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THE SOUTH IN FICTION

EMILY BRIDGERS



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CHAPTER I

SETTLERS

"Unaw'd by power, and unappall'd by fear."

—Goldsmith

There was a day not so far back when Mary Johnston was considered one of the finest historical novelists this country had produced. Whether or not she is still so considered, her novel of early settlers in Virginia, *To Have and To Hold*, is a wonderful bit of fiction with which to initiate this study. A highly diverting historical romance admittedly sentimental in conception and ornate in style, it embodies in its hero those Cavalier qualities upon which in his ancestors the Southerner sets such store. And to it the author, herself a Virginian by birth, brought not only realism of detail, but, a quality equally important, realism of mood.

Born at Buchanan, Botetourt County, Virginia, Miss Johnston (1870-1936) was from her early reading years an avid student of history. Her father, who had been a major in the Confederate States Army, was a lawyer and an ex-member of the Virginia Legislature. His home afforded a large library in which his daughter's taste was easily indulged. Her first book, *Prisoners of Hope*, appeared in 1898, her second, *To Have and To Hold*, in 1899; with others which followed, they were eagerly read by a public excited and curious as to its own past.

In contrast to the swagger and flourish of Miss Johnston's robust tale is the thoughtfulness and quiet beauty of *The Great Meadow* (1930), Elizabeth Madox Roberts' story of early settlers in Kentucky. Miss Roberts was a poet who wrote from a quickening vision of human life, and through an imagination fitted to express the essential beauties of human character. But her book is at the same time "on its own feet in its own region," accurate in setting and detail and authentic in characterization and atmosphere.

A descendant of Kentucky pioneers, Miss Roberts (1886-1941) was born in Springfield, Kentucky, where she spent her formative years and received her early education. In 1921 she received a Ph.B. from the University of Chicago, and in the same year was awarded by the University the Fisk prize for her col-

lection of poems, "Under the Tree." The following year this collection was published. Four years later, Miss Roberts' first novel, *The Time of Man*, drew the acclaim of critics and writers in this country and England. Subsequent novels established her as an artist.

1. HOT BLOOD AND HIGH COURAGE

" . . . the summer lies fair before us."

To Have and To Hold, by Mary Johnston

Sketch briefly the historical background and the course of this superbly adventurous story.

Describe the settlement of Jamestown behind its stockade. Tell of other river settlements and of outlying homes along the river, some of them, like "Weyanoke," embryo plantations of a future Virginia tidewater. People these settlements and homes with the motley and varied cargoes of humanity which sought the Jamestown landing. (In passing, note the delightful names of the boats sailing from England to the shores of Virginia.) Point out the beginnings of an aristocratic tradition in the strict differentiation between quality and generality. Note the ruthless punishments and cruel pleasures of the day. Contrast the impressions of Jocelyn Leigh, newly arrived in this fierce land, with the New World as Ralph Percy envisioned it.

Mention the constant menace of Indian and Spaniard, the awful distance in time as in space from the source of supply and assistance, the treachery of the beautiful Virginia countryside.

2. A POET LOOKS AT PIONEERS

"Whe'r I go to heaven or whe'r I go to hell or whe'r I go nowhere at all, I take my strong part with me."

The Great Meadow, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts

Tell the tender, heroic tale of Diony Hall and Berk Jarvis, with generous quotations from the beautiful prose.

Woven into the narrative is a fascinating account of the life of the day. Tell of the plantation in Virginia, and of the vigorous, full living of Thomas Hall and his family: of home and furnishings, dress, food, books, women's activities, crops and animals, songs and sports, the religious fervor of Polly Hall and her neighbors, and Diony's "wilderness marriage."

Tell of the tales that came to the Virginia fireside of the new land of promise, of its abounding wildlife, its fertility, its fine streams, its beauty, its cruelty. Tell of the trip across Boone's Trace to Harrod's Fort and of the hard, dangerous, promising life of the frontier settlements.

Particularly in its first section, the book is vivid with folk sayings and superstitions. Discuss, noting the wit and imagination, yet at the same time daily homeliness, which went into their making.

The author has a fine feeling for the countryside, for its trees and verdure, for the climate of this land, and the passage of seasons. Read especially fine descriptions.

She has, too, a perceptive appreciation for people and for the warmth and color and abundant vitality associated with the Southern character. Discuss some of these people: the merry, lewd little "ole worn-out half of a man," for instance, whom Diony met on Boone's Trace; or Betsy Dodd, stepping lightly in the dance, yet "one of the first to sway with the preacher and cry out for grace"; or Elvira Jarvis with "a strength to kill a buffalo in the power of her arms."

Note above all the flavor of the speech, poetic in rhythm and imagery, realistic in vigour and homeliness. Select passages in illustration.

Additional Reading:

The Choir Invisible (1897), by; James Lane Allen.

Nick of the Woods (1837), by Robert Montgomery Bird.

The Great Valley (1926), by Mary Johnston.

Lamb in His Bosom (1933), by Caroline Miller.

The Yemassee (1835), by William Gilmore Simms.

REVOLUTION AND FRONTIER

"Ideas played little part in [Southern life in 1800], outside the realm of politics, and the Southern mind was seldom detached and never analytical . . . Writing was an accomplishment merely, as it largely was in the North as well; and the genius of the Southland and the careless, active life there were long to prevent its becoming anything else."

—Van Wyck Brooks

It was not until the second quarter of the nineteenth century that the South produced fiction of any note. Then, in the 1830's, Georgia yielded the humorous sketches of Augustus Baldwin Longstreet (1790-1870), while in South Carolina and Maryland William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) and John Pendleton Kennedy (1795-1870) wrote, in the romantic and adventurous vein of James Fenimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott, stories of the Colonial and Revolutionary South.

Of the romantic novels, many readers consider Kennedy's *Horse-Shoe Robinson* the most spirited and the most consistently entertaining. The author was born in Baltimore of a prosperous merchant father of Scotch-Irish blood, and a Virginia mother of English descent. Following graduation from Baltimore College in 1812, and service in the war of that year, he settled in his native city, where he was renowned for his public and political services, his genial and witty personality, and his abundant and leisurely living. In his prime he wrote three novels: *Swallow Barn* (1832), reminiscent in its style and charm of the work of Washington Irving, and marking the beginning of the Southern plantation tradition in literature; *Rob of the Bowl* (1838), a lively tale of old St. Mary's; and *Horse-Shoe Robinson* (1835), in which he told, in the "richly figurative and poetical prose" so much admired by Edgar Allen Poe, the romance of gentlefolk, but set his scene in the Carolina border region and peopled it largely with frontiersmen. Basing the action on the actual fighting in the Carolinas in the year 1780, he gave strict attention to historical accuracy.

In this period, when ordinarily romance met the popular taste, Longstreet's sketches were distinguished for their realistic portrayal of the Georgia frontiersman. Descriptive of the rough exuberance and unthinking brutality of a primitive

society, the sketches are outstanding in the early expression of that native American humour which flowered in Georgia in the work of Joel Chandler Harris, and in a broader field in that of Mark Twain.

Longstreet was born of Dutch-English-French parents who had but shortly moved from New Jersey to Augusta, Georgia. Prepared in Southern schools, he graduated from Yale in 1813 and immediately undertook the study of law in the school at Litchfield, Connecticut, where John C. Calhoun had studied. An energetic man, plebeian in tastes and habits, full of humour, plain in countenance, robust in body and mind, he was ideally fitted for the life of the frontier. As lawyer, politician, judge, editor, preacher, college president, he had ample opportunity to observe the life around him. His sketches, collected under the title *Georgia Scenes*, are the result of that observation.

I. GATHERING OF THE PARTISANS

"They who possess the valleys and the wilderness, I have heard it said by wise men, will forever choose their own rulers."

Horse-Shoe Robinson, by John P. Kennedy

Explain the military situation in the Carolinas in 1780. Draw attention to the number of "irregulars" among the British troops, the prevalence of Tories among the inhabitants, and the reference to this struggle as a "civil war."

The British necessarily play the part of villains in the romance, but their mistakes, such as the massacre at Waxhaw and the annulment of the Charleston paroles, were real enough. Describe the effect of such mistakes on the native population and their gathering at King's Mountain even from across the Blue Ridge.

Describe in general the rough isolated life of the Carolina frontier in 1780, and tell something of the types which populated it—Wat Adair, Habershaw and his crew, the miller and his family, the Ramsays. Include samples of the colorful, apt frontier talk.

In the characterization of Horseshoe, Kennedy is commonly thought to have imitated Fenimore Cooper, but Horseshoe was a born Southerner. Point out the characteristics which stamp him as such—his geniality, leisurely humour, love of words, sentimentality, gallantry, gregariousness, generosity, courage, etc.

With a "Southern taste" for Addison, and an artistic affinity to Scott, Kennedy is accused of verbosity and declamation. But there is satisfaction to the modern Southern ear in his abundant and exuberant use of the English language. Do you find his leisureliness, his mellowness, his rolling phrases, a pleasurable indication of his Southern heritage? Select especially attractive passages for quotation.

