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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN THE FICTION OF EUDORA WELTY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

CHARLES WILLIAM HEMBREE

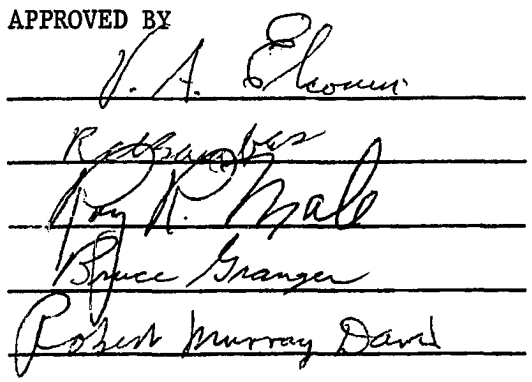
Norman, Oklahoma

1974

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN THE FICTION

OF EUDORA WELTY

APPROVED BY



DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN THE FICTION OF EUDORA WELTY

CHAPTER I

CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

i

The fiction of Eudora Welty, one of America's most distinguished living authors, provides an unusual opportunity for study of narrative technique. Her work contains a variety of narrative modes, and her methods of narration are precise instruments for developing structure, theme and characterization. Because of her constant care in utilizing narrative technique, one should understand her stories and novels in terms of their points of view, or the various perspectives toward the action that represent sources of consciousness. These sources of consciousness are sometimes characters and sometimes narrators detached from the setting, but they are always carefully wrought centers of interest over which the author has control in developing vision as part of her fiction.

This study is to analyze Miss Welty's methods of narration and demonstrate her achievement in the art of rendering consciousness in fiction, or developing point of view. It proceeds to examine narrative technique in all of her novels and most of her short stories, classifying these works in terms of the various types of perspectives developed in

them. A general thesis to be developed is that, while Miss Welty often secures the dramatic immediacy of "scenic" narration in her fiction, she also recognizes the valuable uses of a detached narrator. She thus frequently combines in her fiction the relatively modern method of scenic dramatization with traditional modes of observation and commentary that are afforded by maintaining a narrator outside the story.

The external narrator, detached from the world of the story, is more often used in Miss Welty's fiction than is the internal narrator, the narrator that is a character within the story. He is important to study in connection with Miss Welty's narrative approaches, however, and to understand him first will help to clarify later the rather complex resources available to the external narrator. Because, as a character, the internal narrator is dramatized as part of the setting, he differs considerably from the external narrator, who is never a character, and these two kinds of narrators represent the most basic distinction to be made in understanding Miss Welty's alternatives in narrative technique.

Since the internal narrator is a character, his point of view can represent only his impression of the action, which might be mistaken or confused. Moreover, if he has an auditor, someone listening to his narrative, then his narration is especially subject to question on the basis of motives--motives that might have led him to distort facts or misrepresent his impressions. Miss Welty has used internal narrators both with and without auditors, and this distinction is basic in classifying her approaches to internal narration. While the internal narrator is always a character, his act of narration is not dramatized within the story's setting unless he has an auditor. One might attribute motives to whatever

he says on the basis of his character as the story develops it, but one can hardly relate his act of narration to the story's setting unless he has an auditor, or else simply explains where he is and why he is reporting his story. Otherwise, the act of narration, while a rhetorical supplement to his characterization, is not a part of the story's setting, and this is the case with all of Miss Welty's internal narrators without auditors. Thus separate chapters are set up in the following study for internal narrators that do not have auditors and those that do. This distinction is important in analyzing Miss Welty's methods of narration, though not as important as the distinction between internal and external narration.

Because the external narrator is detached from the story's setting, only his impressions of it are dramatized; he has no "character" like that of the internal narrator, for he is nonexistent in terms of the space-time field of the story's world, called in this study the "fictional illusion."[1] Yet he senses and observes the fictional world of his narrative, and he sometimes does so through both his own perspective and those of selected characters in the story. When such a narrator, said to be "privileged," or cognizant of characters' thoughts, develops a character's perspective into a center of interest as a source of vision, that character is recognized in this study as a "central intelligence character." Sometimes the privileged external narrator observes this character's mind objectively, maintaining considerable distance between his own perspective and that of the character, yet at other times this narrator might represent action subjectively through the character's thoughts and impressions, lending his "voice" to the character's vision. Thus central intelligence

narration, which is one of Miss Welty's principal methods, is to be considered "objective" in mode if the narrator maintains enough distance between his own perspective and that of the central intelligence character that his own remains the immediate source of vision toward the fictional world. The method is to be considered "subjective," however, if the distance between the two perspectives diminishes to the point that the character himself, through his perspective, becomes the immediate source of vision toward the fictional world.[2] In that event, the "center of consciousness" in the story is said to have "shifted" from the external narrator to the central intelligence character, since he actually becomes the story's practical point of view.[3] Some modern writers, such as William Faulkner, have turned subjective central intelligence narration into the method known as "stream of consciousness," but Miss Welty's characteristic approach is to avoid the extreme reduction of distance between the narrator and the central intelligence character that is necessary for stream of consciousness to occur. Such a reduction in that distance allows the character's private thoughts and inward moods to determine even the rhythm and syntax of narration, and none of Miss Welty's central intelligence characters ever achieves that measure of control over the narrator's voice.[4]

Since, however, some of these central intelligence characters do gain control over the narrator's vision, it is convenient to recognize a distinction between the "voice" and the "vision" in subjective central intelligence narration. The voice always belongs to the narrator, and in all of Miss Welty's methods of narration except subjective central intelligence there is no practical distinction between voice and vision, since

the narrator's perspective in those other methods provides the immediate vision of the fictional world throughout the story. Yet, when a central intelligence character does assume control of that vision while not actually becoming the story's narrator, the "split" between the story's voice and vision suggests another major distinction that is important to this study. That is the distinction between "primary" perspectives and "secondary" perspectives. A primary perspective is one that the voice of narration represents as the narrator's, while a secondary perspective is one that is disconnected from the voice of narration, belonging to a non-narrating character. Thus primary perspectives will always represent narrators, but since narrators can be characters, primary perspectives can be either external or internal. Secondary perspectives, on the other hand, will always represent characters, although not all characters will necessarily have secondary perspectives: only those who are not narrators will. Yet secondary perspectives can still become centers of consciousness in privileged external narration, and whenever they do the narrative method by which they do so is subjective central intelligence narration.

Not all of Miss Welty's external narrators are privileged, but even those that restrict themselves to an ordinary degree of cognizance can still develop secondary perspectives (though these can never become true centers of consciousness). The distinction between privileged and restricted external narration is another important one to make in analyzing Miss Welty's narrative technique: in this study, secondary perspectives in restricted external narration are called "conjectural" perspectives, because their so-called vision is only implied by dialogue or conjectured by the narrator himself. Since the restricted external narrator is not

cognizant of a character's thoughts, they can occur only as matter of inference in restricted external narration. If, however, as sometimes happens, a conjectural perspective becomes a center of interest as a source of implied or conjectured vision, then that perspective is identified in this study as a "conjectural intelligence perspective" (to show its analogy with the central intelligence perspective, the focally centered secondary perspective in privileged external narration). Of the two principal methods that Miss Welty uses to develop conjectural intelligence perspectives--those of dialogue and conjecture by the narrator (or "conjectural narration")--the former is the one that she has used more frequently in her fiction. The use of dialogue to imply a character's vision without "going into" his mind is certainly no innovation in fiction at the time Miss Welty begins her career, but in some of her stories she deserves some credit for devising fresh means of developing secondary perspectives through dialogue, and a few of these means will be examined in a later chapter. Yet she deserves even more credit for originality in refinements upon the methods of conjectural narration, and one such method that will also be examined later in this study is that of "subjunctivity." In conjectural narration, subjunctivity is the use of the subjunctive mood to express thought that is only conjectured or attributed to a character.[5] Miss Welty has used subjunctivity sparingly though skillfully in her fiction: with it, she has upon rare instances caused the fictional illusion to appear in the form of conjectured impressions supposedly present in a character's mind, though in no way known to be there. Moreover, she has also used conjectural narration upon a few occasions to develop "collective perspectives," or conjectural perspectives of whole groups, to whom

collective ideas or impressions are attributed. The collective perspective in Miss Welty's fiction will likewise receive later study, along with subjunctivity and the conjectural intelligence perspective.

The following study of narrative technique in Miss Welty's fiction will proceed from internal to external, and also from restricted to privileged, narration. Consequently, internal narration is the subject of the next two chapters, followed by chapters devoted to restricted external and privileged external narration, in that order. During the course of this study it will become apparent that an important development in all three of these major approaches is that of a "comprehensive perspective." The comprehensive perspective of any story takes in more than any one character in the story could every know. It is the perspective that the reader eventually adopts as the basis for interpreting a story, although Miss Welty does not leave its formulation up to subjective responses by readers. Whether the comprehensive perspective is only implied, as in internal narration, or made concrete, as in external narration, it is developed within the story, incorporated into it through irony or convention. Irony is the means of achieving it in internal narration, where it can arise out of the ironic distance between a narrator's overtly limited understanding of the story and a superior understanding of it that the reader recognizes. Such a superior understanding is usually implied by obvious faults or mistakes on the part of the narrator as observer or commentator. This "weak" kind of internal narrator is often "transparent," for a reader can "see through" his narrative to a better understanding of it, and no doubt of the narrator himself, than this narrator will probably ever have. Thus, the comprehensive perspective in internal narration arises out of the

narrator's ironic limitations as they are revealed in his own narration. It develops differently, however, in external narration, for the external narrator is not a character and therefore has no such ironic limitations. The comprehensive perspective in external narration is usually identical with the narrator's perspective, for the age-old conventions of external narration give the narrator certain advantages over characters where vision and insight are concerned. Since he is detached from the story world and exists only as a convention in a sort of "narrative illusion," he is not bound by physical law and is therefore able to observe more, even if he is restricted toward the characters' minds, than any one of these characters could observe. Furthermore, he sometimes exploits the privilege of cognizance of characters' minds to increase his range of perception above that of any one character in the story. As an agent for the comprehensive perspective, then, the external narrator often serves as a device for unifying his story's structure: he sometimes assimilates several characters' perspectives into his own while maintaining his own as a means of coordinating and integrating these characters' insights. Their collective vision thus becomes a part of the narrator's overall perspective, and his bringing of several sources of vision from the story into one concentrated focus thus creates both a comprehensive perspective and a structural center for the story.

ii

The concepts and categories that have been explained in this chapter form the tools and methods of the following study of Miss Welty's narrative technique. Before proceeding to her works of fiction, however, it is well to consider some remarks that Miss Welty has made in one of

her essays, Place in Fiction,[6] upon subjects relevant to her methods of narration. She suggests in this essay a close relationship between the fictional material and the narrator, and another between the narrator and the author. She seems to regard the narrator's perspective, especially when it is external, as an idealized authorial perspective, defining the author's role as an artist and crystallizing his relationship to the story material, without ever becoming a subjective self-portrait of the author.

Miss Welty's design in Place in Fiction is to show the importance of place as a critical concept based on locale, and her method is to analyze its importance in terms of three of its significant relationships. She first considers the relationship of place to "the raw materials of writing." Then she considers its significance in relation to "the writing itself--the achieved world of appearance, through which the novelist has his whole say and puts his whole case." Concerning this relationship, Miss Welty suggests a transformation of raw material into a unified form of articulation for the artist's vision. Finally she considers the question of place in connection with the writer himself, and it is in this portion of the essay that she discusses her concept of point of view. There she regards it professionally, from a writer's perspective.

Introducing the respect for place a writer should have, Miss Welty says that "place is where he has his roots, place is where he stands; in his experience out of which he writes it provides the base of reference, in his work the point of view." Later, in developing this idea, she defines point of view as the resolution of the question of place in fiction in relation to the writer:

> Place, to the writer at work, is seen in a frame. Not an empty frame, a brimming one. Point of view is a sort of burning-glass, a product of personal experience and time; it is burnished with feelings and sensibilities, charged from moment to moment with the sun-points of imagination. It is an instrument--one of intensification; it acts, it must accurately choose, combine, superimpose upon, blot out, shake up, alter the outside world for one absolute purpose, the good of his story. To do this, he is always seeing double, two pictures at once in his frame, his and the world's, a fact that he constantly comprehends; and he works best in a state of constant and subtle and unfooled reference between the two. It is his clear intention--his passion, I should say--to make the reader see only one of the pictures--the author's--under the pleasing illusion that it is the world's; this enormity is the accomplishment of a good story. I think it likely that at the moment of the writer's highest awareness of, and responsiveness to, the "real" world, his imagination's choice (and miles away it may be from actuality) comes closest to being infallible for his purpose. For the spirit of things is what is sought. No blur of inexactness, no cloud of vagueness, is allowable in good writing; from the first seeing to the last putting down, there must be steady lucidity and uncompromise of purpose. I speak, of course, of the ideal.
>
> One of the most important things the young writer comes to see for himself is that point of view <u>is</u> an instrument, not an end in itself, that it is useful as a glass, and not as a mirror to reflect a dear and pensive face. Conscientiously used, point of view will discover, explore, see through--it may sometimes divine and prophesy. Misused, it turns opaque almost at once and gets in the way of the book. And when the good novel is finished, its cooled outside shape, what Sean O'Faolain has called "the veil of reality," has all the burden of communicating that initial, spontaneous, overwhelming, driving charge of personal inner feeling that was the novel's reason for being. The measure of this representation of life corresponds most tellingly with the novel's life-expectancy: whenever its world of outside appearance grows dim or false to the eye, the novel has expired (PF, n. pag.).

Miss Welty states in this passage that point of view is the author's means of objectifying his whole mind as an intensifying, ordering and clarifying agent of the world that he envisions. She considers it necessary that the artist filter his really personal image out of the fictional illusion, however, for if he does not the reader will see both of those pictures that the artist has seen: his own and the world's. The artist's task is to make the reader see only the artist's picture, while under the illusion that it is the world's. For this task to succeed, the artist must reveal

himself in his work only as his picture expresses the essence of his mind at work, and the reader must be able to sense the artist's act of creation, originally a process in the real world, only as it lingers as distilled energy behind the fictional world. Thus, the successful artist uses point of view to achieve a spiritual presence in his fictional world in terms of O'Faolain's "veil of reality," for unless his act of creation reflects upon that fictional world, it is just a reproduction of the world's picture and not true art at all. Essential to true art, Miss Welty says, is the "constant and subtle and unfooled reference" between the artist's picture and the world's, for true art must bear the stamp of this reference, the imaginative interpretation of life that it implies. The artist must therefore make his creative act be felt within the veil of reality as the tension of that constant reference, inherent in the "cooled outside shape" that must communicate it. Otherwise, point of view becomes a "mirror" reflecting the artist's own "dear and pensive face," and then the reader sees both pictures.

Miss Welty thus considers point of view as the means by which the artist gives birth to his work out of his struggle to create, the universal endeavor to create order out of disorder, design out of chaos, meaning out of confusion. The two pictures are the opposing terms of this dichotomy, and the artist's picture acquires its tone and texture from his mode of refining of the world's picture into his own. Yet he must transform the world's picture without allowing it to lose the reverberation of his own struggle to create, for this echo makes the fictional illusion believable as an image of life and thus allows the reader to experience the illusion that the artist's picture is actually the world's. It is finally because

of her conception of point of view as an "instrument"--only a means of transforming raw material into art--that Miss Welty does not make use of editorial omniscience, or the narrative approach that assumes a fixed moral attitude toward one's story material. She recognizes that for the artist, as for the non-artist, there is no moral omniscience toward the world; there are only the two pictures and the artist's constant reference between them. She writes this, in fact, near the end of her essay:

> We see that point of view is hardly a single, unalterable vision as the impression would be in editorial omniscience, but a profound and developing one of great complexity. The vision itself may move in and out of its material, shuttle-fashion, instead of being simply turned on it, like a telescope on the moon. Writing is an expression of the writer's own peculiar personality, could not help being so. Yet in reading great works one feels that the finished piece transcends the personal. All writers great and small must sometimes have felt that they have become part of what they wrote even more than it still remains a part of them (PF, n. pag.).

The specific thesis of this whole study of Miss Welty's fiction is very simply that in her fiction--all of it--Miss Welty succeeds in devising point of view according to the conception of it that she states here, in Place in Fiction: a "profound and developing . . . [vision] of great complexity . . . [moving] in and out of its material."

Footnotes

[1]cf. David Lodge, Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 39-43. In his discussion "Language and Fictional Illusion," Lodge cites an article by Roy Pascal that discusses a contention by Dr. Kate Hamburger. She has argued that "tense in the novel has certain peculiar features which denote the fictional nature of the novelistic world" (Lodge, p. 39). Lodge explains Dr. Hamburger as saying that in fiction the "epic preterite," or past tense of most narrative fiction (which can refer to present or future action), denotes "a fictive universe outside real time and place" (pp. 39-40). Although Lodge agrees with Pascal that Dr. Hamburger's "attempt to classify works of literature on the basis of tense raises more problems than it solves," Lodge grants that her argument is useful in reminding one that "the fictional world is a verbally created world, not to be confused with the real world" (p. 40). Lodge then says that the novelist's "circumstantial matching of fiction with fact" is a convention, for two reasons: "(1) Because, no matter how many circumstantial details the novelist supplies, no matter how carefully he matches his fictional events with the accidents of historical time and place, he can never reproduce the multiplicity, 'givenness' and 'open-endedness' of actual experience . . . [and] (2) Because, however many 'true facts' there may be in a novel, what the novel states as a whole cannot be verified" (p. 42). Lodge then concludes that "the circumstantial particularity of the novel is thus a kind of anti-convention. It attempts to disguise the fact that a novel is discontinuous with real life" (p. 42).

[2]See Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 203. Discussing sources of commentary, Booth helps clarify the difference between objective and subjective central intelligence narration. He notes the "special difficulties" caused by "mood-setting commentary" and then says this about the opening passage of Melville's "Benito Cereno" (a passage of objective central intelligence narration): "Melville does not try to convince us that Captain Delano himself felt the foreshadowing of deeper shadow to come." Here Booth suggests that Melville's narrator, not the character, is the true source of vision in that opening passage; had it been the character, instead of the narrator, there would have been a different mood developed, and Melville's method would have been subjective rather than objective. Either way, however, Melville's method in the passage would be central intelligence narration, for he brings Captain Delano's perspective into focus even as the narrator looks beyond it.

[3]The concepts of the center of consciousness and the central intelligence character are based upon certain discussions in Henry James' collection of Critical Prefaces, The Art of the Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), with an Introduction by Richard P. Blackmur. In his Introduction Blackmur notes "The Plea for a Fine Central Intelligence" (p. xviii) and "The Commanding Centre as a Principle of Composition" (p. xxiii), citing James' treatments of them in Volumes I, II, VII, X, XI, XIX, XXI and XXIII of his New York Edition. Also, Leon Edel cites James' treatment of "The Vessel of Consciousness" in the Preface to The Princess Casamassima, reprinting an excerpt from that Preface on the subject in The Future of the Novel (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1956), pp. 54-60.

[4]See Robert Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1959), pp. 23-61. Chapter 2, "The Techniques," helps to clarify both similarities and differences between stream of consciousness and subjective central intelligence narration. Although Miss Welty does not use stream of consciousness narration, she comes rather close to it in both "The Burning" (in external narration) and "The Whole World Knows" (in internal narration).

[5]See Booth, p. 184. Booth cites some modern uses of conjecture in fiction to preserve an objective tone in spite of commentary designed to influence the reader. He also discusses the use of the subjunctive mood to imply uncertain judgment while nonetheless keeping tight control over the reader's moral responses: "This device," Booth writes, "may for some readers serve general realistic demands--it is 'as if' the author really shared the human condition to the extent of not knowing for sure how to evaluate these events. But morally the effect is still a rigorous control over the reader's own range of judgment."

[6]Place in Fiction (New York: House of Books, Ltd., 1957); originally published in The South Atlantic Quarterly, 55, No. 1 (January 1956), 57-72. Cited hereafter as PF in the text.

CHAPTER II

INTERNAL NARRATION WITHOUT AN AUDITOR

i

This chapter shall consider Eudora Welty's narrative technique and development of point of view in those few stories by her that are told by an internal narrator without an auditor. In each of these stories, "A Memory," from A Curtain of Green, and "Circe" and "Kin," from The Bride of the Innisfallen, the narrative voice is consistently that of a character who affords the primary perspective from within the fictional illusion. This mode of narration gives these stories self-contained structures or fields of vision wherein there is no need to impute overt artificiality of access to account for the visional field. Yet, because the narrative perspective is limited to ordinary human perception, a reader must at first be prepared to question the reliability of the narrator's account touching everything in the story.

To understand a basic quality of internal narration without an auditor, let us consider the fictional illusion of the first story to be discussed, "A Memory." Judging from the formality of tone found in this story, as well as from certain explanatory asides the narrator makes (" . . . this I put down as my observation at that time"; and "I must add, and this is not so strange . . . ."), a reader can conclude that part of

the fictional illusion is that the narrator is carefully designing deliberate communication. This conclusion can indeed be made for all internal narration unless it becomes interior monologue that is overtly private thought. However, in "A Memory" as well as the other two stories of this chapter, the exact context of the narrator's act of communication is never made clear, that is, its time, place and "audience" are never dramatized or accounted for. Furthermore, this indefiniteness as to the context of communication also creates some ambiguity as to the medium of language--that is, an uncertainty as to whether it should be understood as speech or writing. In the absence of notations that would identify it as epistolary or diary or even notebook-like content, one might legitimately conclude that it is speech; however, the significant point here would seem to be that in the stories about to be discussed, at any rate, this question of the medium of language does not seem to have any real bearing upon the structure or meaning of the stories.[1]

Because of the undefined context of the narrator in the three stories of this chapter, what seems focal is not the act of narration itself but rather the substance of the account. Of course an exception to this statement might occur where it could be shown that the account is rendered in such a way, or that it contains such information, as to give the very process of formulation of the narrative an implicit reflection of the narrator's inward self. What these statements suggest, though, is that any effort to identify a motive for narration in a story told by an internal narrator without an auditor must fail for lack of apparent grounds, except on one ground alone--that of self-centered or self-contained motivation pertinent to private rather than outward, social experience. Likewise,

then, in these stories any effort to argue for deliberate narrative distortion of "facts" must rest on grounds of self-deception or finally on none at all. These characteristics of narrative context, language medium and motive for narration are all basic conditions for internal narration without an auditor.

Furthermore, since point of view is actually a dynamic process, it undergoes development as does character and theme. In external narration this process is the development of a complete, comprehensive perspective through which the whole action is ultimately to be seen. This kind of perspective usually grows out of a unification of multiple individual perspectives into a designed, coordinated field of vision; however, this development is not character development as such (except with secondary perspectives), for an external narrator is not a character. On the other hand, though, in the internally narrated stories of this chapter the development of point of view as complete primary perspective is intrinsic to character development insofar as the narrator's perspective reflects an aspect of his character in the story. Of course even in these stories each narrator is "looking back" over an experience, and his perspective itself does not undergo any growth or restriction through the process of narrative formulation that coincides with such growth or restriction of mind in character development. Dramatically speaking, then, the primary perspectives in these stories are all static. Character development that does occur to the narrator as a character is yet represented through a perspective already fully developed at the outset of the story. Still, a reader does not acquire a full understanding of that fully developed perspective until the story's conclusion, so that, because the narrative perspective is part of the fictional

illusion, the development of the complete "portrait" of the static point of view is a part of the reader's dynamically coming to "know" the narrator as a character.

ii

In Miss Welty's "A Memory," the fictional illusion is focused around an episode in the young childhood of an apparently seasoned adult female narrator. The story opens as though the narrator were going simply to describe this episode, but rather quickly she appears to digress off into self-analytical commentary and other memories from the same period of her life. With some appearance of random association at first, this pattern of narration comes subtly at length to suggest interconnections between the central or seminal recollection, having to do with witnessing a group of bathers in a park, and other memories and observations. The core of Miss Welty's story seems to be the way in which these memories cluster together in the narrator's mind around what she has brought forth as pertinent information within their context about her own nature at that time.

"A Memory" develops in terms of two curiously related though distinct perspectives. They both belong to the same person, and one of the most interesting questions about the story is just how psychologically different the two perspectives actually are from one another. The primary perspective belongs to the adult narrator, but she is also her own central character, to whom, finally, a secondary perspective is introduced. The narrator dramatically recreates her mind as it was when she was a young child, and through her memory of impressions and images of one event at that time, this recreated mind finally opens up as a secondary perspective, for the actual center of consciousness of the story seems to shift from

present to past--from adult to child--and thus from primary to secondary perspective as the episode in the park begins to develop in dramatic terms with imagery conveyed with a sense of immediacy.

The narrator seems to be trying to represent her mind as it was when she was a young child by both telling and showing, to use Booth's terms again. She is perhaps aware that she is making the park episode a representative example of her most fundamental imaginative traits at that time; she does this by connecting that episode with her most vital inward experience during the same period of her life--the "love" affair with the remote yet indwelling "friend" that extended before and after the episode. However, what the narrator might not be so aware of is that by not putting these traits into any perspective broader or more "comprehensive" than the one with which they were first represented to the child's mind, she is suggesting probably her most fundamental character traits throughout her whole life--implying them perhaps unknowingly and in such a way as to show starkly both their most supportive strengths and their most restrictive weaknesses.

Miss Welty's conception of her narrator in "A Memory" is perhaps clarified somewhat by a perceptive section of Ruth Vande Kieft's study Eudora Welty.[2] In a chapter entitled "The Weather of the Mind," this expert Welty critic defines what she terms this story's "philosophical weather" and places the story within a scheme of psychic atmosphere that she offers to order a segment of Miss Welty's fiction. This ordering is made according to a pattern of shifting perspectives toward opposite sets of values. From her discussion one becomes aware of the importance of tone in making these perspectives recognizable and of the importance of point of

view in establishing the necessary tone:

> In one kind of philosophical "weather" and according to one kind of light, the bright objects, the positive values, could be grouped to suggest order, form, control, rationality, discipline, knowledge, predictability: all these would provide the larger context favorable to meaning and purpose in life, to security and protection, to the flourishing of the prime value of love. Opposed to these values would be chance, confusion, disorder, chaos, catastrophe, oblivion: all these would make for exposure and vulnerability, they would be hostile to meaning and purpose in life, they would tend to discourage if not destroy love, and they would eventually be associated with death itself.[3]

Within this context of feeling Miss Vande Kieft places "A Memory": ". . . the vulgar woman who rudely exposes her breasts . . . is an active though unconscious embodiment of the destructive principle of chaos, as the child is the embodiment of the principle of order."[4] This observation of course raises the question, "Embodiments for whom?" This question has to be answered on an immediate level given by the fictional illusion: its answer is the one to whom vulgarity and rudeness so appear, or, the narrator. Miss Vande Kieft is only observing their appearance to the narrator. They appear so to the child, and it would seem that they have continued to appear so to the adult, who offers impressions unchanged from those of the child. Since these imputed embodiments of negative moral qualities are parts of the fictional illusion, Miss Welty is not necessarily their spokesman, and point of view is vital to understanding the meaning of these appearances within their narrative context. To give these appearances a dramatic setting with a concrete human background is the initial function of the narrator: as they help to characterize her, she renders them a part of the conflict within one human being arising out of that person's predilections for form over formlessness. As such, they become tentative and subjective as they become "realistically" drawn.

Yet because relatively few stories by Miss Welty are told in internal narration, one can reasonably look for a deeper meaning to the narrator's function than this rather obvious and general one. As Miss Vande Kieft's passage continues, the real function of this narrator emerges with increased clarity. The passage goes on to show Miss Welty to comprehend another way of looking at these values, and what it shows about the narrator of "A Memory" is that her positive sense of order has also a power of moral negation that isolates her from a rich fullness of human contact at the physical level. This fullness is implicit in the terms used below:

> Now as if the light and weather had shifted over Miss Welty's shoulder, we find her engaged, in another set of stories, in painting similar motifs, but with a totally different "atmospheric" or value scheme. In these stories we find the bright tones of discipline, order, control, and rationality transmuted to the darker tones of repression, rigidity, or dullness; and the disordered, which in the process of metamorphosis goes through a stage of the ambiguously valued disorderly, at last pops up delightfully as the spontaneous, unconfined, wild, pagan, irreverent, irrepressible. By this changed light, chance and the unpredictable become surprise; abandon loses its former connotations of desolation and decay, and shines in the bright rays of carelessness and freedom; exposure and vulnerability dissolve with fear, and are displaced by challenge, mischievousness, and good-humored insolence. Glad welcome of the unknown supplants fear of the unknown; gloom is routed by joy; and all the tragic limitations of life and love, the conditions which threatened their destruction, have become opportunities favorable to their flourishing.[5]

The fullness of experience suggested here is also suggested in "A Memory," although it does not occur to the narrator. In her intensity of seeing only one way, she becomes, both as child and as adult recreating the child, a foil to another way of seeing what she has observed in the park. Her mode of observation casts the kind of light favorable to order and control, but the other kind is implicit through the sensory imagery of the park scene that contrasts so sharply and violently with the way the narrator has imaged her childhood: as one of dual roles of dreamer and observer.

This other light serves a view alien and even subversive to the narrator's but it grows the more implicit the more heavy-handedly the narrator treats the scene in terms of her own way of seeing it. This is so because contrast and irony are at work in the fabric of her description, which says more with images than she intends to say. Finally she documents so clearly a subjective impression of the park scene that its restricted scope becomes apparent; the irony then suggests the beauty of a broader, more sympathetic view, even in spite of the other beauty of the narrator's cherished love. If the sheer activeness of the group of bathers contrasts with the dormant passivity of the child, so also does the vibrant appeal of their spontaneous contact with each other contrast with the degrading description the narrator gives of it. Here is an ironic contrast between language and imagery, and it proves one way of developing a perspective set off from a first-person narrator.

