

# Georgia History in Fiction

## The Quest for Identity in the Civil War Novels of Julien Green

BY MICHAEL O'DWYER

JULIEN Green was born in Paris in 1900 of American parents; his father was from Virginia, his mother from Savannah. The Green family lived at 4, rue Ruhmkorff, near Neuilly in western Paris. This was the first of thirteen locations that Green would occupy in the Paris area. His lifelong attachment to Paris found expression in many passages of his *Journal* and in *Paris*, a book described as a masterpiece of poetic prose.<sup>1</sup> His attachment to his American roots was also of great importance to him. He retained his American nationality, which in 1971 earned him the distinction of being the first non-French national elected to the Académie Française.<sup>2</sup>

Green's writing career spanned seventy-seven years, ending only with his death in August 1998. It began with a short story written in English in 1920 when he was a student at the University of Virginia. His most recent work was a volume of his *Journal*, pub-

<sup>1</sup>*Paris* (Paris, 1983). English trans. J. A. Underwood (New York, 1993).

<sup>2</sup>In October 1996, Julien Green left the Académie Française. In a letter to the secretary of the Académie, Green stated that he was "exclusively American" and that, honors, such as membership of the Académie, held no interest for him. In reply the Académie pointed out that it is not possible to resign from this body as membership is a lifelong honor. Technically Green remained a member of that body until his death in August 1998.

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Julien Green, who died this past summer at the age of ninety-seven, left behind him a massive literary legacy in a variety of genres—novels, stories, plays, journals, autobiographies, etc.—much of which explores his southern roots in Georgia and Virginia. *Photograph of the elderly Green reproduced courtesy of Jean-Eric Green.*

lished in 1996. His *Journal* is the longest in the history of French literature. Since 1920, Green wrote extensively in both French and English. His works include short stories, novels, plays, journals, autobiography, biography, translations, articles and essays. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He had the rare distinction of having had eight volumes of his collected works published in the prestigious French *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* edition in his lifetime. He was working on an eighth volume when he died.

This essay endeavors to show that a quest for identity was present in varying degrees in Green's works and that this quest was linked directly or indirectly to the Civil War and the South. It will focus on his recent fictional trilogy as the climax of that quest, the culmination of a search for his American and southern roots that began in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>3</sup>

In writing about the Civil War, Green wrote about events in which his grandparents, both paternal and maternal, were involved. Those experiences left deep marks on both his parents and later, on Julien himself. His grandfather, Charles Green, a Presbyterian and native of Halesowen, Shropshire, on the border between England and Wales, arrived in Savannah in the 1830s. In rags-to-riches style he arrived in the Georgia port city with two dollars in his pocket, rose to become the owner of a cotton exporting company, and consequently to a position of great wealth.<sup>4</sup> He became an extensive property owner. The most prominent of these houses was the Green-Meldrim house on Madison Square, a magnificent Tudor-style mansion for which bricks were brought individually wrapped in paper from England. Designed by the architect, John Norris, and built by slave labor, the house, which is now a national monument, was completed on April 12, 1861, the day on which General Beauregard attacked Fort Sumter.<sup>5</sup> It was in this house that Charles Green received General William T. Sherman when he entered Savannah in December 1864. While Green's grandfather was sympathetic to the Confederate cause, being of English nationality, he received Sherman in order to spare the secessionists (the *Sudistes* as Green would call them) the ignominy of having to receive the northern general. Charles Green also entertained William Makepiece Thackeray and Charles Dickens there during their travels in America. He was arrested in November 1861 by the United States government on returning from a business trip to Europe under suspicion of negotiating loans for the purchase of arms for the Confederacy.

<sup>3</sup>*Les Pays lointains* [*The Distant Lands*] (Paris, 1987), trans. B. Beaumont (New York, 1993); *Les Etoiles du Sud* [*The Stars of the South*] (Paris, 1989), trans. R. Buss (New York, 1996); *Dixie* (Paris, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>See *Journal*, March 23, 1970, in *Julien Green Oeuvres complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1977), 558-59 (hereinafter cited as Pléiade with the appropriate volume number).

<sup>5</sup>*Journal*, January 12, 1934, Pléiade, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1975), 283-84.

Green's mother, Mary Adelaide Hartridge, was born into an Episcopalian family in Savannah. Her parents were Julian Hartridge, a Confederate congressman, and Mary Charlton, of Irish origin. Green frequently stated that the impulsive and visionary side of his temperament was due to his Irish blood. Hartridge later represented Georgia in Congress and was about to be appointed Secretary of State in the Department of Foreign Affairs at the time of his death in 1879. Green was in fact baptized Julian Hartridge Green in honor of his maternal grandfather, though most of his works were published under the name of Julien Green.

