

ANALYSIS

THE STYLE OF CAROLINE GORDON

(1895-1981)

"Magnificent....[*Aleck Maury, Sportsman*] It reads as if a gentleman of the old south who knows not only Latin and Greek but English, had sat down and written his memories in the first words and phrases that came handily, and the kind that came handily would naturally have this sure, slightly formal and balanced rhythm. It's fine masculine prose, and why shouldn't it be, you writing with the sound of your father's voice, all the voices of you fore-fathers, in your ears."

Katherine Anne Porter
Letter to Gordon (undated 1935)

"[*None Shall Look Back*] truly demands praise...written in a style so perfectly suited to its matter that it goes straight to the heaven of all true lovers of style...prose beyond praise....It is undoubtedly that suitability of every sentence to what it is meant to convey that is the secret of Miss Gordon's effect."

Dorothea Brande Collins
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
American Review 8:497-501 (1937)

"Her style is 'vastly superior' to Margaret Mitchell's."

Edith H. Walton
"Miss Gordon's Civil War Novel"
New York Times Book Review (21 February 1937) 6
summarized by Mary C. Sullivan
Flannery O'Connor and Caroline Gordon: A Reference Guide
Robert E. Golden and Sullivan (G. K. Hall 1977) 220

"A novel [*The Women on the Porch*] 'for those who like fine and evocative writing' ranging 'far out to the periphery of experience'...It is a 'rare treat'...The story-line peeps 'in and out of the book like a meandering stream...or better, like a convenient thread...with which to tie up' observations, personalities, and 'the brilliant single strokes of poetic realization that make up the book.' Gordon lavishes upon even minor characters 'the ultimate powers of her perception' and in her characterization resembles Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. Her poetry appears 'sometimes in a sentence,' in a 'sustained lyricism'...or at a chapter closing [e.g., Chapters 9, 13,15, 17]. Every page is 'marked with her devotion to the craft of writing.'"

Nathan L. Rothman
"'Escape' to Tennessee"
Saturday Review (27 May 1944) 24
summarized by Mary C. Sullivan
Flannery O'Connor and Caroline Gordon: A Reference Guide
(G. K. Hall 1977) 225

"Gordon writes prose that is 'perhaps the most unaffected and yet the most classically accomplished written by any American woman today'."

Vivienne Koch
"Regions of the Heart"
Briarcliff Quarterly 1:222-27 (1945)
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 228

"A very fine book of short stories. There is ease in the telling, restraint in the planning, and care in the phrasing. Never is the intention of the story compromised for the sake of popular appeal or cheap effect."

[Each story has] a richness of conception and a measuredness of meaning which makes the book solid, varied, delightful, and original."

Paul Engle
Review of *The Forest of the South*
Chicago Sunday Tribune (23 September 1945) 9

"Few writers have so admirable a talent for creating by suggestion. [Gordon makes you] sense a great deal more than she tells."

Anonymous
Review of *The Forest of the South*
New Yorker (22 September 1945) 78

"[All the stories are] rich in detail, in verisimilitude, in colloquial idiom, and as charming as one could find in a day's browsing."

Olive Carruthers
Review of *The Forest of the South*
The Chicago Sun Book Week (23 September 1945) 17

"[Into this collection have gone a] delicate ear for the rhythms of Southern speech, subtle accretion of detail, rich inventiveness of incident, and rigid subjection of the material to the point of view."

Anonymous
Review of *The Forest of the South*
U.S. Quarterly Book List 1 (December 1945) 10

"Gordon's prose 'abounds in rich, variegated textural imagery....Such textural composition of place as [Thomas] Wolfe displays is assuredly a characteristic common to almost all modern Southern writers. In the poor ones, the odor of magnolia reeks; in the work by Faulkner, Wolfe, Gordon and others, the prose is made rich and sensuous thereby'."

