ANALYSIS

None Shall Look Back (1937)

Caroline Gordon

(1895-1986)

"For some years I cherished the idea of taking a soldier through four years of the war. I think now it can't be done--at least it can't be done by a woman."

Gordon (1932)

"I want to show not only the disintegration and corruption of the South but the spiritual confusion of the people who live through all these things…. I'm going to desert the method of narrow realism and have chapters, oh, several chapters of expository prose….[to] interpret the Civil War in a new light, to show the Southern people just what did happen…. [Shiloh was] very important, because to all intents the war was lost there--the Virginians were done for before they started."

Gordon (1935)
quoted in *The Underground Stream: The Life and Art of Caroline Gordon*
Nancylee Novell Jonza
(U Georgia 1995) 129, 155

"It feels strange and a little harsh; has no pretty passages in it; has no episodes or complete little stories in it; is a single unit, stricter than anything I know in novels offhand. It's an artistic revolutionary wonder for these exclusions. You took a vastly moving subject matter and decided it needed no sentimentalizing; you just proceeded to put it through a severe, denying form; and there it is. It is a terrific experience; real tragedy. It is not half as big as *Gone with the Wind*, I guess, and covers almost precisely the same subject matter, and is many times as powerful--I call you a Great Artist."

John Crowe Ransom
Letter to Gordon (1937)

"The novel is 'inevitably compared" with *Gone with the Wind* which sells 'at the rate of 10,000 a day,' yet there 'should be satisfactory profits in *None Shall Look Back*.' 'Like Margaret Mitchell, Caroline Gordon writes of places and people she knows,' from the vantage point of her home overlooking the Cumberland Valley. Forrest is 'the giant of this story.' He is 'only one of many historic officers revealed in the magnificent battle scenes.' In addition, the chief characters are Fontaine Allard, Lucy Churchill, and Rives Allard. 'Through them and a confusion of relations, Miss Gordon shows the terror, suffering, and ruin which the invading Northern armies brought to the South'…. Parts are 'memorable' yet 'even the thunder of guns doesn't explain the absence of someone like Scarlett O'Hara'."

Anonymous
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Newsweek (20 February 1937) 39
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 213

"The novel is not 'a new *Gone with the Wind*'; 'the treatment is wholly different.' Whereas *Gone with the Wind* was 'primarily the story of one woman's surcharged and fate-filled life, and through her eyes the reader saw the historic panorama,' Gordon's novel 'is the panorama itself…essentially a great, and terrible force going its own inevitable way.' The novel has 'memorable historic scenes' of the escape from Fort Donelson, of women's tragedy. *None Shall Look Back* is 'like a print of the Civil War with every minute figure, every cannon, every shattered tree brought to life'."

Fanny Butcher
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Chicago Daily Tribune (20 February 1937) 8
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 215

"*None Shall Look Back* [is] 'a distinguished addition to the fiction dealing with that theme,' and the 'most ambitious' of Gordon's novels. Her style is 'vastly superior' to Margaret Mitchell's, and her battle scenes are equal in clarity and brilliance to MacKinlay Kantor's. Gordon is seldom 'unduly sentimental,' and plantation life here is neither cloying nor prettified…. The 'real hero' is Forrest… Chickamauga is 'the high point, the climax of the novel. The rest is tragedy.' Gordon has chosen to 'dwell on the slow collapse of the Confederacy rather than on the fortunes of private individuals,' but 'sacrificed a good deal in doing so'…. A 'good story is essential,' as *Gone with the Wind* has 'abundantly proved'…. Yet, 'there is always a danger of being unfair to a book of superior caliber.' *None Shall Look Back*…'belongs with the half-dozen really good novels of the Civil War which have appeared during the last decade'."

Edith H. Walton
"Miss Gordon's Civil War Novel"
New York Times Book Review (21 February 1937) 6
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 220

"'*None Shall Look Back* is 'as excellent novel of its kind as has appeared in many years.' To her familiarity with the South, the author 'adds the polish of newspaper experience.' The novel is 'both superbly descriptive and magnificently moving while her characters are entirely adequate to sustain the burden of recreating' the Civil War.' Forrest is 'the giant of the piece.' Rives and Lucy are the most important Allards…. Through the love romances and scenes of the 'vanished life of the period,' Gordon creates a 'complete canvas' with the final ironic emphasis of Jim's entry into 'the industrialism which is now coming of age'."

William H. Clark
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Boston Transcript (27 February 1937) 3
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 215

"*None Shall Look Back*…'came out in the wake of that typhoon of best-sellers, *Gone with the Wind*.' It 'blew a nearer, straighter course than its circling predecessor'… The real hero' is Forrest. To rescue him from the half-oblivion in which he lurks,' the author 'pens many a panegyric page,' and 'sometimes lets her feminine enthusiasm get the better of military idiom, as when she speaks of Forrest's horse as being 'shot out from under him'." [The phrase "feminine enthusiasm" is cutesy sexism by a reviewer unwilling to admit that Gordon writes about war with understatement as well as any man: having a horse "shot out from under him" is a traditional expression commonly used by men and literally accurate.]

Anonymous
"After the Big Wind"
Time (1 March 1937) 70, 72
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 210

"The story centers 'most of all in Lucy' and Rives Allard. They, and 'the large family and local groups with which their lives were interlocked, are soundly imagined and portrayed.' The 'emphasis is on actual fighting and military strategy.' The story 'of these imagined characters, well composed and reasonably presented, appeals to the intelligence of the reader, but it does not stir his emotions as much as does the actual history of General Forrest.' Three times Forrest stands out 'in dramatic contrast to his fellow-generals'; at Donelson when he leads his cavalry to safety; when he pleads with Bragg to let him 'attack Burnside before Rosecrans [can] get his troops out of Chattanooga'; and the reader's last vision of him, when he gallops across the plain straight to the Federal fortifications. The novel has a 'transparent, quietly effective…style'."

R. W. K.
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Christian Science Monitor (8 March 1937) 16
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide 218*

"Gordon is 'for me the most mysterious of writers.' Though her 'outside-the-study activities' are vivid, brilliant, even clamorous, 'her calm self…gets itself into her writings.' To have a permanent effect the Southern Literary Movement 'must be based on solid, on convincing, on erudite groundings. It must have its classical side. And that is what is mysterious about Mrs. Tate. Her Southern mansions are burned by

unimpassioned men from Michigan with no more outcry than will attend upon a Westchester public funeral.' Only when you have finished reading *None Shall Look Back* do you realize that 'you have been present at a very horrid affair.' The novel 'is most of all a landscape,' as is *The Iliad*. 'You are suspended above a great territory…. Below you run men in grey or blue, goring the gentle bosom of the earth…and beside you, as if herself watching, Mrs. Tate remains mysterious, unimpassioned, almost impartial as the tragic destiny unrolls itself beneath you both.' In its method of attack, the novel resembles *War and Peace*, but 'lacking Tolstoi's moral point of view and his rather transparent military solecisms it is really a better book against War.' It 'has a peculiar quality of tranquility' with 'no single harrowing scene,' and embodies the 'great lesson that all artists must learn before they can write tragedies--that if your approach to horror is not that of the quiet and collected observer and renderer you will fail in attaining to the real height of tragedy'."

Ford Madox Ford
in-house review published by Scribner's (March 1937) 5-6
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 216

"The novel is 'shorter, less verbose, less spectacular' than *Gone with the Wind* by which Civil War novels 'seem destined to be measured'…. 'There is more intelligence,' of a 'distinguished and excellent sort.' The climax is the Battle of Chickamauga. The battle scenes 'have a power and passion'… Gordon may have been more interested in Forrest than in Rives. Forrest is a satisfying heroic figure, who will cause 'an admirable novel to be remembered'…[with] 'understatement and restraint but never of sentimentality or cheap melodrama'."

Anonymous
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Nation (20 March 1937) 332
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 213

"The novel is 'entirely dispassionate in its attitude' toward the Civil War, 'indicating in more than an incidental way the issues fundamentally in dispute.' Forrest is 'the outstanding figure of the narrative as a whole, though not improbably some of the lesser persons will fix themselves more lastingly in the reader's sympathies and memory.' Military matters are 'discriminatingly and skillfully handled'; they are pertinent and 'contribute interpretation.' Simultaneously, life among 'the noncombatants back home' goes on, 'touched by the war, sometimes directly'."

Anonymous
"Civil War Again Theme of Novel"
Springfield (Mass.) Republican (28 March 1937) 7

"Miss Porter begins by comparing and contrasting the beginning and the ending of the novel. Jim Allard is represented as the 'truly defeated man,' the opportunist, whereas Gordon's 'story is a legend in praise of heroes, of those who fought well and lost their battle, and their lives.' Miss Porter celebrates heroism and the need for it, as well as Gordon's pride in such devotion. 'All-seeing as an ancient chronicler, she has created a panorama of a society engaged in a battle for its life,' and she 'moves about, a disembodied spectator timing her presence expertly.' Gordon has chosen to 'observe from all points of view' and so the scenes 'move rapidly'; 'the effect could easily have become diffuse without firm handling, and the central unalterable sympathies of the chronicler herself.' Gordon did not do the 'neat conventional thing' of telling the story through the adventures of the young lovers, Lucy and Rives. Their tragedy is only a part of the larger tragedy; 'the book is not theirs, nor was it meant to be.' 'There is no accounting for Forrest and Miss Gordon does not attempt the impossible. He remains what he was, a hero and a genius.' In the novel, 'the Allard family is a center…a point of departure and return.' The end of each member of the family is 'symbolically exact': imbecility, grief, death, dry rot, numbness--in contrast to what Kentucky planters and their families were 'born to be' [as the reader has seen in the novel]. The Kentucky tone is 'here, properly.' *None Shall Look Back* is 'in a great many ways a better book' that *Penhally* or *Aleck Maury*; here, Gordon's 'style' is at its best."

Katherine Anne Porter
"Dulce et Decorum Est"
New Republic (31 March 1937) 244-45
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 217-18

summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 211

"Gordon's 'vital' and 'masterly new novel' in which Rives Allard, on whom the 'plot hinges' and his 'sad and lovely' wife Lucy are surrounded by 'the clearly drawn figures of a blasted family and a disintegrated society.' 'The outstanding achievement of this book is in its power, through sheer truthfulness, to enable us to live another life in another era, and thus to enter into a new understanding of our country and a greater sympathy with our neighbor'."

Anonymous
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Catholic World 145 (July 1937)
summarized by Mary C. Sullivan
Flannery O'Connor and Caroline Gordon: A Reference Guide
Robert E. Golden and Mary C. Sullivan (Hall 1977) 212

"The whole is very well written with what one accepts as broad historical accuracy,' and 'the characters have within their limits, that individual life which a capable actor can always give to a conventional part."

Anonymous
"The New Novels: American Civil War Tales"
Times Literary Supplement (7 August 1937) 575
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 211-12

"The novel is not another *Gone with the Wind*,' though it offers 'some episodes of definite power'—the eulogistic portrait of Forrest and the military action around Donelson and Chickamauga. 'A traditional Southern romance' with 'an element of noble tragedy,' the novel is 'smooth, flowing, sincere, and readable.'

Anonymous
Review of *None Shall Look Back*
Booklist 33:243
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 212

"*None Shall Look Back*…'truly demands praise.' It is shapely, vital, and illuminating, and 'written in a style so perfectly suited to its matter that it goes straight to the heaven of all true lovers of style.' Rives' 'emergence from adolescence' surpasses other such narratives. The novel though evidently well documented does not convey 'the feeling that it was written with works of reference open at her elbow.' For the Northern reader the illumination of the novel in part dispels the notion of the 'unimaginative ignorance of the South' without 'descending into the raucousness and implausibility of most propaganda.' Yet the novel 'does not suffer because it carries this 'social' effect.' Here is 'prose beyond praise,' in which the past is re-presented 'by some enchantment.' '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)
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 216

"*None Shall Look Back* has 'still greater excellence' [than mere 'substantiality']: 'every detail is life-like,' which is perhaps why some persons 'find it difficult to read,' since Gordon has not 'led them by the nose.' Her characters 'go about their own business in a fashion rare to fiction,' and the author 'refrains from intruding a style.' She has done here 'what every novelist would do if he could, and what perhaps one in a hundred does. She has been real'."

Mark Van Doren
"Fiction of the Quarter"
Southern Review 3:159-82 (1937)
summarized by Sullivan, *A Reference Guide* 219

"The title of *None Shall Look Back* is ironic: 'We are all looking back constantly, to discover what we are, and why'."

Richmond C. Beatty, Floyd C. Watkins, Thomas D. Young, Randall Stewart, eds.
The Literature of the South (Scott, Foresman 1952) 864-65
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 240

"Gordon's *None Shall Look Back* 'is perhaps of all Southern novels the sternest and most unrelenting in its treatment of the Civil War' for every single character who remains faithful to the Southern ethic is in the end 'killed or sadly broken.' In the novel 'the principal image is the family and...the public and private moralities coincide until the *status quo* is ruptured by the War.'

The chapters dealing with Fount Allard's ride over the plantation at the Brackets and his investigation of the overseer's cruelty at Cabin Row 'superbly' convey Allard's sense of the good. More important is the 'superb development' of Rives Allard: 'he refuses to live beyond the failure of his inherited moral code.' The sense of morality in the novel 'is developed through the consciousness of Lucy,' and she participates repeatedly in 'the novel's constant concern with death.' The center of the novel is Rives' rejection of his chance to live, 'not because he loves death but because he is devoted to the civilization which he is defending.' 'Much of the strength of the image is personified in the man'."