Green's father, Edward Green, was born in Virginia in 1853. Having been educated in Europe at Innsbruck, and for a brief period in Paris, he returned to America in 1870 at his father's behest. In 1880 he married Mary Adelaide Hartridge. He was then a director of several companies and appeared to be following successfully in his father's footsteps. His bent for speculation, however, led to many serious losses and to the eventual threat of poverty. These circumstances had a strong influence on his decision to return to France in 1893 for a post with a cotton agency in Le Havre. For Mary Green, profoundly attached to the Deep South (so much so that she could never admit that her father-in-law had received Sherman), and without any knowledge of the French language, this was the beginning of what she considered a period of exile, a sense of which she conveyed to her family and in particular to her youngest child, Julien. In 1897 the family moved to Paris, where Edward worked with the Southern Cotton Seed Oil Company and was responsible for the supervision of European imports of cotton and seed oil from the South.

Julien was the Greens' eighth child. An elder brother, Edward, had died shortly after birth. The other members of the family were Eleanor (1880-1965) who, for a brief period, was engaged to the novelist Arnold Bennett, Mary (1883-1926) and Charles (1885-1967), who was sent to relatives in America at an early age and whom Green did not get to know until later in life. There was also his sister Anne (1891-1979), a novelist, author of a volume of memoirs and several volumes of short stories.<sup>6</sup> She also collabo-

<sup>6</sup>Anne Green wrote fifteen novels. Her volume of memoirs is entitled, *With Much Love* (New York, 1948) [*Mes Jours Évanouis*] (Paris, 1951).

Mary Hartridge Green, Julien's mother, was born into a prominent Savannah family. Her stories of life in the South and of her family's Civil War experiences did much to shape her son's sense of himself and his southern roots. *Photograph of Mary Green in 1888 from Jacques Petit, Julien Green (Paris, 1972).*



rated with her brother on English translations of extracts of Péguy's works and of Julien's own work.<sup>7</sup> Green's other sisters, both born in France, were Retta (1894-1918) and Lucy (1895-1937). The young Green found himself, as he phrased it, "surrounded by six mothers."

Green remembered his father in later years as reticent, taciturn and someone with whom he could not easily communicate. His early years were nourished by his mother's stories about secession, the Civil War, and the sense of belonging to the South. Those stories, which were tainted with melancholy because the South had lost the war, had a profound effect on Julien. The Green chil-

<sup>7</sup>*Basic Verities* (New York, 1943); *God Speaks* (New York, 1943); *Men and Saints* (New York, 1943); *To Leave Before Dawn* (New York, 1967); *The Transgressor* (London, 1958); *Each Man in His Darkness* (London, 1961).

dren were fascinated by the presence in their home of a cannon ball used in the war. Green grew up in Paris with the feeling of being an expatriate surrounded by French people who had never heard of secession. There was the constant feeling of belonging to a nation that no longer existed. He formed the impression that he was being reared in a dream-like world to such an extent that he began to wonder if the world around him was an illusion. Green visited America for the first time in 1919 and studied at the University of Virginia until 1922, when he returned to France. He visited the South on several occasions afterward. The sense of nostalgia for a lost fatherland began as an undercurrent in Green's work and reached its apogee in recent years with the trilogy of Civil War novels published in the 1980s and 1990s.

Green's treatment of the Civil War in fiction has at least two important precedents, both novels set in Georgia. Louisa M. Whitney's *Goldie's Inheritance: A Story of the Siege of Atlanta* (1903) presented the siege of Atlanta from a Unionist point of view and dealt with the circumstances of only thinly fictionalized characters.<sup>8</sup> There is no reference to this work in Green's *Journal*, which abounds in references and reflections on much of what he has read. While Whitney's book remained relatively unknown, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, published thirty-three years later, constituted for many people outside of America their only source of reference for the Civil War. Green made a number of comments on Mitchell's novel. In an interview in 1939, he expressed his ambition to write a book in which he would present a physical and moral portrait of the South, and cited the success of *Gone With the Wind* as an encouraging factor.<sup>9</sup> He also stated in passing that he would like to explode the myth, prevailing in Europe since the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that the South went to war in defense of slavery.

In the program for his play *Sud* (or *South*) in 1953, Green stated that the publication of *Gone With the Wind* actually led him to abandon the project envisaged in 1939 and added that the fifty pages he had written of a novel entitled *Les Pays lointains* (*The Distant Lands*)

<sup>8</sup>For an excellent analysis of this novel, see Thomas G. Dyer, "Atlanta's Other Civil War Novel: Fictional Unionists in a Confederate City," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Spring 1995).

<sup>9</sup>Pléiade, Vol. 2 (Paris, 1973), 1293.

were published in the second volume of his *Journal*.<sup>10</sup> The inference at the time was that Green feared that he would be covering the same territory as Mitchell; he confirmed this in the late 1980s, and added that he had refused to read her novel because, as it had been reasonably well received in the North, he feared that she may have tried to placate northern feelings.<sup>11</sup> In the same article Green said that he decided to see the film but left after the opening scenes because he felt that Mitchell was "not unconditionally in favor of the South." It was his adopted son who finally convinced him that his book was set ten years before the war and thus had no connection with Mitchell's book. Finally in 1985 some friends showed him the film, *Gone With the Wind*, "on a small screen" and he immediately went out and purchased the book. He noted also that he found Mitchell to be as convinced of the southern cause as he was but that, apart from this love of the South, they had very little else in common.<sup>12</sup> Green's comments made it clear that he was passionately committed to the southern cause (and thus it is not surprising that he never commented on Whitney's book).

