

**NOTHING LIKE THE SOUTH:
AURORA GREENWAY – A BELLE IN EXILE**

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Abstract: *“My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” – says Shakespeare in his Sonnet CXXX. Indeed, the (American) South is the land of (un)ladylike belles. The stereotype has been challenged – at least in 20th century local fiction – by remarkable exceptions, founding themselves a canonic gallery: Mitchell’s Scarlett O’Hara, Faulkner’s Joanna Burden. Both face the post-Civil War American South as their (fatal) destination of exile, of ultimate test for their endurance. A more recently familiar (anti) Belle persona is Larry McMurtry’s protagonist, Aurora Greenway – a true leading lady of both a successful novel and a multiply-Oscarized film of the previous century latter quarter: Terms of Endearment. The deeper one belongs to the South (any South), the more bitterly one resents its (homely) fascination. This is what we hear in Quentin Compson’s final cry on the last page of Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!: “Why do you hate the South?” “I don’t hate it! I don’t hate it!”. The South (any South) is the predilect zone of exile: here is where we start with Ovid today. And so the South can only be the (waste) land of the (anti) Belle. Her eyes – we see – “are nothing like the sun”.*