Louis D. Rubin, Jr.
"Thomas Wolfe in Time and Place"
Southern Renaissance: The Literature of the Modern South
eds. Rubin and Robert D. Jacobs (Johns Hopkins 1953) 290-305
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 244

"Miss Gordon's unobtrusive style is so deceptively simple that it is easy to call it artless....Gordon has an 'uncanny ear for local speech patterns....Stories such as "One More Time" and "The Ice House" actually remind one of Hemingway in their purity and intensity'."

John C. Pine
Review of *Old Red and Other Stories*
Library Journal 88:3224 (1963)
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 271

"One is always left in a Gordon novel with admiration for her technique, her ironic revelations, her accuracy in observation."

John M. Bradbury
Renaissance in the South: A Critical History of the Literature, 1920-1960
(U North Carolina 1963) 57-63

"*Green Centuries* is an expressive novel...Her style is careful and exact, her ear for speech is unerring, and her eye for the precise detail is sure."

Frederick P. W. McDowell
Caroline Gordon
(U Minnesota 1966) 26-30

"Gordon is a great student of Flaubert and is great on getting things there so concretely that they can't possibly escape--note how that horse goes through that gate, the sun on the neck and then on the girl's leg and then she turns and watches it slide off his rump. That is real masterly doing, and nobody does it any better than Caroline. You walk through her stories like you are walking in a complete real world. And watch how the meaning comes from the things themselves and not from her imposing anything."

Flannery O'Connor
Mystery and Manners (1969) 79

"Such a masterpiece as Caroline Gordon's *Aleck Maury, Sportsman* [is unforgettable for] the superb craftsmanship, the profound character drawing, the poetry in the novel finally achieves in the meaningful relationship of all its elements."

Peter Taylor
"Comments on Neglected Books of the Past Twenty-Five Years"
American Scholar 39:345 (1970)

"Gordon's prose has 'a cool acuity' and 'exquisite control'."

Anonymous
Review of *The Glory of Hera*
Kirkus 39:1330 (1971)
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 285

"Miss Gordon's early style, which is terse and restrained--particularly in short stories such as 'The Enemies' and 'The Ice House'--reminds us of the famous Hemingway style of the 1920's. We do not imply that her early style is imitative--it is more natural than Hemingway's--but only that she may have learned from Hemingway the art of economy, an art that is closely related to the principle of allowing an action to speak for itself. Miss Gordon's later style is more relaxed and supple; it still catches the rhythms of the spoken language; but it is always formal, even correct. The effect of this style is to bring the reader close to the scene and the characters but never to involve him emotionally as does, for example, the style of a writer like William Faulkner....The best of these three Civil War stories is 'The Ice House'...It is written in a spare, terse style...

Penhally is a solidly built, fully realized novel. The opening paragraph, for example, is finely turned, lucid prose; and it also sets exactly the mood of the novel and states poetically the course the main action is to take: "The shadows that laced the graveled walk shifted and broke'."

William J. Stuckey
Caroline Gordon
(Twayne 1972) 121-24, 136

"There is a classic simplicity in most of her short stories, an unusual economy of incident and detail which decorously masks their essential thematic complexity. Even the prose is, for the most part, spare in its diction and syntax, particularly in the first-person narratives, dominated by a tone that is quiet and conversational, the intimate language of the piazza on a warm summer evening....[Her style is] akin to the 'poetry of inclusion,' where tension always serves to adjust the abstract vision to the concrete world of possibility. The result is an heroic mode that is closer to Homer and Dante than to Virgil."

Thomas H. Landess
The Short Fiction of Caroline Gordon: A Critical Symposium
ed. Landess (U Dallas 1972) 1, 4

"The striking technique of this story ["Emmanuele! Emmanuele!"] is evident in the skillful way that Miss Gordon handles the physical reality of her settings...Two strands of imagery, one containing fruit, trees, and blossoms, the other eyes, water, and light, organize the story into something much more complex than a mere fictional presentation of intellectual and critical point of view."