Walter Sullivan
"Southern Novelists and the Civil War"
Hopkins Review 6:133-46 (1953)
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 244-45

"Of more than a thousand novels on the Civil War by Southerners, only a few, among them Gordon's *None Shall Look Back*, are 'interesting, often of high literary excellence, and well worth reading'.... Rives is intended 'to exemplify a social system, a school of character, the region.' Gordon's intention is 'patriotic; Rives Allard is the prototype of a society'."

Louis D. Rubin, Jr.
"The Image of an Army: The Civil War in Southern Fiction"
Southern Writers: Appraisals in Our Time
ed. R. C. Simonini, Jr. (U Virginia 1964) 50-70
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 273

"*None Shall Look Back* is perhaps the most austere and uncompromising novel about the Civil War that we possess. Its mood is summed up in the words of one of the characters, Cally, when she says: 'There's just two kinds of people in the world, those that'll fight for what they think right and those that don't think anything is worth fighting for.' The only survivors in *None Shall Look Back* are the commercially minded. This is a heroic novel in the strict sense. It contains no consideration of the causes of the War, no criticism of the warring parties, no analysis of the motives of those engaged in the action. It is haunted by images and premonitions of death; its theme is duty and the heroic attitude in the face of death and defeat. Nothing is burked: the battle scenes are brilliantly done, at the level almost of those in *The Red Badge of Courage*; and the horrors, the devastation and famine the war brings in its wake, are chillingly described.

To the outsider, *None Shall Look Back* may appear even fanatical in its author's complete acceptance of the image of the South in its antebellum period. And the image is established right away, in the first chapters, with the description of the gathering of the Allard family at Pleasant Grove for Fontaine Allard's birthday; the image of a patriarchal, feudal society; not sophisticated, but with a simple elegance and a sense of *noblesse oblige* in which duties balance rights. Throughout the novel an aristocratic life-style is beautifully conveyed.... One cannot help wondering whether life has ever been lived at the constantly heroic pitch described in this novel.... Apart from the faithful old Negro butler, Uncle Winston, the slaves are there to be looked after and done good to.... When the Federal troops occupy Clarkesville they depart from Pleasant Grove 'in great haste'.... The Allards are 'good' to their slaves; they are believed to spoil them. They are deserted just the same. So much for the image of the South in its feudal aspect....

Caroline Gordon exposes the moral corruption that was fundamental to Southern society, the negation of human rights on which it was based. But no character in the novel is even aware of this... Admirable human

beings as Caroline Gordon's characters on the whole are... They are doomed. Much of the strength of *None Shall Look Back* comes from the sense of this. It makes the novel a heroic story."

Walter Allen
The Modern Novel in Britain and the United States
(Dutton 1965) 113-14

"Caroline Gordon's *None Shall Look Back* is a masterpiece, out of print now, probably because her scene is the South during the Civil War, and she knows and tells things that are not acceptable now when Southern history is being rewritten or reconstructed to the fancy of those who took no part in it."

Katherine Anne Porter
"On Modern Fiction"
Book Week (1965)

"*None Shall Look Back* (1937) has the massive proportions associated with the epic; and in fact, Miss Gordon's model throughout seems to have been Tolstoi's epical *War and Peace*. Like Tolstoi she begins by presenting the aristocratic culture which war disrupts; and when war comes close, she adopts Tolstoi's technique of alternating panoramic battle scenes with nearer views of the main characters as they participate in the war or suffer behind the lines.

An epical hero, General Nathan Bedford Forrest, dominates activity in the field much as General Kutuzov does in Tolstoi's book. At all times, Forrest is the commanding presence in Miss Gordon's book from the time he is seen worrying about supplies in the early days of the conflict until his last days on the field as still a formidable antagonist in the months of southern defeat. When Rives Allard, the fictional hero and one of Forrest's scouts, retires from action because of a wound, Miss Gordon takes advantage of his absence to enter Forrest's mind directly and to record one of the chief battles through his consciousness. Largely because he is seen so completely from within and without, he is not only a great historical figure but a novelistic character who appeals with aesthetic authority to our emotions and imaginations. In short, we are involved in the drama of his life.

We identify with him when he opposes Generals Pillow and Floyd who counsel the disastrous surrender of Fort Donelson; when he engages in angry parley at Chickamauga with the indecisive Bragg; when he holds his dying brother in his arms at Okolona; and when, at Franklin, thinking of the deaths of his brother and General Cleburne, he perceives that death had always been at his side and he now understands, without endorsing it, the prudence of his superiors who had wanted to keep death at a distance. Like Kutuzov, Forrest possesses the preternatural insight which gives him greatness. Like the Russian, Forrest intuitively appraises a situation which neither he nor any other man can clearly define. Unlike Kutuzov, Forrest is sometimes ineffective because his intuitions are countermanded by his superiors who can only proceed according to rule and who are always cautious, never bold.

When Miss Gordon uses the Flaubertian concealed narrator and records action or psychology through the minds of her central characters, she much more successfully creates a universe possessing imaginative immediacy [than through panoramas]. Principally, she views the action through the eyes of Rives Allard and of Lucy Churchill, successively distant relative, sweetheart, wartime wife, and finally, widow of Rives. Occasionally, some of the other characters reflect the action and their emotions, since Miss Gordon's extended canvas requires a roving narrator. Sometimes she even enters the minds of military figures who are peripheral to the main line of the novel. Still the impression remains that this is the story of Rives Allard and Lucy Churchill and, at another level, that of General Forrest.

Throughout, Miss Gordon contrasts the assertive forces of life, which also informed the gracious antebellum culture, with the negative forces of death and destruction as they overwhelm, with…finality, this culture and its advocates. The woman Lucy is seen as the life-affirming individual, while the warrior Rives becomes aligned in part with the destructive forces that he struggles against. Man, the pioneer and protector of the hearth, is juxtaposed with woman who renews the life of the race and elaborates the arts of peace. The warrior who protects has no protection himself. This Lucy realizes when a skirmish is fought

outside the home of the Georgia Allards and a Confederate captain is brought inside to die. Lucy now perceives that Rives, being human, may also die, and she can hardly bear the weight of this knowledge.

The two most powerful scenes in the novel dramatize the confrontation between the powers of life and death as they may be associated with Lucy and Rives, respectively. On the field at Chickamauga, not far from his home, Rives searches through the multitude of the dead to find the body of his school friend George Rowan. After a sickening search Rives finds George's body and buries it. On such a battlefield as this, the mop-up is a gruesome process from which even seasoned soldiers recoil; and Rives reacts with the same fascinated horror that suffuses Hemingway's nightmarish 'Natural History of the Dead.' It is here that Rives, a potentially dead man among the dead, fortuitously meets Lucy, who walks among the dead and dying, asserting by her very presence a defiance of the death which surrounds her on every side. Lucy is helping Rives's mother, who has engineered a volunteer operation to remove the wounded men from the field to an improvised hospital in the closest home and grove of trees. Amid this desolating scene, Rives responds to Lucy's presence and is able to withdraw from his preoccupation with war and death to the point of loving his wife in the few moments they can snatch from war and caring for the wounded.

The second sequence occurs near the end of the novel when Rives is on leave in Georgia to recover from a wound. Lucy is unprepared for his gradual withdrawal from her, as though he has business elsewhere which does not involve her. The lines and hollows of his face and its deathlike pall oppress her as she gazes at the sleeping man beside her. His brutal talk in his sleep horrifies her, and she recalls with involuntary revulsion that her husband is, actually, a spy. She hardly recognizes the man she loves, and she can hardly endure the changes that war has caused in him. Something more central than domestic life or love of woman has laid hold of him; war and imminent death make the purely personal gratifications seem irrelevant. The dance which Susan Allard arranges, with depleted resources, is a melancholy rather than a joyous affair. It becomes, in effect, a ritual farewell to the soldiers about to leave for the field, a preliminary dance of death in parallel sequence to the dance at the Rowans' early in the novel when the soldiers first go off to war. Then the dance was an expression of expectant triumph and a life-inciting rite, a fertility ritual.

The incompetence of the Confederate generals in the West increases the fatality which pervades the central characters and their land. The ability and discernment of the generals are incommensurate with the moral and spiritual qualities of the people they are defending. Death is associated with the Confederate cause from the time those in command fail to exploit their victories. The generals lack both the absolute selflessness and the realistic insight that would have brought victory. Only the subordinate generals Hill and Forrest possessed both ranges of qualities. Even Lee, dedicated as he was, lacked the realism that might have saved the situation in the West; and Jefferson Davis was foolishly loyal to all those to whom he had once entrusted power. Part of the trouble with the South, too, was the very fervor of its idealism. Thus George Rowan, like Lucy, feels revulsion at Rives for being a spy. Yet without accurate intelligence of Federal movements, Forrest could not have achieved his victories; and part of Bragg's failure was his inability to use information once he was supplied with it.

War not only produces actual death but death-in-life as well. War brutalizes a good man, when Rives, for example, becomes proficient in the conscript guard. War makes an old man of Ned Allard after his three years at Johnson's Island prison camp: a man from whom all energy has gone, a man whose eye seems no longer to see. Fontaine Allard, whose birthday celebration opens the book on an idyllic note, is unable to recover from the burning of his house and the despoiling of his property. Not only the great house goes, but so does the original structure of the first cabin which is outlined in the flames before the whole structure collapses. War burns and destroys, then, to the very roots of a culture. And death sears the living. With Rives's death, Lucy knows that she will see the Kentucky landscape in an alien light. But the fact that she can think at all of 'the green fields of Kentucky' argues for something indestructible in Lucy, in the human spirit itself.

The artistry of the novel resides in Miss Gordon's skilled intertwining of her central characters with the fortunes of the South. As individuals involved in the basic experiences of love, war, and death Rives, Lucy, and General Forrest are capacious enough to objectify Miss Gordon's mythic vision. Their emotions and conflicts stretch beyond their immediate situations and attain a significance that is universal. In a very real sense, then, her characters speak for all human beings who become involved in a cataclysmic war."

Frederick P. W. McDowell
Caroline Gordon
(U Minnesota 1966) 21-26

"*None Shall Look Back* 'is suspenseful and moving from beginning to end and is one of the best novels of the Civil War written in this century'.... One could well claim that Gordon is 'one of the best half dozen or so writers of fiction in English in our century'."

Donald E. Stanford
"Caroline Gordon: From *Penhally* to *A Narrow Heart*"
Southern Review N.S. 7 (April 1971) xv-xx
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 290

"The formal problem of the novel is: 'How to unite several levels of action.' Gordon solves this brilliantly; the novel is 'an object lesson in the conversion of history into tragic fiction.' Gordon arranges the novel in four parts and this is 'one clue to her intention.' Discusses at length the four parts which arrange the subject 'according to history': I. The way of life of Fontaine Allard; II. The Confederate disaster at Fort Donelson and the burning of Brackets itself; III. The peak of the Confederate effort: the Battle at Chickamauga; IV. The climax of the novel: the final desperate effort of the Confederates in the Battle of Franklin; and the Epilogue, with its necessarily falling action.

At the climax of the novel, the two levels of action, public and private meet. Rives' tragedy is caught up in the larger action of which [legendary Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest] is the representative, and for this to be credible Forrest must participate in the pathos himself.' Gordon 'accomplishes this through her adroit shift in the point of view,' from Rives' to Forrest's, 'the technical feature peculiar to the novel.' The effect Gordon gets 'is tragic, and it has been well prepared for.' For Lucy, 'there is only bleak endurance, prefigured in her mother-in-law's mode of existence.' This is the 'most impressive' of Gordon's first group of novels."

Ashley Brown
"*None Shall Look Back*: The Novel as History"
Southern Review N.S. 7:480-94 (1971)
summarized by Sullivan, *Reference Guide* 285-86

"In popular American fiction, there appear to be two chief ways of writing about the Civil War. One, the way of the romancer, is to glamorize; the other, the fashion of the 'serious' popular novelist is to debunk the romantic myth by showing that the war was brutal and that the motives behind it merely those of economic gain.... In *Penhally*, Caroline Gordon dealt with the Civil War only incidentally; but it is significant that her treatment of it differs from both popular traditions. In *Penhally*, the war is not exploited either for swashbuckling excitement or for a journalistic expose; it is, instead, an historical event that impinges on the lives of her characters.

In...*None Shall Look Back* (1937), Miss Gordon treats the war in somewhat the same way. Her interest is neither in romance nor in debunking; it is in making us see the reality of the war in order to make us believe in and be moved by the tragic outcome of the novel.... What concerns her is how a character, black or white, conducts himself in the face of impending disaster. Caroline Gordon writes about the Southern past because...it endows her fiction with an authority the present cannot afford: the authority of historical fact....

A novel set in modern times must somehow come to terms with the widely held myth that life is without meaning and that heroic acts are therefore impossible. Miss Gordon...does not accept this myth... But she is also aware of the difficulties of creating heroes in a world that gives heroism neither credence nor scope.... Historical personages...become paradigms of heroic virtue and help give her fictional heroes plausibility. By creating these historical persons as she would any fictional character, she gains a double authority: that of fictional realism and of historical fact.... Miss Gordon's art works very well in the second historical novel, *None Shall Look Back*....