This passion for the South also emerged in comments other than those made on Mitchell's work. In 1933 he noted in his *Journal* a friend's comment that his (Green's) point of view on the South was that of the first generation after the war.<sup>13</sup> Green explained that this was because his parents, who left America in 1893, had retained the opinions of their youth and had transmitted them to him. In a 1965 entry, Green noted that he was in the process of arranging his books on the South and added that he did not need them to prove that the South was right.<sup>14</sup> He then poured out his fulsome admiration for Lee and Jackson. An entry made on Independence Day, 1966, is also worthy of note. In it Green stated that he had received a book on the South "or rather a book which attacks the South, as legends do not die easily. The author implies that it was out of hatred of slavery that the virtuous northerners declared war on us."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 3 (Paris, 1973), 1719.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 7 (Paris, 1994), 1690.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 1692.

<sup>13</sup>Julien Green, *Journal*, 1928-49 (Paris, 1966), 1539.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 1949-66 (Paris, 1966), 1539.

<sup>15</sup>*Journal*, July 4, 1966.

The ironic reference to the "virtuous northerners" and the close identification with the South, as indicated in the use of the pronoun "us," reveal Green as the "*Sudiste corps et âme*," related to Generals Lee and Beauregard through marriage on his father's side, talking about a war in which his grandparents, both maternal and paternal, were involved.<sup>16</sup> The quotation also reveals the Green who was so strongly influenced by his mother's stories of the war. They confirm a quest for identity undertaken by an author passionately committed to the southern cause.

Out of seventeen novels written to date, six, including Green's masterpiece, *Möira*,<sup>17</sup> have southern settings, while two other novels had their origins in his visits to America and his subsequent reflections on his identity. One of his five plays, (*Sud*) was set in the antebellum South.<sup>18</sup> Green's preoccupation with his connection to the South dominated two out of four volumes of his autobiography, while a third concerned problems he experienced in readapting to life in France after returning from Virginia in 1922.<sup>19</sup> Green also recorded numerous reflections on the South in the various volumes of the *Journal*.

Yet prior to 1950, references to the South or the Civil War were not prominent in Green's work. It was only with the publication of the first volume of his autobiography in 1963 that we have the first comprehensive analysis of his relationship to the Civil War. Nevertheless, the references that occurred throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s are important in that they reveal a constant preoccupation with the subject in the context of a quest for identity on Green's part and are therefore significant for a study of his recent trilogy of novels.

<sup>16</sup>When Green speaks to his attachment to the South, he is speaking principally of Virginia and Savannah. See Julien Green, "D'où viennent me pays lointains," *Pléiade*, Vol. 7, 1691.

<sup>17</sup>*Möira* (Paris, 1950), trans. D. Folliot (c1951; rpt., London, 1988).

<sup>18</sup>*Christine suivi de Léviathan* [*Christine and Other Stories*] (Paris, 1928), trans. C. Bruerton (London, 1931); *Le Voyageur sur la terre* [*The Pilgrim on the Earth*] (Paris, 1927), trans. C. Bruerton (New York, 1929).

<sup>19</sup>The four main volumes of Green's autobiography are: *Partir avant le jour* [*To Leave Before Dawn*] (Paris, 1963), trans. Anne and Julien Green (New York, 1967); *The Green Paradise*, trans. Anne and Julien Green (New York, 1992); *Mille chemins ouverts* [*War at Sixteen*] (Paris, 1964), trans. E. Cameron (New York, 1994); *Terre lointaine* [*Love in America*] (Paris, 1966), trans. E. Cameron (New York, 1994); *Jeunesse* [*Restless Youth*], (Paris, 1974), trans. E. Cameron (New York, 1996).



Although he was born and raised in Paris, Julien Green's parents instilled in him so strong a sense of his southern heritage that he wrote later that he came to feel like an expatriate in France, long before he had ever been to the South. This photograph of Green was made in 1916, three years before he first visited the United States. *Photograph from Jacques Petit, Julien Green (Paris, 1972).*



A short story, "Léviathan," written in 1926, describes a journey from France to Savannah. Its theme is the search for self. Another short story, "Le Voyageur sur la terre," written a year later, deals with schizophrenia, or the crisis provoked by the dual personality of a university student in search of his true identity. It may well have grown out of Green's experience as a student in Virginia from 1919-1922 when he first confronted the various dualisms in his life: his American and French origins, his homosexuality and Christianity, and his experiences as a convert from Protestantism to Catholicism. Thus even in Green's earliest fiction, he conveyed a strong sense of place associated with the South, a sense of place linked to a quest for roots, self-knowledge and identity, ending in a mysterious death.

