

585 QUOTATIONS



Caroline Gordon

(1895-1981)

Most writers become important in literary history for one reason: They publish works of literature that meet the highest standards of aesthetic quality, set by the classics. Caroline Gordon is important for *four* reasons: (1) She published nine novels and many short stories that meet the highest literary standards--greater productivity than all but a half dozen novelists in the canon. (2) Gordon was a leader in the movement called New Criticism--objective analysis of literature according to aesthetic standards--which began with Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, as demonstrated in *The House of Fiction* (1950), an anthology edited with her husband the New Critic and poet Allen Tate, and *How to Read a Novel* (1957). These textbooks, along with those by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, changed the way literature was taught throughout the United States. (3) Gordon and Wallace Stegner were the most significantly influential teachers of fiction writing in American literary history, Gordon especially in her editorial advice to Flannery O'Connor. And (4) at the Tate estate in Tennessee, called Benfolly, Gordon was an alternative to Gertrude Stein in Paris, a hostess to many of the major writers of her day, in particular the Southern Agrarians, some of whom lived and wrote in her home for awhile--Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, Ford Madox Ford, Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, Andrew Lytle, Robert Lowell, Jean Shepard, Laura Riding, Harold Loeb the model for Robert Cohn in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and others.

Nevertheless, since her death in 1981 the dogmatic Feminists who took control of English departments and publishing have denigrated or ignored Caroline Gordon because she is conservative, traditional, intellectual, complex, literary (over their heads), Southern, and Christian. The intolerance of Feminists made Gordon the most underrated writer in American literature. Also, as an objective New Critic, Gordon is seen as an enemy by Feminists who deny that objectivity is possible and replace it with subjective propaganda. Literary quality is determined by aesthetic values. Feminists have no aesthetic values, only political interests focused on themselves--"Me Studies." By replacing the literary classics with mediocre politically correct writing, Feminists belittled and ignored the best women writers, showing more disrespect for the achievements of women than the worst male critics. Gordon epitomizes the woman who must do *a lot more* than a man would to earn deserved recognition. Still, men eventually canonized her, whereas women (Feminists) destroyed her reputation. Ironically, dogmatic Feminists are such philistine narcissists they are incapable of recognizing that most of the best American fiction writers in the 20th century are women--Wharton, Cather, Porter, Gordon, O'Connor, Welty, and Robinson.

ORDER OF TOPICS: family, mother, obligation, rejecting death, human nature, youth, education, college, the South, Benfoly, Allen Tate, marital issues, fear of women, infidelities, Jungian analysis, separations, divorcing, daughter, love, women, domestic life, social relations, Agrarianism, poverty, teaching, readers, how to read a novel, archetypal reality, myth, tragedy, the hero, the artist, religious art, Christ-evoking heroes, the novel, technique, viewpoint, central intelligence, complication and resolution, tone, style, Impressionism, Expressionism, naturalism and symbolism, new criticism, early masters, Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, other Modernists, other contemporaries, short stories, writing novels, critics, editors and publishing, Postmodernism, Communism, Feminism, Political Correctness, homosexuality and fiction, self-criticism, religious faith, spirits, unfinished double novel, pilgrim's progress, old age, nothingness, Hell, death, God, immortality.

FAMILY

The Meriwether arms granted by Richard the Second of the Battle of Bosworth, to Henry Aylworth Meriwether show forth the family's rustic origin.

[My grandmother Miss Carrie] would lean forward and lifting the buggy whip from its resting place at the foot of the bed, shake it to and fro, to let us know what she would do, if...we "pushed her too far."

The family circle--that microcosm which, coming into being through the union, as it were, of two alien worlds, the masculine and feminine consciousnesses, constitutes an inexhaustible reservoir of drama.

[Caroline Douglas Meriwether Goodlett was] the first example in our neighborhood of "the new woman."

I was gorged on babies, what with all those young cousins I didied.

MOTHER

Mother...is as wily and designing a female as ever lived.

My mother...was a blue-stocking. [intellectually independent woman]

She did not scruple to suppress letters [to me] and once even a telegram.

Mother is the sort of person with whom no one can have a satisfactory relationship.

[When I asked my mother if she loved me]: "Carrie, I will always do my duty by you."

Poor Allen...realizes that he is the bad end to which I have come, in Mother's opinion.

We all learned to discount almost everything she said, but of course it affected us just the same.

I think she came heartily to hate Allen for he made her uncomfortable--she has always disliked me.

Mother is--indescribable. She is medieval in spirit. Her ratiocinative processes are those of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages.

My disapproval of Mother, my indignation against her--and Allen's--is all on moral grounds. And she feels great disapproval of us too, so we're completely antagonistic. At the same time she insists on stressing family affection.

If I had identified with her I'd have been a goner. I saved myself by turning to my father, cultivating talents I inherited from my father, but I naturally paid a heavy price for this.

My likeness to my father--the qualities I inherited from him, which were the qualities that saved me, were too much for my mother. She had enough of that sort of thing in him and yet she was too deeply committed to him to turn against him so she took it out on me.

I received such wounds in my childhood and got into such a panic as a result of them that everywhere I go and particularly in any contact with you [Allen] I am frantically demanding reassurance.

OBLIGATION

I cannot remember a moment of my life when the telling of stories did not seem an obligation that had been laid upon me and one which it would be dangerous to evade.

If I hadn't become an artist I'd have gone under the family pressures.

I am really a sort of reporter of my family.

REJECTING DEATH AT AGE FOUR

They tell me that I learned to read when I was four years old.

I have three girl cousins who committed suicide when they were still quite young.

The shadows deepened. With infinite caution I shifted my gaze to where the water glinted. It seemed to me that the shadows swayed forward. I gave way to panic and ran across the room and thrust my face down into the water in the basin. It seemed to me deep enough to drown in. One of the sharpest memories of my life is the surprise I felt when my childish visage raised itself, apparently of its own accord, and I knew that I was still there in that room, with only the shadows for companions.

HUMAN NATURE

These monsters are children of the Earth Mother.

Children, who are savages until they are thirteen, sometimes kill each other in play. Does the desire live on, submerged, in every human being?

It seemed to her that everybody, that she herself, was like Daphne, half-crushed by some early misfortune and having to advance, maimed, through life.

Grown people didn't expect you to answer what they said to you. Half the time, when they said anything to you, they were just talking to themselves.

Most grown people when they talked with you were thinking of something else and rarely paid any attention to what you said.

Everything man-made has its flaws.

YOUTH

My mother had dressed me in a fresh muslin dress (white, candy-striped with pink) and had curled my sand brown hair--and had sent me down to tip-toe through the front hall, but not so noiselessly that my grandfather did not raise his eyes from his book and tell me that I looked pretty.

When I think of my childhood, my first impression is of a rounded whole, of a world which was so self-contained, yet so fully peopled and so fully rooted in time and space that today when its name is pronounced I feel a stirring of the heart which no other name can evoke.

When I think of those days it is always summer. June or July usually. And early morning. I know that it is early morning for the air has a delicious freshness which is savored only at that time of day. I have just waked from the deep sleep of childhood.

[Meriwether Baxter] was the only one of us who had attended dancing school and he was the first boy who ever kissed me. When I told him that I thought he was being silly, he looked surprised and calmly remarked that all the other little girls he knew liked to have him kiss them, as I am sure they did.

My 'work'--the work which, from earliest recollections I have felt called upon to do--came easily when I was quite young. The stories, then, seemed to take shape of their own accord.

EDUCATION

The high-school student who is directed by his teacher to read a certain novel as often as not goes to see a film version of the story, or...a summary or condensation of its action.

BETHANY COLLEGE

When my faculty adviser found that I had some grammar he put me in third year Greek... We read *The Odyssey* the first semester, Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* the second.

[Greek IV gave me] more practical knowledge of the craft of fiction...than anybody was ever likely to acquire in one of my classes in creative writing.

I flunked trigonometry and calculus and would have flunked physics if a boy friend hadn't written up my experiments for me. But I never neglected to translate my 100 lines a day--except on one occasion when I had stayed out late at a party.

Standing there between the stacks, in the somewhat musty air of the little brick building, I suddenly realized where I had first been initiated into...[the] secrets of my craft--not in the works of Flaubert or Chekhov or James Joyce, but in Aeschylus' great play.

My study of creative writing began with the Greek tragedians. My ideas of art form have been influenced by their traditions and by the early English novelists.

THE SOUTH

People don't appreciate the Cherokee as they ought to.

I've seen and been bored by many a Confederate veteran in my day.

Neither Allen nor I believe northern agitators ever do anything but harm in the South.

This negro I imagine will sooner or later be lynched. He is really a little crazy on the subject of race equality. One day leading a parade he acted as traffic cop and held up cars containing white women on the street. That night, of course, his cabin was shot up--the union "literature" has it by a mob of planters when of course it was those degraded white people who have nothing but race superiority left.

The focus of my feelings, of course, is regret for the lost cause. It would have been better, I think, if our grandfathers had been carried off the field dead. The South as it exists today has little of the Old South in it--we have sold out certainly.

If the southern novelist is far-sighted he will continue to emulate the razorback hog. He will turn his back on time and range farther and root deeper into the past until he has turned up all the heritage which was plowed under so recklessly and so wantonly in Reconstruction times.

All the good people in the south were killed off by the war, one way or another.... Only the weak or the base survive in the new conditions.