The scene is the Kentucky-Tennessee area around Clarksville, Tennessee, where a number of Miss Gordon's novels and stories are set.... Several historical personages appear in the novel, including Robert E. Lee and U. S. Grant; but most important of these is Nathan Bedford Forrest, the historical paradigm, or 'real' hero of the novel. Forrest's military exploits not only give coherence to the chapters dealing with the war, but his character and actions provide much of the novel's meaning....

The first character encountered...is Fontaine Allard, a gentleman planter whose forebears, we learn, had come to Kentucky from Virginia two generations earlier. Allard, as the novel opens, has just turned sixty-five. He loves his land and thinks of farming as the only respectable way of life. There is also Charlotte Allard, Allard's wife, who manages her household with both competence and relish. There are also their middle-aged daughter Cathy, whose marriage has failed, and their three grandchildren: Jim, who is married to the daughter of a town storekeeper; Ned, who enlists in Forrest's rangers but sits out most of the war in a Northern prisoner-of-war camp; and Lucy Churchill--all of them children of the Allard's daughter Honoria who had died in childbirth.

Among the purely fictional characters, there are also the Rowans, sports-loving cousins of the Allards who live at 'Music,' a day's ride from 'Brackets,' where the Fontaine Allards live. There are also the Georgia Allards--Susan Allard and her sons Rives and Miles and her daughter Mitty--who live at 'Good Range' in northern Georgia. Susan Allard's husband was killed by a stranger with whom he had generously shared his horse. Susan Allard maintains that her husband had been right to share his horse even though it resulted in his death. Vengeance, she says, belongs to the Lord. Susan Allard gives away her worldly possessions and brings up her children to work hard and to 'do good.' She believes that manual labor is salutary and makes her sons and foster-sons work half of every day in the fields with the Negroes. As a consequence of the self-sacrificing and ascetic household in which he grew up, Rives becomes 'aware not so much of inconveniences and privations of life at Good Range as of its moral compulsions.' A burden seems 'to have been laid upon all the members of his family to do good.'

In contrast to the idealism of the Georgia Allards, there are the Bradleys who own a general store in Clarksville. Belle Bradley is married to Jim Allard, grandson to Fontaine. Arthur Bradley, Belle's brother, later marries Love, a young woman who had been engaged to George Rowan. The Bradleys are opportunists somewhat like Faulkner's Snopeses. Their only guiding principle is money. They never take sides in the war, except to demand United States rather than Confederate currency from their customers.

In *None Shall Look Back*, there are, in effect, three heroes: Lucy Churchill, who is the technical hero of the novel; Rives Allard, who might be called the 'code' hero; and Nathan Bedford Forrest, who is Miss Gordon's historical paradigm. Lucy gives the novel its formal structure; for, though we see a good deal more of the war than Lucy does, the impact of the war is felt chiefly in the changes that take place in her. The other two heroes, though important, are integrated into the novel chiefly through their relationship with Lucy: Rives, because of his marriage to Lucy; Forrest, through his association with Rives.

Rives exemplifies in his conduct the kind of selflessness and fearlessness that many of Miss Gordon's fictional heroes display. He does not understand the arguments about politics, tariffs, and slavery--they merely confuse him. For him, the important fact is simply that 'Our country had been invaded--it did not much matter on what grounds the invaders had come.' And so, though he has never thought about the war, or has never exulted in fighting as others had, when the time comes and men are needed for the defense of the country, Rives is glad to go. Throughout the rest of the novel, Rives displays the same uncomplicated devotion to duty that he was bred to at 'Good Range.' He is a soldier during the siege of Fort Donelson. When the fort is about to be surrendered to federal troops, he joins Forrest's rangers. Later, he goes on a spying mission for which he gets neither acclaim nor promotion. When Rives is caught by the Yankees and is almost executed, he is saved only because the town in which he is being held prisoner is captured by Forrest.

After his rescue, Rives returns to his duties as one of Forrest's 'orderlies.' From this point on, the war goes from bad to worse. Rives is involved in conscripting unwilling men into Forrest's army; then he is shot in battle and is temporarily out of service. When he momentarily fears that the Southern cause is lost, he is depressed. Life for him would not be worth living if the South lost the war. Later, when a guest at Brackets

(his wife's home) suggests that Rives would have been better off if he had been permanently disabled and so out of the fighting, Rives grows angry and orders the man out of the house. His depression, anger, and the growing awareness of the South's plight only stiffen his resolve instead of defeating him. During a battle, which take place near Franklin, Tennessee, the Confederate line wavers and breaks. General Forrest begs his men with tears in his eyes to rally, but they continue to fall back. Even the color bearer madly retreats. Rives' passion is aroused. He pursues the fleeing color bearer, shoots him, snatches up the banner, and carries it into the thick of the fighting. In the charge, he is wounded and falls dead from his horse....

Miss Gordon never falters in her vision of Rives as a man whose life has been one long preparation for doing his duty. She steadfastly avoids the labyrinth of his consciousness where the authors of antiheroes prefer to linger, and she shows us instead Rives Allard in action. This rendering of Allard's physical reality helps carry the conviction of the moral ideal of which he is also a symbol. Another important fictional technique for making Rives credible is Miss Gordon's use of Nathan Forrest as a heroic paradigm.... His personal example of selfless devotion to duty is a model and an inspiration to Rives; and he in part accounts for Rives' heroic actions, particularly in that last battle scene.

Forrest works on us as well, for whether we are inclined to value Forrest's kind of heroism, Forrest the man is beyond dispute. He was an actual person who did in fact the deeds ascribed to him. By making General Forrest a character in her novel, Miss Gordon not only adds the illusion of historical reality but also brings into the novel the code of conduct and attitude toward life by which these fictional realities are to be judged.... In the opening chapters, the novel is dominated by the private lives of the Allard family; but as the narrative interest shifts more and more to the war, Forrest becomes increasingly important. We see him at Fort Donelson pleading unsuccessfully with his superiors not to surrender the fort, later at Nashville as he beats back a crowd of plundering soldiers, and at Chickamauga after the great Southern victory when he urges General Bragg unsuccessfully to pursue the retreating Union army. And we see that, though defeated by his superiors at the conference table, Forrest never really surrenders. When he is relieved of his command under Bragg, he persuades the Confederate government to allow him to raise his own army. We seen him at the head of that army, a rag-tail outfit that continues to win victory after victory even while the other Confederate armies are beaten down by Union forces.

During most of the novel Bedford Forrest is presented, like Rives, from the outside; Forrest is a man of action. His deeds create him. But as the novel moves toward its close, the point of view moves closer to him; and we are permitted to hear what he hears and to see what he thinks. The most striking instance of this closer identification is in Chapter 1 of Book IV. The tale is almost done; the war, almost over; and Forrest himself is wounded on the sole of his foot and has been ordered to bed. In this chapter Miss Gordon has him recollect a battle he recently fought against General Sturgis. Instead of thinking the battle a useless expenditure of energy--for the war is all but lost--Forrest thinks of it rather as a 'fight to hand down to your children and your children's children.' And the excitement of reliving that great battle gets Forrest out of bed against the doctor's orders and into the war again. Significantly, General Forrest is on hand when Rives Allard, bearing the colors he has just snatched from the hands of the retreating color bearer, dies in battle; and it is Forrest who catches up the colors and carries them toward the enemy.

Although it is by means of Rives and, especially Forrest, that Miss Gordon dramatizes the heroic virtues, she uses Lucy Churchill, the technical hero of the novel, to structure the action. The change in Lucy's fortune, the gradual movement from happiness to misery, constitutes the central structural principle. This movement begins on the first page, even before Lucy appears as a character; and the prevailing mood is happiness. A birthday celebration is going on for Fontaine Allard, Lucy's grandfather, who is sixty-five yeas old. But even in the midst of the celebration another mood is introduced, for the very name Fontaine, with its long vowel sounds, strikes a sad and ominous note in the opening sentence of the first chapter.

During Allard's birthday celebration, much of the talk is about the war that has just begun. The patriotic fervor, the excitement, and the sense of impending adventure have in the ears of the reader, who already knows the outcome, an ironic ring. Ironically, too, Lucy's personal happiness begins during this period of hectic excitement. And there is a foreshadowing of Lucy's fate in the fact that she spurns the young man who has been courting her and falls in love with her cousin Rives. The point is not that Lucy would have escaped her fate had she not married Rives; for George Rowan, her other suitor, is also killed in the war.

The point is, rather, that the upheaval brings Lucy and Rives together and then, after they have loved, separates them. The love affair of Lucy and Rives is both a part of and a symbol of the fate of the society about which Miss Gordon is writing. We can see, moving to the allegorical level, that Lucy's choice of Rives is the one the South inevitably made when it took up arms--it shifted its trust from the planters, like Fontaine Allard, to its citizen-soldiers, like Forrest and Rives Allard. The South's fate, like Lucy's is already sealed.

An English critic, Walter Allen, has charged Miss Gordon with ignoring the injustices of slavery in *None Shall Look Back* and of writing, in effect, an apology for the old Southern way of life. It is true that Miss Gordon is not agonized by moral ambiguity as is Faulkner, to whom Allen unfavorably compares her; but her treatment of the Negro and of slavery is more complex than Allen realizes. It should be pointed out that, though Miss Gordon has some points in common with Faulkner, she is a different kind of novelist. She is more detached, more contemplative, and more Joycean in her refusal to allow the private emotions to show. She takes the world--in this case--the Southern pre-Civil War world--as she finds it, with its different classes, its different manners, and its prejudices; out of these she constructs her drama.

I do not mean, as Allen suggests, that she whitewashes the issue of slavery. In Chapter 6 (Part I) she dramatically presents an instance of white brutality to a Negro slave. A white man, hired by Fontaine Allard to oversee four hundred acres of land inherited by Lucy from her mother, is discovered to have beaten the Negro girl Della. The girl's wounds and suffering are graphically described, and Lucy is moved to pity for her and to outrage at the way Della has been mistreated. But, at the same time, knowing the girl very well and recalling the tricks that she often plays on old Aunt Mimy, Lucy thinks that perhaps Della has provoked the overseer beyond endurance. Lucy is confused and embarrassed by these thoughts, just as anyone would be who responds to the complexities of life rather than to theories about it.

The incident of Della and the overseer is, like the war itself, part of the enveloping action of Lucy's story. It brings dramatically into the foreground one of the book's main themes--the inevitability of suffering and human misery. At this point in the novel, Lucy, moved by Della's suffering, is 'ready to weep over the misery of the world, but the next moment when she hears of a dance to be held at the Rowan's, she is so happy that her heart almost bursts.' This abrupt change in Lucy's mood will strike readers who prefer moral tracts to fiction as inexplicable and callow. But, in Lucy, Miss Gordon is depicting a normal young woman living in southern Kentucky in the 1860's--one who, like normal young women everywhere, is usually at the mercy of her emotions. This change in Lucy's mood foreshadows later and more permanent shifts from happiness to misery and finally to despair. In this same chapter, there are other hints at Lucy's tragic fate. There is some talk about Lucy's getting married; and an old Negro woman, glancing slyly at Rives, tells Lucy to be careful passing through the woods and getting a crooked stick. In marrying Rives, Lucy will not get a crooked stick. Indeed, she will get a stick that is unusually straight--so straight that it will finally be broken.

The story of Lucy is interrupted for eight chapters while the progress of the war is given. Fort Donelson has been surrendered against the advice and pleading of Forrest; and the Yankees have arrived at Clarksville, a town close to Brackets, the Allards' home. In Chapter 10 (Part II), the scene shifts once more to the home of Fontaine Allard; and we see the changes that have taken place. The misery and the chaos hinted at in the beginning of the book have deepened appreciably for the Allards. John McLean, Mrs. Allard's have-brother, takes his money and departs for Canada. The healthy Negroes run off, leaving Mrs. Allard to care not only for her own family but also for the sick and aged Negroes. The mistress of the house is not the servant of servants. The overturning of the old order is also dramatized at breakfast when Lucy's sister-in-law Belle criticizes Fontaine Allard, and Allard actually 'stoops' to defend himself. Allard's stooping and later the sight of the confusion in the Negro quarters--the open cabin doors and the abandoned utensils and bedding--deepen Lucy's sadness. She thinks of how 'rats desert a sinking ship: "We are sinking, sinking; and they know it and have deserted us".'

At this point in the novel, the heroic qualities in Lucy's character begin to appear; and they are brought out by the increasing misery and suffering of the times, just as the war is to bring out the latent heroism in Rives. When Ned, Lucy's brother, and Rives show up at Brackets, having escaped from Fort Donelson with Forrest, Lucy is filled with energy and purpose. She hustles about helping everyone. Rives seems to her

more assured in his bearing, and his smile is so sweet when he asks her to go for a walk that she goes promptly with him. The beginning of Lucy's serious love affair with Rives coincides with the end of the way of life known to and represented by her grandfather. The big house at Brackets is burned to the ground by a careless Yankee soldier; Fontaine Allard has a stroke from which he never recovers; and the family is forced to move into a small house behind the big, burned one. Cally, Lucy's aunt, a solid, practical, energetic woman bursts into tears. Nobody knows how to do anything, she cries. There is 'nobody but me.' At this point, Lucy reveals that she and Rives are to be married.

