

FEMINISTS ASSAULT CAROLINE GORDON

(1895-1981)

Since her death in 1981 the dogmatic Feminists who took control of English departments and publishing have denigrated or ignored Caroline Gordon because she is conservative, traditional, intellectual, complex, literary (over their heads), Southern, and Christian. The intolerance of Feminists made Gordon the most underrated writer in American literature. Also, as an objective New Critic, Gordon is seen as an enemy by Feminists who deny that objectivity is possible and replace it with subjective propaganda. Literary quality is determined by aesthetic values. Feminists have no aesthetic values, only political interests focused on themselves--"Me Studies."

By replacing the literary classics with mediocre politically correct writing, Feminists belittled and ignored the best women writers, showing more disrespect for the achievements of women than the worst male critics. Gordon epitomizes the woman who must do *a lot more* than a man would to earn deserved recognition. Still, *men* eventually canonized her, whereas women (Feminists) destroyed her reputation. Ironically, dogmatic Feminists are such philistine narcissists they are incapable of recognizing that most of the best American fiction writers in the 20th century are women--Wharton, Cather, Porter, Gordon, Stafford, O'Connor, Welty, and Robinson. The following quotations from Feminist critics illustrate how their sexism leads them to project political dogmas that are contradicted by facts. Their prejudice is more evident than insight. They often lie. For the most part, however, they are simply uneducated prejudiced readers, self-contradictory thinkers, and incompetent critics.

FEMINIST STEREOTYPE

The best critics have recognized that, contrary to the dogmatic Feminists who destroyed her reputation, Gordon did *not* relegate most women to subservient roles in "The Patriarchy." She portrays a great diversity of women in a wide variety of roles, from the heroic young mother captured by Indians in "The Captive" (1932) to the formidable goddess Hera (1972). At the end of her first novel the most powerful character is the socialite Joan Parrish who acquires the plantation Penhally. At the end of *None Shall Look Back* many women are managing families and properties in the South because so many men have been killed in the Civil War. At the end of *The Women on the Porch* Catherine has her repentant husband on his knees kissing her foot. A number of Gordon's women, including Susan Allard, Cassy Outlaw and Vera Claiborne are Christ-evoking and many others too are saviors of men, whereas Feminists are declared enemies of men. Gordon said "I have been inundated by advice from women all my life. It boils down to two pieces of advice: 1. Stop writing fiction. 2. Be just like me."

LIBERAL SABOTAGE

Liberal male editors of *The New York Times Book Review* sabotaged *The Garden of Adonis* (1937) by assigning a Feminist to review it, a mystery writer named Augusta Tucker. Years after he died, editors of *The Times* admitted they had tried deliberately to destroy the reputation of Wallace Stegner, the major Realist in the 20th century and a conservative like Gordon, both of whom were considered political enemies by New York leftists. Tucker's subjectivity is evident in her description of the conservative rural characters as "boring," by the condescending tone of her insult that Gordon is "best at old men"--as in deplorable old white males beneath the interest of progressive women like herself--and most of all in her assertion that the characters did not "come to life." Since Feminists do not consider men convincing in real life, it is to be expected that they would not find them convincing in a novel.

EXCLUSION

Males made Caroline Gordon canonical, but published no more articles on her after 1972 except Robert Penn Warren's introduction to her collected stories, because the Feminist movement began in full force and Feminists had already begun their campaign against the prominent dissenter Caroline Gordon in 1937 with the attack on *The Garden of Adonis* in the *New York Times Book Review* by Augusta Tucker. Then in 1960,

despite all her publications and recognition by prominent critics and leading writers, Gordon was excluded by Dorothy Nyren from *A Library of Literary Criticism: Modern American Literature*. Nyren was a librarian in the Concord, Massachusetts library, which once censored *Huckleberry Finn*. According to a number of studies, librarians are the most Politically Correct of all biased academics. Known for censoring conservatives, almost all librarians are Feminists who belong to the same political party by a ratio of over 200 to 1. Nyren selected 170 American authors who wrote or became prominent after 1904, including many *far* less important in literary history than Gordon--such as Erskine Caldwell, James Gould Cozzens, Vardis Fisher, William Goyen, MacKinlay Kantor, Carson McCullers, John P. Marquand, May Sarton, Irwin Shaw, Peter Viereck, Glenway Wescott--even the Communist hack Howard Fast.

Gordon was a victim of prejudice by both men and women. Because she had been dismissed by the likes of Edmund Wilson and Malcolm Cowley, and because women--Feminists--likewise dismissed her, male editors began excluding Gordon from their anthologies and histories: James D. Hart lists all her books with comment in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* (1983), but in his *American Fictions 1940-1980* (1983) the bigoted Frederick R. Karl discusses many unimportant Feminists and others while censoring conservatives. Karl refers to Gordon once in passing, discusses none of her works, associates her with the discredited Old South and mentions Wallace Stegner, the major Realist of the 20th century, only once in a footnote. The Harper & Row anthology of American literature published in 1987 omits them *both*, as does the infamous Heath anthology in 1989. By the 1990s radical Feminists had firmly established their regime of Political Correctness and no one got published who did not conform. Feminists disliked Gordon so much that in *Twentieth-Century Southern Literature* (1997) J. A. Bryant, Jr. is able to praise her conservative husband Allen Tate because he does so while slapping down Gordon with a lie: "Ironically in 1938 Tate in a single novel, *The Fathers*, had accomplished what Gordon attempted to do in nine."

In 1970, funded by a foundation, Feminists established hundreds of "women's studies" programs in colleges and universities throughout the United States. Using these programs the way Communists used cells to take over unions, dogmatic radical Feminists began taking over English departments and literary publishing and to denigrate and ignore the best women writers, replacing them with mediocre Feminist writers and others useful to their agenda. Students recognized the differences in quality between their choices of texts and literary classics, making it necessary for Feminists to abolish the classics. Moreover, Feminists have no interest in literature except as a means to a political end; they have rejected everything written before 1970 as "patriarchal"; they lack the imagination and humanity necessary to identifying with male characters or anyone with beliefs different from their own; they have had no literary education; and they have admitted to being incapable of objective reading.

Feminists are resistant readers. Males are dead to them already and so are conservative women writers. When they say that characters did not come to life they are confessing to their own lack of empathy and imagination. As Gordon said, "The reader who demands that his own moral code shall not be infringed upon, or his feelings lacerated by any unpleasant happenings in any book he reads, is actually demanding that the emotions aroused in him by the reading of any work of art shall not overflow into real life." "When we are tempted to censure an author because the characters in his novels do not adhere to our own code of morals we ought to remind ourselves that some of the greatest heroes of fiction--indeed of myth and legend--trespassed against the accepted code of their day."

NEGLECT

"By contrast with Eudora Welty...and with Katherine Anne Porter and Carson McCullers...Gordon has 'suffered a curious lack of appreciation.' Her 'unmodishness' [non-Feminism] may be responsible for her lack of wider recognition." (Vivienne Koch, 1953) "The writings about Gordon and her work are 'surprising and disappointing; the majority of reviews are either negligible or inadequate as criticism, and, considering the extent and excellence of her work, the fact that there have been only four general articles devoted to it is something more than surprising'." (Joan Griscom, 1956) "*Aleck Maury, Sportsman* was a 'minor classic,' and Gordon's books 'have grown more skillful with time' but 'not many people seem to notice'." (Arthur Mizener, 1956) "Gordon is mentioned only a few times in passing in this volume which deals with major and minor Fugitives, among whom she is not discussed. Gordon is listed as one of the 'newer group of Southern women writers'." (John Bradbury, 1958) "She needs somebody to write sensibly about her stuff

because nobody much has. She hasn't ever got the critical attention she deserves I am sure. I see Allen got some kind of medal." (Flannery O'Connor, 1958)

"No full-length study has yet appeared despite the subtlety and strength of her talent." (Frederick P. W. McDowell, 1966) Gordon has 'the most elusive reputation'; her novels 'have not yet had a full-length critical presentation.'" (Ashley Brown, 1968) "Gordon is 'a much neglected writer.' This is due in part to her unpopularity" [non-Feminism]. (James E. Rocks, 1968) "Gordon...is one of those writers 'whose absence from the rolls of contemporary American letters would so dramatically change the picture of our national literature in the second third of the twentieth century that it is almost unimaginable that [she] should not be there'." (Hugh C. Holman, 1970) "These stories have not received the recognition and critical regard which their intrinsic excellence and their relevance to the understanding of Gordon's total vision would seem to warrant." (John E. Alvis, 1972) "Of the major Southern novelists of the twentieth century, Caroline Gordon has been the most neglected. She is perhaps the least appreciated of the critically and artistically important American writers who have contributed directly to the development of their chosen form. Yet before her death in 1981 she had become an acknowledged master of the craft of fiction--especially among other artists of her own stature....[Due to] politics [and] religion....a major part of the story of her undervaluation has been the unavailability of her books, particularly the first five novels, which are the foundation of her achievement." [Feminist censorship] (M. E. Bradford, 1991)