Green's first novel, *Mont-Cinère* (1926), is set in northern Virginia, the birthplace of his father and more precisely in the property

of Kinloch, which belonged to the man whom he affectionately calls "Uncle Turner" and which Robert E. Lee (a relative) sometimes visited.<sup>20</sup> The novel is set twenty-three years after the end of the war.<sup>21</sup> There are references to the capture of Atlanta by Sherman's troops and its aftermath, such as the discretion that must be observed in conversation.<sup>22</sup> The first draft of this novel contained a description of Sherman's entry into Savannah in 1864, references closely linked to Green's roots through his grandfather's house there.<sup>23</sup>

*Journal* entries in the 1930s include other passing references to the war. In June 1932, Green recalled an incident recounted to him by his mother in which his great-aunt refused to honor the northern flag, despite being intimidated by Sherman's soldiers.<sup>24</sup> In 1933-1934, Green began working on a novel, *Les Pays lointains*, to be set in the pre-Civil War South. He abandoned the project, though, because of his fear of simply producing "an insipid historical reconstruction."<sup>25</sup> At a deeper level, his reluctance to continue this particular work indicated a serious search and struggle to give literary form to his quest. As was the case in his writing of *Mont-Cinère*, he was not content with a historical reconstruction of his family's past. Yet he seemed determined to resume the project at some point. In 1937 Green was reading Robert E. Lee's correspondence,<sup>26</sup> and two years later, he stated that he was determined to succeed in producing a physical and moral portrait of the South.

In Green's writings of the 1930s direct references to secession were abandoned and the question of identity was posed on a metaphysical and theological plane that grew out of his American experience. His *Journal* for the period 1919-1924, most of which Green spent at the University of Virginia, showed that he had already outlined the plot of his two novels, *Varouna* and *Si j'étais vous*, that would appear in the 1940s.<sup>27</sup> The question of identity, which may have once appeared to be merely sentimental, began to be

<sup>20</sup>*Mont-Cinère* [*Avarice House*] (Paris, 1926), trans. M. A. Best (London, 1991).

<sup>21</sup>*Mont-Cinère* (Le Livre de Poche), 209.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 118, 128, 210.

<sup>23</sup>For this first draft, see Pléiade, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1972), 1060-82.

<sup>24</sup>*Journal*, June (no precise date is given) 1932.

<sup>25</sup>For the first draft of *Les Pays lointains*, see Pléiade, Vol. 2, 1457-83.

<sup>26</sup>*Journal*, June 26, 1937.

<sup>27</sup>*On est si sérieux quand on a dix-neuf ans* [Eng. version: *Then Shall the Dust Return*] (Paris, 1993), trans. J. Whitall (New York, 1941); *Varouna* (Paris, 1940); *Si j'étais vous* [*If I Were You*] (Paris, 1947), trans. J. H. F. McEwen (London, 1950).

posed at a more fundamental level. (It is significant that he was writing *Varouna* at the same time he was working on the initial draft of *Les Pays lointains* after returning to France from America in 1934.) In an entry made in Baltimore on July 21, 1940, Green noted that as he approached the age of forty he found himself in much the same circumstances as those of his twentieth year when he was in Virginia, less the illusions and the enthusiasm!<sup>28</sup>

The relationship between the older Green and the Green of the 1920s also formed the basis for his novel *Möira* (1950), born out of a nostalgia for Virginia. Its theme is the quest for and struggle with self and with the consequences of a puritanical upbringing, the implications of which were revealed to Green during his years at Charlottesville. The novel can also be seen as a fictional rendering of Green's sexual self-discovery. As part of his quest for identity, Green was trying to exorcise in *Möira* the fanatical Christian, which he was in his twenties, and also to exorcise the puritanical southern elements in his formation.