Additional Reading:

Drums (1925), by James Boyd.

The Forayers (1855), *The Partisan* (1835), *Woodcraft* (1852), by William Gilmore Simms.

2. "IN THEIR NATIVE HABITAT"

"Frontier life [in Georgia] ran a petty round between fist fights and horse races, between politics and religion. These were the staples of every day existence, as necessary to the natural man as whiskey and salt pork; and the honest Georgian preferred his whiskey straight and his politics and religion red-hot."—Vernon Louis Parrington

Georgia Scenes, by A Native Georgian (Augustus Baldwin Longstreet)

Explain rather at length the nature of these sketches. Note the author's explanation of his object in writing them.

Tell of some of the characters: Blossom and Peter, Ned Brace, Ransy Sniffle, the "Charming Creature," the "aged matrons." Distinguish between the characters you think are typically Georgian, or Southern, and those who are broader types.

Give examples from the *Scenes* of the elements of this typically American humour—surprise, hoax, exaggeration, the serious statement of the trivial, the use of slang, dialect, absurd names, indulgence in incorrect spelling, relish of horseplay, the practical joke, wisecracks, tall tales. Does the author's moral viewpoint affect his robust appreciation of the scene? Comment.

The Georgian has been called "the Southern Yankee." In what traits are Longstreet's Georgians akin to the Southerner's conception of the Yankee? How do you think the Yankee of Longstreet's day would have relished the comparison?

The sketches were published in a collected edition in Georgia in 1835, and in the North in 1840. In Georgia critics and populace greeted the edition with shouts of amusement and approval. "The author of this work," a leading publication said, "is a humorist, and paints nature to the life." Would you agree that in his enjoyment of these sketches the native Georgian, with a fine democratic spirit, must most certainly have been possessed of a "certain buoyant healthful lack of sensitiveness?"

Additional Reading:

Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi (1853), by Joseph G. Baldwin.

The Long Hunt (1930), by James Boyd.

The Autobiography of David Crockett (1834), by David Crockett.

Sut Lovingood's Yarns (1867), by George Washington Harris.

Balaam and His Master (1891); *Mingo and Other Sketches* (1890), by Joel Chandler Harris.

The Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs, Late of the Tallapoosa Volunteers (1845), by Johnson Jones Hooper.

Dukesborough Tales (1871), by Richard Malcolm Johnston.

CHAPTER III

SECLUDED PEOPLES

"A national literature ought to be built, as the robin builds its nest, out of the twigs and straws of one's native meadows."

—Van Wyck Brooks

The South offers to the novelist no more fascinating material than that to be found among its secluded populations, two of the most interesting of which are the Louisiana Creole and the Southern highlander. With few exceptions, among them Mary Noailles Murfree (1850-1922), novelists have failed to observe the highlander with other than preconceived prejudice or extreme sentimentality. The Louisiana Creole, in the works of George Washington Cable (1844-1925), has been more fortunate.

Miss Murfree, whose pen name was Charles Egbert Craddock, was born of well-to-do English stock near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. For a period of fifteen years she spent her summers in the Cumberland Mountains, and there she gathered material for stories and novels about the Tennessee mountaineers. A student of the classics, widely read in English, French, Italian, and Latin literature, and even, with her father, the law, she brought to her writing, together with fresh personal observation, a disciplined mind and a style so virile that even her publishers originally accepted her work as that of a man. In 1884 a collection of her stories created a literary sensation.

The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains (1885) tells with restraint a wild and sombre tale in which the ferocity of the action is in contrast to the poetic feeling with which the story is written.

Cable was born in New Orleans, on his father's side from Virginia slaveholders, and on his mother's from bred-in-the-bone New England Puritans. Fascinated with the Creole culture, he was self-taught in its history. He learned the French language, read French classics, and delved into the writings of priest explorers and into the old French documents in the city archives. *The Grandissimes* (1880) was his first long romance. As a novel it is episodic, but as creative writing it is a subtle and sympathetic revelation of the Creole people and of their culture.

1. THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAINEER

The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains, by Charles Egbert Craddock

Tell of the stock, of "proud and ancient culture," which settled the Southern mountains, and of their hardy and isolated lives. Draw attention to the old English heritage of their speech.

Relate briefly the story of the novel.

As late as 1906, Carl Holliday referred to "the curious type of humanity, the Tennessee mountaineer, a people so ignorant, so superstitious, so far behind the world of today as to excite wonder and even pity in all who see them." Analyze the characters in Miss Murfree's novel who would, to lowland minds, substantiate Holliday's opinion. Note carefully whether from the native viewpoint a given trait was a vice or a virtue. Discover the fine qualities which were, equally with lawlessness and violence, an expression of individuality.

With particular attention to the prophet, discuss the function of religion in the lives of these people. Is the prophet a convincing creation, or does he remain a shadowed and puzzling figure?

Is Dorinda a fit descendant of the brave women who followed the rivers inland, and when the rivers stopped, came "on up into the hills"?

Perhaps no one loves the Southern mountains as does the Southern mountaineer. Miss Murfree caught the majesty, the peace, the wealth of coloring, the splendor in spring, the cold beauty in winter, the awe-inspiring elemental force which meet the mountaineer's need. Read selected descriptions.

Special Reference:

The Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge, edited by Roderick Peattie.

Additional Reading:

The Happy Mountain (1928), by Maristan Chapman.

Highland Annals (1925), by Olive Tilford Dargan.

Our Southern Highlanders (1922), by Horace Kaphart.

To Make My Bread (1932), by Grace Lumpkin.

Head O' W-Hollow (1936); *Man With A Bull-Tongue Plow* (poetry, 1934); *Tales From the Plum Grove Hills* (1946); *Trees of Heaven* (1940), by Jesse Stuart.

Blue Ridge Country (1942), by Jean Thomas.

In the Tennessee Mountains (1884), by Charles Egbert Craddock.

The Time of Man (1926), by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

2. THE LOUISIANA CREOLE

The Grandissimes, by George W. Cable

Tell of the Creole culture this book describes: the subtle Creole mind, inviolate caste tradition, terror of voodoo, arrogance, ruthlessness, gayety, decadence. Show how Cable throws this culture into re-

lief against the mind and personality of the Anglo-Saxon, Frowenfeld.

Give some account of the early history of the Grandissimes, and describe several of the novel's fascinating characters: Bras-Coupé, the African king; Clemence, the *calas* vender; the delightful Raoul Innerarity; the white Honoré Grandissime, with his finely developed sense of justice and honor; or that indomitable figure, Agricole Fusilier; or the two women, fiery Palmyre Philosophe and gentle Aurore Nancanou.

The year is that of the Louisiana Purchase. Discuss the Creole reaction to the American ideal of a *free* government. What, in Honoré Grandissime's opinion, was the only possible solution of the problem?

Contrast the deep seriousness of the social and political implications of the narrative with the "allusive, sparkling, felicitous" manner of its telling.

Cable loved the birds, flowers, foliage, seasons, swamps, and prairies of Louisiana, and wrote of them with contagious affection. Read descriptive passages.

Do you find completely enchanting the descriptions of the architecture and streets of New Orleans, and of the physical appearance of individual Creoles? Include several such descriptions. Select samples of the patois of the Negroes and of the "delicately wrought Creole dialect."

Additional Reading:

Old Creole Days (1879), by George Washington Cable.

Bayou Folk (1894), by Kate Chopin.

Balcony Stories (1893), by Grace King.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANTIC TRADITIONS OF PLANTATION AND SLAVE

"A golden light still lingers upon the old plantation. Memories are still too dear to the Virginian to suffer any lessening of the reputed splendors of *ante bellum* days. The tragedy of a lost cause has woven itself into the older romance and endowed the tradition with an added sanction. It has long since spread beyond the confines of Virginia and become a national possession."

—Vernon Louis Parrington

"But when all is said and done, it seems to me that the decisive factor for the almost sudden appearance of this literature was social—that the outburst proceeded fundamentally from, and represented basically the patriotic response of the men of talent to, the absorbing need of the South to defend itself, to shore up its pride at home, and to justify itself in the eyes of the world."

—J. W. Cash

Beginning in Kennedy's *Swallow Barn*, flowering in the work of Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, and F. Hopkinson Smith, the romantic tradition of plantation and slave has survived even the realistic literary era of the 1920's to a rebirth in the best seller, *Gone With the Wind*. Though it has produced much mediocre work, it has also produced several classics in American literature, notably Page's *In Ole Virginia*, Harris's *Uncle Remus* stories, and Smith's *Colonel Carter of Cartersville*. Admirers praise the warm glow and charm of these stories, critics point out their unabashed sentimentality and restricted sympathies, but practically no one disputes the perfection of the fictional molds in which they are cast.

Born of a prominent family on one of the great plantations of Virginia, Page (1853-1922) spent his youth amid scenes of war and reconstruction. Later, with a degree from the University of Virginia, he practised law in Richmond. In 1893 he moved to Washington, D. C., where he devoted himself to his writing, except for a period (1913-19) when he served as ambassador to Italy under President Wilson.

