel was published which showed, for the first time, the South in realistic terms. The Descendant was a novel of meager literary merit, but as Glasgow says in her autobiography, The Woman Within, "it is a freely interpretive form of social history."

The Descendant and her second novel, Phases of an Inferior Planet, are set largely outside Virginia. Nevertheless, she tried in these first two books to create the antithesis of the Virginia gentleman -- the intellectual who could overcome dead tradition. It was after the publication of these two books that she realized she could reflect the changing face of the United States through the mirror of changing life in Virginia.

Glasgow's world was changing; Rawlings' world was one to be tamed. She observed the social habits of backwoods Florida and found them a practical response to the environment. Her Florida was inhabited by those seeking freedom from the restrictions of life in the post-war "old" South, like Penny Baxter in The Yearling, or outcasts from formal European society, like the Captain in Golden Apples, or those seeking new opportunities in a frontier setting.
Both authors wrote about those non-aristocratic Southern families, often called "poor whites." These small farmers were rural in background, thin of purse, and seeking to make their fortunes in a changed and changing environment.

Glasgow's Virginia was heir to a tradition that applied to books written about the South by authors and historians on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. These books either sought to harrow up harsh feelings caused by the Civil War, or, conversely, to depict the South in a romantic haze of moonlight and magnolias. Glasgow's Virginia had been treated according to regional prejudices instead of realism. Rawlings' Florida backwoods had not, on the other hand, ever received much attention from social historians. It was her fascination with the unique culture she found at Cross Creek that led her to share her discovery with others through her books.

The first section of this paper will deal with the practical details of daily life recorded in Rawlings' and Glasgow's books -- how people lived, their employment, housing, food, clothing, communication, transportation, education, and recreation. The second part will discuss the value systems -- what people believed, their religion, the class system, and social customs in each region. In
the final section, the differences in the two societies will be discussed as well as the lasting contribution each author has made to the body of cultural history of the South.
CHAPTER II

How People Lived

Employment

The main source of work available to the majority of those who lived in both Tidewater Virginia and rural Florida sprung from the land itself. Agriculture for home use or for sale to others formed the basis of Southern economy. It also formed the character of the people who worked the land. Farming in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a far cry from the mechanized agribusiness of today. It was a labor-intensive, hard-scrabble battle pitting the sweat and muscle of men, mules, and oxen against an unforgiving and frequently exhausted soil in weather conditions both harsh and inconsistent from season to season.

In spite of these difficulties, Ellen Glasgow believed that the values of an agrarian life were important. In her novel, The Deliverance, she expresses her feeling that, in spite of the harshness of a farmer's life, he benefits from being in harmony with his environment. Christopher Blake, trying to revive the family fortunes through tobacco farming "...could find peace and freedom only in communion with the earth which had moulded (sic) both him and
his race."¹ The Southerner's tradition was closeness to the soil and even a town-bound person like Asa Timberlake of *In This Our Life* feels that freedom is being able to "look at the fields and trees...to help things grow out of the ground."² Asa's secret dream has always been to be a hired man on a farm. Dorinda in *Barren Ground* is the second generation of her family to sacrifice her youth and her strength working the farm, but in spite of the difficulties she encounters, she can still say "the land is the only thing that will stay by you."

In novel after novel, Glasgow writes of her conviction that men draw strength from the land and that the finest character develops in those who have close contact with the earth. Yet she does not romanticize agriculture but describes very realistically and graphically the back-breaking labor, frequent disappointment and natural and man-made disasters that such a life can bring to those who earn their living by farming.

Her description of tobacco culture in *The Romance of a Plain Man* includes all the harshness of heat, long hours in the fields, and the sudden hailstorms or lengthy droughts that can ruin a crop. Dorinda's parents ⁴ literally kill themselves working land that is barren and unproductive. Glasgow shows how the romance of farming can vanish in a harsh cloud of reality, but nevertheless, she respects the
deep roots that tie Virginians to the land they cultivate. She admired what was good and worth preserving in farm life, but she did not shy away from the truth that farming is a difficult and often precarious way to make a living.

The pre-war Tidewater aristocrats had created for themselves an agrarian society with slavery as the working basis. That slave-based social system imitated the English country life -- large land-holdings worked by others while owners enjoyed a golden age of prosperity and material comfort. When the slaves were freed, this way of life vanished. Glasgow points out again and again how these aristocrats and their descendants could not come to terms with the changes that followed the war. At that time it was the small white farmers who owned and worked their own land who carried on the agricultural tradition. The larger landowners either rented their land out on "share" -- taking a portion of the yield in lieu of rent -- or they merely did nothing and let the land fall back into wilderness. Rare was the aristocrat willing to roll up his sleeves and work to make a success of what once had been a flourishing plantation. Christopher Blake in The Deliverance was one of the few to take on the job of farming after the loss of the family plantation. The aristocrats had been taught to oversee the work of others, not to do the work themselves.
Marjorie Rawlings' observations on farming as a means of earning a living are written in a more lyrical tone than Glasgow's, but she also gives more details about the bone-grinding difficulties involved. In The Yearling, she presents the social historian with a whole range of information about the lives of those pioneers who came into Florida and tried to survive by working the land. Penny Baxter gives his life and his health to the struggle of supporting his family by farming. The central conflict of the book -- Jody's love for his pet fawn versus the necessity to protect the crops so the family can beat back starvation -- shows clearly the force reality has over romanticism. All things are superfluous and expendable which do not contribute to the family's survival.

The threat of starvation was a fact, not an over-dramatic literary device in Rawlings' rural South. Poverty, she says, stalked those living in the scrub of backwoods Florida where land wore out, over-logging brought down timber prices, and, in time of drought or disease, animal pelts for sale and meat for the table ran out. "People were at the mercy of nature in a land of such poor soil."6

Wrestling a living from the land was not always a matter of traditional crop production. The Forrester family in The Yearling, for example, plants only the
minimum crops needed for home use. The bulk of their income was derived from raising half-wild cattle and pigs, hunting meat and pelts from native animals, and from that staple industry of rural Southern enterprise, distilling moonshine whiskey. This particular type of income, in hard times the only way to earn cash money, appears to have been more popular in rural Florida than in Tidewater Virginia. One of the earliest efforts by Florida entrepreneurs was making illegal corn liquor for sale to neighbors and to the inhabitants of nearby towns. Rawlings writes about "moonshiners" in short stories like "Gal Young 'Un," where Trax's 'shine operation provides the focus for his wife's eventual rebellion. In her collection of autobiographical essays, Cross Creek, the tale of the wild hogs getting drunk on discarded liquor mash from an illegal still provides one of the most humorous episodes. Ellen Glasgow, on the other hand, does not make reference to the actual production or practice of making corn liquor in any detail, but illegal whiskey did exist in Virginia and some of her characters are known to take a "swig" now and then and to have contact with sellers of moonshine.

So the people in backwoods Florida and in rural Virginia either farmed in traditional ways or took advantage of the land's bounty to supply their basic needs. Therefore, it becomes apparent from any serious reading of
the works of Ellen Glasgow or Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings that the social history of these two areas must start with the understanding that, in one way or another, the land and what it produced formed the bedrock on which these regions developed.

The Civil War, which destroyed the old life of the planter class, brought new opportunities to the enterprising and the unscrupulous alike. The end of the depression in 1879 released investment dollars in the North and abroad and these dollars found their way South. Not only was the South an almost inexhaustible source of raw materials, but local populations, both black and white, constituted new markets and a large, cheap labor pool. The expansion of non-farm business was more marked in the Virginia area than backwoods Florida which would not feel its effects strongly until after World War II. Glasgow examines the results of this expansion on the native population while ignoring the details of the business activity itself. She could only write truthfully about those events of which she had personal experience and, although she had a good grounding in economics, she never had, by her own admission, a strong business sense.

She did, however, understand the effect of industrialization on Southern society. The threat to the aristocracy was brought about by the rise to prominence and
wealth of the poorer whites, a breed "all too numerous in the sullen years which follow invasion and conquest." Ben Starr, the central character in The Romance of a Plain Man, is in the midst of an urban society in transition. Glasgow speculates whether the planter class will be enriched or destroyed by the new blood of the lower classes. Is it a saving infusion or will it merely hasten the end for the former ruling class? Her answer is that it depends on how the changed position of poor whites affects individuals. The new money and changed economy after the Civil War enabled people like Maria Fletcher, the former overseer's daughter, to be educated and to travel abroad, advantages previously enjoyed only by aristocrats. These experiences broaden Maria's view of life and, freed from forced social conventions which assign her a set place regardless of her abilities or talents, she marries Christopher Blake and together they plan a new life without the false standards of either aristocratic or lower class traditions. Glasgow says Maria is an example of someone springing from poorer stock who, given the opportunity, develops away from the family pattern.

Rawlings' Florida friends and neighbors did not have to cope with business in the same way Glasgow's characters did because industrialization came later to the state. Floridians did, however, have to face problems brought
about by a growing population. The Big Scrub, an area of high sandy soil covered with spindly sand pines, palmetto, and turkey oak, seemed to offer an isolation and peace to men like Penny Baxter. He saw it as an untamed land, full of promise to one willing to pit himself against the elements and, if successful, to arrange the conduct of his life according to his own terms.

As Florida became more populous, changes came to the Scrub. Timbering invaded the settler's hunting territory, cities and towns began to spring up and more and more people moved in claiming land and clearing fields. The battle over open or closed range profoundly changed the Scrub also. From the endless stretches of empty land Rawlings writes about in *Golden Apples* and *The Yearling*, to the disputes over range cattle and wild-roving pigs in *Cross Creek*, Rawlings sees the change coming in Florida and tries to capture the way things were before it arrives.

In *The Miller of Old Church* Glasgow shows rural society changing. Abel Revercombe represents the new order and Jonathan Gay the old. Agrarianism was retreating before the industrialization of Virginia as it was in the rest of the country. Aristocrats who still believed in a slave-based agricultural system, who defended a culture characterized by politics and law, and social rules based on good manners and gracious living no matter what, lived
in a time which had no place for them. Farming practices had to change to meet the challenges of a new age.

Virginia was not alone in facing these changes. Glasgow's reflections on this struggle mirrored events elsewhere. As industry and corporate interests began to conflict with agricultural ones, farmers in other parts of the country also saw industrialization as a threat to their way of life. This led to the formation of the Populist party in the 1890s, an attempt by farmers to stave off the intrusion of business into their lives and to keep America an agricultural nation.

Housing

The style in which Virginians and rural Floridians lived was as full of contrast as the agrarian and industrial methods of earning a living. This contrast is most striking in Richmond, Virginia -- the Queensborough of Glasgow's novels -- and the surrounding countryside. In town one saw the spacious mansions of the wealthy, rooms with linen sheets bearing monograms and embroidered designs of doves. There were tables by Duncan Phyfe, old English silver and "rare English messotints on ivory walls." Often these possessions and the rooms that housed them were shabby and decaying; a musty odor lingered in spite of the size and elegance of the house. Because appearances were so important to the impoverished aristocrats, they
preferred to live in these once-gracious surroundings rather than give up cherished illusions in the face of poverty. Asa Timberlake\textsuperscript{13} feels sadness and pain when he visits an old neighborhood and sees a filling station "flaunting a row of red pumps" shouldering its way between a Victorian house and a Georgian mansion both lost in the shifting tides of urbanization. Asa's father had committed suicide rather than face the loss of the family home. Asa lives in a new modern bungalow, but he feels it is a house that could have come from anywhere; the house has no history, no familiar discomforts, no character. Modern plumbing, convenience, workable size in a servant-scarce environment are not comforting compared to the life that he once knew. He yearns for the gracious lost shelter of his youth. Even in the countryside, those who, like Christopher Blake, are forced to move from their family home into the overseer's house after losing claim to the Big House in the war, are never at home in humbler surroundings.

The poor-white farmers, however, lived in modest cabins without the solace of beautiful, if faded, possessions. Their houses were built mainly of logs or wooden planks, the plumbing arrangements were primitive, and the heat and light generated by fireplaces, lamps, and candles. Often the kitchen was in a separate area for coolness
during the long and hot summer season. The sleeping arrangements were a loft, or one or two small bedrooms. Not often found in the rural South were the weather-tight, cozy-but-plain farmhouses of the northeast and mid-west. Ambition was not to improve these plain cabins, but to accumulate enough money to leave the farm and move into a newer house "in town." Dorinda in Barren Ground, after laboring for 30 years to make the family farm successful, mourns the fact that her parents could not live to enjoy such simple comforts as a rag rug covering the floor or an easy chair to rest in.

Glasgow saves her best descriptions for the once-luxurious homes of the formerly wealthy aristocrats and for the mansions of the newly rich. The pillars, the ornate exteriors, the marble, the stained glass at door and window, the luxuriant walled gardens, the high-ceilinged rooms of gracious proportions, are all settings in which her characters try to recreate a lost way of life or, by imitating this life in interior and exterior design, to rise and be seen to rise, from one class to another. Where housing represents a statement about Virginia's class system, description is telling. William Fitzroy in In This Our Life, for example, had seen, as a child, his family fortune and way of life disappear in the aftermath of war and depression. When he makes a new fortune in the stock
market he builds himself a house that was "as bad as money can buy." In a new society where values had changed from intangible to tangible, William sets an example of lavishness with a spacious library, vast fireplaces, sets of leather-bound books never read but put out for show and, most lavish of all, two formal gardens, one Italian and one Japanese. Where housing represents atmosphere, as does the honest farmhouse of Asa Timberlake's friend Kate, it is the atmosphere, "the bittersweet tang of woodsmoke and crushed apples," the cozy fire, the books piled here and there, and the friendly animals that are described, not the details of the farmhouse itself.