"Despite the praise, the reputation, and the acknowledged importance of Miss Gordon's work, her fiction has not received the kind of critical attention one might have expected it to attract, particularly in an age so productive of literary criticism. To date, there has been only one thin pamphlet and a half-dozen or so articles about Caroline Gordon's eight novels and her two collections of short stories. One reason Miss Gordon's fiction has not attracted much critical attention is that her novels have never been popular.... Among other reasons that Caroline Gordon has been ignored is the fact that she is a demanding writer. Most of her novels are difficult to read, not because they are all stylistically or intellectually complex, but because they demand moral and esthetic responses that [Feminists] are unable to make. They...require of readers almost as much talent in the art of reading as their author has lavished on the art of their writing. Furthermore...Miss Gordon's fiction, though rigorously modern in technique is rigorously anti-modern [non-Feminist and Modernist rather than Postmodernist] in attitude." (W. J. Stuckey, 1972)

"Perhaps because most representations tend to fix Gordon in a one-dimensional pose [non-Feminist], the full scope and complexity of her art have not been explored. Her name has been submerged in analyses of the Southern Renaissance, modernism, and in *feminist studies* [italics added].... (Anne M. Boyle, 2002)

Michael Hollister (2020)

FEMINIST ADMITS NEGLECT

"Given the fact that Gordon's history is woven so intricately through the contesting fabric of cultural change and gender rearrangements, it is surprising that feminist critics have neglected an analysis of the works of this prolific writer. There is much in Gordon's life and art to intrigue literary scholars. She experimented with modern artistic techniques and explored many of the themes often associated with the study of women's literature. Indeed, Caroline Gordon seems to be a prime candidate for rediscovery.

Portraying women who feel imprisoned, who fear their creative and procreative potentials, Gordon writes of those betrayed by love and false authorities, those who are silenced, those who crave understanding and influence. Probing into suggestive changes of point of view and uses of poetic language, she investigates sexual and racial perceptions of self and society in her early stories. In her later works, she experiments with autobiographical fiction as she reconstructs her own experience as daughter, wife, and mother and wrestles with cultural, classical, and religious myths. Her memoirs, critical texts, and hundreds of personal letters offer insight into the personalities who dominated the art world during the twenties and thirties and describe her impressions and judgments of contemporary writers. Why, then, have critics neglected Gordon?

The answer probably lies in Gordon's public resistance to the tradition of women writers [women who write as Feminists rather than as persons transcending gender] and her apparent acceptance of patriarchal myths, structures, and values [whereas Feminists try to destroy them]. Although Caroline Gordon explores questions that intrigue feminist scholars who consider how gender and social and cultural values are reflected in women's literature, her responses to these questions are sometimes...disturbing....We come upon the anti-Feminist Gordon...[The reason why she is] not identified as a major American writer...[by Feminists, whereas males canonized her by 1972]

She is stereotyped as an assured and stubborn woman who resists...the modern world [Feminism]...She is presented as a demanding, passionate, and violently quarrelsome [caricature] woman who wished to remain with her husband, Allen Tate, despite his verbal and physical abuse and his many public infidelities [not as many by far as those tolerated by Feminists such as Hillary Clinton]. Her drinking, her anger, her sharp and condescending voice are remembered; so is her late conversion to Catholicism [Feminists are Atheists who discriminate against Christians], her disregard of racial issues in her later works [not in her earlier works], and her desire for the re-assertion of male authority." [Feminists demand *all* authority for themselves, whereas Gordon wants spiritual equality. It is comical to read a Feminist accusing anyone else of being "violently quarrelsome." The smear that Gordon is a racist because she didn't write enough favorable stories about blacks is characteristic of leftists who write no stories at all about blacks and make false accusations of racism to cover their own bigotry.]

Anne M. Boyle
Strange and Lurid Bloom: A Study of the Fiction of Caroline Gordon
(Fairleigh Dickinson U 2002) 32-33

FEMINISTS DESTROY GORDON'S REPUTATION

In 1989 the biography of Caroline Gordon by Veronica A. Makowsky, a professor of Women's Studies, killed her reputation by giving Feminists an excuse to ignore her. Makowsky is a molehill who belittles a mountain. She opens with a quotation from Gordon's memoirs describing a suicidal mood in her childhood. In her *first* sentence of commentary, the Feminist robs Gordon of her heroic life with the lie that she was suicidal all her life--weak and cowardly because she did not become a dogmatic Feminist like Makowsky: "The sense of abandonment to menacing presences, the moment of panic and despair, the seemingly miraculous recovery, and the resolution to confront the danger once more--these elements constitute the continual scenario of Caroline Gordon's life, the pattern that made her the good artist she was and prevented her from becoming the great artist she might have been."

The pattern Makowsky denigrates as disempowering is in fact the life pattern of a hero, one brave enough to "confront the danger once more." Makowsky deems Gordon second-rate because in her life and art Gordon is politically incorrect, disproving Feminist dogmas. Gordon was victimized less by men than by Feminists such as Makowsky and she was heroic in standing alone against a Feminist tide of hostility, slander and snobbery. For decades Feminists accused men of not respecting strong independent women, yet they themselves do not *tolerate* strong independent women. In truth, Gordon was not suicidal, she grew up to become one of the strongest women in American history, and one of the greatest writers.

On what basis does this Feminist demote Gordon from the canon and dub her a failure? She does not reveal her criteria until 212 pages later, where she quotes Gordon saying readers are more interested in action than in the thoughts of characters. It is certainly true that males often find "women's writing" to be self-centered and reduced to women's feelings. Makowsky exaggerates Gordon's accurate observation into a "credo" for all of her writing: "This credo is one reason Caroline Gordon is a writer's writer, not a popular author [with Feminists]. Her works are often beautiful examples of technical mastery, but the thoughts, the feelings, the wit, and the humor that enlivened her letters and her conversations are absent from her characters and her authorial voice. [On the contrary, see her wit and humor quotations.] In some ways the very seriousness with which she regarded the art of fiction barred her from the serendipitous, impulsive plunges into the human heart that often make for great fiction." Makowsky accuses Gordon of being *too serious!* To her a "writer's writer" is inferior to a "popular writer," demoting Henry James, Joyce, Porter, O'Connor and other greats to a status below the author of the Harry Potter children's fantasies.

The intolerance of Makowsky is juvenile. She requires that Gordon write like a "woman writer," the very limitation that all the best women writers transcend. She subordinates "beautiful technical mastery" to her preference for "women's fiction," faulting Gordon for not taking "impulsive plunges" like a giddy Romantic female instead of being a scrupulous artist. Because this women's studies professor has had no literary education, she requires an author to explain her thoughts and feelings in a story so that she can understand her. And she wants tragedies to be funny. Gordon is an objective symbolist like Joyce and writes according to the "iceberg principle" of Hemingway. Makowsky gives no evidence in her biography that she has any familiarity with Modernism. She is ignorant of literary history and aesthetics. The term Modernism does not even appear in her book.

Makowsky is one of the Feminists who took over English departments during the 1980s in order to replace literary study with their "Me Studies." She is an agent of the academic police state called Political Correctness. The term "police state" derives from *The Language Police* (2003), a study of Feminist censorship in the publishing industry by Diane Ravitch, a Democrat. Makowsky and other dogmatic Feminists set out to destroy the reputations of the best women writers because none of them agreed with their sexist dogmas. Another example of Feminist betrayal is the malicious biographer of Gordon's close friend Katherine Anne Porter--Joan Givner, a leftist Canadian professor and jealous mediocre fiction writer who sides with the Communist Josephine Herbst against Porter the patriot.

Joan Givner lied about Porter throughout the first edition of her biography in 1982, then published a second edition in 1991 in order to smear her some more. Porter died in 1980 and Gordon in 1981. Feminists like to attack their victims after they are dead and cannot defend themselves. Their propaganda does that to almost the entire American female population of the 19th century. Feminist biographers like Makowsky interview their subjects, gain their trust and then betray them. Makowsky is the coward, Gordon is a female Hemingway. Throughout her book Malowsky refers to Gordon condescendingly as "Caroline," as if she is a friend. Fortunately, two of America's greatest writers did not have to read the slanders about them by women who pretend to honor the greatest women writers then stab them in the back. Feminists advocate "women's rights" except for the right to disagree.

Only because intolerant Feminists now control Wikipedia entries on women writers, the commentary on Caroline Gordon's page is very short and none of her books are discussed. Nor are any of the books about her listed. This is an example of Politically Correct censorship at its most blatant. While "rediscovering" and publishing many mediocre women writers, Feminists who control literary publishing have not brought out Gordon's novels in paperback since she converted to Christianity, they have published no collection of her essays--despite her importance in the history of New Criticism--nor any collection of critical essays on her novels or her short stories. Lack of paperback editions has in effect censored works by her that offend Feminists, since instructors have been especially unlikely to require students to buy expensive hardbacks by a Politically Incorrect writer.