Harris (1848-1908), son of an improvident Irish father, was born and bred in Georgia. At fourteen he left school to make his living, taking employment on a weekly newspaper published on the plantation of Joseph Addison Turner. Here he was allowed freedom to roam the plantation and acquaint himself with its

life, and to indulge in the Turner library a taste for literature. His *Uncle Remus* sketches were originally written as fillers for the columns of the *Atlanta Constitution*, with which he was connected for twenty-five years. After the first collected edition was published in 1880 the old ducky and Brer Rabbit became, like Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, a delightful part of American life.

Smith (1838-1915) was born and reared in Baltimore, Maryland. At the outbreak of the Civil War he removed to New York City. By profession a construction engineer, he devoted a gradually increasing amount of time to painting and writing. In 1891 he published a study which to many readers is the most endearing in all plantation literature, *Colonel Carter of Cartersville*. But though he wrote with affection, he wrote merrily and with wit and with an all too rare sense of the ridiculous.

1. PLANTATION DAYS

Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings, by Joel Chandler Harris

Colonel Carter of Cartersville, by F. Hopkinson Smith

The Southern Plantation, by Francis Pendleton Gaines

Life and Labor in the Old South, by Ulrich B. Phillips

With Gaines as guide, trace briefly the development of the Southern plantation tradition in literature, noting the chief elements. Analyze the above novel to show how neatly the material fits into the pattern.

Compare fiction to fact as presented by Gaines and Phillips.

Sum up your own view of plantation literature as to its historical fidelity, and as movement toward a friendlier understanding with the North. Bear in mind that the dark side of the picture was never a component part of the literature.

2. "EPITAPH OF A CIVILIZATION"

In Ole Virginia, by Thomas Nelson Page

In these stories, polished to perfection, the traditional Old South lives again. Read one of them aloud, preferably "Marse Chan," considered by most critics Page's finest single piece of work.

Additional Reading:

The Old Virginia Gentleman and Other Sketches (1943), by George W. Bagby.

Surry of Eagle's Nest (1866); *The Virginia Comedians* (1854), by John Esten Cooke.

Aeneas Africanus (1919), by Harry Stillwell Edwards.

Flower de Hundred (1890), by Mrs. Burton Harrison.

Swallow Barn (1832), by John Pendleton Kennedy.

Red Rock (1898), by Thomas Nelson Page.

Feliciano (1935), by Stark Young.

CHAPTER V

SLAVERY AND THE UNION

“ . . . like a fire-bell in the night . . . ”

—Thomas Jefferson

That slavery was not wholeheartedly endorsed by all elements of Southern society, and that secession was not a spontaneous movement in the Old South, is a matter of history. But it was not until fairly recently that fiction took sympathetic and intelligent note of the anti-slavery Union element in the South.

A most satisfying, and in some respects brilliant, account of the struggle between secessionists and the minority in opposition in the state of Georgia is Henrietta Buckmaster's *Deep River* (1944), the story of a native anti-slavery Union sympathizer. Miss Buckmaster is a recognized student of the period and scene of which she writes. All details of plot in *Deep River*, she says, “even some of the more minute ones, are based on fact.” Yet for the reader, the student is lost in the novelist. The author not only makes notably intelligent and dramatic use of historical fact and incident, but tells an unusually taut story, recreates with marked success the atmosphere and attitude of the period, and peoples her scene with convincing and widely diversified characters. Her novel is consequently a milestone in Southern interpretive historical fiction.

Another dramatic, and certainly comprehensible, aspect of the pre-secession scene was the ever-present, if well controlled, fear of uprising among the slaves, with a consequent fierce and relentless union in action, in response to any threat from the slave population, of practically all white elements in a plantation community. In *The Red Cock Crows* (1944), Frances Gaither makes effective use of such material. Telling a sensational story, her compassionate treatment of the enslaved blacks, and her brief tender portrait of a young Southerner fatally caught in the toils of fear and hate, give the book a value beyond that of mere plot.

Miss Gaither (1889-) was born in Somerville, Tennessee, and was educated at the Mississippi State College for Women. Miss Buckmaster (1909-) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, but “my forbears,” she writes, “all came from the South, notably Virginia

and North Carolina." Her best known book, *Set My People Free*, is a history of the underground railroad for escaping slaves. She is now finishing a new novel.

1. BLACK REBELLION

The Red Cock Crows, by Frances Gaither

This story deliberately gets off to a slow start. Picture the background, as initially presented. In what respects does the description of life at Shandy and the surrounding plantations fit into the plantation and slave tradition? At what point does it part company with the tradition? Discuss. Note the effective characterization of "the perfect natural slave," Montgomery.

Tell of the plot for the uprising. Discuss in detail the double nature of Scofield: on the one hand, his humility, courtesy, dependability, and pride as the driver at Shandy; on the other, his fire and confidence as preacher, the fanaticism of his belief in his destiny. Note the pathos of his religious intensity, faith, and dependence, and his ultimate betrayal by his weakness in the shape of the woman, Coatney.

Describe the measures taken for the suppression of the plot. Would you say they were or were not justified in view of the possible danger? Discuss the solid front of native whites, in total disregard of ordinary economic and social class separations.

Note the lynchings as indicative of poor white-Negro relations. Tell the story of Roby Dick, with comment on his death by hanging in answer to criticism of the Southern slave system. Is the South as yet equally sensitive to criticism?

There is no lack of humour in the author's conception of Negro character, but primarily there is pitiful comprehension which is communicated to the reader. Tell of some of the Negroes: Mid, Sack, Holiness Sam, Uncle Zeke.

Is the author successful in the contrast of the surface beauty, charm, leisure, and gayety of plantation life to the white master's merciless racial pride and scarcely hidden terror of its challenge, and of the docility, good humour, and trust of the slave to his deep resentment against the whites and his longing for freedom? Discuss.

2. SOUTHERN ABOLITIONISTS

Deep River, by Henrietta Buckmaster

Outline briefly the story of this novel. Fill in the immediate historical background.

Recalling Miss Buckmaster's careful research into customs, manners, speech, and behavior, tell of several scenes that you find most interesting: Savanna's first home-coming to the mountains; the raising of Seth Conway's house; court week in Ellijay; campaign barbecues; Simon's maiden speech in the Georgia House; the celebration of the act of secession.

The *New York Times* said of this book that it was "that rare thing, a historical novel in which events have moral values and are in themselves founded on ideas." Discuss the clash of ideas between Simon Bliss and Michael Alston, between Savanna and Mrs. Alston. Comment on the latter's picture of the South as she knew it, and the place of women in her picture.

Tell of other attitudes toward slavery as represented by such men as Tom Orr, Lawyer Baird, Guthrie, Murphy. Put together, in contrast, the arguments and convictions of the non-slavers, as represented by Grandpa and Cal Smith.

Comment on the use, as characters in the story, of real men of history, such as Stevens, Ross, Goodloe.

Explain the working of the underground. Select several of the most interesting of the Negro characters and tell their stories: Venus and Pollo, Joe, Jake Thompson, Harry, Lonzo, Prudence.

The action gives a sense of Southern history in the making. Give examples of the manner in which the author, at the same time that she shows characters in the grip of relentless economic and emotional forces, relates them to the turbulent events which forced personal decisions.

Would you say that Miss Buckmaster, writing in terms of the past, at the same time makes provocative comment on the present?

There is beauty in this book. Discuss in several of its aspects: the dignity loaned to responsible individuals by their fearlessness, integrity, and faith; the merciful comprehension, and vision of the worth of men; the poetic, honest, illuminating portrayal of the mountain people; the whole cloth from which the novel is cut.

Additional Reading:

Sapphira and the Slave Girl (1940), by Willa Cather.

CHAPTER VI

CIVIL WAR AND AFTERMATH

"With the overthrow of the aristocratic principle in its final refuge . . . America was to become wholly middle-class, and such romance as it might bring forth was to be of another sort."

—Vernon Louis Parrington

Perhaps in no periods of the South's history is the lack of honestly descriptive, not to say interpretive, fiction so apparent as in those of Civil War and Reconstruction. Covering these periods, Southern novels which have not been written out of sentiment have achieved for the most part violence or sensation, and in them no region of the South and no class in society has been adequately portrayed. Such fiction centers around the planter class and their house servants, misrepresenting or ignoring other elements, notably the small farmer, the trader, the poor white, and the free Negro.

Such a book is *So Red the Rose* (1934) by the Mississippi born, bred, and educated New York writer and drama critic, Stark Young (1881-). Frankly the expression of a romantic nostalgia, this novel recognizes only the well-to-do ruling class and their house slaves, dismissing as "trash" all other people. Within this narrow frame, however, Young depicts with understanding not only types, manners, and habits of living and thinking, but the Southern love of a land which, with other more complex influences, sent planters into Confederate armies despite the inward doubts and fears of many of them as to the wisdom of the South's course.