Miss Vande Kieft finds all of her examples for the first value scheme in Miss Welty's earliest collection of stories, A Curtain of Green, which contains "A Memory." On the other hand, the critic finds her examples for the second, opposing scheme from later volumes. Perhaps this suggests some chronological progression in Miss Welty's thought and theme. However, at any rate, her technique of handling the irony of implication in word-image contrasts in "A Memory" suggests that Miss Welty was already cognizant of such a double-vision at the writing of this story, and also that she sensed that subjective involvement of a first-person narrator might best imply the comprehensive objectivity demanded to understand that vision.

The narrative context of "A Memory" is an excellent model of ironic internal narration: although the narrator cannot avoid conveying images that appeal to an activistic and spontaneous regard for animal vitality, the language she uses to represent the park episode is calculated in her mind to cover the action with abstract contempt. If one goes further to consider the language and imagery with respect to other elements--character, symbolism and theme--the narrative context reveals its central function in controlling the story's whole organic structure.

The structural principle of narrative distance is especially relevant to point of view in "A Memory."[6] Structure includes the temporal and spatial distances between perspectives as well as the moral or intellectual, and these distances are all factors in the subjective construction of the fictional illusion in internal narration, where all perspectives are "subjective" insofar as they all belong to characters and not to a narrator outside the story world. Relating structure and distance in "A Memory" to its language and whole narrative context will exemplify the thematic complexity Miss Welty achieves in that story through narrative irony.

In internal narration structure is a commentary upon the narrator's relationship to his material. Actually, the structure of the fictional illusion is an image of the way the narrator relates himself to the experience he is recounting, and the material so arranged is often a key to the narrator's concept of his identity. In "A Memory" there are several structural movements around a single narrative situation. This situation affords a central structural device in the unique two-in-one narrative perspective, or perspective-within-a-perspective. It is a simple though subtle alignment of vision around one person at two different periods of

life. This alignment means that the narrator's primary perspective "recalls" a true secondary perspective, one belonging to herself as a child. Interestingly, the adult's involvement within her own material causes a shift in center of consciousness to the secondary perspective. Moreover, since the secondary perspective belongs to the same person, a kind of central intelligence reporting occurs within a framework of tentatively unreliable internal narration.

The first structural movement is that of the narrator toward moral isolation, as Wayne Booth defines it in The Rhetoric of Fiction.[7] This movement begins as the primary perspective develops without an auditor and culminates in the second part of the story as the secondary perspective becomes the center of consciousness. The narrator of "A Memory" has no moral support inside or outside the fictional illusion, no one connected with the story that backs up what she says or believes. This condition becomes a structural movement as it intensifies through the narrator's adopting subjectively her childhood viewpoint and thus causing a shift in center of consciousness to secondary perspective. That is, the more drawn into herself the narrator becomes, the more she fails to keep up even a facade of detachment from her subject matter, the more she becomes morally isolated. Wayne Booth feels that moral isolation can work to gain the reader's sympathy, but he also feels that this can happen only when the narrator is close to what he calls the "norms of the work." By this he means the moral standards, roughly. Perhaps whatever measure of redemption goes beyond the sympathy Miss Welty's implicit double vision obtains for the narrator (which is a great deal) derives from this condition of moral isolation, for the narrator is close to one set of moral norms, though far

from a coordinate set (that of the bathers) and ultimately far, too, from an overriding view, the double vision as integrated insight--the authorial view behind this internally narrated story.

The next structural movement in "A Memory" controlled by narration is the shift from primary to secondary perspective. While describing the scene of the bathers the narrator is a virtual captive of her childhood sense of things, and as she slips into the perspective of the past that she only projected at first, even her voice seems almost to belong to it. This movement occurs in conjunction with the intensification of moral isolation, and thus the first two structural developments in the story characterize the narrator and her perspective as first isolated within herself and then taken back in time.

Other structural movements occur as results of the shift in center of consciousness. When in primary perspective narration the narrator takes mostly a summary view of things, digressing and commenting to give a direct self-analysis, which seems to be her real concern. But the adult is no longer trying to understand herself when the center of consciousness shifts to the child's perspective; here the focus changes from summary to scene.[8] This means that the impression of the fictional illustion is dramatized, and of course this movement helps give the child's perspective the immediacy it needs to operate as a center of consciousness. Moreover, as the summary section is developed, there is a shift in scope from a general memory of a characteristic period of childhood, based on the vivid park episode only briefly introduced at first, to specific memories within the context of the general memory. These are the memories connected with the "boyfriend" the narrator loved as a child: her memories of having touched his wrist and

of having seen his nose bleed at school. It finally comes out that the wrist-brushing incident was a memory present to the narrator on the morning she remembers being in the park and watching the bathers:

> As I lay on the beach that sunny morning, I was thinking of my friend and remembering in a retarded, dilated, timeless fashion the incident of my hand brushing his wrist. It made a very long story.[9]

This development toward memories-within-a-memory prepares for the emerging perspective of the child as a living, dramatic, complex center of consciousness by heightening its psychological activity.

This movement facilitates the shift in center of consciousness from primary to secondary perspective insofar as it records the narrator's tendency to digress. This tendency is a sign of her personal involvement in telling of her childhood experience. This involvement brings out the truth behind the adult's appearance, during the summary part of the story, of being detached, objective and studiously critical of herself as a young child. In this movement from proclaimed objectivity to demonstrable subjectivism, from attempted or affected detachment to overt involvement, the structure reflects ironically upon point of view. While evidently trying to move, or appear to move, in one direction, the narrator falls into another, and the personal involvement with her childhood mind counters hope that the story will afford much objectivity toward the child or what the child saw in the park. The summary section affords some appearance of objectivity, but with the shift in center of consciousness this appearance ceases. The child's vision is recorded subjectively and uncritically. Furthermore, the language the narrator chooses to recreate the park scene suggests the extent to which moral maturity and objectivity are lacking in this report.

However, before the shift in center of consciousness the narrator does prepare the reader to understand her motives for using that derogatory language. She does this through her limitedly accurate self-analysis, and its scope and import need to be examined.

Characterization and narrative perspective work together in internal narration even more closely than in external. Although they are still technically distinct elements, each one is constantly helping to develop the other. Yet, because of the condition of unreliability in internal narration, overt self-characterization should be subjected to some reservation unless reliability is established through action or rhetoric in Booth's sense. On the other hand, if the action or rhetoric should at length prove that the narration is not trustworthy with respect to self-characterization, then it should be replaced by other sources of information unless the character is to remain completely ambiguous. Sometimes such other sources may be only indirect or implicit; sometimes they may be sources of deliberate ambiguity. In "A Memory" the narrator becomes literally but not morally trustworthy as a spokesman for herself. She confirms her own factual account of herself by the substance of her recollection and, more subtly, by the manner of her relating of it: the substance cannot be questioned without destroying the story material itself (there would be little gained by treating it as pure fantasy), and the reader observes the relating of it first hand (whatever a narrator in internal narration does in the act of narration can be known as certainly as if it were omnisciently reported). However, her interpretation of her character is somewhat negated by a source other than herself. It is true that the narrator does not become too dogmatic about her love, but she does about

the bathers, and the implications cast by the whole story as an art form suggest the inadequacy of her self-interpretation as far as it goes and the probable gross unfairness of her opinion of the bathers. The notion of the "whole story as an art form" is necessary to explain the fact that the narrator is an artificial rhetorical device operating within a rhetorical framework larger than she and functioning to render commentary beyond her own scope of vision. Interpretation of the narrator's character comes with the confirmation of the literal elements of her account; it comes with the imagery that says more than the language--that commands admiration for the vitality and gregariousness of the closely-knit group of bathers right in the face of the language that imputes hatred and "foolish intent to insult each other" to the bathers' motives. The moral interpretation of the narrator is thus a source of irony insofar as the narrator has been seeking to be or appear detached from her material, and also insofar as it contradicts the narrator's sharp views of the bathers and thus implies that there is something about the narrator that needs saying but is not said.

The narrator of "A Memory" overtly studies herself as a child but shows only brief interest, it seems, in herself as an adult. At one point during the summary portion of the story she does ask, "Does this explain why, ever since that day, I have been unable to bear the sight of blood?" (This is in reference to the nosebleeding incident at school.) But most of the characterization of the adult is only implicit. However, this implicit characterization is central to an important expansion of the story's meaning. Inadvertently the narrator gives much interpretation of herself as an adult through the way she relates to her childhood self. Finally, the

image of her childhood experience makes one see the personality of the adult as one controlled by that of the child. This is true because the adult comes to adopt the child's perspective without detachment or reservation when she narrates the park episode. Yet throughout the secondary-perspective section of the story a detached view of the adult develops through implications from the characterization and imagery that hers is not the only way, nor seemingly even the soundest or most humane way, to regard the bathers. These implications arise from the language-image contrast and also from another contrast between the narrator and the bathers: the bathers possess a facility for enjoyment that the narrator, according to her own account, lacks, both as child and as adult. Although the narrator does not recognize these contrasts as reflections of her inadequacy for full possession of life or perfect sympathy with mankind, the story does suggest these ideas.

The language of the secondary-perspective portion of the story conveys an independent, objective impression of the adult's moral condition that she does not recognize; yet, she is still the primary perspective in this portion--the agent for the voice of narration--even though the center of consciousness is the child's secondary perspective. This language imputes vulgarity and hatred to what the imagery strongly suggests is only a group indulging in harmless and even affectionate enjoyment of one another. Because it reflects the child's mind uncritically without ever the narrator's giving any indication that she knowingly relates the episode in this way, one can only take the meaning of the passage describing the bathers to be that the narrator is incapable of detachment from her childhood eyes, at least while regarding the bathers and the approach to life

they represent (which would include any active, vital, outward encounter with life). Thus the narrator's treatment of this scene suggests a truth about both child and adult: all her life she has followed her highest impulse toward love and order through her memory of this occasion, only to see, paradoxically, the aspects of ugliness and sordidness where others might have seen the beauty of life's dionysian immersion (or at least the uninhibited freshness of abandoned interplay). Finally, one might conclude that the narrator has come to regard the free mixture of bodies and of laughter (both essential parts of life) as a denial of life through chaotic, vulgar behavior. This is her moral position: its weakness lies in her rejection of the group as living within its rights. However, a perceptive reader must accord the group this right to live if he is sensitive to the imagery. For instance, consider the covert, implicit sexuality in the following image:

> The younger girl, who was lying at the man's feet, was curled tensely upon herself. She wore a bright green bathing suit like a bottle from which she might, I felt, burst in a rage of churning smoke. I could feel the genie-like rage in her narrowed figure as she seemed both to crawl and to lie still . . . (CG, 153).

Here the narrator seems to envision snakes and hell-fire, as though a puritan streak were behind her inward passion for ordered, protected love. But a reader who is aware of the way point of view controls language in internal narration will see another image, another kind of "rage." He will see the full image that lies beneath the harsh literal clothing, the image of that health and vitality upon which depends the very propagation of life. This revelation of an almost tragically limited self-knowledge and moral vision goes far in preventing a reader from sympathizing very much with the narrator over her "love affair" with her friend and her continuing regard

for it. This affair itself comes to seem too self-centered in such a person. At the end of the story, one suspects that the narrator and her friend have remained isolated from each other, and one also suspects that the narrator's failure to communicate her love is due exactly to what also makes her fail to appreciate the sense of living so clearly embodied in the bathers' spontaneous, generous intermingling.

However, the significance of Miss Welty's narrator is more complex than this. As both Robert Penn Warren and Ruth Vande Kieft have observed, Miss Welty does create a perspective that does justice to positive qualities in the narrator's vision. The author does this by having the narrator scrutinize herself to come up with observations that are proven to be fairly accurate, so far as they go literally. The material in the section told in secondary perspective confirms the narrator's facts about her childhood: that she formed judgments upon persons, that she "was terrified by a vision of abandonment and wildness," that she needed to watch everything about her, that she lived a dual life of observer and dreamer, and that she felt a necessity for all happenings to conform perfectly with her ideas. However, this introspective study is of insufficient depth to comprehend the childhood vision in terms of all its implicit moral aspects. Irony increases by the fact that, without realizing it, the narrator still clings to her childhood vision, for the adult seems to be trying in the story to understand herself. It is her subjective involvement in her childhood moral view that so underscores the evidence of her deficiency of self-understanding. For although the narrator makes a searching yet inadequate interpretation of her childhood vision, the story's ironic comprehensive perspective judges it to be unsympathetic, self-centered and a little inhumane. And it becomes

clear that she has retained to adulthood this morally narrow (if personally intense) concept of an early childhood episode, and that she has done so without the self-knowledge that would have caused her to recognize the positive values the episode reflected. Indeed, having recognized these values the bathers represent might have started the narrator on the way to self-knowledge, for the truth about the bathers' involvement in life reflects the truth about the narrator's involvement in self. As this is a negative reflection upon the narrator, she succeeds only in protecting herself from painful insight as she tells her story.

Certain themes of "A Memory" cluster around specific ways in which the bathers reflect the narrator's moral limitations. The most obvious way is that their close contact with one another contrasts with the narrator's isolation. She seems isolated not only from her friend but also from her parents:

> My father and mother, who believed that I saw nothing in the world which was not strictly coaxed into place . . . to be presented to my eyes, would have been badly concerned if they had guessed how frequently the weak and inferior and strangely turned examples of what was to come showed themselves to me (CG, 148).

Although one might easily conclude for himself that the narrator would tend to see more "strangely turned" objects than most persons would, a sense of being apart from her parents clearly discloses itself in this passage.

While the child is obsessed with notions about "concealment" and seeks to "wrest . . . a communication or a presentiment" from strangers, the bathers master open communication by revealing themselves quite as they are. While the child does not like sudden surprises, the bathers' almost ritual behavior expresses life itself just because it is abandoned and wildly impulsive. Although the child is a child, the bathers are actually

closer than she to Adam-like innocence; that they seem to lack shame, in this context of fun, simply reflects their unabashed freedom with one another. While projecting her childhood perspective, however, the narrator sees good-humored insolence as forms of hatred and persecution:

> The smaller boy was thin and defiant; his white bangs were plastered down where he had thrown himself time after time head-first into the lake when the older child chased him to persecute him (CG, 152).

To the narrator, the sand piled upon the older woman becomes something "like the teasing threat of oblivion." The narrator calls the group "ill assorted," "foolish" and "idiotic." However, from rather overt indications, the group is probably a family--a rather happy one having fun. Yet the narrator seems to have no sense of humor--at least her account discloses none. Perhaps she takes herself too seriously to laugh at anything. Even laughing at the bathers would have been more humane than her derogatory treatment of them, but the younger girl's "insistent hilarity," the boys' howling and the man's smile only evoke this rather gruesome response: "I wished that they all were dead." This is hardly a sign of a healthy outlook toward strangers.

The "anger" the narrator sees is always imputed only by her language and is probably just in her head; nothing in the imagery suggests anger, or hatred, or persecution--all mere imputations of the language only. This language conveys the narrator's rejection of the "churning," "steaming," "raging" energy of the bathers; she rejects it in favor of being the observer and dreamer, both of which are withdrawn from the life symbolized by the younger girl's bottle-like bright green bathing suit. When the narrator finally does feel pity near the end of the story, it is

a vague and undefined sentiment, caused by the "small, worn white pavilion," and one suspects that the narrator sees herself imaged in the lonely structure as she begins to cry.

The function of point of view in "A Memory" is expressed early in the story. The finger-frame the child habitually forms to observe her world is a symbol of both protective order and restrictive vision. The finger-frame is the story's point of view, because the adult looks back through this frame to tell her story. Unlike the author, who controls the implicit comprehensive perspective, the narrator has never seen around this frame. The virtue of the frame is its orderly perspective: it helps enclose experience to give it form in knowable terms. The narrator will probably intellectually "know" her experience in a way the bathers never will theirs. Yet the other symbolic meaning, restrictive vision, expresses the narrator's weakness: the frame shuts out the vision of sympathy necessary to appreciate the humanity of the bathers. It also distorts the large view of what the bathers organically represent--the free, expressive forces of life and love. Hopefully, the bathers will continue immersing themselves in life and love as the narrator probably never will.

In spite of the narrator's language, the bathers' uninhibited, abandoned behavior, their suspension of fear, their humorous insolence and their tactile communion all strain at the walls of the narrator's frame. Their qualities and actions create an undercurrent of imagery that crosses the narrative perspective. The narrator can only negate these crosscurrents to keep her perspective unbroken. Thus the story stands as a monument to the inner ordering power of the narrator's peculiar vision of love, but the story also throbs as a revelation of the same vision's moral weakness in

the outer world. The narrative perspective can remain unbroken only because the fictional illusion is a world inside the narrator's mind, where she dwells in moral privacy and isolation.

To summarize this discussion in a few paragraphs, we can observe that what Ruth Vande Kieft identifies as psychic atmosphere is closely relevant to point of view, insofar as a center of consciousness must be the perspective through which the lights and shadows filter into particular impressions and concrete images--the content of fiction. In "A Memory," Miss Welty portrays a character that reflects the ordered values, and this character's mind governs the literal representation of the action. Only by analyzing the literal basis for imagery in the park scene can one recognize how one-sided this character's interpretation is. Miss Welty's development of her character-narrator's mind follows a pattern of scene and analysis designed to bring out the positive and negative conceptions of experience in the story in terms of this mind's inward disposition for protective, orderly love. Because the characterization evolves around two self-images closely alike yet remote from each other in time, the psychological implications of the narrator's account of herself take on a unique complexity. Moreover, the narrator's complexity is increased by her ambivalent capacity for feelings of both love and rejection. Her psychology is the development of point of view, and its broad implications create a perspective through which the narrator reveals more of herself than she herself can understand.

The principal factor in creating a primary perspective in "A Memory" is the narrator's analysis of herself as a dreamer-observer. The imagery of her factual observations further implies her fearful withdrawal

from the flux of organic life. Because of this imagery, her interpretation of the facts must be questioned: her language is remote in connotation from that of the imagery. "A Memory" might be compared here with Sherwood Anderson's "I'm a Fool" on the basis of point of view, for both stories have narrators who seek objective, critically detached views of themselves but succumb instead, during narration, to complete subjective immersion in themselves.

The structure of "A Memory" correlates with the development of point of view. The first section is mostly summary and analysis, or introspection, in primary perspective. The second section is largely scene and drama, or, again, introversion, in secondary perspective. The movement between the two sections is essentially one of mental regression to an earlier perspective than that of the first section, but the two perspectives are curiously similar in moral dimension. Point of view also correlates with character and theme to reflect the movement from introspection to introversion. This tendency to give over to a pure introversion is the adult's central fallacy, just as it is the child's. Yet, a dreamer-observer morally isolated from the life around her, at least she creates both as much love and as much rejection as she can out of her peculiar potential for both.

iii

"A Memory" is the only internally narrated story without an auditor in A Curtain of Green. The other two stories Miss Welty tells in this way are in her third and most recent short-story collection, The Bride of the Innisfallen (1955). These are "Circe" and "Kin." In these stories

the question of the distance between the narrator and the author is more complex than it is in "A Memory." In the two later stories, authorial detachment from the narrator is not overt, yet neither can Circe or Dicey, in "Kin," be considered strictly autobiographical characters. On the other hand, this fact does not preclude the chance that either one might express, directly or indirectly, some moral norms that Miss Welty has incorporated into her narrative, although again, finding this to be true would still not mean that either narrator is necessarily a consistent authorial spokesman, one toward whom Miss Welty has maintained no critical detachment whatsoever. The problems of analyzing the roles of these two narrators without auditors will be considered in the following studies, the first of which concerns Circe.

Miss Welty adapts Circe's story from the Odyssey account, which tells of the visit of Odysseus and his crew to the island of Circe, but Miss Welty's contribution to this episode's literary heritage is her telling of Odysseus' visit from Circe's point of view. "Circe" seems in fact designed more to explore the psychology of the feminine point of view than to convey a sense of myth, yet there is created a measurable mythic dimension within which Circe develops as an archetype of eternal womanhood. This aspect of Circe's character seems more sympathetically developed in Miss Welty's story than is the sorceress' image in the Odyssey, and because it is interwoven with an individualized psychological aspect, the archetypal image is essential to understanding the full meaning of the primary perspective in Miss Welty's story.

Miss Welty develops Circe's perspective by combining the archetypal technique of characterization with that of psychological realism. The

The mythic context of the episode in the Odyssey seems to have suggested itself to Miss Welty as a good framework within which to study the psychology of feminine passion. Within a pattern of archetypal female qualities, Circe develops, through various modes of self-revelation, as a real concrete individual. As archetype, the eternal female, Circe is the lover and earth-mother. Yet she is both standoffish and yielding. By turns, Circè's words characterize her as proud, disdainful, indignant, curious, lonely and perplexed. Certain devices of narration help to develop her personality in terms of these qualities--devices such as overt comments, dramatically recorded impressions, intuition of other characters' motives, and controlled intimation of sentiment. Yet this development is complicated since Circe holds both her knowledge of mortals and her capacity for feeling to be inadequate to satisfy her wish to understand the "mortal mystery" that she feels Odysseus and his crew somehow conceal from her. Circe's characterization and her narrative perspective develop together, as is true of all point-of-view characters: one contributes to the other.

Circe's perspective also reflects upon structure. Her account is chronological, yet time is blurred over during the progress of the narrative. Circe seems to focus her mind upon the material of her story in such a way as to make it comprehensible to herself in selected literal terms, as though she were seeking to create a clear pattern of revelation germane to her own rather taxed mode of perception. Her only problem is that she is at the center of her narrative, but she is not a simple person, so that she must try therefore to understand herself in terms as complex as she can recognize. The literal terms of meaning that Circe usually recognizes account for the primarily dramatic quality of the narrative. Yet,

although immediacy, or the "felt" quality of life, characterizes the fictional world, it does so in spite of a subjective note that persists from time to time because of Circe's indulging in commentary and reflection, as though she were seeking to make her occasion for narration a means to interpretive hindsight.

However, those portions of her narrative given over to comment and reflection do not impede the movement of the story or increase the distance between the reader and the fictional illusion. The commentary correlates with the action, arising directly out of its context. For example, there are Circe's comments that "welcome" is "the most dangerous word," that she did not want Odysseus' story of the Cyclops but rather his secret, and that "even heroes could learn from the gods." (Ironically, one theme of this story might be traced from a goddess' wish to learn from a hero.) These comments contribute toward exposition of Circe's mind, and they also help to make the narrative perspective concrete as one of a detached reflector as well as one of a character.

Circe's perspective is a device for conveying an impression of her isolation, for the mixture of dramatic immediacy and a subjective sense of remoteness becomes a structural principle developed around the narrative perspective. Circe is observant enough (and sufficiently intuitive, in her literal way) to bring the "beautiful strangers" to life by capturing the spirit of their restless masculinity, yet her observation creates at best only conjectural secondary perspectives, and, except for Odysseus (and only vaguely and subtly so in his case), these conjectural perspectives are only ambiguougly and collectively developed. This structural condition furthers the suggestion of Circe's isolation by causing hers to be the only

individualized concrete perspective in the story. Moreover, the collective conjectural perspectives of Odysseus' crew are both shaded over by Circe's preconceptions about mortals and manhood, and obscured by her puzzlements over the exact meaning of her experience with them. The way these perspectives materialize in Circe's mind (and indeed her very need for projecting them as part of her story) tells much about Circe's overall character, while the absence of any secondary perspectives except those of a conjectural nature helps to express Circe's "moral isolation" (her feeling of being separated from the mortal characters because of her supposed exclusion from the "mortal mystery").

Then, not only does Miss Welty combine the dramatic treatment with the inwardness of personal vision in "Circe," but she also co-develops a goddess image of Circe (which underscores her isolation) with a humanized, mortal-like quality in her that is necessary if the narrative perspective is to function as a credible source of psychological drama. The credibility of Circe's image as a psychologically realistic narrator is augmented by at least two references to limitations in her; such references contradict any interpretation of her role as one of unlimited inner resources. First, early in the story, commenting on the prophecies concerning the meeting of her power of enchantment with a hero, she says, "Oh, I know those prophecies as well as the back of my hand--only nothing is here to warn me when it is now." Again, near the end of the story, she asserts that, in spite of "knowing" the future course of Odysseus, ". . . foreknowledge is not the same as the last word." These admissions, along with Crice's felt inability to find grief or to "crush" the mortal mystery, all reveal her to be limited in both thought and action. Thus they enable Miss Welty to develop this

internal narrator much as she would any other internal narrator (or any mortal narrator in the same dramatic situation), and they help her to do so with as much psychological credibility as she elsewhere achieves for internal narrators in her fiction. Circe's credibility in terms of human psychology is what makes her perspective contribute directly to the story's taking on of meaning.

Circe's humanized perspective helps focus the thematic emphasis of the story: it gives her narrative a primary level of meaning interpretable through male-female terminology. This level contrasts in terms with a secondary level that is interpretable through mortal-immortal terminology. Although both levels of meaning grow out of the basic goddess-hero context, Circe's experience with Odysseus in this episode of her career has its principal impact upon her at the sexual level because what happens to her brings out more of the female than the goddess in her. Womanhood is a literal quality in this story: it is the mortal capacity for both frustration and fulfillment in the mystery that Circe wishes to explore. Divinity, or magic, on the other hand, is only symbolic or figurative in this context: just the static fulfillment of itself, it suggests in "Circe" (if theme be read in sexual and psychological terms) an aloofness not so much at odds with as simply indifferent to that mortal capacity for ecstasy and pain. Perhaps Miss Welty finds something of the "goddess" in the female mind that experience like Circe's forces the woman to abandon if she is to achieve maturity. Possibly the story questions whether the "goddess" in most women is not just an illusion they look through--the illusion Circe has to retract when Odysseus makes her return his crew to normal human beings from the pig-like forms she had reduced those men to.

At any rate, the goddess feels that her own inherent nature sets her apart from what she calls a "mortal mystery." According to her, it is a mystery that "only frailty . . . can divine." Reflecting, she observes that ". . . mortals alone can divine where it lies in each other, can find and prick it in all its peril, with an instrument made of air. I swear that only to possess that one, trifling secret, I would willingly turn myself into a harmless dove for the rest of eternity!" However, irony develops from this statement at the end of the story where it is learned that Circe has been pricked by the instrument of Odysseus (she is "sickened, with child") and has thereby turned herself not into a dove but into a pig--from her point of view. The pig for Circe has represented that contemptuous view of masculinity and the sex it offers taken by the proud, standoffish female out of a sense of sexual superiority and a too narrow mode of conceiving of life's basic needs.

In the end Circe knows only that her passion for Odysseus is not enough to secure her from that literal isolation that objectifies her inward impoverishment (she wishes for grief but cannot find it), and that it has not even been for her the means to crushing the mortal mystery. At the story's conclusion, a reader might feel that she must have realized that reality in the mortal world of Odysseus holds no final, ultimate, absolute answers for an experience like hers--that only stories can offer to interpret them so that they might be lived with. But although a reader might feel the "moral" to Circe's experience, she herself does not finally indicate whether she accepts her predicament as exactly that of the mortal condition and accepts the fact that she has already done all that she can to live with it.

iv

The remaining story in internal narration without an auditor is "Kin," also from The Bride of the Innisfallen but somewhat more complicated in structural development than "Circe": "Kin" is narrated by Dicey Hastings, a young lady who comes originally from Mississippi but who has been taken away at the age of eight. However, she has made visits back to her home state since then, and "Kin" is an account of one episode of her most recent visit. This episode concerns her going with a "double first cousin," Kate, to Mingo, the old home place of Dicey and Kate's family. Here they discover that the old home has been made into a public studio for a day to be used by an itinerant Yankee photographer. Sister Anne, an apparently unpopular family relation who is felt to be "common," has allowed the photographer to set up his paraphanalia in the parlor and has moved old Uncle Felix, who is in perhaps his terminal illness at an extreme age, to a dusty, shabby room used for the storage of antiques. Dicey and Kate are prepared for the encounter with Sister Anne by Kate's mother, Dicey's Aunt Ethel, although they are not forewarned of the unsuspected photographer. Thus the cousins proceed to Mingo to discover the crowd of persons there and at first interpret it to mean that Uncle Felix has died. However, Sister Anne soon appears to dispel this idea and takes the cousins to Uncle Felix in the back room, where they visit with him, although he is not in very sound mind. During the visit to Mingo Dicey turns to her memory and imagination to rescue her from an otherwise unpleasant situation, and after the cousins watch Sister Anne have her own complimentary picture made, they take leave of her in a forthright manner and depart from Mingo, just at the coming of darkness.

From the sketch of incidents just recorded, the best keys to understanding this story's point of view are Dicey's use of her memory and imagination, and her coming from the North. As narrator, Dicey brings to her story a detached and objective perspective toward the setting (which, as in all of Miss Welty's fiction, bears an important character of its own), as well as a personal context of roots and associations with it. To explain: Dicey rediscovers the intimate role Mingo has played in her inner-mind's development as a child and even comes to recognize to herself a spiritual affinity that she has with her great-grandmother. She begins her narrative, however, by observing that she felt a little like a stranger at the first of her visit, and she continues to think of herself more as a visitor than as a native. Much of the story's psychological interest lies in the subtle development of Mingo's influence over Dicey's imagination as she records it as the outstanding feature of her visit there. This development of influence increases as Dicey's awareness of her own personal context of intimate "kinship" with Mingo's past grows in her mind. Thus, Dicey's perspective develops richer and fuller insight as her consciousness of a native context for herself increases; together, her perspective and context give the story a unifying principle that Dicey projects as part of her inward experience. Also, they give the story a quality of vision that becomes its outstanding virtue as a work of art.