Robert S. Dupree
"Caroline Gordon's 'Constants' of Fiction"

The Short Fiction of Caroline Gordon: A Critical Symposium
ed. Thomas H. Landess (U Dallas 1972) 34-45, 47

"[*The Glory of Hera's*] repetition of 'essential incidents when a god or mortal is mentioned...add[s] to the deliberately timeless scene, since events appear to be constantly recurring.' 'Alternating between gods and mortals, Gordon achieves a stylistic tour de force'--treating the mortals with post-Jamesian resources, while heightening the estrangement of the gods by a 'more formal, sometimes ponderous vocabulary...' The novel is learned, and consistent with the Greeks' outlook; it is 'a remarkable achievement'."

John W. Charles
Review of *The Glory of Hera*
Library Journal 97:515 (1972)
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 297

"[Gordon] knows as much about the art of the novel and the practice of prose fiction as anyone living I can bring to mind."

Janet Lewis
"The Glory of Hera"
Sewanee Review 81:185-94 (1973)

"The stories gathered in *The Collected Stories of Caroline Gordon* are more than admirable examples of the 'solidity of specification.' They are dramatic examples of man in contact with man, and man in contact with nature; of living sympathy; of a disciplined style as unpretentious and clear as running water, but shot through with glints of wit, humor, pity, and poetry. Caroline Gordon belongs in that group of Southern women [Porter, Gordon, O'Connor, Welty] who have been enriching out literature uniquely in this century --all so different in spirit, attitude, and method, but all with the rare gift of the teller of the tale."

Robert Penn Warren
Introduction
The Collected Stories of Caroline Gordon
(Louisiana State/Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1981, J. S. Sanders 1999)

"The quiet elegance of Gordon's autumnal imagery conveys a sense of how the autumn of life feels to Aleck Maury: 'I saw it there for a second, its wings black against the gold light.'"

Veronica A. Makowsky
Caroline Gordon: A Biography
(Oxford 1989) 124-25

"Readers have noted Gordon's changed style and method in this sixth novel [*The Women on the Porch*]: she moves from a former naturalist [Realist] technique to the oneiric and the visionary [Modernist], from 'linear narration' to what Radcliffe Squires speaks of as 'orbicular scenes folded within scenes,' or--as she herself described the new technique--interspersed sections of past and present 'like "broken colours," to use a painter's term'."

Louise Cowan
Preface (1993)
The Women on the Porch (1944)
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1944, 1996) v-xvi

Only three fiction writers in American literature have originated widely influential styles: Stephen Crane, Hemingway, and Faulkner. The Gothic style of Poe, the Victorian style of Hawthorne, and the Romantic style of Melville are all out of date. Crane influenced later Realists with brilliant Impressionism characterized by poetic economy, painterly vividness, concentrated drama, and a modern ironic tone. The experimental writing of Gertrude Stein influenced the styles of Anderson, Hemingway and others, but her Expressionism is too abstract, repetitive, unreal, dissociated from the natural world, and the projection of one narcissistic sensibility to be practical in fiction. She initiated the continuing tradition of experimental fiction writing, but few people can bear to read Gertrude Stein.

The opposite of Stein, Willa Cather has what has been called a "transparent" style, so modest that the common reader never notices it. Porter and O'Connor have great styles too complex and subtle to be imitated. Hemingway and Faulkner both cultivated iconic public images--both were favorite subjects for literary cartoons--and their sensibilities were too prominent, distinctive and strong to be suppressed in their styles. Both wrote in various styles but they were stereotyped by their most influential ones. Their most famous styles were parodied far more often than those of any other writers because both were so uniquely distinctive, familiar, and reducible to dominant characteristics. Novice writers in the 20th century often used them as simplified models of style, Hemingway the champ of short sentences, Faulkner the inspiration for long emotive Expressionistic sentences.

