

## MEMORY LANE

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by Richard H. Brown

AH, YES, I REMEMBER IT WELL... Valley Stream should know and cherish the rising star in the American literary field, Mary Gordon, for she is truly a Valley Stream product. Her mother is Anna Gagliano Gordon, of a family which has lived on Bismark Avenue from 'way back. (The 'gil' is soft -- one must have some Italian blood to get one's tongue properly around that syllable.) When I came to Valley Stream [1923], the Gagliano girls were popular favorites.

Anna became a legal secretary and for years ran the office of Brown and Herman, for she was a capable manager and not a bad lawyer herself, though she held no law degree and was never admitted to practice. But most successful law offices have one or more capable secretaries upon whom to rely, and she was, and is, one of the best. Rather late in her girlhood, she met, at a Catholic retreat, a gentlemen named David Gordon, and they were married. He was a scholarly, sensitive man, and they were happy during a brief married life, which, unhappily, ended in Mr. Gordon's illness and death not too many years after the birth of their only child, Mary.

Mary was brought up by her mother in their home on Bismark Avenue, some reflections of which can be seen in her writings. The home atmosphere was devoutly Roman Catholic, which marks Mary Gordon's style. She was a solemn, serious child, always devoted to books and reading; eventually she went to Columbia [Barnard]. She became a teacher at the college level, meanwhile doing some writing and living for a time in England.

Then, a few years ago (in 1978 to be exact), there was published a first novel under the title *Final Payments*, which climbed rapidly on the best seller lists and made the writer famous. It is widely regarded as something more than a 'popular novel', for it depicts an American Catholic society with more faithfulness and success than is found in the ordinary popular novel. More recently, in 1980, a second novel, *The Company of Women*, confirms the opinion that Mary Gordon writes from a comprehending mind and an understanding heart about a segment of American society which has not heretofore been treated with the skill that it warrants.

Meanwhile, Mary had married and is now Mary Gordon Cash. Her husband is a teacher of literature in the State University at New Paltz and not long since, a daughter arrived, named Anna Gordon Cash, after her grandmother. This little girl has something to live up to!