Not within the fold of tradition, two of the finest contemporary Southern writers of fiction, William Faulkner (1897-) and Katherine Anne Porter (1894-), the latter in a few exquisite stories, the former in short stories and in certain of his novels, have painted, each to his individual talent, illuminated portraits of the planter class and their Negroes. In subtly beautiful prose, Miss Porter recounts the story of a Southern lady and her Negro slave, and limns with truth and freshness facets of the Negro character, especially in its relations with children. The author was born in Texas, has traveled and lived in many countries, and owes her reputation as a stylist to three collections of

short stories. For lack of space, one story only of Faulkner's is here included, an outrageously humorous tale full of human feeling and cut straight from the fabric of Civil War times.

The Deliverance by Ellen Glasgow (1874-1945) and *The Store* (1932), by Thomas Sigismund Stribling (1881-) picture, not reconstruction of government, but the social and economic aftermath of the destruction of the old, and the painful birth of the new, order. *The Deliverance*, published in 1904, shows evidence of the author's youth, and of the influence both of Victorian romance and of plantation literature. But the sense is strong of spiritual and material desolation, and of the impotence engendered by the conflict of old memories and old attitudes with facts, some of them new but many of them only hitherto unrecognized.

Stribling's novel is certainly a most unpleasant analysis of a Southern scene. The second in a cycle of three, its interest lies in the fact that though the plot is silly and the main character intentionally contemptible, there emerges a picture of a people bound and warped spiritually and morally by habits of mind and body inherited from a dead past, and so living dishonestly in a dreadful present. The author was born in Clifton, Tennessee, of a father who fought in the Civil War on the Union side, and a mother whose brothers had been Confederates. Following the war, the parents first edited a country newspaper, and later ran a village store. In 1904, the son took a law degree from the University of Alabama, but eventually yielded to a lifelong desire to write. He has been consistently interested in modes of thought in the South, and in the problems which confront the physically free Negro in hidebound Southern communities.

1. THE OLD ORDER AND CIVIL WAR

So Red The Rose, by Stark Young

"The Raid," by William Faulkner, in *The Portable Faulkner*, edited by Malcolm Cowley

The first five stories in *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories*, by Katherine Anne Porter

Describe the plantation and Civil War background of Young's novel. Develop the characters' love of the region, of the vegetables, birds, fowls, flowers, shrubs, and trees of the Mississippi countryside, of fine horses and Southern food and drink. Compare the pleasure of the Grandmother of Miss Porter's stories in every aspect of the farmhouse, animals, land, growing things, Negroes.

Would you agree that Malcolm Bedford and the McGehee brothers are recognizable characters to all who knew even the second generation after the Civil War? Select for discussion the one of them most interesting to you.

Young's older women, too, are particularly interesting. Tell of them. Comment on the admirable relationship maintained with their husbands by such women as Sallie Bedford and Agnes McGehee. Take note that the astonishing figure of Granny in "The Raid," and the fascinating Grandmother of Miss Porter's stories are spiritual kin to these women.

Discuss the helplessness of the slaves in their reaction to "Yankee" promises, as depicted in the novel and in Faulkner's story. Draw attention to the somewhat ironic, but generally responsible, attitude of the white planter class to the confused Negroes, noting the simple humanity of such an attitude as that of Drusilla in "The Raid."

For superb examples of intimacy of relationship, cite the unity of spirit between Granny, Bayard, and Ringo, in "The Raid," and the interdependence of Grandmother and Nanny in Miss Porter's stories.

In the short stories, the Negro character is treated with affection and appreciation. Tell of several of the Negroes: Ringo, noting his acumen, confidence, and curiosity, and the wonderful humour of Faulkner's portrayal of the little boy; Uncle Jimbilly and the Negroes of Grandmother's farm; Dicey, with her white charge; or, the beautiful and moving portrait, old Nannie.

Many qualities depicted by these writers are common to the South today: intense family relationships and pride; tart humour of character; socialibility and fondness for talk; a wonderful sense of the ridiculous; a less prevalent but delightful and subtle wit; unbounded confidence in regional, family, and personal superiority; fortitude; sentimentality. Discuss. Do you find qualities which have perhaps disappeared from the contemporary South?

Additional Reading:

John Brown's Body (poetry, 1928), by Stephen Vincent Benet.

Marching On (1927), by James Boyd.

The Unvanquished (1938), by William Faulkner.

The Battleground (1902), by Ellen Glasgow.

Cease Firing (1912); *The Long Roll* (1911), by Mary Johnston.

Chronicles of Chicora Wood (memoirs, 1922), by Mrs. Elizabeth W. A. Pringle.

Reminiscences of Peace and War (1904), by Mrs. Roger A. Pryor.

The Wave (1929), by Evelyn Scott.

The Forge (1931), by T. S. Stribling.

Heaven Trees (1926), by Stark Young.

2. A NEW SETTING

" . . . she feels with intense sympathy the elemental needs and hungers and the ideal motives which animate men and women, and make

them, for their hour of crowded life, flame out against the commonplace."

—Stuart P. Sherman

The Deliverance, by Ellen Glasgow

Miss Glasgow writes vividly of the Virginia tobacco country. Set the stage for this story, noting in the passing seasons the crude beauty of the isolated countryside. Tell of the community life around the demanding routine of the tobacco crop.

Explain the situation between Christopher Blake and Bill Fletcher, commenting on the community's appraisal of each man. Give a brief summary of the story.

Discuss the Blake family as representatives and relics of the past. Do you find any spiritual relationship in the male Blakes, son, father, and forbears, to the Alston men in *Deep River*? Compare Mrs. Blake's memory of her married life with Mrs. Alston's conception of the place of a wife in a Southern planter's life. Would you say that Mrs. Blake in her memories of the past belongs rather with the Bedford and McGehee women than with the Mrs. Alstons?

What does Miss Glasgow do to Carraway's "conservative theories as to the necessity of blue blood to nourish high ideals"? Which would you say showed the most intelligent sense of values, the descending aristocrat, Cynthia, or the overseer's rising daughter, Maria? Comment.

Would you agree that this is a story of dead traditions, outworn standards, belief in class privilege, hate, and bitterness, strangling and stunting men and women? Discuss. How do the standards and ideals in this book appear to us today? Comment.

Additional Reading:

The Miller of Old Church (1911); *The Romance of a Plain Man* (1910); *The Voice of the People* (1900), by Ellen Glasgow.

My Day: Reminiscences of a Long Life (1909), by Mrs. Roger A. Pryor.

Memorials of a Southern Planter (1887), by Susan Dabney Smedes.

3. FREEDMEN IN ALABAMA

The Store, by T. S. Stribling

Describe the trading center of Florence and the surrounding farm country. Explain the system of tenant farms and trade by mortgage which replaced in this community the plantation and the Negro slave.

Tell of Colonel Miltiades Vaiden's rise and fall, and of the tribe from which he came.

Stribling sets forth with ironic pen the habits of mind in this Vaiden tribe, and their belief in their superiority, as opposed to their actual character and their actions. Discuss. Note the older members' relegation of religion to a plane not to be touched in daily relationships, and the irony inherent in young Jerry's idealistic imaginings as compared to his inherited Vaiden attitudes, in the instance of Loob

Snipes and the funeral meats, for instance, or Landers' appeal for aid for Toussaint.

Summarize the situation between the whites and blacks: the unconquered slave psychology of the whites; the relationship between former slaves and their masters; the bitter antagonism, rooted in economy, of poor whites to Negroes; the helplessness of Negroes in business relationships or under attack of any sort, and their consequent enforced humility and duplicity. Draw attention to Governor O'Shawn's argument in the case of Vaiden versus Vaiden.

Compare the general attitude of the community toward a white man who maintained a mulatto mistress, and one who was a Republican "nigger lover." Note particularly the public reaction to Handback's death, and the reaction, as exemplified in the clerk, Stebbins, to Landers' death. Comment on Handback's inbred attitude toward Gracie, and on the resulting irony of their relationship.

Is Gracie a pathetic figure, or one of tragedy? Discuss. Tell of her problem with Toussaint, his inherited disposition, his temperament, and his future. Note the white community's attitude to him as a "white nigger," and the anomalous position of Toussaint and Lucy in opposing their intelligence and ambition to the community's prejudice and antagonism.

CHAPTER VII

REBELLIOUS GENERATIONS

"Let the gentle bush dig its root deep and spread upward to split one boulder."

—Walt Whitman

"What the South needs now," Ellen Glasgow once said, "is—blood and irony," and to the best of her ability she has filled the need. Born, bred, and resident in Richmond, Virginia, Miss Glasgow (1874-1945) wrote almost exclusively of her own state and its people, bringing to her work a breadth of vision into the human mind and heart which lifted her out of the ranks of purely sectional writers. At the same time, for her native South her books were skilfully administered antidotes to certain inherent poisons. In social satires, an epigrammatic and intelligent wit punctured much that seemed to her foolish and vain in Southern tradition, and in the pages of her more seriously written books she pictured attitudes of mind and social habits and laws unpardonably wasteful, in her opinion, of human happiness.