FEMINISTS CENSOR A GENIUS

Gordon is called a "genius" in *The Underground Stream: The Life and Art of Caroline Gordon* (1995) by Nancy Lee Novell Jonza. But Jonza does not prove Gordon's genius with analysis of her fiction in the context of literary history. Her biography is much superior to the hit job by Makowsky in 1989, but is likewise uninformed by literary history, as evident in the same failure even to mention literary Modernism: "Until recently Caroline Gordon's literary reputation has been based in large part on misleading and inadequate portraits of her as a woman and a writer. Gordon was almost always judged in the context of her relationships--especially her marriage--and not as a woman and writer in her own right." This accurately describes the prevailing Feminist judgment of Gordon, which is "misleading" and "inadequate" and based not on analysis of her fiction but on feelings about her as a woman rather than as a writer, especially feelings of disapproval because Gordon remained with an abusive husband (which is politically incorrect unless the woman is a Feminist running for President).

As a Feminist, Jonza herself gives the highest priority to gender--to being a woman. She too focuses on relationships, with a petty emphasis on Gordon's anger at betrayal, and projects her own irrelevant attitudes as Feminist critics always do. She reverses the priorities of Gordon, who gives the highest priority to art and to being a writer who transcends gender. Jonza sets out to dispel what she calls the "public myth" that

Gordon created for herself--"in part as an attempt to falsely reassure Tate that he was the most important influence on his wife's life and talent." Jonza sees deception and "self-protective posturing" rather than integrity, generosity, and self-sacrifice. She downplays the literary influence upon Gordon of the "evil" male Allen Tate and emphasizes the Feminist obsession that Gordon was a victim of spousal abuse. As a result, Jonza makes her seem pathetic rather than heroic.

ILLITERATE FEMINISTS PREVAIL

The Feminist critic Anne M. Boyle reinforces the negative stereotype of Gordon in *Strange and Lurid Bloom: A Study of the Fiction of Caroline Gordon* (2002). Her title actually describes her book rather than Gordon: She asserts falsely that Gordon consistently portrays "the failure of heterosexual love," as if homosexuality is the only alternative: "I am particularly influenced by my reading of the works of Adrienne Rich," she writes. Makowsky was Boyle's editorial advisor and Jonza "inspired" her. Whatever the sexual orientation of this author might be, her book is an attack on heterosexual relations from what is essentially a lesbian perspective: To her, matriarchy is Good, patriarchy is Evil. She quotes Gordon referring to "the belief so long prevalent that the 'Old South' was matriarchal in organization." "By 1880," Boyle notes, "the majority of schoolteachers in the South were women, and social and civic reform societies were proliferating in the South as well as the North." She emphasizes the power enjoyed by Southern matriarchs in Gordon's life and art, yet claims the South was totally patriarchal. If that were true, Aleck Maury would not have needed to escape from matriarchal women.

Also as a Feminist, Boyle hates "patriarchy" so much she has rejected God: She dismissively spins "the 'sins' of Eve" to "knowledge, voice, and assertiveness"--falsifying the Bible, where the sins of Eve are pride and disobedience to God. Boyle makes generalizations that subvert religious faith and attributes them to Gordon, claiming for example that Gordon had a "darkening vision": "Mortal men and women cannot rise above nor offset the chaotic trends of their constructed world." It is gender-bound Feminists like Boyle who cannot transcend their constructed world, not Gordon, who became a Catholic. Boyle contends that "the authority of the Catholic Church" was a betrayal of women and Gordon herself as a writer. She claims that religious faith and deference to men were choices she made "at the expense of her developing genius and voice." Having no knowledge of literary tradition or aesthetics, Boyle does not realize that Gordon was elevating her art to the standards set by the classics of past centuries, not just catering to "a literary circle" of men she knew. Most astonishing, as an uneducated Feminist, Boyle does not know how stupid she looks to deny "genius" to writers because they have literary values and religious faith--so even Shakespeare does not qualify as a genius--and to grant that status only to dogmatic radical Feminists who take impulsive but politically correct plunges writing Atheist "women's novels."

Like other Atheist critics feeling insecure in their own faith, Boyle insinuates that Gordon's religious faith is dubious or insincere, that "From her first published novel...to her last...there is evidence that feminine power, perhaps the power of the Great Goddess, existed prior to...the creation of patriarchy." She insists that Gordon "remained haunted by the possibility that a feminine power, perhaps the Great Goddess, ruled the world earlier and could return and destroy the constructions of men." This is a Feminist fantasy. Gordon was not a secret Feminist worshipping women or Nature. She knew well that worshipping a Nature deity is one of the worst sins in the Old Testament, repeatedly condemned by God, and that it would be Christ, not Gaia, who would destroy the constructions of men and of Feminists: "Those women of mine aren't followers of The White Goddess," Gordon declared. "They are simply unregenerate."

FEMINISTS DEFAME INDEPENDENT WOMEN

Boyle's first sentence suggests that Gordon is contaminated by Politically Incorrectness, sick in the head--"infected" by Southern values--and her first paragraph exposes Boyle as just as ignorant of literary history and aesthetics as Makowsky and Jonza. One might counter that Boyle, in her reductive prejudices, is infected by Feminist values: "From the forties on [she converted to Catholicism in 1947], Gordon is seen [by Feminists] in a much more negative light as divorced wife, vengeful autobiographical novelist, difficult and demanding critic, proselytizing Catholic, and conservative social critic....Most representations tend to fix Gordon in a one-dimensional pose." Boyle herself, for example, as when she argues that Gordon should have written "women's fiction" instead of writing "for a literary circle that would never fully accept her."

Men canonized Gordon. It is bigoted Feminists like Boyle who defamed and never fully accepted her. Just like Malcolm Cowley and his male friends excluded Gordon, so Boyle excludes her from her Feminist "community"--reducing her to a "marginal figure."

Throughout her book, Boyle complains that Gordon was independent, that she "resisted the label 'woman writer'" [as have all the best women writers]; that "she disparaged 'women writers' [those who cannot transcend their gender]; that she was "alienated from a community of writing women" [No, she was a close friend of women writers including Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Sally Wood]; that she rejected "the tradition of women writers" [and identified with the canonical tradition that includes both genders]; that she "never established a female community" [she welcomed males at Benfoly]; that she did not "locate herself in a community of women artists" [she had a family].

Boyle says, "Although Gordon does not explain what the 'womanly novel' is, one can be fairly certain that she is criticizing domestic fiction or the romantic or 'sentimental' literature usually ascribed to the popular woman novelist of the day." The feminist Nina Baym defines the "womanly novel" as displaying "allegedly female qualities, as the product of a timid, sentimental, narrow, trivializing sensibility...Some recent feminists, agreeing with this depiction, have seen the authors as hacks and traitors to their sex....A reexamination of this fiction may well show it to lack the esthetic, intellectual, and moral complexity and artistry that we demand of great literature." (*Women's Fiction: A Guide 1820 to 1870*, 1978: 18)

DELIBERATE IGNORANCE

Ignorance of literary history and aesthetics is a Feminist goal, in defiance of "The Patriarchy" and to avoid unfavorable comparisons of their chosen texts to the classics. Boyle explicitly rejects literary values: "the high cultural valuation of figuration, transcendence, and other modes of flight from the literal." To her literal mind, all literature is fantasy--"flight from the literal." Here the uneducated Feminist actually confesses to *disliking literature* because she has not been taught by liberals how to understand it and wants to get rid of it to make room for Feminist autobiographies, PC political tracts, and fantasies of power by "women writers."

"Figuration" (figurative language--metaphor, symbolism, allegory) is the language of great literature and transcendence is its dominant spirit. The language of the "womanly novel" is only literal, whereas literary language is *both* literal and figurative. Because she has no understanding of literature, when she mentions a woman writer who is in fact one of the best, such as Chopin or Jewett, she is reducing her to a woman writer without understanding her. She has never learned that *The Awakening* is not Feminist but a Realist satire of the Romantic New Woman, she misses the transcendental point of "A White Heron," and she thinks a "modernist" is merely a character like J. Alfred Prufrock or Quentin Compson (who is not a modernist but a diehard traditionalist).

Boyle ignores most of Gordon's short stories, snobbishly dismissing "The Ice House," one of Gordon's best according to all other critics, as "a rather tedious story of Northern meanness and greed." No doubt it is tedious to her because there are no women in it. She is too prejudiced to tolerate a story about men only and too ignorant to discern the complexity of the story--in particular the irony that the Southerner is just as guilty of meanness and greed as the Northerner. Her terse dismissal is evidence of how shallow and cursory her reading is. Boyle lumps all women writers together and judges them on the basis of personal taste and Political Correctness, according to the criteria set forth by Cheri Register in *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1971): "The final test must be the subjective response of the female reader [men can go to hell]. To earn feminist approval, literature must perform one or more of the following functions: (1) serve as a forum for women; (2) help to achieve cultural androgyny; (3) provide role-models; (4) promote sisterhood; (5) and... consciousness raising." No literary classic meets these standards.