Aunt Cally, a solidly rendered minor character who is interesting and convincing in her own right, is also used as a way of foreshadowing Lucy's fate. Cally too has been married, but her marriage turned out unhappily. When Lucy thinks of the failure of Cally's marriage, she realizes 'what a precarious business life--and particularly love--is and how implacable the forces which make for success or disaster. And it now seemed to her as improbable that she could be happy in this life as it had once seemed certain.' Such insights do not, of course, keep Lucy from occasionally imagining that happiness is possible for herself. When Rives takes her in his arms on his second visit to Brackets, Lucy cries out, 'Oh, I never thought I'd be happy again.' Her cry of happiness is followed almost immediately by the arrival of the Yankees at Brackets--the house is burnt, her grandfather is laid low by a stroke, and capable Aunt Cally is reduced to helplessness and tears.

Lucy's announcement of her engagement to Rives is not made joyously. She is constrained and red-eyed when she breaks the news to Aunt Cally. But yet there is a hopefulness implied in her actions. Happiness is perhaps still possible. As the lovers, now married, ride off to Rives's home, Miss Gordon evokes both the intimate private world of the lovers and the doom that hangs over them. The first sentence of the next chapter sounds an ominous note... There us a sinister fairy tale quality about this gloomy forest and this journey. And Rives is like an innocent robber-bridegroom leading Lucy to death. It is fitting that the lovers should arrive just as darkness descends and that they should be greeted by the baying of the hounds and by the hooded figure of a woman standing in the doorway of Lucy's new home.... Lucy has been conducted into a marriage and into a life that is to b e far different from what it might have been had there been no war. In the fairy tale, the bridegroom turns out to be sinister; in Miss Gordon's novel, it is life itself.

The Allard house at 'Good Range'...is symbolic of the life Lucy is to lead. There is something bare and even grim about it. There are no carpets on the floor, and Lucy and Rives's bedroom looks more like a dormitory for boys than it does a lady's bedroom.... Mitt, the sister, looks and acts like an old woman and Susan Allard, Rives's mother is somewhat mad.... Susan Allard is perhaps best understood as the author's way of particularizing the madness of the times and of suggesting that the possibility of happiness for Lucy is gone. The first night under her husband's roof, Lucy sees that Rives has his mother's eyes. Rives's madness, of course, is the madness of a hero, a man willing to fight and die for a cause--but that act lies still in the future. The next morning after their arrival, Rives takes Lucy out to see his land, and they inspect the site where they will build their house....

Part III of the novel begins with Rives in Chattanooga. Forest is now a general, and Rives has been selected by a Sergeant Bigstaff to go on a spying mission among the Yankees. Back in Georgia Lucy receives a letter from Rives that recalls her memory of the last morning they had spent together in the woods at Good Range. Then there is, in flashback, a love scene that might have been presented directly at the time it occurred; but, on reflection, we recognize what is gained by this indirection: the pervading tone of *None Shall Look Back* is sadness, and to have presented the love affair directly in present time would have destroyed the tone. By presenting the scene in retrospect Miss Gordon is able to dramatize Lucy and Rives's passion while at the same time casting over it a sense of loss, almost of melancholy. At this point in the novel the two worlds--the public world of the battlefields and the private one of Lucy Allard--converge, and the reader is made to feel, through the private experience of Lucy is, in a sense, the Southern one. This is not to say that Miss Gordon is writing a historical allegory, but the stories of the war--the destruction of the South--and of the lovers parallel and reinforce each other.

But Lucy, like Rives, is still young and full of expectations. Defeat and bitterness are inconceivable to her--a fact nicely dramatized in Chapter 6 (Part III). As the chapter opens, Susan Allard is boiling castor beans. Her gray hair is askew; and beneath her faded calico blouse her homespun skirt sags; a strip of her

flesh shows between. When the Negro woman Rivana ladles a little of the castor oil from the pot and invites Lucy to smell it, Lucy draws back, wrinkles her nose, and says, 'I wouldn't take a dose of castor oil if I were to die for it.' Susan says, 'Humph, you might be glad to get it, Miss'....

Before the chapter is over, Lucy has her first taste of death when a middle-aged Confederate captain is wounded in a skirmish and is carried in and placed in one of the Allards' beds. Lucy sits beside him holding his hand. When the captain dies, Mitty says, 'We ought to shut his eyes.' Lucy says, 'I can't,' but she does: she kneels down beside the bed and with her fingertips strokes the eye lids shut. After the captain's death, Lucy goes outside, crosses the porch, and feels in her bosom the sharp edge of Rives's letter, which has told her he cannot get a leave to come home. Lucy puts down her head and sobs. Susan appears and asks Lucy if the captain is dead. Lucy nods and Susan says, 'Don't cry, he's better off.' Lucy cries out loudly, 'I'm not crying for him.' Rives and Lucy are to meet again before Rives's death, but in the death of this stranger Lucy has already experienced her lover's death.

The next seven chapters of Part III (8-14) deal mainly with the war--the bloody battle of Chickamauga that results in a victory for the South and in death for Lucy's old suitor George Rowan and Rives's comrade, Sergeant Bigstaff. Rives survives this battle and attends Forrest on a wild ride to the headquarters of General Bragg, commander of the Confederate forces. Forrest wants to pursue the Yankees; Bragg refuses. Rives, who overhears their conversation, thinks that life will not be worth living if the Confederate cause is lost. The meeting between Bragg and Forrest and Rives's comment on the war foreshadow the coming end. Bragg, 'the man with the iron hand, the iron heart and the wooden head,' cares more for his own personal glory than for winning battles. It is said that he refuses to pursue the Yankees after the stunning defeat at Chickamauga because he wants to ride into Chattanooga the next morning as the conquering hero. This characterization of Bragg (which, by the way, shows that Miss Gordon is not merely writing a defense of the ante-bellum South, as some critics believe) is also a way of underscoring Forrest's virtues. Bragg is not a hero, he is not a selfless man devoted to causes.

There are also several fictional characters whose concern is for themselves alone: Joe Bradley, a shrewd storekeeper, takes no sides in the war; for his only concern is to make money.... Jim, Lucy's brother who is married to Joe Bradley's daughter and who is perhaps the archvillain of the novel, shares Bradley's view of the war.... When Ned talks about re-enlisting, Jim tells him not to be foolish; the South is going to lose the war.... The store, Jim contends, is the place to be because it is the only place where money can be made. There is one Allard woman who sells out: Love, who becomes engaged to George Rowan after Lucy refuses him. After Rowan's death at Chickamauga, Love becomes engaged to Arthur Bradley, Joe Bradley's son, who did not serve in the war. When Love announces her engagement, Aunt Cally is outraged; but Love defensively replies that she now loves Arthur more than George. Cally then makes a comment that summarizes one side of the novel's moral vision: 'There's just two kind of people in the world, those that'll fight for what they think right and those that don't think anything is worth fighting for.' The best people in *None Shall Look Back* are always capable of devoting themselves to something outside of themselves--to the land, to their families, to their region. The worst people are those without feeling except for themselves and their own personal advancement. Either they care for nothing but money, like the Bradleys, or they are concerned, like Bragg, with the figure they cut in the world.

Lucy, of course, must be numbered among the best people. When Rives comes home wounded and dejected and fails to respond to her and when at night his face in repose looks like marble, Lucy is upset and frightened. When Rives rides back to the front--still cold and emotionless--Lucy cries. Unlike Love, however, she is not fickle; she continues to love Rives no matter what happens. The novel ends shortly after Rives's death in battle. Forrest lives to carry on the fight, but Lucy, the technical hero of the novel, looks out a world that has not altered; 'She watched the light go from the sky and knew that when she saw the green fields of Kentucky again they would be as alien as the gullied, pine-clad slopes outside the window'.... *None Shall Look Back* reflects the haunting sorrow of the South's fate, but it does so through the lives of two fictional characters, Lucy and Rives Allard. And so, because the sadness is objectified in the lives of these characters, it never becomes sentimental. Indeed, the story of Lucy's loss becomes a universal one about human loss and suffering.

Death and suffering, loss of love and loss of life--these are the inevitable lot of man: 'Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back.' All that makes having lived count is the having stood--of having committed oneself in word and in deed to another person, to a higher cause, to something outside oneself. The standing, the commitment, has nothing to do with personal survival. Like Forrest's 'useless' battle, the commitment is a legacy to be handed down to one's children."

W. J. Stuckey
Caroline Gordon
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"The Civil War, demanding the commitment and energy of every able-bodied man, is the setting and focus for *None Shall Look Back*. Though *Penhally*, with its wider scope, necessarily treats the war in less detail, in both novels the cavalier young gentlemen come to realize the seriousness of their soldierly roles. Both Rives Allard and his cousin George Rowan learn that serving a woman and fighting for her protection are part of a larger cause--defending their country. In that larger service the self is destroyed, and the loved ones whom the soldier protects must relinquish him to his own immolation. Providing panoramic scenes as well as closer views through the consciousness of individuals, the omniscient narrator again discloses the paradoxes of heroism and the complexity of response such noble self-sacrifice elicits.

The demands that love and war make on a man cannot be equally fulfilled, although in his naivete George Rowan assumes that both are romantic conquests. Gradually George understands that he can serve but one mistress, war. Unsuccessful one night at soliciting Lucy's affection, George cheers himself as he rides away by singing a hunting song. He feels that love and war share a similar passion and that both are hunts, with different quarries. But in Part III, as the armies are preparing for the battle later known as Chickamauga, George perceives that conquests in love are small in comparison to those of war: 'I am willing to give my life for my country,' he said proudly.

The words spoken in the quiet woods rang a little theatrically on his ear yet evoked a sudden, immediate sense of beauty. He recalled fox-hunting nights when still fresh at dawn he had ridden home through wet woods, recalled other softer nights. That peculiar, excited feeling that came when he was on the verge of making a conquest that most people would have said even he couldn't make. Love itself never had a moment to match that feeling.' Remembering the night that Lucy Churchill refused him, George realizes that he never suffered because of it: 'It was as if he knew that he was soon to be caught up into greater affairs.' The lady that the soldier ultimately serves is his ideal of country and honor, a dark lady--as Lytle writes--exacting death.

The women, too, have to be educated to the deeper implications of the soldier's service. Early in the novel Lucy thinks of both George and Rives as her 'cavaliers.' However, once she has imagined her husband dying in action, she understands that being a soldier has none of the romance and lightheartedness that 'cavalier' connotes. Recalling that night she rode with George, Lucy remembers, as he later does, his self-dramatization and his naivete. He had recited to her, implicitly comparing himself to Troilus, Cressida's lover and a great Greek warrior… For all of George's theatricality that night, he does, in fact, die a hero at Chickamauga. Like Troilus, George ultimately finds that the duties and glories of war are more significant to him than the pleasures of love-making.

Similarly, George's cousin Rives has depended on his hunting experiences to anticipate the reality of war. Still waiting for his first battle, Rives thinks about the war and 'with these thoughts came the same excitement he had known months ago on a fox hunt when, riding home through the wet woods, he had seen the sun rising over the Brackets woods and had asked himself whether going to war would be like the chase or would have in it perhaps some excitement sterner, more terrible than any he had ever imagined.' Rives and his comrades are now defending their invaded land. Like the fox hunt, where the social distinctions between 'gentleman' and 'common soldier are dropped, war unites its participants in the more rigorous discipline of combat. Before the war, men such as Rives's Cousin Edmond at Music Hall could regard fox hunting and fishing as serious pursuits that served to bind together a community of men in a ritualistic test of skill and fortitude. Now, however, the war becomes the test of manhood, a proving ground for heroes, demanding the greater sacrifice of life.

Both George and Rives die in battle. Ned Allard, who manages to survive his imprisonment and return home, is nearly a walking corpse so thoroughly has the war broken him. All three men are destroyed because of their commitment, and paradoxically, they leave defenseless the family they have striven to protect. When Rives realizes that should the Confederate States fall, he will find no happiness except in death, he has already consented to sacrifice himself and abandon his wife and mother to their own devices. Thus, for soldiers, the loss of individuality necessitated by the war is at one extreme a selfless death wish and at the other a failure in human feeling. The narrator who shows us the grandeur of individual acts of heroism also reveals men reduced to animals by war, exploring the metaphor of the hunt to suggest how man can be at once hunter and prey.

We would expect that the commanding officers--who, like omniscient narrators, position themselves to watch the movements of many thousands of soldiers--would come to regard their men not as individuals but as part of a group. Leading his Union troops towards Chattanooga, General Granger thus perceives his exhausted men 'still in line but flat on the ground, panting, most of them, like dogs'; and again he remembers the morning's fighting as a confrontation between animal-like forces, where the Rebels 'swarmed like hornets.' Through gradual shifts to the omniscient narrator alone, we see the near absurdity of the soldier's movements. When a Confederate general views the action below Fort Donelson, the description of the battle as a fatal game between children could either be the narrator's or the general's: 'When it [the smoke from the cannon] cleared away the two armies were revealed blazing away at each other like boys swinging gigantic firecrackers.' Here, the general's detachment and the fantastic and ridiculous action are equally emphasized.

In a similar passage, a Federal commander, who is eating his sandwich and watching from the top of a hill, regards the combat 'like a man at a circus who finds himself unable to concentrate on one ring for fear of missing what is going on in the others.' The narrator, whose position is now clearly established, portrays the war as deadly amusement. 'Then the General shifts his gaze to the next regiment which seems, seen through his glasses, engaged in a game of checkers with the regiment adjacent. Men are falling fast and the action of their comrades in stepping over them is absurdly like 'taking' a man at draughts. But no such frivolous thought enters the General's mind. He is absorbed in noting that these two regiments with soldier-like precision close up each gap, always toward the colors. 'Pretty work,' he murmurs once and strikes his hand on his broad knee.'