The styles of Caroline Gordon are much richer and more varied than the style of Cather and they vary from one work to another and one situation to another, developing in general from plain symbolic Realism in early work, a synthesis of naturalism (the literal/natural) and symbolism, to Expressionistic Modernism in *None Shall Look Back* and her later work. Unlike Hemingway and Faulkner, she did not become identified with any one style because she is so versatile and subordinates her sensibility, just as she writes with a tone of objective detachment. Like James Joyce, a classicist/Modernist like herself, she seems able to write in any style. She interacted with the style of Crane in *None Shall Look Back*, mimicked the style of Henry James in "The Olive Garden," and adapted other styles where appropriate: "I treated Fort Donelson in Plutarchian style, reserving my impressionism for Chickamauga." In "The Captive," "I am imitating the style of Davy Crocket and if you don't think that's hard, try it some time."

Gordon is first of all a storyteller: "I cannot remember a moment of my life when the telling of stories did not seem an obligation that had been laid upon me and one which it would be dangerous to evade." Her highest priority is telling a story in a way that engages readers and expresses the truth: "I am really a sort of reporter of my family." The term "reporter" places her in the tradition of Realism that began in the late 19th century, a movement dedicated to revealing Truth and debunking popular falsehoods, stereotypes, and Romanticism: "The novel differs from other forms of art in being directly concerned with the conduct of life itself." The foundation of her fiction is meticulous convincing Realism filled with authentic details of place, time and character. Gordon is virtually supreme among novelists in her ability to select authentic details that bring a story to life--"solidity of specification" as put by Henry James. In her words, "If the art of naturalism [truth to Nature, not the Naturalism of Zola and Dreiser] consists mainly in making active those elements which had hitherto in fiction remained inert, that is, description and expository summary, the further push given the method by Joyce consists in manipulating what at first sight seems to be mere physical detail into dramatic symbolism."

Gordon is so expert at creating an illusion of real life that her Realism appears to be literal but is in fact symbolic. A Catholic, not a pantheist, Gordon renders the natural world as scripture, the art of God, as divine reality manifest in archetypal symbols: light, dark, paths, gates, fields, mountains, caves, springs, fountains, trees, groves, windows, doors, snakes, horses, dogs and so on. Such symbols are just as systematic--linking together into allegories--as the allegorical images in Hawthorne, except that his symbols are highlighted by repetition and rendered abstract by explicit commentary. Hawthorne's symbols are iconic, with the static quality of stained glass window art, whereas Gordon is consistently realistic, subtle and dynamic, maintaining the illusion of reality by describing the natural world objectively as Nature, as anyone might see it, ostensibly chaotic and arbitrary. Her apparent subordination of "literary" meaning to a literal presentation of real life and the natural world is a strategy of making each scene so convincingly real with specific details that the implied literary meanings seem to derive from reality. Usually, much of the natural detail establishes the illusion of reality, generates atmosphere and contributes to the narrative without being essential to her symbolic structure. Realism, understatement and Modernist detachment in tone disguise her symbolism until repetition, emerging themes, allusions and dialogue illuminate the patterns as spiritual revelation.

In her earlier fiction, as in *Penhally*, her prose style is plain, simple, reportorial and typical of Realism, with little or no figurative language to call attention to style, like Hemingway. Both writers simplify their prose and avoid similes and explicit metaphors--Hemingway nearly all the time, Gordon some of the time--so as not to distract from symbolism, which the reader may sense without conscious understanding, as is true in particular of archetypal symbolism, according to Hemingway's "iceberg principle." Gordon adapts

her style to her characters. For example, a plain style is consistent with the character of Aleck Maury in one novel and several stories, focusing attention on implications of actions and images without the distraction of figurative language. Also like Hemingway, Gordon increases the speed and force of forward movement by *minimizing internal punctuation and inverted syntax*, maintaining for the most part sentence structures of subject-verb-predicate, contributing to the impression that she "writes like a man." This plain style sets up passages of complex style, as in the last paragraph of "The Last Day in the Field," where *seven* commas create rhythms and a tempo that mimic the falling bird and falling leaves: "I saw it there for a second, its wings black against the gold light, before, wings still spread, it came whirling down, like an autumn leaf, like the leaves that were everywhere about us, all over the ground."