There were certain things, certain heroisms if you will, that were never properly celebrated--the South, alas, was weak on poets!

Our past has, in a sense, been taken from us.

BENFOLLY

Allen is developing the true landlord spirit.

[Tate plantation house in Tennessee]: It is shaped just like a crouching lion. The lion's head and shoulders front the river and the house sits on, say, his forehead. One drives up his spinal column, right to the front door; the ascent is gradual and you do not realize till you get on the big porch how high up you are. It is swell, at night, when the lights in the town come out.

It is really funny. Here we are, absolutely broke, even broker than usual, in a magnificent house--at least it seems truly magnificent to my eyes. Of course there is no water for the baths.

If I could ever get that damn Benfolly on a self-sustaining basis then we could all just draw in our belts a little when one of these crises come along.

We will probably never open Benfolly again till one of us writes a best seller.

We went by Benfolly on our way to Monteagle. It looked mighty pretty with the hollyhocks in bloom but we hardened our hearts and listed it with a real estate agent. It is a white elephant, that house, and we have finally realized it.

[It was] at Benfolly that things first began to go really wrong between us.

ALLEN TATE

[When I first met Allen] He heard a voice saying, "She can save me."

"The Ode to the Confederate Dead" is the best poem he ever wrote.

I never even think of showing him anything I write unless he hounds me into it.

Allen stepped in, took a look and pulled the whole thing together with a passage that works.

It seems to me that both in private and public life that he over and over enacts the role of Adonis.

Allen will never make a mushroom hunter. He lacks the spirit of adventure.

Allen is an angel about dishes and things like that but he *won't* work the garden.

I forgot the walking club. We really have splendid walks... Allen won't walk, of course, but attends the tea-supper that follows the walk.

[Allen needed a] satisfactory relation with the sensuous world...to be able to refresh himself or renew himself through Nature--or even through other people.

I think Allen feels toward Nature as I do toward mathematics--respectful indifference. He walks about the garden hailing each tomato and melon with amusement--and never sees any connection between planting seeds and eating fruit....the same appreciation you'd have for a good set in the theatre.

Allen is in a bad way, but then, as I said, he is subject to these seizures, during which his whole personality seems to undergo a great change, every four or five years. It is, I suspect, a trouble to which poets have always been particularly prone. And no doubt it is intimately connected with his genius.

I have always thought that Allen was one of the laziest people I ever knew, and now I begin to think he had been a hero all these years.

Stella, Ford's former wife, has just finished painting a portrait of the Tates *en famille*--Allen and I, held together in space, by Nancy, as it were.

MARITAL ISSUES

The issue between us is so deep that it may be no human affection can resolve it. God knows there is enough affection on both sides.

I think you [Allen] have a great deal of intellectual pride. You have not yet become the little child that one has to become in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Some of the sufferings you [Allen] went through in childhood have left dry--cold places in your heart. I ought to have tried to warm them to life instead of letting my self-love demand that they glow for me.

I have a deep, instinctive revulsion against people who lend themselves to Allen's machinations. I feel as if there is almost nothing he can't maneuver them into doing.

I think that if I could learn not to get angry no matter what happened our life would be different. And if you could forgo deception at the same time I was forgoing anger we'd probably be as happy as any two people could be.

In such cases one usually looks for the other woman. In this case there are two: Allen's mother and my Muse. I'd have done better if I hadn't been so absorbed in my own work. But Allen's mother looms larger in the picture. She so tortured him when he was a child that he is literally afraid to commit himself to any woman.

FEAR OF WOMEN

[The psychiatrist Dr. Max Wolf found Allen to be a] victim of the "castrative impulse." He suffered so at the hands of his mother that he goes in deadly fear of women. At the same time he can never fall in love with any woman who couldn't have real power over him.

His neurosis forbids him to give himself up so completely to any woman, for committing himself wholly to me would be a kind of self-relinquishment.

One thing that makes it possible for me to go back to him is that through the whole business, even when he was saying the most awful things to me, he stoutly maintained that he could never love anybody as he loves me.

He finally turned on me all the hate he had been bottling up all these years. I have become so identified with his mother that he simply couldn't disentangle us.

MULTIPLE INFIDELITIES

We were born, as it were, in a jungle of misinformation and prejudice and lies. You took machete in hand and hacked a way out for both of us when we were young.

Successful male novelists always get rid of the partner of their lean days as soon as they hit the top. I suppose with female novelists it works just as inevitably only reversed. The unsuccessful partner can't stand the success.

When one is married to a poet one always feels a little guilty when he isn't writing poetry...that he might be writing if he were married to somebody else.

Father McCoy has assured me all along that our marriage is indissoluble but I did not know until the other day that you wanted to marry somebody else.

I agree with practically all of the charges you bring against me. You have been sorely tried and in ways more intangible and hence in some ways harder to bear than in the ways in which I have been tried.

One day I am sharing a life with you. The next thing I know you are out of the picture and I have to learn the techniques of living alone. Then you intimate that you might like to come back into the picture. The nervous strain, alone, would have put some women in a sanitarium.

JUNGIAN ANALYSIS

You are firmly established as my animus. I look to you for guidance and wisdom. At the same time life with you has meant great suffering for me, for you do not seem to know how to deal out joy. I hardly have time to recover from one wound before you deal me another.

Just one idea of Jung's, 'the shadow,' man's darker side which grows more and more menacing until it is confronted and come to terms with, has done more for Allen than I could have hoped.

SEPARATIONS

If I should ever amount to anything everybody will know that it is your doing.

I honestly think that we complement each other in an almost mathematical way.

I don't think we could ever be to people separately what we are to them together.

I never could have done what little I've done without your help--you saved my life.

I get so weary of his antics sometimes that I feel I simply can't stand any more of them.

My opinion of Allen is that he is the most wonderful man I have ever known but that he is a bit crazy.

You are perfectly free to live apart from me if that is your wish. But do you feel that it is morally right to inflict considerable hardship on me in my old age?

I, of course, am like a person who's had both legs cut off but will probably learn to get around quite spryly on crutches.

DIVORCING

Allen will not like my divorcing him. He enjoys divorcing me, not the other way around.

I think I would step out of his life, if I thought it would not do him harm.

I do not think he understands himself, or is frank with himself.

Now...I realize I can't help Allen except by praying for him.

It's a wonder that we've lasted this long.

It's really been fine while it lasted.

His plausibility is his curse.

DAUGHTER NANCY

She is the darlinest baby.

Nancy has never hesitated to interrupt me at a crucial moment.

She asked me a minute ago "Mama, what does a person do when they go wild?"

[Nancy] urges us constantly to efforts in her behalf with: "Go on, Daddy and make me a living."

[Nancy] is very much excited...but a little disturbed that it is Little Lord Jesus' birthday, and not hers; she is afraid he will get all the toys.

[I replied to Nancy's desire to become a nun] by telling her that nuns had to promise God never to have any fun. Nancy is much addicted to fun.

I could never have let her go [to stay with her mother] but I was afraid Allen would break down trying to work day and night too...and I was feeling so rotten I couldn't think clearly.

I tried to console myself by reflecting that if Nancy had stayed with us she might have starved to death.

She knows already there is something a little queer about Allen and me and distrusts our judgment.

Nancy was delighted to be left in Chattanooga and I know it was best for her.

I'm really afraid Mother will go all to pieces if Nancy is taken away from her.

LOVE

We can only assure people that we love them, we cannot assure their happiness.

My difficulty was the doubt that you [Allen] loved me, but that came from a feeling of inferiority I have toward you.

Love has a different vocabulary in every age. But never think that the words are unimportant. Love is eternally busy, creating its language. I am convinced that it is the most important in the world.

WOMEN

Man is supposed to lead, woman to follow.

You can't expect a *sentimental* heroine from *me*.

It is for Adam to interpret the voices that Eve hears.

A woman's life, I suspect, is defined by the men she has known. They, as it were, *edit* her life.

The exploits of some of those pioneer women are things that occur usually only on battlefields.

I have a particular devotion to St. Catherine. She seems to me the most admirable woman that ever lived.

No wonder he had never married. If he had married he would have had only one woman to wait on him, whereas as an old bachelor he had half a dozen.

Women, unless their deepest instincts are perverted by false education (as happens so often nowadays), are immemorally inclined to take life itself for granted. For them the mortal condition is the climate in which

they naturally move. It is the wayward, tender, flickering masculine intellect which, playing torch-like on the verge of the abyss, even while it illuminates its depths, can easily conceive of life being hurled backwards, downwards into that void of non-being.

While I am a woman I am also a freak. The work I do is not suitable for a woman. It is unsexing. I speak with real conviction here. I don't write 'the womanly novel.' I write the same kind of novel a man would write, only it is ten times harder for me to write than it would be for a man who had the same degree of talent.

It is, certainly, much harder for a woman to write than it is for a man. It is so much harder that I am in a panic half the time fearing something will happen to prevent me from writing. I am very fierce about it, I assure you.

I have been inundated by advice from women all my life. It boils down to two pieces of advice: 1. Stop writing fiction. 2. Be just like me.

DOMESTIC LIFE

It takes me two days to make a dress. They really look right sweet.

I love to sew but you can't sew very well and have any kind of prose style.

Everybody seemed to have a fairly good time, what with dice and poker and charades.