Of all the narrators without auditors in this chapter, Dicey Hastings may be considered the one most nearly gifted with that special sensibility and simple refinement of perception often seen in Miss Welty's external narrators and appearing to partake of Miss Welty's own finer faculties. Some measure of Miss Welty's self-portrayal in Dicey's

character might be reflected in her very "literary" narrative style: although Dicey's characterization of herself makes no suggestion that she is a "professional" storyteller in any sense, her style seems one that would belong to a polished career artist. While variations of this kind of style also appear in the narration of both "A Memory" and "Circe," their narrators' visions finally reveal a distinct separation between themselves and the vision of the artist who created them. However, such a distinct separation is not apparent in "Kin," for Dicey is not ever brought under focus of any ironic comprehensive perspective that would make her "transparent" to readers, or give them critical insight into her mode of thinking that she herself would seem to lack.

Furthermore, in addition to Dicey's "authorial" style and sensibility, and also to her natural detachment from the story setting by virtue of her Northern background, Dicey has in her perspective as narrator an admirable, carefully controlled sense of proportion, a balanced view of the comic and the serious, and a careful awareness of the incongruous and the appropriate. Consequently, unlike Kate, Dicey avoids sentimentality and the melodramatic but notes genuine humanity, comedy and romance wherever she can. She is especially alert to the romance of domestic life, and she is particularly sensitive to the thought of Mingo's remote past as an influence upon her conception of her current personal identity.

Having recognized these qualities in Dicey's perspective, one might then raise an interesting question. Since Dicey uses no characterizing idiomatic speech but rather a style hardly distinguishable from that of the author, and also since the structure of the story seems in no special way idiosyncratic to Dicey's psychology, except, of course, insofar

as content itself determines it, why did Miss Welty use internal narration at all in "Kin?" And since, moreover, there is no dramatized auditor, why did Miss Welty choose a primary internal rather than external perspective? There would seem to be reasons favoring the use of the latter: while capable of utilizing the same style and structural format, an external mode of narration might have secured a primary focus of dramatic immediacy rather than one of total retrospection: Indeed, it might have offered a way around two apparent rhetorical problems created by the use of internal narration. These two problems (to be discussed further in a subsequent passage) are (1) how to achieve the dramatic sense of immediacy--or "scenic" representation--needed to develop a rich image of "place," without violating the retrospective focus of the narrator, and (2) how to make the overtly literary style appear natural as an instrument for Dicey to be using to recount this particular experience.

To ask this question of choices is, first, to assume that Dicey functions largely as an external narrator would have functioned, and this assumption is basically correct. However, here it should be observed that Dicey's manner of rendering her account much as an external narrator would have not only points up her detachment from the physical locale of the story, but also underscores the balanced perceptiveness and sense of proportion so vital to Dicey's overall character as it functions in the story. Moveover, it can also be observed here that because Dicey does not have an auditorial context within the fictional illusion, a reader is not as conscious as he might otherwise have been of Dicey's use of an essentially literary style, and thus not as conscious of any questions of compatibility between it and the character using it.

Yet, to move from these general, preliminary observations to more detailed analysis, one must recognize that in "Kin" there can be no possible insight into Dicey's mind that would be relevant to Miss Welty's purpose in the story that is significant beyond the meaning of Dicey's own acquiring and articulation of it. This is true because Miss Welty's purpose is to record the development of the imaginative influence upon Dicey of her memories and impressions. This fact alone then removes any valid basis for developing a comprehensive perspective outside the fictional illusion. Moreover, external narration would probably have given the story's field of consciousness a weight and scope out of proportion to the range of interest in the story's external materials. That is, the only seriously interesting developments in the story's action are those of Dicey's mind. External narration (even if using Dicey as center of consciousness, as it could in the central intelligence method) would have tended to magnify the anecdote of Sister Anne and the photographer into something for the reader more prominent within the story's structure than just a comic backdrop for Dicey's reflections. (By itself, the anecdote has symbolic potential reaching beyond Dicey's particular use for it, suggesting the whole cultural change in the South in microcosmic terms.) At the same time, external narration would have detracted emphasis from the way Dicey's personal perspective relegates the anecdote to backdrop status. Yet this act of relegating is necessary for Dicey's mind to perform if it is to carry out the response central to the story's serious theme, and it deserves all the direct emphasis that primary internal narration can give it.

If one now turns to the two rhetorical problems cited previously--how to effect dramatic immediacy within the retrospective focus of internal

narration, and how to keep Dicey's character from appearing incompatible with the literary style she uses--certain solutions are already apparent from what has been said. Far from developing a character who is inwardly incompatible with the spirit of a literary style, Miss Welty has created in Dicey a character who has all the intellectual refinements that make such a style a useful and meaningful instrument. The objectivity and sensitivity of an external narrator in fiction (especially in Miss Welty's fiction) are qualities that Dicey Hastings possesses; if it is implicit that she has probably done no serious writing and has had no formal practice in cultivating such a style, it is still true that the style helps to characterize Dicey's fine, perhaps otherwise largely hidden qualities of mind, in a way that would have been hard for Miss Welty otherwise to have characterized them without violating the simple and unpretentious background she wishes to give Dicey. The style seems natural to Dicey because Dicey seems natural to the style, and the style itself helps to characterize her so. It has already been pointed out that since Dicey has no auditorial context, a reader is not too bothered by questions arising out of the language she uses. Rather, he is to accept the language and reflect upon the character in terms of it, sensing the spirit of compatibility between what the style represents and what Dicey is that Miss Welty means for him to sense.

Moreover, the way in which Miss Welty achieves a dramatic sense of immediacy within the retrospective perspective of Dicey also contributes to making the style that Dicey uses seem to originate from natural involvement in the realistic situation of the story: this way is the use of dialogue. Large portions of the narrative that are not Dicey's reflections or

recollections are conveyed through dialogue. This method both furthers the natural impression of Dicey's overall narrative style and, at the same time, projects a sense of dramatic immediacy without any violation of the retrospective perspective.

Having considered the qualities and technical justifications of Dicey's narrative perspective, one is prepared to study the way it controls meaning in the story. Dicey functions during the first part of "Kin" primarily as an observer: herein she demonstrates her objectivity as a narrator by reporting through dialogue what is essentially exposition. This exposition represents the first stage in Dicey's rediscovery of her innocent, childhood Southern heritage. Her role as visitor (developed in a passage of personal reflections near the beginning of the story) allows naturally for an extended if rambling treatment of background material (details of family relationships, Aunt Ethel's failing health, likewise Uncle Felix's, and Sister Anne's peculiarities) that both Dicey and the reader need to know. Dicey opens her narrative by remarking that at her aunt's first mentioning of "Mingo," she did not know, for a moment, what her aunt had meant: "The name sounded in my ears more like <u>something</u> rather than <u>somewhere</u>." Here Dicey's lapse of association suggests the remoteness of her mind, through periods of absence, from the whole idea of Mingo, yet next moment, at Kate's mentioning of Uncle Felix, Dicey seems to recall the context. Throughout the rest of the opening section of exposition, Dicey mainly listens to the rambling but pointed talk of her aunt and cousin Kate, developing preliminary impressions of Sister Anne from the apocryphal comic-grotesque image created for her benefit by the other two. However, from the point of Dicey's first connection of Mingo with Uncle

Felix, the whole inner logic of the story is a continuing evolution of the process suggested there, until such a context is created (or recreated) in Dicey's mind later in the story that its imagery governs the whole setting. This setting that Dicey's developing vision comes inwardly to propose makes her visit to Mingo finally not just one to the changed house of the decaying Uncle Felix and gregarious but lonely Sister Anne; rather, Dicey visits the "enduring" Mingo of impressions duly recollected. She experiences the "real house," the "real Uncle Felix" (as Dicey remarks of him she recalls), the vistas of the stereopticon, the mysteries of the portrait of Evelina Mackaill Jerrold (Dicey's great-grandmother, with whom Dicey perceives herself to have a spiritual kinship, even though the portrait is hidden from her eyes behind the photographer's backdrop), and all the romance and beauty of history and setting that have contributed to shaping Dicey's perspective toward herself and her world. They have contributed more than Dicey had yet realized or appreciated until this visit, which occurs during the period of Dicey's engagement, when she hangs between the past she had almost forgotten and the future she must look to at the end of the story (thinking of her sweetheart). That is, Dicey's visit comes as she is occupying a middle ground between innocence and maturity that allows for perspective yet at the same time for intimacy of association also.

Dicey's value as a point of view character is stressed by at least two concrete developments. First, Kate offers her interpretation of Uncle Felix's enigmatic note, scribbled on a piece of paper while he lies in bed, delirious. The note reads, "'River--Daisy--Midnight--Please.'"

> "'Midnight'!" Kate cried first. Then, "River daisy? His mind has wandered, the poor old man."

> "Daisy's a lady's name," I whispered impatiently, so impatiently that the idea of the meeting swelled right out of the moment, and I even saw Daisy.
>
> Then Kate whispered, "You must mean Beck, Dicey, that was his wife, and he meant her to meet him in Heaven. . ." (BI, 148).

Kate must attach a sentimental and even religious meaning to the note; she can keep her respect for the old man only if she can have it that he has confused the name "Daisy" for "Beck," his wife. However, for Dicey the note suggests something far less phoney and sentimental, and far more exciting and intriguing, in the life of Uncle Felix. And later, when near the end of the story Kate again insists that Uncle Felix had got his names mixed up, Dicey remarks,

> She could always make the kind of literal remark . . . that could alienate me, even when we were children--much as I love her. I don't know why, yet, but some things are too important for a mistake even to be considered. I was sorry I had shown Kate the message . . . (BI, 152).

For Dicey, the secret romance of Uncle Felix is now a part of that invisible and inviolable context of Mingo that she has returned to and recovered from her family past. The only thing that had hurt her was the world "please," she comments, as though to make the most of every word in forming her private myth of the "real Uncle Felix," abjectly pleading for a lovers' rendezvous (perhaps even an illicit one!).

Again, as was noted earlier, Dicey recreates the image of her great-grandmother Jerrold in the portrait at Mingo, even though the portrait itself has been covered by the photographer's backdrop. This act of memory suggests Dicey's potential for seeing through all of the vulgar changes of the present-day Mingo to a world more real than they to her. And in this case, having fixed her mind upon the invisible portrait, Dicey reflects upon its meaning to her until she has recognized her own character in terms of

its spiritual kinship with that of her remote ancestor:

> She had grown a rose for Aunt Ethel to send back by me. And still those eyes, opaque, all pupil, belonged to Evelina--I knew, because they saw out, as mine did; weren't warned, as mine weren't, and never shut before the end, as mine would not. I, her divided sister, knew who had felt the wildness of the world behind the ladies' view. We were homesick for somewhere that was the same place (BI, 148).

So, in Dicey's mind, the story materials of "Kin"--the raw substance of the fictional illusion--become transformed into a visit to the family past, a discovery of the true nature and meaning of kinship, and a vital new perspective upon an almost forgotten world of innocence. Dicey's initial detachment from the actual setting (through both space and time) creates a basis for developing her perspective, and her being engaged suggests a moral position between innocence and maturity from which this perspective can function. Thus equipped and prepared, Dicey develops a valuable context of personal identity before it is too late for her to recover its images, yet after she has had enough of a taste of life in general to know how to appreciate these images' significance.

Creating visions in the minds of internal narrators without dramatized or even implied auditors, Miss Welty concentrates upon the possibilities of showing the effects of "moral isolation" upon one's interpretation of (or one's attempt to interpret) a vital experience of his life. The narrator of "A Memory" speaks from a delicately contrived isolation that betrays her most damaging trait of shortsightedness at the same time that it reveals her most strengthening quality of tenderminded-ness. Circe speaks from the epistemological predicament of all men, confronted by the illusive vagaries of a relationship based on passion, with nothing whereby to defend herself but an impotent art of calculation.

And Dicey Hastings speaks from the isolation of private, unsharable memory that paradoxically reaches back successfully in search of true kinship. Dicey makes thus the best use of her kind of isolation, and she finds thereby at least a private way out of it. Dicey is not sentimental, as is the narrator of "A Memory," yet Dicey has as much innate sensitivity as does the latter; and Dicey is not coldly rational all the time, as Circe tries to be, yet Dicey has all of Circe's wit.

Footnotes

[1]In common idiomatic speech, "put down" (in the preceding quotation from "A Memory") suggests writing; there is nothing in that story, however, that appears to derive any special significance from that fact.

[2]Eudora Welty, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962). This was the first book-length study of Miss Welty's fiction to be published. Miss Vande Kieft considers some aspects of Miss Welty's narrative technique in Chapter 9, "The Achievement of Eudora Welty," pp. 167-90.

[3]Vande Kieft, p. 56.

[4]Vande Kieft, p. 56.

[5]Vande Kieft, pp. 56-57.

[6]See Booth, pp. 243-65. Booth treats distance in Chapter IX.

[7]See Booth, p. 274. Booth's discussion of moral isolation is the basis for the following discussion in this paragraph.

[8]See Leon Surmelian, Techniques of Fiction Writing: Measure and Madness (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 1-39. Chapter 1 discusses "Scene," while Chapter 2 discusses "Summary and Description."

[9]Eudora Welty, A Curtain of Green (1941; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.), p. 151. Subsequent references to volumes by Miss Welty appear in the text, her books identified as follows: BI (The Bride of the Innisfallen, 1955); CG (A Curtain of Green, 1941); DW (Delta Wedding, 1946); GA (The Golden Apples, 1949); LB (Losing Battles, 1970); OD (The Optimist's Daughter, 1972); PH (The Ponder Heart, 1954); RB (The Robber Bridegroom, 1942); and WN (The Wide Net, 1943). Page references are to the edition cited in the bibliography.

CHAPTER III

INTERNAL NARRATION WITH AN AUDITOR

i

Chapter III shall consider Miss Welty's use of internal narration with an auditor. In those several of her stories that contain this kind of narration, the author's technique is basically to apply the principles of dramatic monologue to prose fiction. She has written only three of her stories in this way with actual auditors present in the narrative context, although a fourth selection, "The Whole World Knows" (Chapter 5 of the episodic novel The Golden Apples), also deserves treatment in this chapter. This rather special case is narrated by one who projects an auditor (his father) in his mind and unfolds his story as though to the projected auditor. The identification of this projected auditor thus dramatically defines at least the story's mental context of narration; it supplies a dramatized motive for narration relevant to another "character," although the form is essentially that of interior monologue. Perhaps T. S. Eliot's "The Love-song of J. Alfred Prufrock" suggests the technique, although Prufrock has no one other than himself in mind when he gives his monologue.

In the other three stories, however, the representation of actual auditors locates the narrative context with respect to time and place within the fictional illusion, and this specific defining of the narrative context makes the act of narration itself an integral part of the dramatic

material of the story. Moreover, in all of these stories, the immediate as well as possible long-range relationship between the narrator and his auditor has to be studied in determining motives for narration and evaluating the trustworthiness of the narrator in the particular context from which he speaks. And too, not only does the presence of an auditor in these stories define the narrative context dramatically, but it also defines the medium of narration, which is speech in the three with actual auditors, and private thought given conscious articulation in the fourth. The three stories with actual auditors are "Why I Live at the P.O." (from A Curtain of Green), "Shower of Gold" (Chapter 1 of The Golden Apples), and the short novel The Ponder Heart. This chapter will first consider an early use of this method of narration in "Why I Live at the P.O.," from Miss Welty's first collection of short stories in 1941; it will then consider the two selections from The Golden Apples (1949), and it will conclude by discussing the technique in The Ponder Heart, one of Miss Welty's comparatively more recent works (1954).

ii

"Why I Live at the P.O." is a story in which a reader is able to develop for himself a far more comprehensive, complex and balanced perspective upon the story materials (including the narrator) than the narrator herself does. The most immediate theme of this story is alienation--a self-imposed alienation of the narrator from her family for which she admits no complicity in guilt. While the narrator is aware of the fact of alienation, she distorts its causes to such a degree that two corollary themes develop, for which the narrator has no awareness. These two themes

are self-knowledge and moral oversimplification of experience. Through her manner of narration, the narrator, simply identified as "Sister," betrays the inadequacy of her account of herself and her motives. Her rigid, oversimplified interpretation of right and wrong conduct, her inconsistency and her rationalization all characterize her storytelling so that what originates with her as an appeal for sympathy and support (but by no means an attempt to justify her behavior to herself, for she can entertain no doubt in her own mind as to her innocence) becomes for the reader a revelation of a pitiful lack of self-knowledge, as well as of the destructive errors of moral rigidity used to order one's interpretation of experience so absurdly that he can come to see himself as absolutely guiltless of blame upon all occasions of personal conflict. As the reader comes finally to identify his perspective with those of auditors in the story (it is not clear just how many), he realizes that his own perceptions reflect a comprehensive perspective implicit in the dramatic setting, and, as in Browning's "My Last Duchess," he can only hope that he is not alone in what he perceives. However, it is only near the end of the story that the narrative context is explicitly defined. There at last it becomes clear that the narrator is telling her story to patrons of the post office only a few days after the events of that story took place.

From her quarters at the post office, the narrator describes how her life was disrupted by her younger sister's returning home. Stella-Rondo, the younger sister, had married a photographer from the North, a Mr. Whitaker, who was once the older sister's boyfriend, before, as she says, "Stella-Rondo broke us up." Now, Stella-Rondo and Mr. Whitaker have separated, and Stella-Rondo has brought home with her a two-year old

daughter, Shirley T., whom her mother says is adopted. However, "Sister," the narrator, refuses to believe this explanation of the origin of the child, whom the rest of the family (consisting of the narrator's mother, her maternal grandfather Papa-Daddy, and her Uncle Rondo, as well as herself) had not previously learned of. "Sister" relates her insinuations to the family that the child favors both Papa-Daddy and Mr. Whitaker, although in view of the complete development of the narrator's character, such an observation as this will be seen to be regarded as questionable. Ruth Vande Kieft describes this narrator's character and motives in Eudora Welty:

> The rigidity of the postmistress of China Grove takes the form of an idee fixe. She follows up her single idea with relentless logic until it puts her in rebellious isolation from the world around her. . . .
>
> The motive of her particular obsession is as clear as it is unadmitted: vindictive jealousy of her sister. Stella-Rondo has repeatedly aggrieved and insulted her: by being a younger, favored sister; by stealing and running off with her boyfriend . . .; by reappearing not long afterwards with a two-year old "adopted" child; and finally, as she supposes, by setting the rest of the family against her, one by one. Her story is built on the logic of that steady progress of alienations: what Stella-Rondo did to bring them about, how she herself reacted to the mounting persecution--now with admirable forbearance, now with pacifying explanations, now with righteous indignation. . . .[1]

Miss Vande Kieft also summarizes developments conducive to the story's climax:

> When the process of Stella-Rondo's evil machinations is complete and everyone is set against her, she saves her pride by moving out to the "P.O." Again she works with inexorable logic, disrupting the family as she systematically removes from the house everything that belongs to her. . . . Finally she is left alone at the "P.O.," secure in her knowledge of who in the town is for her and who against her; protesting loudly her independence and happiness, she works her revenge by shutting her family off from the outside world.[2]

The same critic further cites this effect of the narrative:

> Though acting and thinking with the insane logic of the paranoid, she is not felt to be so because of the marvelous energy, self-possession, and resourcefulness with which she carries out her revenge (so that our pity is not aroused), and because of the inescapable comedy in her situation, the members of her family and their behavior, and her mode of telling her story.[3]

However, although this narrator is engaging and forceful in both words and purported deeds, there are some conspicuous patterns of irony in her narrative that create a critical distance between her and the reader, and thus help to reveal a comprehensive perspective to the latter. These patterns shall now be examined to demonstrate Miss Welty's use of irony as a narrative device in this story.

First, although the reader is aware of the comedy of the narrator's situation, she herself is not: that she lacks a sense of humor is a salient characteristic of "Sister" that creates distance between her and the reader; precisely because the reader is aware of persistent comedy. This ironic "humorless" narration of material filled with comedy induces a detached perspective in the reader from which he can position himself to understand why the narrator lacks a sense of humor: she makes far too much of her own feelings and has a sense of ego monstrously out of proportion to reason and prudence. Understanding this quality in the narrator, the reader possesses a key to understanding her construction of personal experience as well as her mode of narration.

That "Sister" takes herself too seriously is ironic to the fact that she is totally imperceptive of her most obvious faults of character. A motif stressing this irony develops from two references the narrator makes to others' past comments about her. First, Stella-Rondo had told Mr. Whitaker that "Sister" was "one-sided"; secondly, a doctor had said that she was "the most sensitive person he had ever seen in his whole

life." These remarks reflect levelheaded judgments upon the narrator's two most memorable character defects--her closed-mindedness and her egocentricity. However, in recounting these comments the narrator actually betrays both faults while showing that she has misconstrued the remarks. She has understood "one-sided" in a physical sense ("Bigger on one side than the other, which is a deliberate, calculated falsehood," she says), and likewise she has taken "sensitive" as referring to a nervous condition ("Well, I'm just terribly susceptible to noise of any kind . . ."). Moreover, she uses both comments as she has misunderstood them to support her demonstrations of the ways others have allegedly persecuted her. However, these misunderstandings only create humorous puns for the reader, once he gains some knowledge of the storyteller; consequently, the reader comes to recognize not only the irony of the narrator's lack of self-knowledge, but also the humor of her failure to recognize double-meanings. This particular failure emphasizes further the narrator's rigidly simplistic, cut-and-dried view of life, and the reader's sense of irony as well as of humor in the two situations increases his detachment from the narrator by reflecting to him his own (hopefully) finer senses of verbal complexity, moral discernment and comic subtlety.

There are at least two additional patterns of irony proper to the narration itself that further the reader's critical detachment from the narrative perspective. One is the narrator's inconsistency upon the point of "who left whom," referring to the question of Stella-Rondo's separation, and another is the narrator's series of observations that someone has tried to turn someone else against her (observations contradicted by the narrator's dumbly admitted machinations to turn others against Stella-Rondo and Shirley T., and finally even against herself.

To understand the motives behind the narrator's inconsistency toward the matter of Stella-Rondo's separation, one must consider each contradictory observation in its context. First, near the beginning of her story, the narrator is building her argument that Stella-Rondo is spoiled:

> She's always had anything in the world she wanted and then she'd throw it away. Papa-Daddy gave her this gorgeous Add-a-Pearl necklace when she was eight years old and she threw it away playing baseball when she was nine, with only two pearls.
>
> So as soon as she got married and moved away from home the first thing she did was separate! From Mr. Whitaker! (CG, 89-90).

Here one can observe the "relentless logic" at work: whatever damaging conclusion can be made to follow from the "fact" that Stella-Rondo is spoiled the narrator treats as inevitable. Thus she conveniently applies the context of the pearl necklace to that of the separation, drawing her analogy to make the latter appear to be a confirmation of her judgment of Stella-Rondo's sense of values. Yet, if the analogy does not hold up, neither does the confirmation, and much later in the story the narrator herself denies the analogy in effect, having obviously forgotten about it and the use she had made of it. Of course at this later point in the story there is a different context: the mother has just remarked that they should all be glad over Stella-Rondo's leaving "old Mr. Whitaker." To this the narrator reports having replied,

> "He left her--you mark my words," I says. "That's Mr. Whitaker. I know Mr. Whitaker. After all, I knew him first. I said from the beginning he'd up and leave her. I foretold every single thing that's happened" (CG, 108).

Thus, given another context--this one the mother's sympathy with Stella-Rondo's "leaving Mr. Whitaker" (and likely her gladness at having this daughter back home)--the narrator gives another version of the "fact"

behind the separation. This version suits the narrator's purpose of making Stella-Rondo appear imprudent and justly served. Yet, from recognizing the narrator's contradiction of her earlier position, a reader begins to wonder whether Stella-Rondo is both spoiled and imprudent, or whether she is indeed either.

A preceding quotation cited Ruth Vande Kieft's observation of the remaining narrative pattern that creates distance between the narrator and reader, the narrator's series of assertions that one member of the family tried to turn another member against her: first she accuses Stella-Rondo of turning Papa-Daddy against her; then Papa-Daddy of trying to turn Uncle Rondo against her; then Stella-Rondo again of turning her mother against her; and finally the "whole house" of turning against her. Credible as the narrator seeks to make each accusation sound, the accumulated series begins to appear rather curious in view of what the narrator reveals of her own actions: clearly it was the narrator's refusal to believe Stella-Rondo's explanation that Shirley T. was adopted that created this most recent hostility between them. And clearly, too, this refusal was the narrator's first attempt to turn the family against Stella-Rondo because of her daughter. A subsequent attempt to do the same occurred when the narrator implied slyly to her mother that Shirley T. might not be a normal child--that she might not be able to talk. Indeed, "Sister" seems almost obsessed with polarized sentiment, but she is unable to detect any connection between this compulsion for rigid opposition and her own motives. Finally, though, her whole act of narration comes to reflect what must be repeated (probably hourly) attempts to draw all of China Grove into the family quarrel and turn one part of the town against the other part:

> Some of the folks here in town are taking up for me and some turned against me. I know which is which. There are always people who will quit buying stamps just to get on the right side of Papa-Daddy (CG, 110).

Thus, in "Why I Live at the P.O.," a comprehensive perspective develops for the reader who can see the irony, humor and inconsistency in the narration that, because of her moral rigidity and oversimplification of the terms of her own experience, the narrator herself cannot see. As she says near the end of the story, ". . . I've got everything cater-cornered, the way I like it."

iii

Miss Welty's novel The Golden Apples contains two chapters in which there is internal narration; these are the first and the fifth. The book consists of seven chapters in all, and these chapters form a unified novel, although each one develops around an independent episode so that it has a separate unity of its own as a form of short story. The novel derives its overall unity from both the principal setting, Morgana, Mississippi, and a focal group of characters who are sufficiently interrelated to give the book's structural pattern several major threads of continuous development.

In her study Eudora Welty, Ruth Vande Kieft offers an excellent thematic analysis of The Golden Apples, chapter-by-chapter, in which she demonstrates the novel's unity in terms not only of the characters but also of mythical patterns and William Butler Yeats' poem "The Song of the Wandering Aengus."[4] From this poem come both the phrase that gives the novel its title and the basic thematic context of the wanderer and his quest for fulfillment, which holds the book together throughout its various sequences of action.

The immediate purpose in this chapter is to concentrate upon those two chapter-stories from The Golden Apples that contain internal narration and to study them specifically in terms of narrative technique and point of view. Chapter 1, "Shower of Gold," is narrated by Kate Rainey, a character who receives further development in Chapter 7, "The Wanderers," narrated externally. Her daughter, Virgie, a baby in Chapter 1, is also a principal character in the novel and receives development in two subsequent externally narrated chapters, Chapter 2, "June Recital," and Chapter 7. Kate's narrative in Chapter 1 concerns one of the major continuous threads of the novel, the marriage of King and Snowdie MacLain, and both these characters as well as their twin boys, Randall and Eugene, receive further development in later chapters. Eugene is a central intelligence character in "Music from Spain" (Chapter 6), while Randall narrates the other chapter to be studied here in terms of internal narration. As cited earlier, this chapter is "The Whole World Knows" (Chapter 5); it contains biographical material about Ran that he develops as he projects his father, King, as an imaginary auditor. A covert admirer as well as overt censurer of King MacLain, Kate Rainey is also a fairly close friend of Snowdie, King's wife. Kate is thus a pivotal figure in the novel's structural framework, and her material in Chapter 1, concerning the early developments in the MacLain marriage, is also a seminal context from which subsequent action and symbolism grow.

"Shower of Gold" contains a two-part focal structure. The first part consists primarily of Kate's exposition of King and Snowdie's relationship: she covers their courtship, their marriage, King's pattern of leaving and returning home, Snowdie's giving birth to the twins, and King's general

image and reputation. Kate also develops a clear-cut image of Snowdie, whom Kate insists that she loves. The second part concerns an event that reportedly took place on Hallowe'en just a week before the narrative occurs. This event is a brief homecoming King supposedly makes before hurrying away again, never entering his house. The dramatic details come to Kate from sources in a church, who learned them from a fellow-member whose mother kept a Negro who claimed to have eyewitnessed King's arrival and departure. Kate vouches for the trustworthiness of this Negro, Plez Morgan, and even supplies some details of her own that seem to confirm Plez's story. Plez himself becomes a minor center of consciousness in this part of the story, for Kate's narrative makes his report seem entirely plausible in spite of its indirect conveyance.

Kate Rainey's narrative context is defined early in "Shower of Gold": on the first page of the story, having introduced the topic of the way Snowdie MacLain's husband "walked out of the house one day and left his hat on the banks of the Big Black River," Kate says to her auditor:

> But I could almost bring myself to talk about it--to a passer-by, that will never see her again, or me either. Sure I can churn and talk. My name's Mrs. Rainey (GA, 3).

The auditor is a passer-by dissociated, as far as Kate knows, from the context of her subject. This allows Kate a certain freedom to speak her own mind, as she illustrates at the story's conclusion. There, having reported Plez Morgan's version of King's latest arrival and departure, Kate comments, ". . . I bet my little Jersey calf King tarried long enough to get him a child somewhere." She then adds to her auditor, "What makes me say a thing like that? I wouldn't say it to my husband, you mind you forget it."

