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DE SANTIAGO
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Facultade de Filoloxía

Traballo de fin de grao

Two Opposite Models of Femininity: A Comparative Study of Ellen Glasgow's *Virginia* and *Barren Ground*

Tatiana Pereiras González

Titor: Constante González Groba

Xullo 2019

Traballo de Fin de Grao presentado na Facultade de Filoloxía da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela para a obtención do Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

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SOLICITO a aprobación do seguinte título e resumo:

Título:
Two opposite models of femininity: a comparative study of Ellen Glasgow's *Virginia* and *Barren Ground*.

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

This work has the main objective of talking about women's rights in the context of American post-civil war (1870s). Moreover, through the work of the feminist writer Ellen Glasgow, we are going to portray the two types of women we can find in the Southern states in this period: the Southern Lady and the modern woman.

The motive for centering my work on this topic is because feminism is a theme that has gained protagonism in the last years, and movements against sexual abuse, such as the "MeToo Movement" contribute to give more visibility to a topic which had been always considered a taboo. That's the reason why I find it important to go back to a past time, as it is the period of American post-civil war, to reflect the contraposition between these two types of women.

On the one hand, we find the Southern Lady, an example of conservatism, obedience to her father or husband and female disempowerment. On the other hand, we have the new type of woman, a rebellious spirit which many feminist writers, such as Ellen Glasgow, portrayed in their works.

We are going to see the opposition between these two types of women through two of the most significative works written by Ellen Glasgow: *Virginia* (1913) and *Barren Ground* (1925). While *Virginia* reflects the values and manners of the Old South, with a protagonist who has hardly any education and who achieves happiness only by serving her husband and sons, *Barren Ground* is the example of an opposite behaviour: the liberation of the protagonist through intelligence, perseverance and hard work for becoming a prosperous farmer and an independent woman who takes her own revenge against a male-dominated world.

To sum up, we could say that this work is going to make a revision on women's rights and an opposition between the Southern Lady (a disempowered woman who reflects the sentimental and romantic ideas of the

Old South) and the modern woman (a new type of woman who embodies the strong feminist opinions of Ellen Glasgow), and how men, family and religion influenced their behaviour.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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Contents

Introduction

This literary study is going to be based on two of the main works of the Southern writer Ellen Glasgow. Through the analysis of her novels *Virginia* (1913) and *Barren Ground* (1925), we are going to portray the two types of women this writer identified during her lifetime and what was her opinion about them.

Feminism, its proclamations and women's rights have been a highly debated question since the 1960s. However, the period in which we are going to center our essay, from the 1880s to the 1930s, was characterised by the opposite attitude toward women. On the one hand, Southern people considered women not to have any right. On the other hand, they created a myth, the myth of the Southern Lady which the Southern white settlers had brought with them because of the influence of Western imagery:

> Los colonos blancos del Sur trajeron consigo la imaginería occidental sobre la naturaleza femenina con su consiguiente polarización entre la virgen, pura e inaccesible, y la prostituta, peligrosa y degradada. Esta dicotomía iría englobando complejas asociaciones con imágenes de luz y oscuridad, del bien y el mal, hasta adquirir una realidad concreta y tangible con la formación de la casta de plantadores blancos dependientes del trabajo de esclavos de una raza considerada inferior. (González Groba, *Hijas del Viejo Sur* 2)

The myth of the Southern Lady only included white women, because, as we saw in the previous quote, black women were not seen as pure or virginal, blacks were even considered almost animals. However, this mythification was not a positive thing, because, despite being idealised by the Southern society, white women had not any power of decision. Therefore, the main topic to analyse in our essay will be that of the mythification of white women in the South and their lack of rights. The main objectives to fulfill will be those of dismounting the myth through the analysis of the female characters of both novels and also, to show the opposition between the traditional

Southern Lady and the new type of modern woman. While the first submitted to her imposed roles, the new woman refused to be in a position of disempowerment and had anxieties for prospering, for instance, by achieving an economic independence. Moreover, we are going to treat some questions that were viewed as controversial or as a taboo in the Reconstruction period, as can be women's rights, sexuality, reproduction, inequalities between women and men, divorce and even psychological domestic violence through the underestimation of women's importance, and how the two types of women faced these situations.

Feminist literature has many representatives, like Willa Cather, Edith Wharton, Dawn Powell, Dorothy Scarborough, etc., but we cannot focus on all of them. In place of that, we will analyse Ellen Glasgow and her two novels *Virginia* (1913) and *Barren Ground* (1925), as this writer has many features in common with the previously mentioned ones. One of these characteristics is that none of these writers considered themselves as *feminist writers*, despite being firm defenders of women's rights.

The last thing to mention before starting with the core of the paper is that the focus will be put on the feminine characters of the novels, especially on the protagonists: Virginia Pendleton and Dorinda Oakley. We are going to see the influence of many factors over them, like the background, religion, romantic relationships, their relation with their mothers and role of motherhood in their lives. Also, a comparison with other female characters will be of interest to see the contrast of the two types of woman.

1. Chapter 1: A Background to Women in the Old South

This first chapter of our work is going to provide a historical background to the topic that concerns us: the question of women in the Old South. It will have two sections. The first one, 1.1, will be an introduction to the situation of women in the Old South, their perception and mythification. The second section, 1.2, will be focused on Ellen Glasgow and the opinion she had on women and their situation, and what were the things that should be changed according to her.

1.1. The Mythification of Women in the Old South: True Womanhood

The central concept to analyse in this section is what the Southern people understood by *True Womanhood* in the post-Civil War South. This term is a crucial concept to understand the analysis of the two types of women that are portrayed in Glasgow's novels, and who are opposite characters, mainly because of their behavior and the manner they confront love. An accurate definition of the feminine ideal of the time, which can be also named as the *Southern Lady* or the *Southern Belle*, was provided by Dorothy McInnis Scura:

> ..we now turn to a definition of the much-abused term Southern Lady. What Virginia Pendleton embodies as this ideal is a combination of more imagination than reality. Perhaps she came out of the medieval cult of the Virgin Mary or out of early romances or out of the fairy tale. Her existence was confirmed by family legends, codified in the myth of the Old South, and exploited in the sentimental fiction of the post-civil war romantics. That she was the peculiar creation of men cannot be doubted, for no woman would have designed a creature so paradoxically a

> mixture of ethereally perfect behavior, often termed angelic or saintly, and another kind of more earthly behavior demanded by such overwhelming work and responsibilities that her feet never left the ground whereon trod husband, children, servants. (23-24)

McInnis Scura also provided the major features of a Southern Lady, and according to her, there are many characteristics to highlight. Some of them are that "the Southern lady shouldn't have opinions" (24) , as "there was impropriety in a woman's using her mind to think" (27); and the existing differences between a woman and a man, "whom she sought to serve but never to judge" (27). Besides, "as an ideal lady, she did not examine the right or wrong of a situation, because she was emotional rather than rational" (27). Another key feature was that of avoiding reality, as "by avoiding reality, she might even maintain her aura for many years" (27). The last, but not less important feature, is that of beauty, because "without beauty a woman was cruelly deprived of all honors and privileges" (25). However, something that will be seen with Virginia Pendleton is the fact that "beauty was the most important quality for the Southern lady only in her youth when she was winning a husband. After marriage, the primary qualities became sacrifice and devotion to duty" (26).

These features of beauty, avoidance of reality, lack of thought and servitude to men were motivated by the deep attachment that these women were obliged to maintain to their traditions, as it was considered that the Southern Belle "must also have a deep devotion to the past - to the ideas, the values, the glory of the forebears" (McInnis Scura 26). That devotion to the tradition of her ancestors forbade her to enjoy her youth as a girl of the present time, implying this that "her sexual morals had to be immaculate; no youthful indiscretions were tolerated, and her external behavior must be impeccable" because "the family's reputation was based on the morals of the women in that family" (McInnis Scura 28).

Therefore, if we base ourselves in McInnis Scura's theories -and also in what Barbara Welter (1966) named the as the "four cardinal virtues of True Womanhood - piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (152)- we can state that in the post-Civil War South, there were five key features to be a perfect Southern Lady: *beauty, stasis,*

ignorance, domesticity and passivity. To be a True Woman meant to be a mixture of an idealisation of virginal behavior and also a submissive and dependent woman. Ellen Glasgow made an accurate portrait of that sort of woman when she wrote about Virginia Pendleton:

> She was the embodiment of the forsaken ideal. Already, when I wrote of her, she was beginning to pass into legend; and even man, who had created her out of his own desire, had grown a trifle weary of the dream images he had made. But, in passing, she still wore the spiritual radiance that invests the innocent victim of sacrifice. Her only armour was goodness; and her fate was that almost inevitable martyrdom which awaits pure selflessness in a world where self-interest has always been the governing power. (*A Certain Measure* 82-83)

This behavior was the product of the education those women received in their childhood and youth, in a sort of female academies, like the one which is described in Glasgow's *Virginia* (Miss Priscilla's Academy for Young Ladies). In those academies for girls, they were taught to acquire those ideal features, with the only objective of getting a husband. When this happened, the Southern Lady acquired responsibilities and duties toward her husband and children. By achieving those virtues "she was promised with happiness and power" and "marriage was the proper state for the exercise of these four virtues" (Welter 169).

Moreover, as we saw, thinking was forbidden to these women, as it was considered *improper* to offer an opinion different from that of the husband. The best teacher in non-thinking is Miss Priscilla Batte, the embodiment of an old-fashioned, static and ignorant Old South, "who was capable of dying for an idea, but not of conceiving one" (*Virginia* 9-10).

The last Southern Belle's feature to explain is the one of the avoidance of reality, or according to Shelton, "to be an embodiment of the South's 'evasive idealism' and blindness to reality" (497). Virginia Pendleton, in the same way as her mother, Mrs. Lucy Pendleton, and also her father, the clergyman Mr. Gabriel Pendleton, is an embodiment of this Southern "evasive idealism" which Glasgow totally rejected, but decided to portray in her early novels, being one of them *Virginia*. This "evasive

idealism" hurts, in the majority of cases, those True Women, but they are blind to their reality and cannot see they are mistaken in behaving like that.

In an interview that Glasgow gave in 1916 to Joyce Kilmer, she stated her rejection of this "evasive idealism", not only in the field of literature, but also in the field of society and politics:

> "[...] in America we demand from our writers, as we demand from our politicians, and in general from those who theoretically are our men of light and leading, an evasive idealism instead of a straightforward facing of realities. In England the demand is for a direct and sincere interpretation of life, and that is what the novelists of England, especially the younger novelists, are making. But what the American public seems to desire is the cheapest sort of sham optimism. And apparently our writers - a great many of them - are ready and eager to meet this demand".(*Reasonable Doubts* 123)

This avoidance of reality was the result of the influence that religion, literature and social convention had over the lives of those Southern women. It was thought that the only presence of realism would be a corrupting influence on the lives of Southern people, especially on the lives of Southern ladies. The prevailing tendency was to sweeten the reality to make it appear more beautiful than it was. So, we are going to see the roles that religion, literature and society played in this "evasive idealism" so typical in Southern Ladies.

To begin the analysis, it is necessary to clarify that both religion, literature and society converged in one thing: that women's existence had to be based on marriage and having children. If this did not happen, a woman's life had no meaning. Also, within the institution of marriage, women were clearly inferior to their husbands, and they were obliged to submit to their will and never raise their hand to protest. The submissiveness which Welter mentions refers to this acceptance of the male power, and it was an essential feature for being a Southern Lady. Not complying with that required quality could provoke that those women were criticised by society:

> The ideal Southern woman -as Glasgow knew from her own family's attitudes- was to be deferential to the patriarch of the family or, in his absence, to any other male -uncle, brother, nephew. If she challenged that male direction, she was only acting whimsically and, as a deviant from reasonable behavior, she could then be scolded, cajoled, or humored. (Wagner 18-19)

This concept of female inferiority and submissiveness to males has a synonym which is used many times by critics: the *supplementary being of women*. Calvinism defended this position and, as religion was one of the basic pillars in society and, specially, in a woman's life (along with her family), they accepted it blindly.