Gordon also resembles Hemingway in her variation of sentence lengths to create rhythms that evoke the action and feelings being rendered, as early in *None Shall Look Back* when the parents of Ned Allard think the same frightening thought about the fate of their son: "They stood there together a moment. Her hand was still on his arm. Her eyes were fixed on his face. His gaze was bent on the ground. Each knew what the other was thinking....The boys had come home to go to war." The dramatic shock is evoked by repetition of short sentences with the same syntax and nearly the same length--the first sentence in the paragraph 6 words long, the next 4 sentences each 7 words long, and the last sentence in the paragraph a climax 9 words long." Gordon has been compared to Hemingway with the suggestion that she was influenced by him, but that is misleading. Both were Modernists with aesthetics derived from Realism rooted in Classicism, or Neoclassicism, especially Gordon, who studied ancient Classical literature, whereas Hemingway was more influenced by the style of dispatches he cultivated as a journalist than by ancient models. You would not expect so, but Gordon actually excels Hemingway in the artistic rendering of violent action and battle scenes, changing her prose style to accelerate the speed of reading and evoke the violence and using more Impressionistic techniques. As she said, "Since Stephen Crane's time, all serious writers have concentrated on the effort of rendering individual scenes more vividly."

Gordon is also a master at rendering forms of speech. The authenticity of her southern black dialect evokes the illusion of real life more effectively than the standard English spoken by white characters, which sounds or looks pretty much the same regardless of who is speaking, despite white southern accents, because black dialects are more individual, spontaneous, emotive and original. Authentic black dialect can bring a fiction to life immediately: "Antony was in the room, turning his ragged hat around in his hands. 'Ole Miss, they's a whole lot of 'em over in the hollow. Some of 'em's 'live'." Gordon also excels at analogies between Nature and human feelings and actions: "In the flower bed in front of him a June bug was lighting on a snapdragon stalk. It bent almost to the ground, then righted itself only to bend again, but the fellow hung on..." "The tired horses of the Second Kentucky in their last charge had been able only to breast the fences, not to clear them. He had been like those horses then..."

She sometimes uses present participles to sustain movement and for the immediacy of the present tense: Instead of saying "He had sat...and *walked*" she writes "He had sat beside him that night, and *walking* to the graveyard he had kept his hand all the way on the casket..." "The dog groaned softly and *turning* over pawed at the air." "Once *crossing* a stream celebrated for its purity and coldness they got off their horses and *going* down the steep hill to its source bathed their faces and wrists in the green water." "A broad ribbon of smoke which *hanging* low over the river slowly advanced toward the town." "He borrowed a chew of tobacco and *leaning* up against a tree gave the news of the day." "He walked to the door and *standing* on the porch looked out over the yard." "Rion at once turned down the steep road, and *crossing* the creek got down off his horse, and *slipping* the bridle through his arm started along the path." "He smiled at them and *turning* shouted an order that stopped the whole train." [Italics added.]

For an effect of abrupt change rather than continuation, some sentences avoid the compound structure of phrases linked by the connective *and* common in Hemingway, for an effect of abruptness or quickness: Not "The orderly passed the tent and stopped," but rather "The orderly passed the tent, stopped." "He stepped *quickly* to the door, looked through the grating." "Rives' eyes left the light, roved along the gray road." "Archy *tripped* on a clump of sage, was down, then up." "The path descended *sharply*, emerged on the banks of the creek." "Granger shook his head, seemed to push them away with his flattened palm, walked to the edge of the ridge, looked down." "When his look grew more intent she lifted her hand *swiftly* from

his, pressed it against her throat." "She raised her head, stared at the window." [Italics added.] "The primary concern of a novel, then, is life, and life as it manifests itself in change, in action."