Whereas the officers perceive how combat changes men into animal-like hordes or into well-functioning units, the individual soldiers, who are not often granted a larger perspective, tend to see at close range the savagery of war. Watching the Yankee soldiers charging Fort Donelson, Rives thinks of 'a horde of shining ants.' Later, as part of the conscript guard, Rives, even more detached, compares the squealing of the 'recruited' boys to the 'shrill squeaking' of rats. Especially in prison, the soldiers tend to view their fellow men as animals. Because the Union men treat them so inhumanely, the Confederate prisoners are forced, as animals would be, to concentrate on survival. Starving, they catch and eat rats or dogs; when they try to escape, they are mercilessly butchered--their bodies left to rot in the open.

If man's need to survive does not reduce him to an animal, the soldier's shared purpose, at the very least, makes them subservient to their grim hunt. A Federal general's aide appraising Birge's sharp-shooters realizes that these men, now hunters of men, take almost an aesthetic pleasure in a good day's shooting…. The Confederate cavalrymen also become hunters who have surrendered themselves to the discipline and esprit of the company. Before the battle of Chickamauga, the boy Henry Dunbar sees the men ride past: 'these men, moving secretly through the woods, were not soldiers. They were hunters, hunters who had chased the same quarry so long that they had come, all of them, to look alike.'

Moving smoothly and quickly from one perspective to another, the omniscient narrator renders the complexity of war. [The critic] Ashley Brown admires the way that this shifting point of view fuses two levels of action, 'public and private.' Praising especially the climactic battle scene in which the narrator shifts from Rives's eyes to those of General Bedford Forrest as he seizes the colors from the dying Rives, Brown observes, 'Rives' tragedy is caught up in the larger action of which Forrest is the representative, and for this to be credible Forrest must participate in the pathos himself. This Miss Gordon accomplishes through her adroit shift in the point of view, the technical feature peculiar to the novel.'

Another fusion of public and private worlds, which has not been examined adequately, is the juxtaposition and merging of war scenes with domestic ones. Those who stay at home--Mrs. Allard, Cally, Jim Allard, and especially Lucy--comment on the changes war brings and measure the heroism of their soldiers. Because of the war, people can be classified as 'those that'll fight for what they think right,' as Cally says, or 'those that don't think anything is worth fighting for.' And the omniscient narrator allows us to examine the psychology of even those who will fight for nothing except their own self-interest.

Appropriately, then, Jim Allard describes for us the home scene in fall, 1864, when it is becoming increasingly apparent that the South is losing. Unlike his brother Ned, who has been fighting for the Confederacy, Jim favors business interests and economic competition and has married into the family of the town merchant. Jim's physical handicap and selfishness have preserved him during the war so that now he represents the ascending power. He still has the energy to take over the society that the returning veterans can no longer preserve. Cally accuses Jim of being 'no better than a spy or a deserter' for refusing to sell coffee to a customer who has only Confederate money, but Jim replies angrily: 'You think so much of being an Allard, but let me tell you something, Madam. You'll see Allards doing lots of things you never thought to see before you're through with it. You better be glad one of us has got enough sense to keep a roof over your head.'

Through Callie's eyes we also see the same period. Her outrage is an index of her brother's betrayal and the ruthlessness of his practical-mindedness. Moreover, it is Cally who reprimands Love for flirting with Arthur Bradley, Jim's brother-in-law, while she is still wearing mourning for her dead fiancé George Rowan. Later, when she learns that Love is planning to marry Arthur, Cally wearily admits, 'They say we're losing the war. I reckon if we do people like him'll rule this country. You may be glad, Miss, that you married a Bradley….'

Although Cally realizes that Jim and the Bradleys will prosper, she despises anyone like Arthur who has not fought in the war and is willing now to take advantage of the fall of the old order. Despite the kindness of Arthur's father, Joe Bradley, in allowing the Allards to stay in one of his cottages at no expense, Cally resents the debt of gratitude he exacts and loathes him as a reminder of the family's dependency: 'I hate him… I wish he was dead. Dead and rotten.' Yet Cally's curses on Bradley's 'spry old back' are useless. As [the critic] Stuckey notes, in Caroline Gordon's fiction 'the superior man is destroyed because of his superiority. The cautious or self-seeking man always survives.' Whereas Bradley still has vitality, Cally's father has become senile and paralyzed by the stroke brought on when the Yankees set fire to the family home. The ascendancy of those like her brother Jim and Joe Bradley only reminds Cally all the more of the loss of the South's best men.

The close examination of domestic life permitted by these various points of view discloses a society threatened from without and within…. The novel is concerned with analyzing the dynamics of heroism, but approximately half of the chapters are reported through the points of view of family members at home; the novel's scope is larger… If the southern characters do not regard slavery as a moral question, it is because they are too preoccupied with their own survival to question the values upon which their society is founded. This is a profound failing, but it is psychologically appropriate. The Confederates say they are defending their homeland; they do not claim to fight for some abstract system of values. In fact, before Rives goes to war he realizes, 'it was not a question of slavery.' On the other side, the Union officer who righteously informs Mrs. Allard, 'I don't hold with slavery,' is, ironically, the same man who supervises the demotion of the Allards' home. Thus, Gordon very 'wittingly' shows the failure of both sides to examine the discrepancy between their ideals and their actions.

Lucy, whose point of view predominates in the domestic scenes, gives us the best understanding of the complexity of heroism. That war dehumanizes is not denied. Tending the wounded, she realizes the sacrifice required. As she holds a hemorrhaging captain, she is surrounded by men agonizing in death; in another room a doctor is amputating a man's leg: 'The terrible loud groaning kept on. Once a man's high voice cut across it. 'Shut up, Joe! They got to do it.' There was a cry after that more bestial than any of the others and then that too died away into a faint whimpering that might have been made by an injured dog

trying to go to sleep.' And when the captain dies, Lucy cries not so much for him as for her husband whose death she now knows is inevitable.

Lucy sees how war can reduce men to animals but also appreciates the sacrifice her husband will make. Intuitively, she knows the absurdity and nobility of his action. As Susan Allard reads aloud the letter describing Rives's death, Lucy looks out at the landscape and her imagination reconstructs the paradox of heroism: 'He was killed instantly while carrying the colors forward against the enemy'…. Like David against Goliath, like Saint George against the dragon, or like any of their mythical archetypes, the soldiers have participated in a primal conflict and proven themselves the stuff legends are made of. Although it is impossible, ridiculous even, for a man to fight a dragon or a boy to take on a giant, the hero braves the insurmountable, for as Caroline Gordon herself writes, 'that has always been the task of the hero, the confrontation of the supernatural in one or other of those forms which men of every age have labeled 'monstrous.'

Identifying the source of the title, [the critic] Jane Gobson Brown explains… 'In Nahum [2]:8, the war is depicted as lost because the men flee from the battle and only the heroes stand.' But this biblical description of the fall of Nineveh is also important for the implicit parallel between the fall of the Assyrian empire and the fall of the Old South. The war not only tests the men who fight on both sides, it assesses a society grown comfortable in affluence and power. Furthermore, the biblical allusion is significant for its prophetic tone: like Nahum who foretells the end of an empire that has subjected other nations, the narrator of *None Shall Look Back* describes the ruin of a region whose economic system is based on slavery. The South--blind to its internal weakness--becomes easy prey for the increasingly powerful, self-serving capitalists. In *Penhally*, old Nicholas Allard refuses to endorse a war that he feels was fought for economic gain, and his intuitions are to some extent correct. Indeed…at the end of the war, 'the only survivors…are the commercially minded.'

The narrator's 'prophecy' of the South's fall comes from the hindsight of history' her tone, though less declamatory than a religious prophet's, is equally authoritative. In a contemporary review Mark Van Doren praises this nonintrusive method: '*None Shall Look Back*, as I have said, is all detail. This may be why certain persons of my acquaintance have found it difficult to read. I do not see why it should be, but they say it is; and I fancy it is because Miss Gordon has not stepped out of her story from time to time and led them by the nose, or by the foretop.' However, as we have seen, Caroline Gordon's seeming objectivity always implies a judgment.

That the title of the novel comes from one of the biblical books of prophecy suggests again the serious duty of the author. Examining without sentimentality the nature of heroism and criticizing those who fail to live up to heroic standards, the author as omniscient narrator manipulates time and point of view to provide a complex and significant comment on the historical action, recreating…'an heroic past for a generation in need of heroes'."

Rose Ann C. Fraistat
Caroline Gordon as Novelist and Woman of Letters
(Louisiana State 1984) 64-73

"Caroline had wanted to write a big book, a magnum opus, and this was a big book. The presence of historical figures like Forrest and Grant and Buckner and Pillow and other commanders from both sides gives it an epic quality. It is not a happy book. Any joy people feel in love or sex is muffled (Caroline hated it when reviewers used the word 'muted,' but it leaps inevitably to mind) by the cloud of doom, defeat, and loss apparent from the very beginning. As soon as the scene is set at Brackets, seventeen-year-old Ned Allard brings his cousins George Rowan and Rives Allard, of the Georgia branch of the Allards, home from school. They are about to join Forrest's rangers. Almost immediately, from the garden, we see Ned's orphaned niece, Lucy Churchill, inside the candlelit parlor, singing with obvious symbolism, 'Let thy loveliness fade as it will.'

Lucy loves Rives Allard, but she marries him partly because she feels there is no room for her in the small house to which the Kentucky Allards move after Brackets is burned. Aunt Cally, arming herself with an axe at the prospect of a 'servitors' uprising,' turns on Lucy and says, 'You don't know how to do

anything…. There's nobody. Nobody but me!' When later that evening Lucy sees Rives, who is briefly hiding out at Brackets, she cries out to him, 'They don't want me…. I haven't anywhere to go…. They don't want me.' Rives says, 'I want you, more than anything in the world,' and adds they will ride to Hopkinsville to get married. And they do.

Through all the novel run the themes that were important to Caroline and to the Agrarians: Land, the most important thing in the world, must be cared for. Lucy's grandfather Fontaine Allard even quotes Edmund Ruffin, a Virginia agronomist much admired by the Agrarians, who developed methods for restoring soil fertility. (Ruffin had the distinction of firing the first shot of the Civil War at Fort Sumter and is said to have killed himself when it was clear the Confederacy was defeated.) Shopkeeping is infinitely inferior to farming. Jim Allard, Ned's older brother, married Belle Bradley, whose father has a store in Clarksville. 'Old Joe Bradley was conspicuous in Clarksville as being a 'sharp man to deal with. Allard actually winced at the thought of the word being applied to any connection of his.' But Fontaine Allard himself is not above a little sharp trading in slaves with his neighbor, Colonel Miles. Allard believes in treating slaves well, and he acts quickly to get rid of a white overseer at Cabin Row, a plantation Lucy has inherited from her mother, when the overseer beats a female slave. But he never questions whether the system is right or wrong. (Fontaine's cousin Tom Allard, Rives's father, a 'peculiar' man, did not believe in slavery and freed his slaves, whereupon most of them went to Liberia.)

Allard, doting on his granddaughter, finds only one fault with her: her lack of interest in the management of Cabin Row. 'Boy, what do you think of a farmer who won't go out to look at her crops?' he asks. Lucy, however, as the war goes on, is clearly capable of doing hard outdoor and indoor work when she must. She manages the poultry at Brackets until it is burned. She goes to cut and haul cane to feed the remaining animals. When she stays with the Rives's family in north Georgia, she works hard to learn to spin. She has the stamina and the spirit to work alongside her mother-in-law to tend the wounded soldiers in awful circumstances. ('The odor [from a wound] was living evil. It crouched above the bed on angry feet, made forays into the room. Rives thought: nothing like this on the battlefield.')

The legendary Nathan Forrest is a very large figure in the novel, and his prominence in the book reflects the conviction of both Andrew Lytle and Allen Tate that he was the best of the Confederate generals and that if he had been in charge the South would have won the war. Rives, in fact, is so lost in Forrest's thrall that he becomes single-minded in his service, almost unconscious of wife, family, or anything else. (Caroline wrote to Lon Cheney after it appeared that 'I wanted Forrest to be like a god,' but added that there were dangers in this method, the chief one 'that it is difficult to get catharsis at the end when one of the heroes is a demi-god. She feared the book wasn't human enough. She brushed over Forrest's past as a slave trader and his lack of control over his troops and, of course, ignored his later role as the founder of the Ku Klux Klan.) Heroism in war is entirely proper in this novel, and the schoolmaster, aroused by Ned, Rives, and George when they leave to join the rangers, says '*Dulce et decorum est*….'; the phrase seems to echo through the pages as the young men ride forward almost seeking death.

Caroline used the scheme of the omniscient narrator, going inside the minds of nearly every character, male or female, high or low, important or not important. This dilutes the book's strength and energy, but academic critics admire her technical skill in using a shifting point of view. Caroline creates vivid characters and demonstrates pitilessly how they act in times of high excitement, extreme dangers, and desolate defeat. She sketches in the background with a sure hand, using a stand of silver poplars, a clump of sumac, Virginia creeper on the walls, the enthusiastic cries of ladies admiring a yellow rose, a red clay gully and dark pine woods, the condition of a starving horse, to set a scene and create a mood. Reviews were mixed and many reviewers compared it, inevitably, to *Gone with the Wind*. Katherine Anne Porter wrote a glowing piece…in which she said Caroline was as 'all-seeing as an ancient chronicler, creating a panorama of a society engaged in battle for its life."