Kate's consciousness of maintaining an air of decorum in front of a stranger fluctuates throughout her narrative with her urge to be confidential, forthright and outspoken. For although this is the kind of person Kate is deep within herself, she is yet loyally committed to the mores and conventional attitudes of Morgana, her community, and she is dealing with a most delicate topic in that community. About to tell of Plez's account of King's visit to his front porch, Kate interjects this comment: "And not a word's been spoke out loud, for Snowdié's sake, so I trust the rest of the world will be as careful." Speaking outside the pale of the community, Kate feels the passer-by to offer a unique opportunity for her to articulate this delicate topic, but the image of that community is never far from Kate's mind, nor is the fact that she is speaking to one with whom she has not formed a casual basis for intimate gossip. The context, as it thus registers itself in Kate's mind, is ideal for Miss Welty's narrative purpose: she is seeking to represent the conventional views of Morgana toward King and Snowdie's relationship while at the same time conveying private sentiments and speculations that always underlie the conventional.

Ruth Vande Kieft observes that Kate Rainey's "gossipy idiom plunges us at once into the middle of the life and ethos of this small southern town, and it conveys exactly the mixed admiration and sense of outrage felt by Morgana folk as they contemplate King's amorous career."[5] Kate herself, both an individual and a respectful sounding board for community sentiment at large, reflects personally the general ambivalence felt toward King in Morgana, and much of her narrative in "Shower of Gold" might be analyzed by tracing patterns of both private and public, and positive

and negative reflections about King MacLain. As these patterns develop, they build up the narrative's image of King as well as his wife, and they also create a self-portrait of Kate herself.

As Kate is telling of the marriage of King and Snowdie, she represents to her auditor what she feels King's idea of marrying must have been:

> But take King: marrying must have been some of his showing off--like man never married at all till he flung in, then had to show the others how he could go right on acting. And like, "Look, everybody, this is what I think of Morgana and MacLain Courthouse and all the way between"--further, for all I know--"marrying a girl with pink eyes." "I swan!" we all say. Just like he wants us to, scoundrel (GA, 4).

Here Kate's use of "we" and "us" suggests that she is voicing what the community has accepted as its appropriate sense of outrage; note the ambivalence, though, in attributing success to King's design to mock convention while according him a conventional degree of censure for it, nonetheless.

Kate later describes her husband, Fate's, account of having seen a man "the spit-image" of King MacLain in a Governor's inaugural parade at Jackson. This was during one of King's long absences from home, and to her auditor Kate reports her reaction at the time to have been that of wishing King to have been publicly exposed, "right in front of the New Capitol." But of course this is the position Kate then took with her husband. It is good enough to represent to the auditor, as well, but then Kate goes on to temper her present attitude just slightly: "Well, sure men like that need to be shown up before the world, I guess--not that any of us would be surprised." Here one might guess that Kate feels such a public exposure to be exactly what would suit King's vain fancy of himself, and

that, on the one hand, she would personally like to see him triumph, while on the other she wants to maintain a safe, secure moral attitude of deflating that triumph somewhat. Both impulses are real in Kate--the covert sympathy with what King stands for outside society and the safely acknowledged, respectable agreement with what public sentiment commonly stands for within society. For while Kate is a singular human character, she needs society probably more even than society needs her, and much of her individuality has been molded within acceptable channels of society's codes and mores, which lend firmness to Kate's backbone.

Yet several times during her narrative Kate offers independent interpretations of known facts about the MacLain relationship, and it is interesting to observe that in at least three instances she offers interpretations that tend to moderate such bases for censuring King MacLain as society at large might be most likely to discover in these facts. Kate's first instance of this approach is early in the story, where she overtly contradicts a published rumor. Having explained to her auditor that Snowdie is an albino, Kate continues to observe this about King's leaving his hat on the banks of the Big Black:

> Some said King figured out that if the babies started coming, he had a chance for a nestful of little albinos, and that swayed him. No, I don't say it. I say he was just willful. He wouldn't think ahead (GA, 3).

Covering her suggestion with criticism of King's willfulness and even lack of foresight, Kate is really implying that King was not running away from Snowdie for fear of having albino children. Her meaning is to counter this idea of weak moral courage in King, even if she has to resort to other vices with which to do it: at least the other vices are more manly!

Again, still referring to King's leaving his hat on the banks of the Big Black, Kate says that she does not yet know whether King meant the gesture "kind or cruel":

> Kind, I incline to believe. Or maybe she was winning. Why do I try to figure? Maybe because Fate Rainey ain't got a surprise in him, and proud of it (GA, 6).

Not only does Kate incline toward believing the gesture meant kindly, but also she seems to find it a refreshing contrast to the dullness of her own routine husband. In Chapter 7, "The Wanderers," it is learned that King MacLain had once given Kate a swivel chair to sit in while selling eggs by the roadside. King himself, then quite old, makes the disclosure, saying, "Oh, then, she could see where Fate Rainey had fallen down . . .; never got her the thing she wanted. I set her on a throne!" In Chapter 1 Kate implies that she had not been married long herself when Snowdie's twins were born; one can at least speculate that Kate married after Snowdie, resigning herself to "Fate."

Finally, Kate tells her auditor that Snowdie named her twins "Lucius Randall and Eugene Hudson, after her own father and her mother's father." She then adds:

> It was the only sign she ever give Morgana that maybe she didn't think the name King MacLain has stayed beautiful. But not much of a sign; some women don't name after their husbands, until they get down to nothing else left. I don't think with Snowdie even <u>two</u> other names meant she had changed yet, not towards King, that scoundrel (GA, 9).

Here Kate contradicts taking Snowdie's naming of the children as a sign that she has soured toward her husband. That Kate is simply unwilling to see such a sign in Snowdie's naming at least attests to the fact that Kate is not deliberately seeking to muster all the useable scandalous material available against King's reputation. However, to understand Kate's true

reasons for her conclusion upon this point, one needs to examine her conception of Snowdie.

Kate has this to say describing Snowdie during her pregnancy:

> Snowdie just kept as bright and brave, she didn't seem to give in. She must have had her thoughts and they must have been one of two things. One that he was dead--then why did her face have the glow? It had a glow--and the other that he left her and meant it. And like people said, if she smiled then, she was clear out of reach. I didn't know if I liked the glow. . . . But it didn't seem to me, running in and out the way I was, that Snowdie had ever got a real good look at life, maybe. Maybe from the beginning. Maybe she just doesn't know the extent. Not the kind of look I got, and away back when I was twelve year old or so. Like something was put to my eye (GA, 8).

Ruth Vande Kieft relates the "glow" to the Greek myth of Zeus and Danae, connecting it symbolically with the title, "Shower of Gold."[6] Kate finally resolves its ambiguity for her in terms of a mild condescension toward Snowdie for her poor vision (literally, Snowdie has poor eyesight). Kate's condescension seems to have been part of a general community response that expressed itself ambivalently through a kind of protectiveness toward Snowdie. As Kate attempts to explain it, insisting that she loves Snowdie, she says:

> Except none of us felt very close to her all the while. I'll tell you what it was, what made her different. It was the not waiting any more, except where the babies waited, and that's not but one story. We were mad at her and protecting her all at once, when we couldn't be close to her (GA, 8).

Thus the community, including Kate, has sought to deal with the inscrutable in its midst. In its detachment from Snowdie, it resigned itself to a kind of protectiveness of her in which it could at last take a measure of pride: "We was every bit she had," Kate says to her auditor. That this image of Snowdie controls Kate's narrative presentation of her is illustrated near the end of the story, where Kate comments concerning her being

with Snowdie when King supposedly made his last brief visit home. Kate says, "I think she kind of holds it against me, because I was there that day when he come; and she don't like my baby any more."

The second structural segment is more dramatic in focus than the first; in the first Kate's discourse covers developments over a number of years, while in the second her report concentrates upon a single alleged event of one afternoon. As before pointed out, this report concerns Plez Morgan's story of King MacLain's brief visit to his front porch before hurrying away on Hallowe'en just a week before the narrative present. According to Plez's story, which has filtered to Kate Rainey through members of the church to which Lizzie Stark, the lady whose mother employs Plez, belongs, King walked up to his front door before being surprised by his two young sons in Hallowe'en masks. For some moments they capered about their father before he turned and hurried off. In her narrative Kate renders the whole scene quite dramatically, supposedly just as Plez has reported it according to his observation. Kate herself was at the moment in question inside the MacLain house with Snowdie, helping her cut out patterns for sewing. This circumstance leads to a rather complex narrative framework, for Kate supports Plez's information by confirming certain of the details she had access to inside the MacLain house.

The framework first develops as Kate introduces Plez Morgan: ". . . if it wasn't for something that come from outside us all to tell about it, I wouldn't have the faith I have that it come about." She then says of the witness, Plez, "If you wanted anybody in Morgana that wouldn't be likely to make a mistake in who a person is, you would ask for Old Plez." Later, Kate quotes Lizzie Stark's words of similar faith in Plez:

> Miss Lizzie said to the church ladies, "I, for one, trust the Negro. I trust him the way you trust me, Old Plez's mind has remained clear as a bell. I trust his story implicitly," she says, "because that's just what I know King MacLain'd do--run." And that's one time I feel in agreement about something with Miss Lizzie Stark, though she don't know about it, I guess (GA, 18).

Yet even Plez's report has its own measure of implicitness, to compound the literal ambiguity. For example, Kate quotes him in these words: ". . . and Plez said though he couldn't swear to seeing from the Presbyterian Church exactly what Mr. King was doing, he knows as good as seeing it that he looked through the blinds."

As the narrative continues to develop its framework, Kate partially counters the effect of such implicitness by being able, so she says, to confirm several of the details that Plez had reported himself as having observed. For instance, Kate tells her auditor,

> Lucius Randall, Plez said, had on something pink, and he did, the basted flannelette teddy-bears we had tried on on top of his clothes and he got away. And said Eugene was a Chinaman, and that was what he was. . . .
>
> And they made a tremendous uproar with their skates, Plez said, and that was no mistake, because I remember what a hard time Snowdie and me had hearing what each other had to say all afternoon (GA, 15).

Yet, this last "confirmation" raises, in turn, more doubt: in spite of the noise of the skates that gave Kate and Snowdie difficulty hearing, Plez reports having heard the twins address their father. According to Kate, "Plez said King stood it a minute--he got to turning around too. They were skating around him and saying in high birdie voices, 'How do you do, Mister Booger?'" Again, later in the story, Kate reports what the twins told Snowdie when she questioned them about their peculiar behavior following the incident:

> "Well, speak," said their mother, and they told her a booger had come up on the front porch and when they went out to see him he said, "I'm going. You stay," so they chased him down the steps and run him off (GA, 16).

What Kate here says that the children replied to Snowdie seems indirectly to confirm what Kate says that Plez overheard them say to King (the word "booger" occurs in both contexts). However, both statements are only Kate's reported versions of what was spoken and allegedly overheard; furthermore, Kate admits that she failed to take an opportunity she might have had to learn the truth of the story with her own eyes:

> Suppose Snowdie'd took a notion to glance down the hall--the dining room's at the end of it, and the folding-doors pushed back--and seen him, all "Come-kiss-me" like that. I don't know if she could have seen that good--but I could. I was a fool and didn't look (GA, 14).

Thus, in spite of the supplementary evidence Kate offers from having had a special vantage point inside the MacLain house, she cannot circumstantiate Plez's version that the caller was indeed King MacLain.

Continuing, Kate gives an account of what followed Snowdie's brief interview with her sons during the incident in question, explaining that Snowdie abruptly rushed outside the house and, encountering Plez, asked him what he had just seen. However, affecting successfully just to be passing by at the moment, Plez denied having noticed anyone at all. Kate then tells her auditor that it was later, after the incident, that Plez declared the "truth"; Kate describes the course of Plez's information from him to herself and also explains why Plez "fabricated" to Snowdie:

> It was later on that Mrs. Stark got hold of Plez and got the truth out of him, and I heard it after a while, through her church. But of course he wasn't going to let Miss Snowdie MacLain get hurt now, after we'd all watched her so long. So he fabricated (GA, 17-18).

The narrative framework fully defined, its last effect occurs very near the end of the story when Kate reports a "change" Plez made in his story. Earlier, Kate's account had been that, according to Plez, King had "plowed into the rough toward the Big Black" when hurrying away from the MacLain house; however, reviewing her impression of King's retreat just before concluding her narrative, Kate informs her auditor that Plez "couldn't swear to the direction--so he changed and said." Yet, in the final analysis, Plez's contradictory "change" in his story makes Kate's own version no less realistic as a simple account of what she has heard; her narrative coheres upon a firm basis of plausibility. Moreover, not only is the narrative plausible, but also the use of Plez as a purported eyewitness makes a dramatic focus possible that Kate develops very well in spite of its dubious origin, devious course and indirect angle of vision. This indirectness, implicitness and ambiguity are always there, mixed with the dramatic immediacy and sense of plausibility. The former elements contribute to the impression of mystery and elusiveness that generally characterizes King MacLain's image in the eyes of Morgana, while the two latter not only lend themselves to a vivid mode of storytelling but also seem to confirm some of the aspects of King's conduct and career that Kate relates in the first part of the story. Finally, the whole narrative framework of the second section enables Miss Welty to continue carrying out the narrative purpose begun in the first section, that of portraying the way the MacLain relationship looks to the community while frequently going behind the public's open view for personal insight and special details.

iv

After developing much history of other characters in three succeeding chapters of The Golden Apples, Miss Welty again turns to internal narration in Chapter 5, "The Whole World Knows," to probe the mind of Ran MacLain, King's now-grown son. Although Ran, the narrator, has no literal auditor, interest in the narrative context centers around the imaginary situation of addressing his father that Ran projects in his mind. Ran's obvious "search" for a father is one sharply drawn motive for his narration; as internal monologue, it expresses the inwardness of his quest. Yet because the projected father is his real father and also a character in the novel, Ran's narrative seemingly enters the social dimension of dramatic experience.

One purpose Miss Welty seems to achieve in "The Whole World Knows" is that of using Ran's mind to effect a variation of the image of King MacLain. Ran's narrative implicates his father in the social morality of both his native community and his immediate family. In Ran's tortured perspective King appears somewhat less than heroic or legendary. For the first time in the novel his failure as a father comes into sharp focus, for not only is it suggested by his absence from Morgana and deafness toward Ran when this son needs him desperately, but it is also underscored by the irony in Ran's situation of having left his wife not to be unfaithful to her but to retaliate for her infidelity to him. Herein, Ran's course parallels that of his father, but only in outline; the son is actually a victim of that crime of desertion by which his father has repeatedly victimized his mother. By King's dubious code, therefore, Ran must be accounted a failure in manhood, or something like it, but by surer

standards objectified in this ironic reversal, King must be held accountable for his son's moral failures through his own failure as a father. Ran's monologue is a judgment upon his father, although Ran does not make even the accusation overt: he appears frustrated by the fact that it would be vain to point a finger at a nonentity, for his father has become for him largely just a memory and figment of imagination.

Ran's narrative context is inward: he recounts his story to an imagined listener, and his mind controls the development of its structure. However, his perspective is implicitly well defined, and his field of vision is basically coherent. Although Ran never indicates his literal location as narrator, it is tempting to picture him alone and ruminating in Francine Murphy's rooming house--formerly the MacLain house and Ran's childhood home. Yet the actual moment of narration seems to lie somewhere in the vague interval between Ran's leaving his room at Francine Murphy's and his eventual reconciliation with his wife, Jinny Love, in a later chapter.[7] Ran returns to his childhood dwelling after leaving Jinny, and this circumstance reflects the search-for-a-father motif. Whatever vague literal setting he occupies, he focuses upon his recent past, centering in particular around two concrete settings that become contexts for most of the dramatic action he conveys. These settings are the Stark household and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Ran describes a couple of visits to see Jinny at the former and a singular trip to the latter with a girl companion whose innocence he thereby dooms. First he tells of leaving his wife, its impact upon town gossip and the triangular situation he is trapped in--trapped even at his local place of business as well as Jinny's house. He also relates his private feelings toward the "other man," Woody Spights,

and toward his "cheating" wife. Finally, he tells of manipulating and corrupting Maideen Sumrall, a previously innocent country girl of eighteen, while with her on a trip to Vicksburg that leads them to a sordid night of sex, drunkenness and attempted suicide in a motel room.

Miss Welty uses the "internal-dramatic" monologue technique--the soliloquy addressed to a supposed but absent or imaginary listener--both to achieve a substantial degree of concrete dramatic coherence and to effect a pervasive overtone of failure, irony and desperation. Yet she also uses it further in this story to exploit some of its potential effects of stream of consciousness narration. These effects in "The Whole World Knows" serve as means to at least three narrative ends: they are flexibility of focus, psychic immediacy of vision, and indirect revelation of inward states of consciousness. They are wrought through three devices in Ran's narrative that help to transform its impression as literature from one of dramatic monologue to one of inner dialogue--a truer description of the nature of its real context, after all. The first of these devices is that of Ran's paraphrasing of two other characters' speeches as monologues, with significance for him and for the reader beyond their literal contexts. The second is his inserting of fragments of a telephone conversation with his mother at odd points into his narration. The third is his describing of digressions in his mind of imagined violence done in retribution upon his wife and her new lover.

It would be easy to say that, as indirect reflectors of Ran's character, the paraphrased monologues reveal his self-consciousness, the telephone fragments his filial incommunicativeness, and the violence-filled digressions his obscure outrage, blinding resentment and moral

impotence. Or, one could also cite the monologues' suggestions of Ran's sense of guilt or their implication of his feeling of exposure to the public eye. Or again, one might discover in the telephone fragments their implication of anonymity--of mechanized alienation--or in the digressions theirs of frustration in both hate and love. And indeed, although nearly every instance of these devices receives a full measure of implication from both its immediate context and other parts of the story, it is adequate for illustrating Miss Welty's narrative purpose and skill in using them that one concentrate only upon their broad, obvious functions.

There are three separate accounts of monologuic speeches to which Ran has been subjected; all three occur in the portion of the story that precedes the trip to Vicksburg, or that part forming the first of two loosely conceived dramatic "actions." However, only one occurs at the basic setting for that part, the Stark household. The other two occur at the local bank, where Ran (and also Woody Spights) works behind a window. The first and third speeches are spoken by Morgana's general sounding-board, Miss Perdita Mayo; these Ran directly quotes (using rhetorical introductions and quotation marks), and they are the two that occur at the bank. The second speech originates in the mouth of Maideen Sumrall during a visit she accompanies Ran on to the Starks' home. This monologue appears more nearly a reconstruction by Ran himself, as narrator, than do the other two, for in recounting Maideen's talk Ran does not use a formal introduction to quotation or quotation marks. Rather, Ran introduces the passage of content ascribed to Maideen by explaining her perspective and motivation in two preceding paragraphs. The perspective is that of public gossip, uncritically digested; in her innocence Maideen has assimilated

unto herself the "story" of Ran's marital difficulty without questioning or even fully understanding the words, which she parrots to the assemblage at Lizzie Stark's. According to Ran, her motivation is practically nil--just repetitiousness for its own sake: dumb, purposeless repetitiousness. Ran feels himself a victim of this ignorant impulse in Maideen that is susceptible to being used by the more knowingly motivated gossips that have been her malicious sources. He feels himself victimized in two senses: first, he is trumpeted as a subject of scandal that he can hardly begin to interpret; and secondly, he is an unwilling witness to an unwitting demonstration of one of the absurd processes of life. It is finally this second sense of being victimized that most rubs Ran counter to his sensibility, for it is precisely the general absurdity of life that he feels himself fleeing from, in fear that there might be no escape. Only some principle of order, like a father-figure, might possibly restore some harmony to these recent events Maideen retells, but at the end of her monologue (that ends on an explicit note of imprisionment in Morgana), Ran discovers no such ordering principle in the void into which Maideen's absurdity fades: "Father! You didn't listen," is all that Ran can think to frame the passage.

The two monologues by Perdito Mayo that Ran directly quotes complicate his basis for evaluating Maideen's talk and its sources. Both Maideen's passage and Perdita's second monologue end on the same note, expressed almost in the same words; this is the suggestion that Morgana is a closed community, that Jinny's affair is an "endless circle," and that it is futile to try to escape from any reality in Morgana, especially that of guilty lust. This correlation between the two monologues first suggests

that Perdita Mayo might have been a source for Maideen's repertoire; yet secondly, it also suggests how much Ran possibly senses the wisdom and weight of this common closing note, for one cannot read Maideen's or Perdita's monologues realistically without assuming that Ran has reconstructed them according to his own words, and it could be his own inner device to close the two in question on the same literal note, as though it were a motif his mind has burdened itself with or obsessively wants to communicate to his father. Yet, Perdita's surface shows no sign of malice; indeed it seems to suggest a motive of appeasing and reconciling. If she has been one of Maideen's sources, then her apparent motivation must suggest to Ran some ambiguity in the morality of gossip and validity of its circulation.

Perdita's perspective develops as a supplement to Maideen's in the first part of the story; they both basically reflect Ran's own sense of current gossip about Jinny and himself. However, as Perdita's monologues develops through direct quotation into some length, they come also (the second one in particular) to create a measurably dramatized perspective that affords some direct sense of the public view in actual evolution. One experiences with immediacy the processes of Perdita's thoughts as Ran recreates them in his words and she becomes heightened for the moment as his "character." The haunting effect of having this "character" speak in one's mind is obvious with this device. Perdita's voice is one of several discordant motifs that clutter Ran's conscience and scramble his perspective. Yet, for Ran this haunting effect is ambiguous, not only because of Perdita's apparent motivation, but also because of what she reasons and advises. She admonishes Ran to return to Jinny, claiming that her affair with Woody is

only a "thing of the flesh" and "won't last." Very likely, this interpretation and advice do strike a sympathetic chord in Ran's heart and seem agreeable to him in weak moments. Yet, he appears capable of stronger moments, too, when he must only be puzzled and bewildered by her bland approach and specious reasoning.

The monologues of "The Whole World Knows" are cooperative with the fragments of telephone conversation as narrative measures for exposition; they provide background needed to clarify the chapter's outward conflicts. For instance, it is Perdita's "voice" that finally spells out Ran's predicament with Jinny in black and white. However, the six fragments of telephone conversation between Ran and his mother, Snowdie, present Ran with a clear alternative to Perdita's overview. This alternative, his mother's overview, has the obvious weakness of being overly subjective and narrow-minded. These fragments develop Ran's conception of his mother as being shallow and ineffectual, and create his essential image of her as just a voice in a box. A dominant motif in these fragments is the familiar one of "'Where have you gone?' 'Nowhere.' 'What have you done?' 'Nothing.'" These stock responses characterize the meaninglessness of the conversation for Ran; in truth, they suggest the meaninglessness of his whole relationship with his mother, as he sees it. Ran seems to imply this meaninglessness by avoiding overt comment in the narrative whenever a fragment ends: his silence on its subject reflects his mind's positive negation of its value. Yet, for all this conversation's negative import for Ran, it is significant to the study of narrative technique in the chapter that one analyze Snowdie's conception of Ran's only course, which so sharply polarizes that expressed by Perdita Mayo.

The first fragment appears just after Ran's first address to King, which opens the chapter. Ran's futile opening invocation is the only preliminary to his initial attempt to communicate to his father that nagging, prying tone he gets from his mother. In this fragment Snowdie wants Ran to return and live with her in the neighboring community of MacLain Courthouse. Then, in the next fragment, she accuses her son in Morgana of keeping things from her and neglecting his health. Her solution is for Ran to return to her, and in the next fragment she accuses him of "walking around in a dream." However, this charge ironically recalls Kate Rainey's view of Snowdie herself in Chapter 1.

The fourth fragment develops as a brief monologue in itself; Ran makes no reported response to anything his mother says, as he does in the first two fragments. He simply introduces his mother's speech with the usual "Mother said . . . ." Ran does report his responses to parts of his mother's conversation in four of the six fragments, the other exception being the threadbare insertion, "Mother said, Son, you're walking around in a dream" (the third and briefest fragment). In these as well as the four fragments in which Ran does report his responses, Ran indicates his mother's words by using italics, without quotation marks (a device suggestive of Faulknerian technique). In those four that contain replies to his mother, Ran sets off these replies with dashes, and their words are unitalicized. The typography of these fragments must be interpreted symbolically, since nowhere can Ran's narrative be identified as printing; the print must be regarded as a narrative convention (similar to that of omniscient access, for instance). As in all unspoken, internal monologue, the peculiar effects of the unconventional typography in Ran's narrative suggest the moral

topography of the thinker's mind: the typographical deviations that call special attention to themselves form a "map"--a symbolic graph--of the contours of consciousness in the narrator's mind. The effect of the particular typographical deviations in "The Whole World Knows"--which are found only in the telephone-conversation fragments--is to convey Ran's sense of the obliteration of his mother's identity as an individual source of insight and inward fortitude; the absence of quotation marks symbolizes the absence of form (that is, identity) that Ran attributes to the voice in the box.

In her monologue constituting the fourth fragment, Snowdie questions what Ran could want with his father's old pistol, which she has noticed in Ran's coat pocket; this same pistol she says King "never cared for . . ., went off and left. . . ." King's nature is neither violent nor self-destructive, so again the contrast between the father and the son suggests an irony that builds toward a petty climax--Ran's unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide in the motel at Vicksburg with this same pistol. Much of this irony develops implicitly around this pistol's image: Ran seems to use it as a crutch, before he finally tries to use it against his own life. When he does actually try to use it, it is impotent; it fails to fire in the motel room, and Maideen takes custody of it. Before this incident, Ran has used it only in his imagination--to "kill" Jinny. This imagined act, as well as his imagined fatal assault upon Woody Spights, is detailed in the form of a dramatic digression in the narrative (or rather a digression in Ran's thought, or his life, which his narrative dramatically records). Examination of the two digressions of imagined murder reveals their depth of irony; the first point to note is that Ran's

imaginary slayings with a real pistol probably in his pocket suggest not only his essential ineffectuality as a protagonist but also his moral impotence (and the impotence even of his imagination), for murder is a form of impotence in a situation like Ran's--an act in such a case that concludes or resolves nothing morally. Moreover, not only does the pistol fail to fire when Ran tries to use it, but much later it is disclosed that Maideen finally succeeds wherein Ran has failed, completing literally a suicide of her own that she has begun to commit in the motel with Ran. The pistol that only puzzles Snowdie in the fourth fragment of Ran's conversation with her becomes an objective correlative for all this ironic impotence and self-destruction, yet Snowdie can merely speculate on its uselessness to Ran and then turn her attention to thrift and vacations. Clearly, the pistol incorporates Snowdie in its irony, too, for her puzzlement over this central object of meaning reflects her impotence as a parent to save or aid her desperate son.

In the fifth fragment of telephone conversation Snowdie remarks, "The Lord never meant us all to separate," referring probably to herself and her sons, but not necessarily to King (she mentions the other son's going away in this same fragment). This likelihood of King's exclusion from Snowdie's reference becomes clear in the sixth and last fragment, when Snowdie says, "The whole world knows what she did to you. It's different from when it's the man." The "whole world" also knows what King has done to her, but she uncourageously implies her own weak willingness to excuse her husband on the familiar but questionable grounds of a "double standard" of sexual morality. Although she has taken King back apparently a number of times (judging from other parts of the novel), she says that

she could not stand the thought of Ran's ever going back to Jinny. This "double standard" indeed lies very close to the principal source of Ran's whole bewilderment over the ambiguity of experience: in fantasy Ran seeks to "use his father's weapon" against Jinny, but it does not work for him. It fails to work not so much because Ran is only daydreaming as because Jinny has already "used his father's weapon" against him. This is very likely the most crucial of all the ironies that cluster around the pistol in Ran's pocket.

Twice during his narrative Randall reports digressions in his mind upon imaginary murders committed against Jinny and Woody Spights. These digressions reportedly occur during actual visits Ran makes to the Stark house. In the first reported digression Ran imagines that he beats Woody to death with a croquet mallet but that he rises up again from the dead "with no sign of pain." In the second digression Ran imagines that he fires bullets into Jinny's breasts from his father's pistol but that she is unaffected by and insensitive to the attack. Ran narrates these imaginings as though they were integral parts of the outward action; so doing, he suggests his inner desperation to control the uncontrollable outward--a desperation so intense that illusion has begun to assume the quality of reality in his mind. Yet, this illusioning process is not completed when Ran forms his monologue to his father, for Ran uses terms to describe his digressions that obliquely reveal the imaginative status of the "murders." One can only conclude that Ran's subtle mixture of reality and fantasy in his own narrative method reveals an impulsive use of self-destructive irony, while noting further that other related ironies connected with these digressive scenes of imagined murder have

already been cited in discussing the function of King's pistol as a symbol.

In his "dramatic" monologue or, more accurately, inner dialogue with himself, finally, Randall MacLain is seeking an explanation of why he has left Jinny, or why she has been unfaithful, as well as some justification of what he has done to Maideen Sumrall and, most of all, an evaluation of what he is doing or letting happen to himself. However, Ran can at last only wonder about these things, for the developing image of King MacLain finally comes full circle in Ran's mind, and the son can only consign his father back to the nebulous realm of legend, for what he is worth. The legend that his father is holds no answer to the riddle of Ran's recent experience, no more than does the advice of Perita Mayo or the counsel of Snowdie.

V

Miss Welty turns once again to internal narration with an auditor in her comic novel The Ponder Heart (1953). In this novel she does not introduce any notable innovations in the technique; she neither surpasses in scope nor extends the range of the resources for internal narration she develops in her earlier short fiction. Since this shorter fiction has provided a concentrated basis on which to examine these resources in detail already, it is not particularly valid for this study to make now any extensive survey of detailed narrative development in The Ponder Heart. What is particularly valid here is an overview of its narrative context, for by comparison and contrast with respectively significant short works, such as overview discloses a thematic pattern of moral implication developed through internal narration with an auditor in Miss Welty's fiction.