With more Impressionism came more Expressionism, inspired by Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, a model for *None Shall Look Back*: "Tolstoy manages to give even his panoramic scenes--that is, the scenes viewed, as if at a distance, by an omniscient narrator--the glitter of immediacy. This is achieved by an almost miraculously *rapid alternation of viewpoint*." [Italics added.] This form of Impressionism, or sometimes Expressionism, depending on clarity, became a major feature of Gordon's narration and the main challenge to readers, her "rapid alternation of viewpoint." Mainly in the battle scenes in *None Shall Look Back* but also in her last novels, for realistic immediacy and to render consciousness in combat and in other stressed mental states, there are Expressionistic jump cuts from one viewpoint to another or from present to past without specific contexts--fragmented thoughts, memories, sensations, actions--with intended effects of confusion, intensity, and revelation. Any confusion of the reader is slight compared to that created in most readers by the long interior monologues in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and *As Lay Dying*. Expressionism in the form of figurative language is rare in Gordon, as she is too much a Realist to indulge much in poetic flights, but Expressionism is common in her descriptions of eyes and it became increasingly so as well in her narrative line beginning with *The Women on the Porch*. For deeper characterization and clear allegory, she uses dreams--pure symbolic Expressionism--with increasing frequency.

Green Centuries (1941) is a masterpiece of richly detailed mostly plain style symbolic Realism, after which Gordon transitioned fully into Realism enhanced by Expressionistic Modernism. Compared to her first five novels, *The Women on the Porch* (1944) is contemporary rather than set in the past, more psychological than historical, more inward than outward, more symbolic than literal, more inclined to archetypal allegory, and the simpler plot more reducible to a single issue--will Catherine and Jim reconcile? This is also her most spiritual novel so far, the first with a clearly Christian framework and the first containing ghosts, spirits, or "presences." Here her vision has enlarged to include the paranormal. She is Modernist in ways she has been in the earlier novels, using (1) the "mythic method" of allusions and parallels to ancient myths; (2) multiple viewpoints; (3) archetypal symbolism inclined to allegory; (4) non-linear narration due to flashbacks and memories. She remains fundamentally a Realist but becomes more Modernist in techniques by (5) simplifying the plot to make symbolism, aesthetics and psychological development more evident; (6) deepening the psychology with stream-of-consciousness passages; and (7) including much more Expressionism in style (in the last third of the book), in particular sentence fragments, successive sentences jump-cutting from one context to another, as when Old Miss Kit the grandmother recalls the Civil War, and excellent long periodic sentences that complicate thought.

The Strange Children (1951) and *The Malefactors* (1956) are Expressionistic novels full of interior monologues, dreams, visions, flashbacks, memories, and evocations of the spiritual dimension. In these narratives, by limiting herself mainly to the perspectives of a single protagonist, she is able to use more Expressionistic content that is challenging to interpret and would be too confusing if much of it were given to more than one or just a few main characters. Her last novel, *The Glory of Hera* (1972), is by far her *most* Expressionist work, as it is entirely a visionary adventure novel dramatizing Greek mythology and the parallels between Hercules and Jesus, with characters brought to life by Realism. In her last four novels she transcends the eclecticism, alienation and scope of Modernism with a Christian vision, as did T. S. Eliot after *The Waste Land* (1922). "I have come to believe that there is only [one] plot (the scheme of Redemption) and that any short story, or novel, any fiction (detective story, folk tale, any story anywhere at any time) is a splinter, so to speak, of that plot--if it's good."

In her fiction Gordon's own judgments are made by implication rather than by statement, indirectly through arrangement of actions, allusions, symbolism and dialogue. Her sympathy is manifest especially in her selection of incidents and rendering of emotions, while her detached narrative voice is consistent with the traditional aesthetics of both Classicism and Modernism, as expressed by Joyce through Stephen Daedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916): "The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails." This transcendence of self is also advocated to poets by Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and is essential in Christianity.