But the business of cooking three meals a day, churning and so on is too much for me. I am so exhausted by afternoon that I have to get in bed and stay for hours and I can't think of a word to write.

Nobody ever thought of not having people staying in the house when I was at a crucial stage in a book. And that was the way I wanted it...*trying to do something that was impossible*. [italics added]

I've done the cooking for six or eight people all summer besides writing the novel. Have a negro girl who washes dishes but can't clean up because there is somebody writing a book in every room in the house.

I've had to develop a brand new technique for writing--one hand on the kitchen stove and one on the typewriter. It works to my surprise--I do my five or six pages most days.

[My little dog Uncle Bud] thinks the typewriter is my voice or rather that it is I who emit those constant clickings. When I go away he mopes and will not eat but they can always lure him into a room by typing rapidly.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

The natives are all grand--they think we are mad, but like us anyhow.

New York seems to preserve people like flies in its own amber.

The bars of Paris don't tempt me much...a sort of super-Greenwich Village.

It is these young poets from the South--they call us up as soon as they hit Pennsylvania Station and they stay anywhere from a week to a month.

I have been sewing madly on this garment for two days, crouched in a welter of young men from Vanderbilt.

I begin to think that I must be Puritanical; I can't be comfortable around exhibitionists.

Allen's psychosis carries with it a strong streak of exhibitionism.

AGRARIANISM

I hate air planes.

New York is terrible.

Land is a responsibility.

The country is really heavenly.

I never want to live in town again.

Allen is yelling at me to go to town. I've learned to drive.

I have been stupefied and appalled by the city ever since I got back.

What I crave is the opportunity to garden. I am really hardly human without it.

Only here in the woods, which this morning seemed an enchanted place, was she recapturing the old feeling for home.

I'm not at all an urban person, you see. I love to have space around me, and I love to dig in the dirt and walk in the woods.

[Allen] realizes I must finger the soil and I see that he will never really enjoy hoeing. So I don't try to drive him into the garden and he doesn't try to drive me out of it.

[The "Agrarians" were] primarily artists, men of thought [lacking the] capacity for action.... They've formulated the doctrine [but] somebody else would have to put it into practice.

None of the others will listen to me, I being a mere woman and not admitted to the councils and God knows I won't want to be in on them.

We collected two horses and two saddles and bridles. Cath and I took them home in the moonlight. It was grand. I had forgotten how I love to ride.

We go bare foot, all of us, including George, who puts on a white coat to serve dinner--more formal he is than the rest of us. We...drink raw corn before dinner.

We have the new raft built now, as large as a room, it rides high on the water, mounted on five enormous steel drums. It is really palatial. I am dying to start swimming.

Must get out and do some raking. I also tote manure from one place to the place where I think it will do the most good--a very soothing occupation after writing fiction.

Daisy Miller, our Jersey cow grazes on the lawn and duly scatters manure which I pick up on a dust pan and place carefully around the petunias.

Marion is trying to farm--a thousand acres, two different farms. It's a big job. But I think it is good for her to have something to do.

Did I tell you we also have two tenants... They speak beautiful archaic English and steal everything they can lay their hands on.

[Hemingway] is trying to persuade us to settle in Arkansas....[for the] wild land down there.

[Esther Murphy] reports that the country is on the verge of an agrarian revolution.

POVERTY

You have got to take risks in this our life.

In two months we have spent twenty eight dollars for food, and our rent is eight dollars a month. It sounds almost unbelievable so near New York.

It had got to the point where neither of us could stand it any longer, the nervous strain, aside from the unpleasantness of slowly starving to death while Allen tried to write a book he never wanted to write.

It was stupid of me about the bills but I just let them pile up thinking I'd get enough money from City College to pay them. But I didn't.

I am at this point writing a series of pot boilers in an effort to accumulate enough money for Nancy's railroad fare up here.

How in the hell can you write a book if you can't get your mind off finances for two hours a day even?

At this moment we haven't even money to buy a stamp for this letter but God doubtless will provide.

My idea was that I might avoid starving if I could only learn to write a juvenile, say one a year.

We have never been as broke in our lives for we never had as many debts before. [1932]

God, how I hated leaving Paris.

It was easier suffering together.

I'm fed up on starving.

TEACHING

What I have learned about the writing of fiction I have gotten from someone else.

I am *not* a critic. But one of the greatest pleasures authors enjoy is talking about their craft.

Allen teaches at NYU on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and I am at Columbia on Thursday evenings.

Here I am only the professor. I have no house-keeping, no garden--no means of escape into the feminine world.

Practically every member of the faculty here thinks that every other member is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

[University creative writing programs are] not only useless but vicious, almost criminal in their waste and misdirection of youthful 'creative' energies.

I do not approve of college magazines. I think the young gentlemen would be better off studying the works of any dead masters rather than considering the work of any live master.

The older English professors [Princeton] were hostile to the New Criticism, for which Allen was an advocate, and Allen was contemptuous of them and their historical criticism.

The teaching does take it out of you, if you take it seriously, and I can't seem to take it any other way.

I am known in [Princeton] as a writer of mystery stories under a nom de plume.

The worship of mediocrity is almost a religion in Princeton.

READERS

American men, alas, seldom read novels!

The *Mental Voyage* is too intellectual, puts people off.

People can't see anything that isn't already in their heads.

Every masterpiece demands collaboration from the beholder.

I am not sure that the average intelligent reader will ever see what I've tried to do.

People don't want to make an effort to see a thing, they just want to be told what it is like.

The majority of novel readers are not capable of the effort it takes to translate yourself into another age.

[I am] writing very lucidly about something that is quite complicated, and there is nothing that annoys people more.

The word [historical] has become so debased. I wrote two novels, one in Civil War time and one in pioneer times, but people didn't know how to read them.

Something strange has happened to the novel in the last half century. There are not many people who realize that it is or should be a work of art.

No matter how intelligent we are, as readers we are always more interested in what a character in a novel does than in what he thinks.

All the people who are the kind of people I thought I was panning so hard [in *Penhally*] tell me they love the book and find it such a true picture of life in the old South.

There remains the reader who...feels that the author ought to write books that people want to read rather than the books he himself feels impelled to write.

HOW TO READ A NOVEL

The only way to learn how to write novels is to learn how to read novels.

If we are to read a novel with understanding we must first of all lay aside our own preconceived idea of what a particular novel ought to be like and try, instead, to find out what it *is*.

In life we often have to give up one thing in order to get another. The reader who wants to read understandingly--whether he is reading *War and Peace* or the admirable detective stories of Raymond Chandler--must perform an act of self-abasement. He must lay aside his own opinions for the time being, and ask himself not why Mr. Chandler or Count Tolstoi didn't write the kind of book he would like to see them write, but what kind of book they have actually written. That is, he must try to understand what the fiction writer has accomplished before he allows himself to express an opinion on how--or why--he went about accomplishing it.

By putting ourselves, as best we can, in his place, we share to some extent in the sacrifice he made in order to write his book and are therefore in a position to reap our share of the rewards of his work. To do this

intelligently we must not only make an effort to put ourselves in the place of the author but actually try to follow in his footsteps.

If one follows faithfully enough in the footsteps of the masters, one experiences delights that do not befall the impatient reader.

There are...great writers who are not read properly in their own day for the reason, perhaps, that their readers are not yet born. What they have to say to their own generation is said so at cross-purposes and with such apparent irrelevance that it is not understood. They are, as it were, giants who tower above their own age to cast their shadows across the next. Hawthorne was such a writer, and Flaubert, and Henry James [and Caroline Gordon].

ARCHETYPAL REALITY

The action takes place on the frontiers of the archetypal conscious mind.

The rock showed darkest where the water was churned into the wildest froth.

Roots put down easily are not as enduring as those which make their way through interstices of rock.

[Jung is] much more interesting than Freud because...he believes that the archetype is operating right now.

We feel that we know all about the mechanics of the unconscious because we have read a little Freud or Jung. But we really don't.

[The Jungian Erich Neumann's *The Origins and History of Consciousness* is] about the best book I ever read, next to Holy Writ.

The only way to get in touch with the unconscious is through the dream which gives the only accurate report of what is going on.

Towards morning he had fallen into a doze and dreamed that he and Cassy, walking through the woods, came on a cave and they knew from the harsh breathing that a monster lived inside.

[Dr. Bernhard was a real] "new critic" [of dreams]. Meeting this woman, at least becoming acquainted with the Jungian technique is the most tremendous experience of my life, next to falling in love and being converted, and of a piece with both.

This scheme [Aristotle's scheme of complication, resolution, peripety, and discovery], one of the basic patterns of the human imagination, has acquired a fresh interest in our own time, with Henry James's great technical discovery that "the same key unlocks both the narrative and dramatic chambers" of "The House of Fiction."

MYTH

It is the implacable Hecate in me that has kept me from giving a full assent to what my mind tells me is all too true.

[Tiresias was] preeminent among the Greek seers for the reason that he saw further and more clearly than any of his priestly confreres. His vision extended into both the past and the future. [like Gordon's]

TRAGEDY

We can't have things the way we want them in this life.

I myself cannot remember a time when I was not aware that life was a desperate affair, at best.

[As a child I thought] the world had been created as a plaything by a group of men, who, tired of sporting with it, had gone on to other pleasures, leaving it to roll on the way it would.