Particularly she presented the fighting edge to woman's training in the chivalric tradition, which she thought was "designed to paralyze [woman's] reasoning faculties," leaving her prey to the illusion that she must live by love alone. It was this battle in which she engaged in that fine novel, *Barren Ground* (1925), one of the first realistic novels to challenge the romantic sentimental Southern attitude. Unlike *The Deliverance*, this book is totally lacking in vestiges of the old romanticism. Rather, together with its beautiful, rhythmic prose, it is distinguished for its passionate honesty, the poetic and moving quality of the revelation of character, and the unfaltering certainty with which the author develops her theme.

In *Barren Ground* Miss Glasgow wrote of "good people" as distinguished from "good family." In *The Gentle Bush* (1947) Barbara Giles is concerned with the social and human problems involved in the fetish of "good family" as distinguished from "good people." Written apparently straight out of the young author's own background of gentility in the Louisiana back-country, *The Gentle Bush* is a subtle, courageous, and highly intelligent book. As fiction, it is the story of the Durel family,

particularly of non-conforming young Michel Durel. As social comment, it is the story of the decay of a culture, of an iniquitous power predominant in society, and of a potential alliance of forces that were shaping to its destruction. A first novel, it is notable for beauty of style, truthful thinking, and an especially fine awareness of the subtleties of human relationships.

Though born and educated in Louisiana, Miss Giles now lives in New York City, having left the South like many other young people in a effort, as she sees it, to find outside of the South an "understanding of themselves and the times in which they live."

1. A CHALLENGE TO LIFE

" . . . deeper than all, underlying all, the realistic drive of [Ellen Glasgow's] nature toward the discovery of ends which shall make life for men and women, but especially for women, somehow not wholly unworthy of the candle which lights them into the long darkness."

—Stuart P. Sherman

Barren Ground, by Ellen Glasgow

Scotch characteristics have been woven with first-rate results into the warp and woof of various Southern communities. Discuss the qualities inherited by Dorinda Oakley from her Scotch-Irish Presbyterian great-grandfather which set her apart from the majority of her neighbors and made for her success in reclaiming Old Farm, and salvaging her own happiness. Contrast to the daughter's common sense, open mind, and efficient approach, the mother's tight religious armor, the father's sweating futility, the tenant farmers' stubborn backwardness.

Cash says this is a "wholly genuine picture of the people who make up and always have made up the body of the South." Tell of some of the most interesting of them, white and black, those coming up and those going down.

Visitors to the South frequently express surprise at the intimate relationship between many of the white people and their Negro servants. Miss Glasgow caught this relationship admirably in her picture of family and farm life at Old Farm, and particularly in Dorinda's dependence on the Negroes not only for work but for friendship. Discuss.

By an interesting use of common field flowers and weeds, Miss Glasgow evokes for the reader the barrenness of the land and the spiritual poverty of the people. Other symbolism is equally effective. Tell of it.

The book suggests a number of reasons for the continuing prevailing poverty; wornout land and an antiquated crop system, coupled with fatalism and inanition; lack of education and natural carelessness, especially among the Negroes; heredity, an inherent futility, and

laziness bred in the bone of the poor whites ("mental malaria," Mrs. Oakley called it); climatic inertia; lack of capital. What is your opinion?

Stuart P. Sherman once defined reality as the "fighting edge of romance . . . the cut and thrust of an active will amid the material circumstances of present life." How well do you think Dorinda's battle against her romantic heritage meets this definition of reality? Discuss.

Carl Van Doren says that Miss Glasgow was surprised when men took her book to be a "story of personal triumph," because with other women she herself thought of it as a "story of tragic failure." Comment on the values involved in the man's point of view and in the woman's. With reference to the author's own opinion, quote and analyze the passage at the end of the book which begins, "Strange how her courage had revived with the sun!"

2. SPREADING ROOTS

"I mean, there is something more important than not being afraid. If many things are hateful, if they are very hateful, I should not like to say only 'They do not frighten me.' I should like to—well—to try to change them."

—Michel

The Gentle Bush, by Barbara Giles

Trace briefly the history of the Durel family's rise to power and unchallenged prestige, and its decline into decadence.

Discuss especially interesting individual Durels in their relation to the degeneration and disintegration of the family, and as symbols of a dead, if still unburied, culture, or in rebellion against it. Point out the significance of Felicie's marriage to the Cajun. Tell of Michel's fight against the fear and impotence engendered by tentacles of the past, and of his enduring effort toward understanding of the society in which he lived. Comment on the monetary survival of his father and brother through the adoption of efficient, if cold-blooded and socially irresponsible, business methods.

Discuss the place of Cajuns and Negroes in this landlord-tenant-laborer society, and describe the conditions under which they lived. Tell the story of Laurent, Blanchette, and Otis, and that of Gus Jackson.

Discuss Peter as a product of the society. Do you sense only defeat in his death, or was the "monstrous power" which destroyed him yet without power to kill what he stood for?

The book has been praised for the "inevitability of its symbolism." Trace the interesting pattern of the symbolism, from the depressing odor of a house, to the moldering soil which surprisingly sustained "as fine a growth" as Grandmere and Felicie, to the swamp with its snakes and slime, and finally to the characters themselves.

Is the final effect of this book one of violence and hopelessness, or do you feel that Dr. Levy and Mr. Lauve, Michel and Felicie, and "al

those people," may, like the gentle bush, dig deep and spread upward to split many boulders?

Additional Reading:

Life and Gabriella (1916); *Vein of Iron* (1935), by Ellen Glasgow.
He Sent Forth A Raven (1935), by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

THE ARISTOCRAT IN A NEW SOUTH

"Despite . . . harsh realities, the attitude of the agrarian aristocracy of the Old South continued to be a living part of Southern tradition, not only for the 35 years after 1865 but for the twentieth century as well."

—Francis Butler Simkins

William Faulkner (1897-) was born, bred, and educated in the state of Mississippi. After service in the R. A. F. in France and a year or so of drifting and odd jobs, he settled in Oxford, Mississippi, where he now lives and writes. Practically all of his fiction concerns Mississippians and is rooted, in the deepest sense, in his native soil. With the exception, perhaps, of James Branch Cabell, his is the most distinguished contemporary Southern literary talent.

In the discussion, Faulkner's work sounds bizarre, repellent, purely sensational. In the reading, the best of it is engrossing, richly imaginative, expertly colored, poetic, exciting, subtle. Because the author has no respect for chronological sequence as such, because he very often moves forward and backward in time as the minds of his characters move forward and backward, the first impact of much of his work is one of confusion; because he deals in decadence, ignorance, cruelty, violence, lust, and other reprehensible aspects of human character, it is also one of shock. But, creating a world recognizable in its essential outlines, Faulkner has written with a passion, an intensity, and a fierce honesty from which no reader need necessarily wish to escape.

The Sound and the Fury (1929), the shocking story of a decaying Southern family, is very difficult to follow. It is a question whether the explanations now current (and partly prepared upon request by Faulkner himself), while relieving the reader's confusion do not at the same time deprive him of the full emotional experience of the first reading. For purposes of this outline, however, such explanations as Burgum's and Faulkner's own have their value.

Like the calm after the storm of *The Sound and the Fury*, is Eudora Welty's novel, *Delta Wedding* (1946). Also born and bred in Mississippi, where she now lives, Miss Welty in this novel

writes with humour and insight, if perhaps with too obvious affection, of the complex relationships of a large and arrogant Delta landowning family. One of the younger Southern writers, she is distinguished for her luminous, imaginative prose and for her suggestive treatment of the inner, emotional life of her characters.

1. THE PASSION AND THE VIOLENCE

"And over all [Faulkner's] work plays the light of a really intellectual, if tragic, estimate of the whole business."

—J. W. Beach

The Sound and the Fury, by William Faulkner

"William Faulkner's Patterns of American Decadence," in *The Novel and The World's Dilemma*, by Edwin Berry Burgum

The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, by James Branch Cabell

The Frenchman, Malraux, once remarked that "The novels of Faulkner are eruptions of Greek tragedy in the detective story." Show how this might apply to this novel: explain Faulkner's disregard of chronological sequence and the patterned revelation of events as reflected in the consciousness of different characters; put together briefly the story of the Jason III Compsons; and point out the furies by which each was pursued, with especial attention to the brothers, Quentin and Jason.

In Cash's opinion, Faulkner is a romantic of the appalling. In your opinion is this novel, though appalling, yet in a sense a romantic approach to the familiar theme of the decadent Southern aristocrat? Comment.

Burgum thinks that through use of the interior monologue in its purest form Faulkner in such a novel as this secures "an intensity of emotional effect almost without parallel in the history of fiction." Would you agree that this being true Faulkner's talent is eminently suited to the portrayal of the intense emotional content frequently credited to the Southern temperament?

Faulkner is commonly accused of a total lack of humaneness, more especially in his treatment of his fellow Southerners. Is this novel without evidence of such a quality? Discuss, noting such evidence as Caddy's poignant concern for Benjy, Shreve's affection for Quentin, Caddy's suffering over her daughter, Dilsey's touching humanity toward Benjy, and, above all, the fierce comprehension of the particular hell in which each Compson suffered. In passing, comment on the understanding pen which limned the little northern boys and the small foreign girl.