Ignorance of literary history and a literal mind leads Boyle to criticize Gordon for being objective and subtle, writing according to the iceberg principle, refining herself "out of existence" like Stephen Daedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by Joyce. Boyle calls this sophisticated Modernist technique "inadequacy of expression." She thinks this is why Gordon "perplexes rather than satisfies readers." Uneducated Feminist readers like herself that is. Boyle refers to the "artistic detachment required by the

New Critics" yet she blames Gordon's detachment on a deception practiced *only* by her, intended "to mask her gender, to subdue feminine power." Yes, the technique is intended to "mask" not just gender but the entire author. It is sexist to deny a woman the right to use a technique used by men and philistine to see it as a fault. Boyle sees only the literal surface of a narrative. It is Feminists who "subdue feminine power" by promoting ignorance and depriving women of an education.

FEMINIST NARCISSISM

The narcissism characteristic of Feminists is evident in Boyle's discussion of how Gordon revised "Summer Dust" into "One Against Thebes." Boyle likes the first version best because it is Politically Correct, "about the choices a young, sensitive girl will face as she grows up in a society that denies her values and her value." She thinks the story "should be read" as one of the many stories by women that challenged the interlocking power hierarchies present in not only the political and social world but also in literature." The story "should be read" as furthering the Feminist agenda, reduced to gender power rather than read as art according to its own pattern of implications. Boyle complains that in Gordon's revision 32 years later, under the influence of her father the girl she identifies with "loses her name, her singular perspective, her contentious voice, and her lonely stand against violent and unfair power." Projecting herself, Boyle objects to bringing the girl into the real world where she must relate to men. She prefers the first version in which the girl turns "toward an alternate world governed by a fairy godmother." Boyle is an adolescent Romantic objecting to Realism.

Boyle condemns broadening the vision of the girl to include other people: "Using an omniscient narrator rather than a central intelligence, Gordon broadens her focus to include other characters." Feminists like Boyle are so self-important they want the spotlight entirely on themselves--*all the time!* Boyle goes on to complain about literary values: "Overt sexual symbolism and classical allusions reinforce theme and make more apparent this girl's place in a traditional and...stable society....Rather than providing more insights into Sally's character, the older Gordon chose to develop characters and forces in the environment that shape Sally's identity. Gordon expands Sally's connection to the male community by enlarging...the part of one male character." Boyle objects to any positive connection between a male and a female because Feminists want to polarize the genders. She also complains that the later version of the story reduces the threat of rape. Boyle even resents the normal relationship of the girl with her father, seeing the male parent as having "unfair power" over his daughter--a threat to her "contentious voice." Feminists are opposed to fathers as personifications of The Patriarchy and Boyle loses sympathy with the story completely because in her feverish eyes gender relations are always a competition for power: Gordon "pits the masculine voice of the father against the feminine voice."

As is true of Feminists on campuses all over the country today, Boyle wants to silence the male voice and to encourage little girls to become as contentious as they can. Her ignorance of Modernist techniques leads her to accuse Gordon of repeatedly "silencing the female protagonist." She is not able to detect the implications in the silence. To men, the most comical Feminist dogma is that women "have been silenced." Women have always censored male writers as much as they can--totally if possible, as on campuses today--and have always dominated the fiction marketplace, for the most part as sentimentalists who are popular with other women because they "do not plumb the abyss." Boyle is most absurd when she downgrades Gordon because she "does not plumb the abyss." Boyle does not know what the abyss is. She cannot define it: "the abyss" is "the undefined territory that threatens her fictional characters."

Boyle is the one who does not analyze in depth: She summarizes plots and applies her template of Feminist dogmas to them, making political stock responses and judging works according to who has "dominance," men or women, and whether female characters "are allowed" to express feelings congenial to radical Feminists of the late 20th century--who gets to win the gender war. Because she cannot define the abyss herself, let alone "plumb" it, Boyle blames Gordon, accusing her of using narrative strategies "to divert attention from the specific nature of the abyss." Boyle is so shallow it is ironic when she declares, "I strive to understand the depth of Gordon's personal and cultural uneasiness with the world." So to this Feminist, the abyss is not death or existential meaninglessness, it is merely "uneasiness." This woman could not see an abyss if she fell into one.

FEMINISTS DISEMPOWER WOMEN

Boyle does not acknowledge the power Gordon exerted on the teaching of literature throughout the United States with her anthology *The House of Fiction* (1950) and her demonstration of New Criticism *How to Read a Novel* (1957). Gordon was a *leader* of the New Criticism movement. Feminists are opposed to objective analysis because they cannot be objective and do not want to be--they are political activists, subjective by definition. Gordon personifies what Feminists oppose--objectivity, the classics, literary rather than political priorities, transcending gender, and respect for males.

Accordingly, Boyle punishes Gordon for heresy by saying that "Gordon's close relationship with these men and her *support* of the practitioners of the New Criticism, who exerted a most powerful influence over the discussion of literature from the 1940s through the 1970s, may very well have facilitated her movement away from exploring and affirming women's thoughts and values [Feminism] in her work." Boyle takes away Gordon's distinction as a leader of a major revolution in literary criticism and gives it entirely to men. She depicts Gordon not as a leader but as merely giving "support" to the movement. [Italics added.]

Similarly, by rejecting traditional literary values and calling them "masculine criteria," Boyle rejects the best literature by women as "masculine." This implies that being great writers makes women "traitors to their sex." By demeaning and ignoring the best women writers, rejecting their classics, Feminists deprive them of the recognition they deserve and deprive students of exposure to the best writing by women, giving the impression that what they teach instead is the best that women can do. In killing the classics by both genders, destroying literary study, persecuting males, denying them due process, prohibiting free speech, reducing enrollments and funding, provoking opposition to higher education, making English departments liabilities, and accelerating the demise of colleges, Feminists have appeared to validate the old stereotypes of women as childish narcissists--irrational, intolerant and totalitarian. Their monopolies in education and publishing have been disastrous for both. They have reduced opportunities for women of future generations and will subject them to men who distrust them and do not want to hire them because they might be Feminists who will accuse men unfairly and sue them. Feminists are the real "traitors to their sex." They are half-brained in excluding half the human race, proving that Gordon was correct that "women's culture" is "inherently inferior to men's"--which includes *both* men and women.

Anne Boyle is most obviously a radical Feminist when she indicates that her own goal is matriarchy--a "woman-centered world"--not equality but the "dominance" of men by women, as is already true now in the education system. As she sees it, dominance over men is the only way a woman can feel comfortable in this world (pages 34-35). She advocates total control over men. Her book perpetuates the gender war and indoctrinates by spreading falsehoods, still another proof of how Feminists have corrupted education. Boyle was a literature student in the 1970s (in her 40s) when the radical Feminist movement began to replace literary studies with their "Me Studies." She earned a Ph.D. in 1982 with a dissertation on Gordon that must have been directed by a radical Feminist, taught at Wake Forest and published her book on Gordon in 2002, just three years before she died. Surprisingly, she was married, had a number of sons and was buried in a Catholic cemetery. She dedicated her anti-male book to her husband and one of her sons and appears to have had a good relationship with them.

Nevertheless, Boyle's book is neither Christian nor tolerant of males. She flashes her Politically Correct credentials repeatedly, over and over again--*See how PC I am!*--with abundant citations and quotations of PC Feminists, reduction of Gordon's poet husband Allen Tate to an evil embodiment of "The Patriarchy," ridiculous complaints that women have been "silenced," and the pious lie that black writers have been excluded like women--this from a Feminist participating in a movement that silences and excludes men wherever possible--including black men. Boyle needed a recommendation from a Feminist to get her book published in 2002 and used Makowsky. Her bibliography and citations reflect her own dogmatic radical Feminism: Makowsky (8 citations); Jonza (5); Annette Kolodny (5)--Kolodny is a notoriously inaccurate and vicious anti-male critic; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2)--the most famous radical Feminist critics; and Adrienne Rich the distinguished lesbian poet (2). Not cited is William Stuckey, a New Critic whose *Caroline Gordon* (1972) provides some of the best close analyses of her fiction of any book.

A professor at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School and Editor of the *Journal of Forecasting* studied academic writing and concluded that anyone wishing to be published in the PC academic press controlled by Feminists after 1980 must: "(1) *not* pick an important problem, (2) *not challenge existing beliefs*, (3) *not* obtain surprising results, (4) *not* use simple methods, (5) *not* provide full disclosure of methodology, sources and findings, and (6) *not* write clearly." (J. Scott Armstrong, quoted by Charles J. Sykes, *ProfScam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education*, 1988: 105-06.)