I feel as if some horrible Grendel were lurking in the marshes and bellowing for a sacrifice of young men.

God, it is wonderful not to have to lie awake nights, worrying about the boys. [end of WWII]

I am not a Pacifist and I know that war is spiritually necessary.

THE HERO

There is only one true subject for fiction, as every folk tale or fairy tale or good novel shows us: the adventures of a hero or heroine--that is, the story of what happened to some man or woman who, through answering the call to the adventure which constitutes the action of the story, comes to stand out from his or her fellow as a remarkable person.

Joseph Campbell, in a book called *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, has analyzed a great many stories, among them many legends and fairy tales, with a view to determining the essential nature of the hero. He concludes that the hero, wherever he appears, in whatever age or in what guise, has certain characteristics and is faced always with the same task: the overcoming of evil that good may flourish.

The thing that distinguishes the Labors of Hercules from the labors you and I perform every day is their seeming impossibility.

Suffering is one of the tasks appointed a hero.

Women, of course, are always on the look-out for heroes.

Every one of us has his ghostly company, of course. And they are all heroes.

A human soul can triumph by embracing its destiny, however grim that destiny may be.

"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."

[Tom Jones] is always ready to drop whatever he is doing to help somebody whose fortunes are lower than his own.

Heroes don't start out as extraordinary men. They become extraordinary men by performing extraordinary deeds.

The hero of myth or legend usually has help in accomplishing his feats of strength or skill; often it is supernatural help.

The author who celebrates himself, or prototypes of himself, does not create a work of art, for...the hero whose aim is expression, without need of either conscience or motive, is not a real hero and therefore not a fit subject for artistic creation.... His energies are absorbed in the task of being, not doing.

The hero who does not reach out to a world outside himself--that world which, from time immemorial, has been personified in the feminine consciousness--is left confronting himself. The only adventure that beckons is self-expression.

THE ARTIST

An artist is never dead--if he was ever alive.

An artist spends his time working with symbols.

Artists are tough--a lot tougher than ordinary people.

The life of a person who is not writing a book is too strenuous for me.

I had a hard time with my nude...[in a painting] She kept crying out for umber shadows and nipples and navels and as soon as I'd get them in she looked like a corset ad. I finally compromised by making them all sort of mauve and now she doesn't seem to be advertising lingerie.

If I am writing a novel I have an excuse for letting other things go. If I'm not my conscience hurts.

An artist's first duty is the same as any other man's--to serve, praise and worship God.

RELIGIOUS ART

I have come to believe that the writing of [serious] fiction is in essence a religious act. We are moved to imitate our Creator, to do as he did, and create a world.

Working as a fiction writer all those years taught me how god-like a trade it is. We are actually trying to do what God did: make our word flesh and make it live among men.

The business of a fiction writer is, in its humble way, the same as the Almighty's: incarnation, and it has to proceed at an even slower pace.

That reaction to the patterns of sunlight on leaves, that delight in the visible world is one of the greatest gifts a writer can have. It is one of the reasons you write: to communicate it.

That kind of patient, passionate portrayal of natural objects is a recognition of the natural order which I can only call Christian, "Christian in hope."

If only I hadn't bitten off such a sizable chunk of the universe.

CHRIST-EVOKING HEROES

I have been collecting data on Heracles (as a prototype of Christ) for a good many years now.

He is the only one of the Greek heroes who 'went to heaven,' you will recall.

[Heracles] plowed the same furrow that Christ plowed as a man, only further back in time.

I had as near a mystical experience as I will ever have. I suddenly seemed to understand the nature of war, of righteous war. I understood how men could be glad and proud to die, could thirst for death in order that ideas they hated should not prevail. I felt that I myself would be glad to die.

The Christ-figure is remarkably prevalent in contemporary fiction. Faulkner's corporal in *A Fable*, Robert Jordan in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Scott Fitzgerald's Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night*, and his *Gatsby*--all seem bent on laying down their lives to find something better.

In the nineteenth century and in our own century as well the fiction writer's imagination often operates within the pattern of Christian symbolism rather than in the pattern of contemporary thought. The peculiarly Christian element of the great nineteenth century novels is their architecture. Many of them are based on the primal plot: the Christian scheme of Redemption.

THE NOVEL

I think of a novel, in a way, as a piece of sculpture.

The novel differs from other forms of art in being directly concerned with the conduct of life itself.

The primary concern of a novel, then, is life, and life as it manifests itself in change, in action.

In the development of the novel as an art form there has been an ever-increasing emphasis on the dramatic.

The character of the hero or heroine of a novel reveals itself through action--through the author's portrayal of what he or she did or what happened to him or her as the result of somebody else's actions.

Malcolm Cowley has defined the novel as a "long but unified story, designed to be read at more than one sitting, that deals with the relations among a group of characters and leads to a change in those relations."

I have come to believe that there is only [one] plot (the scheme of Redemption) and that any short story, or novel, any fiction (detective story, folk tale, any story anywhere at any time) is a splinter, so to speak, of that plot--if it's good.

The difference between "art proper" and "amusement art" has been recognized... F. Scott Fitzgerald made such a sharp distinction in his own mind between his "amusement art" and his "art proper" that among his intimates he spoke of the stories he published in popular magazines as "sold down the river" and objected strenuously if his friends even referred to them.

TECHNIQUE

Lift us from the natural level to the supernatural level.

It is the duty of every fiction writer to acquire the techniques that will best serve his gifts.

We all speak Johnsonian English when communing with our souls, as Faulkner has shown many times.

The craft, I believe, is ebbing fast, partly as the result of the emphasis on creativity as opposed to technique.

I was twenty-seven years old before I ever encountered another human being who was interested in the techniques of fiction.

Any fiction writer who uses a method that has not been used before, or explores a method already in use more thoroughly than it has been explored hitherto, extends the boundaries of the medium.

[*The House of Fiction*, 1950] differs from other short story anthologies in that it is based on the assumption that fiction is an art closely allied to painting and that, as in painting, there are certain "constants" or secrets of technique which not only appear in the works of all the masters of the craft but which have been handed down from master to master throughout the ages.

One of the most practical of all fictional devices Aristotle has labeled the "Peripety" (from *peri-patos*, "a walking up and down"). Sometimes the word is translated as "Reversal." The situation is reversed, and not by any change in the mind or heart of one of the characters but by an incident: something which, happening suddenly, crystallizes the action and hurries it toward the Resolution... A Peripety consists of two parts: the unexpected incident which causes the *per-patos*, the walking about, in the course of which the action, as it were, turns around and faces the other way.

This [ancient Greek] poet--the Thomas Wolfe of his day--included all the adventures of Heracles in his epic poem, thereby failing to achieve any *form*, whereas Homer, Aristotle points out, used in the *Odyssey* only such of Odysseus' adventures as suited his purpose.

If the art of naturalism [not the Naturalism of Zola and Dreiser] consists mainly in making active those elements which had hitherto in fiction remained inert, that is, description and expository summary, the

further push given the method by Joyce consists in manipulating what at first sight seems to be mere physical detail into dramatic symbolism.

There are four questions which are answered in the first few pages of every good piece of fiction. They are: What happened? To whom...? When...? Where...?... [These] four questions...are the ones that every reader would ask of every author in every age and in every country; and the author--if he is a real master--seems to answer the questions as spontaneously as the readers ask them.

The art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be "shown," to be exhibited so that it will seem to be telling itself.

You can't say that men ate rats at Vicksburg and make the reader see it. You have to show a specific man eating a specific rat.

VIEWPOINT

The viewpoint, or the center of vision, or, as we sometimes call it, the 'problem of authority,' is indeed the most difficult question that confronts a writer of fiction.

By placing himself at the very center of vision--that is, within the consciousness of his heroine--[Samuel] Richardson not only achieves the immediacy which is the goal of every serious novelist, but, like all the great innovators, paves the way for the triumphs of writers who come after him.

Every fiction writer is confronted with the same choice that confronted the...early novelists: he must decide whether he will view events at close quarters [Richardson] or from a distance [Fielding]. If he chooses to view them from a distance we say that he is using the "viewpoint of the omniscient narrator."

The omniscient narrator not only sees everything that is going on but he also knows everything that has happened before and there is nowhere he cannot go. But prolonged consideration reveals the fact that this method--like every method--has disadvantages.

The omniscient narrator sees everything that goes on but he does not always get close enough to the event to make the reader see it as clearly as he does. The third-person narrator has the advantage of being closer to what is going on but his viewpoint is limited; he can show us only a part of the action.

In England the Victorian author, for the most part, used a combination viewpoint of the omniscient narrator and the scenic or third-person narrator, varying the range of his camera according to whether his talent was for the panorama or for the scene.

There have been very few writers who excelled in both the "scenic" and the "panoramic" effects. Foremost among them is Leo Tolstoi, who shifts from the "scene" to the "panorama" without any apparent difficulty.

Tolstoi manages to give even his panoramic scenes--that is, the scenes viewed, as if at a distance, by an omniscient narrator--the glitter of immediacy. *This is achieved by an almost miraculously rapid alternation of viewpoint.* [See especially the battle scenes in Gordon's *None Shall Look Back*. Italics added.]

Very few writers have Tolstoi's agility. Once they undertake to present a panorama, they are likely to hover high over the scene, instead of darting with lightning-like speed into the thick of the action and then back to their Olympian heights.