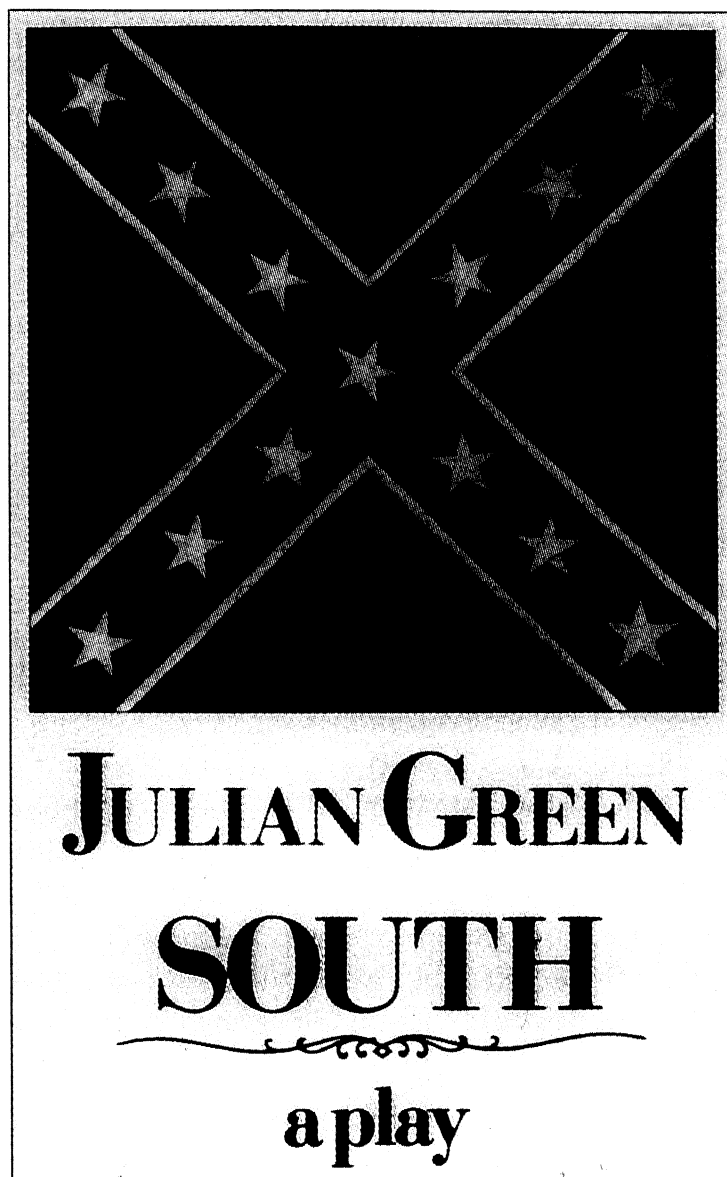
The play *Sud* (1953) marked a return to Green's preoccupation with the American Civil War itself.<sup>29</sup> The play takes place on the eve of the war. Green explored the question of slavery, marked by his ironic treatment of slave owners and their use of biblical quotations to justify their practice. This was an important question for Green's family. He recalled his grandfather's liberation of slaves and the fact that his mother never availed herself of a present made to her on the occasion of her birth—two hundred slaves!<sup>30</sup> The treatment of the question of slavery represented an as yet unusual incursion into the social and political domain by Green but it was indicative of his original intention, which was to give prominence to the re-creation of the Civil War South, thus resuming the project that he abandoned in the mid-1950s. The treatment of historical and social questions is also a feature of the trilogy of Civil War novels and in this sense *Sud* can be seen as a precursor. However, as he reached the end of the writing of the first act, he stated that the true drama was revealed to him.<sup>31</sup> The central drama sprang from an inability on the part of the principal character to express homo-

<sup>28</sup>*Journal*, July 21, 1940.

<sup>29</sup>*Sud [South]* (Paris, 1953), trans. Julian Green (c1955; rpt., New York, 1991).

<sup>30</sup>*Journal*, March 17, 1950.

<sup>31</sup>See Robert de Saint Jean, *Julien Green par lui-même* (Paris, 1967), 100-101.



Julien Green's play *Sud* was published in 1953, and translated into English two years later. Although it was a precursor to his later trilogy of Civil War novels in many of its themes, it remains one of the few works by Green in which he squarely confronted the issue of slavery. *Front cover of a 1991 edition of the play (New York: M. Boyars, 1991.)*

sexual love. Here again, *Sud* can be seen to anticipate the trilogy in which the heroine Elizabeth's sentimental story is woven into the fabric of events taking place during the Civil War.

Green's autobiography is characterized by the sense of communion that he established with his childhood. He gave it an important polyphonic dimension: in addition to his own voice as a

child, he also included the voice of his southern mother and even that of God, through his mother's reading of the Bible to her son. The first volume of his memoirs, *Partir avant le jour* (1963), shows a direct link between the American Civil War and his quest for identity.<sup>32</sup> It deals with Green's early years in Paris and his mother's stories of the war. (The feeling of exile and quest for identity remained with Green throughout his life to such an extent that he used the title *L'Expatrié* for the fourteenth volume of his *Journal*, which appeared in his ninetieth year.)<sup>33</sup> In the third volume of his autobiography, *Terre Lointaine*, which describes his student days in Virginia, he recorded almost all the key influences on him as a writer: his search for family roots, his love for the man whom he called Mark, his awareness of his homosexual tendencies and his discovery of the works of Hawthorne. Green's attempts in his novels and plays of the 1950s and 1960s to exorcise the puritanical elements of his southern upbringing led him, in his autobiography, to pinpoint the key moments in this struggle associated with a precise sense of time and place, the South of his student days.