The narrator of The Ponder Heart, Edna Earle Ponder, tells an extended, sometimes digressive "comic anecdote" of her eccentric Uncle Daniel Ponder. Edna Earle's rather obviously patient auditor is just a stranger who is marooned by car trouble. As auditor, this stranger in Edna Earle's community represents both a "reader-figure" and a symbol of the "world" outside that small community. In her critical study, Ruth Vande Kieft offers this understanding of the novel's purpose and narrative contribution to fictional humor:

> Uncle Daniel of The Ponder Heart has a Dickensian sort of eccentricity. His particular "humour" is his over-generosity: the compulsion to give away which springs from his enormous, "ponder"ous heart. But the incongruity of his nature is that this out-sized heart has no balancing counterpart of rational and moral intelligence. Lacking the wisdom of the serpent, Uncle Daniel is foolish as a dove; lacking a trace of "common sense," he borders on insanity. Out of the clash between the foolishness of Uncle Daniel's "wisdom" and the "foolishness" of the ordinary world of selfishness and calculation, zany relationships and muddles develop: the absurd marriage between Bonnie Dee Peacock and Uncle Daniel; the "murder" by tickling ("creep-mousie," Edna Earle calls it); the riotous disruption of a trial by the hero's explosive "give-away."
>
> Again the comedy is inherent in the speaker's tone and manner of speech as much as in characters and situation, and again the comedy is mixed with irony. The "tragedy" develops because Bonnie Dee's heart isn't, either literally or symbolically, strong enough to match the strength of the Ponder Heart. "It may be," says Edna Earle, "anybody's heart would quail, trying to keep up with Uncle Daniel's." The townsfolk, in any event, are finally alienated from their most generous and entertaining citizen only because of their greed in keeping the money he gives away in the courtroom. But the story is not a parable; it is a light-hearted "murder mystery"--Miss Welty's single venture into that particular fictional mode.[8]

Although Miss Vande Kieft does not find a parable in Edna Earle's narrative, it is clear that the novel is a study of the ambiguity that lies between madness and magnanimity, or between generosity and the psychologically grotesque. The study develops implicitly as a story told about an uncle by a favored niece. This niece is sufficiently like her uncle and

loyal to him to be sympathetic toward him, yet she is also "sane" enough to utilize a detached perspective in her narrative. She is also adequately sensitive to combine both the sympathy and the perspective with a unique, not to say quaint, kind of understanding. Edna Earle's avowed role as "go-between" between her family and the world reflects her essentially balanced view of life: "When somebody spoke to Uncle Daniel, I tried to answer for him too, if I could. I'm the go-between, that's what I am, between my family and the world. I hardly ever get a word in for myself." These remarks by the narrator refer to conversation at a dinner during a recess in Uncle Daniel's trial for the murder of his wife, Bonnie Dee: the trial itself seems to represent an inevitable "test" of the values of the Ponder heart (and head) before the world's tribunal. Edna Earle speaks to her auditor as though she feels that this trial is inconclusive--as though she senses that one like her Uncle Daniel will always be "on trial" before worldly judgment and opinion. Thus her point of view develops the perspective of the legal advocate as its controlling metaphor. The metaphor defines the narrator's role as mediator between the world of common values and order and that of eccentricity.

In a passage nearly midway through her narrative, Edna Earle discusses her uncle's treatment of his young wife, and in so doing the narrator reveals a way to understand her uncle that suggests his basic character "flaw." In her account the narrator does not take up this suggestion as critically as a more objective reader might, yet what she does indicate about her uncle says a great deal about her basic "objectivity" in situations demanding upon her sympathy and loyalty:

> And to tell you the truth, he was happy. This time, he knew where she was. Bonnie Dee was out yonder in the big old

> lonesome dark house, right in the spot where he most wanted her and where he left her, and where he could think of her being--and here was himself safe with Edna Earle in the Beulah Hotel, where life goes on on all sides (PH, 48).

One might conclude from this description of Uncle Daniel's predilections that he most wants a private kind of security that he can think about without actually being committed to or involved in. Possibly he just wants the availability of freedom and unhampered circulation; or perhaps, as with some figures in Browning's dramatic monologues (e.g., "My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover"), Uncle Daniel's desire not to participate in his own secure private world stems from a fear that such personal participation would create variables and thus be exactly what would jeopardize its security. At any rate, his flaw seems to be an "innocent" flaw, yet one that is ironic to his virtue of generosity. He wishes to be involved in the public world of the hotel's activity, where nothing is demanded of him, but he also wants to keep a safe, secure private world, without committing any part of himself to it.

To begin to perceive the pattern of moral implication that Miss Welty develops through internal narration with an auditor, one might compare Edna Earle Ponder with Kate Rainey, the internal narrator of "Shower of Gold" in The Golden Apples. Both Kate and Edna Earle show their capability of balancing the "inner" vision with the "outer"--the private world with the social. Kate, like Edna Earle, is a "go-between," mediating between Snowdie MacLain (possibly another eccentric in her own way) and the world of Morgana. Finally, both Kate and Edna Earle seek to develop sympathetic perspectives toward the character for whom they "go-between." Edna Earle's motive seems finally to be the more difficult of the two, yet her perspective, insofar as it is sympathetic, is also the more convincing.

One should also contrast both Edna Earle and Kate Rainey with the other two internal narrators who have auditors, "Sister," in "Why I Live at the P.O.," and Ran MacLain, in "The Whole World Knows." "Sister" is more "transparent than Ran, because her mind is less pliable than his. She maintains an outward appearance of moral sturdiness because she can distort complex experience into straight, rigid modes of interpretation. Yet one can easily see through the oversimplification on which she tries to base her false position. Ran, on the other hand, is conscious of complication and ambiguity but cannot satisfactorily balance them with a stable moral vision; he is too bewildered and frustrated to supply his own, and he has no one else he can really rely on. Perdita is too much like "Sister" in her forceful resoluteness, and Snowdie is too much like "Sister" also in her weakness to distort and oversimplify. Thus Ran is spiritually overwhelmed by the consciousness of ambiguity, while "Sister" is spiritually paralyzed by her unconsciousness of it. Ran is a victim of moral disorientation in a predicament of ambiguities, while "Sister" is a victim of moral oversimplification in a network of complex relationships.

From these comparisons and contrasts one can conclude that those narrators who are incapable of dealing with ambiguity and complexity in life (i.e., "Sister" and Ran) tend to focus on their own problems, whereas those others (i.e., Kate and Edna Earle) who are capable of balancing ambiguity and complexity with flexible but firm moral vision tend to concentrate upon another's predicament. These latter seem successful in developing a basis for sympathy upon their balanced visions, while the unfortunate former two seem either negated or destroyed as moral agents. This negation and destruction is the price of egoism, whether it erode the

capacity for outward discimination or blur the inner moral vision: this, at least, is one conviction that Miss Welty seems to have used as a principle of developing internal narration with an auditor, which has converted that conviction into a literary theme.

Footnotes

[1]Vande Kieft, pp. 67-68.

[2]Vande Kieft, p. 68.

[3]Vande Kieft, pp. 67-68.

[4]See Vande Kieft, pp. 111-49 (Chapter 7, "The Search for the Golden Apples").

[5]Vande Kieft, p. 113.

[6]See Vande Kieft, p. 113.

[7]At one point Ran speaks of the room he "had" at Francine Murphy's. Yet, his narrative has the effect of connecting the monologue closely with that quarter, and it is "felt" to be the narrative setting, not only because of its symbolic relevance to the narrative context, but also because no interval is dramatized that would remove him visibly in time from the indefinite period of his residence there.

[8]Vande Kieft, pp. 69-70.

CHAPTER IV

EXTERNAL NARRATION AS RESTRICTED PRIMARY PERSPECTIVE

i

With this chapter the present study now considers a selection of Eudora Welty's fiction that is conspicuous for development of the restricted external narrative perspective. In doing so, it must address itself to the most fundamental of all distinctions in method to be found among narrative resources--the distinction between internal and external narration. This distinction is more germane to story structure than is either the one between privileged and restricted narration or that between primary and secondary perspective. The basic structural difference between internal and external narration is that whereas the narrative context in internal narration is an integral part of the fictional illusion, it is a separate context or illusion altogether in external narration and might conveniently be called the "narrative illusion" to distinguish it structurally from the fictional illusion. There is usually more irony of rhetoric in Miss Welty's internal narration than there is in her external narration, the latter generally containing greater comprehensiveness of vision and complexity of insight than the former; yet, even this comprehensiveness and richness of implication can become vehicles of irony in external narration, especially the irony of discrepancy in vision or perspective. While both internal and external narration develop this kind of irony, the external method

develops it more explicitly than does the internal method, since external narration allows one to measure discrepancies between character perspectives against a constant norm that often functions in turn as a comprehensive perspective at further ironic distance from all character perspectives. Also, both methods likewise develop the irony of situation, but whereas the internal method usually implicates the narrator in this kind of irony, the external method always keeps him safely detached from it. This detachment helps to clarify the comprehensive nature of his vision whenever it attains that measure of development.

Furthermore, this detachment from the dramatic context of the fictional illusion and its ironies of situation suggests a second salient characteristic of external narration, both restricted and privileged, that should be regarded almost as carefully as should the first, the structural cleavage between the fictional and the narrative illusions. This second characteristic of external narration as opposed to internal is one that might be called the external narrator's "spokesmanship": it is the capacity of the external narrator to reflect the author's own projected ideal consciousness as an observer and sometimes an interpreter of the action. "Spokesmanship" is prevalent in all of Miss Welty's external narration, and its central thematic role in certain works largely accounts for their meriting inclusion in either this chapter's discussion or that of Chapter VI, both of which concentrate upon primary external rather than secondary internal perspectives. The quality of spokesmanship in external narration creates an obvious texture of sensitive perception and sometimes implies a moral frame of reference; while the former often seems to control language and imagery, the latter even sometimes appears to affect structure and symbolism.

Miss Welty has used external narration much more extensively in her fiction than she has internal narration, although it would probably be incorrect to conclude either that she has felt less secure or competent in internal narration than she has in external, or that she has deemed internal narration to be only a minor resource for her native kind of talent. Nevertheless, one should recognize that the bulk of her major work is done in external narration and that much of her most thematically intense material, such as Delta Wedding, a large part of The Golden Apples, Losing Battles and short stories like "Death of a Traveling Salesman," relies on that technique. She simply seems to have regarded the advantages of external narration as preferable to her needs more often than the subtle ironies of wit and verbiage best secured through internal narration. Among the chief advantages of external narration, again, are a flexibility for observation, a comprehensiveness of analysis, and a steady personal frame of reference for moral interpretation.

The following studies in this chapter and those in the next chapter as well all concern Miss Welty's development of external narration and perspective that does not adopt the convention of privileged psychological access toward characters' minds; hence the method is designated as "restricted," and it shares this perceptual limitation with that of internal narration, although the external narrator never shares the internal narrator's dramatic fallability as a reporter. These present studies concentrate on the external perspective of the narrator in restricted external narration, while those of the following chapter consider the secondary internal or character perspective that such narration can develop. As illustrated there, the secondary perspective in restricted

narration is always substance of conjecture. The proceeding section of this chapter examines Miss Welty's early use of external narration as restricted primary perspective in a group of short stories from her first collection, A Curtain of Green.

ii

"Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" poses a question of mismanaged motives. It opens a collection of stories that range from comic to tragically serious reflections of character in Mississippi life. A considerable majority of these stories contain external narration, and their narrators range likewise from detachment to absorption in the thoughts of their characters. This first story in A Curtain of Green depicts a series of comic events observed with perfectly collected objectivity by a characteristically reticent narrator. This reticence is broken only occasionally enough to insure clarity in characterization and tone. The "three ladies" are characterized as sharers in the folly of taking oneself and one's duties too seriously. Lily Daw's character is that of healthy retardation. The narrator's tone is one of familiar diversion that falls short, however, of being true amusement.

This story is a mock-melodrama that appears to have all the standard components of true melodrama until one examines their flimsy surfaces. There is the young heroine who is hopefully still a virgin though possibly already deflowered. There are her protectors, watching over innocence and local values. There are the rigid alternatives of fate for the heroine, the opposing forces of good and evil, and finally the dark villian himself. Yet, without much probing, these surfaces yield to

their ironic undersides as soon as the action begins. The young heroine is mentally retarded, incapable of understanding loyalty even on her wedding day. The protectors are actually seeking a scapegoat to punish--for vague enough reasons--no matter whether it be guilty of conjectured wrongdoing or of natural handicap. And the dark villain, who is actually a redhead with a red coat and red notebook, appears voluntarily at last to fulfill his proposal of marriage.

It is not the narrator but the three ladies who conceive of the action as melodramatic, just as it is they who mostly create that action. One must continually measure their degree of misguided involvement in farfetched idealism with the narrator's degree of unimpassioned detachment from their floundering circumstances. His own sane and steady vision puts the ladies' context in perspective and reduces their melodramatic illusions to realistic proportions. By so doing, the narrator attributes a correct dimension of value and significance to the ladies' story, reducing it from their pretentious "readings" to the status of an anecdote. As anecdote, the story expresses the absurdity of affected community rapport with the psychically defective mind.

The ladies' ostensible motive in the story is to remove the simple Lily Daw from worldly danger. She is becoming "'very mature for her age,'" according to Mrs. Watts, one of the three ladies, and can no longer, so that lady professes, go ungoverned or unprotected. Actually, the fact seems to be that for these ladies such a temptation as Lily constitutes can no longer be tolerated, for they fear not so much the threat of her downfall as the threat of offense to their sensibilities. And even further, their sensibilities might thinly veil an even deeper fear rooted in

Lily's presence, the fear of affront to their worn-out capacities for love-making. Yet this idea is finally a matter of conjecture, which the narrator's distanced reticence merely suggests.

The ladies conceive of removing Lily from Victory, their Mississippi community, to the Ellisville Institute for the Feeble-Minded of Mississippi at their own expense, even before learning of Lily's sudden plans for impending marriage to an itinerant xylophone player. This disclosure heightens their sense of the urgency of their mission, not because they fear that the xylophone player could unwittingly marry a dimwit, which they do not at first believe could happen and later do not bother about when it appears likely to take place, just that way, but rather because they fear that Lily might be pregnant. As this action proceeds, the conceptions the ladies have of it become adequately clear. Although remaining somewhat confused and overlapping, these conceptions are tentatively distinct enough in each lady's mind to be defined in individual categories reflecting each one's basic viewpoint. Mrs. Watts, who appears to be a widow, seems to view the episode mostly as insidious material for sensational scandal, rectifiable only through her charming manipulation, as she thinks, of a just resolution. Mrs. Carson, the second lady and wife of the local Baptist minister, seems to envision the episode in terms of a morality play--a conflict of cosmic proportions between the forces of evil and the forces of good, the latter being directed by God Himself, aided by her husband the minister, and being immediately represented by her trio of companions. Finally, the third lady, Aimee Slocum, seems to picture the action as the sentimental necessity of misfortune. All three of these ladies conceive of Lily's story, then, as some form of heroic

melodrama. They do so chiefly because they wish to, and they wish to, it would seem, because they do not know any better. That is, they know no better than their illusions of self-glorification.

It is the narrator's external perspective that must comprehend for the reader that these ladies are making a hypocrisy of benevolence and an unintentional travesty of marriage. The narrator communicates this idea not by delving into the inner minds of the three ladies or by offering extensive commentary upon their actions, but rather by carefully avoiding or rejecting those excesses and illusions that so grossly distort these ladies' perspectives. He will flatly have no part of Mrs. Watts' suspicion of scandal, of Mrs. Carson's moral radicalism, or of Aimee Slocum's heartbroken sentimentality. The contrasts are always present to reader, implied by the very reticence of the narrator.

The essential function of the narrative perspective in "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" is now clear, although its discussion is not quite yet complete. Still needed are illustrations of the narrator's occasional short comments that sharpen sketches of character and make explicit verbal clarification of tone. Also, one other aspect of the overall method of narration needs to be brought out to account for its whole effect.

Certain statements or situations seem to provoke the narrator momentarily out of his usual reticence; these occasions function to motivate comments that respond to them directly in the narrator's characteristically unimpressed tone of distaste. For example, two such comments about Mrs. Watts occur during the three ladies' interrogation of Lily about her decision to marry. When Mrs. Watts seems to challenge Lily's whole assumption by putting a query as to the man's identity in the form

of a condescending rhetorical question implying that there is no man at all, the narrator comments, "She knew how to pin people down and make them deny what they'd already said." The generalized terms of this comment suggest that the narrator assumes some familiar knowledge of this lady. This familiarity, however, only stresses the narrator's distance in treatment. Again, when the same lady asks indirectly of Lily whether she has been sexually used, the narrator remarks, "In the long run, it was still only Mrs. Watts who could take charge." When somewhat later Aimee Slocum is tearfully saying goodby to Lily on the train that is about to take the young girl to Ellisville, the narrator simply says of Aimee, "She was the one who felt things." Also, the narrator characterizes the voice of Mrs. Carson at one point as being "sad as the soft noises in the hen house at twilight." This rural image helps associate the narrator with "place," but this fact too just stresses his distance in treatment. Finally, when Mrs. Carson has just explained to Lily that it is God and "Mr. Carson, too" that have ordained Ellisville as her best proper resort, the narrator cannot forego making this comment: "Lily looked reverent, but still stubborn." Thus the outrageous conduct of the ladies seems occasionally to strain the basic structure of effaced narration by forcing these irrestible intrusions.

Still other forms of intrusions, however, also break the general pattern of effaced narration. Occasionally the narrator generalizes the collective thoughts or impressions of particular groups that exclude the principal characters. For example, to create the impression of the opening scene of the story, which focuses upon Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Carson's talking in the Victory post office, the narrator observes that "Everybody

else in the post office wondered what was up now." Later concluding this first scene, the narrator again comments that "several of the other ladies . . . did not go at once to take their mail out of their boxes; they felt a little left out." Finally, concluding the whole story in the last scene, the narrator remarks that "Some of the people thought Lily was on the train . . . ." The words "wondered," "felt" and especially "thought" seem at first to suggest privileged-access reporting; the collective and general scope of these comments, however, implies that they cannot represent precise omniscient information. Therefore, what might at first be construed as omniscient vision in these passages actually should be recognized as nothing more than what any perceptive yet ordinary observer could accurately conclude from outward appearance and familiar acquaintance.

This question of privileged access in the story, however, deserves close study in another connection, for therein it is not so easy to explain away. This other connection concerns the reporting of Aimee Slocum's thoughts in the latter part of the story. For example, as the ladies are seeing Lily off on the train, the narrator notes that "Aimee cried sorrowfully, as she thought how far away it was." Again, the narrator observes this when Aimee runs into the xylophone player just outside the train and he asks her of the whereabouts of Lily Daw: "'What do you want to know for?' Aimee asked before she knew it." Then, when Aimee has understood that this is the man Lily has planned to marry, the narrator asks, in his own voice, "Which was more terrible?" as Aimee looks back and forth from the man to the train. The narrator's question here should of course be understood as reflecting waywardness in Aimee's mind, not in his

own. Do this and the other two precise descriptions of thought reflect simply the narrator's taking the liberty to conjecture Aimee's probable thoughts at these moments? Or do they represent his assuming the privilege of omniscient access to record Aimee's exact thoughts? The possibility of conjecture at least exists as a basis on which to argue the case for consistency in narrative perspective; yet, there is nothing that conclusively discounts the possibility of omniscience in these passages, either. That possibility also exists as a basis for contending that Miss Welty might have been exploring in this story the techniques of subtle and strategic shifts in perspective that come under study later in this chapter. That each possibility is valid, however, does not create ambiguity in meaning, and to regard "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" as a story mixing basic restricted narration with supplementary privileged comments is merely one way to look at it. What is important is that, whether done by conjecture or by omniscience, the development of particular focus upon Aimee's mind in the latter part of the story does help to internalize the vision somewhat as the action approaches its climax.

Privileged narration is, however, clearly mixed with restricted in "A Piece of News," the next story from A Curtain of Green, where their alternation defines a three-part structure. In the first part, which contains restricted reporting, a young wife, alone in her house, becomes preoccupied with a newspaper story about someone with her name. She first simply regards the story as a mistake, but she proceeds to reflect until she imagines the case if it were true of herself. The scene that she envisions represents the second part of the story, which contains privileged narration. Then the third part begins when her husband comes home,

and it concludes the story with basically restricted narration. During this sequence of events, a common couple with not an unusual problem contain their lives within a context of expediency and compromise based on practicality and a sense of actual proportion; moreover, the reader discovers the meaning and the price of such a containment--its value as a necessity for endurance and its cost as a product of sacrifice.

The story opens as Ruby Fisher, the young wife, has just returned home from "hitch-hiking," which for her means allowing herself to be picked up along the highway near her home by a male motorist, usually an out-of-state traveler, who is interested in sex. "Hitch-hiking" appears to be a habit Ruby practices frequently. In this particular instance, her companion has been a coffee salesman from Tennessee, who, after spending himself with Ruby in her usual place, the shed of an empty gin, has given her a token of sample coffee, wrapped in a Tennessee newspaper. Much of this detail is background developed by restricted narration in the first part of the story. This narration contains several specific devices to convey its exposition as material contributed by Ruby's own thoughts without resorting to privileged access. Studied later in detail, these devices include uses of the subjunctive mood, metaphor, questions, paraphrasing and Ruby's talking to herself. Besides developing the needed exposition, however, the first part of the story also creates action leading to Ruby's imagined "fate," which in turn contrasts with the mood of the third part to make the story's chief point.

This "fate" that Ruby conjures in her mind is her own murder and burial, both by the hands of her husband, Clyde (for whom she knows such action to be out of character in real life). Ruby imagines such a scene,

however, after discovering a story in the newspaper the salesman had wrapped her coffee in about a "Ruby Fisher" whose husband had shot her in the leg, apparently by accident. As Ruby proceeds to "wonder out loud," she pictures Clyde with "wild black hair," although when he actually appears later in the story he is discovered as being bald. Ruby then sees herself dying in a "brand-new" nightgown, exchanging such stock words with Clyde as, ". . . you done this to me." Obviously intrigued with her image, Ruby then "lay silently for a moment, composing her face into a look which would be beautiful, desirable, and dead." Flattered, even, by what the narrator presently calls "the pity and beauty and power of her death," Ruby continues to imagine Clyde's personal burial of her in vivid detail: the deep hole dug by him under a cedar tree behind their house, the nailed-up pine coffin, and his carrying her to the grave by himself and covering her up with dirt. She imagines that he, in contrast to her composed beauty in death, is "wild, shouting, and all distracted, to think he could never touch her one more time." While all these details are rising in Ruby's mind, constituting the second part of the story, a thunderstorm is occurring outside.

Like "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies," this story concerns an individual who indulges in a fanciful melodrama of the self. Unlike those three ladies, however, Ruby does not confuse her fancy with reality or let it control her actions with respect to the actual, for she can and does recognize the line between the two worlds. Although this capacity later allows her to follow Clyde's lead in accepting their roles as perpetuators of life, Ruby's motives for imagining her murder might be partly masochistic, arising from feelings of guilt and possibly a wish for at least

self-punishment in her mind. They might also be partly sadistic, as well, causing her to make up an occasion for Clyde's own undoing, for the reader learns from the narrator that Ruby would "go out onto the road" whenever "Clyde would make her blue." Yet they too are overtly egotistic, for she is quick to find gratification for her romantic self-image in her imaginative store of decadent melodrama. Nevertheless, Ruby's fantasy has more serious import than do the total delusions of the three ladies in the preceding story: her scenario of violence, passion, guilt and grief is finally, at a level deeper than all the preceding ones, an expression of longing for positive involvement in conclusive meaning that can come about only, she seems to think, through high tragic and moral resolution (which her perverse ego translates into its own melodramatic style and imagery). The newspaper story suggests to Ruby the potentiality for tragic dimension in life, even in her own life. Could she only rise with Clyde to meet the occasion, then out of their mutually tragic moment of truth his revenge might yield her expiation, and her guilt might occasion his martyrdom--or so she unconsciously speculates: at least, profound action would immerse their memories in profound significance. Yet the cost of such tragic resolution of evil is suffering and death. It is a resolution to which the evil should be proportionate and a fate thus reserved for only a few, as both Aristotle and Shakespeare knew, for, as Ruby and Clyde discover, the mass of men lead lives of quiet reprieve from desperation.

Clyde and Ruby illustrate in the last part of the story that her infidelity is not proportionate to tragic resolution. When Clyde comes home he indicates his knowledge of Ruby's "hitch-hiking" and even makes a

vague threat to beat her for it some day. She knows, however, that it is not to be taken seriously. She shows him the newspaper item, and he reacts with normal disbelief, which he confirms for himself later by noting that the issue is a Tennessee newspaper. Before he makes that discovery, though, the couple share a tense moment over the article and its connotation--a moment of both "a double shame and a double pleasure." It is only after this moment and Clyde's placing the newspaper in the fire that he discovers its source of origin and assures Ruby that she is not the subject of its mordant newspiece. Yet Ruby seems to want some acknowledgment from Clyde of its connection with her guilt, for she persists in identifying the name in the story as her own. So, Clyde spanks her playfully as he accuses his wife of fooling him. The reader at this point understands that Clyde and Ruby are not beings destined for high tragedy or serious moral resolutions, but rather are creatures cut from more mundane yet more substantial material. Essentially they are comic figures: they confront but contain the possibility of a tragic moment of truth, as Clyde's good humor and common sense achieves a realistic perspective that is a durable alternative to the clearing of moral debts by murder. Clyde offers an expedient perspective upon guilt that is not even melodramatic but comically commonplace, and he does so because of his nature (which is also Ruby's). Both he and Ruby live in the real world of necessary cohesion between individuals, a world where guilt is common enough but seldom brought to tragic climaxes; rather, it is contained within a daily context of humor, balance and give-and-take. What Clyde and Ruby follow instinctively without quite comprehending it is an inner mandate for coherence in marriage and all social institutions. A meal

is prepared as the storm outside subsides at last, and the story concludes quietly.

Narration in "A Piece of News" is restricted except for Ruby's interval of fantasy when she is alone and the moment of tension after Clyde comes. The central figure in the story is Ruby Fisher, although the center of consciousness is the external narrator, who develops Ruby's perspective objectively and conjecturally throughout the first part of the story. The narrator's use of implication and imputation in this part develops a characterization of Ruby that correlates with the expository background and extends the depth of the fictional illusion. The restricted narration here allows the narrator the general focus needed to integrate exposition with characterization, but he uses certain devices of narration that permit both background and character to develop dramatically as parts of a scene. These devices afford concreteness of vision by expressing information about Ruby's character and the story's background in terms of inferences and assumptions the narrator makes about Ruby's conduct and appearance. They are thus devices for expressing the general view within the particular, as well as means of combining the motifs of exposition, characterization and action into a scene dramatically focused through a single, fixed, detached perspective. They need particular study, especially in ways they contribute to scenic effects; in general, they do so in that they permit the exposition to be dramatized as projected conjectural content of Ruby's "body language" and actual articulation, while the restricted external narrative perspective makes the fictional illusion a natural context for general exposition.

While Ruby is alone, she occasionally talks to herself, and the narrator uses this habit as one basis on which to develop Ruby's perspective. In connection with this basis, narrative questions and paraphrasing are also supplied to supplement its development of implication. Another basis for developing Ruby's perspective centers around the uses of subjunctive mood and metaphor, and it will be illustrated after examples of the first basis are explained.

Parts of Ruby's intermittent monologue are quoted and parts are paraphrased, while parts are merely conjectured, as the narrative voice goes near the beginning of the story: "'The pouring-down rain, the pouring-down rain'--was that what she was saying over and over, like a song?" The narrator asks another question, one that reflects Ruby's conjectured feeling, just after she has whispered her name to herself upon discovering the newspaper article: "What eye in the world did she feel looking in on her?" asks the narrator. The first question suggests the vaguely poetic influence of the storm upon Ruby's mood, and the second reflects her sensitive preoccupation with self-image. Later, as Ruby again talks to herself, the narrator paraphrases her words in his voice:

> She bowed her head toward the heat, onto her rosy arms, and began to talk and talk to herself. She grew voluble. Even if he heard about the coffee man, with a Pontiac car, she did not think he would shoot her (CG, 25).

The passage continues in this way to develop part of the exposition already cited as contained in the first part of the story.

Other remarks that Ruby makes aloud to herself are quoted directly, and as the first example shows, they occasionally provide the narrator with pretexts for conjectural interpretation of character: "'Why, how come he wrapped it in a newspaper!' she said . . . . She must

have been lonesome and slow all her life, the way things would take her by surprise." The pattern continues as Ruby whispers her name, then reads the news item, and finally identifies her name. "'You Clyde!' screamed Ruby Fisher at last, jumping to her feet. 'Where are you, Clyde Fisher?'"

Another pattern of subjunctive and figurative narration contributes still further insight into what occurs in the first part of the story. Before Ruby discovers the article in the newspaper, the narrator notes her "look of unconscious cunning" as well as her appearance of hiding, and then observes that ". . . at moments when the fire stirred and tumbled in the grate, she would tremble, and her hand would start out as if in impatience or despair." The description here is only the narrator's interpretation of Ruby's "body language," but it does afford some clue to her emotional state. Next, Ruby touches the page of the newspaper "as if it were fragile," and the narrator reports her as watching it "as if it were unpredictable, like a young girl watching a baby." The couple seem childless, though, although Clyde has reached his age of baldness. As Ruby scrutinizes the printing, her lips tremble "as if looking and spelling so slowly had stirred her heart." Then, after calling out Clyde's name and opening the door, Ruby stands there in a flash of lightning, "as if she half thought that would bring him in, a gun leveled in his hand." Finally, shortly before the narrator enters Ruby's mind to describe her fantasy, she looks into the fire: "It might have been," comments the narrator, "a mirror in the cabin, into which she could look deeper and deeper as she pulled her fingers through her hair, trying to see herself and Clyde coming up behind her." These and other examples of figurative and subjunctive language occur in the first part of the story (Ruby is

twice compared with a cat), and they all contribute toward developing Ruby's perspective objectively and conjecturally with restricted external narration. The exposition eventually accomplished, privileged narration occurs to give infallible representation of Ruby's fantasy, while restricted narration concludes the story as it began.