To get a picture of housing for the truly poor, Rawlings is the mistress of description. The Baxter cabin is small; cooking is done on an open hearth. The windows are open to the air and protected from rain by a deeply overhanging tin roof. In harsh weather, wooden shutters close off the interior from the assault of the elements. The only floor coverings are animal hides. The mattresses are stuffed with corn shucks of Spanish moss. They are covered with animal skins in winter and handmade quilts in summer.

Grandma Hutto's house in the riverside settlement of Volusia is luxurious to Jody. It boasts a white picket fence, a flower garden and, indoors, easy chairs and a
cast-iron cookstove. The chairs are even padded and "Grandma Hutto was the only person Jody knew who had a separate room to eat in." This constituted elegance by rural Florida standards. The location of Grandma Hutto's house doubtless contributed to its comparative luxury. She lived on the banks of the then-populous St. Johns River, in a settlement often visited by steamboats coming South to pick up timber, citrus, indigo, and other products for markets in Jacksonville and beyond. The boats also brought goods from northern markets to the people along the river which, at the turn of the century, was the main road to Florida's interior.

Rawlings describes other backwoods cabins with shoe-string latches, open clay hearths and spare, handmade wooden furniture. The poverty of the shelters in the Big Scrub was a product of the poverty of the area, yet the women who made homes from these poor houses often had treasured possessions to remind them of better lives; things such as a white linen tablecloth or a few pieces of English crockery.

When Marjorie Rawlings moved to backwoods Florida in the early 1930s, living conditions were still amazingly spare. In Cross Creek, she describes the long, low wooden farmhouse with its tin roof, narrow porch and a yard containing not only sand and sandspurs, but the outdoor
privy that made up the sanitary arrangements with its zig zag of white paint on the door for privacy.

During the years she lived at the Creek, Rawlings improved the house by adding a cypress shingle roof, a wider screened-in porch, another bedroom and bath and a covered dogtrot, or open porch, between bedrooms and living area. However, it remains today as austere a dwelling as one can imagine. It is decidedly a working house. Everything in it is designed for utility, not comfort. The porches and dogtrot keep off the heavy summer rains and protect visitors as they move from room to room. The scrubbed wooden floors are easy to sweep clean in spite of the traffic of dogs and cats; the pump beside the back door has a handy shelf for cleaning fish or game. Close by is space for a washtub and scrubbing board. Everything is handy, no space is wasted. One can see the logic behind the small indoor living room, for example. In summer, French doors to the porch could be opened to cool the house and provide a larger living area, all cross-ventilated. In winter, the small inside room could be closed off and be adequately heated by the fireplace. Since this house, lived in and used by real people of our generation, appears in the same or perhaps a more primitive form, depending on the historical time frame, in other Rawlings' books, one can deduce that it gives the social historian an accurate
picture of how people lived in rural Florida until very recent times.

If one looks at photographs of Ellen Glasgow's family home in Richmond, and compares its gracious lines and luxurious gardens to those described in her novels, one sees that she, too, wrote realistically about the types of homes lived in by the affluent in post-Civil War Virginia, secure behind their walled gardens and the safety and privacy of high-ceilinged, curtained rooms.

Foods

There are differences in the way each author writes of the foods that made up the diets of their separate societies; differences that arise out of the interests and attitudes of each. Glasgow was much more interested in food as ritual, as another element that divided the poor white, the rising middle class, and the past-worshipping aristocrat. Food, to Glasgow, had a social meaning. In The Romance of a Plain Man the former slave, Big Abel, steals food for his former master, but fears he will not be satisfied with nigger food,¹⁶ implying that aristocrats could not survive on rations common to the blacks. Agatha, in They Stooped to Folly, says that, in her youth, a lady always chose the wing of a chicken over the leg since, even if it was called dark meat, such a choice would seem
Supposedly, the sensibilities of a true Southern lady were so fastidious that any connection between food, however remote, and any portion of the human anatomy would be so gross as to spoil the appetite. Each of these quotes make a point on the social and caste implications of food more than they comment on the food for its own sake.

Rawlings, on the other hand, loved and appreciated food, both as an accomplished cook and as one who thoroughly enjoyed eating. She says, "Cooking is my one great vanity, and I am a slave to any guest who praises my culinary art." The chapter in *Cross Creek*, "Our Daily Bread," gives mouthwatering descriptions of the foods prepared and eaten at the Creek. It was so popular with readers that it was expanded into a successful cookbook, *Cross Creek Cookery*.

Each of her novels is very detailed about what the characters ate, how it was grown or captured, how it was harvested and prepared, and even under what circumstances certain foods were eaten. In *South Moon Under* Piety's mother feeds her family a daily diet of game stew, soft grits, biscuits, coffee with brown sugar, and hot cakes. This is varied according to seasonal plenty and may include pork backbone and rice, sausage, ham shoulder, and side meat topped off with yellow cake "strong with meat"
drippings and egg." On festive occasions when neighbors came together for a barn building, fence mending, or other communal activity, the women outdid themselves, bringing pound cake, lard cake, sweet potato pone, fruit pies, wild orange perserve, guava paste, and sweet cassava pudding, all products of local ingredients unique to Florida families of the time. "Long sweetening" was cane syrup made from home-grown sugarcane stalks crushed in a mule-drawn grinder with the resulting juice boiled down to syrup.

"Short sweetening" was white sugar, a rarity in the Scrub. If the occasion was a wedding supper, the menu might also include chicken or game pilau and elderberry wine.

Jody Baxter, a growing boy who always takes a strong interest in food, licks his chops when he returns from building his flutter-mill and discovers his mother has prepared a supper of greens with white bacon, dumplings of potato, onion and turtle meat, sour orange biscuits and sweet potato pone. No less delicious to him is the more delicate fare served by his friend, Grandma Hutto, who prepared stuffed, baked river bass, Irish potatoes -- a rare and special treat -- early corn and "light bread and mayhaw jelly." The pre-dinner snack of spice cakes and scuppernong wine was clear evidence to Jody of the luxury of town life over the austerity of the Scrub. After the big storm, when Jody, Penny, and the Forresters ride out to
assess the damage to the countryside, hunting camp meals of palm hearts, or swamp cabbage, along with hush puppies, venison, and coffee, is for Jody, an integral part of the excitement of the trip.

Rawlings emphasizes food also as evidence of how thin the line is between survival and starvation in a harsh environment. The food had to be gathered in and preserved against a lean season; families had to prepare aggressively to defeat hunger, it was a survival necessity. Jody's mother is at her most contented when the corn crib is full and the smoke house stocked with meat. When wolves kill off stock or bears raid the hog pen, the loss is not just monetary, but a matter of future nourishment or hunger, depending on what can be salvaged from the disaster. A crop failure, or damage from storm or disease can push the small farmer into near-starvation. Rawlings, in her early days in Florida, ran her own small orange grove, grew a garden, and knew first-hand the precarious state of the food supply in hard times. She saw hunger in others and experienced it herself so, in emphasizing the food habits of the settlers, she spoke from observation and actual knowledge. Glasgow, on the other hand, came from an affluent family and had no personal experience of hunger. Her comments on food reflected her observation of its role as a social ingredient.
Clothing

In the matter of clothing, Glasgow again uses descriptions of what people wore as a commentary on the social mores of the time, while Rawlings' comments give us insights into the way life was lived on the Florida frontier.

In rural Florida, clothing was above all practical and suited to the task at hand. The men wore long johns, blue denims -- not then called "jeans" -- homemade or storebought cowhide boots and wide-brimmed straw hats to protect them against the fierce sub-tropical sun. Women's dress varied according to the season. In summer's heat they wore cotton prints, long or short depending on the era, and hats of woven palmetto strands, or calico sunbonnets. In winter, serviceable alpaca or serge in dark colors was the choice. The styles were plain. Shawls protected them from chill and shoes were brogans of cowhide. In summer, feet were bare for women and children alike. In heat or cold, nightwear for men was long johns and, for women, long-sleeved, high-necked gowns of flannel or cotton. It was no-frills couture.

Rawlings' characters looked for practicality in their garments. She herself learned that there was reason behind the choices of clothing. In one of the early chapters of Cross Creek, she discovers that the light voile short
dresses she brought to the Creek offered little protection from poison ivy, sandspurs, and mosquitoes. She resorted to neighbor-rousing screams to express her pain and frustration when she encounters all three at once. Meanwhile, Martha Mickens, her native-born neighbor, in her long, heavy serge skirts, wards off such aggravation with ease.

Rural Floridians had a strong sense of what was seemly in dress for certain occasions. Penny Baxter had a special suit saved for those times when he went to trade in nearby Volusia. It was worn and green with age, but the serious business of trading required that a man dress for the occasion. Even women living under the simplest of circumstances tried to keep one trinket or adornment even if it was just a necklace of colorful native Cherokee beans. One gets the idea that a small touch of beauty may not have actually been a luxury, but a necessity in an otherwise austere and hard life.

The role clothing played in Virginia society differed according to one's caste. Dorinda in Barren Ground fled the farm for New York when she was young, and one of the first discoveries she made was that the lovingly made trousseau she had brought with her was hopelessly countrified. She thinks the local dressmaker back home would be amazed to see dresses with sleeves of a different
color and material from the rest of the outfit. Yet, when Dorinda returns to the farm, determined to make it a successful operation, she milks the cows and does other farm work in her brother's overalls, saying "you can't farm in skirts anyhow." Dorinda's mother, brought up in the strict Presbyterian tenets that decreed what was proper, is aghast at Dorinda's choice of working clothes. But even as practical Dorinda continues to wear overalls in her daily work, she takes pride in buying a new dress, slightly amazed at how a new dress can lift her spirits and determined to show her neighbors, by her clothes, that she is someone of consequence in the area.

Life among the newly rich and those aristocrats not impoverished by the war, required attention to dress as a sign of one's caste and status in the community. Even for domestic calls made from one home to another nearby, ladies wore "their fur coats, hats, and long gloves." Clothes advertised social position as clearly as if one had worn a printed sign. A lady of delicate health like Lavinia Timberlake wore challis or chiffon wrappers, fussy enough to make useful work out of the question, and draped herself in shawls and coverlets as she lounged on a chaise or sofa allowing others to fetch and carry for her. Lavinia was from "old money" and could thus afford -- indeed was even expected -- to indulge in valetudinarian behavior which
emphasized her delicacy and fine breeding. Dorinda's mother, by contrast, was allowed no such indulgence; if she had physical complaints, she just donned an apron over her calico dress and kept on with the drudgery of farm and home chores until her health broke and she took to her bed and died quietly. Social messages conveyed through dress in Virginia even extended to the colors one wore. Mrs. Littlepage in They Stooped to Folly thinks it is unladylike of Milly, and betrays her poor origins, when she wears a red sweater of the exact shade of "carnal appeal."  

Clothing to Marjorie Rawlings was a practical answer to the physical conditions of rural life; to Glasgow it was one element in the changing conditions of life in post-war Virginia and an important status symbol.

Communication

From the streets of urban Queensborough to the isolation of a rural farm in Florida, the necessity to exchange news was the same. Values and codes of behavior also had to be communicated and passed from generation to generation. The latter was most commonly accomplished through stories, legends, and the telling and retelling of family history. The oral tradition was strong in both Florida and Virginia. In rural areas, these stories and legends were often the prime source of entertainment. Hunting stories told around a campfire, war stories and
tales of past events in family life educated and amused both teller and listener. Maxims or apt quotations were used to explain why certain acts were performed certain ways and these, along with other oral communications, helped people identify themselves in relation to their families, their community and their social status.

In an age without radios, movies, or television, face-to-face exchange of social information devolved on meetings with neighbors, on news carried from farm to farm by people like the circuit rider or the mail carrier, or even workers moving from one job to another. In *The Yearling*, the Baxters and the Forresters scout the countryside after the storm and the plague afterward to assess the damage, see how other neighbors had fared, and to carry news from homestead to homestead. If help was needed on one farm or another, they could discover what was necessary and either help themselves or send someone else to help. The country store depicted in both *The Yearling* and in *Barren Ground* shows how that institution served as a clearing house for local news and information. Exchange of news was also a big feature of local weddings, funerals, and the rarer church services. In times where newspapers were available, however, most rural people had neither the time nor the money for them.
Letters were another common form of information exchange. Dorinda learns of conditions back on the farm in Barren Ground from her mother's letters. Written communications could be elaborate or as brief and to the point as the pencilled scribble sent to Rawlings by her housekeeper Kate -- "the groav (sic) is fine. we is fine." As it turned out, this message was the opposite of truth but, for the moment it reassured Rawlings and she continued her mountain vacation without further worry about her grove.