In addition, we also find the question of the inherited values and traditions, this is in other words, the attachment to the past. The True Woman must always think about what her female ancestors would have done, and, if possible, follow the advice of their mothers (as Virginia does with Mrs. Pendleton). This general attitude in society of constantly refusing to change their old-fashioned traditions helped the Southern lady to increase even more her "evasive idealism", being not aware of the true reality and the harm that her rejection to see reality was provoking to her. In chapter 2, we are going to focus more on this topic and explain how males contribute to the enslavement of women by using the *power of love* to increase their blindness to reality. This is going to be exemplified through the analysis of the character of Virginia Pendleton in relation to her husband, Oliver Treadwell and the character of Mrs. Belinda Treadwell also in relation to her husband, Cyrus Treadwell.

After this brief overview of the roles of religion and society in this "evasive idealism", it is still necessary to explain the role of literature. To explain the role of literature in contributing to this blindness to reality, it is necessary to quote a fragment from *Virginia*, in which an intertextual reference to E.D.E.N. Southworth's novels is included:

> [Susan]: "[...] Yesterday he picked up one of Mrs. Southworth's novels on mother's bureau and asked her how she could allow such immoral stuff in her room. She had got it out of the bookcase to lend to Miss Willy Whitlow, who was there making my dress, but he scolded her so about it that at last Miss Willy went off with Mill's "Essay on Liberty", and mother burned all of Mrs. Southworth's that she had in the house". (14)

Jones defines E.D.E.N. Southworth as "one of the best-selling of the phenomenally successful nineteenth-century female novelists often known as the

scribbling-women" (26). He also explains that this author published between the 1850s and the 1880s and qualifies "her fifty or so novels" as "*sentimental* and often incredible accounts of women's struggles in the antebellum South, most frequently on plantations in Virginia and Maryland". The current analysis of those novels is different from that of Glasgow's times. Jones sees that, while nowadays these novels are perceived as "subversive and challenging to male paradigms", at the time when Glasgow's *Virginia* was published, the perception was that of a "quaint, sentimental and most of all, old-fashioned" literature, and "readers in 1913, including Glasgow herself, would undoubtedly have found [these works as] foreign and even absurd" (29).

Therefore, when Glasgow included the intertextual reference to Mrs. Southworth in *Virginia*, she did it because this author represented the True Womanhood that Virginia Pendleton embodies. Mrs. Southworth's works represent the "evasive idealism" and sentimentalism that permeated the South and the Southern Ladies, realism being perceived as an unnecessary harm to women. To express her feeling that the concept of True Womanhood must be removed from the South along with the permeating idealism and sentimentalism, Glasgow included a book-burning in *Virginia* which was not casual. The burning of E.D.E.N. Southworth's novels represents what the writer thought that should disappear in order to allow evolution in the South. This is something that will be further developed in section 1.2, in which we will analyse Glasgow's view on women and some biographical aspects that influenced her work.

1.2. Ellen Glasgow and her view on women

This section will try to summarise the most important aspects of Glasgow's life that marked her work and also, the opinion she had about the mythification of women in the South and the arguments she gave against this model of behavior.

To start, we must mention that Glasgow stated the necessity of women's evolution and freedom through, for example, her support of women's suffrage. In an

interview Glasgow gave to Carter W. Wormeley, she confessed herself "as agreeably surprised at the apparent eartnessness and wide scope assumed by the woman suffrage movement at Richmond" and "proud of the women who are bravely coming to the front of this cause of right" (*Reasonable Doubts* 16).

She saw that the only way to allow evolution to enter in the South was women's liberation. For that, women should achieve both physical and mental independence, that is, they should liberate themselves through knowledge and critical thinking. The only way to train this critical thinking is by reading scientific and philosophical works as she did, for example, Mill's *Essay on Liberty*, and also Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, mentioned various times in *Virginia*. Another important fact is the opposition that Glasgow established between the South and the North, both in *Virginia* and *Barren Ground*. In the first, the North is perceived as a place with an improper behavior and with a wrong education in values. In *Barren Ground*, the North represents modernity and intelligence, and it is also the place in which Dorinda frees herself from the ignorance and the stasis of the South.

Glasgow considered herself both a Democrat and an evolutionist. As Democracy is based on everybody's equal opportunities to decide, she felt that there was not a motive for denying women their right to vote. What's more, in her view, the adoption of women's suffrage in the Southern States was a necessary step for both political and social evolution. Despite the conservatism that characterised those States, Glasgow stated that

> the women of the South are probably more fitted for the ballot than any other American women, though you would not think so, at the first blush. The women of the antebellum days, and of the Reconstruction period, although they were remarkably sheltered from contact with the outside world, had really an enormous responsibility in the management of their own households. They had to direct an amount of labor which today would appal the great majority of women. [...] This sense of responsibility the Southern woman still has, and she is, today less appalled at the gravity of being allowed to vote, and of helping to govern, than the women of any other portion of the country. (*Reasonable Doubts* 22-23)

Therefore, Glasgow saw the Southern women as the most adequate to have the right to vote, and she totally despised the feminine ideal that dominated at the time, the True Womanhood, because of the empty lives that those women had if they did not occupy themselves with their families. In her own words,

> When I realize the lives of the women of the South, of the generation before me, I am fairly horror-stricken at the loneliness and depression they must have endured. Even those who married were only occupied for a limited time -say for twenty years of their lives, in bringing up children and preserving their homes. Then what? Their children grown, and off to make homes of their own; their habits already formed; the better parts of their lives spent -oh, to me, they are inexpressibly tragic. (*Reasonable Doubts* 24-25)

The writer's life experiences had also a great influence on her work, and it is necessary to mention some aspects that have to do with the novels we are analysing.

The first of those important facts is that her father's authoritarianism and her mother's submissiveness could have inspired two of the characters that appear in *Virginia*, Cyrus and Belinda Treadwell, respectively. Wagner highlights that

> Both Scott and Raper, for example, point out that in *Virginia* the character of Cyrus Treadwell resembles Glasgow's autocratic father, and that if the character of Mrs. Treadwell is meant to represent that of Glasgow's mother, it is sad testimony indeed to the parental relationship. (51)[1]

The second fact is that this authoritarianism of her father also marked Glasgow during all her life. For that motive, when she grew up, she rebelled against him and the convention of her time. A way she found for that was reading a large amount of scientific and philosophical works, and her brother-in-law, Walter McCormack, contributed to this. Two of the readings that influenced her most were Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*. Referring to the first, she says that the Southerners never accepted the theory that we descend from monkeys, and this refusal to change their religious view for a more scientific one is something that she portrayed in *Virginia*.

[1] Wagner based her argument on Firor Scott, A., *The Southern Lady*, p.217; and Raper, J., *Without Shelter*, p.245. (See Note 4 in Wagner, 1982, p.129).

It is also interesting to say that Glasgow portrayed religion and science differently in her early and later novels. While in her early novels (*Virginia*) she portrayed religion and science as opposites; in her later ones (*Barren Ground*) she considered that religion and science worked in collusion to the enslavement of women, but this is something that we will see deeply in chapters 2 and 3 of our essay.

Despite being a rebellious woman who rejected the conventions of her time, some experts see a conflict in Glasgow between her admiration for strong women and her dependence on men. Wagner quotes Barbro Eckman (29), who states that, "Glasgow had rebelled against the convictions of her day. The women she admires are strong and able to live without love; yet, deep at heart, they all, including Glasgow, seem to think that love is the only thing worth having"(qtd. in Wagner 51).

González Groba explains even more clearly this duality in Glasgow, portraying her as a contradictory woman who could both approve of and reject the Southern lady's behavior:

> ¿Y qué tipo de mujer fue Glasgow? Parece ser que bastante contradictoria, incluso incoherente, a pesar de su rebelión contra las convenciones de su sociedad y su admiración por personajes femeninos independientes, como Betty Ambler en *The Battle-Ground* y Susan Treadwell en *Virginia*. Es probable que la ambivalencia e indecisión que a veces afectan a muchas de sus heroínas de carácter fuerte e independiente, pero que en el fondo creen que el amor es lo más importante, sean un reflejo de la propia autora, que unas veces censuraba y otras aprobaba la vida de la mujer tradicional sureña de clase acomodada. (*Hijas del Viejo Sur* 55)

Glasgow also admitted in her autobiography to have fought the concept of True Womanhood in order to build a literary career against the male power of the time, and she even had to face comments like this of Mr. Price Collier, a critic for Macmillan's publishing house, who advised her "to stop writing, and go back to the South and have some babies" (*The Woman Within* 108).

The writer states on the same page that she never had the desire to be a mother and that she centered her life on writing her novels. This affirmation can be a motive for assuring that Dorinda Oakley is the embodiment of Glasgow's rebellious spirit against

the convention of motherhood and True Womanhood, something we will further analyse in chapter 3.

To end chapter 1, we must say that the writer's rebellion against the male power is only a proof of what she believed about the female ideal of the time. For her, this model of Southern Lady was a model of unhappy women, of women that accepted their lives as a constant waiting for something. She even compares the female waiting of the time with the eternal waiting on hell, and she states that it was only the power of religion that made those women to accept it blindly:

> The Victorian era, above all, was one of waiting, as hell is an eternity of waiting.
> Women waiting for the first word of love from their lovers.
> Women waiting with all the inherited belief in the omnipotence of love, for the birth of their sons. Women waiting, during the civil war, for news of their sons and husbands. Women waiting beside the beds of the sick and dying -waiting -waiting.
> As a result I think it is almost impossible to overestimate the part that religion, in one form or another, has played in the lives of Southern women. Nothing else could have made them accept with meekness the wing of the chicken and the double standard of morals. (qtd. in Wagner 4)

2. Chapter 2: Virginia Pendleton and the Traditional Southern Lady

The core of this chapter will be put on the analysis of the character of Virginia Pendleton. We will analyse her in relation to religion, family, love and society. Moreover, by making a comparison with the other female characters of the novel, as can be her mother, Mrs. Pendleton; the local teacher, Miss Priscilla Batte; her best friend, Susan Treadwell; her rivals for the love of Oliver, Abby Goode and Margaret Oldcastle; and her daughters, Lucy and Jenny; we will demonstrate that, as Glasgow believed, the model of Southern Lady is condemned to disappear from society to give its place to the new type of woman: the modern one.

Before starting with the analysis of Virginia Pendleton, we must make a reference to the place where the novel is set. The writer made a very realistic portrayal of the Southern society setting her novel in the fictional place of Dinwiddie (State of Virginia), which according to McDowell, is "a pseudonym for Petersburg" (112). Through this novel, Glasgow not only described extensively the old values, and stasis of the South, she also described the proper features of a True Woman or Southern Lady, which is in this case, embodied by Virginia Pendleton. Because of all that, Glasgow classified this novel as a "novel of manners" which "intended to be the candid portrait of a lady" and she also said that now she was "made increasingly aware that the lady has become almost extinct as the dodo" (*A Certain Measure* 77).

Something interesting in the analysis of the protagonist is her name, which also gives origin to the title of the novel: *Virginia*. What it implies is the female ideal of that

time, representing the ideal wife, mother and daughter, pure and submissive, without any quality to be criticised:

> [...] the title implies an ideal female, a woman named reverentially after the land, serving the expected female functions of earth-mother, child-bearer, mythic and actual home. [...] the name Virginia itself suggests the index of purity, the condition of virginity by which so many women have been judged, both in life and literature. (Wagner 41-42)

Therefore, when we refer to *Virginia*, we refer to three things at the same time: to the State, to the woman and to the virginal ideal of the time. Talking about the character means talking about the general attitude of the State, and talking of the State means talking about the character and the female ideal of the time. What the protagonist shares with the State is her stasis, her immobility and her rejection to change the old-fashioned behavior, something that will have tragic consequences for her.