We have thus seen Green the novelist, playwright and autobiographer of these years piecing together the isolated fragments of his existence with greater success than had the novelist of the 1930s and 1940s. The novelist was moved by nostalgia for the Deep South and a desire to liberate himself from the puritanical elements associated with it. The playwright also dealt with these preoccupations against the backdrop of the Civil War, while the autobiographer analyzed the effects of its aftermath on his early formation and traced the development of the awareness of his cultural and literary identity.

Green's last works of fiction, *Les Pays lointains* (1987), *Les Etoiles du Sud* (1989), and *Dixie* (1995), represented a return to his abandoned project of the 1930s to present a physical and moral portrait of the South. He retained the original title, *Les Pays lointains* (*The Distant Lands*), which had a particular resonance for Green.<sup>34</sup> It was the title of the piece by Franz Schumann that his sister Mary frequently played to him on the piano to express her

<sup>32</sup>See note 24.

<sup>33</sup>*L'Expatrié* (Paris, 1990).

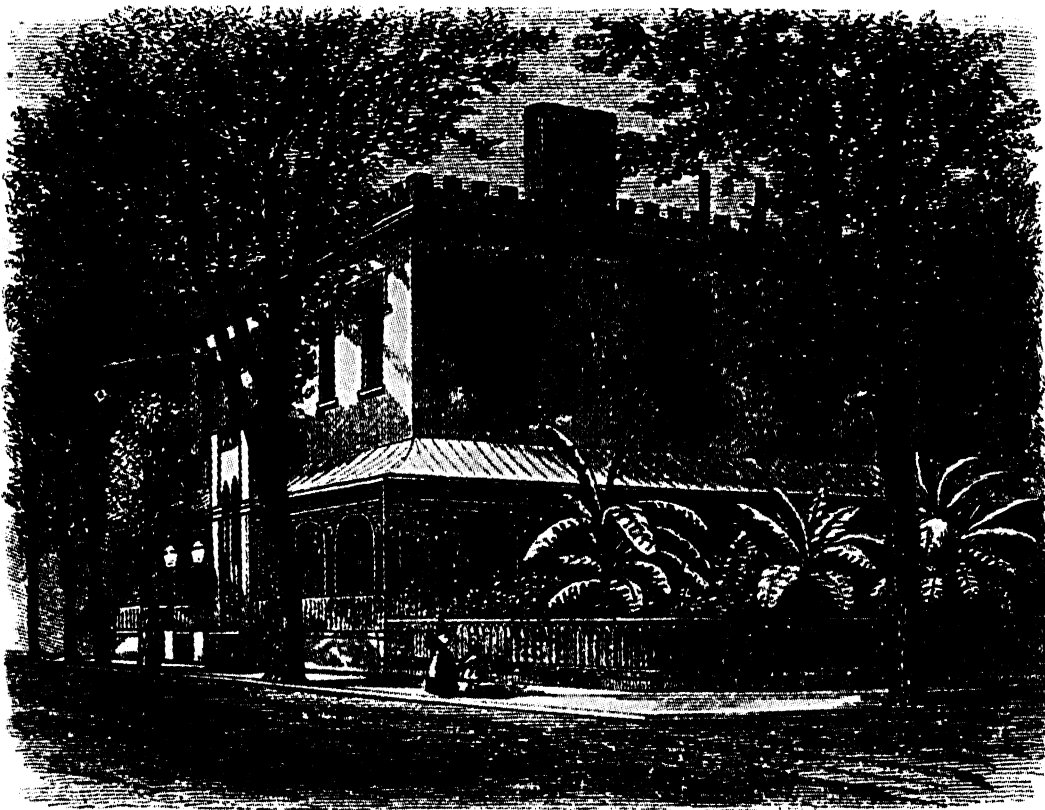
<sup>34</sup>See note 3.

nostalgia for the South. Green dedicated the first volume to his mother, "a daughter of the South." As in the autobiography, Green's consciousness of the polyphonic dimension of the work led him to include his mother's voice and the "sweet modulations" of southern voices.<sup>35</sup> The novel's heroine, Elizabeth, came to Georgia from England a decade prior to the Civil War. In a typical feature of the structure of Green's work she is "the one who comes from elsewhere," whose arrival upsets the way of life of those with whom she comes into contact. The novel deals with Elizabeth's *éducation sentimentale*, her love of one man, the somewhat noble and mysterious Jonathan, representing a form of idealized love, and her marriage to the more down-to-earth Ned, a marriage that turns out to be a form of imprisonment. As in many of Green's other works, the characters, Elizabeth and Jonathan in particular, are involved in an interminable struggle to reconcile love and sexuality. Like *Sud*, the volume ends with a duel. Unlike *Sud*, in which the Civil War is directly linked to a personal drama, Elizabeth's destiny is intimately linked to that of the Civil War. *Les Pays lointains* covers the period of 1850-1851 and captures the atmosphere of the antebellum South, a world of large plantations and elaborate receptions with slaves in attendance. Dimwood was dotted with magnolia and oak trees and resounded to the echo of the cicadas and tree frogs. The author evoked the exoticism of the large plantations with their long shaded avenues, the forests, mansions and squares of Savannah, the elegant balls, the tables set with elaborate silverware. This sensual feature of the novel, combined with a belief in ghosts and evil spirits, and the recounting of legends associated with various places, all serve to create a magical and otherworldly atmosphere that paves the way for the introduction of the fantastic dimension. This time, however, the cruelty associated with the fantastic in some of the earlier works is not prominent.