Thackeray's novels afford examples of the advantages and disadvantages of the method of the omniscient narrator. His genius was for the panorama and in *Vanity Fair* he achieves a range, a sweep of action, that he probably could not have achieved in any other way. But his scenes lack immediacy. He is weak in what Henry James called "specification."

Thackeray rarely gets close enough to his scene to give the detail which could be reported only by somebody who was close at hand. He is long-winded, too, and full of stale phrases...and worst of all, he

himself often steps between us and the characters he is calling our attention to: "I have heard from ladies who were in that town at the period...."

Since Stephen Crane's time, all serious writers have concentrated on the effort of rendering individual scenes more vividly; telling one's story in the first person is the easiest way to do this and the first way that comes to mind. But the method has serious disadvantages and, as a result, is suitable for only certain kinds of stories. Its chief merit, of course, is the fact that it secures immediacy, vividness, almost automatically....

The first-person narrator may be telling the truth, but he can only tell it as he sees it or can tell only the part of the truth that he sees. And no matter how honest he is or how keenly he feels, he may not understand what is going on.

But perhaps the most serious limitation of this method is that it affords little room for expansion; the action--except in the hands of brilliant inventors...is confined to the limits of the narrator's perception. This means that--in the hands of twentieth-century writers, at least--a whole dimension, the supernatural, is left out.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

A central intelligence has to be superior, or it won't work.

James' central intelligence is not omniscient, but his very lack of knowledge is made to serve him as powerfully as knowledge would have served him. He is closer to the happenings than other narrators; the sensory impressions he records are as vivid as those of any first-person narrator, and his scenes are as "pictorial" as Dickens'....

But he is not subject to the limitations of the other narrators. In one leap James seems to have hurdled all the obstacles which have confronted other fiction writers. His viewpoint of the central intelligence as it reveals itself in his last three great novels, *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*, is perhaps the greatest technical triumph which the novel has known in its short history.

A novel which uses the combination of the omniscient and scenic viewpoints gives you only one man's vision of events, that of the author, while the first-person narrator gives you an even more restricted vision, that of the hero-narrator. James' method actually doubles the vision; we have two pairs of eyes viewing events instead of one.

COMPLICATION AND RESOLUTION

The action of *Oedipus Rex* falls, as Aristotle says every action falls, into two parts: Complication and Resolution. "By Complication," Aristotle says, "I mean all from the beginning of the story to the point just before the change in the hero's fortunes. By Resolution [I mean] the beginning of the change to the end."

In any masterpiece the Resolution is always embedded in the Complication from the very start. The ideal effect, of course, is that in which the Resolution appears to grow out of the Complication as inevitably, as naturally, as a plant grows from a seed.

The author foreshadows the Resolution. But he does it in such a way that our conscious minds do not recognize it for what it is.... Ordinarily, the Resolution is introduced into the Complication disguised--that is, disguised as part of the action.

The Complication and Resolution are two component parts [of] "Recognition" or "Discovery." Aristotle defines it as "the change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate, in the personages marked for either good or evil fortune".... This larger movement encircles the whole of that action which is made up of Complication and Resolution, like a great wheel which, revolving, turns day into night or night into day.

TONE

Every remark that Ford's narrator makes carries its own conviction; the tone is perfectly suited to the action. His way of achieving this effect is to keep reminding us of the human condition.

Ernest Hemingway is also a master of tonal effects. Very often the tone of one of his paragraphs is made to serve as part of the action.

Such tonal effects call for the unerring selection of the right word for the right place.

STYLE

The very shape of your sentences reflects a disordered mind.

English fiction lost the directness and concreteness that characterized the work of Swift and Defoe. Jane Austen's style is an example of this privation. It has an admirable concreteness but its chief characteristics are those of the essayist.

[James'] imagination...exploded in the dazzling metaphors which shed their radiance over all his work. It is possible that the very awkwardness, the turgidity, of his style makes his metaphors glow more brightly. His characters seem to move in a sort of Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro until the metaphor flashes on the scene a light so brilliant that we perceive things it seems no other light could reveal.

I treated Fort Donelson in Plutarchian style, reserving my impressionism for Chickamauga. [In *None Shall Look Back*]

I am imitating the style of Davy Crockett and if you don't think that's hard, try it some time. [In "The Captive"]

[In a review of Ford's *Parade's End* for *The New York Times Book Review* in 1950 I had] to calculate and translate my meaning into language for the simple-minded.

[In *None Shall Look Back*]: They stood there together a moment. Her hand was still on his arm. Her eyes were fixed on his face. His gaze was bent on the ground. Each knew what the other was thinking.... The boys had come home to go to war. [The repetition of short sentences with the same syntax and nearly the same length--the first sentence in the paragraph 6 words long, the next 4 sentences each 7 words long, and the last sentence in the paragraph a climax 9 words long--conveys that the two parents are thinking the same frightening thought about the fate of their son.]

IMPRESSIONISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His dark mustache lifted to disclose gleaming teeth.

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

She lay there like a shot bird.

EXPRESSIONISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NATURALISM AND SYMBOLISM

Many of the finest stories of our time, while solidly grounded in Naturalism [what is natural, not the Naturalism of Zola and Dreiser], are also built on a metaphor, and have some great controlling image [such as] the snow in Joyce's story "The Dead."

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

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

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

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

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

The icy plains that surrounded the prison glittered blue.

His thought followed the stream in its wanderings.

She did not know the way out of the woods.

NEW CRITICISM

We can all learn from the masters.

If you observe the members of this band closely enough, passionately enough, you will not only find them stretching out their hands to each other across time and space but you will find that in all ages, in all places, they are *doing the same things*.

The work of art, once it is created, has an existence separate from that of its author, and "belongs now to the public."

EARLY MASTERS

[Saint Catherine of Siena] could have been probably the greatest fiction writer of all time if she had thought it was worth her while.

Stendhal's almost Olympian attitude toward human nature lends itself particularly well to panoramic effects.

Balzac was a great writer, one of the greatest who ever lived, but [his] meticulous piling up of detail is clumsy.

Do you realize that *Ivanhoe* [Sir Walter Scott] is one of the most magnificent performances in the way of a novel that's ever been written? It's the most gorgeous thing--the whole feudal pageant passing before you and all very cleverly put together. The whole thing is grand.

With the Brontes a new vitality and stricter Realism came into English fiction.

Dickens...is acknowledged by his peers as one of the greatest masters of certain techniques indispensable in the writing of fiction.... He excelled in what we call "scenic effects," that is, he could set his stage, people it, and put his characters in motion better than any of his contemporaries.

Dickens lacked Thackeray's range; his view of human nature seems crabbed and sometimes petulant as compared to Thackeray's broad compassion; in his novels the line of action is never taut, but consists, rather, in a series of brilliant episodes strung on a loose thread of narration. But nobody excelled him in the creation of a scene.

Hawthorne, as a craftsman, had at his command only the outmoded Gothic romance as the vehicle for his genius.

Flaubert's handling of the center of vision, or the problem of authority, is perhaps his greatest contribution to the craft. In *Madame Bovary* he grapples with this problem and solves it in a way which had not been used before.... He evolved the viewpoint which I have called the effaced narrator.

The greatest technical triumphs which have been achieved so far by any novelist seem to me to be solidly based on Flaubert's achievement--seem, indeed, an extension of his effaced narrator.

[George Eliot] calmly arrogated unto herself privileges which had been monopolized by men up to that time.... She ranks with that small number of novelists whose work has an appeal which is lasting and universal.

Reading a great novel like *War and Peace* [Leo Tolstoi] is an experience like falling in love or breaking your leg or going to war. One doesn't care for *War and Peace* as bedtime reading.

One of the boldest and most successful of these experimenters was...an American, Stephen Crane, who, almost singlehanded, revolutionized the short story.

HENRY JAMES

As he approached his later method his books grew more and more unpopular.

I do not believe that any great writer has ever been more misunderstood and misrepresented--in short, so badly read.

Many of James' early critics were blinded by their own preconceptions, which kept them from making any serious effort to find out what manner of creature they were dealing with.

James is a colossus who bestrides two continents. The action of his novels takes place in Venice, Florence, Rome, or London, but his subject is the impact of America on Europe. Nothing happens until the Americans come on the scene.

His people reveal themselves to us gradually--the way people reveal themselves to us in life. James had practically obliterated himself as narrator. His stories are not told; they are acted out as if on a stage. He does not tell you anything about his characters; he lets them reveal themselves to you by what they say and do [and] are further revealed by being shown to us through the eyes of their families, their friends, their enemies, and their acquaintances.

[Henry James] was able through his genius to apprehend the archetypal patterns of Christianity and to use them as no novelist before him had used them. But it took him a lifetime to do it. *The Golden Bowl* is the only one of his major creations that is a comedy in the sense that Dante's great poem is a comedy, the only one in which virtue is wholly triumphant over vice.

The thing when it is said [by James] comes to you with a cumulative effect, a sort of rounding off of something you've already been brought to accept. It's really as if you'd been knocked down with a sledge hammer and then given one final tap.

I have come to a conclusion about Henry [James]... I believe he's like the little girl with the curl, when he's bad he's really awful.... *The Portrait of a Lady* is marvelous.

FORD MADOX FORD

The best craftsman of his day.

Never did I see such a passion for the novel as that man has.