2.1. Physical Appearance

As we said in the introductory chapter, in section 1.1, one of the main features of a Southern Belle is beauty, and that is something that Virginia reflects in her youth. Early in the novel, we are presented with physical descriptions of Virginia and Susan, Virginia being described as a girl embodying all the feminine or womanly features a woman of that time should have. To see it more in detail, we quote the fragment:

> Their white lawn dresses were made with the close-fitting sleeves and the narrow waists of the period, and their elaborately draped overskirts were looped on the left with graduated bows of light blue ottoman ribbon. They wore no hats, and Virginia, who was the shorter of the two, had fastened a Jacqueminot rose in the thick dark braid which was wound in a wreath about her head. Above her arched black eyebrows, which lent an expression of surprise and animation to her vivid oval face, her hair was parted, after an earlier fashion, under its plaited crown, and allowed to break in a mist of little curls over her temples. Even in repose there was a joyousness in her look which seemed less the effect of an inward gaiety of mind than of some happy outward accident of form and colour. Her eyes, very far apart and set in black lashes, were of a deep soft blue -the blue of wild hyacinths after rain. By her eyes, and by an old-world charm of personality which she exhaled like a perfume, it was easy to discern that she embodied the feminine ideal of the ages. To look at her was to think inevitably of love. For that end, obedient to the powers of Life, the centuries had formed and coloured her, as they had formed and coloured the wild rose with its delicate petals. The air of a spoiled beauty which rested not ungracefully upon her was sweetened by her expression of natural simplicity and goodness. (4-5)

This long description of Virginia has many points to highlight. The first of them is the fact that she is dressed in white, a color which is the symbol of innocence and purity, a very important feature for a girl of that time. These innocence and purity translated in a more specific word: *virginity*. The second point is that she is dressed in a very elaborated way, as having a perfect appearance was essential to get a husband. The third point to mention is that she possesses "joyousness", a happy appearance that she will lose as years pass over her, making her bitter and look older than she really is. All the features described in this quote are the ones that make her to embody the "feminine ideal of the ages", provoking that any man who looks at her falls in love.

Added to the physical description, at the end of the quote, we find the expression "obedient to the powers of Life". This sentence means that Virginia surrenders to what society demands of her, that is, to be physically perfect and intellectually empty to gain a husband. This is going to be very important for the analysis we are going to do in chapter 3 of Dorinda fighting against her Fate or destiny, being totally subversive against the imposed role of being wife and mother.

Returning to the physical description of Virginia, there is a word we have not commented on in this analysis. It is the word "shorter", which in the description refers to Virginia's height in comparison with her friend Susan's. Apparently, this is only a physical description, but if we scratch a little, we find that, under this surface, there is a very clever use of irony by the author of the novel. This being "shorter" not only refers to her height, it also refers to her intelligence, stating that Susan is more clever and intelligent than her. This is something that can be justified if we read Susan's description, which is, strategically included on the next page to Virginia's, as if they were in an opposition:

> Her smile included Virginia's companion, a tall, rather heavy girl, with intelligent grey eyes and fair hair out in a straight fringe across her forehead. She was the daughter of Cyrus Treadwell, the wealthiest and therefore the most prominent citizen of the town, and she was also as intellectual as the early eighties and the twenty-one thousand inhabitants of Dinwiddie permitted a woman to be. [...] The stronger of the two, she dominated the other [Virginia], as she dominated every person or situation in life, not by charm, but by the force of an energetic and capable mind. (5)

Susan's description contrasts with Virginia's, firstly because she does not possess the beauty of Virginia (eg. she has grey eyes, something which contrasts with Virginia's blue eyes, which fulfilled the canon of beauty of the age). Nevertheless, she possesses a feature that a True Woman like Virginia cannot possess: *intelligence*. Through her "energetic and capable mind", Susan is capable of controlling every situation and person, and this is something that doesn't allow her to embody the "female ideal of the age".

After the analysis we provided of Virginia and Susan in their youth, we are going to see the descriptions of their appearance as years passed. Here, we provide the two descriptions, being the first that of Virginia and the second that of Susan:

(1)

> She wore a black cloth skirt, and a blouse of some ugly blue figured silk finished at the neck with the lace scarf Susan had sent her at Christmas. Her hat was a characterless black straw trimmed with a bunch of yellow daisies; and by its shape alone, Susan discerned that Virginia had ceased to consider whether or not her clothes were becoming. [...] Virginia was beginning to look older than he [Oliver]. There was a difference, too, in their dress, for he had the carefully groomed and well-brushed appearance so rare in Dinwiddie, while Virginia's clothes might have been worn, with equal propriety, by Miss Priscilla Batte. (184)
>
> She wore the black skirt and blue blouse in which she had travelled, for she had neglected to unpack her own clothes in her eagerness to get out the things that Oliver and the children might need. Her hair had been hastily coiled around her head, without so much as a glance in the mirror [...] (195)

(2)

> She was a large, young, superbly vigorous woman of forty-five, with an abundant energy which overflowed outside of her household in a dozen different directions. She loved John Henry, but she did not love him to the exclusion of other people; she loved her children, but they did not absorb her. There was hardly a charity or a public movement in Dinwiddie in which she did not take a practical interest. She had kept her mind as alert as her body, and the number of books she read had always shocked Virginia a little, who felt that time for reading was obliged to be time subtracted from more important duties. (333)

Virginia's description differentiates from the one of her 20-year-old period in the fact that she abandoned herself, as beauty was no more an important feature after marriage. In place of worrying about being beautiful, the Southern Belle had now other tasks to fulfill, being between them, pleasing her husband, doing the housework and

raising her progeny. Another important fact is that she substituted the white color of her youth for the black she wears now, as it was considered the proper color for a Southern Lady like her.

We could say that the descriptions of Susan and Virginia are in opposition because of the physical deterioration that Virginia suffered and the well-preserved appearance than Susan possessed. We must highlight that the descriptions we quote here do not belong to the same period of time. Virginia's description corresponds to the period when she was almost 30-years-old, and Susan's one is when she was 45-years-old. So, what we can conclude from that is that, Susan looked better at 45 than Virginia at 30. This happens because Susan did not obsess herself with duty toward her family, keeping herself busy with social life. However, Virginia rapidly deteriorated as a consequence of her social isolation and her self-sacrifice for pleasing her family and following the old behavior she had learned from women like her mother, Mrs. Pendleton. Therefore, we can state that following the model of True Womanhood only brings disgrace to the life of a woman, becoming the deteriorated physical appearance one of the most evident signs of it.

2.2. The Enslavement of the Southern Lady

This section 2.2 is going to treat the enslavement that Southern Ladies suffered, and how society, religion, men and love worked in collusion for that.

2.2.1. The Role of Society

This role of society in the enslavement of women has much to do with the "evasive idealism" that permeated the Southern States and that Ellen Glasgow, as we saw in 1.1 and 1.2, totally rejected. To begin, it is necessary to remember that Virginia Pendleton, the same as her mother, Mrs. Lucy Pendleton, is a great representative of this idealism so typical in Southern Belles. As the writer was born in Richmond (State of

Virginia), she knew first-hand how a woman of that type would have acted in any situation, and Virginia Pendleton is a direct product of this background, being also a victim of the "tyranny of tradition":

> I could not separate Virginia from her background, because she was an integral part of it, and it shared her validity. What she was, that background and atmosphere had helped to make her, and she, in turn bad intensified the life of the picture. Every person in Dinwiddie, from the greater to the least, was linked, in some obscure fashion with her tragedy, and with the larger tyranny of tradition. (*A Certain Measure* 82)

Glasgow stated in her interview to Joyce Kilmer that the Americans had "a preference for a pretty sham instead of the truth" (*Reasonable Doubts* 123), not only in the field of literature but also in all fields of life. An example of this preference for a sweetening of reality is found in the description of Virginia's bookcase:

> That any book, which told, however mildly, the truth about life should have entered their daughter's bedroom would have seemed little short of profanation to both the rector and Mrs. Pendleton. The sacred shelves of that bookcase (which had been ceremoniously presented to her on her fourteenth birthday) had never suffered the contaminating presence of realism. The solitary purpose of art was, in Mrs. Pendleton's eyes, to be "sweet", and she scrupulously judged all literature by its success or failure in this particular quality. (40)

In other words, this description of her bookcase is the proof that realism was totally forbidden to Southern Ladies. Its only presence was a contaminating influence which could break the True Womanhood in which these women had been raised. Southern Ladies, like Virginia Pendleton, were a consequence of social convention and cultural conditioning, and novels like those previously mentioned of Mrs. Southworth, were a great contribution to this idealist and sentimental education.

Apart from the description of Virginia's bookcase, we find other examples of that "evasive idealism" in *Virginia*. The most clear are those in which Mrs. Pendleton talks about "sweet" stories, being those, instances of what Glasgow called "a sugary philosophy" (*Reasonable Doubts* 123). There are two fragments in *Virginia* that we find meaningful to explain this "sugary philosophy". The first is one which describes "that Divine gift of evasion, which enabled Mrs. Pendleton to see only the thing she wanted to see in every occurrence" (51); and the second is referred to Virginia, making an

accurate portrayal of what she feels when she avoids reality: "Though she was in reality walking over cinders, she felt that her feet were treading on golden air" (54).

People, especially women, thought that by avoiding to face reality, could be really happy. This was no more than a false illusion, because avoiding to confront reality only provoked that reality knocked even harder.

This avoidance of reality was supported by both religion and society, as it was convenient for society that women accepted blindly and happily their roles of wives and mothers always secluded in their homes. Southern Ladies were not educated to think or to reason, their only function was to be servants of her family: *slave mothers*. They were obliged to accept this *enslavement* because it was what society demanded from them, and not fulfilling with that required duty meant to be criticised by everybody. To clarify it, society demanded from women to be paralysed in their homes, voiceless, waiting the return of their husbands from work. This concept of *slave mother* is going to be developed later on, but before that, it is worth mentioning that women were considered "emotional rather than rational" (McInnis Scura 27), apart from being mere decorative objects, something we can also see in *Virginia*, when it is narrated that both the protagonist and her mother "were creatures trained to feel rather than think, whose very goodness was the result not of reason, but of emotion" (236); and that Virginia "was born to decorate instead of to reason" (297).

2.2.2. The Role of Religion

The Southern lady had, as we mentioned previously, religion and family as basic pillars of her life. This, added to the refusal to abandon the old values of the past and the ban to women's education in Universities, provoked that those True Women were ignorant in all areas of reality. According to Glasgow, Virginia Pendleton, in the same way as the writer's own mother, "who was the perfect flower of the Southern culture,

was educated to the simple theory that the less a girl knew about life, the better prepared she would be to contend with it" (*A Certain Measure* 90).

This education based on the ignorance of reality was justified by the reason that, if a woman were introduced to the harshness of reality, she could not assimilate it and would have mental unsettlings in the future. For avoiding this, *the only valid explanation to whatever was the religious one*.

Glasgow, in her early novels, considered religion and science as opposite forces. *Virginia*, being the last of her early novels also shows this opposition. On the one hand, religion (Calvinism) means ignorance and attachment to the past. On the other hand, science (Darwinism) means evolution. What the writer shows us in *Virginia* is this attachment of the characters to the past, rejecting the truth that science offers to them in favour of the old religious view.