Aleck Maury, Sportsman

Feminists advocate that women become independent of men *all the time*, yet they resent any man who wishes to be independent of women most of the time. Jonza calls Aleck "foolish and selfish." Boyle goes so far as to claim that Aleck hates women: She alleges that Gordon's "Aleck Maury fiction does, to use Louise Cowan's unambiguous phrase, present "active misogyny." (92) His actions and language suggest that he is a "self-absorbed misogynist." (106) Boyle refers to "Maury's misogynistic voice" (97) and asserts that "his misogyny" is "conspicuous." (115) Yet there is no hint that the affable Aleck hates anyone, whereas the Feminist smear "misogynist" is hate speech. Boyle is so uneducated a hater and so careless a writer that she frequently contradicts herself, even in successive sentences: Aleck is said to be "very concerned about the lives of others," then in the next sentence he is said to be "Unable to love or to care for others..." (112) He hates women yet "the reader is assured of Maury's love for his wife." (114)

Contrary to the Feminist accusation that he hates women: Aleck agrees with his father that his Aunt Vic is the "best scholar I ever knew, woman or no woman." He says Aunt Vic was "always charitable....Dear Aunt Vic! I feel a glow of pride even now when I reflect on her unfailing, her admirable sternness. It was on a scale with all her other virtues. I loved her and admired her then but it is only now after the lapse of many years that I realize what real grandeur of soul she had." "I suspect that Aunt Vic in adversity was a better manager than Uncle James had been even in his prosperous days." Likewise he clearly appreciates his attentive mother-in-law Mrs. Fayerlee: "My heart warmed towards the kind, motherly woman." "We were expecting a baby in November, and as the time approached I did not like to be away from Molly." "Molly sat up in bed, groaning and throwing her arms wide. I ran back to her and put my arms about her and tried to get her to lay her head on my shoulder, but she pushed me aside..." "I used to go in several times a day and hang over the crib watching him." "I know when I am licked. I got up and went outdoors. After all a child, a boy, up to the age of twelve or thirteen is inevitably in the hands of women and, I decided, might as well be left there."

"In our room Molly was lying face downwards on the bed, one arm flung across Dick's body. I knelt down beside her and put my arms around her but she did not seem to know that I was there." "I took her hand and told her that she must come now and get some rest. She did not look at me or speak and after a little I realized that she would not move. I got some blankets, for the nights grew cool toward morning now, and we stayed there together beside the bed until it was day." "Sometimes I would be roused in the night by her wild sobbing... I would have to sit beside her and tend her as if she were a child...I grew to feel that she did not want me with her and I sat those fall afternoons in my study in the other wing of the house." "That nameless anxiety that always beset me if I did not know where Molly was came over me." "I could never be easy coming in unless I exchanged a greeting with her or at least knew where she was or what she was doing." "Molly was dead." "I wondered whether it was grief that had dulled my faculties....It was two years now. I ought to be getting over it." "For the first time in my life I was free....Only, I thought with sudden panic, there wasn't anything now that I wanted to do..." I would read, or write the brief letter which duty compelled me once a week to send my daughter."

Contrary to the charge that he selfishly abandoned family ties, Aleck maintains them according to his own measure. In the end, his revived love of fishing and his choice of where to live is an heroic triumph over grief, aging, melancholy, loneliness, and the anticipation of death.

"The Petrified Woman"

The Feminist critic Nancy Lee Jonza claims that, because the story does not express her own point of view, Gordon was dishonest in her final version of "The Petrified Woman." Jonza claims that Gordon

"inverted" her *true* sympathies, that Gordon is *hiding* her actual allegiance to radical Feminism. Jonza is a typical Feminist--narcissistic and totalitarian--when she insists that "women's concerns" must *always* be paramount in fiction, wanting no sympathy for male characters and all virtue to reside in the females--an ironic echo of Victorianism. This sexist bias, inherent in Feminism, insults the best women writers and falsifies their fiction. As a rule, Feminist critics are petrified women.

"The Long Day"

An interpretation of this story is largely determined by how the reader understands the main event, the fight between Joe and his girlfriend Sarah. Evidently they are not married but she is violently possessive. She started the fight: Sarah is not an innocent victim, she attacked Joe with a razor, presumably because he has had an affair. This is excessive revenge. Sarah is contrasted to Joe's previous girlfriend Georgy, who was "no sucking dove" but at least "she never attacked Joe with a razor. This razor business is really too much, Fergus. If I were you I'd tell her to leave," says Mamie. The white characters do not know that Sarah has been cut, only that "She's feeling po'ly."

"Uncle Fergus said Sarah was the worst little hellcat he'd ever seen, but he didn't believe she meant to cut Joe. She thought a lot of Joe." When jealous Sarah came "jumping" at him with a razor and cut his face, apparently trying to slit his throat, Joe defended himself and then beat her. Afterwards, he did not run away, he takes care of her all the long day, keeping his head turned "listening for Sarah to call him." The further evidence of what happened is his insistence that "I never cut that woman...Before God, I never cut that woman!...She cut herself...tryin' to do me harm." If the author intended the reader to disbelieve this, she would have included some evidence to the contrary. As it is, we are left to imagine more precisely what happened. When she "jumped" at him with the razor, his natural reflex would have been to defend himself by grabbing her wrist. As a "hellcat," she must have held onto the razor and got cut herself during their ensuing struggle. After she dies he runs away because he knows he will be accused of killing her, just as the Feminist critics do. Interpreted this way, with sympathy for both victims, the story is tragic. Interpreted the Feminist way it is reduced to commonplace propaganda in their war against men.

The interpretation by Thomas Landess is valid. All the Feminist critics are inaccurate as usual: Ann Waldron does not notice that Sarah seems to be only a girlfriend and charges that Joe "has mortally wounded his wife." Jonza claims that Joe insists that Sarah "turned" the razor "on herself," committing suicide. *He did not say that.* But Jonza implies that he told this lie to cover up murder. Makowsky thinks a man who has an affair *deserves* to be murdered, complaining that "Sarah's husband can have an affair, but she can't retaliate with a razor." Nobody in the story says it is okay to have an affair and nobody but criminals and Feminists think it okay to attack a man with a razor. On the whole, most Feminist criticism is conducted in the spirit of attacking men with a razor. Boyle is also self-contradictory and absurd. She even claims that Mamie "murders Sarah." If these white Feminists were on his jury, they would all vote to convict the innocent black man of murder.

Michael Hollister (2020)

[Feminist critic]: "In 'The Long Day,' time seems to be stretched beyond endurance as readers are made to witness a prolonged tragedy that might be averted if Mamie, a white woman most often referred to as Henry's mother, *felt free to act* upon her convictions [False: Mamie *does not know* what is going on.]. Outside a black tenant's cabin where his lover Sarah suffers from a 'good larruping' after having done an 'outrageous' thing: gone after her volatile lover with a razor. Henry's mother, whose family owns the land, knows of the unpredictable and tempestuous relationships...Joe had had with women. She suspects trouble but, ever protective of herself and her family, particularly her son, and keenly aware of the politics of tenant/landlord relationships, *she subconsciously collaborates in Sarah's death* by refusing to investigate. Mamie not only allows Joe his privacy but also *guiltily* [?] defends *his* violence: 'I hope he beat her within an inch of her life. It's outrageous, really it is.' [False allegation: *Mamie does not know* that Sarah has been cut and is in danger of dying, only that she has been beaten. Also, the Feminist critic is ignoring the fact that Sarah *attacked Joe with a razor*. Italics added.]...

Henry's mother excuses male violence because she believes it will restore order in the cabin, the *patriarchal* order that she depends upon in her own life. [No, she excuses this particular act of male

violence because the woman who attacked the man with a razor is *mean* and violent and Mamie feels that Sarah deserves what she got--she cut her own throat.] Although the strong words of this articulate and opinionated woman are heard at the outset, Gordon soon undercuts her authority and proves that *men rule*. [This is not an issue in the story. Gordon is not a Feminist.]...

[Sarah's] dead body signifies, on one level, the consequences of unnatural and aggressive female passion. While it seems clear to Mamie that Sarah's lust and unfeminine wielding of a razor against Joe led to her own destruction, Gordon is purposefully *ambiguous* in her depiction of the causes of her death. Whether Sarah died at her own hands, as Joe claims, or whether he retaliated, *which seems more likely* given both *the placement of the wounds* [She cut Joe's cheek with one swipe of the razor and if she tried a second swipe and Joe blocked it, then the razor could have cut her own throat--ironic and in its way just.] and Joe's subsequent *lies*. [Lies? The critic has just said the death is "ambiguous," yet she takes the side of the woman throughout her discussion.]

One wonders...if manners control and hide violence or if the conventional roles accepted by whites and blacks, men and women, trigger violence....[The Feminist/Marxist blames all evil on the structures of society rather than holding the minorities they privilege responsible for their actions.] Gordon's text raises specific questions. Why does Joe respond to Sarah's passion with a razor? [He does not. She is the one with the razor.] Why do the white landowners condone his violence over her? [What evidence indicates that they "condone" it?] Why does Mamie allow her son to visit Joe? [Why not?] Why does she not help Sarah? [She does not know Sarah has been cut or how injured she is and she is reluctant to stick her nose into other people's domestic affairs, unlike Feminists.] Finally, why does Gordon protect Mamie while she objectifies and *murders Sarah*? [This is ridiculous. The author does not commit murder. There is no murder, it was an accident.] Gordon presents her readers with a 'conflicting story' of how interlocking power hierarchies of gender, class, and race *destroy the aggressive or black woman*...[These are stupid questions if the black man is simply stronger physically than the black woman. Italics added.]