In the city, in spite of telephone service, newspapers and telegraph, the most satisfactory exchanges of news were done person-to-person. By contacting those concerned directly, not only could the facts be exchanged, but action needed could be agreed upon. After Stanley's hit-and-run accident, the family is summoned to discuss what had happened and how to deal with it. The young black boy, Parry, is to be the scapegoat and Asa, convinced Parry cannot be guilty, goes personally to Parry's home to satisfy himself about the effect of this blame on his life.

Communication in Rawlings' Florida and Glasgow's Virginia was a very personal thing; both authors emphasize the role this communication played in forming the character of the two regions.
Transportation

Because the South had undergone experiences not shared by the rest of the nation -- war, reconstruction, poverty, defeat, and destruction of life and property -- transportation methods lagged behind those then common in the North. The South's main link with the outside world was the railroad. It was the avenue of escape for the young longing to leave harsh or unhappy conditions at home. Rachel Gavin in *The Descendant* and Dorinda in *Barren Ground* both flee to New York by train after personal crises. Dorinda's brother, Rufus, leaves Pedlar's Mill by trail after he is acquitted of murder. The sight and sound of passing trains was romance and adventure to rural Southerners. When the railroad reached Florida, Marjorie Rawlings and other grove owners shipped fruit north by train. Earlier, the riverboats had been the only way to get large amounts of produce to northern markets.

Automobiles in Queensborough were only for the more affluent when they first came on the market. In Florida, the use of automobiles was constrained by the fact that good roads were few and far between and the cost of gasoline was something to be carefully considered. The horse, or the horse and wagon, was the most-used form of transportation in the rural areas Glasgow and Rawlings
wrote about. These horse-drawn carts were often found in
the city until just before World War I.

In an age when people only walk or run for recreation,
it is difficult to imagine the distances people once walked
out of necessity. Dorinda, for example, routinely walked
the two miles to and from Pedlar's Mill to work in the
general store. Jody, escaping from the agony of Flag's
death, walks first to the Forrester's for help and later
walks the fifteen miles to the St. Johns River to begin his
journey to Boston.29

It is no accident that early settlements developed
along the banks of the rivers. The rivers were a principle
means of transportation for rural people as roads were few
and generally in poor condition. The people gravitated to
the riverbanks where travel was easy and the markets for
their goods accessible. The Oklawaha, for example, was a
minor Florida river but it joined the mighty St. Johns and
led to the cities to the north. Early lumbermen used the
Oklawaha to float the cypress logs they cut from the swamps
to market.30

It was a combination of poor roads, limited railroads
and a lack of easy, swift transportation that caused the
great degree of isolation for many people in the South.
This isolation from the more heavily populated and
industrialized North had a great deal to do with why the
people in Rawlings' and Glasgow's regions were slow to change and were able to retain their special character so far into the 20th century.

Recreation

In an area like Virginia, one that suffered from the aftermath of war, recreation was not a high priority item. It is this absence of recreational activities in Glasgow's books that is most telling. Virginia was trying to adjust to the new world rising from the relics of an older civilization and her people had scant time for amusements. In Glasgow's own words, "I had in mind... (writing about) the adjustment of human lives to changing conditions." 31 So she noted that the weddings, for example, that cemented the union between two old families were serious occasions, signalling the continuation of a dynasty, and were not a time for joyous revelry. If the wedding or funeral took place among the strict Scotch-Irish farmers, they usually lacked the freedom of spirit to make it a festive event. A ball might be given in Queensborough, as it was in The Romantic Comedians, but it usually had behind it the serious purpose of arranging alliances between young girls and "suitable" men. There is little evidence that Glasgow observed people in her world having a good time for its own sake. If this was characteristic of the life she actually knew, and not just a peculiar bias on her part arising from
her own isolation due to her increasing deafness, it may help explain why so many of her younger characters wanted to break away from Virginia life and be free from the chains of custom and tradition that bound their elders.

The Florida frontier was very different. Here, too, life was harsh, but people threw themselves into whatever amusements came their way with great relish. The gathering of friends and neighbors for a fence-raising in South Moon Under is a good example of their gusto. There was music from fiddle, banjo, and harmonica. There was square dancing in spite of the heat and a bare ground for a dance floor. Young and old alike joined in the fun of singing and dancing and being together. At their cabin, when Piety and her father play together on accordion and banjo, they became "absorbed in the magic of string and wind." The settlers also enjoyed candy-making or merely sitting around a fire and telling tall tales.

In The Yearling, Jody and his father visit the Forresters and enjoy the music, singing, and horse-play of that rowdy family. The robust Forrester clan thoroughly enjoys music, drinking, and general hell-raising. The more conservative Baxters mostly observe -- Ma Baxter flatly disapproves -- but nevertheless enjoy this exuberance. The episode of "The Pound Party" told in Cross Creek tells how the framework of a so-called social occasion can be used to
serve another purpose, one based on need rather than on status. The Townsends did manage to coax a fine cake out of Rawlings, but gave music and dance, and peanut butter and crackers in exchange. 33

The loneliness of the Scrub meant that people often had to devise their own amusements in unusual ways. When Rawlings goes with her friend Zelma to take the census, she discovers a woman deep in the woods who, with her daughters, is pretending they are at a beauty parlor by making mud packs out of local clay. Hunting and fishing served domestic need in rural Florida, but the people felt that need not prevent them from enjoying themselves while doing these things. The hunting trips Jody makes with his father break the monotony of hoeing endless rows of corn and tobacco and he looks forward to them eagerly. It is on one of these trips that Jody and Penny see the whooping cranes at their mating dance and are awed by the beauty of nature's creatures. One notes that one of the main recreational outlets for Rawlings' characters in all her books is the simple enjoyment of nature. Close to the land and dependent upon it for life, these Floridians appreciated its beauty and mystery.

All of these factors, from how people earned their living, to where and how they were housed, what they ate, how they dressed, how they communicated with each other and
their means of transportation and recreation, are the framework around which Glasgow's and Rawlings' societies constructed their lives. We will explore the value system that gave meaning to their lives in the next section.
Chapter II

4 Ibid.
9 Glasgow, Deliverance, p. 102.
11 Rawlings, South Moon Under, p. 225.
12 Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 155.
13 Ibid.
14 Rawlings, The Yearling, p. 118.
15 Rawlings, South Moon Under, p. 3-4.


23 Rawlings, *Cross Creek*, p. 331.


25 Glasgow, *In This Our Life*, p. 150.

26 Glasgow, *They Stooped to Folly*, p. 235.

27 Rawlings, *Cross Creek*, p. 182.

28 Glasgow, *In This Our Life*, chapters VI and VII.


32 Rawlings, *South Moon Under*, p. 48

33 Rawlings, *Cross Creek*, p. 40-47.
CHAPTER III

The Value Systems

A well-rounded understanding of any society must include an examination of its value systems as well as details of how the people in that culture conduct the business of their daily lives. The value systems provide the foundations on which those daily lives are built. Clifford Geertz in his book, The Interpretation of Cultures, says that "culture is composed of psychological structures by means of which individuals or groups of individuals guide their behavior."\(^1\) These structures are not comprised of one simple set of rules by which a society conducts itself. They are a combination of many things, constructed layer by layer over time, modified by experience, and offering people so many directions in which to move that they must choose what experiences to honor and which ones to discard. Geertz says that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun."\(^2\) The culture is this web. Analysis of a culture is not experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning, he says. In this chapter we will look for the strands of that web in the value systems of Glasgow and Rawlings as their works discuss religion, myth
and legend, educational systems, social customs and the caste system.

It is often difficult to decide exactly how to interpret these value systems since "ideological thought is elusive because it is expressed in intricate, vaguely defined, emotionally charged symbolic webs." Nowhere is this more evident than in the South. The value systems of this region are tinged with mystery and a fascination that has never faded in the popular imagination. Natives of Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia, or any other area below the Mason-Dixon line think of themselves as Southerners first and natives of their state or city second. People from New York, Connecticut, of New Jersey, by contrast, never refer to themselves as "Northerners." They define themselves as being from a specific place, not a region. Even the term, Yankee, used by many native Southerners to describe any person not specifically from the South, is only used by certain New England inhabitants to describe their regional loyalty. The feeling of "Southern-ness" exists largely because Southern people share a whole set of traditional values, mores and cultural forms that cut across state and city limits.

Religion

Some outward forms showing man's relationship with his God are present in every society even though the content
and form of worship may vary. Tidewater Virginia and rural Florida were no exceptions to this rule, however different their religious expressions may have been.

Virginia had two very different religious traditions, though both were Protestant. The first settlers in Cavalier times brought the Anglican forms of worship from England and, in America, this became the Episcopal Church. These early settlers and their offspring, the plantation owners and Virginia aristocrats, were comfortable with the Episcopal values -- set rituals using the forms in the Prayer Book, high-mindedness, spiritual, and intellectual meditation and adherence to the ancient Church calendar. It was a religion of restraint and simplicity. Sermons were usually based on the Biblical texts ordained for the day and the services consisted of readings and responses and familiar old hymns. Nothing in Episcopal worship in Virginia was designed to bring out emotion or even strong action on the part of parishioners; they attended church, followed the service, and returned home feeling they had done their Godly duty. The second religious tradition in Virginia was the stern Calvinism of the Scotch-Irish settlers who originally inhabited the state's interior.

Ellen Glasgow was born into the Virginia upper class in Richmond in 1873 and had intimate knowledge of both these religious traditions from her childhood. Her father,
a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, worked in the family's Tredegar Iron Works, a prosperous enterprise which figured prominently in Richmond's historic and economic picture. Her gentle mother, on the other hand, was a descendant of Tidewater aristocracy and embraced the Episcopal tradition. She was part and parcel of a society whose main enthusiasm was extolling the virtues of a life that existed before the Civil War. Glasgow loved her mother and saw her endless childbearing, and patience with illness and loss, with great pain. She was not fond of her father, seeing him as cold and unsympathetic, and felt his stern Calvinism made life harsh and difficult for his family. This feeling was at the root of her desire to seek other values in life than the ones for which he stood. She was torn between sympathy for her mother and frustration with her meek acceptance of life's blows, and rage at her father for his harshness and lack of understanding.

After the premature deaths of her beloved mother, her sister, a brother and a much-loved brother-in-law, she rebelled against both religions and went in search of a new and different truth. She read widely and, after consuming the works of such philosophers as George Santayana, Spinoza and Pascal as well as thinkers like Charles Darwin and Jung, she embraced realism and learned to hate "the inherent falseness in much Southern tradition,"
falseness which she felt extended to the religious beliefs of Virginians.

For her the Episcopal Church was "a sheltering illusion. . .a high-minded evasion of the struggle for existence." In They Stooped to Folly she compares the flabby spiritual fiber of those in the Episcopal faith and the "vehement doctrines" of the evangelistic religions of the circuit riders' faith. She unleashed her famous ironic touch on the shallowness of Mary Victoria's belief when she quotes her saying "...nice people in Queensborough go to church no matter what they believe." To the naive and pampered Mary Victoria, what was important was not that people should have faith and receive comfort and strength from that faith, but that they should be seen worshipping openly so that others would admire them for having faith. The appearance took precedence over reality and to Glasgow this indicated that even the practice of religion was a snare and a delusion.

Glasgow also points out that since the aristocrats had traditionally been members of the Episcopal Church, those newly rich who wished to ape the manners and customs of the aristocrats also joined the same church, hoping that if they observed the outward forms of aristocracy, they would be taken as inheritors of their other attributes.
The character of Anthony Algarcife, in her 1898 novel *Phases of an Inferior Planet*, represents the escape from conventional faith of those in post-war Virginia who sought new forms of worship. Algarcife rejects the church in favor of science, philosophy, and atheism. When personal failure drives him back to the church, his religion has meaning only because he can use it to help the cause of the abused working man. Sally in *The Romance of a Plain Man* is another person disillusioned by traditional religion's failure to offer answers to life's problems. She wonders "is there is a spot on earth...where they worship another god?"^9\

Glasgow is not above poking a little gentle fun at the absurdity of some of those like Mrs. Starr in *The Romance of a Plain Man* who follow the strict Puritan ethic. Mrs. Starr says "I've never been comfortable in my life, and I don't expect to begin when I dress myself to go to a funeral."^10 These Calvinists didn't expect much help from their religion in the conduct of their daily lives. To suffer and endure was God's will for them. As the old fishmonger says, "The safest way is to believe in the Lord on Sunday and on Monday go to work."^11\

It was not that Ellen Glasgow could not believe in God or in His manifestations in life and nature. Her problem was with the manner in which people interpreted and used
religion. On the one hand, she found that the aristocrats, who had lost so much in the war, clung to their church as a symbol of that vanished life. It was a refuge to avoid facing the changes that were taking place in their lives. If the church was the same, then they could pretend their lives would also be the same. On the other hand, the newly rich, those of less-than-aristocratic background who were prospering in the new South, found that money alone would not gain them entry into old established society. The church was one place where they could meet and mingle with that society as equals and, by taking on their religious practices as well as their dress and behavior, convince themselves that they had "arrived" as social leaders.