Compare the suavity and chivalry of the aristocrats in *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck* with the torment of the Compsons. Is it your observation that the present descendants of *ante-bellum* well-to-do families frequently cling in turmoil and suffering, though in lesser degree usual-

ly than the Compsons, to the remnants of their pride, or, like Colonel Musgrave, live riveted in a pleasant futility? Or do you think that on the whole they have by now come to some sort of active terms with the present?

Note in the above connection that Burgum thinks that we pass beyond the provincialism of Faulkner's Jefferson County characters "into meanings that transcend the provincial. We recognize in these Southerners only an extreme form of typically American personalities." Do you agree that the "seething torment" beneath the surface in *The Sound and the Fury* is not just old Southern and decadence, but modern American? Discuss.

2. THE CHARM AND THE GENTILITY

Delta Wedding, by Eudora Welty

This is the revelation of a Southern matriarchy in which, with their men's consent, women rule. Set the pleasant Mississippi Delta scene, indicate the pace at which life moves, and tell of some of the most interesting of the women, and, other than George, the men in this Fairchild world.

George had married beneath him and Robbie would forever remain an outsider among these people. Show the family through the outsider's eyes. Draw attention to Robbie's conception of the externally pleading mask worn by the Fairchild women, and to her contempt for the women's demand from their men for "small sacrifice by small sacrifice, the little pieces of the whole body."

Revelation progresses through the development of personal relationships. The family saw George by the lamp of their own indulgence. Robbie saw him "lighted up by his own fire," a solid man, a husband. Tell of George in his relationship to the different worshipping Fairchilds, each striving to hold him within their proper circle, and of the less charming but more honest relationship of George and Robbie.

For the Fairchilds the world was divided into "two kinds of people"—themselves and Robbie, for instance, themselves and the overseer. Would you say that for them the two kinds would be shadowed forth in George's instinctive action at the bridge and Robbie's lack of understanding and deep resentment? Discuss.

Does this Fairchild world include Negroes as persons in themselves or only in their relationship to white people? Comment. Certain aspects of Negro character, particularly the comic, are well presented. Tell of some of the Negroes.

The world of childhood in a Southern rural family of means is enchantingly pictured. Miss Welty has observed this life to its most delightful and most humorous detail. Describe this world of bare feet, sore fingers, pigtailed, dressing up, of indulgent grownups, of babies and young lady sisters, of ladybugs and June bugs, princess feathers and niggers, food and sunlight, wide horizons, alluring rivers, and forbidden adventure.

Details of the surface life and idiom of speech are authentic, evocative, and continuously amusing. Discuss, with selected examples.

All things taken together, do you find these Fairchilds important as individuals, with ideas and ideals in a modern world? Beneath the charming surface do you glimpse any depths that relate them to the Compsons? Could they be Americans, north, east, south, or west, or are they molded and indelibly stamped by their Southern heritage of tradition, slavery, and Civil War?

Additional Reading:

Cinnamon Seed (1934), by Hamilton Basso.

The Cords of Vanity (1908); *The Cream of the Jest* (1917), by James Branch Cabell.

Where I Was Born and Raised (1948) by David L. Cohn.

Absalom, Absalom (1936), by William Faulkner.

The Romantic Comedians (1926); *The Sheltered Life* (1932); *They Stooped to Folly* (1929), by Ellen Glasgow.

The House of Connelly (play, 1931); *The Laughing Pioneer* (1932), by Paul Green.

Three O'clock Dinner (1945), by Josephine Pinckney.

River House (1929), by Stark Young.

CHAPTER IX

POOR FOLK

“ . . . the South which has stayed poor and often desperate so long . . . ”
—Jonathan Daniels

In company with the Negro, the most discussed classes in Southern society today are from the depressed rural population, notably sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and “poor whites.” From among these people have come in bulk the almost equally famed white mill and factory workers and around them in the last twenty years has grown a revealing and, usually, humane literature. Particularly interesting in this literature of the poor is the work of Paul Green and the early fiction of Erskine Caldwell.

Paul Green (1894-) was born of a farm family in Harnett County, North Carolina, where he worked in the tobacco and cotton fields, and himself earned the money for an education. Following service in the first World War, he combined with writing a teaching position at the University of North Carolina, of which he is a graduate. His work, which, with essays, includes plays, novels, and short stories, is admired for its authentic folk content and for the understanding and mercy with which he regards his subjects, both black and white. In *Salvation on a String* (1946), he has written a book as Southern as cotton, tobacco, possums, sweet potatoes, and collards.

Erskine Caldwell (1903-) was born in White Oak, Georgia. His father, a North Carolinian by birth, was a Presbyterian preacher, and for the first fourteen years of his life young Caldwell received no formal education but learned from observation as he moved across the South with his parents. Later education included some class attendance at the University of Virginia and that of Pennsylvania. The author sprang into fame almost overnight with the publication of *Tobacco Road* in 1932. His early short stories and novels about poverty-stricken Georgia crackers and unfortunate Negroes continue to be his best work. This writing is often frankly pornographic, usually entertaining, and always fiercely, almost savagely compassionate.

1. THE DISINHERITED

“In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances, and

of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again"

—James Agee

"We understand the wobbly warped Southerners in *Tobacco Road*, their decay, curdled like a cheese; they have slipped into the quicksand, their eyes are the eyes of flesh, their souls are tired of living."

—Ben Robertson

Tobacco Road, by Erskine Caldwell

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, by John Agee and Walker Evans

Taps for Private Tussie, by Jesse Stuart

Explain the origin of the tobacco road, and tell the outrageous story of this book in its comic and revolting details. Describe each of the characters, with particular attention to Jeeter Lester. Note, in addition to the comic and blunted aspects of Jeeter's character, the potentialities in his attachment to the land and his longing to make a crop.

How much of caricature, or even ribald burlesque, and how much of truth is there in the characterization of the Lesters and their friends? Discuss. Note the part hunger plays in their lives, and that of religion and sex as the only sources of recreation and excitement. Could these people come from any section other than the South? What relation do they bear to Longstreet's Georgia crackers? To Jesse Stuart's inhumanly comic mountaineers in *Taps for Private Tussie*?

Discuss the background—worn-out, eroded land, a one-crop system, uncertain weather and boll-weevil, seven-cent cotton, monopoly of capital, the trek away from the land to the factory, child marriages, lack of schooling, etc.

Compare to this picture of the Lesters the living record of the Ricketts, the Woods, and the Gudgers in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Present the cold facts of the existence of the latter families, consider the trap in which they are caught from birth, discover their fortitude. In comparison to the Lesters, these people are, ironically enough, relatively fortunate, but would you yet agree that the conditions of their living might conceivably produce characters such as Caldwell's?

2. THE INDOMITABLE

"I walked through the hills, and I walked through the fields,
And I ask you to tell me if you can,
You know what a rock is, you know what a tree is,
But what is the soul of man?"

Salvation on a String, by Paul Green

"Spotted Horses," in *The Portable Faulkner*, edited by Malcolm Cowley.

Paul Green's Little Bethel country lies in the valley of the Cape Fear River in North Carolina. Paint an overall picture of the community: lusty, hard-working, Bible-reading, Devil-fearing, laughter-loving, poor farmers; broken-down aristocrats; helpless Negroes; revivals, cornshuckings, ice cream suppers, breakdowns, tobacco auctions.

Parts of this country are considered the most backward in North Carolina. Give examples of this backwardness: ignorance, superstition, credulity, illiteracy, conjure practices, etc.

To these people the world is filled with sin, and for their souls itinerant preachers wage unremitting battle. Tell of some of these battles, many of which, chiefly in their comic and absurd aspects, have passed into local folklore.

To many Little Bethel people the world is also filled with fiddling, good drink, talk, laughter, and dancing. Cite some of the examples of American humour in the Longstreet-Mark Twain tradition, the horse-play and practical joking, the love of tall tales and the ridiculous, the boisterous delight when the mighty fall. Compare the hilarity of this material to that of Faulkner in "Spotted Horses."

Into the writing, Paul Green has woven folk speech, similes, songs, superstitions, and beliefs. Give examples, quoting from the colorful wealth of material.

From the stories comes a feeling for the countryside scene, for the dwellings and farms, the sweltering heat of summer and the bitter winter daybreak. Into them are woven, too, the food and drink and chewing tobacco, the medicines, the sounds, all living and growing things. Picture.

With feeling, Paul Green has portrayed the haunting pathos in the lives of many of these people, the kindness, simplicity, and generosity of the majority of them, the "ragged and pitiful and weak" existence of some, the dogged valor of all. Discuss.