"The Key," a later story from A Curtain of Green, is like "A Piece of News" in that it too contains conjectural narration, and it is further like "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" in that it occasionally interlards ambiguous possibilities of special insight from privileged-access narration. The center of consciousness in "The Key" is consistently the external narrator, yet without resorting overtly to omniscience, he manages to develop five additional secondary perspectives--some more sharply defined than others--including one for a "you" figure that is associated with the reader's hypothetical presence in the fictional illusion. A couple who are both deaf-mute are the central characters, and a curious feature of this story's narrative technique is the narrator's apparent ability to read their sign language, which allows him to convey certain communication to the reader that they hold in private from the rest of their company at a train station. Because this communication contains substantial exposition concerning the couple's background, the narrator's and the reader's perspectives are, in that respect, more comprehensive than those of the other spectators in the story, including even that of the sensitive red-haired man, who yet sees so much more, it appears, than do the average lookers in the crowd.

"The Key" literally concerns the frustrated wait of Ellie and Albert Morgan at a railroad depot for a train that is to begin their

anticipated second-honeymoon trip to Niagara Falls. The depot is located in rural Mississippi, and the Morgans have carefully saved enough money to afford the long journey to New York. The narrator reveals the couple's purpose a few pages into the story by quoting their silent conversation in sign language. With careful scrutiny and frequent inference, however, he turns the whole occasion into an opportunity for psychological study that climaxes in grim anecdote when a sensitive, interested stranger accidentally drops a key at Albert's feet. Because the Morgans are both deaf-mute, they fail to note their train's approach and miss it completely, but the narrator's sense of irony and analysis, as well as the stranger's action near the end of the story, prevents any sentimental exploitation of either the couple's handicap or their literal frustration.

Besides characterizing both Ellie and Albert individually, the narrator also studies the Morgans' marital relationship. While their interpretable motives provide a universal context that develops broad implications about both marriage in general and peculiar character-types as well, their deaf-mute condition becomes a means of heightening their immediate situation's potential for revealing man's individual isolation or innate "privateness," which is a focal theme on which the character and marital studies are based. The narrator avoids sentimentality largely because he recognizes the Morgans' conditions of personal isolation as kinds commonly manifest in human nature and only heightened in their cases by the mutual handicap. Yet he creates a perspective that makes use of this handicap both as a natural symbol of the grotesqueness of indulged isolation and as a tool to explore and express its psychological effects in a particular couple.

A consistently developed pattern in the story is that of the narrator's (and reader's) gradual accumulation of insight into the Morgans' characters and shared circumstances in life. The narrator builds his perspective upon outward, observable appearances, making simple conjectures at first and later working out extensive interpretations of psychological states and processes on the basis of gestures or simple expressions combined with what he has already pieced together. Of course his ability to interpret the sign language of the deaf-mutes gives him a solid foundation for speculation that looks beyond what the couple's conversations disclose to him literally. The reader shares this advantage with the narrator, although the latter also develops a "you" figure, whose perspective is treated as though it were part of the fictional illusion even though it seems specifically addressed to the reader. The perspective of the sensitive red-haired stranger, whom Ruth Vande Kieft considers to "have god-like prescience and compassion,"[1] is really another of the narrator's conjectural constructs. Miss Vande Kieft notes, concerning this figure, that "the narrator seems to have infinite faith in his awareness,"[2] and although she recognizes that the question of exactly how much he really guesses is not finally answered for the reader, this sharply dramatized spectator does seem finally to reflect, if not actually to suggest, much in the narrator's own assured responses toward the couple. This young stranger, however, does not share the narrator's or the reader's perspective (although he might be closely associated with the "you" perspective--the hypothetical perspective of the reader as a presumed part of the fictional illusion), for, as the narrator points out, the young stranger does not understand the sign

language and therefore lacks the specific knowledge about the couple that their silent conversations afford both the narrator and, through him, the reader as well. What seems remarkable at first is the degree to which the stranger's perspective toward the Morgans seems to correlate with that of the narrator in spite of the character's inability to read sign langauge. Yet one must consider that the narrator just attributes his own conjectured insight to the stranger--that the narrator does not look into the stranger's mind with privileged access and that it is only the narrator's construing of the stranger's last act that makes that act appear to confirm the character and insight that the narrator attributes to him. The stranger's perspective is ultimately an objective correlative for the narrator's perspective, given dramatic extension by the character sketch that the narrator bases on behavior and outward features of appearance.

Although it is clear that the stranger's conduct at the station helps to sustain the narrator's interest in the Morgans, the narrator takes no cue from the stranger in initially creating a center of interest in the couple, for he notes Ellie and Albert, focuses on them and describes them outwardly in some detail before ever introducing the stranger into the story. The narrator does not immediately disclose the Morgans' twin handicaps, however; he rather builds toward that disclosure through a natural sequence of observations leading to the fact's perception. When the Morgans do first speak, Albert's reply, quoted with two ellipses, reveals first where they intend to go; the speech occurs just after Albert has discovered the stranger's key, dropped accidentally, lying at his feet. The same reply also reveals Albert's first impression of the key's

meaning--that it is a miraculous symbol of better future understanding between himself and his wife (for, being deaf and not hearing the key drop, neither Albert nor Ellie realize where it has come from). Finally, this reply openly acknowledges the couple's having lived with the suspicion that they married only because they were drawn together by their similar afflictions, and not because they were in love. Before they miss their train, the narrator infers secret sympathy on Ellie's part for Albert's hope in the key (which sentiment, even if the narrator infers it correctly, Ellie nevertheless contradicts in words to Albert), but after that mishap has dawned upon them, the narrator conceives a growing suspicion and hostility in Ellie toward the rest of the company. He conjectures that in one sense Ellie is stronger than Albert, suggesting, as a likelihood noted by the "you" figure, that she makes a game of plot and counterplot of her constant suspicion of others and keeps after Albert, although he probably finds it "rough and violent," to play the game along with her. Yet, concludes the narrator, although Ellie isolates herself inwardly from normal society, she can hardly bear having Albert detach himself from her private world, for she desperately needs his frequent reassurance that all is well. She is thus, in another sense, weaker than Albert, the narrator believes: she feels very insecure about whatever her happiness depends on (as her hostility and suspicion might imply), and she literally craves communication with Albert to reinforce her unsteady nerves.

Ironically, however, the narrator further infers from Albert that this sort of communication with Ellie is just what his own sense of wellbeing is most vulnerable to: as long as he can go about his daily

routine by himself, with Ellie at her appointed work in the house, he feels happy and secure enough, but whenever Ellie starts to verbalize some worry or fear to gain his reassurance, he becomes distraught at once. The narrator even imagines a concrete scene to picture the whole idea. Albert, thinks the narrator, is over-adapted to self-privacy, even to the point that unshared joy seems more alluring than any to be shared, for the narrator again infers from Albert, after the train has gone, that he will never want to share his newly found key with Ellie now--that it has come to symbolize for him the hope of some private joy to be had without her.

The narrator seems to attribute most of this conjectured insight to the red-haired stranger; although that character lacks the narrator's advantage of reading sign language, the narrator describes him as being acutely sensitive and observant, and the narrator is quite consistent in citing external signs that provide clues for conjecture. His method of restricted and conjectural narration can in fact be studied by illustrating his frequent use of such clues to develop the Morgans' individual characters and surmise the nature of their marital relationship. The narrator is able to use the Morgans' names at the beginning of the story, when he first focuses upon them, without having to make any unwarranted intrusion that might seem out of keeping with the mood of anonymity given by the setting, because their names are clearly printed on their suitcase. He observes Ellie's face shortly after introducing the couple to infer her age to be about forty, and the appearance of her black purse seems to suggest to him the idea that their savings are making their trip possible. Because they and their suitcase are covered with yellow dust, the narrator concludes that they are from the country and have come into town in a

wagon. Something stirring, however, beneath the drab exterior of their lives becomes visible in Albert's face when he picks up and examines the key that the stranger has dropped while carelessly tossing it: the narrator notes the "wonder written all over his face and hands." And again, reflecting on Albert's first reaction to seeing the key, the narrator recalls that, "You could see memory seize his face . . . ." Subtly, the narrator relates this and other external clues to the "you" figure's perspective to involve it, as it were, in the fictional illusion. By using that secondary perspective as a hypothetical spectator, the narrator creates a common, objective ground of observation as a basis for his conjecture and inference, without having either to blend the identity of the stranger too fluidly into his own or to sacrifice the moral point of the general obtuseness of the rest of the crowd, whom he develops into an additional collective perspective.

Conjectural reporting occurs as a basic narrative device for characterization throughout the story of the Morgan couple, but the narrator uses it especially well to infer Ellie and Albert's individual feelings after they have discussed the key and become aware that the stranger is regarding them closely. Led on by Ellie's instant suspicion of the man, Albert too fears that he is plotting something, no doubt to get possession of the key, and speaks to reassure Ellie that it is safely hidden. In this fertile context for making conjecture, the narrator sees doubt and anxiety in Ellie's "troubled hands," and in "every line, every motion" of Albert's body he discovers that Albert did not mind missing the train because he loved the key more than he did Ellie. Then, says the narrator, "the whole story began to illuminate them now, as if the lantern

flame had been turned up" (a literal lantern flame from a railroad lantern set by Albert's foot earlier in the story). Here the narrator, extending his conjectured vision of the Morgans by consolidating all previous impressions and inferences, develops his theory that "there was something lacking in Ellie" and goes on to imagine the scene of their home-life, representing Ellie's talk and worry, and Albert's upset equilibrium.

Conjecture develops background, character, conflict, meaning--everything in this story, in fact, except the bare circumstances of the plot, including a multiple set of secondary perspectives. In addition to the narrative perspective, the "you" perspective and the perspective of the stranger, there are also the separate perspectives of the Morgans as individuals as well as a collective perspective attributed to the crowd. Not until near the end of the story, however, are the Morgans' perspectives fully defined: focusing through the "you" perspective once again, the narrator suggests that Albert privately fears the kind of change that a trip with Ellie to Niagara Falls could bring unto his life--a change involving a fusion of their selves into a true marital union. The narrator clearly implies that it is fear of change itself, of change and its quantity of unknown, that he supposes he detects in Albert. At this point the reader becomes conscious of an additional "lantern" casting light upon these events, the perspective of Albert's mind as conjectured by the narrator, and slightly further on still another source of light reaches full intensity. This other light is that of Ellie's own perspective, of course, now susceptible of being minutely conjectured in practically clinical detail. The narrator infers her habitual brooding, supposing

that she concentrates unhappily on even that central fact of existence, the fact of "proper separation . . . between a man and a woman, . . . their secret life . . . ." It is important that these are the narrator's words, for they suggest that not Ellie but the narrator himself affords the perspective that can reason the propriety of the separation. Ellie's perspective, on the other hand, is defined rather by the irony of such an attitude's approach within the context. Albert's fear of change and Ellie's grotesquely sentimental brooding complete the Morgans' development into fully realized characters and sharpen their secondary perspectives into psychological clarity and focus. These effects materialize slowly, however, from a gradual process of narrative inference, conjecture and speculation.

The narrator also creates a collective perspective attributed to the crowd. It contrasts with both the awareness of the narrator's and the "you" figure's perspectives and the sensitivity of the stranger's. Although the stranger has the same outward view of the Morgans that the other members of the crowd have, he possesses finer insight than they do, or so the narrator distinguishes him from them in his mind. The crowd is imaged, through the narrator's generalizations, as a group of isolated beings, each one insulated unfeelingly behind "walls of reproach." When Albert speaks with his hands, they can only be embarrassed, thinks the narrator, feeling together, stupidly, that "they were the deaf-mutes and he the speaker." The reader must recognize the crowd's perspective as representing the "average" intelligence, however, and he is perhaps made to feel aware of being rescued from it in this instance only by the narrator's having taken him into his own special confidence.

Occasionally the narrator makes a comment that, on the surface, appears to contain privileged information--something the narrator, as he represents his perspective in the main, could not directly know or even securely infer--as when he reports that Ellie was "secretly pleased" with Albert's interpretation of the key as a miracle, or when he observes that she "did not comprehend" Albert's sense of experience as a sequence of vague expectations abruptly realized. Yet one can discover adequate bases in preceding observations for the narrator to venture such boldness of vision with perfect confidence; the more he comes to know the Morgans, it seems, the more he feels himself on sound ground for intimate speculation. Even when he later asserts that "they" had filled Ellie's head in childhood with the popular myth of Niagara Falls, there is no need to take this remark as anything more than probable conjecture, either, for in the same paragraph the narrator directly turns to comparing Ellie and Albert's hands for a basis on which to infer that she had "worked harder" than he. As perceptually ambiguous as these statements, taken out of context, may seem in themselves, the overall context of narration provides every justification for regarding them as elements consistent with continuous restricted narration.

During his course of observation, the narrator conceives the idea that the young stranger, alert, curious and sensitive, is basically a Hamlet-like figure who will never fulfill himself outwardly through any expressive action, simply because he is "too deeply aware" for such forms of fulfillment to satisfy his real needs. The narrator's implication here is that of frustration deriving from a tragic split between conception and outlet, or between mode of being and mode of expression. The

narrator in one passage draws the "you" figure into close sympathy with the stranger: "You felt as though some exact, skillful contact had been made between the surfaces of your hearts to make you aware, in some pattern, of his joy and his despair." The narrator then goes on to cite the "fullness and the emptiness of this stranger's life." His joy lies in the fullness of his soul, while his despair lies in the emptiness of his motives, for his soul is incapable of being served by his motives, as they are couched in shallow channels that such a deep soul as his can only choke. The last act the stranger performs in the story, then, seems to confirm all the insight the narrator has attributed to him as well as the characterization of him the narrator has inferred: as Albert seems to sink deeper and deeper into the privacy of his own thoughts, and as Ellie seems to endure this retreat stoically, the stranger comes up and hands her a second key, one marked "Star Hotel, Room 2." Then he goes outside; the narrator follows him, leaving the Morgans to themselves and their keys, and comments, "You could see that he despised and saw the uselessness of the thing he had done." Does he see the uselessness of showing Albert the real source of his own key, or perhaps the uselessness of Ellie's ever sharing a hotel room in earnest; and does he see the futility of his mock proposition to Ellie, the uselessness even of the sardonic approach to frustration? At any rate, his action forms comments in all of these ways and also provides the narrator with a perfect opportunity to observe confirmation of what he has intuited regarding the stranger and his insight into the Morgans.

"The Whistle" is another story from A Curtain of Green that contains restricted external narration, but it is like "A Piece of News"

in that its narrator assumes privileged access into one character's mind to convey a private vision. Like that other story, too, "The Whistle" is a study of the effects of many years upon a marital relationship. The narrator of "The Whistle," however, does not confine privileged reporting just to one passage of private vision; he also not only conveys a measure of exposition wholly unsupplied by the thoughts of any character but also returns occasionally to the mind of the one character, the wife, Sara Morton, to represent sketches of her impressions even after the vision passage.

"The Whistle" concerns the Morton couple, Jason and Sara, who are apparently sharecroppers for a Mr. Perkins and live on a tomato farm that he owns. The narrator knows not only the couple's names but also their ages, "fifty." He discloses as exposition that for a long time the Mortons have been essentially incommunicative, speaking only at rare, infrequent intervals. It is not clear how the narrator knows this, but it is necessary to accept his intimate knowledge of the couple as given in his perspective. Yet, while doing so also necessitates recognizing a degree of privileged insight in the narrator, he further explains that he does not know how the long habit of silence ever started originally: "Who could tell now?" he asks, as though that information had by now escaped even the couple themselves and lay beyond the perimeter of privileged access he has assumed for exposition.

The narrator makes considerable use of privileged insight in "The Whistle," and restricted narration can at best be said to develop into only slightly basic status. The narrator, for example, in addition to knowing the Mortons' names and ages and the fact of their

incommunicativeness--and to being able to enter into Sara's mind whenever such privilege seems warranted--knows also about Mr. Perkins' whistle in the community of Dexter. He can furthermore shift the focus of his perspective, not only from inside the house to outside, scanning the farmhouse and surrounding landscape, but also from that view to an even larger one of the whole countryside, as lights come on when Mr. Perkins' whistle blows to warn of impending freeze.

Introducing the setting with an exterior view of the house in darkness, the narrator reports that on the particular night of the story the cold outside the Mortons' farmhouse is nearing freezing as the husband and wife huddle inside under the quilts of a pallet made near the fireplace. He next suggests Jason's fatigue by observing the man's breathing, and then he moves gradually into Sara's mind, paraphrasing her thoughts as she lies awake beside her sleeping husband: "She was so tired of the cold!" reports the narrator, continuing on in Sara's mind to connect this sense of fatigue with her expectation of death, her familiarity with the ironic spring that is like winter and her memory that it has regularly come annually, after transplanting, stunting the growth of the tomato crop. Then the narrator becomes almost subjective as Sara, in half-dreamlike recollection, returns to her youth and envisions a scene of the shipping season in Dexter, typical of Mays long past. Almost taking possession of the fictional illusion, the scene suggests a Dionysian celebration, replete with youthfulness and nature's fertility, with warm May sunshine contrasting with the cold ironic spring of the present. The past Sara here remembers is full of light and prosperity, companionship and excitement, all of which is polar to the poverty, dullness and darkness of the

present. The shipping season in Dexter that Sara recalls is a pagan-like ritual of life itself, but, as Sara finally reflects, "How quickly it is all over!"

As Sara's memory-vision fades from her mind, the narrator remarks that she could see the vision of Dexter "only in brief snatches," and that the rest of the time she thought only of the cold, "which was not to think at all," says the narrator, "but was for her only a trembling in the dark." Soon after Sara too falls asleep--the weather outside becoming colder by the hour--Mr. Perkins' whistle in Dexter blows, warning the community of sharecroppers of freezing temperatures and bidding it to arise and go protect the tomato plants. Sara awakens (the narrator noting "an illusion of warmth" that momentarily keeps her still) and presently rouses Jason; in silence the couple go out into the field to cover their plants. Once again Sara and Jason seem to participate in a ritual connected with the earth--this one a winter ritual, a ritual of death--as they stoop over and touch the ground to confirm the need for action. The narration in this and the remaining scenes of the story is basically restricted, for as the couple's thinking is now minimal, their purposes and motives become externalized in ritual-like acts that serve as modes of communication.

The whistle, a symbol of Mr. Perkins' power and of the economic system that deals poverty or plenty as nature so affords, exacts much of Sara and Jason that night: their quilts, Jason's coat and even Sara's dress all go sacrificially to preserve the plants. Yet these articles of self-preservation are not all that the Mortons give up; back inside, Jason does what the narrator only calls "a rare, strange thing." Without

entering Jason's mind to explain his thoughts, the narrator simply observes that Jason silently lights up the kindling wood and, when that fuel is consumed, brings in and ignites another load, including their reserve supply for the last extremity of winter. Then, when that too is gone, Jason burns next the split-bottomed chair and finally the kitchen table. The couple speak no words during any of this action, nor does the narrator reveal either Jason's motives or Sara's stream of impressions; he only suggests that the extraordinary warmth affects Sara as do her memories of Dexter in the shipping season, and that the fire made by the kitchen table had "seemed wonderful to them--as if what they had never said, and what could not be, had its life, too, after all." It is as though once again the Mortons communicate silently through a ritual of self-consumption, by indulging their dreams of the impossible even though such an indulgence costs them possibly their lives, and certainly their further security from the cold. In other words, they cast their lot tragically with an illusion that seems to afford a vague sense of fulfillment, accepting the fate of destruction that awaits them, sooner or later, in the world of reality--a world of stripping away of possessions and even of thoughts--the world symbolized by the blowing whistle. When that last fire too is finally out, the Mortons just sit together silently, colder than ever. Yet presently the narrator has one last occasion to enter Sara's mind, this one to report the sense of utter helplessness that makes her finally call out Jason's name. But Jason, though he replies aloud, says only "Listen," as the whistle continues to blow, "as though it would exact something further from their lives."

Jason lets the exacting, symbolic whistle communicate all that he has to say at the end of the story, just as both the Mortons have apparently let outward rituals, both joyful and painful, communicate for them for much of their married lives. With little left to think about now except the cold, and with nothing more to communicate than what they share in sensory contact with the earth, Jason and Sara are proper dramatic subjects of restricted narration. The narrator represents nothing from Sara's perspective except her concept of the past; her perspective is in fact just one of memory. He represents no perspective at all for Jason, never even looking into Jason's mind. All present action is seen from the narrator's perspective, and most of it is observed with restriction. The reason that privileged narration is used too centers obviously around Sara's memory of Dexter, and the dominant theme of the story centers only a little less obviously around that memory also.

It is a common theme that "The Whistle" develops, that of the irreconcilable discrepancy between desire and actuality--between youth and age, past and present, comfort and misery. Yet, to have represented the poles of this moral geography without developing the positive extreme as content of Sara's thoughts would have been to traffic in melodrama as well as to falsify a verity of experience--that the ideal past is never real; that it was not real at the time and is so conceived as having been real only in memory. The shipping season in Dexter is a private myth, gradually being snuffed out by reality, as the mind of Sara is its only "reality." Sara's context is melodramatic enough, if that context is defined by inward experience, but the outward terms of life are not melodramatic, and neither is this story (as when Jason acts melodramatically,

his act costs the couple dearly). The restricted narration helps keep the reader aware of this fact from an impersonal perspective that dwarfs the Mortons within their controlling setting, while the privileged narration still allows the development of the moral geography that sustains the private myth, which gives the Mortons' fate whatever measure of significance it can have in such a setting. Yet Miss Welty combines restricted and privileged narration in "The Whistle" largely to suggest the inexorable duality of inward state and outward fact.

"A Worn Path," the last story contained in A Curtain of Green, marks a return to almost exclusively restricted narration: the narrative perspective in this story is external, and its basic modes of exposition and characterization are dialogue and the central character's talking to herself. The narrator is consistently detached and objective, observing and reporting a series of external actions and taking only occasional glimpses into the protagonist's mind. Because he is external, he does afford a "private view" of this character, old Phoenix, as she is called, while she is alone in the woods on her journey to town. This convention of artifice allows the narrator to make occasional descriptive comments and reflections that keep his perspective in focus and prevent him from becoming just an "effaced" medium, although he finally says very little to color the action; rather, he mostly lets Phoenix's words to herself do the coloring. Developing primarily in terms of speech and action, "A Worn Path" proceeds chiefly as characterization and exposition, the latter being achieved during the last scene of the story to complete the context of Phoenix's journey and remove the suspenseful vagueness about her motives that creates a mystery in the preceding parts of the story.

The story develops in terms of three structural stages or units: during the first stage old Phoenix, an ancient Negro woman, makes her way alone over the even more ancient Mississippi trail, the Natchez Trace. There is little exposition in this section but much characterization of the feeble old lady through her comments to herself and to the nature around her. In the second stage Phoenix converses with a white man who pulls her out of a ditch into which she has fallen; here the characterization of Phoenix continues through dialogue and action while just enough exposition occurs to further suspense. Old Phoenix declares that she is on her way to "town" but explains her purpose no further to the man, who advises her to go home. Only in the last scene, after Phoenix has arrived in Natchez and entered a doctor's office, does the reader finally learn that she is on a mission of mercy for her grandson. Her dialogue with a nurse reveals that Phoenix has just made one of her periodic trips into Natchez to secure charity medicine for her grandson, who, some two or three years earlier, had swallowed lye. The case, as the nurse says, is "'. . . obstinate . . .'"; the child's throat does not cure up but only persists in swelling until Phoenix goes for a new supply of medication, which seems just to soothe it for a time without effecting any permanent healing progress. From prior exposition, meaningless until now, one can judge that Phoenix undertakes her quasi-restorative quests at least twice yearly, for the present one is in December, and she has earlier recalled an experience with a snake along the way from the previous summer. The dialogue in the last scene also brings out the fact that the afflicted child, who dwells with Phoenix, is her only known living relative. In spite of the ineffectual medication, however, old Phoenix Jackson has

faith that her grandson is "'. . . going to last . . . ,'" and she declares that his suffering "'. . . don't seem to put him back at all. . . .'" With that, her latest sequel is complete except for buying a paper windmill, to take back with the medicine to her grandson, who is waiting for her by himself.

Ruth M. Vande Kieft, interested in the germs of Miss Welty's fiction, has explained the origin of the character Phoenix as having been a real-life experience of the author; her critic writes, in Eudora Welty, that

> . . . one day Miss Welty took a book and went along for company on a little excursion to the country with a painter friend. While the two were quietly engaged, an ancient Negress with a bright, weathered face chanced along. She asked Miss Welty to tie her shoes, a few words were exchanged, and the old woman, when asked her age, said, "I was old at the Surrender."[3]

Miss Vande Kieft also writes further on the character that developed from this experience. Old Phoenix's love, says Miss Vande Kieft,

> . . . is most triumphantly realized "in the world." It has a clear object--her grandson; it is actualized, put out into reality, not only by her care of him, but in the periodic ceremonial act of her trip along the worn path into town to fetch the "soothing medicine." There are no significant barriers to the expressive love of old Phoenix, and this is reflected also in her sense of familiarity with nature--the ease with which she talks to the birds and animals--and in her ability to live as readily, interchangeably, and effectively in the realm of the fanciful and supernatural as she does in the realm of practicalities. She is, like Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury, a completely and beautifully harmonious person--something one does not often find in the fiction of either Miss Welty or Faulkner.[4]

Perceptive as these comments are, they perhaps do overlook one possible element of disharmony creeping into Phoenix's life with age that could at least threaten to erect a barrier to her expression of love. That element would be the forgetfulness that for a moment causes her to lose sight of the very purpose of her coming while in the doctor's office. Though

Phoenix vows never to let it happen again, this brief lapse of memory forebodes an eventual dissolution of faculties that could fragment and obstruct her wonderful powers of expression. Even now she cannot always trust her senses, mistaking thorns along the way for a green bush and a scarecrow for a ghost, and she is also susceptible to hallucination, as the narrator reveals through a rare moment of privileged access to her mind. The story does more than just portray a character; it suggests incipient tragedy for both the grandmother and grandchild, an increasingly hopeless case of the blind leading the blind. Yet, except for Phoenix herself, only the white man she meets knows the hardship of her journey, while only the doctor and his staff know her reason for making it, and only the narrator outside the story can combine these fragmentary perspectives and fuse them with Phoenix's own unique understanding to give a comprehensive view of her character, her mission and her ordeal.

Phoenix's perspective is developed fully during the first section of the story, before she meets the white man, as she makes her way along the path to Natchez, addressing words both to nature and to herself. The words she speaks to unseen animals seem almost like incantations to charm any lurking creatures into docility through authoritative remonstrance:

> . . . "Out of my way, all you foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals! . . . Keep out from under these feet, little bob-whites. . . . Keep the big wild hogs out of my path. Don't let none of those come running my direction. I got a long way" (CG, 272).

Clearly, Phoenix backs her familiarity with nature with cautious respect, although she uses her instictively poetic sense for words to invoke that superiority over it that should protect her. Her poetry implicates her thus in an archetypal context that defines her perspective, while her age makes the primitiveness of that context seem quite natural to her. In

other words that she addresses to herself, the narrator allows her to assume part of the function of narration and of developing the fictional illusion in her own voice. These comments convey not only some clear images of the landscape over which she has to travel, but also an idea of her poor eyesight as well as her superstition about ghosts. Finally, as when she passes some cabins boarded up against the cold, her comments sometimes contribute to atmospheric description--"'I walking in their sleep,' she said. . . ."

The narrator breaks his restriction of insight only very occasionally to look into Phoenix's mind with privileged access. The three times he clearly does so in the first section of the story are only for momentary glimpses, and these occasions of privileged-access reporting serve only to confirm old Phoenix's poor vision and to dramatize her ready susceptibility to hallucination. First, the narrator reports, subjectively (so as to make her a momentary center of consciousness), the hallucination she has of being offered a slice of marble-cake on a platter by a little boy. Next, in another context, he tells the reader that the old scarecrow that Phoenix dances with, once she has recognized what it is, appears to her at first as a man. Finally, the narrator declares that it is a dream that causes old Phoenix to reach her hand up to thin air while lying helpless in the ditch--". . . her senses drifted away," he explains. Except for these short intrusions into Phoenix's mind, the narration of the whole story is restricted in access, although the narrator does also occasionally report Phoenix's immediate sense impressions ("Then she smelled wood-smoke, and smelled the river, and she saw a steeple and the cabins on their steep steps.") Once more, too, in the last section of

the story, the narrator makes an observation that seems to imply at least more intimate knowledge of Phoenix's mind than anyone in the story could have: "Old Phoenix would have been lost if she had not distrusted her eyesight and depended on her feet to know where to take her." These latter observations, however, are so close to conjectural restricted narration as to be insignificant as extensions of privileged access.

"A Worn Path" thus develops chiefly in terms of speech and external phenomena, although the narrator does make his presence felt, and the human predicament that the story dramatizes becomes meaningful primarily in terms of its allusion and parallel to the phoenix myth of perennial restoration. The parallel is ironic, however, because old Phoenix's fate is qualified by reality. Phoenix's mission, unlike the quest of the legendary bird, seems unproductive of any permanent restoration, although the medication she obtains does appear to provide her grandson with some time, perhaps, as well as a measure of temporary relief after each trip. This grandson, as earlier mentioned, is apparently Phoenix's only living relative--at least the only one she knows about--and he is thus her own sole hope for personal renewal. Like the mythical bird, this old Phoenix too sets out in search of personal restoration or immortality, yet the medication she gets for that purpose does not seem to promise either permanent progress or eventual cure. The old grandmother seems to have faith, though, that the boy will keep on being restored periodically, justifying her ordeal more by confidence than by duty, and insofar as the mythical bird seeks continual restoration out of its own ashes, so likewise does Phoenix's grandchild depend continually

for temporary restoration upon each trip she makes to Natchez that consumes her just a trace more each time.