Her quarrel with the Puritan ethic and stern Calvinism was of a different nature. She interpreted Puritanism as a religion of unrelieved gloom and harshness, looking on any joy or pleasure as immediately suspect. To the Mrs. Starrs of Glasgow's world, religion was meant to help man endure a harsh life without complaint, hoping for rewards in the hereafter. Comfort, good fortune, even happiness, were not part of the present, but saved for the future. She felt that joy should be a part of life and that killing joy by stern living was wrong and false. So religion, according to Glasgow, was not a source of inspiration to Virginians,
In rural Florida, formal religion was not characterized by regular church services, institutions or community gathering places. Yet Marjorie Rawlings observed that a deep relationship existed between her Floridians and the Almighty. In *Cross Creek* Rawlings examines the harmony between man and land, exhibiting an almost Pantheistic feeling. The slow, almost imperceptible change from one season to another, always observed by those who lived at the Creek, was appreciated with recognition of the God who made this beauty possible. "We at the Creek draw our conclusions about the world from our intimate knowledge of one small portion of it," she says. Her friend Martha Mickens thinks the Creek is "just as close to Heaven here as any other place."

The people understood that their actions had to be compatible with the God-given advantages of their lives. They suffered and rejoiced together. They shared generously, and without counting, what little they had in material possessions. They understood forgiveness. When Tom Glisson was accused of poisoning Rawlings' dog, she was angry and unforgiving for a year, while all the Creek neighbors watched the feud with concern. When the dispute was resolved and harmony restored, the whole creek
rejoiced. Rawlings says that the sense of stewardship of the land among Creek residents is strong. She writes that "it seems to me the earth may be borrowed, but not bought." Rawlings and her friends at the Creek blessed God for his generosity in giving them a warm, beautiful, and fruitful land and they felt responsibility for its nurture and wise use. They also felt an obligation to appreciate nature. Like Glasgow, she felt man and his environment should be in harmony; she differed from Glasgow because she believed that man used the land only during his time on earth and then passed it on to the next generation.

Rural Florida was a place of "itinerant preacher and backwoods baptisms." Yet, though simple, their faith was profound:

Good God, with a bounty
look down on Marion county.
For the soil is so poor
and so awful rooty, too,
I don't know what to God
the poor folks gonna do.

Mo Jacklin's grace may lack elegance and grammar, but it came from the heart. When Fodderwing dies in The Yearling, the Forresters' grief was the same as the grief of more sophisticated city dwellers and, although they had no church and no preacher to conduct a funeral, they did their best, honoring their dead by wearing their best clothes and asking their most educated neighbor, Penny Baxter, to "say something." Penny was "a small, staunch rock against which
their grief could beat." Penny's eulogy admitted that mortals couldn't understand God's way of right and wrong. He said the family would have chosen to have Fodderwing sound in mind and body, but the Lord compensated him with gifts of gentleness and wisdom and a way with live creatures. Penny said he knew God had healed Fodderwing and he only asked that perhaps he could have a few wild creatures in heaven to keep him from being lonely. The Forresters and Baxters spread their grief a little thinner by sharing it, thus making it possible to bear their sorrow. The simple burial service was a link with all life, a recognition that no one is spared. Mrs. Forrester, in the midst of her grief, recognizes that Jody's mother has buried more sons than she has living and takes comfort from the fact that she is not alone in sorrow.

Rural Floridians shared joy as well as sadness. Rawlings was especially keen at observing the intensity with which her Crackers experienced significantly happy moments. The opening of *The Yearling* when Jody escapes from hoeing the field and runs to the creek to build his flutter-mill and taste the joy of being young on a perfect April afternoon is an example. When Jody and his father watch the whooping cranes dancing, they know they have enjoyed a special blessing in witnessing this rare event. "They had seen a thing of unearthly beauty," and were
awed. These simple stories reveal Rawlings' conviction that even a people isolated from formal religious life, found spiritual experiences in their daily lives.

Though Glasgow and Rawlings differed in their views of religion and how it affected the cultures they knew, they both included religion in their list of important influences.

Rituals and Myths

In Virginia, previous writers considered life there in a romantic haze of moonlight and magnolias. Ellen Glasgow "hated the florid romance of the South," knowing that Virginians saw life as they wished it to be rather than as it was. In her writing she moved against the popular tide and tried to depict the South without excessive sentiment. She knew well the myths that Virginians lived by: your blood lines determined your place in life; women were fragile creatures not be taken seriously; blacks were really better off and happier under slavery; the newly rich were vulgar; the rising poor whites were basically inferior and, the strongest and most persistent myth of all, that family honor and tradition should take precedence over everything else, regardless of cost, especially if it concerned the South's "Lost Cause."

Glasgow was very much aware that the early aristocrats of pre-war Virginia tried to create an order of social
conduct, a ritual of chivalrous manners and a gracious and gentle lifestyle unique among Americans. In her writing she tried to preserve what was true and of lasting value in this tradition. She knew that much in this way of life had been overlaid with legend, often warped by time and distorted by overblown nostalgia. It was for this sentimental, romantic distortion of what had once been true and beautiful that she reserved her skepticism. "A great tradition is an expensive luxury," says Asa Timberlake, conceding that, while tradition lends inspiration, it can also lead to "hardening of the arteries."¹⁹

Glasgow saw the absurdity of such things as making a religion out of one's family. Miss Mitty in The Romance of a Plain Man is one who believes with an unbending view that family is all. She and Miss Matoaca would sacrifice all but principle to the claims of family.²⁰ Glasgow says that Miss Mitty "sat enthroned" upon her traditions.²¹ Miss Matoaca says "the claims of family are not to be sacrificed. . ."²²

Another target of Glasgow's ironic viewpoint toward closely held beliefs was Queensborough's social judgment on certain forms of work. An artist like Marmaduke in In This Our Life never made a suitable living from his art; therefore, he could only be a bad artist. If he had been good,
he would have made money. This attitude toward any form of culture that didn't create wealth was common, according to Glasgow, among the newly rich and showed that money didn't eliminate vulgarity.

The aristocrats worked hard to convince the lower classes that they had the authority of tradition on their side, a myth that someone like the poor white Ben Starr had a difficult time dispelling. He had to prove to himself that he was not common just because a certain group of people said he was due to his background.

Suggestions that Southern patriots, like the hot-blooded Major Lightfoot in *The Battleground*, were wrong in their arrogance and mistaken in their belief that a Civil War meant that the slaves would revolt and kill their white masters, went against popular myth. This fear of revolt and murder was a myth that lasted long after the war ended and was felt in many quarters well into the mid-1900s.

Glasgow admitted that the first part of *The Battleground* "was an evocation of a lost way of living,"
\[23\] but did not ever believe "the late invasion had been a romantic conflict." She shows how the aristocratic Dan grows up during the war, learning much that his former life had failed to teach him. Glasgow knew that many Virginians, like Dan, accepted their myths and legends without questions until something jolted them out of their
complacency. She felt that the culture of the South had strayed too far from its origins; it wanted to merely copy the old instead of creating the new. What was needed, she said, was "blood and irony" to counteract the decay of sentimental regard for legends that had outlived their usefulness.

The ultimate example of adherence to myth and legend is Christopher Blake's blind mother in The Deliverance. Mrs. Blake is based on a real person Glasgow had heard about when she was a child. The family never told Mrs. Blake that the South had lost the war, their home, and the family plantation. She kept up the old standards, with the family's collusion, and maintained her beliefs even though they were illusions, ironic illusions in the face of poverty and loss of any social position. Mrs. Blake's inability to "see" present reality, her idealization of a romantic past and her maintenance of strict class distinctions were characteristic of post-war Southern life as a whole, says Glasgow. She balances the misguided and protected Mrs. Blake with the character of Tucker Corbin, Christopher's crippled uncle, who realized the pretensions of his class are hollow, yet respects their sincere, if mistaken, loyalties.

The role of myth and legend differed in Rawlings' rural Florida. While many of Glasgow's characters were
passive people, more acted upon than acting, Rawlings' characters were people of energy. Myth and legend in Florida played an active part in everyday life, a sort of oral history passed on from father to son, mother to daughter, helping each new generation cope with the hardships of backwoods life. In *South Moon Under*, Rawlings says that "birth and death were unimportant, being only a beginning and an end." What was important was the passing on of legends about the woods creatures, tales of great past hunts, woodsmen's lore, such as the information on Old Slewfoot's spring feeding habits that Penny Baxter tells Jody in *The Yearling*. The title of Rawlings' book *South Moon Under* itself is part of the frontier legend that certain crops must be planted when the moon is visible, South moon over, and others planted when the moon is hidden by the earth, South moon under. When Jody sees his father suffering from the rattlesnake bite and dreams of a nest of snakes, you know that one day, he will tell his son the tale of that day's adventure. Jody will tell how Penny shot a doe to use the liver to draw the poison, how Penny killed the snake and how he survived his terrible wound. This will become another woods legend and help, like all the others, to educate the younger generation on how to hunt, avoid danger, and secure food for the family. Sometimes an item of accumulated lore is expressed in a
single sentence, as when the old trapper tells Lant in *South Moon Under* that you look for "a young coon for runnin', but an ole coon for cunnin'," meaning that if you want a chase, seek the young animal, but if you want to pit your wits and skill against a wise adversary, seek out the older raccoon.

By making the tales of past hunts exciting and adventurous, the young people are encouraged to develop a thirst for the chase, a necessity for survival. The tales of fire-hunting and the search and slaughter of Old Slewfoot in *The Yearling* challenge Jody and others to accomplish similar deeds or to better the exploits of their elders. They become part of an honorable rural tradition.

In her chapter on "Fall" in *Cross Creek*, Rawlings includes a host of rural beliefs that guide the conduct and actions of Creek inhabitants. Forty days after the dog fennel blooms, for example, the first frost is scheduled to arrive. Highflying curlews mean autumn will be dry, while the call of the bull alligator means the weather will change. Experience of the "fact" of these occurrences has transformed them into legend. Martha Mickens practices a little voodoo to recall a friend's errant husband and she also believes a lot in luck. "Us was maybe born to good luck," she says, "but bad luck done overtaken us." Martha refuses to clean out the fireplace on unlucky
Friday; onion peelings are thrown on the fire but peanut shells go out the door to prevent quarreling. Nothing must be swept out of the door after sunset lest misfortune fall upon the unfortunate householder who offends the "night folks," unknown denizens of the dark hours who take umbrage at being swept on. A whistling woman or a crowing hen are bad luck and bring a curse to men. Adding new wood to old is a signal that illness will follow. Rawlings learned this the hard way with trips to the hospital after she added new pine bathrooms to her old farmhouse. Martha Mickens thinks Rawlings is slow to learn. To repel marauding hawks, the corpse of the last hawk killed is strung up in the grove with a bottle hung around its neck to catch the sun. Rawlings says she doesn't know if the hawk understands the symbolic warning but adds that no hawks have appeared since the gruesome totem was erected. A dead snake in a tree is supposed to bring rain and often works. Signs of death are a broken tree limb or a cow lowing in the deep hours of night. This chapter is full of signs, portents, legends and superstitions on which the wise will base their actions. Rawlings doesn't necessarily believe them all, but she respects the folk wisdom that gave rise to these unwritten beliefs.

Another area in which myth and legend and word-of-mouth wisdom prevails is that of folk medicine. One should
carry prickly ash to chew to avoid flu, for example. A soap and honey poltice will ease the pain of boils. Panther oil brought relief to arthritic joints. Fevers were treated with lemon-leaf tea, snake root tonic or fever-grass tea. Mullein tea brought out the rash of measles. The Florida Cracker families used what remedies were available locally to cure what they could. Surprisingly often these worked, whether by their natural properties or by the concern with which they were administered, or the faith with which they were received.

The main difference between the myths and legends of Glasgow's Virginia and Rawlings' Florida is one of purpose. In Virginia, the myths were a means to preserve the essence of a dying society, to comfort people in the face of change they could neither understand nor accept. In Florida, by contrast, myths and legends served to explain the way life was, to pass on wisdom from generation to generation and help solve the practical problems of everyday living. Tradition was local or contained within each family. Backwoods Florida had no use for a dead past; if something did not work in the present, it was discarded. The Crackers took their Southern-ness, their poverty, and their difficult lives for granted and put their faith in the changing seasons and the rhythms of nature. If simple
explanations served to make life's mysteries more acceptable, then all to the good.

The Class System

At no point does the cultural history of the South differ more from that of the rest of the country than in its attitude toward the class to which its inhabitants belong. Much of this attitude arose out of the way in which the South developed. Without a big industrial base, without the great immigration of Europeans, and without the many large urban areas of the North, the South's acceptance of the idea that people were created equal was translated into the idea that the rich planter class was more equal than the rest of the population. Within that planter class, men were more equal than women, and women were more equal than poor whites or Negroes. The matter of class and caste went unquestioned until after the Civil War when change overtook a society that had been virtually unchanged for decades. The three areas in which class attitudes were most strongly entrenched were those concerning the roles of women, of the rising middle class and of Negroes. Here again, the differences were marked between attitudes in Virginia and attitudes in Florida.