Additional Reading:

- The Varmints* (1947), by Peggy Bennett.
American Earth (1931); *God's Little Acre* (1933); *We Are the Living* (1933), by Erskine Caldwell.
The Fingers of Night (1946), by Hubert Creekmore.
As I Lay Dying (1930), by William Faulkner.
The Field God (play, 1927); *This Body the Earth* (1935); *Wide Fields* (1928), by Paul Green.
The Georgians (1904), by Will N. Harben.
Portulaca (1941); *Purslane* (1939); *Sage Quarter* (1945); *Sweet Beulah Land* (1943), by Bernice Kelly Harris.
Cabin in the Cotton (1931); *I Was a Sharecropper* (1937), by Harry Harrison Kroll.
Golden Apples (1935); *South Moon Under* (1933); *The Yearling* (1938), by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.
The Time of Man (1926), by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.
Teeftallow (1926), by T. S. Stribling.
Red Wine First (1947), by Nedra Tyre.
Clods of Southern Earth (1946); *Toil and Hunger* (1940), poetry by Don West.

CHAPTER X

NEGROES

"I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

—Langston Hughes

Not until the beginning of the literary renaissance of the 1920's did Southern writers break away from the mold set by the romanticists and begin to write of the Negro as a person rather than a type. Prior to that time, in American fiction only George Washington Cable and Mark Twain had, in the opinion of the Negroes themselves, depicted the race other than in stereotype. But beginning in the 1920's Southern writers such as Paul Green, T. S. Stribling, Erskine Caldwell, Hamilton Basso, and DuBose Heyward abandoned portrayal of the Negro as the white man had typed him, in favor of an attempt to see him as he was.

Negroes have not, however, continued to leave the problem entirely up to sympathetic white poets, playwrights, and novelists, but have with slowly increasing success themselves assumed responsibility. It is true that only too few of the Negro writers are Southern born and bred, but of the few several rank with the most distinguished of their race. Fortunately for this outline the outstanding Negro novelist, Richard Wright, is Southern in both birth and experience.

Wright (1908-) was born near Natchez, Mississippi, of a family which in his childhood moved frequently, from Mississippi to Arkansas, to Tennessee. He was practically self-educated, taking his early learning from hard personal experience in odd jobs as ditchdigger, hotel hallboy, porter, etc. As he grew, a taste for reading developed into a desire to write. In Chicago and New York during the depression, he joined the Federal Writers' Project, and in 1938 won, with *Uncle Tom's Children*, a \$500.00 prize for the best fiction by a Project worker. In 1941, in collaboration with Paul Green, he dramatized his novel, *Native Son*, for the New York stage.

Wright writes with passion and a point of view. His people are the struggling, the helpless, the ignorant, the abused, and

in his deep indignation he is not afraid to put his heart into his work. The forceful, imaginative stories included in *Uncle Tom's Children* were written with an admirable purpose far removed from that of mere entertainment.

Heyward's *Porgy* (1925), while not "realistic" in the strictest sense of the word, is perceptive, humane, and moving. Born of the elect, reared, and resident in the old city of Charleston, South Carolina, Heyward (1885-1940) wrote in *Porgy* of people he understood and loved, the Gullah Negroes of the South Carolina coast country. Alive with the excitement of color, movement, humour, tragedy, folk customs, and character, the novel was first dramatized by Heyward and his wife, Dorothy, and later made into a folk opera to music by the late George Gershwin.

1. GULLAHS

"Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
So long."

—Langston Hughes

Porgy, by DuBose Heyward

Describe the teeming and vivid life of Catfish Row.

Tell of Porgy, his manner of life, his strength, the innate goodness of his character. Note his humorous appraisal of "de buckra" temperament. Describe Bess in the complexity and pathos of her character. Tell the story of these two.

The book is fascinating in description of Gullah customs and ceremonies: the wake for Robbins, and his funeral; the parade; the picnic; the vigil during the hurricane. Describe several. According to choice, quote from the effective descriptions of coastal waters, the island of Kittiwah, the hurricane.

Above all, Heyward is successful in the delineation of the Gullah character and temperament. Discuss. Note the use for characterization of spirituals and superstitions, the contrast of a personal faith such as Serena's to the primitive convictions of Maria. Show the conflict in the Gullahs between their natural temperaments and the restrictions imposed by the white folks and the law. Point out the fierce kindness and moral integrity of a woman such as Maria, in the white man's eyes a figure of menace, and the essential dignity of the man Porgy, to the white people a figure of comedy.

Additional Reading:

Congaree Sketches (1926), by Edward C. L. Adams.

Kneel to the Rising Sun (1935), by Erskine Caldwell.

Go Down, Moses (1942); *Light in August* (1932), by William Faulkner.

In Abraham's Bosom (play, 1926); *Lonesome Road* (1926), by Paul Green.

Janey Jeems (1946), by Bernice Kelly Harris.

Mamba's Daughters (1929), by DuBose Heyward.

Send Me An Angel (1947), by Alice Nisbet.

Rainbow Round My Shoulder (1928), by; Howard W. Odum.

Black April (1927); *Green Thursday* (1924); *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928), by Julia Peterkin.

Deep Dark River (1935), by Robert Rylee.

Birthright (1922), by T. S. Stribling.

2. BLACK MISERY

"Born upon the same soil, and brought up in an intimacy of relationship unknown to any other state of society, we have formed attachments for the white race which must be as enduring as life and we can conceive of no reason that our God-bestowed freedom should now sever the kindly ties which have so long united us . . . Here we have toiled and suffered; our parents, wives, and children are buried here; and in this land we will remain, unless forcibly driven away."

—Freedmen's Convention, Raleigh, North Carolina,
September 29, 1865

Uncle Tom's Children, by Richard Wright

"A Reporter at Large: Opera in Greenville," by Rebecca West, in *The New Yorker*, June 14, 1947

Outline briefly each of the four stories, with particular attention to the pity, terror, and irony of the situation in each of them. Analyze several of the chief Negro characters with emphasis on Wright's conception of the extent to which their weaknesses are aggravated and their virtues warped by the extremity of their helplessness.

Does Wright treat his own race with unthinking sympathy, or is his attitude one of compassionate acceptance of their less creditable actions as a deplorable result of unalleviated poverty, ignorance, and/or impotence in a white world?

Do you feel that Wright's indictment of Southern white women, along with their men, is justified? Comment.

Wright is a passionate crusader. Are these stories well calculated to shock the reader into awareness? Discuss.

As writing, do you find them convincing, suspenseful, and full of honest horror?

On the whole, do you think this is a true depiction of Negro-white

relationships in the South? How does it square with Rebecca West's brilliant analysis of the Greenville, South Carolina, lynching scene? Discuss.

Additional Reading:

"The Art of Richard Wright's Short Stories," in *The Novel and the World's Dilemma*, by Edwin Berry Burgum.

Their Eyes were Watching God (1937), by Zora Neale Hurston.

Cane (1923), by Jean Toomer.

The Fire in the Flint (1924), by Walter F. White.

Native Son (1940), by Richard Wright.

Ollie Miss (1936), by George Wylie Henderson.

CHAPTER XI

TINDER

The tradition of sentimentality in Southern fiction is almost as old, if not as honorable, as that of oration and song. The tradition of violence, though of more recent growth, is equally persistent, with the unhappy result that in a region where race relations, economic conditions, and privilege are so closely interwoven as to be for practical social purposes one problem, and where in deeply grooved channels feeling runs full and strong, thoughtful novels dealing with the contemporary social scene are rare in comparison with the number of those marked by bitterness, resentment, lack of perspective, partisan sentimentality, or bad taste.

Edward Kimbrough's *Night Fire* (1946) and Robert Rylee's *The Ring and the Cross* (1947) are valuable straws in the wind of constructive Southern thinking. A cleverly inclusive picture of a Southern community, *Night Fire*, fashioned of entertaining and often witty melodrama, makes eminently sensible comment on the scene, particularly as to race relations. Rylee's viewpoint is most interesting in its approach to Southern problems not as sectional matters but as manifestations in a national, and world, danger. Though the immediate scene is Texas, the author is urgently speaking of the entire nation. Whether the reader agrees or disagrees, he will appreciate the intelligent presentation of material, the succinct and imperative statement of the danger, as Rylee sees it, into which democracy has fallen, of the imbalance of power in America, and of the bondage of Americans to wealth and corruption, both economic and intellectual.

Kimbrough, born in Meridian, Mississippi, and now in his thirties, teaches creative writing at the University of Alabama, from which he took both his B. A. and M. A. degrees. *Night Fire* is his second novel. Rylee was born forty odd years ago in Memphis, Tennessee, of purely Southern ancestry. Following preparation at Andover, he took a B. A. at Amherst College. His experience includes residence in Mississippi, New York, Wisconsin, and Texas, and work as a farmhand, steelworker, ship-builder, construction worker, insurance clerk, and writer of ad-

vertising and sales promotion. *The Ring and the Cross* is his third novel.

1. RURAL

Night Fire, by Edward Kimbrough

Summarize the story, and the chief social issues involved.

Introduce briefly and explain the social status and the point of view of each of the main characters. Enlarge somewhat on the character and background of Ashby Pelham and Bevo Banes.

Discuss the interesting manner in which Kimbrough uses the lore and romantic traditions of the Old South to set off the problems of the New.