From the start in 1931, way before her conversion to Catholicism in 1947, Gordon was a religious writer who always gave her fiction a transcendent dimension, even in passages of what seem to be merely literal renderings of the natural world: "Lift us from the natural level to the supernatural." The aesthetics of Gordon the Modernist Christian are the opposite of Andre Gide's essentially atheist Postmodern aesthetics dramatized in "Emmanuele! Emmanuele!" (1954): "Andre Gide is a conspicuous example of another writer who destroys the form of his work by imitating the formless." Yvor Winters, the poet/critic who published Gordon's first story, called this "the fallacy of imitative form." Gordon continues, Gide's "failure as a novelist springs, I suspect, from the same source as Miss [Gertrude] Stein's, an unwillingness or inability to accept reality--that is, to recognize the existence of a world outside his own consciousness."

The following quotations illustrate major techniques that influenced Gordon's style:

IMPRESSIONISM

Fiction is an art closely allied to painting and...as in painting, there are certain "constants" or secrets of technique which not only appear in the works of all the masters of the craft but which have been handed down from master to master throughout the ages.

The eyes are the mirror of the soul.

To look into his eyes long was like falling into tumbling water.

Eyes as expressionless, as dark as two holes burned in a blanket.

Her eyes had more than ever that look of leaves in a running brook.

His blue eyes shone up at her from under lids the color of bruised morning glories.

His gaze would narrow, as a candle set on the window ledge will flicker before it settles to a steady flame.

Tom's eyes were glittering. They looked as if they might spill over and run down his face.

In the landscape of the face an eye is set like a lake, for exploration.

He thought that her eyes were like those lakes that the hunter comes upon in the Carolina marshes at the end of a long day.

The flesh about her eyelids was frail and shone a little, the way a flower that's been touched by a hand does just before it wilts.

His black eyes opened wide. They looked enormous in the yellow face and they glistened as Rion had once seen the petals of a lily glisten under the vigorous strokes of a bumblebee's legs.

When a man gets those little red veins in his cheeks and his neck gets thick, so that it spreads out over his collar, there is something about a dinner jacket that makes him look like a carp.

I saw him take the gun away from Coogan and return it to him butt first. There was a ludicrous precision about the movement, a finickiness as of a lady being careful to hand a spoon to a guest, handle first.

When the Confederate soldiers woke in the morning an inch-deep crust of snow covered all the earthworks and whitened the carriages of the black guns that pointed down the river.

Suddenly a 128-pound solid shot struck the port broadside casemate, passed through it and, striking the upper deck, seemed to bound about it like a wild beast after its prey.

"You mean some of our men was blowed clean out of the fort?" Bill nodded. "They was half a dozen of 'em. They went up like a covey of pa'tridges." He threw his arm up in the air then suddenly curved the hand downwards. "I saw Aaron York whizzing by me. I saw his face and I saw him hit the water. Landed like he's diving and then I saw him trying to swim, with one arm..."

Eyes that had been vacant and staring glinted in grimy faces as stepping faster and faster they looked down the line, saw the whole division unroll like mist moving over a field.

They rose up from behind, rushed out from inside, were suddenly everywhere, a monster swarm of bees that clouded the slope and hummed angrily.

Here and there was to be seen the wry grimace, the sightless eye of a man who knew that in an instant he would be killed.

Figures that a moment before had been running now lay on the ground in a variety of attitudes, as if a hand carelessly shuffling a deck of cards had splayed them out upon a table.

In the soft light the warriors' painted faces were greyish blurs except for the glint of an eye-ball every now and then or the thrust of some feather when a man turned his head.

Their spurs jingled on the polished boards. One as he came played a tune on the banisters with his sabre, the way a child might have done with a stick.

His body bent a little at the waist so that his long lawyer's coat tails stood out behind him like a turkey's fan.