This study of restricted external narrative perspectives in A Curtain of Green has now demonstrated Miss Welty's early range of resources in that method except for two more special variations of technique. First, there is still what Ruth Vande Kieft has called "the implicitly collective point of view"[5] in "Powerhouse," a story that just precedes "A Worn Path" in that collection, and then there is also the overt shift from restricted external to central intelligence point of view in "A Curtain of Green" and also another story from a later volume. Sketches of conjectural collectivity have already been observed in connection with the crowd's perspective in "The Key," and what Miss Welty does with that device in "Powerhouse," mixing it with the scenic method of dialogue, is only an intensification of its focus and effects, yet one worthy of special note. Her switching of the principal modes of vision in "A Curtain of Green" and "The Bride of the Innisfallen," however, is a marked departure from those techniques this chapter has studied thus far, and it deserves full and separate consideration because it creates structural innovations not to be found even in the kinds of mixing of restricted and privileged access already discussed in connection with some preceding stories.

In "Powerhouse," Miss Welty develops a portrait of an artist who devises a semi-private myth as a defense mechanism against anxiety. She studies the interchange between life and art in that context, suggesting both the real-life source for the creative process and the creative impact upon real life, as well as the minuteness of the distinction between reality and illusion in the creative moment. The artist is "Powerhouse,"

a piano-playing leader of a traveling jazz group. He has within his group a three-man core with whom he converses, elaborating upon a theme that contains his deepest and most immediate cause for fear. In Eudora Welty, Ruth Vande Keft suggests that exposition makes no background clear in the story, asserting that Powerhouse's dialogue affords no trustworthy basis for factual knowledge.[6] He spends much of his dialogue in formulating his own narrative of the death of his wife, Gypsy, only to deny its truth at a seemingly crucial moment of intensity. Implication suggests, however, that his wife is not dead, at least at last report, and that Powerhouse has spoken with her on the preceding day. Indirect exposition in the form of dialogue also suggests further that she did at that time make some threat of committing suicide. What is not at all clear, though, since the conversation was by long-distance telephone, is the degree of seriousness with which her threat should be taken, and since this question is as much of a puzzle for Powerhouse as it is for the reader, it is the cause of Powerhouse's present anxiety. One can make an interesting study of "Powerhouse," therefore, by pursuing these implications: Powerhouse's job takes him frequently away from home, in the North--he is currently playing a one-night stand for a "white dance" in Alligator, Mississippi--and his wife finds it difficult to cope emotionally with his absence. Her probable vague threat of suicide could have been motivated by sheer loneliness, or it could also have been motivated either by guilt for her own secret infidelity or by suspicion of her husband's. Her true motive or motives are no clearer than the question of the seriousness of her threat, and unless she has made herself clearer to Powerhouse in the past than he ever indicates in the story, he too can only conjecture whether or not

she has been unfaithful to him or whether she suspects him of being so to her.

The story develops a structural pattern of three main sections, moving from the dance itself to intermission outside the dance hall, and finally back to the resumption of the dance to conclude the action. The intermission also moves from the street to a small cafe in the Negro quarter, and then back to the street again. The collective point of view--the generalized perspective of the white audience--represents the center of consciousness during the dance hall scenes, while the narrator's perspective acts as a medium for developing dialogue during the section of intermission. Throughout practically the whole story, Powerhouse and his core of intimates (Valentine, Scoot and Little Brother), who accompany him to the cafe during intermission, have an audience, for both in the cafe and walking back from the cafe to the dance hall, they are watched and followed by a host of rather delighted Negroes. Moreover, during all this time the four musicians conduct a jazz-like conversation that introduces, develops and applies their private myth of Gypsy and "Uranus Knockwood." Powerhouse controls this particular evening's version by centering his talk around the material of the telegram from Knockwood reporting his wife's "death."

The narrative structure of "Powerhouse" can be analyzed by subdividing the first two structural sections--the first on the basis of modifications in perspective and the second on the basis of a change in scene--so that the first section consists of three separate parts and the second consists of two, while the third remains undivided at all. All of these subdivisions are indicated by unmarked spacings in the text except

for the separation between the first and second structural sections (or between the third and fourth subsections of the story).

In the first subsection of "Powerhouse," the narrative voice describes the popular image of Powerhouse and his jazz group as performers in actual concert. This voice adopts the collective perspective of the white patrons at the dance in progress, and it develops precise but general impressions of the group's leader. Although these impressions are based on external features and gestures, they include a measure of subjectivism that finds expression in both simile and speculative query. The dominant tone is that of fascination at the mystery of the man's uniqueness, and the complete reaction suggests that it partakes of both on-the-spot observation and responses preconditioned by reputation and popular legend. Because the collective perspective is used, a certain hardly noticeable degree of stereotyping and stock response seems appropriate and realistic, for this provincial audience is probably seeing much that folk sources and popular media have led it to expect ("Of course you know how he sounds--you've heard him on records. . . ."), which is chiefly what it has come to see. Only a recollection of some "acrobats" helps to localize its identity.

The collective perspective continues as center of consciousness in the second subsection, but there it becomes comparatively discriminating and analytical, as though the mass-focus of the preceding subsection were abruptly filtered out and the perspective had come to represent just a select core of perceptive minds. It concentrates closely on Powerhouse's technique while performing and seems to reflect a more and more exclusive mode of vision as the voice's description proceeds toward the third

subsection, where collectivity finally becomes a clear medium for dialogue between Powerhouse and his three intimates during "Pagan Love Song." This dialogue introduces the figure of Uranus Knockwood and the telegram motif, and it also introduces the personalities of the intimate core: as Danfort Ross has observed, "Little Brother is most gullible; he believes anything Powerhouse tells him. Scoot, on the other hand, is disbelieving, keeping Powerhouse from soaring too high."[7] Ruth Vande Kieft implies in her discussion of the story that this dialogue is wholly musical, not spoken at all,[8] and if this idea is true then the narrator must be seen as having already taken control of his perspective at this point, translating the musical sense unobtrusively into literal form. Collectivity appears indeed to dissolve in favor of personal narration when the narrator remarks that Scoot is "a disbelieving maniac," and the overall effect of the narration in this subsection is that of collectivity's having yielded to scenic material as the story moves from an impersonal to a personal center of consciousness.

The second or middle structural section is overtly scenic, its first subsection comprising the dialogue of Powerhouse and his companions on their way to a small cafe and in the cafe itself. This dialogue, conveyed through a largely effaced narrative perspective, gives fuller development to the telegram and Uranus Knockwood material, and although Powerhouse, Scoot, Valentine and Little Brother continue to have an audience in a large group of Negroes that has followed them from under the eaves of the dance hall, the narrator directs his perspective toward it objectively so that collectivity does not occur. A part of the dialogue in this subsection consists of a series of short bursts without

literal identification of speakers, suggesting a method of writing Ernest Hemingway has used. While this narrator, like many a Hemingway narrator, assumes no privileged access and remains effaced, so to speak, throughout most of the scenic portions of the story, his remark, "O Lord, she likes talk and scares," when a curious waitress shows delight at being puzzled by one of Powerhouse's enigmatic replies does suggest a reflection that might be attributed to Powerhouse's conjectured thought. By and large, however, conjectural narration in "Powerhouse" is confined to the collectively reported segments of the story. The next subsection consists of further dialogue on the street as the group walks back to the dance, and this dialogue completes the development of the telegram and Uranus Knockwood material. Back at the dance, the narrative perspective is the same as it is in the first structural section, giving more external description from the collective point of view of the white dance patrons. This concluding section returns the reader to a familiar perspective, but he returns with deeper understanding, having accompanied the musicians during intermission and listened to their private talk. The reader is thus more detached from the collective perspective when it resumes its function as center of consciousness than he is at the beginning of the story; he is more detached from it at the end of the story as he is more knowledgeable of the ordeal that generates Powerhouse's creative energy.

This internal ordeal that Powerhouse experiences is probably a nightly occurrence, being intensified on the night of the story by Gypsy's threat on the preceding evening to kill herself. It is a clue to the mystery that fascinates those who watch him perform as well as a key to understanding his peculiar creative impulse. The reader sees during the

intermission that Powerhouse so orders and expresses his most lurid concept of his wife's dying violently that he can achieve for himself a reasonable measure of distance and perspective toward his real anxiety and thus regard its vague causes with a realistic sense of proportion. It might be that his private concept represents his deepest fear of what could happen, although he tells the interested waitress that, "'Truth is something worse . . .'"; it could be that death really stands for infidelity in the context of the private myth, or even that death is what he fears that he desires for Gypsy as a means of keeping her faithful, if she still is. Her name, "Gypsy," though, suggests that she might not be too inclined to sit still and contemplate suicide, and while Danfort Ross notes that Powerhouse can actually do little more than "knock on wood" in any case,[9] the sexual pun in "Uranus Knockwood" implies that he might figure specifically for Powerhouse all those that would lead or cause Gypsy to roam unfaithfully. A reader cannot ascertain such matters for sure, however, because the narration is restricted, but when Scoot asks Powerhouse quite pointedly whether he is not going to call his wife again as he had done the preceding night, one should be inclined to accept the implied exposition as true, for Scoot speaks seriously and is the realistic one in the group. He seems to want to urge Powerhouse to call, "Just to see if she there at home. . . ." In his blunt refusal to do so, however, one sees that his whole private myth-making process is a careful design to protect himself from the impulse to overreact, through either suspicion or fear, to his wife's ambiguous threats. It is thus a means Powerhouse uses both just to live with his sense of anxiety, the persistent

hovering of Uranus Knockwood somewhere close by, and to draw upon that sense for inspiration and covert material for his art.

iii

Miss Welty uses a shifting device in "A Curtain of Green," the title story of her first volume, that recurs only once more in her whole canon, much later in her career, in "The Bride of the Innisfallen," also the title work in its collection. This device is that of using external narration to develop the first part of a story from a consistently restricted narrative perspective, while shifting to privileged narration at a structurally strategic moment to continue development in the latter part from a central intelligence perspective. The center of consciousness does not change if the central intelligence perspective develops objectively, but the change in primary mode of vision that causes the story to fall into two separate narrative units, each one having a distinct mode of vision, is unique and rare in Miss Welty's fiction and reflects a peculiar concept of structure that she has executed only twice in her present career. "A Curtain of Green" represents the more consistent and evenly wrought example of the concept, for one can observe some irregularity in its format in "The Bride of the Innisfallen." Both stories shall bear examination of the narrative shifts in them, however, for such study yields insight into the full range of Miss Welty's narrative technique.

"A Curtain of Green" centers upon a single afternoon but uses both inference and collectivity that is developed objectively from an external narrator's center of consciousness to stretch an expository impression of the central character over a period of time. The narrator

is restricted in the first part of the story, during which this impression develops, but he shifts to privileged reporting in the second part to focus upon the central character's thoughts. The story concerns the outward and inward life of this character, a Mrs. Larkin, who has been widowed for a year by a freak accident, and the generalized impression that the restricted narrator infers from familiar acquaintance with the neighborhood is actually reported as Mrs. Larkin's neighbors' common view of her in her garden from their upstairs windows. After developing this impression, the narrator becomes privileged, making Mrs. Larkin's mind the object of central intelligence reporting until she collapses unconscious in the garden. Then Jamey, her youthful Negro helper there, takes on the role of central intelligence character in a similarly objective capacity for a brief period, before he flees and the story ends.

The story thus moves from an objective, conjectural collective perspective to one central intelligence perspective and then to a second, both of the latter developed objectively as the narrator remains the center of consciousness throughout the story. The neighbors' collective perspective focuses upon Mrs. Larkin's outward pattern of behavior in her garden ever since her husband's death the preceding summer, while Mrs. Larkin's central intelligence perspective concentrates on a complicated moral question that obsesses her and provides much insight into her conduct and character, although the neighbors cannot see it. Finally, Jamey's central intelligence perspective, sustained only briefly, reviews the climactic moment of the story from his point of view.

Two kinds of exposition occur in the story, exposition of background and exposition of character. The background concerns Mrs.

Larkin's husband's accidental death the preceding summer when, as he drove in from work, a chinaberry tree in the Larkins' yard fell, striking his vehicle and killing him. Central intelligence narration conveys this information as content of the widow's memory that surfaces into consciousness on the particular afternoon of the story, constituting a specific moment of recollection in detailed imagery. Central to comprehending Mrs. Larkin's current obsession, withdrawal and isolation are the facts, brought out through her act of conscious memory, that she witnessed the accident quite helplessly and that, although she uttered the words, "'You can't be hurt,'" they failed to affect the course of accident. Central intelligence narration in this story confines itself almost wholly to rendering Mrs. Larkin's (and briefly Jamey's) thoughts for a short time in the garden late in the afternoon of the story. Since the narrator does not make personal commentary or analysis during the central intelligence reporting, that narration conveys exposition only during Mrs. Larkin's interval of memory; the other action it conveys is dramatized without narrative interpretation.

The other exposition, that of character, occurs during the first part of the story. The restricted narrator of that part develops some conjectural analysis of Mrs. Larkin's outward conduct, reported as conclusions her neighbors have quite openly and collectively drawn from observation and inference. Since these conclusions are the property of the neighbors' conjectured perspective, they must be regarded as only tentative exposition, for the neighbors can only speculate about what, to them, seems odd conduct, ". . . over-vigorous, disreputable, and heedless," in a tangled "sort of jungle." Their consensus constitutes the collective

impression of Mrs. Larkin's daily behavior since her husband's death, and the narrator uses conditional and subjunctive language in representing that impression as theirs. For instance, Mrs. Larkin ". . . seemed not to seek for order . . . ," although in the central intelligence narration she appears to be seeking, or at least questioning, the principle of moral order in the natural world.

There are two images that define the mode and context of Mrs. Larkin's search for an answer to the question of fate. These are the image of the garden and the image of the curtain. The garden suggests the ambiguity of the natural world as a setting for man's spirit: although it is supposedly plotted, it makes the neighbors think of a jungle. Moreover, the chinaberry tree that caused Mr. Larkin's death contrasts with the pear tree in the center of the garden, which Mrs. Larkin seeks for shelter from the rain: the chinaberry tree suggests the arm of nature as a weapon, while the pear tree suggests the hand of nature as a shield. Mrs. Larkin's inward ordeal since her husband's death has been an effort to reconcile the ambiguity implicit in the garden image, and she has obsessed herself with that problem's subject just as she has immersed herself daily in her garden.[10]

The curtain image becomes a conceit that the title of the story introduces and the narrative develops on several levels. It can refer to the spiritual isolation of Mrs. Larkin by her controlling obsession, as the garden's border of hedge is "high like a wall," isolating her physically from the social body of the community. It also refers to the curtain of the mind, concealing memory from consciousness until it is easily drawn aside--a meaning that the narrator makes explicit when he

shifts to central intelligence narration. Finally, it refers to the ambiguous face of nature as a curtain that will not be drawn aside, for some strange "force," speaking through a fluttering heart that finally fails, seems to say to Mrs. Larkin that, "The bird that flies within your heart could not divide this cloudy air. . . ." The curtain conceit thus depicts Mrs. Larkin in various contexts of isolation (isolation from her uncomprehending peers, her irrecoverable past and her inaccessible Truth), so that it as well as the garden image provides much implicit characterization that unburdens the narrator of additional direct intrusion.

The development of meaning in the story is fulfilled at the climax, as Mrs. Larkin stands quietly behind Jamey and thinks of how she might kill him with her hoe. Jamey seems to her to be wholly abstracted from the immediate present, lost within some "ridiculous dream," and the central intelligence narration becomes almost subjective in a paragraph that contains this question that rises in her mind: "Was it not possible to compensate? to punish? to protest?" Then the expected rain comes, interrupting Mrs. Larkin's possible forethoughts of murder and occupying her complete attention until she collapses, apparently from some form of heart attack, and Jamey becomes the central intelligence. Mrs. Larkin seems to be seeking at first to place herself toward Jamey as an agent similar to the chinaberry tree that killed her husband. She seems to be experimenting to see whether she can discover any difference between "will" and "accident," or between chaotic fate and moral agency. She appears to be wanting to find out whether love, or moral order, which in her so failed her husband, is yet real in her or in the world at all. Again she seems to be testing the words, "You can't be hurt," that expressed only impotent

protectiveness toward her husband, only this time changing their implicit meaning to "You can be hurt." She seems then to wonder whether, if no internal power exists in her to control outward events, there exists likewise no moral order outside herself to govern her intentional acts. The narrator, interpretating her thoughts during the paragraph that approaches subjective central intelligence reporting, says that life and death ". . . now meant nothing to her . . . ," but that these ". . . she was compelled continually to wield with both her hands . . . ," seeking compensation, punishment or protest.

When the rain comes at last, it seems to come as both an admonition not to seek to tempt away the curtain from the secrets of nature and a balancing agent against the climactic heat and stillness of Mrs. Larkin's momentary mood. It mercifully restores her from the diabolical state of abstraction that had overcome her to the actuality of time and place, but again, ambiguously, this restoration also returns her to the natural world's course of "accident," which she seems to collide with moments later when her weak heart fails and she collapses. According to Ruth Vande Kieft, "No rational answer comes to Mrs. Larkin. There is only release, touched off by the sudden fall of a retarded rain: thus it is a chance of nature which saves her from committing a meaningless murder, just as it is a chance of nature which kills her husband."[11] "And possibly also kills her too," one might add, although with the rain "tenderness tore and spun through her sagging body" just before her collapse, as though some measure of redemption were in store for her.

After Mrs. Larkin collapses, Jamey's mind becomes the story's central intelligence as it flashes back in memory to the moment Mrs. Larkin

had stood behind him. He had ". . . felt her standing there . . . ," but ". . . he would not have turned around at that moment for anything in the world," the narrator reports. The story seems to ask whether this compulsion not to move were an invisible or symbolic force behind the rain that possibly saved Jamey's life--an innocent, "witless" protectiveness lying behind the curtain of green.

"The Bride of the Innisfallen" represents Miss Welty's writing at a stage generally regarded as more mature than that of the stories in A Curtain of Green. Originally published in 1951, it has greater length and variety of characters than do the typical stories of her first volume. Most of the characters in "The Bride of the Innisfallen," however, receive only implicit, sketchy or "typed" development, suggesting occasionally the comic "humor" approach to characterization. Only one character becomes central to the slowly emerging theme, although certain others manifest parallels to the central character that reflect this theme. The leading purpose of the story is to treat the predicament of a runaway American wife bound for Ireland from London, as Ruth Vande Kieft has demonstrated in Eudora Welty, noting there that the story is the American wife's.[12] The same critic also notes the shift in narrative focus that occurs in this story, a shift similar to the one just observed in "A Curtain of Green." The American wife blends somewhat with the others in her train compartment during the first part of the story, which is told, with one exceptional passage, from a restricted external narrative perspective, but during the second part, which is much shorter than the first, the same character becomes a central intelligence character and realizes her function as the story's prime subject.

The structure of the story reflects a basic journey motif: moving first by train and then by boat from rainy London to sunny Cork in Ireland, the characters pass through an obscure Welsh night to take the comic literary voyage from darkness into light--the symbolic journey through death to rebirth. The story begins in London before the American wife's compartment is filled. Then the "boat train" to catch the Innisfallen departs for Fishguard, where the travelers board the vessel in the night to wake up on an Irish river the next morning. They finally dock at Cork, where the narrator concentrates on the American wife's first day in Ireland without her husband's knowledge. He assumes privileged access toward her mind just before she leaves the ship, having done so only once, toward another character's, earlier in the story.

During the train journey from London to Fishguard, there is an assortment of individuals collected together with the American wife in the same compartment. They form a fairly consistent group, most of them bound for Ireland as the American is. The narrator employs most of the special techniques and resources of restricted external narration that this chapter has already studied in developing the train-ride portion of the story. He uses conjecture, frequently with subjunctivity, to convey a mutual sense of context, a basis for common impressions and responses to one another that becomes a secondary collective perspective of the entire group. He also uses conjecture and figurative language occasionally to represent personal impressions from his individual narrative perspective. In its collective capacity his voice articulates a collective sense of atmosphere, while in its individual capacity it provides coloring and meaning that fail to register upon the whole group. Finally, he uses

occasional pieces of impersonal, anonymous dialogue to reflect further the idea of mutuality within a common context. In short, he makes use of conjecture, subjunctivity, collectivity, figurative speech and anonymous dialogue, or most of the special resources that one can discover in the restricted external narration of A Curtain of Green. For instance, concerning the lady in the raincoat, whose precise connection with the "round man," her companion in London, is never revealed, the narrator says this: "When the round man put the suitcase up in the rack, she sank down under it as if something were now done that could not be undone . . . ." Later, when the man from Connemara enters the compartment, the narrator seems to regard him from the collective perspective of the group already assembled: "There seemed something in him about to explode, but--he pushed off his wet coat, threw it down, threw it up overhead, flung himself into the seat--he was going to be a good boy." Still later, the narrator observes the same man from a more discriminating individual perspective:

> He had a neat, short, tender, slightly alarmed profile--dark, straight hair cut not ten minutes ago, a slight cut over the ear. But this still-bleeding customer, a Connemara man as he was now announcing himself, always did everything last-minute, because that was the way he was made (BI, 49-50).

The narrator here makes a definitive point of characterization conjecturally by inferring the Connemara man's "humor" from his outward appearance. Yet, although the narrator remains objective toward the group and keeps his perspective detached from the characters throughout the train journey, the collective point of view recurs from time to time, as it does explicitly when, at one station, the Welshman replaces the schoolgirl in

the compartment: "It was this station, it was felt, where they actually ceased leaving a place and from now on were arriving at one."

Dialogue in the compartment affords much outward characterization and some exposition during the train journey. Topics occupy certain characters' thoughts that help bring out their peculiarities or "humors," as the Welshman, for instance, reveals his indefatigable curiousity simply by questioning nearly everyone about something. From Victor, the young boy, he evokes the purpose that has taken the lad to England, and from the boy's pregnant guardian for the trip home he learns why the boy is not returning to Ireland in his own mother's company. Other questions the Welshman asks the man from Connemara about Catholicism seem to reveal the former's complete ignorance of the subject as well as his apparently anti-Catholic background. Additional talk about a possible kidnapping aboard the train causes Victor's young guardian to betray an affected innocence or possibly a real fear of evil, as a discussion of Welsh and Irish ghosts causes the same girl to shrink back in real or affected distaste. The lady in the raincoat, however, remains largely a mystery; although the Connemara man concludes that she is "'Very high and mighty . . . ,'" the collective perspective finally confirms another view of her: "They shouted for you--they knew it! She <u>was</u> funny." A reader gets little help from the narrator in figuring this lady out: one might infer, from her affected smoking and interest in horse racing news, that she is capitalizing upon an infrequent freedom the trip has afforded her, one that ends abruptly when she meets a "flock of beautiful children" and "a man bigger than she was" upon docking at Cork. The role of the "round man," though, at whom the lady had stuck out her tongue for a private

farewell, remains a secret known perhaps only to them alone. Her mystery suggests, at any rate, that her experience could parallel, along with another young girl's brief separation of herself from her sweetheart's company during the train ride, the predicament of the American wife, which becomes central thematically as it reaches full development late in the story.

The narrator gives two expository views of the American wife's predicament during the restricted portion of narration that the later privileged access confirms. These views must be regarded as foretastes of the special insight that the narrator eventually assumes toward the American wife, for it is difficult to find their accuracy credible solely on the basis of ordinary restricted vision, however much one allows for unusual perceptiveness in the narrator. He does, however, keep both views within the technical context of restricted narration, attributing the first to observable circumstances and the second to his studied conjecture of the probable reason for the Connemara man's intense stare at the American. The narrator introduces her background early in the story as he notes her exposed image in the compartment before it completely fills: ". . . As long as the train stood in the station, her whole predicament seemed betrayed by her earliness. She was leaving London without her husband's knowledge. . . ." Although she might have felt her predicament betrayed, one can hardly imagine that it was quite so precisely betrayed as that. Yet rhetorically, the statement is kept compatible with conjectural narration, for the preceding one declares the empirical basis for its inference. Again, much later in the story, the narrator reports that the Connemara man stares at the American wife ". . . as if he saw

somebody desperate who had left her husband once, endangered herself among strangers, been turned back, and was here for the second go-round, asking again for a place to stay in Cork. . . ." Here too the narrator presents only his conjecture, if one studies the rhetoric alone, and while the later central intelligence reporting confirms the fact that the wife has run away without her husband's knowledge, it never confirms the additional supposition that she is now making her second attempt to run away to Cork without her husband. A reader should not regard that idea as factual information, therefore, even though it is coupled with other information that does prove to be factual.

The possible parallel between the American wife and the mysterious lady in the raincoat is never as clear as the other demonstrable parallel between the American and a young sweetheart. There is a pair of lovers in the American girl's compartment, and at one point during the train ride through Wales the female detaches herself from her companion, leaving him in the compartment while she goes to stand in the corridor alone. What makes this incident conspicuous at first is that it represents the only time before the Innisfallen reaches Cork that the narrator assumes overt privileged access to a character's mind. Following the female sweetheart out to the corridor, the narrator breaks the continuity of his basic restricted mode for a brief time as he creates a short-lived central intelligence perspective toward this girl. He enters her mind and paraphrases her thoughts as she fascinates herself by looking out into the Welsh night, ". . . seen from inside itself--her head in its mouth . . . ." She seems to relish her unique, individual perspective, detached from her lover's for the moment and reflecting her private,

undivided sensibility. "What contours which she could not see were raised out there, dense and heraldic?" asks the narrator for her in his voice. Then, at the end of the passage, he articulates the crucial thought that relates this incident thematically to the American wife: "She hung out into the wounded night a minute . . . ," the narrator says of the sweetheart, and then, "let him wish her back." Here the narrator reports the sweetheart's exact thoughts about her male; the narrator uses this interval of privileged access to establish an overt parallel between the sweetheart's brief gesture of individual detachment and the larger, more ambitious venture of the American girl.

Ruth Vande Kieft has devined an important theme in Eudora Welty's fiction as having to do with the excess of joy and one lover's need to detach himself occasionally from the other--to assume a discreet perspective from a novel vantage point from time to time to recover his personal identity, his unique selfhood, and to contain his fullness of joy in diverse experience. Miss Vande Kieft has cited this motif in both "The Bride of the Innisfallen" and another story, "The Wide Net," from an earlier volume. Writing of "The Bride of the Innisfallen" in Eudora Welty, this critic identifies the American wife's "trouble" with her husband:

> The "trouble" is her excess of hope, joy, and wonder at the mystery and glory of human life, all of which is symbolized to her in the lovely young bride who appears mysteriously on board the "Innisfallen" just as it prepares to land at Cork. This joy the American girl's husband apparently cannot see or share. . . . How can she preserve this quality which is so much and simply her definition that without it she loses her identity? . . . Her real problem is not how to preserve her joy, but how to communicate it to her husband, or to anybody . . . .[13]

When the American girl is about to leave the Innisfallen, the narrator shifts to privileged access toward her and maintains that mode of narration, developing her as a central intelligence character, for the brief remainder of the story. He notes her feeling of exposure just before she leaves the ship, and then he shifts to late afternoon and reflects her thoughts about her day's adventure in Cork as she shelters herself in the doorway of a pub and then tries to send a telegram to her husband. She has considered that she was in a situation of true loneliness--a shell-like kind of love becoming devoid of joy--that was about to destroy her. She has also reflected that one must neither hide nor flaunt pure joy, and she has finally contemplated the mystery of an upper window in a house by the river that has intrigued her. Throughout all of these reflections the American girl shows a rather puzzled mind but very full and determined heart. As the story concludes, she lets the telegram to her husband just fall into running water in the street and enters the exciting and inviting world of the pub (a symbolic extension of the train compartment and a microcosm as well of all that Cork means to her). The narrator's methods of developing this thematic material from central intelligence narration in terms of the American girl's thoughts are both interesting and resourceful, but they are not proper subjects of this chapter on restricted external narration, and it would continue to offer little insight into that present subject to study them here in detail.

iv

The novel Losing Battles, published in 1970, is Miss Welty's longest, most diversified and possibly most humorous work. It is the only

one of her four major novels to date that uses restricted external narration, although it is like two of the others, Delta Wedding and The Optimist's Daughter (1972), in that it centers around a formal, functional family occasion that draws the characters together in one setting. While Delta Wedding focuses upon a wedding and The Optimist's Daughter concerns a funeral, Losing Battles is based on a family reunion. As a comic-serious treatment of family and community interrelationships and of local stories and private histories, this novel of Miss Welty's matured career is a study of folk culture in the rural-Mississippi South during the 1930's. It concerns the unlawful return of the Renfro family's older son, Jack, from prison, just in time for the reunion and his great-grandmother's supposed hundredth birthday. Upon Jack's arrival home at the reunion, both he and his young wife, Gloria, experience delayed initiations, Jack into parenthood and Gloria into the complexity of mature identity. Yet it is a reunion not only of Jack and Gloria but also of the Renfro family and the judge that has sent Jack to prison: in this respect the image of "reunion" becomes a conceit suggesting spiritual harmony, as the family seeks openly to forgive the judge. Finally, the most serious motif of the novel concerns the life and death of Miss Julia Mortimer, a retired schoolteacher in the Banner community who has gone insane, whose death is another occasion concurrent with the reunion. Julia represents the principles of idealism and learning that have been her causes and her weapons in a long losing battle against ignorance and both economic and spiritual poverty. These themes of initiation, "reunion" and the "losing battle" of knowledge against ignorance and circumstance are probably the most serious ones in the novel. They are developed concretely and

dramatically through restricted external narration with much dialogue and other special devices, including conjectural intelligence perspectives and even the epistolary perspective.