In this vast fresco of characters spanning three generations, children are depicted as being happy almost for the first time in Green's work. In one of many striking moments the children are led through a field in moonlight.<sup>36</sup> Through the mysterious and frightening darkness of Dimwood they are taken beneath the ave-

<sup>35</sup>"D'où viennent mes pays lointains," *Pléinade*, Vol. 7, 1693.

<sup>36</sup>*Les Pays lointains*, 294.



Julien Green's grandfather Charles settled in Savannah in the 1830s, and built this mansion on Madison Square just as the Civil War broke out. Known today as the Green-Meldrim House, it served as William T. Sherman's headquarters during his occupation of Savannah, and figures in several of Green's novels, including *Les Pays lointains*. Drawing from Edward King, *The Great South* (Hartford, Conn., 1875).

nue of oak trees whose trunks seemed to be participating "in a solemn procession." In a hushed atmosphere, which Elizabeth compares to that of a cathedral, the spellbound children and adults contemplate the moon and seem "to be transported into another world," with the adults experiencing a "childlike happiness." In this and other passages Green's poetic evocation of the innocence and spirituality of childhood reached a high point in his work.<sup>37</sup>

The exoticism is, however, charged with the possibility of destruction and the charm depicts that of a "refined but fragile society."<sup>38</sup> The happiness of this picturesque world is marred by the possible outbreak of the Civil War, prefigured at the end of this

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 219, 294, 322.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 199.

volume by the duel between Jonathan and Ned in which both die. Their deaths reveal the frailty of Elizabeth's world. She moved from Dimwood to Savannah and then to Virginia, birthplaces of Green's mother and father respectively. The decor is set with precision and readers of Green are able to recognize in the "house of the large meadow" a combination of the Green-Meldrim House in Savannah and "The Lawn" in Virginia in which his father lived. They are also able to recognize in the avuncular Charlie Jones a portrait of his grandfather, Charles Green.

The second volume, *Les Etoiles du Sud* (*The Stars of the South*), takes the reader from 1856 through the elections of 1860 to the first battle of Manassas, which took place on July 22, 1861, near the home of one of Green's grandfathers, and which represented a temporary victory for the Confederates. Green ended the novel on this note of Confederate victory almost as if he was reluctant to admit that the South had lost the war or as if he wanted to postpone its telling. The socio-political atmosphere is once again recreated with a certain precision. The plot centers on Elizabeth's relationship with and her marriage to the soldier Billy who was killed in the war and her relationship with her son Ned (whose father died in the first volume), but who is the reincarnation of Jonathan for Elizabeth. Ned also represents innocence and a tendency toward mysticism, characteristics associated with childhood in Green's works. Elizabeth's marriage to Billy is marked by a lack of emotional satisfaction. She constantly questions what is happening around her and the dramatic tension of the novel comes to center on her growing preoccupation with the invisible, her fear of insanity and her conviction that her visions and hallucinations are more "real" than the "reality" about her. Like many of Green's characters, she is in a state of daydream and her vision of the world becomes more and more fluid.

The trilogy's third volume, *Dixie*, covers the period from the end of 1861 until September 1862. Green described the main events of 1862, depicting the celebrations after the victory of Manassas, the victory of Confederate General P. T. G. Beauregard at Shiloh, the saving of Richmond and Kentucky from Union forces, General Lee's preparations to enter Maryland and Stonewall Jackson's projected march toward Harper's Ferry. Once again Green concluded his book after a Confederate victory but implied that



the victory was fragile. Green noted that the young boys in *Dixie* are ten and eleven years old (just as Green's mother did not admit to him until he had reached the age of twelve that the South had lost the war). Once again Green clearly wished to postpone openly admitting the defeat of the Confederates.

In the depiction of the war, Green presented the idealism and enthusiasm of the young southern men ready to die for their cause while the northern forces are depicted as paid mercenaries. Here he gave full vent to his passion for the South and reached the heart of his quest for identity. A scene in which Charlie Jones smuggles arms in a ship to the South and insists that the ship be searched in the presence of the British ambassador recalls Green's paternal grandfather's efforts to smuggle arms into Savannah and the searching of the ship in the presence of the ambassador, Lord Lyons, a friend of the Green family. The visit of the Union general to Charlie Jones recalls Green's grandfather receiving Sherman.