Through his manipulation of social decorum, Joe manages to cage the consequences of his passion for a long day as he keeps Sarah's critical condition *veiled* from Henry *and his mother*. [This contradicts the earlier accusation that Mamie "murders" Sarah.]...In the wild landscape, he loses all protection; the white world must view him now as a violent criminal rather than as a legitimate avenger...Joe, at best, *sacrifices Sarah's life* and his protected space for a code of behavior that restricts his ability to consider independent and constructive action [She is *attacking him* with a razor!]

By emphasizing his ability to read and to control the behavior of the whites, while providing no direct portrayal of Sarah, Gordon traps many readers into accepting Joe as the central character, a vulnerable and tragic figure, *rather than a liar, manipulator, and killer* [Above, this Feminist said the responsibility for the death is "ambiguous," but now she is absolutely certain.] Sarah, however, a woman whose independence, passion, and assertiveness lead not only to voicelessness but to a death that *objectifies her as a spectacle of horror* [Feminists go to any length to drag in their irrelevant cliches.] may have been the character to whom Gordon's attention was drawn. Wood explained that Gordon names this woman, Sarah, as a signal of their friendship. Sarah, then, is certainly *not meant to be seen as evil and deserving of her fate*; she is the assertive woman who tries to live outside of society's protection [wielding a razor]. If Joe had not defended himself she would have killed him.

Joe's association with the child Henry, shown in those scenes when both manipulate women (Mamie and the family's cook Ella), suggests that both are childlike or unprotected outsiders, who attempt to use their wits to elude *authority* [contradicts statement above that Mamie has no authority] and assert their own control. In the last lines, when Gordon skillfully centers attention on Henry and links his flight toward the house with Joe's flight into the field of goldenrod, we see both males coerced into a wild territory [the house?] where their youthful identities are lost. Their loss, however, does not herald rebirth, character reformation, or revitalization of the weakened society. Gordon likens Joe to an animal running from captivity in the human world...and Henry's position is no more auspicious. Readers are left to contemplate the future of this young boy, who, horrified by his vision of the mutilated body of the passionate black woman [wielding a razor], feels, *perhaps* [Feminist projection] complicit in her death [an innocent child?] and runs back to his hesitating mother for protection, comfort, and understanding....

Positioned to one side of the narrative, Henry's mother, Mamie, is the only character who *has the insight and power to save Sarah* (and, therefore, Joe and Henry). [She does not even know that Sarah has been cut. Feminists frequently blame innocent people.] Instead, she is finally revealed as one of the many 'petrified' white women in Gordon's fiction who, fearing the wilderness outside *their cage* [!], will not elude those conventions or social amenities that sanction violence. The mother's ability to vent her emotions in speech and her final compliance set her in opposition to Sarah, whose act of passion traps her in silence and death. However alienated from one another, *both women are deeply related in their final acquiescence to, and victimization by, the stronger power of men.* Mamie's fears and her inability to act make her both *criminal and victim*; she is the woman with whom Gordon identifies." [Above, this Feminist said that Sarah was the one for whom Gordon had "friendship"; Gordon does not identify with racism. Italics added.]

Anne M. Boyle
Strange and Lurid Bloom: A Study of the Fiction of Caroline Gordon
(Fairleigh Dickinson 2002) 69-73

Mr. Powers

"It was the story of a man who accidentally killed his son when he threw an ax," says the Feminist critic, Jonza. No, he did not "throw" the axe: "The double-bladed axe, swinging backward..." struck and killed his son by accident. Since the axe struck his son on his "backward" awing, that impact would have stopped his movement before he could throw the axe. Mr. Powers is fortunate that none of these Feminist critics will be on a jury deciding his fate. Waldron is so mistaken she thinks Mr. Powers "attacked his wife with an axe." Jonza thinks wrongly that he "threw" the ax and Makowsky pays so little attention to the story she overlays its events and meanings with her irrelevant Marxism. Gordon was not a Marxist. Finally, Boyle repeatedly calls Mr. Powers a "criminal" before he is tried for a "crime" that was actually an accident. Feminists convict men of all evil because they are men, without due process.

Mr. Powers" is about charity and forgiveness. Feminists are about blaming men. They do not blame the wife at all, though she initiated the tragedy by having an affair with the hired man. Judge Pryor knows Mr. Powers as a hard worker who lived on his place for five years. His judgment carries a lot of weight in the story because he is a judge: "The judge thinks a lot of him. Says he's always had this quick temper, like all the Powerses, but he's all right if you handle him properly. He's a hustler, too." In contrast, the hired man is immoral in committing adultery with his employer's wife and is described as "mean." Society and its legal system are inclined to be unforgiving, as are some members of the community.

Mr. Powers is charged with murder. Jack says that "they all think" that he will get off "with a light sentence. Ten to twenty years. He could hardly expect to get off with less than that." This should strike the reader as shocking, since the killing was an accident. At most the charge should be involuntary manslaughter, as Ellen says. But even so, Jack says "Manslaughter and assault and battery with intent to kill....He could get life for that." Mr. Powers did not immediately attack the hired man when he found him with his wife at midnight: "There had been a good deal of shouting back and forth and calling of names." No doubt Mr. Powers ordered the hired man off his place. Apparently the hired man would not go and leave Mrs. Powers alone. "Jim finally picked up an axe and went after the feller with that."

None Shall Look Back

Veronica Makowsky is the Women's Studies professor who declares on the first page of her biography that Gordon failed as a novelist because she did not become a dogmatic radical Feminist. As a Feminist, Makowsky has no literary education and clearly has never read *The Red Badge of Courage* because she complains of *None Shall Look Back* that "Without an expert knowledge on the Civil War, the reader cannot know what the battle is, why it is important, or even the date." On the contrary, this information is in the novel: dates of or introducing most of the major battles are specific--"early in February, 1862" (73), "the nineteenth of September, 1863" (232), "September 21, 1863" (277), "the eleventh of February, 1864" (310). Six dramatized battles are named after the places where they were fought: Fort Donelson, Chickamauga, Okolona, Brice Cross Roads, Franklin, and Murfreesboro. The importance of each battle dramatized is clear in the behavior of the soldiers, in dialogue, and in the orders given by the generals. Actually, the

reader does not need to know anything about the Civil War. The reader need only follow the narrative as a vicarious experience, but a critic needs to know how to read a literary text.

Because she had no literary education, Makowsky cannot infer from implications and requires a writer to explain the meanings of a novel directly, blaming Gordon for her own limitations: "She sometimes forgot the [uneducated] reader's need to follow and understand the action." As if Gordon is the stupid one. No, she did not "forget," she wrote for educated readers, or for anyone with a receptive attitude. Feminists require that fiction be dumbed down so that they can understand it. And they have no sense of literary form, as when Makowsky says, "Some of these public scenes are *enormously effective*, such as the two small boys watching the beginning of the Chickamauga or General Nathan Bedford Forrest confronting his pusillanimous fellow officers at Fort Donelson. *Their inclusion, however, is at the expense of the novel as an integrated whole.*" [Italics added.] The scene of the two small boys is an allegory evoking comparison of this Henry to the Henry in *TRB* and provides an innocent perspective on violent death; the Forrest scene at Fort Donelson is one of the most integral in the novel. Makowsky exposes herself here as completely out of touch with the literal plot as well as with the aesthetics of the novel.

Without knowing it, Makowsky responds to a technique of Impressionism: "In a way, this lack of information contributes to a sense of confusion that mimics that of war; a soldier, however, would at least know where he was, the name of his general, and some of his larger purposes." On the contrary, "The private soldier never knows where he is going next or why." (104). In *TRB* young Henry often does *not* know where he is, what the name of the battle is, who is winning, or what may be the larger purposes of his general. Most infantry soldiers in combat do not know. That is a traditional theme in war movies. Makowsky knows nothing about war, let alone the Civil War, yet she presumes to belittle a great Civil War novel by an expert.

The Feminist critic Anne M. Boyle in *Strange and Lurid Bloom* (2002) is so dogmatic she falsifies the text repeatedly in order to make allegations. She has no interest in the novel as written, only in criticizing the patriarchal social order of the Old South. She reduces the large cast of the novel to only two women, Lucy Churchill and Susan Allard, the characters she sees as most like and most unlike herself. She analyzes only one episode, Lucy's visit to the slave quarters (Part I, Chapter 5), which she characterizes falsely as "full of violent energy that is subdued or at least controlled in Lucy's wealthy, aristocratic, and patriarchal world." On the contrary, "The men were all in the field at this time of day but a number of old women and children were on the porches." One is an elderly black dwarf who does no work. Peace is connoted by the pastoral scene, in particular by "the flock of sheep grazing just then not a hundred yards away." The only violence mentioned here is the beating of Della the mulatto girl by the white overseer. Otherwise the slave quarters are peaceful and none of the slaves has run away, in contrast to the ram "which persisted in breaking out of any pasture he was put in."