Ann Waldron
Close Connections: Caroline Gordon and the Southern Renaissance
(Putnam's 1987) 166-68

"The core of *None Shall Look Back* is based on the antithetical character of Caroline's maternal grandparents, Caroline and Douglas Meriwether, who appear in the novel as Lucy and Rives Allard. The

recently wed Lucy loves Rives, but he has dedicated himself to the god of war in the guise of the Confederacy. He progressively divests himself of any human ties and pleasures and even accepts the solitary and dangerous mission of a spy although it prevents any communication with his wife. On his last leave at home, Rives shouts in his sleep, 'stick with him and leave him.' Lucy tries to understand the murderous stranger he has become…. Lucy not only foresees Rives's death, but realizes that he is already dead to all domestic ties and tranquil human pleasures.

The moving story of Lucy and Rives reiterates Gordon's central theme of the sexes' unresolvably conflicting points of view, but *None Shall Look Back* goes beyond this private theme to explore heroism in the public arena of war. Caroline had Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in mind as she alternated domestic and battle scenes. She wrote to Sally Wood: 'each battle, it seemed to me, had to be treated in a different way or you'd get monotony… I treated Fort Donelson in Plutarchan style, reserving some impressionism for Chickamauga.' Some of these public scenes are enormously effective, such as the two small boys watching the beginning of Chickamauga or General Nathan Bedford Forrest confronting his pusillanimous fellow officers at Fort Donelson…. One of the most fascinating aspects of Caroline's early fiction…is her ambition, the way one can see her strive to master techniques from work to work…. The locally focused, highly ritualized genre of modern Civil War fiction is too narrow for her; she wants to write an American *War and Peace* with historical giants and panoramic set-pieces. In the past, of course, such works were much more characteristic of male novelists than their sister artists…. She is often, and justly, called a novelist's novelist….

Although Caroline did not have a best seller of *Gone with the Wind* dimensions, *None Shall Look Back* did very well, selling ten thousand copies by May, 'enough to live on—frugally--for a year,' according to Caroline. The novel received widespread attention, and Caroline was gratified by the perspicacious admiration of friends and fellow writers. Stark Young wrote to her praising *None Shall Look Back*'s 'nobility of tone'… In a review for the *New Republic*, Katherine Anne Porter recognized Gordon's inability to repeat herself and play it safe: 'She might have done the neat conventional thing, and told her story through the adventures of her unlucky pair of young lovers, Lucy Churchill and her cousin Rives Allard. But they take their place in the midst of a tragedy of which their own tragedy is only a part.' Porter also noted the advances Caroline had made in her art, writing, 'This seems to me in a great many ways a better book than *Penhally* or *Aleck Maury, Sportsman*'….

Ford Madox Ford…contrasts the carnage of the battlefield scenes with Caroline's authorial stance: 'And beside you, Mrs. Tate remains mysterious, unimpassioned, almost impartial as the tragic destiny unrolls itself beneath you both…. It is as if she were Pallas Athene, suspended above the Greek hosts, knowing what destiny decrees.' Ford…commends Caroline for knowing 'that if your approach to horror is not that of the quiet and collected observer and renderer you will fail in attaining the real height of a tragedy'…. The novels appear to be written by a woman with a tragic sense of life combined with a steely Olympian detachment…. Max Perkins, a staunch admirer of Caroline's work, was delighted with the success of *None Shall Look Back*."

Veronica A. Makowsky
Caroline Gordon: A Biography
(Oxford 1989) 136-39

"She chose the most demanding of stories--the story of a soldier--depending upon no easy devices of narrative, and crafting her work with models in mind that far transcended the genre of Civil War romance... The Civil War had something of a mythic stature--a 'general catastrophe' in the past...that, at least in part, explained why 'life was a desperate affair'....

She seems to have envisioned a narrative difficult to achieve, one that would be epic in spirit--a tale memorializing the deeds of a hero, set in the context of the concrete, valuable, though flawed world for which he is willing to die. 'Her story,' said Katherine Anne Porter in reviewing *None Shall Look Back*, 'is a legend in praise of heroes, of those who lost their battle, and their lives.' As Porter keenly discerns, it attempts to give homage to the ancient assertion...uttered by an old classics teacher as his students leave the academy for war. This unqualified affirmation of the heroic, was to some extent scandalous even in its own day, when anti-heroes were the norm and when the writer, according to Porter, was under considerable

pressure to adopt a 'form of opportunism...called "interpreting history correctly".' Even more so does it seem scandalous today, with our still more exacting criteria of negation.... [Namely Political Correctness, the academic police state currently enforced by liberals.]

The Naturalism at the roots of the novel is essentially skeptical, resistant to the easy appeal of public beliefs and of heroic gestures: irony is its dominant tone. Thus, as much as Gordon admired Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, its narrator, who continually deflates the pretensions of the main character and who views 'courage'--both as a human gesture and as a public 'badge'--with steady skepticism [Crane debunks false popular notions of heroism--symbolized by the badge--while affirming true heroism, which he calls "a sublime absence of selfishness"], cannot serve as a guide in her effort to render the hero. Crane's irony must be eschewed, as well as the sentimentality of the romance....

Women do not generally write epic narratives. And in technical terms, though the world of the home and of lovers is relatively accessible to the imagination, to write a narrative of the experience of a soldier in war requires more: an assured mastery of a 'masculine' domain, the highly technical language of warcraft--strategy and maneuver, both overt and covert; disposition of forces; the technical nature, force, and impact of weapons; the pragmatic care of the army, the movement of vehicles, the feeding of men and of horses; the physical symptoms of hunger, thirst, disease, and exposure; the nature and variety of wounds, the postures of the dead, the cries of the dying, the effects of putrefaction, the disposition of bodies; and, perhaps most essentially, a language attentive to the individual characters of horses and of men as they show themselves in gesture--that is to say, a language ordered to the discrimination of spirit and courage. We should note, indeed, that the mastery of this kind of detail is not typical of male writers either: it simply requires too much work....

For her narrative discipline and for the factual record she depended upon the study of historical writers--Civil War documents such as the Forrest biographies of John Wyeth and Andrew Lytle and the collection of eyewitness accounts in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*; and, as models of perspective, classical battle narratives, such as those of Plutarch and Thucydides. But beyond these disciplinary guides, she chose imaginative company with no less than Tolstoy and Homer. Indeed, the considerable technical achievement of *None Shall Look Back* is to make the devices of fictional Naturalism serve the purposes of a classical heroic narrative. As in Homer, the bareness and simplicity of the style, the quiet, reiterative use of epithets, and the play between nearness and distance, give great dignity and poignancy to the tragic events described. The narrative distance in the novel, Ford Madox Ford said, suggested that of Athene among the armies in the *Iliad*, the narrator standing beside the reader with calm impartiality and clear-sighted premonition....

She sees the pattern of her life's work in terms that make *None Shall Look Back* appear a fable of her career: 'War which, now under one disguise, now another, pits a man against his arch enemy, Death, has always provided a favorable climate for the growth of the hero, as well as for the study of his ways and deeds. The novelist, like the soldier, is committed by his profession to a life-long study of wars and warriors.' The novelist and soldier are alike in commitment: and thus the author's attention to the details of military craft as well as to the passion of the soldier's life reflexively signifies the inexorable demands, the austerity and sacrifice, or her own art....

Concerning the war itself, the loss of Confederate to Union forces in the western campaigns, Gordon is quite clear. Its leaders relied excessively on an abstract knowledge of military procedure and insufficiently on specific and original strategies and inspired leaders: 'The problem,' Forrest thinks when he sees that the generals at Fort Donelson plan to surrender, 'was how to convey to these men a certain knowledge which he had and which they did not seem to possess,' a knowledge based on concrete and intuitive engagement with all the actualities of the moment. Gordon does not give commentary on the generals and battles, but only renders the historical account, which itself clearly conveys the imprudence and blindness that lost the Confederate army its opportunities at Fort Donelson and which caused unnecessary slaughter at the hands of Franklin. Nor does she obscure these failures by vilifying the enemy or ridiculing its leaders. On the contrary, Sherman in particular, unlike Jefferson Davis or General Bragg and Hood, is depicted as recognizing a military genius when he sees on, and from the beginning considered Forrest one of his most formidable adversaries.

Apart from this large arena of pride and error, in the private sphere of family and desire, do we also find premonitory signs of the eventual fall of this world? We are led to this question in part because of the title of the book. An apocalyptic sense is suggested both in the original title--'The Cup of Fury,' from Jeremiah 25:15--as well as the final title, taken, as the epigraph tells us, from Nahum 2:8: 'But Ninevah is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back.' In the verses alluded to, both Jeremiah and Nahum speak prophetically of the wrath of God descending upon unrighteous peoples. The verse from Nahum, in particular, describes the warriors in the last line of the city's defense breaking in terror. The novel closes with just such a scene of panic in battle, when Forrest yells to his retreating men: 'Rally, men, rally! For God's sake, rally!' But they would not listen.

Though the title of the novel may be read ambivalently--as referring to the kingdom of the invaders (the oppressor Ninevah) rather than to the South (Israel)--the parallel between the biblical text and the last scene clearly suggests that the defeat of the South is a kind of retribution, that it collapses out of some ultimate weakness of spirit. However, the ending just as clearly points to the heroic figure, for Rives does 'stand,' and our last image of the war is of Forrest charging the line alone.

To understand the importance of the hero in the world of the novel, we must first contemplate the problem of courage--that is, the problem of facing death--which his presence brings into focus. As we attempt to discern the possible weakness within this world--or more specifically within the Allard family--the flaw is not obvious, but so deeply embedded in a stable and elegant way of life as to be almost invisible. Critics have located this flaw as part of a defense or attack of the presumed agrarian beliefs of the author, and their diagnoses seem inadequate: the polemical is as alien to this novel as is the sentimental.

As the author renders it, the chief flaw does not appear to be the encroachment from within of 'Yankee' entrepreneurs like Joe Bradley, or industrialists-to-be like Jim Allard. Nor is the flaw of the Allards and of the South to be found in the institution of slavery as such, which appears to be a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem, rather than the problem itself. The novel reflects a deliberate choice by the author to avoid the question of slavery as an abstract issue--for such reductive abstraction on both sides was, after all, a main cause of the war--and to confront it as a concrete and therefore complex aspect of the South, reflecting its hierarchy and economics, but also its values and its unresolved moral perplexities.

The flaw of the Allard world might best be seen in the figure of its patriarch. Fontaine Allard's love of land and his sense of responsibility to his ancestors and descendants are presented as a kind of sacred piety; and as one who breeds horses, he is associated with the heroic pattern of the whole novel (two of the Confederate generals who escaped from Fort Donelson were on his horses). But this sense of piety and proprietorship should not be taken as an unqualified moral measure.

Though he is basically a good and generous man, the narrator makes us aware that Fontaine Allard is unable to be happy where he cannot command; that he is slightly pompous, complacent in his sense of his family's superiority, and intolerance of difference. He thinks to himself at the beginning of the novel that 'Youth must always regard itself as imperishable'; but there is little sign that he does not participate in the same naiveté, the same inability to appreciate the mutable and transient. Even his awareness of familial continuity in time is associated with the transient, the fragrance of flowers from the garden, which 'spoke to him of pleasures past and of pleasures to come.' His identification with land, lineage, and ownership is so complete and unconscious that, like the crazy dwarfish Old Ben who haunts the stables where he used to ride as a jockey, Fontaine becomes a helpless idiot at the moment his house falls, roused from torpor only at the mention of horses.

The flaw in the fabric of the ample and contented Allards of Kentucky might be put in simple and proverbial terms: they live a life whose happiness (well-being, good fortune) is apparently never seriously examined in relation to death and mutability, and never rooted in any order beyond the natural. The South, Allen Tate suggests in *I'll Take My Stand* [1930], failed in being a feudal society without a correspondingly articulate structure of religion; its way of life to some extent was an end in itself. Something of the same insistence is made in *None Shall Look Back* [1937], as it presents a world of gracious and decorous pleasures and passions, having no apparent ends beyond the moment, except in its own perpetuation in the

family. The implied questions throughout the novel, thus, are simple, stark, and ancient ones: in what does human happiness consist, and what are the ends by which it is measured? War and catastrophe bring us to a remembrance of these ultimate questions; and the hero points to an answer, if we are able to read it.

The novel establishes a persistent questioning all along, in pointing to ambiguous figures like Forrest who possess an incommunicable and invaluable knowledge. In this light, we must reconsider two of the Allard connection that are taken by the Fontaine Allards to be 'eccentric,' but that prove, paradoxically, to be central: Edmund Rowan, who ignores the life of the farmer in order to pursue the life of sport; and Susan Allard, the wife of Thomas Allard, whose father Garrett Allard, concerned with his soul, in his old age gave up the raising of tobacco and tried to dispose of his slaves. These two figures are alike in important ways: each lives austerely, minimally sustained by an agrarian life, with no concern for possessions; each manifests an intensity or a 'passion' that transcends the pursuit of ordinary pleasure--for Susan Allard, the care of the sick and needy, and for Edmund Rowan, the hunt (if, as Gordon suggests elsewhere, we take the hunt as an heroic quest, a ritual confrontation with death); and each is happy and self-sufficient, as are no other characters in the novel.