The accounts of the battle of Manassas at the end of the second volume and the celebrations at the beginning of the third are based on Green's father's recollection of these events. The incident in which young Ned risks his life in bringing an important message to Jeb Stuart recalls a similar incident in which Green's father risked his life as a young boy to bring a message to Stuart.<sup>39</sup> Several major battlefields were situated in proximity to the Green family's extensive property, thus enabling the author to recall with pride his family's passionate identification with the Confederate cause. As with Elizabeth's *éducation sentimentale*, her relationship with the soldier Joel, and his wounding in battle indicate that her destiny would continue to be intertwined with that of the war, insinuating the fragile nature of the victory of the South on which Green wished to end the novel. The author was so intent on presenting a comprehensive tableau of the characters of his ancestral South, many of whom are modeled on his own relations, that *The Distant Lands* is complete with genealogical tables that allow us to situate the vast fresco of characters in this saga. *The Stars of the South* is accompanied by drawings and maps. In addition to noting memories of stories told to him, discussions with relatives and consultation of family documents, Green also carried out extensive re-

<sup>39</sup>*Dixie*, 348. See also Julien Green, "Notre Chant du Sud," *Pléiade*, Vol. 7, 1692.

search before undertaking this project.<sup>40</sup> He had thus abandoned the discretion that led him to eliminate from *Mont-Cinère* direct references to incidents in the Civil War in which his family was involved and the reticence that prevented him from completing *Les Pays lointains* in the 1930s.

As in *Sud*, Green dealt with such historical and social questions (which showed evidence of vast reading on his part), as the problem of slavery, the disappearance of Indian tribes, child labor, economic growth and social inequality, the Democratic Convention of 1860, and the presidential election that same year.

The presentation of the war is characterized by a mixture of romanticism and realism. War is depicted as an expression of defense of the honor of the South. In the third volume, *Dixie*, in particular, he depicted the idealism and enthusiasm of the young recruits, as we have seen, with many of them cheating in regard to their age in order to go to war. Southern pride burst forth when Richmond was successfully defended: "Richmond was saved a second time. The South strutted."<sup>41</sup> He also captured the excitement of the news of the various victories throughout the South. However, the depiction of the idealism of the southern forces fighting to defend their honor found a corrective in the harsh reality of war. The victory at Manassas and the cries of "*Vive les soldats! Vive le Sud!*" are marred by the disappearance and death referred to later by Elizabeth when she condemns the "cursed War. . . . In taking away our men it crushes our hearts and bodies."<sup>42</sup> This sentiment is echoed in the various statements of the pacifist, Josh, who appears to have been Green's spokesman. The vivid treatment of war conveys the sense of tragedy of the fratricidal conflict that characterized his mother's stories, and left their mark on Green.

If the novels of the 1950s and 1960s were a form of exorcism of the puritanical elements of his southern upbringing, this later trilogy may be seen as an exorcism of the scar of the American Civil War that Green carried since childhood. In a later entry to his *Journal*, he stated that in writing *Dixie* he had liberated himself "from the War of Secession which I have carried within me since my childhood."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>A list of sixty titles consulted by Green in the course of the preparation of this trilogy is published in *Pléiade*, Vol. 7, 1929-32.

<sup>41</sup>*Dixie*, 339.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>43</sup>*Journal*, August 11, 1990.

Despite the emphasis on research, historical detail, and the careful creation of the atmosphere of the antebellum and Civil War South in this trilogy, it was the imagination and vision of Green the novelist that predominated. As he noted in a *Journal* entry, "Historical facts are not sufficient."<sup>44</sup> Having abandoned the project nearly fifty years earlier, Green was now confident that the visionary writer, which he admired in Hawthorne and Poe, would shape his physical and moral portrait of the South and elevate his work to the realm of art. After noting the documentation available to his father's library and examining various photographs, drawings and maps, he added that he had "put all that into *Les Pays lointains* but it was transformed by the dreamer who writes."<sup>45</sup>

History was present, Green the biographer was active, but, as in almost all his works, the real force lay in the interplay of the *réel* and the *irréel*, combined with a sense of mystery that became a leit-motif symbolizing sensuality. As was almost always the case with Green, descriptions of a starlit sky represent happiness. Against that atmosphere the typical themes of Green's work were played out—the struggle between body and soul, flesh and spirit and the anguish of the believer in God. The recurring notation of the mellifluous chant of the Negro slaves and the rendering of the Confederate war song, "Dixie," served to reinforce the poetic dimension of the work and to re-create "the song of the South," a phrase that Green was fond of using.

Such then was the evolution of the expatriate Green's effort to come to grips with his southern origins and the consequences for him of his family's involvement in the Civil War as part of his quest for identity. His last three novels, which have yet to receive serious critical attention, represent a climax in this quest. By means of deft characterization, psychological analysis, a skillful handling of plot, a poetic gift for the creation of images and symbols suggestive of a deeper order lying behind that of appearances, Green created in his novels a southern world that reflects the psychological and spiritual questions and anxieties with which readers of a troubled twentieth century can powerfully identify.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, October 13, 1934.

<sup>45</sup>Julien Green, "D'où viennent mes pays lointains," 1692.

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