Glasgow, in her opposition to the restraints of artificial conventions that kept men from true sympathy for
others, felt that this sympathy was particularly lacking toward women. It is no accident that her strongest and most compelling characters are women. She explained the mistakes of a woman like Rachel Gavin in *The Descendant* by saying that she had been led astray by men. Mrs. Blake in *The Deliverance* was sheltered from truth by an artificial social code that said women could not handle difficult problems and should be protected from reality. Glasgow was opposed to the "ideal" of the Southern gentlewoman and that Southern code of chivalry, which set women up as objects to be admired and cultivated, to be decorative, gentle, and useless and then often rejected them from active partnership in life. Three of her novels, *Virginia*, *Barren Ground*, and *Life and Gabriella*, feature heroines who reject this convention and either make meaningful lives for themselves or are destroyed by the code.

In *Virginia*, one of Glasgow's saddest early novels, Virginia Pendleton is the perfect Southern lady, one whose mind failed to mature because she accepted the idea that a woman's role should be to be beautiful, marry well, bear children, and confine herself to domestic interests. She is the perfect example of the self-sacrificing idol of Southern chivalry. "Mrs. Gay, who bore sorrow so nobly, and Kesiah, who bore ugliness so submissively," in *The Miller of Old Church*, are spiritual sisters to Virginia.
Glasgow knew that a certain class of Southern men admired women to whom love, marriage, and motherhood defined the limits of their existence. Such men gave no thought to the reality that "ladies" were deliberately cultivated and then often scorned for being what they were in a world that was not ideal.

Many Glasgow male characters speak the platitudes that enforced the code of chivalry. A favorite proverb of Southern gentlemen like Virginius Littlepage in They Stooped to Folly is that "a woman's virtue is its best defense," implying that the less a woman knows about sex, the easier it is for her to remain unsullied. Virginius exhibits perfectly the Southern male's unrealistic attitude toward women. With his wife, for example, "he had learned in time to feel the pride of a husband in her natural frigidity." He was convinced that his wife, Victoria, "...like all pure women everywhere, was satisfied with monogamy." Virginius does not question his lack of sympathy for his wife's natural feelings, for when she reaches the age "...when she has ceased to be an object of wonder to me," he accepts the cliche that "after all, women of her age must expect to make duty her pleasure."

Glasgow says that women often had no sympathy for each other, a statement she bolsters by Mrs. Chitling's statement that she had no use for women everlastinglly
standing up for their rights. Mrs. Chitling thought a woman's life was her children and her kitchen. Glasgow thought otherwise, and knew from experience that the ideal was not the reality. She was the first writer to address feminist ideas in relation to Southern women. Gabriella Carr in Life and Gabriella was a woman of spirit. She triumphs over the stereotyped woman and becomes a successful milliner on her own terms.

General Bolingbroke represents the arrogant Southern male who knew how to deal with strong women, women with ideas. He thought they should never be allowed time to sit down and let such ideas develop. "Pet her, dress her, amuse her," he says, and if she should begin to talk about principles, "buy her a present to take her mind off them."

Glasgow championed the idea of feminine freedom and felt women were tied by the confines of marriage under the old Southern ideals. But changes were coming. It was frigid, tradition-bound Victoria who dragged Aunt Agatha out of her solitary confinement into the war effort. This led, in turn, to Agatha's passion for ice cream sodas and motion pictures. Aunt Agatha had committed a mild indiscretion in her youth and custom of that time dictated she should henceforth avoid any life of her own as payment to society for her violation of the behavior code of a "lady." Victoria felt like a modern pioneer for having
persuaded Agatha to give up her self-imposed penitential solitude. So, although Glasgow thought highly of good manners and courtesy and thought social graces were nice to have, she picked women as major characters in her novels who were intelligent, willing to adopt new ideas, spirited, and above all, willing to take responsibility for their own actions and their own lives. If there were truly women like this, she thought, it would be a breakthrough in Southern life, and a good omen for the future in a changing world.

The strong women Glasgow noted in post-war Virginia were already established in rural Florida. This was probably due to the fact that only the strong in body or spirit could survive life there. While Piety in _South Moon Under_ felt "she had no existence outside these two males (her husband and her father)," and knew women had to work the garden, prepare the spoils from the hunt and tend the house and children, she took pride in her ability to make a place for her loved ones in the face of nature's indifference. The women gave meaning to the lives the men hacked out of the swamps and hammocks. If a woman was not strong enough to cope with the frontier, she either went gently dotty like the nameless woman Rawlings met while taking the census in _Cross Creek_, or drifted off into oblivion like Tim's wife at the Creek; the latter haunted
Rawlings so much that she appeared as Florry in *Jacob's Ladder* and Allie in *Golden Apples*. The kind of frontier woman who could endure life with an irreducible minimum of human comforts "put a mark on me," Rawlings says. In her years at the Creek, Rawlings came to know this kind of woman in the Scrub, in the hammock, and deep in the piney woods.

While Tim's gentle wife represented the kind of rural woman that most captured Rawlings' imagination, she also knew and wrote about other women who made their lives in backwoods Florida. The Widow Slater managed to raise her fatherless brood on "no means at all," doing laundry, picking fruit, helping at births and generally lending a hand to others when needed. Rawlings says she was "violent," "unpredictable," and "eccentric." To do her credit, she was only violent in defense of a belief. She took a shotgun to the county nurse who wanted to vaccinate her children. She simply felt that no good could come of injecting horse blood into her children. But the Widow Slater was filled with unquenchable optimism, an optimism which enabled her to take all the blows in life with conviction that things would work out in the end. They did, too, and her brood of children all grew up to make their own way in the world. Martha Mickens, the matriarch of the Creek's black families, was one person who could be
counted on to "take up the slack," helping out here and there, keeping what peace she could among warring blacks and offering advice and human comfort to any person, black or white, she felt needed it. Rawlings' eccentric and alcoholic maid, Geechee, was another unforgettable character. She deprived herself of all hope by trying to redeem her ex-convict lover and drank destructively to ease the pain he caused her, but she was loyal, physically strong and willing, and carried great love in her huge and ugly body. Rawlings' friend, Zelma, the census taker, was another strong, independent woman. She took great offense at Rawlings' portrait of her in Cross Creek, sued for libel, won her case and, in doing so, dealt Rawlings one of the most serious blows in her career, for Rawlings admired and loved Zelma and all the other people she knew at the Creek, and was crushed to discover that Zelma took offense at being shared with Rawlings' readers.

Rawlings saw that all these women were survivors, women of great strength and inner resources. The men might make a show of superiority, but it was the women who formed the backbone of rural life. Lip service might be given to "women's place," but even the feisty Forrester men showed respect to women like their mother, Mrs. Baxter, and Grandma Hutto, realizing that without them, life in the backwoods could make no claim to being civilized.
The break-up of the old class system in the South began during the Civil War when men of all classes were thrown together in battle. The old system changed very slowly; the last vestiges are still found in some remote corners of the South even today. Glasgow addressed these changes first in her Civil War novel, *The Battleground*. The aristocratic Dan finds himself fighting beside the poor white, Pinetop, and learns to see beyond his stereotyped thinking about such people. When he finds Pinetop trying to teach himself to read "...the tragedy of hopeless ignorance for an inquiring mind" is brought home to him dramatically. Glasgow uses this sort of incident to point out the way in which the South oppressed the poor white as it did the black. It sets the stage for the postwar struggle of men like Pinetop to escape from class boundaries and take their place as full citizens in a new South.

 Those aristocrats, like Dan, who could accept new ideas, benefit from their war experiences, learn that "where every man's fighting for his country, we're all equal," and then translate that insight into a new way of treating the poor white, would benefit the new society. Dan learns respect and admiration for Pinetop. For the first time, during his years at war, he learned the significance of the war for the lower classes. He vows to remember these lessons when the war is over.
The break-up of the old order after the war set the stage for the rise of a middle class that had scarcely existed before. In *The Deliverance, The Voice of the People, The Miller of Old Church, The Romance of a Plain Man, The Builders, One Man in His Time* and *The Ancient Law*, Glasgow examines what the laboring class can attain when freed from the pre-war forced conventions and codes and the social control by the aristocracy. Two main roads were open to them, entrance into the new political arena or becoming part of the business growth of the new South. Michael Akersham in *The Descendant* is an early example of one who has risen above the prejudice he experienced as a youth by sheer intellectual ability. He cannot, however, overcome the anger he feels at his treatment because he was not of the right social class. He differs from Ben Starr in *The Romance of a Plain Man*. Ben wonders if he "is common to the bone," but instead of being bitter at the fate that made him that way, vows to overcome his origins. He plans to achieve the material success necessary to give him a place in society by ambition and hard work. "Self-taught he was and self-made he would be," he promises himself.

One result of the Civil War was the great shortage of eligible men in Virginia. Most had died in battle or from wounds afterward. The young girls of good family who
wanted husbands and children often had no other alternati­ves than to marry men outside their own class. Lila Blake in *The Descendant* embraces the new order of things and marries the farmer, Jim Weatherby. Eugenia Battle, daughter of aristocratic General Battle in *The Voice of the People*, marries Nicholas Burr, the poor white who rose to social importance through politics in Queensborough. Abel Revercombe in *The Miller of Old Church* and his bride, Molly Merryweather, again represent the mingling of the common and aristocratic strains. Glasgow was enough child of her own background to wonder whether this mingling of classes would be a saving grace for the South or would destroy the last traces of its unique heritage. This concern with marrying out of one's class seems outdated, but it was a serious and deep concern to families of Glasgow's time. Therefore, her books dealing with the relationships of planter aristocracy, poor white, lower middle class and Negroes are a valuable commentary on what concerned people at that time. Earlier literature assumed that the South's population consisted only of the planter class and the Negro; Glasgow saw beyond this and wanted her readers to know that, in reality, the population was much more diverse. As time went on, she decided that, on the whole, the breakdown of class barriers and interaction of various groups would strengthen blood that had grown thin and weak.
One of the traditional ways the aristocrats had cemented family closeness and kept wealth within strict control, was to encourage intermarriage, especially between cousins. In Glasgow's short stories, especially "Jordan's End," and "A Point in Morals," she shows the sometimes terrible results of this sort of dynasty building. As the old man in "Jordan's End," says, "that's the reason (intermarriage) the blood. . .went bad." Intermarriage in this story leads to madness, murder, and the final destruction of a family obsessed with preserving its past in a world that had no room for a backward-looking population.

Marjorie Rawlings, on the other hand, found very little class consciousness in rural Florida in the usually accepted sense. Even the Captain, Tordell, in Golden Apples, an exiled English remittance man sent to Florida for causing a family scandal, is drawn as an example of the diverse kinds of people that have come to Florida. He is not there to represent part of an established segment of frontier society. In the Florida Rawlings knew, people were accepted as individuals, not as products of a specific background. Some were eccentric, to be sure, and some went beyond eccentricity to actual madness, like Adrenna in Cross Creek, but character, not caste, was what counted. The state was sparsely settled for many years; there was no established planter class in the interior regions Rawlings
knew, although large plantations did exist in other areas. At any rate, the dynastic cultural forms familiar to Ellen Glasgow were not part of life in Florida backwoods. This is not to say, however, that people living there lacked a strong sense of who mattered and who did not; in the Scrub and hammock frontier, these decisions were made by a set of standards completely different from those in Virginia.

Penny Baxter in *The Yearling*, for example, is respected by his neighbors, including the wild and non-conformist Forresters, because he is known to be hard-working, honest, a peace-maker and a man whose judgment could be trusted. That he was without wealth and was not even a particularly successful farmer did nothing to diminish his standing. Grandma Hutto's word that her house fire was caused by a carelessly placed candle was not disputed, even by those who knew the Forresters had probably set the fire deliberately. She was determined to stop a local feud between the Forresters and her son, Oliver, before the entire community got involved, and out of respect for her, the lie was not questioned. A woman like Piety in *South Moon Under* earned respect and admiration from those who knew her by the way in which she coped with the difficulties and tragedies of her life in the Scrub. Strength, both physical and spiritual, survival, and patience were qualities admired by the settlers.
Of the five white and two black families living at Cross Creek at the time Rawlings made her home there, each knew "the foibles of the others, the strengths and weaknesses, and who can be counted on for what."44 One could not be angry at someone who simply acted according to his or her own nature. Rawlings was aware of the contrast between life at the Creek and life in Virginia, remarking that Old Williamsburg in its "genteel poverty" had more elegance than the restored Williamsburg, for the former came from "long years of gracious living."45 The Creek has its own hierarchy which recognized, for example, that Old Boss Brisson was ". . . father, arbiter, disciplinarian to all the Negroes who have ever lived or worked here."46 The Creek admires courage, hard work and thrift, and rewards those who exhibit these qualities with a social standing that no amount of money or worldly honors could obtain. Marjorie Rawlings herself was not accepted as part of the Creek population until it was determined that she truly loved the place and could accept with equanimity both the pleasures and the perils of life there; once accepted, it was taken for granted she would shoulder her share of community burdens, usually involving a gift of time or money to someone in need.

There was no conformity of class at the Creek, a major difference between it and Queensborough, where conformity
was prized. In Virginia, the struggle to retain the caste system was an attempt to preserve the past. At the Creek, the loose assigning of status was based on selecting those individuals who could best insure the future of rural Florida life.

Today, when one speaks of race, one might mean any of a number of ethnic groups. In Glasgow's Virginia and Rawlings' Florida, race had only one meaning -- Negroes. The writings of the two authors concerning race seem oddly outdated today, but they are true representations of the times.