Boyle makes a false allegation of rape, as Feminists so frequently do, exaggerating "the horrors of racial oppression and sexual violence." Gordon acknowledges horrors with this episode of the cruel beating, and also by referring to the neighbor Colonel Miles: Lucy "had heard of people whipping negroes. There was a man living not a mile from Brackets who punished unruly negroes by fastening them to the back of a buggy drawn by a fast trotting horse. She had heard people speak of this Colonel Miles all her life in disapproval." Gordon implies that extreme cruelty is the exception rather than the rule. The Feminist critic refers to the "lustful white overseer" and claims that Della was a "victim of lust." On the contrary, there is no evidence of sexual assault whatsoever. "There was a purple bruise on her arm and in the middle of her back a great lacerated place clotted with black blood." Della does not say she was raped, she says she was beaten. She does not call the overseer a rapist, she calls him a "mean man."

The Feminist does not mention that Della is mean herself. When they were childhood playmates, Lucy learned that Della was "bold and revengeful": "When Aunt Mimy, the cook, refused to let the children lick the dasher from the ice-cream freezer one day it was Della who had thought of fastening the wire across the path which Aunt Mimy had to traverse between her cabin and the out-kitchen." When Fount Allard asks Uncle John the "intelligent, elderly looking negro" what the trouble is, the black man blames Della, not the overseer: "Hit uz that yallow gal, Della, Marster." The cause of the beating was not a rape: "She sassed him, all right... Hit uz about bringin' water from the spring. He say he tole her three times to fill up that

pitcher what set on his washstand and she ain't never done it. He git in there ever' night and they ain't no water to wash with and then he go after Della."

Ironically, the beating is Lucy's fault. The woman the Feminist critic identifies with and characterizes as a victim of the patriarchal order is the white *girl* who owns these slaves and is responsible for their welfare. Lucy is supposed to be supervising the overseer: "These were Lucy's own negroes in whom she was supposed to take a special interest." Her excuse is that she is female. "If she had been a man and could have assumed...management, [Cabin Row] would not have been the thorn in her grandfather's side that it had been now for years." Boyle the Feminist identifies with the female who refuses to take responsibility. Naturally, when she learns that Della has been beaten by the overseer in her absence, Lucy feels guilty, but she places all the blame on the man: "The horrible, brutal creature! Grandpa doesn't allow anybody to lay a hand on his negroes." Her grandfather has to compel her to go examine Della. Taking responsibility himself, he "now felt that he had been negligent. He should have examined this man's character further before putting him in charge of negroes." Lucy assures Della that "Grandpa'll beat *him*. He won't let him stay on this place." Knowing this, the overseer is already gone.

Liberals want you to believe that all southerners who owned slaves abused them. They reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes, whereas Gordon debunks them. To the dogmatic Feminist, Fount is a patriarchal oppressor, whereas Gordon depicts him as respectful, even deferential to his slaves. The first paragraph ends with the slave woman Mrs. Sampson--whose name suggests great strength--criticizing Fount: "You going to Cabin Row? I was saying to Henry last night it was about time some of you all was over." Her complaint, repeated by other slaves, is that their white owners are ignoring them, not that they are oppressing them. These slaves have independent minds and are outspoken. Old Henry spits on the ground and disagrees with Fount's judgment in hiring the present overseer. Fount believes the account of the beating given by Uncle John and does not even ask the overseer for his version of events. He trusts the blacks more than he trusts his white overseer.

Feminist critics such as Makowsky and Boyle rewrite books by misinterpreting them in ways that promote their political agenda. Boyle turns Gordon's novel about male and female heroism in the Civil War to a novel about the alleged oppression of women: "*None Shall Look Back* must be seen as a work of violent confrontation with a *culture* where traditional race and gender arrangements have been disrupted." [Italics added.] That is to say, this is not a novel about the violent confrontation of two armies of men, it is a novel about women as victims in a patriarchal *culture*. All the dead male soldiers represent the liberation of women from men. At the same time, Boyle suggests that the Civil War was important primarily as a "betrayal" of southern women, depriving them of happiness.

Feminists are very pious about the evil of prejudice against blacks, who are one of various ethnic groups, whereas Feminists themselves are prejudiced against half the human race and have produced a toxic "woman's culture" that persecutes men on campuses all over the country. Women's Studies programs teach women to regard all men--white and black--as rapists. "Men who are unjustly accused of rape can sometimes gain from the experience." (Catherine Comin, Assistant Dean, Vassar College). Boyle's lesbian perspective is expressed when she claims that Gordon depicts "the incompatibility of masculine and feminine values, needs, and desires and the failure of heterosexual love." No, the novel opens with the Allard family celebration that demonstrates the *compatibility* of masculine and feminine values in a traditional society that is both patriarchal and matriarchal, with separate gender roles. All the dancing and romancing demonstrates the compatibility of needs among heterosexuals and love fails because of the war, not because all heterosexuals should turn gay.

Boyle emasculates the hero of the novel, Rives Allard. She is so oblivious to the effects of war on a soldier that she does not consider it a factor in changing his character: "Rives' silence, discomfort in social situations, gloomy nature, and morbidity may be attributed to his mother's inattention to traditional familial comforts and customs." His "morbidity" is caused not by the bloody carnage all around him in battle after battle, it is caused by his traditional mother. His "love of death...may well represent the *longing* of a *genderless or androgynous* [nonsense] man who, having known no maternal tenderness, *no paternal authority* [the opposite is true], wishes to die on *the bloody fields that his mother tends*." [Rives does not die in Georgia, he dies in Mississippi.] So the motive of the hero is not to win the battle and to drive

invaders from his country, it is to spite his traditional mother. The male hero is not really brave and strong and masculine, he is petty and ignoble. He just wants to die. At the same time, however, as a weakling he is a Feminist New Man--"androgynous"! This is supposedly because his mother, Susan Allard, is traditional--"weak and pathetic." [italics added]

Boyle hates traditional roles so much that she even claims that the traditional mother is *sadistic!* Susan Allard "unconsciously taught her children to love the pain and loss to which she gives *all* her attention." Susan spends most of her time on horseback supervising her field workers. If she was sadistic she would have a sadistic white overseer who would beat her slaves instead of a *black* man, Uncle Mack, who is "more like a member of the family than a servant." [Italics added.] If Susan was sadistic she would not have forgiven the murderer of her husband: Susan Allard declared that "vengeance belonged to the Lord, and she quoted something about giving the stranger thy cloak also." She is quoting Jesus Christ. She also exhibits Christian charity by affirming that "her husband was quite right in sharing his horse with the stranger even though he turned out to be his murderer." As a battlefield nurse caring for wounded soldiers Susan sets an example of charity and love. Loving her neighbor as she loves herself, she gives away the furniture in her house to invalid neighbors: "A carved rosewood sofa carried out to a negro cabin because rheumatic old Aunt Dolly liked to sit up close to the fire." Boyle the Feminist sees no love in all this charity. Susan Allard is the most Christian character in the novel, the most like Jesus: "She was indefatigable in her charities." It is not Susan who is sadistic, it is Feminists rabid for revenge.

When critics make things up they claim that the author or the character was "unconscious" of what the critic has discerned with insight superior to that of the author. According to Boyle the traditional Christian mother and battlefield nurse Susan actually loves to see people suffering and teaches her children to be sadists. No, she taught Rives to be a self-sacrificial hero. Rives' mother "abandoned her domestic duties to tend to community needs." No, that is what Feminists do. "Susan was in the saddle from early morning on, overseeing the work in her fields or attending to the wants of her neighbors." Boyle claims that "Her children are often victims of neglect." No, they are "victims" of discipline: "Her sons--and her foster sons--were required to work in the field along with the negroes for half of every day." Boyle says "Rives and Lucy inhabit a world *without parental authority or love.*" [Italics added.] Like most Feminist critics, Boyle is unable to recognize love in any form, especially not between heterosexuals.

Susan Allard is heroic as widow, mother, farmer, and battlefield nurse. She teaches her children to be disciplined, strong, hardworking, egalitarian, family-oriented, and Christian--traditional. However, like most kids, her children were "young and pleasure loving" and rebel against her "moral compulsions," against the "burden" of doing good--of being like Jesus. Since her children love pleasure, they must not have been altogether denied it by their mother. Susan sets an example of self-sacrifice that inspires her son Rives and is required of many others in the war. Feminists hate self-sacrifice and instead teach self-interest and revenge. Susan's daughters marry young and her sons leave home not because she is *sadistic*, but primarily because they feel the house is too crowded after Susan takes in seven neighbors whose house burned down: "But Mama," asks one of her daughters, "where can we *put* them. In my room?" Most people would not take in seven neighbors. Jesus would.