There is no one, not even James, who can bring a scene before us with more vividness.

I love to see him take his sentences by the tail and uncurl them--in a perfectly elegant manner.

I told him I had a novel about a third written but saw that I would have to throw it away. Whereupon he made me vacate the desk and sat him down and took my dictation. That is, he asked, "What are you going to say next?" and when I told him he would say, "That is a beautiful sentence. I will take it down." He took things down for several weeks. By that time I was ready to start back writing my novel. It was really a very generous thing for Ford to have done.

Ford took me by the scruff of the neck...set me down in his apartment every morning at eleven o'clock and forced me to dictate at least five thousand words, not all in one morning, of my novel.

God knows when I'll finish the novel if Ford can't land me an advance.

Breadth of view, immense knowledge of many literatures, and an unwavering loyalty to his great profession marked Ford as perhaps the last great man of letters in the nineteenth-century style... He was one of the few great editors of this century. In reckoning his value one must not forget that as editor of the *English Review*, founded in 1908, he brought what we know now as "Modernism" to England.

JAMES JOYCE

Joyce was a good classicist, steeped from youth in Greek mythology.

[Joyce is] a more Christian writer than Francois Mauriac.

Joyce was more apt to attempt to plumb the fathomless depths that underlie every myth than to bring it up to date [as Caroline Gordon does].

Joyce's hero has for surname the name of the pagan artificer but his given, or Christian, name is that of the first martyr, Saint Stephen.

Stephen is setting out on a journey with wings of wax. Though a believer--he never *loses* his faith, he *denies* it--he is an anti-Christ and has his precursor to make his way straight for him.

The Christian theologians tell us that it is impossible to love God directly; we must love Him through His creatures, our fellow men. Stephen had tried to achieve the impossible. His sin, pride, begets in him a terrible restlessness.

I suspect that Joyce's *Portrait* has been misread by a whole generation. It is not primarily, I think, a picture of the artist rebelling against constituted authority, but rather the picture of a soul that is being damned for time and eternity caught in the act of foreseeing and foreknowing its damnation.

Stephen Dedalus towers high among heroes. His sin is the same as Lucifer's. He said what Lucifer said: "I will not serve," and he falls from a great height, as Lucifer fell, from pride.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

It wouldn't do you any harm to study Hemingway for his beautiful sense of form and for his dialogue.

Ernest Hemingway's novels are perhaps as good an example as one can find of the triumphs an author may achieve and the risks he inevitably runs when he uses the first person as narrator. Neither Richardson nor his great successor, James Joyce, succeeded in getting closer to his action than Hemingway does. Sound plays almost as large a part as sight in his scenes; the cadence of his sentences is such that the reader almost feels as if his own heart were beating in unison with that of the hero.

WILLIAM FAULKNER

[A book] should click into place like something by Mr. Faulkner.

A cotton country [was] so very different from a tobacco country....pure Faulkner. He had a better ear even than I had thought.

[Faulkner] has accomplished what Flaubert himself longed to accomplish, the union of concrete historical detail with lyricism.

[Faulkner was the] only person who conducted himself like a real he-writer, in the best Hemingway style, with some good touches of the old South, [in a voice] like an indifferent weasel's.

[Faulkner] is a piece of cheese. I do not say this because he spit on me that time [vomited on her while drunk]; he just is. Too bad. He sure can write.

[Faulkner] was trying to say "Yes ma'am," and the drink he had just taken went the wrong way and there was a geyser in which I was engulfed.... Faulkner reeled off into a corner with a handkerchief. The poor devil felt pretty bad about it. I heard him muttering something about his bad manners...and I went over and said everything pleasant I could think of to him but he just sat there staring at me like a dejected coon.... Thank God it wasn't my white satin dress.

[Invited by the Tates to dinner, Faulkner was] a little diffident, rather old fashioned in his manners, sort of a touch of Edgar Allan Poe about him. Allen and I both liked him very much.

[At dinner with Faulkner in Rome] He was sunk in a trance so deep that when spoken to he would answer three or four minutes later.

Faulkner...has a livelier imagination than Mr. Caldwell and swells his characters to monstrous proportions or shrinks them below human level, but he never falsifies sensuous details. I know that the insides of his country stories smell just the way he tells me they smell and have the same things on the shelves.

Mr. Faulkner seems to have an instinctive perception of the pitfalls lying in wait for the first-person narrator. His stage is large enough to include human beings of every kind. The range of his creation includes not only normal people but characters whose consciousness is below the human level.

Mr. Faulkner, for all his lapses into bathos, will loom large, I think, when the history of the novel is written. Certainly he is one of the boldest and most successful experimenters the craft has known. Both *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* are significant contributions to form.... Using an "innocent eye" as his center of vision Faulkner achieves dramatic effects comparable to those achieved by Henry James in his "later method."

Even when he is not using the first-person narrator, or an adaptation of that method, Faulkner achieves a vividness, an immediacy, that is achieved by few of his fellow writers. He may never have read Henry James, but he seems to have profited considerably from the example of James' great contemporary, Gustave Flaubert. All of Faulkner's work is characterized by..."Flaubertian three-dimensionalism." Flaubert never told you what a flower, for instance, was like. Instead, he tried to give you the illusion, by the use of sensory details, that you could not only look at the flower he was presenting for your admiration but could smell it and feel the texture of its petals.

William Faulkner's recent novel, *A Fable*, is another example of a book which is marred by its author's misconception of or failure properly to explore his subject matter. The book is, on the whole, ill-written. The sentences are almost all of the same length and have few of the subtle modulations which play such an important part in his finest rhetorical flights. More serious still, his scenes often lack the lifelikeness which in many of his other works almost takes the reader's breath away.

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Flannery O'Connor...is the most gifted of the younger fiction writers.

She has more in common with Henry James than almost any other American writer.

I have got me a disciple [O'Connor] who is going to be able to do everything I have ever been able to do and a lot more.

I'm quite excited about [O'Connor's work]. This girl is a real novelist. (I only wish that I had as firm a grasp on my subject matter when I was her age!). At any rate, she is already a rare phenomenon: a Catholic novelist with a real dramatic sense, one who relies more on her technique than her piety.

MORE FELLOW MODERNISTS

I do like Eudora [Welty] so much.

Scott [Fitzgerald's] characters are always ninety percent Scott.

Sherwood Anderson's personality was, indeed, engaging, and he...was also a considerable artist. His work is certainly uneven.... His talent was pre-eminently for the short story, but he has left short stories behind him which are well-nigh flawless.

We then went out and celebrated...by getting drunk with Hart Crane.

Hart is a fine poet, but God save me from ever having another romantic in the house.

I think [Walker Percy] is one of the most important young writers coming along.

Walker's novel and Flannery's novel are IT. They are both so damned good!

I've met several of Proust's lady friends--they are invariably incredibly vulgar women.

I got in three days work the other day, then took cold and have been sitting around doing nothing but read Virginia Woolf three more days. Oh, I think she's marvelous.

Andre Gide is a conspicuous example of another writer who destroys the form of his work by imitating the formless. His failure as a novelist springs, I suspect, from the same source as Miss [Gertrude] Stein's, an unwillingness or inability to accept reality--that is, to recognize the existence of a world outside his own consciousness.

[T. S. Eliot was] literally one of the most charming men I've ever known.... He's still extremely handsome. And a brilliant conversationalist. He just seems to pluck the right word out of the air, and usually one word would do the trick where somebody else would use a dozen.

I sat in a corner of Gertrude Stein's vast studio on the rue Fleurus and listened--impatiently--while Miss Stein descanted on the nature of her own genius.... It is sometimes amusing to listen to nonsense but it is irritating to have to listen to nonsense when serious matters are under discussion.

If [a writer] ignores the nature of his medium and proceeds on Miss Stein's theory that fiction can be divorced from experience, that is to say, reality, he is likely to fall into a trap.

[To Sally Wood about Gertrude Stein]: When you come up I do want to take you there. She will treat you with great contempt on account of your sex but you can see her Picassos and it will be worth going. She never addresses a remark to the women and it is rather nice, you can just wander around and look at her pictures.

Have you read Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*? It is a remarkable thing--the doctor's bedroom is one of the finest scenes I know anywhere--but I don't on the whole agree with Eliot about it.

Mr. [Aldous] Huxley writes a beautiful, lucid prose and burns with some of the same fervor that animated his grandfather, the biologist Thomas Huxley....but his book does not deal with the conduct of life in the way that Dickens or Thackeray or Stendhal or any of the great novelists deals with life. His characters tend to pale in the rarified intellectual atmosphere in which they move. The reader knows as soon as they come on the scene what the author thinks of them.

Poor K.A. [Katherine Anne Porter] is still in Mexico trying to finish her novel. I got a letter from her the other day. Hart Crane has moved in on her and she wanted to know what she should do!... There he stays, getting up very early in the morning to turn on his victrola, caroling and drinking beer and so on.

As for K.A. she is an actress who happens to have a talent for setting down her emotions in felicitous prose. She would walk miles to get you a bouquet of flowers or a jug of wine and present the gift gracefully but you cannot *depend* on her for anything. The very thought of anyone depending on her makes her wild. This is partly because she is always in a crisis herself and partly because of her histrionic gifts.

[Katherine Anne] is one of the finest writers now living and she will kill herself very soon, by living in the wrong climate or wasting herself on idiotic people or anything else that is suicidal enough.