Glasgow was the first Southern writer to depict the Negroes as individuals, not as what postwar historian William Dunning called "Happy Sambos." Her faithful Negroes were drawn from her own experiences. It must be remembered, however, that in her time, few, if any, whites knew what Negroes were actually thinking or feeling. Glasgow was no exception to this and, although she gave her Negro characters feelings, dignity and, often, character, she still tended to view them as different in kind from white people. Sally Middleborough's Mammy Euphronisia in The Romance of a Plain Man, for example, is shown as protective and concerned about the friends her white charge makes among "white trash." Except for the fact that servants of that time often derived a sense of status from
the social standing of their masters, it is doubtful whether a Negro mammy of that time, with no social standing of her own, would be so concerned with the class of people her nursling associated with. This is an example of the fact that all whites had power and the Negro had none with the whites believing that Negro servants adopted the standards they themselves observed. What Glasgow should be given credit for, however, is at least seeing the futility and frustration of Negro lives even though she shows little, if any, concern for the idea of equality. Her understanding of the depth of the problem increased as she matured; she says in her autobiography that had she been born before the Civil War, she would have been an abolitionist.47

Glasgow understood the fear that underscored much of the black/white relationship. Major Lightfoot in The Battleground, for example, speaks of the fear the white planters have that war and abolishment of slavery means that the Negroes will revolt and slaughter their former masters. This fear was real, though not commonly admitted. The most common cover-up was that the Negro was happy in his servitude. Levi, the freed slave in The Battleground, exhibits one form of this cover-up because he bears "alike the scornful pity of his white neighbors and the withering contempt of his black ones."48 The message here is that a
freed slave is in a social no-man's land. He would have a secure place in black society had he remained beholden to a white family for position and status, and would thus be happier than he is as a person without accepted rank. Levi, himself, is aware of even finer distinctions within the slave community for he, a body servant, could win his freedom, while his wife, a field hand, could be sold away without any regret; the house servant enjoying higher status than an agricultural worker.

Glasgow presents some of the most telling accounts of racial prejudice as it affects sexual behavior. While she never touches upon relationships involving white females and black males, she does write of the callous use of black women by white men in both *They Stooped to Folly* and *In This Our Life*. In the former, Virginius looks down on Martin because he had seduced "a girl of good family." In his view, a gentleman could be immoral if he did it with discretion, which meant seducing girls of color. He calls this "stepping down from his superior shading of color." These actions are, he says, "the facts of life that every man discovers and no man discusses. . . when sin was sin, not inhibited pleasure." In discussing Martin's moral obligation to Milly, whom he has seduced, Virginius says that when there has been a child the claim, or obligation, is stronger. Victoria reminds him that he felt the
opposite way about the obligation of his Uncle Mark, who also fathered a child out of wedlock. Virginius says that situation was different because it involved a mulatto child. Sin was viewed differently when the victim was black instead of white. This was a further change rung on the old Southern theme of a double standard for women, who were rigidly classified as good women, bad women, black women, and white women. This is a theme that Glasgow touches upon only in the sketchiest way but the reader gets the clear idea that a white man's sexual needs could be satisfied outside the confines of this class without any sacrifice of status among his male equals and without taking advantage of the sacred Southern "lady."

The Negroes in Glasgow's novels have feelings and are not drawn as "types." When young Parry in In This Our Life is suspected of a hit-and-run offense, the police pay no attention to his mother's assertion that he was at home all evening and could not have committed the crime. "But they wouldn't believe me, I'm colored," says Minerva simply. 51 It was a fact of life that no Negro's word was taken over a white person's. Injustices of this type were accepted, sadly but philosophically, by the Negroes of that time. Glasgow shows this but fails to deal with what the inner feelings of rage and frustration might have been. After Parry is vindicated through the intervention of Asa, it is
still too late for him to ever realize his potential and his dream of becoming a lawyer. Minerva sadly observes that "colored people are used to that sort of mistake." 52 Parry's life is ruined by the false accusation of a white girl who wanted to cover her own crime. Her family, except for Asa, is willing to have Parry be the scapegoat rather than see her life sullied by criminal prosecution. Parry was Negro and, in the family's mind, his life was of no value compared to the girl's.

Ellen Glasgow did not subscribe to the theories of historians like William A. Dunning who saw the Negroes as happy, singing, essentially simple people. Unfortunately, the views of Dunning and those he taught had great influence on the way Americans regarded the Negro until the 1930s. Glasgow did not consider the question of equality for Negroes but she refused to accept the idea that they were better off as slaves. She tried to interpret the attitudes of Virginians toward the Negro and record them as accurately as possible. This was a breakthrough in writings about the South and was one aspect of her observation of the social history of Virginia that provides worthwhile insights to readers of her books.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings admits that she is "not of the race of Southerners who claim to understand the Negro." 53 She says, however, that the myths seem
"reasonably accurate," including the qualities of childishness, gaiety, disregard for truth and undependability among the things she observes. She says, however, that given the basic injustice of the Negro's position in life, he can only adapt by being "childish, religious, untruthful, and unreliable." The attitudes she expresses in "Black Shadows" chapter of Cross Creek reflect personal experience. She recognizes the mental and emotional confusion of a race told for generations what to do, thus rendered unable to make good decisions on its own. However, since she begins with a flawed premise, albeit one that had a persistent hold on the white Southern mind, she finds what she expects to find -- that only in "rare instances can a Negro work for long on his own initiative." Yet she recognizes that economics and education play a big part in the problems of Negroes. In her genuine affection for her maid, Geechee, her respect and devotion to Martha Mickens and her appreciation for the domestic skills of her housekeeper, Adrenna, she gives evidence that deep affection between individuals of each race is not only possible, but actual. On the other hand, she makes a devastating comparison of the roles of family dogs and Negroes when she writes that "they (dogs) are also expected to serve us, as the Negro serves."
Like Glasgow, she fails to deal with black/white sexual relationships. She does not even dip into the implications of the black female/white male encounters or discuss any fears white females may have of sexual violence from black males. The only time she even hints of such subjects is in *Golden Apples* when the Captain wanders into the hammock drunk and feverish and confuses his image of the cabbage palm as a turbaned Queen of Sheba with the sight of the naked, half-witted black Reba. Even here, no sexual encounter, in fact no encounter between two conscious adults, takes place. Reba finds the Captain sunk in fever and semi-conscious and carries him back to the cabin, then disappears never to be seen again in the narrative.

Some changes in the white attitude toward blacks is noticeable between the earliest books of Ellen Glasgow and the last of Rawlings' books about Florida. In *The Battleground's* opening scene, the slaves of a dead master are taken away to be sold -- as items of property like guns, dogs or horses. By the mid-1930s, the time *Cross Creek* was written, the Negro is left pretty much to his own devices, with some slight opportunity to rise or fall in fortune according to his luck and his nature.
Education

Education in the formal sense was rare in backwoods Florida. The scattered settlements and widely separated farms did not lend themselves to the organization of schools. Penny Baxter was the son of a poor preacher and learned to read and write from his father. Penny and the Forresters had planned to offer board and room to a teacher for Jody and Fodderwing, but Fodderwing's death ended that plan. Jody is delighted to escape formal schooling since he feels that he already knows a "heap," and so he looks forward to lessons from his father, who can easily be persuaded to drift away from reading or sums to tales of hunting or woods lore. So while Jody lacks all but the rudiments of formal schooling, he is taught daily how to live in his environment and to notice and appreciate both its dangers and its beauties.

Illiteracy was common in rural Florida well into the 1930s. Rawlings tells in Cross Creek about the wife of one of her grove workers who comes to her to ask if she will read a postcard her husband has received. Those who could read or write often had only the most basic of these skills. Rawlings' own writing career was mysterious to her Creek neighbors. When she apologizes to Martha Mickens for rising late because she had stayed up most of the night writing, Martha replies "...I knows you're tired in the
Rawlings tries to make Martha understand that writing is a mental, not a physical, activity and shows her copies of her published books. Martha's comment is that "...nobody at the Creek can do that," being more impressed with the books than aware of their content.

Like many other things, education in Rawlings' Florida was a practical matter. If education could be arranged within the demands of survival, children were exposed to it; if not, education was ignored. The inhabitants of the Creek sent their children to school when they could be spared from farm work and when the parents could manage to provide them with clothes, shoes, and something to eat. The Crackers considered school as primarily a place for learning to read, write, and do sums. Such extras as hygiene and vaccinations were not a proper part of the learning experience. If hookworm medicine made children sick, then you simply stopped giving it to them. If they didn't like school, then you let them stay home. It was a practical approach to life. The well-educated Rawlings ran straight into this wall of resistance to formal demands for childhood education she knew from the North, and finally realized that the harsh life had taught her Cracker friends to strip all the non-essentials from their lives. They knew other things of greater value, she concluded. Yet the desire to see one's children educated was strong among
Florida pioneers, especially on the part of the mothers. In the midst of a struggle for life in rural areas, women like Piety in *South Moon Under* were always seeking ways and means to obtain "larning" for their offspring. As the Scrub became populated, and more settlers moved into an area, one of the first signs of civilization was a push among the mothers to arrange schooling, even if it meant rowing the children far up-river to the nearest settlement.\(^{59}\) This meant white children only, of course. It would be many years before education in rural areas included the children of black families.

Glasgow's experience of education was again vastly different from Rawlings'. In Virginia, it was not a question of any schooling, it was assumed that some schooling was available for white children. The question was what kind of schooling. Glasgow turned her ironic eye on upper-class Virginia's attitudes toward education in *They Stooped to Folly*. The aristocratic belief was that all the learning needed by a Southern gentleman was to be found in the works of the classic authors and in the Episcopal Prayer Book. Virginius, in his arrogant belief that everything worth learning had already been learned, says "there isn't much material in Virginia history that hasn't already been exhausted."\(^{60}\) That there might be things to learn outside of the set history of Virginia was
an idea that simply never entered his mind. In Martin's case, his public school education and his wide reading fell short of the accepted standards among the newly wealthy who only recognized "practical" subjects like business and politics as having worth. General knowledge didn't count.

Glasgow was widely read in science, political economy, philosophy, and the biological and social sciences. She was excited by all the new insights this reading provided and felt that Virginians could benefit from looking beyond their narrow horizons. In her early books, therefore, she tended to make her characters "types" representing art, science, philosophy or social Darwinism. She was self-educated, much as was Ben Starr in *The Romance of a Plain Man*. She was familiar with the works of Charles Darwin, George Santayana, Spinoza, Jung and Freud, Henry and William James, Pascal, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Huxley as well as Marcus Aurelius and other classical writers. It was the influence of these writers that increased her rebellion against the unrealistic and sentimental fiction of her day.

She felt strongly that success does not require the formal education in set subjects -- mostly about the past -- that was so respected by the aristocracy. This was especially true, she thought, when such education was reserved solely for the males of the family.
Female education was tuned to the prevailing feminine ideal of women to whom love, marriage, and motherhood were the only necessities. Southern women were trained to ignore any serpents in their Eden, lest seeing them, they would have to do something about them. The simplistic view of education for women in Glasgow's Virginia was that the less a girl knew about life, the better prepared she would be to live it. Glasgow says that knowledge of any sort outside of basic skills and such niceties as music, sewing, and watercolors, was kept from the well-bred young female "as rigorously as if it contained the germs of a contagious disease." Glasgow finds it ironic that this ignorance of anything that could possibly be useful was, by some mysterious alchemy, expected to add to a woman's value and make her more desirable to a man who was expected to know his world, either by experience -- denied to women -- or by his instinct as the male of the species.

Among blacks, education was also considered non-essential. To educate Negroes was to threaten the status quo. Slavery was abolished, but ignorant, dependent Negroes were still kept in an inferior position almost as satisfactory as slavery and, if they were inferior inherently, how could they benefit by education? The Negro boy, Parry, in In This Our Life, longs for education almost from childhood and, because he was bright and promising,
Asa Timberlake promises to help him attend Howard University. In the growing cities like Richmond (Queensborough), such a young man would occasionally draw the attention of a white mentor who would try to help in obtaining education. It was a rare instance and Parry's case shows how quickly such interest could change. After Parry's arrest and imprisonment on charges of hitting a child with a borrowed car while drunk -- false charges made to protect a white girl -- Parry knows his quest to become a lawyer is over. The white community gives his broken dream little consideration, since Parry can always be a porter or a railway or factory worker, considered good jobs for the brighter Negro by whites. That a Negro's desire for education was important was a concept light-years away from the Virginia Glasgow knew.

In her world, education was reserved for the white male, especially the aristocratic male. The major change that occurred after the Civil War was that a Ben Starr, self-educated and self-made, but from poor white stock, had a chance to succeed in a world he could not have conquered two decades previously. Education began to move from the aristocrats to the middle classes, but detoured around white women and blacks. Glasgow does not give us many details of specific educational experiences in her books. This may be because she herself did not attend school and
hesitated to write of an environment she had not experienced. She did not attempt to give specific details of education, but showed, through the lives of her characters, how the philosophy of education influenced those lives as the old order began to die.