When she wrote *Virginia*, Glasgow tried to show that Calvinistic Presbyterianism worked hardly to enslave women, imposing on them the only roles of wives and mothers in society. Religion provoked that women really believed that they should behave in such a passive and angelic way, being always dependent on social convention and not being allowed to be free and grow themselves through critical thinking. Hiding themselves behind old traditional values and religion, Southern Belles avoided to see the true reality: that they were considered almost servants of their family and that they didn't have any importance apart from being mere reproductive instruments. They limited themselves to accept blindly their imposed role of wives and mothers in society, even abandoning their physical appearance to serve their family, as happens with Virginia Pendleton.

Calvinistic Presbyterianism is a Protestant theological system established by John Calvin and it establishes that God is over all things, and it is only His will what makes things to happen. There is a central principle of this religion which highlights the

role of women in society. The doctrines of this religion state the *inferiority of women,* and their inferiority is even more evident within the institution of marriage. These doctrines say that *the wife must always submit to her husband's will and perform her duties without protesting*. This is what Virginia Pendleton was taught since she was a child, to follow the Calvinist doctrine of submitting to her husband's will. Mrs. Pendleton exemplifies this dogma of submission when she advises Virginia that "even in the matter of religion you have to yield to him" (151).

This doctrine is based on the Fifth Commandment of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which states "Honor thy father and thy mother". This commandment can have several interpretations, being one of them, to preserve the honor of both family and society, and this can be achieved through demanding "the wives surrender completely to their husbands" (Hollibaugh 38). In other words, women cannot have free will, they must submit to their husbands in the same way all humans must submit to God's will.

This interpretation of women being inferior to men can be compared to the interpretation of the inferiority of some races. Therefore, the Fifth Commandment was used to justify both the practice of slavery and the practice of women submitting to men's will. As Hollibaugh says

> This same section of the Catechism, which preaches the importance of "everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals", is also used to justify the servitude of one human to another - again, relying on the writings of Paul for its basis. This combination of Old and New Testament interpretations had often been used in the antebellum South to justify the practice of slavery. The same Calvinist doctrine, then, oversees the social hierarchies of marriage and of slavery, equating the two institutions in the idea of a human as property with no sense of agency or will". (39)

This interpretation lead us to the concept of the *supplementary being of women* (synonym used by many critics for referring to women's inferiority) and also to the concept of *slave mother*, mentioned in Glasgow's *Virginia* many times. One of the most evident examples is when Virginia Pendleton sees that "she had been born into a world where the slaving of mothers was a part of the natural order, and she had not as yet become independent enough to question the morality of the commonplace" (41).

Another example is the one which states that the protagonist's mother, "like herself, was but one of the endless procession of women who pass perpetually from the sphere of pleasure into the sphere of service" (42).

These two quotes are extracted from an early chapter of the novel, when Virginia sees how her mother has wasted her life serving her family. She does not agree with this "slaving of mothers", but as it is the traditional behavior, it cannot be questioned. In fact, traditional women like Mrs. Pendleton totally agreed with that behavior, which also included different tasks for each sex, having as only objective to keep the appearances in order to not provoke gossip in the neighbourhood. We quote a dialogue between husband and wife:

> "Let me wash the dishes, Lucy", he would implore. "What? Will you trust me with other people's souls, but not with your china?"
> "It's *not a man's work*, Mr. Pendleton. *What would the neighbours think?"* (42)

Not fulfilling with their *womanly* tasks could provoke that those women were criticised not only in daily places, like the market; they could be ashamed even in the Church, as there were sermons oriented to direct the right feminine behavior (as we can see in Glasgow's novel *The Miller of Old Church*).

In later chapters of the novel, we see how Virginia has become a *slave mother* in the same way as her mother, when it is narrated that, "Every minute of her eighteen waking hours was spent in keeping the children washed, dressed and good-humoured. She thought of herself so little that it never occurred to her to reflect whether she was happy or unhappy [...]" (233).

In addition to this, it is also worth to mention that the constant association of women to religion was not only because they were perceived as almost virgins or saints. Barbara Welter found a more convincing explanation and quoted it from a sort of manual for female behavior: "The world would be reclaimed for God through her suffering, for 'God increased the cares and sorrows of woman, that she might be sooner

constrained to accept the terms of salvation'" (*Woman: As She Was, Is, and Should Be,* 206; qtd. in Welter 152).

Therefore, God makes to suffer women more than men to reclaim the world for its sins. Only through the suffering of women, the world could be redeemed for such quantity of sin, as women would accept rapidly the terms of salvation to stop their sorrow. An example could be the episode in which Harry, Virginia's son, falls ill of diphtheria, because for any Southern Lady like Virginia, there is not a major pain than the illness or the fear of losing a child. The only consolation she finds is praying. As *Virginia*'s narrator says, "While Harry lay there, wrapped in that burning stupor, she prayed, not as she had been taught to pray in her childhood, not with the humble and resigned worship of civilization, but in the wild and threatening lament of a savage who seeks to reach the ears of an implacable deity" (254).

This fear of God is another way for enslaving those women to their families. If a woman is afraid of being punished by God for not carrying out her required duties, she will blindly fulfill the virtues of domesticity and passivity. In the view of a Southern Belle, if she is devoted to her house and family, and never contradicts her husband's will, she will never be penalised by an implacable deity. That's why, after Harry falls ill of diphtheria and recovers, Virginia returns to her usual attitude of passivity, silence, avoidance of reality and obedience to Oliver, as she thought that she was being punished by God for taking the decision of accompanying Oliver and Abby to Atlantic City. As this was a trip for pleasure, she felt as if she were abandoning her duty toward her children, and the abandoning of this duty could be punished with Harry's death.

2.2.3. The Role of Men

To continue with the analysis of the Southern Lady's enslavement, it only remains to scan the role of men, focusing our analysis on the *trap of ideal love*.

This idealisation of love is no more than a technique used by males for imprisoning women in their houses. The only thing to highlight is that this imprisonment is not a forced one; men made women to think that they are who decide to stay at home for fulfilling their duty toward their husbands and children. These women never complain about it, as they think they are working for the power of love. This is something we can see through Virginia Pendleton, as she thinks she must sacrifice herself only because it is her duty toward Oliver: "Nothing had really counted in life except the supreme privilege of giving herself body and soul, in the service of love" (228). Equally important is the moment in which Virginia asks to her mother, "Love is the only thing that really matters, isn't it, mother?", and Mrs. Pendleton answers, "A pure and noble love, darling. It is a woman's love. God meant it so" (152).

In this conversation we see again the centrality of religion in a woman's life, when Mrs. Pendleton says that love is the most important thing in a woman's life only because God disposes it. Wagner also sees the centrality of what she calls the *fallacy of love:*

> At the heart of the many conventions affecting women's lives, Glasgow suggests that through her fiction, lies the myth of the primacy of romantic love -a man who loved, honored, and cared for her -her life was complete. Such a relationship would provide both vocation and avocation, physical passion and intellectual stimulus. [...] marriage [...] meant accepting the *fallacy* that "love is a self-sustaining force, independent of material conditions". (19-20)

The female ideal of the time is what provoked that men like Oliver or Cyrus Treadwell saw their wives as mere servants of them, considering Virginia or Belinda as inferior human beings only for the fact of being women. In a time when women had not rights, it was very simple to abuse of them, to force them to lead a life of servitude to their family. Not only women were a product of their environment, men were also a direct result of the obsolete education and values of the South, as they were taught to love a specific model of woman, and this model was that of the Southern Lady, a silent, passive, dependent and domestic woman. The most clear example is that of Virginia's husband, Oliver, who at the beginning of the novel is writing a play about the new model of woman, the modern one. In this part of the novel, he feels attraction for his

cousin, Susan Treadwell, as she shows an attitude which was not typical of a Southern Belle. However, his education taught him not to fall in love with a girl of such disposition, as she did not embody the female ideal of the ages. Instead, he started to idealise Virginia, mainly because of her beauty and sweetness, for example, thinking of her as "an enclosed garden of sweetness and bloom" (136), or in the way it is now shown:

> [...] the face of Virginia looked down at him over the palings of the gate. Immediately, it seemed to him that he had known from the beginning that he should meet her. A sense of recognition so piercingly sweet that it stirred his pulses like wine was in his heart as he moved towards her. The whole universe appeared to him to have been planned and perfect for this instant. (139)

Apart from that, she had not any other characteristic which resulted of interest to him, as for example, intelligence. That's why, years after his marriage, he awakens to reality, and sees that she is intellectually empty and cannot give him the intellectual support he needs. As he gets bored when talking to her, he escapes from his dead marriage to New York, where he meets Margaret Oldcastle, a modern and independent actress, with whom he falls in love. It is worth mentioning the ironic treatment that Glasgow gave to this fact, and according to McDowell:

> With a whimsical irony Miss Glasgow emphasized how, until too late, Oliver fails to realize that being married to the "feminine ideal of the ages" has been, of all fates, the worst for his intellectually active temperament. That Oliver, as Virginia's young lover, writes a play about the "new woman", when he is sighing for the old-fashioned one he has just met is in itself ironic; he would, moreover, introduce on stage the reality he avoids in his own life. (116)

A similar pattern to that of Virginia and Oliver is that of Cyrus and Belinda Treadwell, Oliver's uncle and aunt, and Susan's parents. In this case, Belinda is the most evident instance of a paralysed Southern Lady, metaphorically and literally. Why? Because she reflects the mental and the physical stasis of a True Woman. We are going to explain it in more detail.

Before explaining this concept of paralysis, it is necessary to clarify another idea: *men possessing women*. When a woman loved a man, she wanted him *to possess her,* and men also wanted to possess women. This can be translated into having sexual

relations, as when a True Woman lost her virginity with a man, it was considered that she belonged to him. This is seen in Virginia's inner thoughts, when she thinks about "What could be more beautiful or more sacred than to be "given" to Oliver -to belong to him as utterly as she had belonged to her father? What could make her happier than the knowledge that she must surrender her will to his from the day of her wedding until the day of her death?" (153).

Through this quote we can see that, for a Southern Lady, the moment when she lost her virginity was a crucial moment in her life, because since that moment, her will belonged to her husband. This is, she had lost her agency along with her virginity. From that moment, which could only happen after marriage, the woman had to adopt an attitude of unselfishness for the rest of her life, remaining silent and paralysed in her home, as domesticity was a key feature for being considered a perfect wife.

This is the pattern we mentioned before. What does it consist on? It is very simple: a man idealises a young woman and through this idealisation, he makes her to fall in love. After marriage and the loss of her virginity, only by praising her "womanly" virtues, he enslaves her, because he is, indirectly, asking his wife to stay at home to be his servant. This is what we can see through Cyrus and Belinda Treadwell, who after many years of marriage, is unhappy with the treatment that Cyrus gives to her. As it is said in the novel, Cyrus enslaved Belinda through love: "A few words of casual kindness and he had made a slave of her" (85-86). Despite her unhappiness, her enslavement prevents her from raising her hand to protest and fighting against her situation.

This provoked a mental paralysis in Belinda, who was not capable of externalising through words the hate she felt for her husband. After many years of enduring her husband's mistreatments, Belinda suffered a physical stroke which kept her paralysed in bed.

Domínguez Rué states that, in Glasgow, it is very common to find female characters with chronic invalidism, mental disorders or neuralgia (as will be seen in *Barren Ground*, with the characters of Geneva Greylock and Mrs. Eudora Oakley). This happens as a consequence of the exhaustion those characters presented for being overexploited by their families. Domínguez Rué quotes from Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's *Disorderly Conduct* that, "The abyss that existed between the Victorian concepts of True Womanhood and Ideal Motherhood frequently rendered women unable to reconcile the evident tensions between these two roles" (qtd. in Domínguez Rué 426).