His family decided [Robert Lowell] was crazy because he wants to be a poet and had him in a psychopathic sanitarium. He does have a queer eye on him but is very well behaved and affable, but imagine...coming all the way from Boston to sit at Southern feet [of Allen Tate].

I have been here alone with [Lowell] during the day time a great deal and pretty scared at times. I think he kissed me every five minutes (literally). Towards the last he took to kissing Allen, too, and coming up behind him and squeezing and lifting him off the floor, which scared the hell out of Allen.

The grandnephew of James Russell Lowell lives in an umbrella tent on the lawn.

OTHER CONTEMPORARIES

Everybody there was engaged in trying to conceal the fact that they knew that Ellen Glasgow lacked intellectual subtlety.

It is this reverence for the particular detail, this passionate apprehension of a whole world that gives [Andrew] Lytle's fiction its peculiar power. [Lytle was an Agrarian and close friend.]

Whom should we run into in Richmond but Thomas Wolfe. He was drunk and dumb and extremely amiable. He kept looking at me and blubbering "Mrs. Gordon, Max Perkins thinks you're wonderful." He is so dumb that he can hardly follow a conversation.

SHORT STORIES

I began to think seriously about the writing of fiction when I was twenty-seven.

I wasn't cut out to write short stories.

I can face a lifetime of incessant toil writing novels but each short story takes as much out of you--me, anyhow, as a novel and then you have to start all over again.

Writing short stories has one advantage--it makes writing a novel seem such easy, pleasant work that you wonder why you ever took it so hard.

I cannot bear to touch [to read] any of my short stories.

WRITING NOVELS

A writer's talent is God-given.

I am...a novelist by profession.

I don't see how I can ever do what I am trying to do.

I find that having a room of my own enables me to write.

My path is very plain before me. Just one novel after another.

The reason I type so badly is because my hands are so cold they won't hit the keys.

Thank God for being a Southern writer...I am one of the few writers in this generation who have something to write about.

[My] ultimate purpose [is] the writing of prose which shall be personal and American and yet derived from classical models.

The writing of a book is like a journey across an apparently trackless waste. We have the illusion that nobody else has ever left a footprint on those burning sands.

No doubt people will find resemblances to Hemingway's bull fighting books in [*Aleck Maury, Sportsman*]. Anyhow it is to be [a] history of a life dominated by a passion for fishing.

If I was to work at all I had to work through somebody else's mind as my own had been rendered unendurable to me.

The book was written mostly to prove that sport is not a pastime.

When I finished *Aleck Maury* I had the persistent delusion that I was a baseball and was just about to whiz over the fence.

[*None Shall Look Back* is] the most ambitious novel written so far about the Civil War.

I have to stop and remind myself that I was neither at Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill nor Bull Run.

That Civil War novel kept my nose closer to the grindstone than I thought a nose could go and not be pared off.

Margaret Mitchell has got all the trade, damn her. They say it took her ten years to write that novel [*Gone with the Wind*]. Why couldn't it have taken her twelve?

My Muse turned the inspiration on again as if I had been a bathtub and she the keeper of the faucet.

I feel like one of these women who knows she is going to have another baby before the one in her arms is weaned. I have the subject for my next book.

[My writing is] steadily growing more human, easier to read.

CRITICS

[John Crowe Ransom] can't bear for women to be serious about their art.

[Edmund Wilson, likewise] can't bear for women to be serious about their art.

You know, Edmund, I have sat around for nearly twenty years listening to you talk, often about the novel. I don't think it ever occurred to you during that time that I might possibly have something interesting to say. But I think you'd do well to listen occasionally to what fiction writers have to say. It seems to me that both in conversation and in your criticism you show great interest in novelty of subject and almost no interest in technique.... But please, in memory of all those hours that I have listened to you talking through your hat, don't have my book reviewed in the *New Yorker* at all.

As far as I can gather, there is no instance of a revolutionary talent--or technique--being recognized by any literary critic who was not himself an artist.

Allen says 'If you write a book which is an innovation both in subject matter and form you must expect to be attacked,' and I did expect--not to be attacked so viciously, but ignored, as usual.

I am...enormously pleased by your discernments and comments on the techniques used in my book. I believe it is the first time that what James called his 'great compositional law' of 'the angle of vision' or 'central consciousness' has been used consistently and exhaustively. But I believe, too, that, as you have divined, I have succeeded in adding another dimension in using the Jungian 'underground' as a setting for action.

Three illicit love affairs, an elopement, an illegitimate baby and a murder ought to keep things moving. I fear, however, that when I get through with these events reviewers will be saying the book has a muted charm or something like that.

There are three young men writing about it [her fiction] now, and each one of them finds out symbols that never entered my head.

It seems to me that if you persist in writing about my work you should acquaint yourself with the writings of critics whom I find capable of judging my work instead of relying on judgments which I find unsound.

EDITORS AND PUBLISHING

[Max Perkins her Editor at Scribner's] was masterly and had me roped and tied in two paragraphs and then went on to do his will. That Perkins is a smooth article and there is no use fooling with him.... [His] suggestions were damn good.

He [Perkins] wasn't terribly interested in my work. He liked other people like Tom Wolfe or Marcia Davenport. They gave him an opportunity to exercise his extraordinary talent.

[Max was] the only publishing person I ever met whom you could talk to like a human being.

[*Scribner's* magazine] takes of my stories only those dealing with murder, sudden death and the like.

I am at last convinced that *Scribner's* is no market for my stories.

It seems to me that ten days after it was out Scribner's had forgotten they had published *Green Centuries*.

I always seem to fall into the troughs made by these leviathans like Ernest [Hemingway]--and Margaret [Mitchell].

Scribner's contracts are the most generous of any to authors, but what good does it do the author if he never sells enough to take advantage of all the benefits they offer?

I see no reason why my publisher should let me starve until he can catch up with my work.

My books have never sold and doubtless never will--at least in my lifetime.

[Scribner's] sold me down the river.

POSTMODERNISM

[Gertrude] Stein...exalt[ed] herself above her subject matter.

There are eight million people in New York. And no dearth of sick intellectuals.

Their knowledge of life is what you would expect from the sons of commuters.

All this computerization of human beings is a step toward the gas chambers of the future.

At times I have actually been frightened by the torrent of muddy thought which has been pouring over us.

As Proust put it, "A book in which there are theories is like an article from which the price mark has not been removed."

With all our energies going into material things there are not going to be many people left capable of asserting spiritual values.

The author who celebrates only himself, or prototypes of himself, does not create a work of art, for...the hero whose aim is expression, without need of either conscience or motive, is not a real hero and therefore not a fit subject for artistic creation.

He writes about the same thing they write about today: the self-sufficiency of the natural man and the exaltation of the state that always goes along with it. Existentialism we call it today.

[The] "hero of expression" is incapable of the adventures that befall heroes; his energies are absorbed in the task of being, not doing.

Everything goes into the Freudian meat-grinder to emerge as pap suitable to be fed to invalids.

Trouble with Freud he never got around to but one myth.

COMMUNISM

A rabid Communist...but she is really a sweet child and very agreeable.

All these Utopian conceptions and Workers' paradises etc. are due to too much peace.

I just don't think you can trust a radical because where the revolution is concerned they can't have any personal loyalties.

I'm taking an oath not to let another Communist or fellow traveler cross my threshold because they are so unscrupulous in their dealings, particularly with southern people.

I don't think anybody who isn't communistically inclined would have much chance with the [Guggenheim] Foundation these days.

Destroying a people's language is a pretty effective way of brain-washing them.... It is my sober and long considered conclusion that this movement is a new sort of Communist front, one that goes deeper underground in a way than any of them has ever gone.

I had not read *Das Kapital* and could not have understood it if I had. But I felt--in my bones if you will--not so much that Marx was wrong as that my fellow writers were wrong in accepting him, for even one step of the long way, as a guide. I did not believe that they would have subscribed to his theories if they had known what I knew.

FEMINISM

The world, whether we like it or not, is full of women.

[Zelda Fitzgerald] just wanted to have her own accomplishments.

[Zelda was a] victim to Scott's delusions of grandeur in a silk hat.

[Next to the Virgin Mary, St. Catherine was] the most wonderful woman that ever lived. She never learned to read till three years before she died, but she licked two popes and one emperor into shape nonetheless.

Margaret Fuller...was perhaps more fortunate than Miss [Gertrude] Stein in that she finally, albeit with reluctance, accepted reality in the shape of the universe.

A society in which there is a preponderance of members who habitually do not reckon with the practical consequences that follow upon emotion is in danger of its existence.

Simone de Beauvoir has named her book *The Second Sex*; one is tempted to think of poor Marcelle as a representative of some sex newly originated, a woman who, in order to get her rights, has given up all her prerogatives.

Cynthia [*The Malefactors*] has missed out on everything that makes life worth while to a woman. Therefore her ambition grows larger. Life must make up to her for what she has missed.

I am Miss Caroline Gordon--never Ms! In private life I am Mrs. Gordon Tate. These aliases are accidental, not from choice. I published my first novel as Caroline Gordon. Publishers don't want you to change names.