Social Customs

By the 18th century, the planter class in Tidewater Virginia had consciously created a society of great beauty and meaning, suitable to a relaxed plantation life where the work was done by many slaves. This creation was based on strict rules of honorable conduct, of manners, and of a style of gracious living unique among American societies. Glasgow was aware of the hold this picture of the legendary South had on the American imagination, but she wanted to be sure this hold was based on fact. She tried to preserve in her books those qualities she felt were valuable in Southern society but expose, by delicate irony, those which were false and sentimental. Therefore, she made a point of creating characters who fought against the restraints of convention. While the social ideals of the original Virginia aristocrats were noble and, perhaps even appropriate to their time, in the hands of an improverished and defeated ruling class they became almost a caricature of themselves. The South would never be the same again, but the remnants of the early aristocrats refused to accept
this reality; in fact, they almost made a cult of not accepting it. They were so inwardly turned that they were barely aware that America was itself changing out of all recognition.

Virginians clung stubbornly to social customs that were not only outmoded, but even scorned by the great mass of Americans. In an era when the middle class was becoming the dominant force in American democracy, the aristocrat's idea that heredity determined a man's place in life was not realistic. In an era when the politics of reform were gaining ground, the traditional conservatism in thought and politics of the aristocrat was out-of-date. In an era of great mobility, growth and change, there was no place for those who thought that any form of labor was unsuitable for ladies and gentlemen. As the American population grew, swelled by waves of immigrants, the South could no longer remain apart, living as it were an almost medieval life in a growing industrial age. It was foolish and wasteful of one's talents to always be a slave to what other people thought, what other people decreed as proper for one's station. Among the more sensitive offspring of the aristocrats, doubts arose. Virginius in They Stooped to Folly asks himself if he hasn't spent all his life trying to conform to other people's ideals. "Fear, not ambition, has been the mainspring of my character," he says. The
greatest fear he had was "what people would think of me."
For Glasgow, Virginius represented the enormous waste of
human potential among the heirs of the old order who could
not shake off its restraints and embrace the new.

Virginius' wife, Lavinia, is another person who could
not face change. Her defense was to become an invalid and
to avoid change through helplessness. She mourns the fact
that even the memories of the Civil War did not have the
staying power they once did when they were preserved "in
the fluid of Confederate memorials." In spite of their
inward recognition that somewhere, somehow, things had gone
wrong, both Virginius and Lavinia are so conditioned to
observance of the social customs of their class that they
react automatically as they had been taught to do, never
asking themselves if their lives could be happier and more
productive if they threw off the bonds of convention.

One of the most stringent social customs was that
which placed any open discussion of sexual behavior high on
the list of forbidden topics. Asa, in In This Our Life,
notes that 80-year-old Uncle William loses control of his
hands in the presence of young women. This is the only
open thought Asa allows himself, a reference to the hidden,
but covertly accepted, vices that one avoided confronting
in a hidebound social group. Breaking the law was another
vice that was acceptable to the upper classes if it was
part of the proper group's pattern of habitual activity. During prohibition, for example, one could be socially acceptable and have one's own bootlegger if he was "a college man and from a good family." If, says Glasgow, all the pillars of society support illegal liquor consumption, custom made them reconcile their instincts to accept law-breaking. Virginius justifies his contact with the bootlegger in question by saying "he is more presentable than a parson," one of Glasgow's ironic thrusts at the logic that said liquor was an important facet of gracious living, the bootlegger was socially acceptable, and that a misguided law should not be allowed to interfere with the carrying on of tradition.

One way situations concerning things like sexual behavior, law-breaking or other embarrassments were handled was to call into play the unspoken agreement between Southern men to "refrain from asking embarrassing questions between themselves." Virginians were almost Victorian in their zeal to conceal. The flirtation scene in The Battleground, for example, is typical of the sort of light banter that the young engaged in, never allowing seriousness to surface.

Social custom extended not only to the expectation men had of women, but also to those they had of their own sex. A man, said conventional wisdom, was suspect if he was not
a conscientious provider for his family. This required he work only in positions appropriate to his station. Being a writer, for example, or an artist, was not considered serious "work." This is a clear example of how old traditions had become twisted, for the pre-war aristocrats prided themselves on their culture. Art, music, cultural interests were, along with politics, blood sports and overseeing one's plantations, the hallmarks of the planter class. Among the rising middle class, imitating but not understanding, the group to which they aspired, writing or art were not acceptable careers.69

As we noted previously, the custom of elevating family feeling and the status quo above reason was part of the accepted mythology. During the hit-and-run episode in This Our Life, the family makes Asa feel he is in the wrong for wanting the truth to come out. Asa realizes that "fear of the truth, fear of uncertainty, fear of decision and, most of all, fear of action," controlled the whole family and that Parry's shattered life and dream is not too high a price to pay to preserve the easiest and most pleasant way of problem-solving.70 After all, Parry was black and the life of a young black boy did not compare in value to the reputation of a young white "lady" from a socially prominent family.
Virginians had constructed a whole range of behaviors to cover every imaginable occurrence. The structure was in place, one simply had to refer to the appropriate social custom to solve any problem that arose, from aberrant sexual behavior to the proper dress to wear for a morning call. This social structure was the aristocrat's last defense against a changing world, but in the final analysis, it failed them and left them undefended to face the future. Many of Glasgow's characters were cast aside by the tides of change like Asa was, but others, like Dorinda in Barren Ground or Betty Ambler in The Battleground, those with the will and strength to take what was good from the past, and add it to what was good in the present, survived.

Social customs were a matter of survival in Rawlings' Florida also, but the roots were far different. The enemy there was not a changing world, but an untamed, or barely tamed, place where social customs existed to help the settlers conquer a harsh environment. Rawlings noted that the early communities solved their own problems and resented the intrusion of the law. The settlers had evolved a system of self-policing which, though often unconventional, was workable. Rawlings' friend, Cal Long, for example, finds the establishment of a Federal game refuge on his land meant that he was no longer permitted to
kill deer there. A famous hunter, he laments that the law will not allow him to hunt in his own potato patch or cowpea field. "I'm too old a man to begin obeyin' the law," he says. Hunting was acceptable if it met a man's need for food; senseless slaughter was looked down on, for waste today could mean hunger tomorrow. If a man killed more than he could use, as when Penny and the Forresters killed Ole Slewfoot, then the bounty was shared. Sport hunting was another matter altogether, and here each man's conscience had to be his guide. Marjorie Rawlings herself was torn, because she loved the excitement of the hunt, but she hated to kill any form of life, except snakes, unless it was absolutely necessary.

Another Cracker custom was to help one's neighbor in time of need. Martha Mickens in Cross Creek took the place of any of her family if they were unable to fill their jobs due to illness, drunkenness or childbearing. "I always likes to take up the slack," she says. The hungry had a call on the Creek's inhabitants, for all of them had known "Ol' Starvation." At the Creek, people did not barter or trade; they exchanged "favors." Value did not matter; need did. This was the basis for social intercourse; this Rawlings learned to her cost when she tried to hire the wife of a poor grove worker to do her laundry, thinking to help a family in need. Pride would not allow them to
accept what they considered menial work; had it been needed because of illness or disability, it would have been done for nothing. Debt, as in the case of Mr. Martin's pig, is not necessarily repaid with mere money. One must wait until the time is propitious so that "the pig is paid for" in a manner that protects one's honor as well as one's pocketbook. Pride and honor demand that the smallest sums be repaid, but gifts of goods and services are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The social rules are unwritten and fluid, as Rawlings discovered, often to her humiliation; they must be discovered on one's own.

Prohibition played its role in the social custom of backwoods Florida as it did in Virginia. A frontier community, however scattered, obeys its own rules. Men had been making moonshine in hidden stills in the Scrub and hammocks since the earliest times. Mere Federal law could not change ancient custom. The settlers knew without question that they had right on their side. The making and sale of illegal liquor was an important part of backwoods economy. The "pro-hi's" were simply to be outwitted; it was unthinkable that they should be obeyed. In her short story, "Gal Young 'Un," Rawlings tells exactly how a moonshine still is operated and how Trax sells his product to people on the coast. The fear and shyness of the Crackers is especially keen when the stranger may be a
government revenue agent. When Trax's homely and hard-working wife is displaced by the gal young'un, she gets revenge by destroying his still, his livelihood.

In moments of happiness and plenty, the generosity of these Crackers was monumental, considering what small gifts they had to share. In South Moon Under, the gifts at Piety's wedding show an openhandedness that is notable among such poor people. There is a side of beef, a bolt of unbleached muslin, dresses, nightgowns and aprons -- all practical necessities, but more valuable to the recipient than diamonds and gold.

Manners, like speaking politely to one's elders and to women, were important; considered a sign of respect. Rules were strict about "cussin'" and when it was acceptable and when a deadly insult. To curse in the heat of battle with the elements or animals was overlooked, but if a man cursed another in anger, the one cursed had to defend his honor. A woman's good name had to be defended, as Oliver defended Twink Weatherby in The Yearling. In the same episode, Penny and Jody feel obliged to defend Oliver Hutto when he is set upon by the Forresters because it was too many against one and Penny had to even the odds. At the Creek, Rawlings noticed the innate courtesy of her neighbors and included many of these courteous customs in her books.
The local social customs were an important facet of the cultural history noted by both authors. It was the oil that greased the wheels of self-preservation, whether to survive on a frontier or to protect a comforting way of life for those being swept into a new and different world.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

2 Ibid, p. 5.
3 Ibid, p. 195.
5 Ibid, p. 27.
6 Ibid, p. 15.
7 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 231.
8 Ibid, p. 191.
10 Ibid, p. 18.
11 Ibid, p. 70.
12 Rawlings, Cross Creek, p. 360.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid, p. 368.
16 Ibid, p. 121.
18 Ibid, p. 96.
19 Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 44.
21 Ibid, p. 269.
23 Glasgow, A Certain Measure, p. 3.
24 Ibid, p. 45.
25 Rawlings, South Moon Under, p. 58.
26 Ibid, p. 98.
27 Rawlings, Cross Creek, p. 300.
28 Ibid, p. 301.
29 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 12.
31 Ibid, p. 15.
32 Ibid, p. 266.
33 Glasgow, The Romance of a Plain Man, p. 78.
34 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 154.
35 Ibid.
36 Rawlings, South Moon Under, p. 85.
37 Rawlings, Cross Creek, p. 68.
38 Ibid, p. 69.
41 Ibid, p. 338.
42 Glasgow, The Romance of a Plain Man, p. 10.
44 Rawlings, Cross Creek, p. 5.
47 Glasgow, The Woman Within, p. 27.
48 Glasgow, The Battleground, p. 128.
49 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 69.
50 Ibid.
51 Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 394.
52 Ibid, p. 421.
53 Rawlings, Cross Creek, p. 180.
54 Ibid, p. 181.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid, p. 67.
57 Ibid, p. 27.
58 Ibid, p. 70.
60 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 75.
61 Glasgow, Virginia, p. 115.
62 Ibid.
63 Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 230.
64 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 129.
66 Ibid, p. 64.
68 Glasgow, The Battleground, chapter VIII.
69 Glasgow, They Stooped to Folly, p. 75.
70 Glasgow, In This Our Life, p. 412.
71 Rawlings, *Cross Creek*, p. 35.

72 Ibid, p. 5.
CHAPTER IV

The Differences in the Two Societies and the Two Authors

Having examined the day-to-day lives of the Tidewater Virginians and Florida Crackers and the underlying values on which they structured their lives, this chapter will discuss the differences between the two societies, differences that influenced the social history of each area. In addition, it is important to understand the backgrounds and personal attitudes of the two writers, since these factors had an important effect on how each approached her subject. Lastly, the contribution each made to the overall knowledge about her chosen locale will be discussed.

Virginia, in the decades following the Civil War, was representative of conditions in many sections of the South. In matters of wealth, the living standards and the general welfare of its people, the South lagged behind the rest of the nation. Destruction of the railroads during the war meant that national markets were not as open to the South as they were elsewhere. Virginia and its capital, Richmond, fared better than many places in the South, but as Glasgow says, "after ten bitter years, the city was still bound by the terrible lethargy which had immediately
succeeded the war.¹ She felt the city gave the impression of having been passed by in the march of progress. Yet in an expanding American economy, the South was an area where land, labor, raw materials, and power were plentiful, an irresistible lure to the capitalist. During this period, exploitation of resources was characteristic. Many historians called this the age of the Robber Barons, those daring buccaneers of free enterprise who gave a new meaning to the word exploitation. A South weakened by war and Reconstruction suffered even more than other parts of the country from the profit-seeking of these new capitalists. Glasgow was acutely aware of the difficulties Virginians had while struggling to adjust to the industrial age.

Glasgow's experience of Southern life dictated her subject matter. She knew that patricians would rather starve genteely than eat the bread of common labor. Even if their standards were outmoded and unworkable in the new era, they clung to their conventions as to a raft in an unfriendly sea. The poor white farmers, meanwhile, were trying desperately to wrest a living from barren, used-up acres. Many of them gave up the struggle and moved into the city to try and make their fortunes in business or politics, two areas formerly closed to any but aristocrats. Others packed their meager belongings and headed west or south to try a new start in a frontier setting. The
shifting social scene threw some of these poor whites into contact with aristocrats in ways that had not been possible in the rigid pre-war Virginia class system. Alliances of marriage and in business and politics upset the status quo. Glasgow was fascinated with the interplay between the various groups in Virginia and wanted to record what she saw and observed about life there. She saw Virginia's struggle as a microcosm of America -- a world emerging from a predominately agricultural economy into the industrial age. In order to insure that future readers would see the South as it was and not as they imagined it to be, Glasgow was anxious to expose all that was false and unrealistic in those writings about the South that preceded her work. In A Certain Measure, she says that the "multitude of half-wits, and whole idiots, nymphomaniacs and paranoics, and rakehells in general...is not realism, and it is not peculiarly Southern," even though these were the main figures in the works of local colorists like Mary Johnston, Thomas Nelson Page, Lafcadio Hern, George Washington Cable, Thomas Dixon and Colonel William Faulkner.