Passing from being a young woman without any other preoccupation apart from gaining a husband, to being a married woman with the responsibilities of pleasing the husband, educating the children, running the home economics and caring for elderly and children was something unbearable for many women. As a consequence, they started to suffer physical pains and, "Several forms of neuralgia emerged as a consequence of exhaustion, childbearing and depression, but also as a silent rebellion against a life of isolation and self-sacrifice" (Domínguez Rué 426). Something like that is what happens to Mrs. Treadwell in *Virginia*, who, suddenly, loses her mobility: "The doctor has been there for over an hour, and he says that she'll never be able to move again" (193); "Aunt Belinda has not spoken yet, and she can't move the lower part of her body at all. The doctor says she may live for years, but he doesn't think she will ever be able to walk again [...]" (198).

This physical paralysis is a symbol of what she has lived throughout her whole life since she married Cyrus. Educated for behaving with the "manners of a lady", the same as Virginia Pendleton and her own daughter Susan, Mrs. Treadwell had always been an unhappy woman. Trying to keep the appearances, as separation or divorce from the husband was considered a sin in Dinwiddie, she stayed with Cyrus and her children, Susan and James. Her silence, eternal waiting and passivity finally provoked to her a physical stroke, keeping her paralysed until her death. However, as the virtuosity of a Southern Belle also lays on her domesticity, that is, in being secluded in her house, there

is no much difference in her actual paralysis and her former one. As happens in Glasgow's "The Shadowy Third", the "angel in the house is condemned to invalidism and death" (Domínguez Rué 433). We provide an example of Mrs. Treadwell's paralysis before her stroke:

> Left alone in her room, Mrs. Treadwell sat down in a rocking-chair by the window, and clasped her hands tightly in her lap with a nervous gesture which she had acquired in long periods of silent waiting on destiny. Her mental attitude, which was one of secret, and usually passive, antagonism to her husband, had stamped its likeness so indelibly upon her features, sitting there in the wan light, she resembled a woman who suffers from the effects of some slow yet deadly sickness. Lacking the courage to put her revolt into words**,** she had allowed it to turn inward and embitter the hidden sources of her being. (70)

This same pattern is that of Oliver and Virginia. A similar situation is what happens to Virginia during her 30 years of marriage with Oliver. Her silence starts even before her marriage, because, as women were not taught to think, she cannot express with words her feelings: "Her tongue was paralyzed; she couldn't say what she felt, and everything else seemed to her horribly purposeless and ineffectual [...] The richness of her beauty combined with the poverty of her speech" (117). This corresponds with what Oliver thinks of Virginia while they are single. He falls in love with the ideal of True Womanhood. However, Virginia's lack of speech is something that Oliver will not bear after years of marriage.

To continue explaining this concept of *paralysis*, we must go back to the previously seen division of tasks depending on sex. While the role of men (or "manly tasks") was to be the economic supplier of his family, the role of women (or "womanly tasks") was to devote her life to her family, do the housework and wait until her husband returned home. After marrying, Virginia starts to hide consciously her worryings and opinions, because the male cannot be disturbed by her:

> "I try not to let Oliver see how I mind it. He has so much to bother him, poor dear, that I keep all of my worries, big and little, in the background. When anything goes wrong in the house I never tell him, because he has so many important things on his mind that I don't think I ought to trouble him about small ones". (162)

These attitudes of unselfishness and silence were added to an increasing preoccupation in Virginia for saving money, the same as happened to Mrs. Treadwell. This was provoked because women depended economically on their husbands. Men's role was to work outside the home, and the role of women was to distribute this money and make the most of it. The only possible manner for doing that was, in Virginia's view, to abandon her physical appearance not spending money on herself. This situation worsens when their first baby is born: "It is hard to housekeep on a small allowance, and now that we have to save for the baby's coming, I have to count every penny"(168); "Of course, I have to save as much as I can and I count every single penny [...] I never buy a stitch for either the baby or for myself, though Oliver complains now and then that I don't dress as well as I used to do" (177).

However, Virginia not only abandoned her physical appearance. She also abandoned social life when she married Oliver, as for her, the only company of her husband must be sufficient: "I am perfectly sure that if I live to be a hundred I shall never want any society but Oliver's" (165).

This social isolation and paralysis worsened after the birth of her children, because after that, she started to be more centered in maternity than in love. This provokes a *clash between her sexuality and her motherhood,* because the incapacity of combining her sexual life with her obligations as a mother. Oliver starts to be bothered by Virginia's physical abandonment and he feels that she does not pay attention to him since their children were born. All these facts provoke that he feels attraction for Abby Goode and he makes Virginia knowledgeable of it:

> "All the same, I wish you wouldn't let yourself go to pieces. What have you done to your hands? They used to be so pretty". (229)
> "I never noticed until tonight what pretty hands Abby has", he said, innocently enough, as he turned off the gas. (230)

When this happens, Virginia experiments feelings she never had before: "love, envy, jealousy, desire, desperation, regret…" (247). As a consequence of that, she

adopts a more daring attitude, deciding to fight for Oliver's love. When she confronts Abby, Oliver feels attraction for Virginia: "By Jove, you rode superbly, Virginia! I had no idea you could do it", said Oliver, as they trotted into Dinwiddie'' (248).

However, this attitude lasts little time, because when Harry fell ill of diphtheria, she returns to her usual passivity in order to not being punished by God. With her refusal to travel to Atlantic City with Oliver and Abby she clearly states that motherhood is more important than marriage for her:

> "I was jealous - for the first time in my life, I was jealous, and because I was jealous, I did wrong and neglected my duty. Yesterday I sacrificed the children to Oliver, and to-day I sacrificed Oliver to the children. I love Oliver as much, but I have made the children. They came only because I brought them into the world. I am responsible for them [...]" (259)

Moreover, as we said in 2.2.2 (cf. p28), motherhood was another form of enslaving the Southern Lady. Her duty as a mother does not allow Virginia to *abandon* her ill son for a trip for pleasure. Moreover, this social isolation in her house, combined with her higher interest in motherhood than in marriage, provokes that Oliver distanced even more from her, spending more time in New York than in Dinwiddie.

Years passed and the children grew up. At 45, Virginia is a woman with an empty life after having raised her progeny and being deserted by Oliver. In her own words, "she had outlived her usefulness" (390) and the only thing which remains to her is waiting in her house for the return of their daughters and son, especially for Harry's return, because he is the one who resembles her most.

Before ending this section 2.2.3, it is worth mentioning the fact that even the natural imagery presented in the novel makes reference to Virginia's paralysis. As McDowell notes:

> Flower and light imagery are also implicated in Virginia's tragedy. Light and flowers (roses, honeysuckle, the paulownia blooms in the rectory garden) connote Virginia's ecstatic emotion, her abandonment to love, and her expectations in the early part of the novel. [...]

> When a drab middle age comes to Virginia, flowers only recall to her a lost youth, and light has edged off into shadow. It is fitting, therefore, that Virginia return from her defeat in New York in a dark, disagreeable slush storm. Absence of light and a bleak winter season mean that she is no longer an energetic embodiment of the Life Force with which, as a young girl, she was so perfectly in harmony. Loss of love and decline in beauty keep pace with the rotting of the paulownia trees which have been previously associated in her mind with her once overpowering happiness. When she comes back heartbroken from New York, she hears with anguish that the wife of the present rector is anxious to have them cut out. (McDowell 124)

To summarise, Virginia repeats the same pattern as that of Mrs. Belinda Treadwell. The latter externalises the harm that her constant paralysis provoked to her, remaining immovable in a bed until her death. However, Virginia does not suffer any physical stroke. In place, she continues her existence excluding herself from society, as she did during all her life since the day of her marriage. As she does not fit in the modern times she lives, she prefers to seclude in her house, limiting her existence to the eternal waiting of Southern Ladies, in this case, the waiting for Harry.

2.3 Virginia Pendleton vs the New Women

To end this chapter 2 centered on the character of Virginia Pendleton, we will make a comparison between her and the feminine characters which are opposed to her in the novel: Susan Treadwell, Abby Goode, Margaret Oldcastle, Jenny Treadwell and Mrs. Payson.

We start with Susan Treadwell, Virginia's best friend. The main difference we find between Virginia and Susan is that the latter one gives more importance to her intelligence than to her beauty. This intelligence is what provokes that Oliver feels an attraction for her, but refuses to admit it because she does not embody the female ideal. Apart from that, we find a rebellious spirit in her, for example, when she asks her father, Cyrus, to go to college. Here we can read the conversation:

> "Father, I want to go to college", she said quite simply [..].
> Her demand was a direct challenge to the male in Cyrus [...]
> "Tut-tut", he responded. "If you want something to occupy you, you'd better start about helping your mother with her preserving". (123)

For those facts, her mother even considers her to have "some authority" (66) in her house. Nevertheless, this quality was not allowed in a girl from the South. Those aspects and the independence she maintains after her marriage is what differentiates her from Virginia Pendleton.

Secondly, we analyse the character of Mrs. Payson, who though being a minor character is very important for what she represents. She is mentioned in the chapter "Virginia's Letters", and she is totally opposed to Virginia in various things. The first one is that she dresses in "bright colors" (160), differently from what happens with Virginia, who always dresses in dark blue or black. The second thing is that she is a "college woman" (164), this is, that she was educated in the University, something which was banned to Southern Ladies. Moreover, Mrs. Payson is a firm defender of women's rights, something which is seen by Virginia as something wrong. We quote the paragraph for more clarity: "Mrs. Payson is a college woman, and it seems to me that she is always trying to appear as clever as a man. She talks in a way sometimes that sounds as if she believed in women's rights and all that sort of thing" (164).

In third place, we analyse Abby Goode and Margaret Oldcastle, direct rivals of Virginia for Oliver's love. Those females are also examples of a modern behavior. Abby Goode ends marrying another man, but before that, she is a strong opponent for Virginia, having an education typical from the North and being interested in activities more typical of men. In the case of Abby, Oliver feels that he has to reject her behavior, despite being attracted by her independence:

> [Oliver]: "You can't help liking her, she's such jolly good company; but, somehow, she doesn't seem womanly. She's too fond of sport and all that sort of thing". [...]
> [...] Though he enjoyed Abby, he refused stubbornly to admire her [...] He saw woman as dependent upon man for the very integrity of her being, and beyond the divine fact of this dependency, he did not see her at all. [...]
> [...] Virginia was perfect; as a mental companion, she barely existed at all. She was, he had come to recognize, profoundly indifferent to the actual world. Her universe was a fiction except the part of it that concerned him or the children. (230-231)

After rejecting Abby, Margaret Oldcastle is the woman who *steals* Oliver from Virginia, conquering him through her intelligence and decided attitude in spite of not possessing a great beauty:

> [Oliver]: "She didn't look nearly so young, then, and she's not exactly pretty; but, somehow, it didn't seem to matter. She's got a genius -you couldn't be with her ten minutes without finding out that. I never saw anyone in my life so much alive. When she's in a room, even if she doesn't speak, you can't keep your eyes off her. She's like a bright flame you can't stop looking at -not even if there's a lot of prettier women there, too". (315)

The last character to analyse in opposition with Virginia is that of Jenny, her own daughter. This girl is considered not to have a "womanly" attitude and her modern fashion, education in the University and active life, for example, fighting for working women's rights, is something that Virginia cannot approve. These are some of the fragments we can take as examples:

> In the month that Jenny spent in Dinwiddie, she organized a number of societies and clubs for the improvement of conditions among working girls, and in spite of the intense heat (the hottest spell of the summer came while she was there), she barely allowed herself a minute for rest or for conversation with her mother. (374)
>
> [...] Jenny says she is obliged to have something to think about besides men. (334)
>
> [Jenny]: "I'm specializing in biology, you know". (319)

So, what we have seen throughout the novel is the slow change of the model of woman. The dependent and submissive woman from the South became an obsolete model in the changing society of the time. A new type of woman emerged, intelligent and independent, both intellectually and economically. The problem was that Virginia Pendleton was not capable of accepting the change and adapting her behaviour to the new one. The new type of woman had triumphed over her, and we end this chapter 2 with a quote which evidences not only the triumph of Margaret Oldcastle but the success of the modern woman: "Her triumph was less the triumph of the individual than of the type" (364).