My demon [like Feminist critics] does not want me to be happy with my husband so it tells me I can't be.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

[In the 18th century Henry] Fielding was not obliged to take into account considerations of propriety which weighed more and more heavily on the novelist as Victorian conventions exerted a stronger and stronger stranglehold on the creative gift [throughout the 19th century, then it got replaced by its opposite, dogmatic radical Feminism, in the late 20th century].

The reader who demands that his own moral code shall not be infringed upon, or his feelings lacerated by any unpleasant happenings in any book he reads, is actually demanding that the emotions aroused in him by the reading of any work of art shall not overflow into real life.

When we are tempted to censure an author because the characters in his novels do not adhere to our own code of morals we ought to remind ourselves that some of the greatest heroes of fiction--indeed of myth and legend--trespassed against the accepted code of their day.

If, while [the PC reader] is engaged in the reading of the book, he allows his own opinions or prejudices to come between him and the author's presentation of his subject matter, he is not giving the book the kind of reading it should have or, indeed, the best reading that he himself is capable of. This is asking a great deal of the reader and few readers attain to such detachment, such humility.

The danger sets in when people get so in the habit of discharging their emotions...without reckoning with any of its consequences.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND FICTION

"I do not believe that Rimbaud was fated to be damned--any more than any other man."

Homosexuality, childishness, freakishness--in the end, I think it comes to *fatherlessness*--is rampant in the world today.

As a man, Proust, too, was beset with homosexual inclinations, but as an author Proust held to the normal viewpoint, that is to say, the viewpoint of heterosexuality...giving Proust's work a dimension, an air of reality, which *The Counterfeiters*, for all Gide's mastery of style, all his brilliant insights, still lacks.

SELF-CRITICISM

It should have been a better book.

The book is too short, too compressed.

I didn't devote enough space to the people's private lives.

Neither of my books so far has been rounded off enough.

None of my books ever seems round enough. They are always too lean somewhere. [Gordon aspired to aesthetic perfection like other Modernists such as Faulkner, who called all of his books failures--vain efforts to achieve the impossible.]

Always before I've felt that if I could just put a little more time into a thing I could get it right. This time I had the feeling that I'd put all I had into it and alas, it wasn't enough. [*None Shall Look Back*]

[Fanny Cheney, assistant to Allen Tate] does, without grumbling or apparent effort, all the things that I am accustomed to do with clenched teeth and curses.

I sound awfully smug, as if everything were wrong with him and nothing wrong with me. But every day I am more and more aware of the part my own weaknesses and faults have played in our troubles. I make scenes and reproach him for things he has done--and I must say he does dreadful things!

My instinctual nature, whatever its flaws, is my instinctual nature, the only one I've got. I should rely more on it instead of identifying myself so with Allen and trying to do everything the way he wants it done.

I am impulsive and violent and these traits might make me lose myself in certain aesthetic sides of the church, to the neglect of its real wisdom.

Neither of us has Catholic habits and neither of us is a good Christian.

It is hard for Allen and me, with all our flaws of character and infantilisms.

I'd have done better if I hadn't been so absorbed in my work and so drained by it.

The alcoholic just goes nuts when he gets around the stuff. The drunk...keeps a rhythm of his own.

I am a bit of an alcoholic. I have had to give up whiskey entirely.

I am inclined to self-pity now and I don't deserve any pity at all, for I have a good time in this life. But I do have a lot on my hands. I bite off more than I can chew all the time.

I have in me the melancholy of the barbaric races with their migratory instincts and inborn tastes for a life that makes them leave their country rather than change themselves.

If I had faith in the promises of Christ I would never be disturbed and would never do things that disturb other people. The psychologists say that when a person is frightened it's "fight or flight." I don't flee but I am too quick to fight. If I had enough faith I wouldn't feel that I had to fight.

I would not blow my top like that if I did not go always in such fear of receiving a mortal wound.

I see my own life...as largely a conflict with daimons.

My worst sin is self-love.

RELIGIOUS FAITH

Artists are fundamentally religious, I suppose, or they're no good.

"I don't think people get along very well without any religion at all."

It's like suddenly being given authority to believe all the things you've surmised.

Ours is the first age in which a man would call himself educated and know no theology.

I find that I don't know nearly as much as I need to know about the Devil.

As the result of the Fall the understanding of the soul in divine things is blinder than that of a mole.

I feel that a person with my faults--and my kinds of family--badly needs some spiritual discipline to practice every day in order to have it backing me up in times of trouble.

The analogies between the religious life and the working life of the artist are striking--and, I'm sure, dangerous to contemplate because we are tempted to press them too far.

I was nearly fifty years old before I discovered that art is the handmaiden of the Church. Up to that time it had been the only religion I had and I served it as faithfully as I could.

I was converted, I suppose, mostly by reading the Gospels.... I think I was converted by my own work, too. I have lived most of my life on the evidence of things not seen--what else is writing a novel but that?

It is, to me, a little as if I had all my life been engaged in the writing of a novel and only recently had discovered that the plot is entirely different from what I thought it was!

In life, as well as in the writing of novels, faith is the key to the puzzle; the puzzle doesn't make any sense until you have the key. I have been working at my particular puzzle all my life.

People who don't have to set the universe up fresh for every performance, people who don't have to spend time trying to figure out what moral order prevails in the universe [have] more energy for spontaneous creation.

It is taken for granted by the majority of reviewers of fiction that grace--supernatural grace--is not a proper subject for fiction, when it seems to me, the interworkings, intertwining of natural grace and supernatural grace (or the lack of it) are the only subjects for fiction, from the Greek tragedians on down.

I go to Mass by way of the alleys, so I can inspect the little back gardens.

I say let all of us that can turn Catholic at once.

SPIRITS

Often when she was a child, playing in one of the quiet rooms or out on the lawn under the trees she had suddenly been made to feel some stirring of the air or change of light that she was not alone, and to preserve her privacy she would turn her back or go off to play in another place. The presences had been then only companions whom one could not conveniently address. After she became a woman they had seemed at times to menace or at least to prophesy evil.

I have spent most of my life half paralyzed with fear of those voices that other people hear. I realize now...that these voices are dangerous and that I was right to fear them--but I took the wrong way to combat them. They came from evil spirits, who, being fallen angels, have angelic intelligences and the only way to rout them is to call in other angelic intelligences--to let the mind of Christ dwell in us.

Once she herself had almost seen Jesus, coming around the corner of the house. At any rate, the lilac bush had shaken and there had been a radiance in the air.

UNFINISHED DOUBLE NOVEL

The upper pattern purports to be my own autobiography but is actually the history of the lives of certain members of my family who have been associated, to some extent, with public figures (Dr. John Hunter, Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, Sir Walter Scott, et al.). The lower pattern winds serpent-wise through the upper pattern of action and deals with the archetypal world which the present day Jungians and the archaic Greeks inform us lies at the very bottom of every human consciousness.

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

An artist was not meant to have a fixed habitation. He is meant to wander.

'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour / I've seen my fondest hopes decay / I never loved a tree or flower /
But when it got ready to bloom / I had to go away.

A pilgrim, by the nature of his calling, sees more of the world than he would have seen if he had stayed at home. But if he settles down in any one place he ceases to be a pilgrim.

My longing to have ground under my feet represents that most feminine side of my nature, a side which has been dangerously suppressed and frustrated by our wandering lives.

I cannot recall, offhand, the names of all the cities and towns I have lived in.

OLD AGE

Old age came upon me like a clap of thunder.

My stupid heart won't stand airplane travel at an elevation of thirty feet.

I've seen all I want to see and I want to get out of this world.

Find me a hovel and give my house to Allen.

The cold makes my arthritis unbearable.

NOTHINGNESS

An abyss so deep and dark that no human eye has ever penetrated it.

My mother really did reject me.... I perceived that when I was very young and...it was as if an abyss had opened under my feet and I have been scared to death ever since.

There is an abyss at the bottom of every human soul, I feel sure...[but] it ought to remain unplumbed. ["Gaze not too deeply into the abyss, lest it gaze into you." Nietzsche. Ghost hunters say the same.]

It was a long time ago, but it sometimes seems as if I had all my life been standing in that darkening room, companioned only by shadows, shadows which, as I stood there, I kept at bay by the exertion of all my childish will, for I knew even then that their very existence betokened peril and that too close communion with them meant death.

I can hardly face each day. I long only for night. It is, doubtless, some kind of night of the soul, a trial sent me by God for a much needed purgation. I am sure of that. But it is very disconcerting to suddenly feel yourself become almost another person.

HELL

In my long and misspent life I have had two of those hysterical seizures, such as I had at your house--in which an abyss seems to open right under my feet into hell. I had the other seizure...on the beach. I was walking along with the others and suddenly had convulsions which lasted a long time.

DEATH

I am well past eighty and am so tired I would like to get dead as soon as possible--or would if I weren't so wicked.

After all, one does, or should die, soon after one has learned a little something about how to live.

Our car turned over and over and we were pinned in it but it didn't catch fire. All the glass was shattered yet none of us were cut though my hair was full of broken glass.

GOD

The ways of God are, of course, incomprehensible but occasionally one seems to catch a glimpse of the working of God's will.

The Lord has to use even our blindness his wonders to perform.

IMMORTALITY

This modern substitute for prayer is not really an improvement. You stood some chance of getting hold of God when all you had to do was kneel down at your bedside, but getting hold of your psychiatrist takes all the energy and skill you can muster. And then he can only give you an hour.