The writer makes significant use of symbols. Select several for discussion: for instance, malignant fire set in the night, spreading unseen but terrible to consume valuable resources of a community; or flowers planted white against a colored cabin in the master's yard. Is the mulatto Tilda ever realized as a person, or does she remain always a symbol?

To weave his pattern, Kimbrough uses with perfect amiability the satiric humour, love of tall tales and flavorful incident, relished vulgarity, and colorful talk of the South. Does this good humour in any way weaken his social judgment? Does he make his point in the end with reference to the necessity for arousing in the Negro, Temp, a sense of personal importance and responsibility, and in the white man, Ashby, a willingness to forego the role of *deus ex machina* in order to share with an awakened Negro a vigorous responsibility for the future? Discuss.

2. URBAN

The Ring and the Cross, by Robert Rylee

Sketch in the exceedingly interesting background of this novel: a Texas industrial city, an all-powerful politician, world war, a shipyard, unscrupulous executives, helpless thousands of workers, haste, waste, corruption, accomplishment.

Outline briefly the situation as it develops into murder and the burning of the Negro-Mexican shanty settlement. Describe the men, and their assistants, who pull the strings: the Senator, Wesley Clayton, Norman Burnett, Luke Golden, Judge Armitage. Fill in the scene with such tools as Big Bobo, Mode, Brame, and Mirabeau Hanks. In contrast, tell of Michaeloff and Vaiden MacEachern.

Though the book tells a good story and peoples it colorfully, the compelling interest is in ideas. Quoting generously, present the beliefs and arguments of Gregory Clayton, Wesley Clayton, and , in detail, those of Vaiden MacEachern. Note the conflicting conceptions of the priest (p. 97), Wesley Clayton, and Vaiden as to the actual nature of democracy.

Rylee, in this analysis of the war scene, is quite frankly writing grim prophecy. Would you say that the social, economic, and political scene today justifies his urgency?

Additional Reading:

The Hourglass (1947), by David Alman.

A Stone Came Rolling (1935); *Call Home the Heart* (1932), by Fielding Burke (Olive Tilford Dargan).

The Hamlet (1940), by William Faulkner.

Straw in the South Wind (1946), by Donald Joseph.

A Lion Is in the Streets (1945), by Adria L. Langley.

To Make My Bread (1932), by Grace Lumpkin.

All the King's Men (1946), by Robert Penn Warren.

CHAPTER XII

THOMAS WOLFE

" . . . nonconformity, or even bitter revolt against their age and environment, has been a far more common characteristic of great artists than acceptance or sympathy."

—Henri Peyre

In Thomas Wolfe the South produced not alone a distinguished creative writer and prose poet but a major figure in American literature. Of mixed English, Pennsylvania Holland-Dutch, and Southern Appalachian Scotch-Irish mountain stock, born and bred in the South, Wolfe was at the same time distinctively Southern and distinctively American, and his work, like his character and temperament, gave vigorous evidence both of his Southern heritage and his American background. His novels, more than usually autobiographical, tell the story of a search for values which begins with a young person's reactions to his Southern surroundings, and ends in a man's imaginative and prophetic comprehension of America and American democracy.

Wolfe was born October 3, 1900, in Asheville, North Carolina. At the age of nineteen he was graduated from the University of North Carolina, where as an original member of the Carolina Playmakers he had both written plays and acted in them. Ambitious as a playwright, he joined the 47 Workshop at Harvard University. Three years later he received his M.A. degree, and following travel and study in Europe, made his home in New York City. He was a member of the English faculty of New York University until 1930, when he resigned to devote himself to his writing, his abundant prose having long overflowed dramatic limits into the more generous field of fiction. He died of pneumonia in September, 1938.

Two novels, *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) and *Of Time and the River* (1935), and a book of short stories, *From Death to Morning* (1935), were published before Wolfe's death. From the mass of material which, prior to his illness, he had turned over to his editor, two novels, *The Web and the Rock* and *You Can't Go Home Again*, and a volume of selected pieces, *The Hills Beyond*, were published posthumously.

It is in the first of the novels, *Look Homeward, Angel*, which is technically the best—and from which, chiefly, inference has

been drawn of the writer's hatred for his native region—that Wolfe recreates with riotous vitality and bitter and poetic feeling the multitudinous life of a small Southern town. The most striking creation in the novel is that of the hero's family. This lusty and penetrating portrayal is further enriched in later work, in which the writer's feeling toward both his family and the South is clarified beyond his early apparent bitterness.

1. "A STORY OF THE BURIED LIFE"

"Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth."

—Milton's "Lycidas"

Look Homeward, Angel, by Thomas Wolfe

Thomas Wolfe, by Herbert J. Muller

Summarize the story of this novel. Comment on the remarkably inclusive and fiercely realistic portrayal of the life of the town, and on the incisive pen-portraits of its wonderfully diverse inhabitants. Note the cruelty of some of these characterizations, the bitterness of others, the deep compassion, frequently, beneath the ruthless surface.

Muller points out that Wolfe, like our most characteristically American writers, writes in the folk tradition of tall tale, monologue, rhapsody, declamation, and burlesque, and that he "brought back the tradition of oratory, which is the oldest American literary tradition." Such an approach is put to consummate use in the characterization of Oliver Gant. Tell of Gant, illustrating with descriptive passages and characteristic declamations and tirades. Do you agree that this characterization, magnificently exaggerated and colored, in its gusto, grotesquerie and bawdry, is in the most hilarious tradition of native mountain, Southern, and American humor? Discuss.

Muller also thinks that Wolfe, "who had the native tradition in his blood, wrote by ear." In his creation of Eliza, he certainly wrote by ear, catching every shade and meaning of her personality as expressed in speech marvelously characteristic both of the individual and of her mountain heritage. Observe that the moving quality of the characterization, in this book, lies usually deeper than words, to be found in the meaning of her gestures and in all that, remarkably, she left unsaid. Discuss.

The novel culminates in the touching scene with the dead Ben. Tell of Ben, and read significant passages from the final scene.

It is commonly accepted as fact that Thomas Wolfe, in the person of Eugene Gant, hated the South. Would you call this novel a paean of hate, or does its intensity of emotion indicate in youth and the artist, rather than lack of normal affection for family and native region, the white-hot recognition of, and rebellion against, the drab inadequacy of his surroundings as compared to his buried visions of life as it might be? How much of this resentment, do you think, sprang directly from the wide divergence of the ordinary life around him from that South

"that burned like Dark Helen in Eugene's blood"? Discuss. Note the description of Eugene's trip to the Battery in Charleston, the passages at the beginning of Chapters XIII and XXVIII, beginning, respectively, "His feeling for the South was not so much historic," and "He was a child when he went away," and Muller's comment, pp. 68-9.

2. AMERICA

"I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us."

—Thomas Wolfe

Of Time and the River and *You Can't Go Home Again*, by Thomas Wolfe

Shortly before his death, in a letter to a friend, Wolfe wrote, "I was a citizen of Asheville, and I am now a citizen of mankind—there is my loyalty, and that is where it must go . . ." He had from early years a movingly poetic apprehension of the physical magnitude, beauty, and abundance of America. As a "citizen of mankind," he came to a poignant realization of the deficiencies of American life and of the unfulfilled potentialities of American democracy.

Read selected passages. The following are suggested for your consideration:

Of Time and the River: South, and North, 23-4; Springtime in New England, 137-41, 280-81; America, 155-60; October, 329-34; Mountains of North Carolina, 366-67; City Slum Streets, 495-97; Sound of Time on New York Streets, 497-500; The Hudson River, the City, and Light, 506-10; Secret Desire of Night, 533; Wealth in America, 538-43; Disenchantment, and Discovery, 570-71; Rich Man's Library, 587-91; Common People, 596-98; The Past, 854-56; Names of the Nation, 866-69.

You Can't Go Home Again: Homeless Men, 412-14; Loneliness of the City, 427-31; The Little Man in America, 462-70; The Promise of America, 505-8; Lost America, 729-30, 741-43.

Additional Reading:

Hungry Gulliver, An English Critical Appraisal of Thomas Wolfe, (1948), by Pamela Hansford Johnson.

"Writing Is My Life," by Thomas Wolfe, in the *Atlantic*, February, 1947.

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Kennedy, J. P.	<i>Horse-Shoe Robinson.</i> 1835. (2)	Amer.Bk.Co.	1.50
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2. A Poet Looks at Pioneers

Second Meeting: REVOLUTION AND FRONTIER

1. Gathering of the Partisans
2. "In Their Native Habitat"

Third Meeting: SECLUDED PEOPLE

1. The Tennessee Mountaineer
2. The Louisiana Creole

Fourth Meeting: ROMATIC TRADITIONS OF PLANTATION AND SLAVE

1. Plantation Days
2. "Epitaph of a Civilization"

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Tenth Meeting: NEGROES

1. Gullahs
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2. Urban

Twelfth Meeting: THOMAS WOLFE

1. "A Story of the Buried Life"
2. America

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