3. Chapter 3: Dorinda Oakley and the New Modern Woman

This last chapter of our essay is going to deal with the other type of women we find in Ellen Glasgow: the new woman. For that, we are going to analyse her novel *Barren Ground* (1925), which can be categorised, in Glasgow's own words, as a "novel of character".

Mainly, the focus will be placed on Dorinda Oakley, the protagonist of the story. We are going to analyse her in relation to other minor and main characters, as can be Mrs. Eudora Oakley (her mother), Geneva Ellgood (m. Geneva Greylock), Rose Emily Pedlar or Jason Greylock.

To begin, it is important to show how Dorinda is, in some way, an embodiment of Glasgow's rebellious spirit toward the traditional Southern society and conception of woman, and how she, the same as the writer, rebels against the imposed roles of wife and mother that religion and society imposed upon women. It is worth mentioning that Glasgow herself qualified *Barren Ground* as a "vehicle of liberation", which made her feel free rather than rebellious. Wagner quotes Glasgow and gives also her own opinion:

> "After years of tragedy and the sense of defeat that tragedy breeds in the mind, I had won my way to the other side of the wilderness, and had discovered, with astonishment, that I was another and a very different person". (qtd. in Wagner 79)
>
> The freedom of finding herself a new woman -less the rebellious child of the solid Glasgow family, more the distinguished and still imaginatively passionate novelist -seemed to give Glasgow a full range of fictional power. Instead of creating character through abstract and philosophical dialogue, Glasgow here turned to concrete descriptions of emotions in play -anger, fear, joy, despair. (Wagner 79)

Before starting with the analysis of the female characters, we have to provide the setting in which it is developed. The fictional place in which *Barren Ground* is set is a small village named Pedlar's Mill, situated in the State of Virginia. As McDowell says, "Pedlar's Mill is situated in the Piedmont region of Virginia" (147). Something else to mention about the setting is the picture that Glasgow made of the *land poor*, as she called them. The writer gave an accurate portrait of lower-class people, which were not usually mentioned in Southern literature. By doing that, she acted in consequence to what she thought: she rejected the "evasive idealism" of the South in favour of a more realistic portrait of the society.

In this chapter 3, we are going to explain the relations that Dorinda established with males and the land, the influence that Jason Greylock had over her, the impact of her miscarriage and the roles that Darwinism and Calvinism had, according to Glasgow, on women's lives. Furthermore, we are going to see how Dorinda moves from being an ignorant and dependent woman to be a representative of the new type of modern woman, freeing herself through knowledge, critical thinking and economic independence. Moreover, we are going to analyse how money, love and religion influenced her.

3.1. Physical Appearance, Betrayal and Change

To start Dorinda Oakley's analysis, we will provide a description of her physical appearance. At the beginning of the novel, she is portrayed like "A girl in an orange-coloured shawl stood at the window of Pedlar's store and looked, through the falling snow, at the deserted road. Though she watched there without moving her attitude, in its stillness, gave an impression of arrested flight, as if she were running toward life" (3).

This early description is the first proof of Dorinda's nature: she is a girl who wants to fly free, this is, she wants to release herself from the Southern convention that

oppresses her. By looking at the deserted road, we can feel that Dorinda is imagining how her future will be, because she is not willing to accept the future that the majority of women have in Pedlar's Mill. This anxiety for prospering and evolving is shown in another descriptions we are presented of Dorinda at the beginning of the novel. We will quote two paragraphs in which we can see her character. In the first one, Glasgow shows her concept of heroine and anticipates what Dorinda will be in the future, an example of the new type of modern woman, introducing to us the most frequent features of modern women: "not beautiful", "decisive" and "determination". In the second quote, we see how the protagonist is anxious for evolution and a more prosperous future:

> She was a tall girl, not beautiful, scarcely pretty even according to the waxen type of the "nineties"; but there was a glow of expression, an April charm, in her face. [...] In repose her features were too stern, too decisive. [...] the pointed curve of her chin, revealed, perhaps, too much determination in its outward thrust. (10)

> [...] the girl had listened eagerly for the first rumble of the approaching trains. Until to-day the passing trains had been a part of that expected miracle, the something different in the future, to which she looked ahead over the tedious stretch of the present. (11-12)

Here Glasgow described her type of heroine, a woman unhappy with her destiny, and embodying the features of her youth. However, according to Wagner, this nonconformity and constant questioning often lead those women to catastrophe:

> Many of Glasgow's ingénue heroines were prototypes of the young Ellen -audacious, winsome, free-thinking, distinctive without being beautiful, passionate, defiant and ambitious. [...] These heroines are different from the other women of the novels (and Glasgow used many foil characters to point up those differences). Generous to a fault, Glasgow's young heroines either love too well or refuse to love; they may not be intellectual but are at least questioning. They want to know where they are headed and why; indeed, their personal catastrophes often occur because of this questioning, this spirit that keeps them from accepting the convention of "women's place". (21)

Apart from those features, another one which can be important is the economic independence which is shown from the beginning. Dorinda works at the Pedlar's Store, and, despite not having a good salary, this is something very significative, because other girls were not allowed to work outside their houses. Furthermore, her "dream of escape", that is, of escaping Pedlar's Mill, is presented early in the novel, and quoting Anderson:

> In the first section of *Barren Ground*, Dorinda is trying to move outward, to detach herself from the oppressive natural landscape around her. [...] Dorinda's efforts to extricate herself from this environment typify her struggle to become differentiated from nature itself, to move outward toward a personal ego and away from collective, racial values. [...] Dorinda's dream of escape takes the form of a stranger who she fantasizes will step off the train and carry her away over the horizon. (385)

However, this "dream of escape" is seen, from a psychological perspective as "a desire to move toward a double self or potential self, a desire which for Dorinda attaches itself to Jason Greylock" (Anderson 385). In other words, Dorinda's dream is a symbol of the permeating "evasive idealism" which Glasgow saw as pervasive in the South. This provoked that Dorinda fell in the trap of ideal love with Jason Greylock, being not capable of seeing how he really was, that is, without *character* **(**cf.3.2) and provoking the suffering of two women. In this part of the novel, she follows the same pattern of Virginia Pendleton, being totally dominated by love, and even being paralysed and remaining speechless when she is with Jason. This paralysis is seen in two fragments: "In their place a force which was stronger than all these things together, a force with which she had never reckoned before, dominated her being" (29); "At this moment, when of all the occasions in her life she longed to be most brilliant and animated, she was tongue-tied by an immobility which was like the drowsiness, only far pleasanter, that she felt in church on hot August afternoons" (30).

In the latter quote we see something which is very interesting. It is the comparison of the immobility that love provokes with the sleepy sensation that she feels in Church. In other words, the immobility and paralysis that both love and religion provoke in women. We can say that Dorinda, in this moment, is totally blind to reality, falling completely in the power of "evasive idealism" that Glasgow despised. When Dorinda awakes to reality, it is too late: she is pregnant and Jason is going to marry Geneva Ellgood. This provokes in her a total rejection of this idealism and also a break with religion, which can be seen when Eudora asks her to read a chapter of the Bible to get better of her headache and Dorinda answers that, "I'm never coming to prayers again" (171).

This breaking with religion happens after a moment of mental confusion when she tries to kill Jason. According to McDowell, "Despite her Calvinist upbringing, Dorinda responds to primitive impulses in her attempt to kill Jason after he betrays her" (148).

As a consequence of his betrayal, Dorinda decides to abandon religion in the way it was conceived for women. Despite she says "never come to prayers again", what she means is that she will not conceive religion more as her mother does, this is, praying for what she needs or desires. As this was not effective for gaining Jason's love and becoming her wife, Dorinda decides to embrace religion in a masculine way, through a position of power instead of female disempowerment (cf. 3.2). Furthermore, her pregnancy makes Dorinda move to New York and look at her future with realism, after having deserted the idealism that permeated her while she was being deceived by Jason: "Dimly she felt that she was meeting life, at this moment, on its own terms, stripped of illusion, stripped even of idealism, except the idealism she could wring from the solid facts of experience. The blow that had shattered her dreams had let in the cloudless flood of reality" (197).

In the city, she is saved from the enslavement of motherhood with a very clever spin script introduced by Glasgow: the *miscarriage*. With the loss of her baby, she takes a new path in her life. In New York, she begins to work for the Doctor who assisted her in the hospital, Dr. Faraday and his family. There, she meets Dr. Richard Burch, a young man who falls in love with her and, despite not being corresponded, animates her to study in the University. He cannot be corresponded by her because Dorinda totally refuses to fall in love again, in order not to be hurt: she wants "something better than broomsedge" (238). After that change in her character, Dorinda starts to feel self-confident and independent again, two features that are the most important in a new modern woman like her:

> Her self-confidence returned when she found how easy it was to pursue her individual life, to retain her secret identity, in the midst of the city. She discovered presently that when nothing matters, the problem of existence becomes amazingly simple. [...] From several unpleasant

> episodes she had learned to be on the watch and to repulse advances that were disagreeable; but as such moments her courage proved to be as vast as her wretchedness. (204)

As a consequence of the miscarriage, Dorinda refuses to be a mother, the same as she refuses to love again. This is going to be developed in the next section of this chapter 3, but something we can advance is that Dorinda is the embodiment of Ellen Glasgow's rebellious spirit, who also admitted not to feel the desire to be a mother. Moreover, the concept of the "female principle of creation and regeneration*"* (Anderson 387) is going to be explained along with a motive that is presented in the novel many times: the *dead child*.

3.2. Rejection of Fate and the Centrality of Motherhood

This section 3.2 will deal with many aspects we can see in Glasgow's *Barren Ground*. Here we will analyse Dorinda's *growing into maleness* and resemblance to her great-grandfather John Calvin Abernethy, her relationship with religion, land and men and her rejection of the imposed roles of wife and mother. What's more, we will also see Glasgow's use of irony in this novel, through her use of Darwinism and Calvinism and, for completing our analysis, we will make a comparison of Dorinda with the other female characters of the novel: Eudora Oakley and Geneva Ellgood, including here the motif of the dead child, which is mentioned various times in the novel.