Susan Allard's character, in particular, deserves closer attention, since her household provides the chief counterpoint to that of Fontaine Allard, and since Rives Allard inherits her intense and austere disposition. Her significance in the novel is almost uniformly misread, because critics take the condescension and prejudices of the Kentucky Allards as somehow normative--and surely this is not entirely justified. Seen without prejudice, Susan Allard is clearly a good and selfless woman: she takes in orphans; cares for the sick, the poor, the homeless, and the wounded; refuses to participate in the retribution for her husband's murder, referring vengeance to God, not to men; compels her sons to work in the fields part of each day with the slaves; gives away her possessions continuously, the family heirlooms as well as the fresh pudding at dinner. None of these things is scandalous in itself; but certainly they appear so to a society bound in its identity to various codes--hierarchy, legality, ownership--which she ignores and transgresses.

Susan Allard is, like the Allards of her husband's family, concerned with the soul and with the good. She is apparently possessed by a sense of mission that wholly preoccupies her attention, to the exclusion of domestic affairs. But there is nothing abstract or puritanical about her ministrations: she is active, pragmatic, and effective. After seeing his other tend to the wounded on the battlefield of Chickamauga, Rives thinks: 'You could not set her down as belonging to one of those [ladies'] associations. She was a host in herself. A "captain" the negroes called it'.

What they mean in this phrase is that she has the mysterious quality of 'authority.' Within this chronicle of a confused and death-filled world, where the heroic is often difficult to discern, the author surprisingly points to an essential kinship between Susan Allard and General Forrest: as those engaged in concrete, directed action, both move instinctively, in ways that call into question the codes within which they move. They are distant and strange to those who surround them. Nothing makes clearer the hidden affiliation of these characters than Rives Allard, who has his mother's disquieting eyes, 'at once cold and passionate,' who like his mother is seen often reflectively gazing into the flames of the fire; but who also feels an affinity for Forrest like that of a son for his father, and who becomes inextricably linked with Forrest in the last heroic gesture of the novel. George Rowan, thinking of the 'dangerous lot' of the Forrest brothers, wild and reckless, places Rives among them, echoing the chauvinism of all the Kentucky Allards: 'Well, Rives Allard had always been a queer cuss. It was only natural that he should land in a queer branch of the service. For it [spying] was a queer way of fighting.' Rives, along with Susan, belongs to the 'peculiar' branch of the family, and that strangeness is identified with the 'queerness' of Forrest's scouts.

Finally, both Susan Allard and Forrest are associated in the novel through the image of the horse. Susan Allard is called 'Mammy Horse' by one of her children, so constantly is she mounted and moving. 'She goes up and down the yearth,' Rivanna says of Susan Allard: 'She just gets on her horse and waits till the spirit move her.' Likewise the last image of Forrest on his gigantic horse King Philip is a culmination of the constant presence of horses throughout the novel, beginning with Fontaine Allard's race horses, and moving through the incessant changing of mounts in the cavalry, as the horses are driven to their limits and collapse or die of wounds. The horse and the hero are inextricable, joined especially in battle as a sign of intensity, power, and mysterious spiritedness.

There emerges, then, in the novel an implicit argument suggesting the limitation and the transparency of the 'happiness' of Fontaine Allard and his family. What they disdain about Good Range, the land of the Georgia Allards--that they would 'hate to live in a country where [their] grave was already dug'--points precisely to their blindness. For the simplest piety tells us that in some sense our grave is already dug. The author points to characters marginal to the accepted agrarian structures who possess compelling passions rooted in the spirit, and rooted in a constant and candid engagement with death. Nowhere is the innocence of the Allards shown more vividly than in the marriage of Rives and Lucy Churchill, which joins the two branches of the family. Their momentary passionate happiness possesses no ground sufficient to sustain it in the face of despair and death.

The story of marriages made quickly in the midst of war is an ancient one: the woman, in her passion for the warrior, becomes in a sense the bride of Hades, and the marriage bed and deathbed become one. The warrior, lost in the vastness of the underworld, mesmerized by the constant gaze on death, loses the orientation toward life that his bride might give him. That mythical dimension is fully amplified in *None Shall Look Back*. Here, as so many characters say in the *Iliad*, it seems wrong to assign blame where fate has had inexorable control. Rendering the first days of their marriage, the narrator captures their doomed story in an image: 'One of the logs that Rives had just laid on [the fire] was green. From one end of it little drops of moisture formed and fell hissing into the ashes.'

However, the special poignancy of this union is that it possesses a spiritual possibility never realized. When Rives first recognizes his attraction to Lucy, he recalls George Rowan's phrase for her, and she is associated in his heart with that exaltation of spirit causing him to go to war: *'Clarissima... Most clear*! The name suited her, a sort of brightness about her, a quick, proud way she had of turning her head. When he looked at her he got back the feeling he had about the war before all this talk came to confuse him.' On Lucy's part, the necessities of her own spirit cause her to reject the conventional George Rowan and to be attracted to the silent intensity of Rives, to his fieriness and pride. However, as so often happens in Gordon's work, their choice to marry is not quite a choice, but an event brought about by circumstance. Moreover, their union seems completely defined in terms of passion: 'I *want* you, more than anything,' Rives says to Lucy, as they decide to marry; and when he leaves a final time for battle, Lucy thinks (unable to utter it), 'I may never see you again, but I will *desire* you all my life' [emphasis added]. The consuming, mortal passion that defines their love is most clearly seen in their physical union in a 'dark cedared ravine' on the death-filled battlefield of Chickamauga.

In their passion, circumscribed by loss and hardship as well as by the weary desperation of battle, the question of 'happiness' arises repeatedly and hauntingly. Each time it does, it brings with it more vividly a sense of the fragility and inadequacy of the happiness sought so fiercely. As heir to the innocence of the Kentucky Allards, Lucy Churchill naively expects happiness from the future, an animated and rich fullness of the moment, such as the dance brings her. The narrator shows us the repeated frustrations of Lucy's expectations, and her persistent unwillingness to accept the darkness and confusion that those disappointments bring. Reflecting on her own inexplicable behavior toward George Rowan and on the 'ruined life' of her aunt Cally, Lucy sees 'in a flash...what a precarious business life--and particularly love--is and how impalpable the forces which make for success or disaster. And it now seemed to her as improbable that she could be happy in this life as it had once seemed certain.' Though her insight here is genuine, her disillusion is to some extent self-fulfilling. Her instinct is to shut her eyes and raise a barrier of pride at the first sign of the betrayal of her happiness--and life itself, as Lytle points out, is her betrayer.

Lucy's story consists of a series of 'descents' which she fails to negotiate. When she goes down the dark, sunken lane to Cabin Row where her own slaves live, she refuses to take in the human, moral darkness signified in Della's brutal beating by the overseer, and instead she feels revulsion for the beaten woman herself. Later when she travels down to Georgia to Rives' home after their marriage, she is oppressed by the darkness of the woods, and by the bare, austere house. When alone with Rives, she turns passionately to him, 'her eyes tightly closed as if to shut out the room.' When he asks her then, 'Are you happy?' she whispers 'yes' passionately. The device of using passion in order to escape from circumstances she does not want to see is in fact at the origin of her hasty marriage to Rives, which takes place immediately following the destruction of Brackets, the Allards' home in Kentucky.

Later, her descent with Rives into the 'dark, cedared ravine' on the battlefield, in the midst of death and disease, represents a more desperate escape into passion. All the while, Lucy impatiently endures her condition--her separation from Rives, the hardship of work and hunger, the increasing presence of death in her life--in proud and increasing bitterness that she has been betrayed. Needles to say, Lucy finds her mother-in-law Susan Allard 'disquieting,' and is fearful that Rives shares in her nature; for Susan Allard is clearly drawn to a happiness entirely other than the one Lucy desires.

Rives' sense of happiness centers from the beginning upon the spiritedness associated with the thought of going to war: he reflects on the day he leaves that no one 'could possibly know how happy he was.' His orientation, which draws from the quiet spiritual intensity of his mother, stands in contrast to that of Lucy and her family. His reasons for fighting are not intellectual or abstract but simple: to defend an invaded country. But more profoundly his exaltation in anticipation of battle involves the mystery of courage, the nature of which is impossible to know except in concrete action. But like Lucy's initial happiness in the animated moment, Rives' expectations too must come to a fall. When he begins to experience battle, the reflective character inherited from his mother draws him increasingly into a fascination with death. Especially, the prospects of the South's defeat accentuates the appeal of death. Rives thinks, after General Bragg's refusal of an appeal by Forrest seals the doom of the Confederate forces: 'If the Confederate cause failed...there could be no happiness for him except the grave.'

The dilemma of the hero's desire for 'happiness' is a subtle one. For him, we might say, happiness consists in that moment of selfless, spirited release which goes under the name of courage. But in the anger and weariness of continual defeat and loss, death would seem to offer another release and another mystery. So courage is confused by Death that relentlessly shadows it; and the act of the hero may seem an act of despairing rage, or even an act of suicide, and thus of cowardice. This situation--the ambiguous appeals to the hero that draw him between courage and the darkness of despair--may be what Gordon means when she says (in 'Cock-Crow') that each hero stands 'at the edge of the abyss. An abyss so deep and dark that no human eye has ever penetrated it.'

This mystery within the nature of courage, with its shadow life of rage and despair, is what Rives Allard faces more and more intently throughout his story. It comes to a climax when, after his brother Jeffrey is killed in battle, General Forrest charges in a blind rage toward the enemy lines. An officer, his eyes 'bright with fear,' whispers, 'Be killed. That's what he wants. Be killed.' Riding away, Rives curses the officer violently: 'God damn...lying...dirty...*coward!*' Then, waving his arms crazily, he shouts, 'Every man. Got the right. To get killed,' and collapses with the thought that Forrest himself may already be dead. Is Forrest's charge an act of courage, despair, or cowardice? Does the officer accusing Forrest of wanting to die do so because the hero's courage, his unhesitating surrender to possible death, is terrifying? Forrest in this scene stands at the abyss, and Rives recognizes it as the place where he too stands.

Though *None Shall Look Back* ends, like the *Iliad*, with an austere and uncompromising sense of loss and grief, it also, like the *Iliad*, wholeheartedly praises the hero, whose central task is to act as fully and selflessly as possible, with awareness of the ultimate stakes of his action. Speaking of this novel, Porter says, 'The hero is forever the same, then and forever unanswerable, the man who throws his life away as if he hated living, in defense of one thing, whatever it may be, that he cares to live for.' Porter keenly recognizes the ambiguity of paradox of the hero's gesture: 'as if he hated living...in defense of the one thing...he cares to live for.' Rives Allard in the last scene of the novel successfully, it seems to me, negotiates the precarious territory of his own spirit. When the line of battle breaks and all the soldiers flee, Rives does stand; after shooting the fleeing color-bearer, he seizes the flag and furiously charges the enemy line to his death. At this point Forrest--recognizing Rives with pity and grief, and seeing in him his own fallen brother Jeffery--in his turn takes up the fallen flag and charges the line alone.

Rives' action to stand against the impossible onslaught of the enemy is simple, instinctive, and unhesitating. If at the end we ask what he dies for, and thus what he cares to live for, whether his act is not simply one of rage and despair, the answer is given not in any commentary or in any words spoken by Rives, but in the image of the 'colors.' The cowardice of the color-bearer--entrusted to bear the honor of his people in the vanguard--is the unbearable outrage. Rives unhesitatingly kills him (as in one historical

account of this battle Forrest himself did) and mounts the flag on his saddle; so absolutely is his attention fixed on the flag and the battle line that he never knows he has been shot and is dying.

That Rives' gesture in this scene is completed by Forrest suggests its participation in the full dimension of the heroic. The last image of war in the book is of Forrest: 'He put spurs to King Philip. The great war-horse bounded forward. Forrest stood in his stirrups. The rose-colored flag danced above him then dipped. It veiled his face for a moment from the men's sight but they heard his voice sounding back over the windy plain and saw him gallop towards the fort.' Though the novel suggests why the cause of the South failed, the ending clearly points to the endurance of its heroes and its heroic gestures in the face of death. The hero Forrest on his powerful horse, always obscure and unaccountable, partially veiled from our vision, enters into memory here, joining other, ancient heroes on the 'windy plain.' In the last scene of the novel, Lucy after hearing of Rives' death, sees clearly enough, despite her grief and bitterness, to recognize the ancient battle in which Rives has been engaged: 'She had been staring at the dark woods.... They took strange shapes, a boy in a peaked cap fleeing a giant along a forest road, a man on horseback contending with a dragon.'

When Homer in the *Iliad* has Achilles bear the shield depicting the whole of the human cosmos, it is to remind his audience that the happiness of any world has no ground without the hero's struggle with death. *None Shall Look Back*, rendering the catastrophe of the Allards, and of the South, consistently points to the same truth."

Eileen Gregory
Preface
None Shall Look Back
(J. S. Sanders 1992) vii-xx

"The future success of [*None Shall Look Back*] was threatened by another novel about 'the War.' *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell had been published on June 30, 1936, and immediately became a best-seller: within three weeks it had sold over 178,000 copies. By the end of the summer, David O. Selznick would purchase the movie rights to the novel for fifty thousand dollars, the highest price paid for a first novel at that time…. Could any other novel compete for sales with such a book?…. As Mitchell became something of a folk heroine, the newspapers were full of stories about how it took her ten years to write *Gone with the Wind*. 'Why couldn't it have taken her twelve?' Caroline complained… *Gone with the Wind* was little more than 'a super salesman's idea, half a dozen of the best plots in the world wrapped up, with the Civil War as cellophane,' Caroline thought, but it had 'gobbled up all the trade'…. Some critics thought *None Shall Look Back* 'vastly superior' to Mitchell's novel, but many more found it…in need of a sympathetic hero or heroine….like Scarlett O'Hara'…

Perhaps Caroline was afraid such a book might seem trivial, more domestic fiction than serious art…. Caroline seemed determined to challenge herself, to write prose not typically female. She crafted a narrative following Rives through the war, mastering the male domain of military strategy she had once thought beyond a woman's ability…. Caroline had agonized over her characterization of Lucy in the final version of the story, and her decisions about her heroine reflected her own gender anxieties. If [her editor, the illustrious Maxwell Perkins] had not insisted otherwise, she would have left the story of Lucy completely unresolved… [He] had certainly influenced Caroline's decision to abandon Lucy when he told her that the novel would not be as interesting once it focused on Lucy alone.