Glasgow's view of Virginia life was free and untutored. She had been deemed by an over-protective family to be too frail to attend either public or private school and educated herself by wide and voracious reading. She was curious about life outside the narrow confines of a
society circumscribed by custom and tradition. She never married, though she was engaged more than once, so her time was not taken up by the demands of husband and family. Like many unmarried ladies of good family, she had leisure to observe the world around her and used the opportunity to good effect. In the earlier novels, she brought her sharp eye and sharper wit to bear on those actions and habits of mind of traditional Southern aristocrats, but as time went on she also turned her famous ironic observation toward the vulgarity of the newly rich. There was not a group, an idea, a belief or an obsession in the Virginia of her time and place that did not appear in one or another of her novels.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' literary universe was very different. While Virginia was attempting to build a new social order on the ashes of an old one, Florida was a frontier trying to establish a society where none, at least not an American one, had existed before. Rawlings came to Florida almost by accident and fell in love at once with the land and its people. She did not record the lives of the Crackers she met in an attempt to do anything except help her readers appreciate their unique character and the utter enchantment of the place itself. In her attempt to save her failing marriage and to revitalize an unsuccessful writing career, she amused herself writing to her editor,
Max Perkins, about the experiences she was having in her new home. This astute editor advised her to abandon the romantic and gothic writing of her past and write major pieces about the lives of the backwoods Floridians. She had no intention of writing "social history," or anything so important, but she was intelligent enough to realize that she had come upon an unexplored literary area, one that was bound to change as the world changed. Although she observed the changes growth was making in rural Florida, she did not envision that today's super-highways, enormous tourist industry, and tremendous population growth would transform Florida into a place with no room for a truly isolated rural life. It is precisely the fact that Florida has undergone these changes which makes her writing a valuable historical contribution.

Rawlings discovered that the people she knew at Cross Creek were the inheritors, either actual or spiritual, of a land pioneered by a tough, God-fearing group that came into the Florida wilderness to escape conditions of no hope in their previous location. In her earliest Florida books, she told tales of these pioneers. In The Yearling, South Moon Under and Golden Apples, she introduced early Florida characters ranging from poor white farmers, to English remittance men, to country doctors to people of means and breeding. All were trying to start new lives in an
unexplored society. There were no pre-existing social customs and traditions other than those the inhabitants brought with them from their former lives. These people created their own society by a system of trial and error. If certain behaviors or values worked, they became part of the social fabric; if they failed to work, they were abandoned. It was a purely functional society.

In an unpublished manuscript quoted by Gordon E. Bigelow in Frontier Eden, Rawlings calls her Florida Crackers "a people without a history," meaning that they were migrants from the Carolinas, Georgia, and other states of the deep South who came to Florida as a last hope for making a living. They arrived poor and, for the most part, remained poor. Where other writers like Theodore Pratt, Edwin Granberry, and Erskine Caldwell had characterized Florida Crackers as backward, shiftless, morally weak, and often lawless, she saw a hardy people whose characters were formed by the beauty of the land they inhabited. She could see that these Crackers would not be able to survive the inroads of business, big agriculture, and tourism. They were not considered worth preserving. So she wanted to help people appreciate these rural folk and the land they loved and from which they drew their strength.

While Glasgow wrote in order to tear away the covering of "evasive idealism" she saw disguising the "harsher
realities beneath manners and social customs" of Virginians, Rawlings sought to show her audience the beauty, romance, and exoticism of semi-tropical rural Florida and its people. Glasgow used irony and anger to expose the falseness of much in her society; Rawlings used passion and sympathy to reveal the beauty of life in rural Central Florida. Both used humor; Glasgow to point out the absurdity of beliefs and attitudes, Rawlings to get a belly-laugh from her readers.

The differences in the backgrounds of the two writers influenced the way they viewed their literary territory. Glasgow was born and bred in the South, descended from a long and honorable line of native Virginians. She knew her world almost by tribal memory. Rawlings had Southern roots, but was essentially an outsider with a journalistic background and brought to bear an outsider's eye to her observations at Cross Creek. Glasgow was frail in health, sheltered all her life, living much in her mind rather than in the rough-and-tumble of life. She did not have great financial resources but she was widely travelled and had a wide network of friends and never suffered from lack of money for the amenities of gracious living. Rawlings, on the other hand, knew hardship, hunger, and grinding labor in her orange grove and was, all her adult life, struggling to earn a living. In spite of physical problems and bouts
of depression, she was an active participant in Florida life, while Glasgow's increasing deafness made her a more passive observer of Virginia society.

The environments sharply differed as Glasgow's settings were both urban and rural, while Rawlings' were not only rural, but often primitive. The urban setting didn't appear in any of Rawlings' works; her Florida interior was still full of rattlesnakes, panthers, bears, and other animals which had to be dealt with in life-threatening situations. Glasgow's rural settings were not so isolated as the homesteads in the Scrub and the threat from wild animals was long gone from the worn-out farmland in Virginia.

The period of each author's literary career also had its influence on her approach to her material. Ellen Glasgow had a long life, some seventy-two years, and was productive from the 1897 publication of The Descendant to her final Virginia novel, In This Our Life, in 1941. She wrote to a plan -- a conscious history of Virginia from the Civil War to just before the Great Depression. She had many years to observe Virginia society, effect of time and change upon it and what direction she saw both Virginia and America heading. Rawlings, on the other hand, died at age fifty-seven. Her literary output of social consequence was small compared to Glasgow's twenty novels and numerous
short stories, essays, poems, and autobiography. Furthermore, Rawlings' Florida writings were all produced between 1928 and 1942, with the major works coming in a burst during the five-year period from 1937 to 1942. She might have been able to give readers wider insights into Florida and the changes growth was making had she lived long enough to see events there after World War II.

As the two societies differed and as the authors differed in approach and background, so did the spirit of each area differ. Virginia had an old aristocratic mentality, ever looking backward with regret toward a better time that once existed. Virginians fought change and were threatened by it. In Florida, a frontier mentality prevailed. Things might be bad now, people said, but there was hope they would get better. The chance was there, opportunity and good fortune were only as far away as the next good crop. It was the difference between an active and a passive society; unfettered by the dead past, Crackers proceeded to live one season at a time, always in hope that next year things would be better. They sought life in a simpler, more elemental world than that of Glasgow's Virginians. Virginians, on the other hand, could and did lay claim to a real legend stemming from Revolutionary times, even though that legend became distorted in the aftermath of the Civil War and the
changing social and economic scene. For them the dream had once been real.

**Lasting Contributions**

Historians draw on many sources to reconstruct events. The novels of Ellen Glasgow and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings should be considered one good source for historians of the periods and the people about which they wrote. Neither woman considered herself to be a formal scholar; each wanted to convey to her readers something about the societies they knew. Each writer was shaped by the very fact that she was writing fiction not a formal historical study or even a documented historical record. The spirit or feeling of their subjects was central to their writing, but they often captured this spirit precisely because they were novelists of emotion and were not dispassionate about their material. E. Stanley Godbold in *Ellen Glasgow and the Woman Within*\(^3\) says that historians came late to the appreciation of literature but that social historical literature can provide "a record of social experience." That is precisely what Glasgow did in her novels.

C. Vann Woodward, in his *Origins of the New South*,\(^4\) credits Ellen Glasgow with leading the revolt against the sentimental, affected, and pretentious writing about the South. He says that she perceived a gold mine of "untouched materials" about the South that never had been
written about realistically. In her attempt to create a social record of Virginia, notes Woodward, "the only conspicuous element in Southern society which is not made the special subject of one of Ellen Glasgow's novels is the Negro, and he enters freely into all her Virginia books, though usually as a servant." As Glasgow's writing developed, she could show as much skepticism of the New Order as of the Old. Glasgow "bridged the gap between the old and the new...between romanticism and realism." 5

Another historical study which confirms Ellen Glasgow's veracity is Catherine Clinton's The Plantation Mistress. 7

Clinton says that exalted imagery and "an unwillingness to cope with reality when it conflicted with the ideal created this eccentric world." 8 Clinton describes the world of white women on plantations and in doing so, validates Glasgow's earlier claim that these and other Southern women were the victims of a system that made them subservient to the claims of family, made them unequal in legal and sexual matters and forced them into a regulated and circumscribed life. Clinton says "the clash of myth and reality was monumental." 9

Blair Rouse says Glasgow has been accorded respectful notice in works of literary history and criticism and that her books have been praised by writers like Van Wyck Brooks
and Jay B. Hubbell. Godbold, however, feels her lasting historical value was only valid for those sixteen years between her first novel and *Life and Gabriella*. She failed to move on to the challenges brought about by the New South because she could not accept the changes that took place after World War I. Marcelle Thiebaux in her book, *Ellen Glasgow*, analyzes each novel and concludes that, if you exempt her novels with the New York settings, she covered all the significant events in Virginia from the Civil War and its aftermath, through Virginia's growth, politics, changing mores, and the period between the two World Wars. These comments indicate that Glasgow provided a valuable contribution to the social history of Virginia and one which should be taken into account by historians.

Wilbur J. Cash's *The Mind of the South* says that there were special circumstances and events that created a Southern society different from any other in the United States. Both Glasgow and Rawlings wrote in detail about the ways in which these societies were different. The one aspect of Southern life which they addressed only briefly is what Cash calls "the tendency to violence in the Southern psyche." This can be explained in Glasgow's books by the fact that Virginia, according to Cash, had evolved earlier into the finished antebellum society on which the romantic dreams of the entire South was based and, because
the premier position of the planter class was firmly established there, Virginia escaped many of the frustrations that led to violence in other areas. Also, the sheltered Glasgow, being raised as a proper Southern belle, probably did not have as much experience of violence as did Rawlings. Rawlings, on the other hand, lived and worked in what was essentially a frontier environment. She acknowledged the heritage of violence in her scenes of the whipping of the Englishman, Tordell, in Golden Apples, the fight between the Forresters, Oliver Hutto, and the Baxters in The Yearling and the death of Marsh Turner in Cross Creek. She saw these incidents of violence as only one facet of life in rural Florida, not as evidence of a violent society. Because she hated violence herself, she did not dwell on these incidents in great detail, preferring to focus her attention on more positive aspects of Florida life.

On the subject of idealizing the Confederate cause and on ancestor worship, Rawlings had nothing to say. This is due to the fact that the Confederate myth so prevalent in Virginia and other parts of the South did not extend so strongly into rural Florida that it influenced the Crackers she knew.

In checking indexes of a number of books on Southern history, one finds references to Glasgow but not to
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. It is left to the naturalists and environmentalists who know Florida to praise her work. Thomas Barbour, in *That Vanishing Eden. A Naturalist's Florida*,¹⁴ says he makes no attempt to describe the people in the backwoods because "...it ill becomes me to trespass on a field which she (Rawlings) has already made so eminently her own." When Marjorie Stoneman Douglas wrote her *Florida: The Long Frontier* in 1967, she compared Rawlings favorably with William Bartram and said "...she knew the people and the country as no one else did."¹⁵ Gordon Bigelow's study of Rawling's works, *Frontier Eden*, includes a comparison of the effectiveness of Glasgow and Rawlings in describing the cultural history of their chosen locales. Glasgow's emphasis on character gives her works more power, he feels, but Rawlings, with her strong evocation of place, has a universal appeal for readers of all ages, one which Bigelow thinks will continue for years to come.¹⁶

Evidence of Bigelow's theory is found in the fact that Rawlings' Florida books, especially *The Yearling*, have been translated into innumerable foreign languages and have been the subject of motion pictures and plays and the books themselves continue to sell briskly. Glasgow's works, by contrast, are not equally popular. Most of her books are out of print, few titles can be found in modern bookstores
and the average public library only contains her autobiography and one or two of her later novels. The reason for this may also lie in the difference between the two societies. The details of a backward-looking, essentially out-dated culture like that of post-Civil War Virginia are not as fascinating to the average reader as the timeless charm of the elemental rural life Rawlings created in her books.

Although neither writer dealt with the larger themes of Southern history such as politics, economic change, racial conflicts, or broad social movements, each gave a detailed picture of daily life in her chosen locale. Few, if any, social historians have focused on cultural history at this level. It is the very scarcity of such material that makes the contributions of Ellen Glasgow and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings so valuable to historians seeking a well-rounded picture of Southern life in the period between the Civil War and World War II.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter IV


2 Glasgow, *A Certain Measure*, p. 68.


5 Ibid, p. 436.

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid, p. 17.

9 Ibid.


11 Godbold, *Ellen Glasgow and The Woman Within*.


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