To start, the first thing we are going to deal with is the use of *irony* that Glasgow made in this novel. As we saw previously in the analysis of *Virginia*, Hollibaugh stated that Glasgow considered Calvinism to influence the enslavement of women. This is something that also happens in *Barren Ground*, but, differently from what occurs in *Virginia*, here, religion works in collusion with science. In other words, science is not portrayed as a symbol of evolution in *Barren Ground* as it was in *Virginia*. It is portrayed as an instrument of enslavement, showing how Darwinism uses the same principles as Calvinism. According to Hollibaugh:

> Rather than using Darwinism to criticise Calvinism, as in her earlier works, Glasgow now shows them to be in collusion, as they work together to prescribe the enslavement of women through the biological and social constructions of marriage and maternity. *Barren Ground* highlights the scientific and theological assumptions of women's inferiority, and therefore necessary subservience to men. (33-34)

Glasgow conveys that both Calvinism and Darwinism coincide in one thing: the role of women is to marry in order to procreate. For Calvinism, this was an irreproachable principle based on the interpretation of the Fifth Commandment we saw in chapter 2. For Darwinism, it was the only way to preserve the continuity of the species. What we conclude from that is that, *both Calvinism and Darwinism write women's destiny or Fate: motherhood*. If maternity is not possible, a woman's life is totally meaningless. This is something we can see through the characters of Mrs. Eudora Oakley and Geneva Greylock, but we will return to this later. Before that, it is worth mentioning how Dorinda avoids this imposed role of mother after having suffered both Jason's betrayal and the miscarriage. By avoiding sex and religion, Dorinda finds a way to liberate herself from the imposed dogmas. As Hollibaugh states:

> If Dorinda is to avoid the destiny determined by her cultural environment, she must extract herself from the forces of Calvinist dogma and Darwinian sexual selection in order to free her own will from their influence and thereby establish a truer sense of female agency. Ironically, only after she frees herself from the necessities of religion and science she can find a way in which to embrace them. (47)

It is only through this fight against her Fate that she succeeds, being totally free to fulfill her will and having true agency. By not enslaving her to motherhood, she is capable of becoming a successful farmer, something that she could have never done if she had chosen to sacrifice herself in the same way as her mother did, when she committed perjury for her son Rufus. Dorinda herself says that she "couldn't have done it" (324). In that time, it was considered normal that women allowed males to "shape, damage and destroy their lives" (Wagner 72). However, Dorinda expanded the few possibilities that a woman had in those days and, according to Wagner (73), Adrienne Rich stated that, "The most important thing one woman can do for another is to illuminate and expand her sense of actual possibilities… To refuse to be a victim.... As

daughters we need mothers who want their freedom and ours"[2]. Nevertheless, this is something that Mrs. Oakley was not capable of doing with Dorinda. She never gave to her the advice to think of her life outside of the roles of wife and mother, as she totally centered her life in maternity. An example of Mrs. Oakley's advice is "You'll be all right married, daughter, if you just make up your mind that whatever happens, you ain't going to let any man spoil your life" (106).

Here, it is necessary to analyse the *motif of the dead child*, present in three of the female characters of the novel: Dorinda, Eudora and Geneva.

On the one hand, we can see this motif both in Eudora and Geneva. In the case of Eudora, she has a recurrent *nightmare*: "Then I begin to have that dream about coral strands and palm trees and ancient rivers and naked black babies thrown to crocodiles" (124). In the case of Geneva, she has the *hallucination* that she gave birth to a child and Jason killed him. Nathan explains Geneva's situation to Dorinda, saying that, "They lead a cat-and-dog life together, and when she is out of her head she runs about telling everybody that she had a child and he murdered it" (362).

What we deduce from both cases is that the centrality of motherhood is something that creates an obsession in those two women. The fear of losing their sons or daughters or the impossibility of having descendants is something that can provoke madness to women. That occurred because both Calvinism and Darwinism stated that the female role was that of raising their progeny. If they failed to do this, they were failing to both the religious and scientific duty.

Moreover, as we previously saw in 2.2.3, and as Domínguez Rué states, in Glasgow it is very common to find women suffering from neuralgia or mental disorders. What is the motive? There can be many. In some cases, it can be the incapacity of many women to accept their reality, as happens with Geneva, who is incapable of accepting

[2] Rich, p.246. Quoted in Wagner, 1982, p.73. (See Note 3 in Wagner, p.130).

the fact that she cannot have children. In other cases, it can be the stress that is produced in those women for the overexploitation they suffered in their houses and also the fear of losing their progeny, as it happens with Mrs. Oakley.

Returning to the motif of the dead child, there is another interpretation that Hollibaugh finds: the dead child not only reflects the centrality of motherhood in women's lives; it also reflects the "dead marriages" of those women: "Eudora's nightmare and Geneva's madness reflect a culture that is inhospitable to the figure of the wife and mother: in each case, a "dead" marriage leads to a recurring fantasy of a dead baby" (37).

On the other hand, the motif of the dead child is also present in Dorinda when she suffers the miscarriage. Nevertheless, she represents a different interpretation of this motif. First of all, it is worth mentioning that Glasgow introduced this spin script in the novel for one reason: through losing her baby, Dorinda would start her process of liberation.

After having rejected the Southern culture in which she was raised and removing religion from her life, Dorinda is in an unknown city, ready to find a job to earn her living. If the baby had been born, this would have been a form of enslavement, in the same way as her mother, Mrs. Oakley, or the previously analysed Virginia Pendleton. Dorinda would have probably followed the same pattern: the obsession with the child's comfort and education, and the fear of losing him. Moreover, she would have abandoned her concerns and interests for giving the best to her child. As a consequence, she would have never freed herself through studying in the University, acquiring knowledge to revive Old Farm and prosper in life. So that, Glasgow introduced the miscarriage as an element of liberation for Dorinda, to give her the possibility of fighting against her Fate, her destiny of motherhood.

In New York, despite being courted by Dr. Burch, she also refuses to engage in a love relationship, because this could make her to be dependent on men, in the same way as happened with Jason. Instead, she starts to acquire knowledge of what interests her: the land and farming. She starts to study modern farming techniques and then she returns to Pedlar's Mill and the Old Farm, after having heard the call of the land in a concert of classical music: "I feel as if I had ploughed a field. It made me savage, just the way moonlight used to when I was growing up.[...] Whenever I smell the country, I want to go home" (241).

Through working the land, Dorinda will redeem herself by using what Anderson names the "female principle of creation and regeneration". This principle says that a woman has the power to create and give life only because she is a woman. As Dorinda refuses to be a mother, the only way she has for creating something is making the land to be productive:

> Though Dorinda, in order to become self-determining and autonomous, must deny her personal biology, becoming, in fact, sexually frigid, she maintains the association with the creative principle by her association with nature. By overcoming the static barrenness of the land, she overcomes the dominating principle of Fate; by identifying herself with the land and finding her salvation through it; she reclaims her own creative, "feminine" principle. (Anderson 387-388)

Additionally, Dorinda succeeds because of her knowledge, the knowledge of the power of the land, something that men like her father Joshua was incapable to do. Furthermore, when she accepts that her duty is controlling the land, it becomes the center of her life and she is capable of dominating it, thanks to her fortitude, strength or *vein of iron*. She never abandons her work at the farm, no matter what happens, even her own wedding or Nathan's death:

> With her drooping energy, weariness had crept over her; but out of weariness, she passed presently, like the country, into a mood of endurance. [...] Nothing would last through to the end except courage. (296)

> The farm belonged to her, and the knowledge aroused a fierce sense of possession. To protect, to lift up, rebuild and restore, these impulses formed the deepest obligation her nature could feel. (350)

> After all, it was not religion, it was not philosophy, it was nothing outside her own being that had delivered her from evil. The vein of iron which had supported her through adversity [...] (474)

Dorinda does not enslave herself to a husband or to socially imposed children. She enslaves herself to the work in the farm, something that she sees necessary for succeeding in life and gaining the respect of the male dominated business of farming.

Therefore, as Hollibaugh quotes from Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (585), we can state that Dorinda developed a *character*, the character of whom Geneva, Eudora or Jason lack. This character is what determines the survival, or not, of an individual: "Now when two men are put into competition, or a man with a woman, both possessed of every mental quality in equal perfection, save that one was higher energy, perseverance and courage, the latter will generally become more eminent in every pursuit, and will gain the ascendancy" (qtd. in Hollibaugh 50).

This *character* is, in Darwin's and Glasgow's view, inherited. In the case of Eudora, her character was "undermined by the combined patriarchal forces of her grandfather's Calvinism and Darwin's sexual selection" (Hollibaugh 50). In other words, Eudora was oppressed by both Calvinism and Darwinism, she had blindly accepted her Fate. However, Dorinda did not accept to be conquered by the impositions of Calvinism and Darwinism. She inherited the character of her great-grandfather, John Calvin Abernethy, which can be an embodiment of the founder of Calvinism, John Calvin. Dorinda, instead of accepting the inheritance of her mother, modified it for resembling more to her great-grandfather. In other words, to combat her Fate, Dorinda "grows into maleness" (Anderson 384). She has to resemble men in order to gain the respect of the community, and this is reflected in her encounter with Bob Ellgood: "He was looking at her now with keen, impersonal, *admiration*. Just as if she had been a man, she thought, with a glow of triumph" (292).

Now, Dorinda is no more in a position of inferiority. She has the same rights and respect as a man. It is worth mentioning that, when her father dies and she begins to take care of the farm, she decides to wear masculine clothes, and it is not until she

succeeds that she returns to wear female clothes: "[...]it's easier for me to wear *overalls* than to break them. You can't farm in skirts, anyway" (303); "I want *a dress* to wear to Church [...] something good that will last" (358).

After her eventual success, Dorinda returns to feminine clothes and also to Church, a place which she had abandoned because she was not complying with the requirements of her religion. As we mentioned previously, Dorinda did not abandon religion completely, she embraced it in a masculine way, in a position of *power*, like the one of John Calvin Abernethy. She was in a position of *domination*, over the land and over men, in a position of male dominance and power instead of female disempowerment. If she had followed the gender expectations put on her by religion, she would have ended like her mother Eudora or like Geneva Greylock: completely oppressed by society and obsessed with their roles as mothers.

Despite this position of masculine power and dominance, in this section 3.2 we mentioned the "female power of creation and regeneration". It is thanks to this power that Dorinda does not become completely masculine, creating life through the land.

In spite of rejecting sex and maternity in order to not being enslaved, she fulfills her duty toward the land: she makes the land and the farm productive. In addition, she also plays the role of mother with Nathan's children, especially with John Abner. This boy has a physical disability (a clubfoot), and this is something interesting, because we could say that Dorinda fulfills her duty of mother with him and also feels identified with this boy in some way. Why do we say that? Because Dorinda raised him as if he was his son, always worrying for his disability and helping him to overcome difficulties in his life. In this way, Dorinda meets the obligations that both Darwinism and Calvinism impose over women, but without enslaving herself to anybody. In Darwinian selection, she helps an inferior individual to survive. In Calvinist election, she makes John Abner her heir, of character and possessions, because she finds it necessary to reinscribe the role of mother in her life. According to Hollibaugh:

> Dorinda's exercise of will in order to recover her social instincts and to establish sympathetic relationships based on shared character ultimately reinscribes the parameters of wife and mother in her Southern culture. By adopting and raising John Abner as her heir -both to her character and to the farm- Dorinda becomes successful in the frameworks of both Darwinian natural selection and Calvinist election. (59)

Another thing to mention is that the inheritance she bequeaths to John Abner can be also provoked because of Dorinda's self-identification with him. In Darwinian selection, both are considered as inferior individuals (a woman and a disabled person). However, both achieve success in life, against all the forecasts that were made about them.

To end this section, it only remains to say that there is a great contrast between the young Dorinda and the older one. The young one dreams of escaping the oppressive background of the South and also questions the "sterility of the lives of her self-sacrificing mother and her dying friend Rose Emily Pedlar" (Wagner 71). However, she also feels that love is the most important thing in a woman's life, and we see it when she turns to question them about love and marriage. The older Dorinda is a much different woman. After being betrayed by her lover, she escaped to New York, a place which symbolises progress and power. There she decides to study, and when she returns to the farm, she applies all her knowledge to the land. Through this knowledge, she conquers the land, which is also a symbol of conquering her Fate, her destiny. In Glasgow's own words:

> Democracy does not consist in the belief that all men are born free and equal or in the desire that they shall be born free and equal. It consists in the knowledge that all people should possess an opportunity to use their will to control -to create- destiny, and that they should know that they have this opportunity. They must be educated to the use of the will, and they must be taught that character can create destiny. (*Reasonable Doubts* 126)

But the price of conquering her Fate was a high one: she "learnt to live without joy" (*A Certain Measure* 154), becoming almost a slave of her work in the farm, "a slave to routine" (*Barren Ground* 378). However, she was capable of overcoming the adversities of life and became "the victor instead of the victim" (*A Certain Measure*

160). Experience taught her, and only by embracing realism and accepting her life as it was, imperfect, she could achieve happiness. In contrast with Eudora and Geneva, who enslaved themselves to dead marriages and maternity, by rejecting to enslave herself to a husband and to a progeny, Dorinda succeeded because she achieved independence, both intellectually and economically.