Like Caroline's earlier heroines, Lucy had a creative imagination and intuition sure to be her salvation. She was sensitive to the complex nature of good and evil; she recognized the terrible price of survival, the precarious lives women were forced to live. Lucy even understood her husband's headlong rush into death. Yet like her creator, she often distrusted her own strength and the intuition that enabled her to survive…. In the end the men who survived were defeated. The women alone had strength to face the future, however bleak it might be…. Lucy and the other women in the novel were powerful figures. But for reviewers looking for a sentimental heroine, Caroline's women of silent strength were hardly sufficient….

Caroline accepted the bad reviews with unusual grace…[dwelling] on the difference between popular novels and fine art. She realized her book would never have the popular appeal of Mitchell's opus.

‘Whether it is good or bad, it takes an effort for the reader to follow it,’ she admitted…. And despite the competition from *Gone with the Wind* and a handful of other novels about the Civil War recently published, *None Shall Look Back* was selling well, in fact better than any of Caroline’s other novels: about thirty-five hundred copies in the first month after publication…. [Her editor, Perkins] thought the ‘tone of many of the reviews’ revealed Caroline’s growing reputation. ‘They all take you as a writer of importance, as one from whom great things are expected,’ he said….

She thought her novel was ‘the most ambitious novel written so far about the Civil War’…. Caroline had once again used her mother’s family history as the basis of her narrative. She created the character of Cally Allard Hobart in the image of her great-great-aunt Cal, Caroline Meriwether Goodlett, who founded the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Susan Allard, like Caroline’s great-grandmother Susan Meriwether, was called Mammy Horse. Even Cousin Garrett, the Meriwether kin who freed his slaves and took up silk farming, appeared in the novel…. She based both Lucy Allard and Lucy Llwellyn on her grandmother; she modeled Fontaine Allard and Ralph Llewellyn after ‘Grandpa Woodstock,’ and John Llwellyn and Rives Allard on her grandfather Douglas Meriwether…. Union soldiers burned the mansion to the ground, an incident borrowed from Allen’s family history.”

Nancylee Novell Jonza
The Underground Stream: The Life and Art of Caroline Gordon
(U Georgia 1995) 170, 177-81

“Called *None Shall Look Back* after a passage in the biblical Book of Nahum, it told as one action the story of the Civil War’s western theater and three people involved in it: Rives Allard, Georgia cousin of a prominent family of Kentucky tobacco planters; Lucy Churchill, his Kentucky cousin and young wife; and the one undoubted military genius in that theater, Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest. Gordon’s model here was nothing less than Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, and like Tolstoy she assumed for the most of her narrative the risky position of omniscient author, but she deftly narrowed her focus from time to time to give the three principals a credibility…

In particular her characterization of Forrest, with his zealous dedication to the southern cause, his brilliant performances in the field, his frustrations with lesser leaders whose blunders and indecision negated much of what he attempted to do, and his fury and grief at the death of his brother in battle, provided a core of strength that gave the novel a power unequaled by other novels about the war that were then crowding the bookstalls. In addition, Gordon’s Forrest served as the principal bearer of the novel’s theme, this time one to which readers of most persuasions could respond, of death as the ultimate reality of all warfare. For readers attuned to Gordon’s way of thinking about the South, the agrarian theme was there too, though not insisted upon. In the course of the story Rives Allard, agrarian to his finger tips, dies gloriously in defense of Georgia’s way of life, and Lucy, on hearing the news, turns her thoughts toward a more genial Kentucky version of that same way; but precisely what constitutes this unique way of life is left for the reader to infer…. [This novel] was successful, financially as well as critically.”

J. A. Bryant, Jr.
Twentieth-Century Southern Literature
(U Kentucky 1997) 65

“In part one of *None Shall Look Back*, Gordon leads her unwilling heroine, Lucy Churchill, down this curiously sunken lane, away from the ‘open, bright light’ of Brackets, her grandparents’ plantation, to witness a different and darker reality. Font Allard, Lucy’s grandfather, insists that the young girl visit Cabin Row, the slave quarters, which the orphaned Lucy has inherited but cannot yet manage. The landscape is so strange that she considers it might lead to ‘the house that one finds at the end of a road in a fairy tale.’ As in most fairy tales, this place is no paradise; it is full of violent energy that is subdued or at least controlled in Lucy’s wealthy, aristocratic, and patriarchal world. Here, she is asked to examine the back of the slave Della, her former playmate, and report on the severity of the scars that were inflicted by the lustful white overseer who manages the place in Lucy’s stead.

Although Gordon immediately introduces her readers to the horrors of racial oppression and sexual violence, she characteristically draws her heroine’s response with ambiguity. Using a detached point of

view, Gordon first emphasizes Lucy's fascination and sickened silence, and then her attempts to distance herself from the scene as she turns her attention to traditional and romantic gender activities, to news of a dance brought by one of her 'two cavaliers.' Is Lucy's reaction indicative of her frivolous nature, of her youth, or of her need to repress what she finds too difficult to bear? At the end of the novel, Gordon re-evaluates her protagonist's moral nature through her response to another critical situation--the death of her husband. No longer sickened by violence or betrayal, having lost all joy and hope, Lucy staunchly and practically returns to the land to face, as best she can, her bleak future….

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. Gordon returns to the vision of *Penhally*, to a vivid and unrelenting portrayal of the chaos that surrounds the ordered world…. We witness the internal struggles and subsequent defeat of lovers, both soldiers and civilians, during the Civil War. Because the rituals and structures of the past have lost all meaning, the new generation, traveling down a road to chaos and dissolution, their minds filled with fairy tales, find only betrayal and defeat.

It is fitting that Lucy Churchill is an orphan. She never knew her parents and her grandparents inhabit a less troubled world, one where they have the luxury to become obsessed with the beauty of a rose garden or the carving of a peacock, not one where a young white girl must survey the mutilated back of a black woman, a victim of lust and oppression. Lucy's parents, however, built what are now the slave quarters, Cabin Row, so that they could farm, but her father died before her birth; her mother, in childbirth. Lucy is a motherless child, trapped in a dying land, a land destroyed by the inequities inherent in its aristocratic, patriarchal structures…. Lucy is a modern Persephone without a loving Demeter to recall her from the land of the dead. Like Persephone, Lucy almost intuitively rejects her conventional and dynamic and masculine cavalier, George Rowan, and is captivated b y a Pluto-figure, a man of the underworld, a spy--the morbid, silent, and introverted Rives Allard.

Like Lucy, Rives is without the traditional attachment to the generation before him. His father, showing generosity toward a stranger, was murdered when Rives was nine years old, and his mother, though a woman of great passion, is so consumed by her desire to minister to the community that her children are often victims of neglect…. As is the case with Lucy, Rives inherits a world where traditional gender and racial roles have been undone. He lives with a curious history: his parents freed their slaves, his father has been victimized and murdered, and his assertive and unaffectionate mother has abandoned her domestic duties to tend to community needs.

According to Andrew Lytle, Susan Allard is the 'eccentric,' 'the subversive element in a tradition.' Although it was her husband, Garret Allard who gave his slaves freedom, it is Susan who insists her children work with her beside Uncle Mack, a freed slave and his many descendants. Lytle argues that in freeing their slaves, this branch of the Allards has betrayed the self-identity of the family, and that this 'internal betrayal' or 'defection persists and spreads,' and is symbolized in Susan Allard's 'neglect' of her family. Underlying Lytle's argument is a censuring of Susan Allard's unconventional activities that take her beyond her home, beyond conventional race relations. Caroline Gordon does not necessarily agree.

Undoubtedly, Gordon created Susan Allard to be a subversive and eccentric principle. In her passion and her attention to the conventional 'playing fields' of men, she is like Alice Blair in *Penhally*, who was condemned for pursuing, in a frivolous way, however, and seems to be treated more harshly by critics of Gordon than by Gordon herself. Gordon depicts her as a hero on the battlefield, arriving before the army surgeons and caring quite competently for the wounded and dying. In portraying both her heroism and her difficulty in openly demonstrating love for her children, 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, the nursery, or the bedroom.

Susan Allard is perhaps Gordon's most balanced and objective portrayal of an 'unfeminine' woman. Although Lucy's grandmother remembers Susan as a woman whose children fled her as soon as they were able to marry--and although Rives's silence, discomfort in social situations, gloomy nature, and morbidity may be attributed to his mother's inattention to traditional familial comforts and customs--when Lucy

comes to know her mother-in-law, we get a different view. Susan has a strong and partly positive influence over her daughter-in-law…. [Her eyes] seem the eyes of Demeter as Susan sits recalling her absent children. Mindful of her inability to rescue her children from a world of death and unfairness, this Demeter has turned her attention to the barren and bloody fields outside the home and works to provide comfort there.

At the end of the novel, Gordon emphasizes the fact that the strong and determined Susan Allard is a weak and pathetic mother. This underlies her theme that Rives and Lucy inhabit a world without parental authority or love. The culture has changed so quickly and so radically that parents have lost touch with their children. While Susan is equipped to deal with this new world, she is not equipped to help her children. In tending the battlegrounds, she has unconsciously taught her children to love the pain and the loss to which she gives all her attention. Yet Lucy, who has lived in a figurative underworld with Susan's son, ministers to 'the weeping old woman' and does not tell her that Rives's desire for death surpasses his desire for life or for Lucy. As she goes through the gestures of consolation, Lucy knows she will never impart her dark knowledge to her foster mother. "'She has never seen him die before,' Lucy thought." As [the critic] Ashley Brown explains: 'Rives, then, is in love with Death, which is more than a state of non-existence to him: it is a positive force, almost allegorically conceived, and his real antagonist.' Rives's love of death, what Lytle calls his erotic embrace of it, may well represent the longing of a genderless or androgynous man who, having known no maternal tenderness, no paternal authority, wishes to die on the bloody fields that his mother tends. In contrast, the betrayed but discerning Lucy--who, like Persephone, has lived with death--will return for a time to the bright and fertile landscape of her youth.

While Rives Allard rides into battle, picking up the flag of the Confederacy, facing death with exhilaration, Lucy, like many of Gordon's women, survives the war with keen consciousness of her loss. Unlike the young girl who looked at the mutilated back of a slave woman and was 'sickened' into silence, the mature Lucy has been steeled by Susan Allard. She tends to the sick and dying with equilibrium, and she will no longer turn her attentions, as she did when she was innocent, to frivolous, romantic pursuits. The Civil War highlights the radical changes that were taking place in America at the end of the nineteenth century. With the defeat of the South, Lucy does not expect to return to the traditional society at Brackets: the plantation was burned; the slaves are now, in name at least, free men and women; she has worked to protect and sustain herself and others during the war years; and she has married and lost Rives, a man of the underworld. She has seen too much to expect a fairytale ending.

At the end of the novel, Lucy has no hope for love on the morrow…. Gordon concludes this novel without her heroine's rejuvenation; that would be impossible. But she does have great respect for Lucy's character. While Rives, like Quentin Compson, finds solace in death, Lucy returns to her homeland; with eyes unaverted, she wanders, heroically, alone."

Anne M. Boyle
Strange and Lurid Bloom: A Study of the Fiction of Caroline Gordon
(Fairleigh Dickinson U 2002) 125-29

Gordon had the great misfortune of publishing her major novel of the Civil War just a year after *Gone with the Wind* became a sensational blockbuster. As one reviewer said, thereafter *Gone with the Wind* became the model by which all Civil War novels "seemed destined to be measured." Other reviewers likewise compared the two novels as if there is no difference between an original literary novel and a formulaic genre novel: *None Shall Look Back* was said by one to be "a traditional Southern romance"--whereas in fact it is a masterpiece of Realism debunking Romance. Another reviewer lamented that Gordon's novel was "not another *Gone with the Wind*," though it offers "some episodes of definite power." Another called *Wind* a "typhoon" in contrast to a less than "first-class gale." Another wanted the novel to be simple enough for her to understand: A "good story is essential," as *Gone with the Wind* has "abundantly proved." Another advocate of Romance considered Gordon's Neoclassical aesthetics of "understatement and restraint" to be faults, the aesthetics that led the Modernist novelist Ford Madox Ford to compare *None Shall Look Back* to no less a classic than *The Iliad* and to call it a "better book against War" than *War and Peace*. The *Newsweek* reviewer compared the two novels exclusively in monetary terms: *None Shall Look Back* is "inevitably compared" with *Gone with the Wind* which sells "at the rate of 10,000 a day," yet there "should be satisfactory profits in *None Shall Look Back*." The common subordination of her masterpiece to

a famous example of popular romantic schlock gave liberal academics an excuse to ignore Gordon, a cover for their intolerance of a viewpoint contrary to their Political Correctness.

See analysis of *None Shall Look Back* by chapter.

Michael Hollister (2018)