How little Boyle understands the novel is evident when she says that Susan Allard "seems to be treated more harshly by critics of Gordon than by Gordon herself." Yes, the traditional Christian is treated harshly by atheist critics like Boyle, whereas Gordon makes Susan the spiritual and moral exemplar in the novel. "It was his mother's character and way of life that set the Allards apart." It is ironic that the most Christian character is also feminist, as distinct from a dogmatic radical Feminist like Boyle: "Susan Allard, after her husband's death, went on farming her land with the help of old Uncle Mack as overseer." She is feminist in taking over management of her farm, supervising the workers herself, reversing gender roles, and rejecting the large plantation system in a step toward equality by dividing her land out to her sons as soon as the oldest came of age.

Susan Allard represents social progress, treating blacks like members of her family and bonding with her neighbors. Her feminism confuses Boyle, who cannot therefore condemn Susan completely as a sadist. She must admit that "Susan Allard is perhaps Gordon's most balanced and objective portrayal of an 'unfeminine' woman." She says "In portraying both her heroism and her difficulty in openly demonstrating

love for her children [no evidence of such difficulty is cited], Gordon *comes closest to accepting and perhaps even celebrating* the life of the woman who, though a mother, finds herself at home in the masculine landscape. Like Gordon's own mother--like the artist herself--Susan Allard's field is not limited to the kitchen." Unlike Gordon, the dogmatic Feminist Boyle cannot bring herself to celebrate a traditional woman and resists anyone else doing so. [Italics added.]

At one point Boyle refers to the marriage of "John and Lucy in *None Shall Look Back*." Apparently all men are Johns to this Feminist. She also claims that the novel demonstrates "the bleakness of the modern patriarchal world." The Old South in the 1860s was not the "modern world." At the end of her discussion, she claims that Rives Allard is "like Quentin Compson, [who] finds solace in death." In Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* Quentin is an immature romantic boy so weak he faints rather than shoot the man who took his sister's virginity--a trivial cause--and eventually *kills himself*. Rives is a combat veteran who fights bravely in many savage battles and dies leading the charge on enemy lines carrying the flag of his cause. Feminist absurdities interpreting texts reflect their absurd interpretations of life.

Green Centuries

(1) The most common mistake of the critics is conflating pioneers, mostly farmers who settled down, with frontiersmen, hunters who kept moving west. Many critics are urban liberals with a bias against rural people and many of their sweeping generalizations about pioneers are the opposite of true, falsified by Political Correctness on race, religion, and the environment. Boyle is the worst, ignoring religious faith and scalped children while claiming that "Gordon's sympathies are with the Indians."

(3) The identity politics of liberals have made them racists in idealizing all Indians while condemning whites. Feminists are also hypocrites in condemning all patriarchy as evil except in Indian tribes, as if they would prefer to be squaws. At the time Europeans arrived, there were over 400 different Indian tribes in North America, some peaceful, others at war all the time. "These Indians down this way seems like all they want is to be let alone but up there in the Six Nations they study war." One Canadian chief "reached over the counter and sunk his tomahawk in Joe's head." "Captain Eliot's body had been cut into pieces... Before the Indians did him the kindness of killing him they had heated their gun barrels red hot and thrust them into his bowels." At Fort Loudon, "officers and men had all been massacred." "They scalped the captain there on the field and made him dance a long time and when he give out they cut off his arms and legs and stuffed dirt in his mouth..." "Luke lasted all night... They had gun barrels heated and they stuck 'em up him. He hollered then. I don't know whether he was dead when they cut his arms and legs off..." "Paul Demere had been scalped alive before they cut his arms and legs off." "Frank looked the worst, scalped and his back bone hacked in two. He must not have known what hit him, asleep there on his face and the Indian creeping out on him from behind the tree." Cherokee warriors take scalps randomly: "They did not love to return empty-handed." In over 10,000 years, American Indians hunted many species to extinction, were often genocidal and did not succeed in creating a unified nation.

The Woman on the Porch

Although the plot will be resolved in one of only two ways, both of which are quite plausible and commonplace in broken marriages, Feminist critics find it difficult to accept that Catherine chooses to forgive Jim: Boyle says that "critics are often bothered or baffled by the last impressionistic and cryptic pages of *The Women on the Porch*." The ending is "cryptic" because Feminists lack the objectivity required to interpret literature or life well. They cannot transcend their self-centered dogmas. Feminists are "baffled" by Gordon's ending because they cannot imagine a woman making a choice different from what they would make. They are "bothered" because they advocate revenge rather than forgiveness. Catherine has it both ways: she has her revenge when she tells Jim of her affair with Tom and she also saves her marriage. The Feminist critic Jonza is so baffled she complains that Gordon was not explicit with her meanings and is so bothered she claims that both Gordon and Catherine are weak and unwise to forgive their husbands. Cowan is "puzzled" and claims that the reconciliation comes "out of the blue," as if it was not a possibility all along. Makowsky is so baffled she resorts to a Feminist cliché, that Gordon is "blaming the victim." Nonsense. It is ironic that the Feminists fail to see Catherine's "feminist" triumph and the authority she will enjoy in her marriage for the rest of their lives.

In Gordon's earlier fiction, instances of enduring love between men and women are few....Characters in Gordon's early novels and stories either vaguely feel, fear, suppress, or discount supernatural or spiritual forces. Ellen Cromlie of 'Mr. Powers' believes in a power reflected in nature, but she fears even its shadow and works to keep herself in her own circle of light. The fact that these supernatural presences are often felt by women or described in feminine terms further diminishes their influence in Gordon's masculine world. Her male characters are so fearful of the power inherent in the 'evil' or destructive woman that *they reject the feminine 'presence,' be it menacing or inspirational.* [Not true. A number of her husbands yield to their wives, including Jim Chapman and Stephen Lewis, who literally bows and kisses his wife's foot.] For Gordon, the crisis for modern men and women arose from individuals who strove to retain hollow traditions [Christianity is not "hollow"] and gender roles in a changed world."

The Strange Children

In her novels of the fifties, Gordon allows her hitherto aspiritual male protagonists to achieve a supernatural or spiritual vision *from women* [female authority] that authorizes them to assume *control over the abyss.* [How do you "control" death or Hell? Italics added.] That the Catholic Church legitimizes such power leads many readers to evaluate Gordon's later works, especially *The Strange Children* and *The Malefactors*, in terms of her Christian vision....In her 1944 novel [*The Women on the Porch*] Gordon ambiguously depicted Jim Chapman as either *the deadly snake who destroys female power* [Feminist illusion. Italics added.] or the Orphic hero who rescues Catherine by leading her out of the static realm of Swan Quarter and toward the city, where, together, they will confront a world of lost values and of violent and authoritarian rule. [This is the plot, not the Feminist illusion.] In 1951, Gordon leaves a similar male protagonist, Stephen Lewis of *The Strange Children*...groaning over...the dangers inherent in a life not predicated on faith and spirituality. Unlike the enigmatic vision of Jim Chapman, Stephen Lewis's vision is Christian and clear. He experiences an awakening in which he realizes he must cast off his cynical, intellectual philosophy of life, but he has not attained the stature of the prophet and knows not what he must do after that. The novel ends not with action but with his groan of recognition....

If we are to save our culture--and save our marriages--intellectual man must construct and articulate a moral vision, which is derived from the intuitions of women who serve as unresisting vehicles for divine revelation....[This Feminist critic sounds as if she might *resist* divine revelation.] Like Jim Chapman, Stephen Lewis has a vision of death and the destruction of the world, but here, instead of using the mythical imagery of a Great Goddess who reasserts her authority over the world of men [worshipped by Feminists], Gordon chooses to use Christian imagery and the language of Saint John....

The Malefactors

[This radical Feminist critic goes on]: In *The Strange Children* and *The Malefactors*...she turns her attention to the salvation of the frustrated, intellectual, emasculated man who needs to locate his authority and assume responsibility....Stephen Lewis and Thomas Claiborne *assert their point of view and their desires over their respective wives* at the close of both these novels....[False: They both submit to their wives. At the end Tom even bows and kisses his wife's foot! Italics added.]

Tom Claiborne of *The Malefactors* is...finally propelled into action. A man haunted by his dreams of artists who cannot express their suffering or their love, a cruel and unfaithful husband, Tom drives to the refuge that his wife has found for herself, a community in which she cares for the homeless and the handicapped. There, he finds reconciliation based upon his restored faith that wives, according to doctrine, must be *submissive to their husbands.* [TOM BOWS AND KISSES HER FOOT!] *The Malefactors* represents, certainly, Gordon's most stunning declamation of masculine authority [Feminists do not know that God is the authority.] and feminine forgiveness and submission....If we are to save our culture--and save our marriages--[misses the main point: saving our souls] intellectual man must construct and articulate a moral vision, which is derived from the intuitions of women who serve as unresisting vehicles for divine revelations."

Anne M. Boyle
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