3.3. The Power of Money

This last section of chapter 3 is going to treat the topic of Dorinda's economic independence, and how the pursuit of this economic situation brought about her rejection of emotions and eroticism in favour of a materialistic view of life.

According to Dianne Bunch, we find two types of economy in Dorinda's life: there is "a conflicting interaction with the two economies -the traditional economy of production, exchange and accumulation and an unassimilable economy of desire, waste and expenditure" (17). Later on, Bunch identifies those types as homogeneous (or capitalist) and heterogeneous economies.

Dorinda was raised in the latter, in the heterogeneous economy of her parents, an economy of work, poverty, trash and little pleasure. However, as a consequence of having been raised in a heterogeneous economy, Dorinda wanted to express her emotions, and this happens when she falls in love with Jason. Bunch explains that Dorinda's pregnancy is "part of the heterogeneous" (18) and she agrees with Susan Lurie (106) in the fact that, "Dorinda's illegitimate pregnancy emphasizes 'that the meaning of the poor white woman's pregnancy depends on the whims of elite men' and 'sets the stage for Dorinda's refusal to participate in elite marriage and maternity"'.

Then, when she moves to New York and discovers the loss of her baby, she decides to refuse any emotion that can exist on her, from sexual desire to mother's love. Bunch sees that she "moves from heterogeneity to the strength of her parents' religious

resignation to a life of work without joy" (19). From this moment, Dorinda centers her life on studying farming techniques to return to Pedlar's Mill and lead a life based on capitalism or homogeneous economy, production and accumulation becoming the most important for her. Another important thing to mention is the effect of capitalism over human beings. Quoting Bunch:

> Bataille[3] explains and Glasgow illustrates by Dorinda's success, that the homogeneous economy (usually synonymous with capitalism) assimilates human beings as tools for production, reducing them into objects and mere reflections of what they possess.
> Correctly perceiving that the essence of a life controlled by the sensibilities is anguish, Dorinda proceeds to spend the rest of her life with "dignity", making money, acquiring land, and denying her erotic impulses. (19)

Therefore, after the loss of her baby, Dorinda becomes a mere tool for production, a tool of capitalism being not capable of escaping the attraction that money has over her. She becomes obsessed with the farm and even marries Nathan to expand her power over land. It is only a "practical affair", because she really sees marriage as a cage: "The flutter of the heart like a caged bird. Feet flying toward happiness…. Yes, he was a good man, and you couldn't have everything" (378).

Nathan's children are also perceived by her as "more helpers to work the farm" (Bunch 20), this is, as members of capitalism. However, there are two characters who are representatives of the heterogeneous economy: John Abner and Fluvanna.

As we explained before, John Abner is the beloved stepson of Dorinda, a boy with a physical disability who is helped by Dorinda. Despite her refusal to pay attention to her emotions, Dorinda cannot avoid feeling affection for him, because, apart from the fact that both belong to the disadvantaged individuals of Calvinism and Darwinism, he is the inheritor of her character. Therefore, John Abner is in the field of heterogeneous economy, the economy of emotions in which Dorinda was raised by her parents.

[3] Bataille, G., *Visions of Excess (Selected Writings, 1927-1939).* Trans. Allan Stoeckl, Carl R. Lobitt, and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press, 1985.

Yet, this contrasts with her incapacity of identifying Fluvanna as a member of this heterogeneous economy, because she sees the black woman as a servant and not as her unconditional friend and helper. According to Bunch (21), by not allowing her to have the same social status, she is classifying Fluvanna in the field of capitalism, perceiving her as a tool of production. However, Fluvanna is a character capable of "validating both economies, but recognizing greater importance of the heterogeneous" (Bunch 21). An example is seen when Fluvanna and the other milkers criticise Dorinda when she decides to work in her wedding night, advising her to go with her husband.

After that, we find the moment when Dorinda has really achieved economic success, as she had been independent since she started to work in Old Farm. Now, she is totally free from men, social and religious impositions. However, the price to pay was to reject sex and love. Only by fighting her erotic impulses, she could succeed in the American capitalistic economy. Until that point of the novel, Dorinda is the clear example of the incapacity of combining both the homogeneous and the heterogeneous economies.

Nevertheless, at the end of the novel, there is a change in Dorinda, when she awakes to her reality. After Jason's death, she becomes aware that she has never known an erotic life and sees the importance of combining both economies:

> She saw now, as she had seen in the night, that life is never what one dreamed, that it is seldom what one desired; yet for the vital spirit and the eager mind, the future will always hold the search for buried treasure and the possibilities of high adventure. Though in a measure destiny had defeated her, for it had given her none of the gifts she had asked of it, still her failure was one of those defeats, she realized, which are victories. (525)

In this quote, we see how Dorinda becomes aware that what she really wanted in life, that is, the "pleasures found in erotic loss" (Bunch 25) had not been achieved by the homogeneous economy. So, Bunch sees the previous quote as an epiphany where Dorinda sees the importance of heterogeneity, and the victory of this heterogeneous economy over capitalism. In other words, Dorinda's return to social life, to Church and the bequest of all her properties to John Abner are a symbol of her moving toward a

heterogeneous economy. She now sees her future with expectancy, and, despite having rejected romantic love, she will accept what will come to her. She realizes that, if she continues enslaved to work the farm and obsessed with accumulating property, she will never achieve happiness. For that, she decides to abandon the homogeneous economy she embraced until that moment, returning to the heterogeneous one in which she grew up. What she had lost (eg. romantic love, eroticism) would never be recovered, but she could repair her life by accepting it as it comes, facing her destiny as she had done until that moment, not embittering herself but enjoying the pleasures of life.

4. Conclusions

Throughout this work, we have analysed the two types of women portrayed in Ellen Glasgow's *Virginia* (1913) and *Barren Ground* (1925), respectively. In both novels, we found instances of the obsolete Southern Lady and of the new modern woman. In this last section of our essay, we will draw our conclusions about this comparison, summarising the most important features of each type and justifying why the old type of woman must disappear from society.

The opposition between Virginia Pendleton and Dorinda Oakley is evident in the different behaviors that those women present. Virginia is a submissive, voiceless and dependent woman who fulfills all the qualities that society and religion demanded from her. Dorinda is all the contrary: she is a liberated woman who achieved success and economic independence through hard work, and gained the respect of the community by adopting a masculine lifestyle. This, at first sight, could mean that Virginia would achieve happiness more easily than Dorinda, because following the established models of behavior and not fighting against them could be more comfortable. Nothing further from reality.

Those differences have their basis on the relationship that each of the protagonists have with their mothers and lovers, being the idealisation of love and motherhood crucial points. First of all it is important to summarise the story of each character.

On the one hand, Virginia is a woman that was educated to behave with the manners of a lady, that is, to keep her mind empty, not to think of the real world that surrounds her and to follow the model of True Womanhood that her female ancestors had taught to her. In this field, the relationship that Virginia had with her mother, Mrs. Lucy Pendleton, played a crucial role, because she based her life on the advise this woman gave to her. Mrs. Pendleton's advise consisted mainly in submitting to her husband's will and never adopting an attitude of selfishness, as her family had to be always first than herself. This traditional behavior was a direct consequence of the Calvinist upbringing in which the Southerners were raised, believing that women were an inferior sex and that their destiny was to serve and obey her husband and family. Those women had not any type of independence: as they depended economically from their husbands, they could not have any different opinion from what they believed. They were almost slaves of their families. Furthermore, if the marriage was a failure and a separation occurred, the blame would be always put on the wife, and this would also be a shame for her family, especially for her parents, as the honor of a family depended mainly on the behavior of the female members. So, Southern Ladies were in a situation of total disempowerment. If they separated, they would be severely criticised not only by society but also by their own families. A daring attitude could suppose the total abandonment of their families and of society.

Additionally, there is another central point in the life of a Southern Lady like Virginia. Added to religion and marriage, motherhood was a pillar in a woman's life, and it was also another form of enslavement. Those women were educated only for serving the husband and caring for their children. If they failed in any of these duties, they were blamed not only by society, they also blamed themselves because without family, their lives had no sense. That's why, after being deserted by Oliver and having raised her children, Virginia feels to "have outlived her usefulness", because now her life is totally meaningless.

On the other hand, we find Dorinda Oakley. The case of this woman would have been the same of Virginia if she had not been betrayed by Jason. In other words, the break of the idealisation of love is what provokes that Dorinda awakes to her reality, rejecting all the imposed conventions over women. When she discovers her pregnancy and Jason's betrayal, Dorinda presents an attitude much different from that of Virginia when she discovers the romance between her husband and Margaret Oldcastle. Instead of conforming herself to spend her life in Pedlar's Mill, being criticised by society for being a single mother, Dorinda takes the determination to move the North to start a new life. Once there, she suffers a miscarriage, and we could say that this is the starting point of her freedom. Why? Because a child would have enslaved her in the same way it enslaved Virginia Pendleton and the other traditional female characters of the novels, as can be Mrs. Oakley. The existence of a child would have stopped the improvement of her life, because it would have been the center of Dorinda's world. With a baby, she could have never studied and expanded the few possibilities that a woman had in life, being those, to marry and to raise her progeny.

There is something else interesting to mention about Dorinda, and, it is the relationship with her mother. At the beginning of the novel, we can see that the advises that Mrs. Oakley gives to her are very similar to that of Mrs. Pendleton: "to marry right". This, according to Calvinism, was something that women must expect in life. However, after Jason's betrayal, this is something that Dorinda refuses. Implicitly, she is refusing the impositions of religion over women, and she is also rejecting to face life as a disempowered woman. She refused Calvinism in the ways it was imposed on women. Instead, she embraced religion from a position of power, resembling more her great-grandfather, John Calvin Abernethy, than her own mother, Mrs. Oakley. So that, what we see in Dorinda is a break with the imposed traditions, a break with the continuity of what mothers advise their daughters to do, a break with the past. She acquires the power of deciding about her own life, fighting against her Fate. Characters like Virginia, Mrs. Pendleton, Miss Priscilla Batte, Mrs. Oakley or Geneva Greylock were not allowed to do that, as they must be submitted to religion in a womanly attitude,

in an attitude of submissiveness. Her "growing into maleness" is what allows her to do that. What does it consist on? It consists on abandoning female clothes and on abandoning Church in order to not being ashamed for her masculine attitudes. However, she does not totally reject her feminine nature, creating life through land and making use of her "female power of creation and regeneration".

To conclude this study, we must say that the new woman's strength allows her to triumph over the Southern Lady. The only path to women's freedom is rebellion. Rebellion is what provides Dorinda with happiness, and submissiveness is what ends up sinking Virginia. Moreover, the straightforward facing of reality instead of sentimentality is something that helps women to succeed in life, which is what happened to the writer of both novels, Ellen Glasgow. If Dorinda had not faced her reality, she would never have succeeded. The acceptance of her life as it is, imperfect, and the acceptance of the consequences of her best and worst decisions is what makes her happy. The problem with the Southern Lady is not in making good or bad decisions; the problem is the lack of capacity for deciding what to do with her life. If Virginia had decided something by herself, she would not have ended her life secluded in her house. If she had decided something, Oliver would have never abandoned her, because he was really attracted by strong women. In conclusion, the only way to achieve happiness is the fight against the imposed dogmas in order to achieve the freedom of decision, independently of the the rightness or wrongness of these decisions.

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