He pointed to a big-bellied oak that thrust its trunk out into the path, like a pompous person demanding attention.

A plane tree reared its stout trunk up from the cobblestones, like a drunk man getting to his feet after a fall.

In the stable lot below a negro boy was leading a horse round and round the silver dollar that was the pond.

A sigh ran through the audience, thin and sibilant like the murmur of the wind through ripe wheat.

It was so still that you could hear the little plunk the bridge made every time a car passed over it.

It was gone now, like a mouse which you see out of the tail of your eye only as it is vanishing.

There was a scream, like some great creature that nobody had ever seen, wailing in the night.

They broke around him and fled, orphan chickens scudding before a hawk over the plain.

The girls in their pale-colored dresses drifted by in the wavering light like great moths.

The man looked from one to the other, his face the color of a rooster's comb.

The sound of axes was as sharp, as insistent as the chatter of squirrels.

His sharp nose dived forward, came up, hung, like a dog's on a point.

His voice was high, like somebody trying to talk in a loud wind.

He shook his head again, sharply, like a man beset by bees.

She had a pretty walk, like a deer stepping out from cover.

Her whole face swayed at you, like a flower on its stalk.

His dark mustache lifted to disclose gleaming teeth.

His face was black as a fiend's with powder.

She lay there like a shot bird.

EXPRESSIONISM

The man thrashing about on the bed, moaning, had an enormous arm, swollen darkly red and blistered, where it was not hidden by scraps of filthy bandage. The odor from it was living evil. It crouched above the bed on angry feet, made forays into the room.

It is no use denying the white men anything. They are like their own flies. A swarm comes. The people beat them out of the town, turn around and another swarm is upon them. Does a man spend his life fighting flies? I wanted them to have land of their own to sit down on. Maybe then they would leave us in peace.

She had had for a second the odd feeling that the anger had been there all along, that he would always have spoken to her in that harsh, authoritative voice but for the patience that like rubber, coating fiery electric current, overlaid his every movement and his least utterance.

It was almost as if the poem had a palpable body that floated in the air above Horne's head and that it was only when Horne was intoxicated that he became agile enough to reach up and grasp one of its members.

The gondolas, each curve outlined in pulsing light, might have climbed of their own accord into the dark blue sky, to sway as gently to and fro as lilies in a pond.

He had been all right when he was walking along the road though hot as the devil, but when he had bent over to drink he had felt as if the top of his head might drop off into the spring.

He remembered looking up at the sun and thinking it looked like it might melt and run down out of the sky.

She had already gone too far; the whole land was a cave, a cave in which she was about to be lost.

His dark eyes were so full of light they looked as if they might spill out of his head.

Lucy felt as if someone had taken the shears and thrust them into her bowels.

The pool crouched, unvisited, at the foot of the cliff.

NATURALISM AND SYMBOLISM

Many of the finest stories of our time, while solidly grounded in Naturalism [what is natural, not the Naturalism of Zola and Dreiser], are also built on a metaphor, and have some great controlling image [such as] the snow in Joyce's story "The Dead." [Also such as the pet mule in Gordon's "Hear the Nightingale Sing" and the evasive old fox in "Old Red."]

The characteristic literary trend of our time is a fusion of Naturalism and Symbolism. Among fiction writers perhaps the greatest exponents of this method are James Joyce and Henry James.

The lanterns that the church-goers held in their hands gave off flickering lights, like the will-o'-the-wisps that shine before travelers who have lost their way in dark forests.

When he had first come into this country he had gathered one of those creamy blossoms only to see it turn brown in his grasp.

Melancholy invaded the house with winter as mice creep from the fields at the first touch of frost.

The cavern's mouth, a wide overhanging ledge which glowed as if illuminated from within.

Birds, returned since the last snow, sang from the black boughs.

The icy plains that surrounded the prison glittered blue.

His thought followed the stream in its wanderings.

She did not know the way out of the woods.

Michael Hollister (2020)