The special devices of Losing Battles' restricted external narration include familiar techniques such as subjunctivism, ambiguity (of perspective or "vision," even, occasionally), implication and irony. They include the development of suspense motifs, such as the question of Jack's or Judge Moody's character, the parentage of Gloria and the mental faculty of Lady May, Jack and Gloria's small daughter. They also include the use of private stories, quasi factual family "myths," both to develop images of character that later must be compared with their prototypes in actuality and to create a depth of complex history and past involving the characters and their community, which furthers the book's aura of mystery and uncertainty. Finally, these special devices include implicit spokesmanship, the indirect imputation of the role as "moral norm" to a certain character, as well as conjectural intelligence reporting, the epistolary technique and even one overt shift to privileged access during the course of the novel.

Losing Battles consists of six parts. Five of these parts are studied in this chapter, while Part 4, which centrally concerns the development of Julia Mortimer as a character in the other characters' minds, is studied in Chapter 4, since that part of the novel relies extensively upon the conjectural intelligence perspective. Part 1's pace is controlled at frequent intervals by the arrivals of different branches of the Renfros' clan on the day of their reunion at Beulah and Ralph Renfro's home. The members of these branches are to provide much of the

subsequent dialogue throughout the novel; their conversation, by far the single most extensively used narrative vehicle in the novel, not only develops exposition and characterization but also creates a constant "internal tone," at some distance from the external narrator, that helps to characterize the whole culture dramatically and concretely, yet also collectively. Part 1 focuses on both the present and the past, devoting much of its content to events leading up to Jack's being sent to prison. This history evolves in terms of the ways various members of the reunion tell it, and a reader must constantly ask whether each of these members has enough exact knowledge to act as a check upon the others. In other words, one must question whether there is enough common knowledge recognized as such to delineate a reasonably accurate account, but both the nature of some of the recounted incidents and the absence of a privileged-access narrator keep the reader generally aware of his having to sift through local legend, half-truths, family "myths" and ambiguities much of the time.

After some suspense builds around Granny's confidence that Jack will be home for her birthday, an uncle, Percy, begins to relate the story of Jack's efforts to recover his great-grandmother's keepsake gold ring, a ring that had belonged to Jack's dead grandmother. His younger sister Ella Fay had "borrowed" it from Granny's Bible on the first day of school, the version goes, only to allow the local storekeeper, Curly Stovall, to take it instinctively from her proffered hand in a perturbed moment, without allowing him time, however, to restore it. Jack, to protect both family honor and treasure, had then assaulted the storekeeper and abducted his safe, erroneously supposing it to contain the ring as he

carried it away on his back. For this conduct, Judge Moody had decided to make an example of Jack for the sake of respect for the law, sending the youth to prison under a conviction of aggravated battery. Judge Moody's serious upholding of respect for law and order comes later to parallel Julia Mortimer's idealistic though futile crusade for education in the community, but the members of the reunion, of course, make a hero out of Jack and a scoundrel out of the judge. They treat the cause of honor not, to be sure, with a romantic obsession, as some of William Faulkner's people do, yet with a comic pride, careless crudity and egotistic humor that parallel, on an only ostensibly milder note, the overtly destructive romanticism about honor found in some of Faulkner's characters. In addition to Jack's image as perfect, unblemished champion of sacred honor, however, other images of him, equally mythical in tone, also develop during the conversations in Part 1 that precede his homecoming. There are the images of the pastoral hero, the prodigal son, and the "sleeping beauty" hero (as Beulah says that Gloria is "addled" and that it will require Jack to restore her). Clearly, the family perspective implies a tacit assumption of superiority to the law, and this "myth" also informs the composite image given of Jack in the dialogue of Part 1; indeed, the impression of his carrying Curly's safe on his back suggests Atlas-like imparity.

Jack's myth-like quality prior to his real introduction into the story creates suspense as to his actual character, which Part 2 brings into tentative focus. He does at length arrive home in Part 1, claiming to have been released on "good behavior" (though later appearing simply to have run away, just before his sentence would have been complete), and his family suggests that it is his duty now to confront Judge Moody with some

manner of just revenge. Jack's own sense of "debt" to the judge increases as he learns of the changes and problems at home while he has been away, until he finally determines to go at once to complete the business of his homecoming. Although others start to go with him, Gloria orders them not to; only she and the baby, Lady May, will accompany Jack, and the mission of their subsequent excursion forms the basic subject of Part 2.

The narrator stays with Jack in Part 2 as he and Gloria detach themselves from the reunion. Their movement with Lady May from the Renfro house to Banner Top, a local elevation, is enveloped by some irony of reversal in the discrepancy between the ostensible and the real motives of their private outing. Once at Gloria's request Jack articulates the avowed purpose of the mission: he says to Lady May that it is for "family duty," to put Judge Moody in a ditch and teach him a lesson. But Jack goes on to say that he is going to put the judge in one that he can get himself out of, without any help, to save time. That Jack's own mind is comic-serious correlates with the tone of much of the book, a tone that often leads to ambiguity, as reflected in the uncertainty even of Jack and Gloria as to what their real object in going to Banner Top is. As this part of the action develops without special insight or privileged access, one can only conjecture on the basis of that action that, in actuality, the mission is multiple: it seems to be simply to be together, away from the others; it seems also to be to gain an opportunity for privacy to make love. Yet, in addition to the declared object of "fixing" Judge Moody and these other less spoken, more intimate motives, there also appears to be the purpose of showing Lady May the world, as though Gloria had been waiting for Jack to come and introduce Lady May to the nature

around her. At one point, "'Lady May,' Jack said, 'you have to remember that when the old Bywy backs up in Panther Creek, it's an ocean where we're stepping.'" And again, "'Now, Lady May. The first thing you do is look out and see what you got around you,' Jack told the baby, 'This right here is Banner Top, little girl, and around us is all its brothers and sisters.'" Jack's remarks to Lady May seem to confirm some purpose he has undertaken to acquaint his child with the composition and features of her native plot of earth--that plot that holds and nourishes her roots. Insofar as Jack takes this purpose seriously, the excursion to Banner Top might well be seen as his delayed ritual of initiation into the fatherhood of a child that he is seeing now only for the first time. Moreover, telling Jack in later dialogue that his "system" will not work and that she must bring him "down to earth," Gloria seems to feel that Jack is simply not used to being a father yet. And, although Jack merely tells his daughter to "'Trust your dad . . . ,'" he admits that he had not pictured Gloria as breast-feeding the child. The motives sorted out, then, one fact becomes increasingly clear about the mission and its meaning: the togetherness with the baby is quite meaningful, while the rhetoric about Judge Moody is not. Yet, in spite of the clarity on this point for the reader, the excursion finally seems to be for Jack and Gloria a maze of mixed motives reflecting life's ambiguities of direction.

As Jack's character moves toward greater realism in Part 2, so do those of Judge Moody and Curly Stovall. One notes, for instance, that Judge Moody's comparatively mild temperament and concern for others after the accident he has in dodging Gloria and Lady May on Banner Top does not quite correlate with earlier reports of his temper. Jack determines now

to help the judge with his car because he has saved the lives of Gloria and the baby, and Mr. Renfro, moreover, seems to be on friendly enough terms with the judge when he finally comes to the Renfro home. Likewise, when Curly Stovall comes along in Jack's old truck, the narrator brings out his curls and laughter, which were not parts of his image as earlier given by reports of the family, but the reunion's "foregiveness" of the judge becomes, in fact, a central motif of Part 3.

Beulah Renfro seems to second her husband's reception of Judge Moody and his wife, as in Part 3 the reunion's hostess' graciousness toward the Moodys proves her earlier vitriolic rhetoric against the judge to have been false, at least literally if not wholly so in spirit. Then, when Jack tells how he and Aycock, a companion, absconded from Parchman prison, the narrator creates suspense in the judge's silence as to his reaction to the news that Jack has broken out. Finally, however, moved by a suggestion of Brother Bethune, a local minister, the reunion decides collectively to forgive Judge Moody. The judge says that he does not want to hear himself be forgiven, and the restricted narrator of course does not reveal what Brother Bethune's real motive is. He and some of the other members of the reunion seem to be using outward forgiveness as a cruel pretext for embarrassing and humiliating the judge, as though he needed such forgiveness from them. It is not clear, though, whether Brother Bethune is wise to the irony in what he says of forgiveness or is just downright stupid. Jack and Beulah, at least, do not go along with the idea of forgiving the judge, yet when Jack tells the judge that he does not know what his poor family is thinking about, neither can a reader know for sure whether Jack is aware of the implicit cruelty of irony and

embarrassment in the sudden gesture as it is so made. This irony so clearly asserted by some, such as Aunt Birdie and Aunt Beck, is that while the judge is being forgiven for judging Jack, the judge is himself being judged. Yet an even deeper irony lies in the further fact that while judgment and forgiveness are near opposites, the reunion now, by judging the judge, is really making a mockery out of forgiveness in order to humiliate him. One remembers Brother Bethune's earlier text, "Be humble," as Aunt Birdie claps her hands in suspectedly proud triumph over humiliating the judge in her own mind, and Jack groans in possible sympathy with the judge.

In spite of his groan here and his earlier possible attempt to apologize to the judge, however, Jack finally does not appear too sympathetic with the judge on the matter of his being sent to prison. Yet there is a comic innocence as well as an immature egotism expressed in Jack's reason for not forgiving Judge Moody: he has caused Jack's family to be deprived of him for "'. . . a year, six months and a day . . . ,'" and Jack feels somewhat shocked and hurt now to hear the others forgive the judge. Here Jack seems perhaps unable to perceive the mocking tone of the others' "forgiveness," failing in his innocence to understand what their cruel irony is all about. Perhaps a comprehensive perspective would best suggest here that Jack's straightforward attitude is, in spite of its egotism, yet better than either a mocking travesty of forgiveness or a hypocritical pretense at it. It would furthermore appear that Mr. Renfro, in being neither mocking nor hypocritical (nor yet like Jack either), could represent such a comprehensive perspective, especially when, replying to Jack's protest, he says, "'It's all part of the reunion. We got to

live it out, son' . . . ." Mr. Renfro seems here to assume the burden of "spokesmanship" for the author, for he seems to have a true sense of forgiveness in mind--one that seems appropriately connected with the spiritual idea of "reunion." Except for some egotistical indulgence in the judge's company, perhaps, Mr. Renfro might actually operate as a "moral norm" throughout much of the novel.

Part 3 concludes with the motif of Granny's gradual loss of contact with reality, and Part 4 introduces further character development of Julia Mortimer, who begins to emerge as a distinct image as Part 4 proceeds. That both Granny and Julia suffer mental failure in old age suggests a grotesqueness reflected in the chance that Jack and Gloria could be first cousins and also the possibility, throughout much of the novel, that Lady May could be deaf-mute. The development of Julia Mortimer is a major subject of Part 4, along with the question of Gloria's parentage, and since the development of this Julia Mortimer material concerns the use of the conjectural intelligence perspective, Part 4 will receive concentration in the next chapter.

Part 5 seems to resolve the question of Lady May's faculties, a well-founded question that develops subtly throughout the narrative up to its apparent resolution. First the narrator makes it quite clear that, although Lady May can make noises vocally, she cannot or has not been known as yet to speak words. Then one gradually notes that the baby seems unresponsive to sound--at least she is never described as responding to any until Part 5. Even in Part 5, a letter from Julia Mortimer "'. . . said a baby, if one was to get here, might be deaf and dumb,'" apparently referring to that lady's fear or knowledge that Jack and Gloria were first

cousins. "Even at the sound of her name, the baby didn't wake or stir," reports the narrator in the same passage, and later, "'Nothing ever wakes her but the sun coming up and feeling the fresh pangs of hunger,' said Gloria." Indeed, in Part 1 the narrator once describes Lady May as that ". . . she might have been listening for her name," but the subjunctivity here might well appear subsequently to have been a vehicle for irony, in view of the ambiguity that the narrative goes on to create about Lady May's faculty for hearing. In Part 5, however, this ambiguity seems to clear away. At the very end of that section of the novel, rain begins to fall:

> Hearing what sounded like great treads going over her head, the baby opened her eyes. She put her voice into the fray, and spoke to it the first sentence of her life: "What you huntin', man?"
>
> Miss Beulah ran out onto the porch, snatched up the baby, and ran with her back to her own bed, as if a life had been saved (LB, 368).

It is conceivable that the description of the sound of the rain is intended to convey Lady May's own impression, not just the narrator's, for as he goes on to assert positively that this is "the first sentence of her life," he seems to be assuming some measure of special insight that would imply privileged access. And such access, if it does appear here, does not come without precedent in the novel, for somewhat earlier in Part 5 the narrator has clearly assumed privileged access toward the mind of Jack's younger brother, Vaughn.

The passage of privileged access toward Vaughn in Part 5 is preparation for his full realization in Part 6 of the role of moral foil to Jack, as Jack in Part 6 completes the movement of his character development from myth to reality. In that concluding section one discovers

that while Vaughn stands up realistically as an admirable character, Jack loses some of his myth-like stature in the world of actuality. It is the overt contrast between Jack and Vaughn that finally demonstrates that Jack's former image is only subtle caricature. While that contrast is depicted graphically in Part 6, its immediate foreshadowing occurs in Part 5, once the narrator assumes privileged access toward Vaughn. There he reflects:

> . . . Had today been all brave show, and had Jack all in secret fallen down--taking the whole day to fall, but falling, like that star he saw now, going out of sight like the scut of a rabbit? Could Jack take a fall from highest place and nobody be man enough to say so? Was falling a secret, another part of people's getting tangled up with each other, another danger to walk up on without warning--like finding them lying deep in the woods together, like one creature, some kind of cricket hatching out of the ground, big enough to eat him or to rasp at him and drive him away? . . . (LB, 363).

Although the narrator uses third person in this passage, his voice articulates an image current in Vaughn's mind; the language might be the narrator's, but the inner vision is Vaughn's, and he almost becomes the center of consciousness as his vision spectrum spreads over the fictional illusion. The image of Jack's "falling" should be regarded closely in connection with other revealing information about Vaughn that the narrator discloses during his short interval of privileged access toward Vaughn's mind. One learns, for instance, that he ". . . loved Banner School . . . ," and that he liked the smell of the print of his geography book. These facts associate Vaughn with Julia Mortimer as her spiritual ally in the cause of learning, and Vaughn becomes, by virtue of this high association, a symbol of whatever hope there is in his world for redeeming Julia's lost life, her "losing battle." Vaughn answers straight out in Part 6; he does not fool around with witticisms, as Jack does. Vaughn finally replies

to Jack "with scorn" as Jack, playing the role of comic caricature, turns the Banner School bus into a joke, a toy, but Vaughn is "ready to worship" the new school teacher. Miss Julia Mortimer, however, is the novel's real prototype of Vaughn's ideal, and her character development shall receive special study in the next chapter.

Footnotes

[1]Vande Kieft, p. 47.

[2]Vande Kieft, p. 46.

[3]Vande Kieft, p. 23.

[4]Vande Kieft, p. 43.

[5]Vande Kieft, p. 84.

[6]Vande Kieft, p. 84.

[7]Danforth Ross, The American Short Story, Univ. of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 14 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1961), p. 42.

[8]Vande Kieft, p. 83.

[9]Ross, p. 42.

[10]See Vande Kieft, p. 29. Miss Vande Kieft carefully describes Mrs. Larkin's search for reality in her garden.

[11]Vande Kieft, p. 30.

[12]Vande Kieft, pp. 48-49.

[13]Vande Kieft, p. 49.

CHAPTER V

THE CONJECTURAL INTELLIGENCE PERSPECTIVE

i

This chapter concentrates on the conjectural intelligence perspective in Miss Welty's fiction. This is the internal or character perspective that occurs with restricted external narration. The conjectural intelligence character is developed with either dialogue or conjectural narration, whenever the narrator utilizes either of these devices to create such a character's perspective as matter of inference or speculation. The method of conjectural narration frequently includes subjunctivity to develop a character perspective.

A character's perspective must be conjectural when the narration is restricted. If the method of developing this character perspective is dialogue, the development seems more direct than it does if the method is conjectural narration, although these degrees are relative. Whichever method of development occurs, the narrator can treat the conjectural character perspective either objectively or subjectively, regarding the character's thoughts from the detached narrative perspective if the treatment is objective but regarding the fictional illusion from the conjectured character perspective if the treatment is subjective. The conjectural intelligence character becomes a center of consciousness only if the narrator develops his perspective subjectively: when the mode of treatment

is objective, the reader shares the narrator's conjectured impressions of the character's mind, whereas in the subjective method the reader observes the fictional illusion from the conjectured perspective of the character. Subjective development rarely occurs with dialogue unless one character sustains a consistent narrative focus by dominating a conversation or rendering a monologue. Subjective development occurs with conjectural narration whenever the narrator, while restricted, articulates a character's attributed vision of the fictional illusion, so that the character seems to afford the immediate impression of the story world as it is imaged in terms of his conjectured impressions.

Miss Welty has used dialogue as well as another special device that approximates monologue (the epistolary device) to develop conjectural intelligence perspectives in Losing Battles, both those of other characters toward Miss Julia Mortimer and that of Julia herself, who never appears directly in the narrative perspective at all, toward her part of the story world. Dialogue occurs also in at least three other stories by Miss Welty to create conjectural intelligence perspectives, and subjunctivity occurs in at least two more to help create character perspectives through conjectural narration. First, this chapter shall consider conjectural intelligence narration in Losing Battles.

ii

Conjectural narration occurs intermittently throughout most of Losing Battles, but its most conspicuous use in developing sustained character perspectives is in Part 4. This part of the novel concerns two distinct though remotely connected motifs, the character and ideals of

Miss Julia Mortimer and the question of Gloria Renfro's parentage. These are two of the most serious subjects of the book, and they are not only conjoined ambiguously in Part 4 but also extended into Part 5. The subject of Julia Mortimer's character develops implicitly for the most part, as literal recollections and criticism of her by members of the reunion function only indirectly to point out her true individual nature and personal goals. These idealistic goals, as well as the dynamic, forceful personality that had upheld them in a largely alien world, are apparent in the novel at first only through a measure of ironic discrepancy between what the reunion implies and what it actually says about Julia. That is, the collective reunion so misinterprets the meaning of Julia Mortimer through its own ignorance that it becomes almost a microcosm of that alien world wherein the schoolteacher had fought her "losing battle" against ignorance (indeed, the reunion consists largely of her former students). As such a microcosm, the reunion offers a mock or anti-eulogistic critique of her, from its own sadly perpetuated point of view, upon the occasion of her death, not even confining its damning to faint praise. Significantly, as Julia's real character steadily crystallizes into the ideal to which the members of the reunion are so blind, it comes to supplant the greater-than-life image of Jack as the novel's moral center; the former ideal remains intact only in the minds of the members of the family, for the reader moves with the comprehensive perspective farther and farther away from these members as he perceives the ironic blindness from which they attempt to evaluate Julia as a piece of community history and only that. As a piece of community history, however, Julia is significantly kept alive long enough for her bearing upon the other

central motif of Part 4, the question of Gloria's parentage, to be aired one last time. This second motif also develops through conjectural perspectives, whose characters' literal avowals, even, are sometimes no more than declared conjecture themselves. That one such conjectural intelligence character is Granny Renfro complicates the motif's development even as she seems to clarify its basic question, for Granny Renfro's mind wavers more and more obviously between illusion and reality as the reunion wears on in Part 4, an action ironically often ignored by the reunion as it discusses a parallel "madness" of Julia in her old age.

The primary perspective in Part 4 of Losing Battles is that of the external narrator, as it is throughout all of the novel, and this narrator is consistently restricted in Part 4, just as he is in all except one short passage of the novel. The secondary or character perspectives in Part 4 are consequently conjectural intelligence perspectives, whenever they receive sufficiently sustained or intense focus to qualify as factors of vision, just as the character perspectives developed in all of the other restrictedly narrated parts of the novel are. It is only because thematic structure depends more directly in Part 4 than in any other part of the novel upon subjects developed from secondary perspectives rather than the primary one of the narrator, and also because these secondary perspectives in Part 4 consequently become centers of consciousness more frequently than do those of any other part, that Part 4 has been selected for particular study in connection with the conjectural intelligence perspective.

The following study of Part 4 of Losing Battles considers the conjectural intelligence perspective as it occurs with respect to both

major motifs. Those secondary perspectives that are developed toward the Julia Mortimer motif as such might include Julia's own; it is developed implicitly rather than explicitly, inasmuch as she never appears directly in the narrative or primary perspective. In addition to this implicitness of development, as well as its overall conjectural status, Julia's perspective is also filtered through the indirectness of irony inherent in the narrow, shortsighted visions that imperfectly project it. Her conjectural, implicit, ironically developed perspective--before it receives a measure of explicitness through epistolary means--concentrates and epitomizes Miss Welty's most subtle resources for exploiting the possibilities of restricted external narration. Julia's perspective is also relevant to the motif of Gloria's parentage, being developed in that particular capacity largely through Gloria herself. Other secondary perspectives developed toward the Julia Mortimer motif receive explicit treatment from the narrator's perspective. These include not only a broad, collective perspective representing the consensus of the reunion, but also several character perspectives that, while contributing to the collective perspective, are also redeemable or otherwise conspicuous enough on strategic occasions to individualize themselves, as though they emerged as bubbles reflecting sometimes reliable, sometimes dubious light from one source or another upon the common sea-surface of mutual ignorance and stupidity. Among those individual perspectives growing out of the collective one are at least three minor ones in addition to two major ones; the three most fully realized minor individual perspectives are those of Beulah and Gloria Renfro and a Mr. Willy Trimble, while the two major individual perspectives toward the Julia Mortimer material are those of Miss Lexie

Renfro and Judge Oscar Moody. Lexie's perspective affords possibly the sharpest indication of irony as a device for the indirect development of Julia's perspective and the implication of the ideal she truly represents, while Judge Moody's rational, sane perspective counterbalances both Lexie and the whole reunion with its sympathy for Miss Julia, its insight into her motives and its basic sense of proportion. With these qualities, Judge Moody projects Julia's perspective with less irony to filter through than does anyone else at the reunion, even Gloria. Moreover, he becomes the instrument for the climactic presentation of Julia's mind in "first person," through epistolary documents. Finally, in addition to Gloria's perspective, there are at least three other character perspectives developed explicitly toward the motif of her parentage; these three are Lexie's, Beulah's and Granny Renfro's, all clearly individualized along with Gloria's.

The collective perspective of the reunion toward Julia Mortimer begins to develop shortly after Mr. Willy Trimble, an outsider to the group, interrupts the gathering and announces her death earlier that day. Regarding Miss Julia generally as a taskmaster and a perfectionist, the company of relatives carry on an open, free-flowing discussion of the schoolteacher's life as they see it, and enough concrete information soon comes out of this discussion for an image of Julia to emerge. It is the consensus of the relatives that they "suffered" under Miss Julia Mortimer, that she "'. . . put an end to good fishing . . .'" (as Uncle Percy says), and that she was a "cross to bear." These former students have retained impressions of Miss Julia's outward manner sufficient to render a shallow, schoolboyish caricature of her in their natural hostility to learning,

but they continue to lack what they had lacked in her schoolroom, what had made her "losing battle" so frustrating in its absence, and that is understanding sympathy with her goals for the community and appreciative insight into her concept of reform. Lacking these keys to Miss Julia's inner character, the company only misrepresents or misinterprets what it knows of the former teacher and her life. The truly damning sin of most if not all of Miss Julia's former students is not so much their ignorance as it is their complacency in ignorance--their inbred hostility to change and reluctance to put forth effort of any kind. Yet it is also partly their failure to recognize education as a means to a better way of life for them--really their failure to take seriously any prospect of there being possible any better way of life for themselves--that constitutes their sin against themselves as well as Julia's ideal, and that failure is a form of ignorance. Julia stood for all forms of learning (not just "booklearning") as means to raising both the cultural level and the practical standard of living in an area sorely in need of social and economic reforms, but to such a typical observer as Uncle Noah Webster, her strategy was simply to make one over into something he was not, and her chief tactic for achieving her end was sheer mortification of her victims. Miss Beulah Renfro does indeed recall Julia's own declared aim--"'. . . She wanted us to quit worshipping ourselves quite so wholehearted!' . . ."--but still, even speaking individually and not as a part of the chorus, Miss Beulah lacks a genuine sense of what these words mean. She, like all the others, is too provincial to have any deep understanding of Julia's viewpoint. Beulah seems to feel that the schoolteacher's province should be confined to the schoolroom and to resent Miss Julia's ever

having sought to moderate her brothers' high spirits. The reunion finally is not just complacent, even; for the most part it is downright proud, though, it might be said, proud in a desperate sort of way--proud because pride (whether based on anything real or not) is about all its members do have to enjoy.

Not the least proud of all the Renfro family is Gloria, the girl that married Jack, who stands as the reunion's ideal against the true ideal of the book. Yet Gloria takes the word of Julia's death quite severely, herself. After all, Julia had taken this illegitimate orphan into her own care at one time, had tended to the adolescent's education and, as Gloria reports, had conceived plans of "passing the torch" of her profession on to Gloria upon her graduation from the state Normal. Gloria now seems to feel ambivalently about her forsaken commitment to Miss Julia and her ideal: while she appears to feel not only sorrow but also some guilt at the news of Julia's death, she also knows that she has given up her teaching career for someone she loves and wants to change (albeit in her own way). So, Gloria's idealism seems to have turned simply toward one man, not toward the whole Banner community, as Miss Julia's selfless ambition had turned. Although the reunion speaks seriously of Gloria's having been "rescued" from such a life as Julia Mortimer's, Gloria speaks in turn with such apparent admiration for the lady's liberality that Aunt Nanny, at one point, half-jokingly questions Gloria as to whose side she is on. Aunt Nanny had earlier remarked that Miss Julia's "'. . . whistling switch put an end to their dreams,' . . ." and Aunt Birdie had also expressed amazement that Gloria, with her "dreamy eyes," could have ever seriously followed Miss Julia's pattern of life. Gloria, however, recalls

the dream that Miss Julia had once inspired in her--the dream of teaching civics in high school and eventually becoming a principal. What Aunt Nanny, Aunt Birdie and all the others fail to realize is that Miss Julia was probably the truest "dreamer" ever to come to Banner community. Yet Gloria at least has understood Julia's battle in Julia's own terms, for she quotes Julia's comparison of herself to Saint George in the myth of the dragon, having to explain the analogy to Miss Beulah.

Mr. Willy Trimble, the man who finds Miss Julia after her fatal falling accident and reports her death to the reunion, is a local handy-man of sorts that has milked Miss Julia's cow for her in her old age. Willy is also a former student of Julia, and while the members of the reunion ill conceal their deprecatory opinion of Willy, who signs his name with a question mark, he is blessed with enough natural simplicity to have the naked innocence to appreciate the gifts and qualities of Miss Julia; he is simply awed by a sense of her superiority and, unlike the members of the reunion, he does not seek to cast aspersion on the dead. He recognizes his debt to the lady and pays her tribute for having taught him practically all he knows. His story of Miss Julia indicates that she brought him as far as she could in the three "R's" and then taught him to use hand tools. It appears from his perspective that the teacher would seek to develop whatever kinds of talents there were in any responsible individual to their fullest potential. In reporting to the reunion that Miss Julia's mourners had turned down the coffin he had made for her, Willy notes that it was Miss Julia that had taught him how to use a hand-saw in the first place and that he had thought his coffin for her to be no more than his debt to her. It is Willy's admiration for Miss Julia

and his honest appreciation of her contribution to his own welfare that individualize his perspective; his faithfulness to Julia for her superior mind sets him off from the rest of the group, and his innocence saves him in some measure while ignorance is damning the others.

The individual perspectives of Miss Lexie Renfro and Judge Moody become the most clearly sustained sources of vision toward Julia Mortimer in Part 4. Their sharply contrasting perspectives bring Miss Julia's own implicit perspective into more concentrated focus than it receives from any other source, and they polarize the range of conflicting attitudes suggested by the distance between the relatives' collective perspective and the book's comprehensive perspective. Miss Lexie Renfro, who has abandoned Miss Julia, her nursing charge in the latter's home, to come to the reunion, relates a narrative of the ordeal she has had in nursing the aged schoolteacher in recent times. According to Miss Lexie, Miss Julia's mind has completely gone, and her nurse seems to regard her in this presumed condition as just an adversary to overcome and care for in spite of herself. Because Miss Lexie conceives of her role as that of antagonist rather than nurse, she perpetuates Miss Julia's battle with ignorance into her last years of retirement and possible senility in probably its most grotesque and futile episode. Miss Julia is simply an object to the obtuse and uncompromising Lexie, something to be manipulated just for the satisfaction of asserting a victory. For example, Miss Lexie details with no evidence of pity or compassion the blunt and tactless way she handled Miss Julia's obsession for writing letters of vitriolic content supposedly degrading human nature: the nurse reports that when she had taken away her charge's writing material the poor patient went on writing with her

finger, first on the bedsheet and then in the palm of her hand. Miss Lexie also shows no genuine ability to render comfort in the unsympathetic way she says she responded to Miss Julia's request for reading matter; unable to make Lexie understand which books she wanted, Julia got no books at all. In Lexie's bizarre tale, at least, Julia's madness climaxes in her wish to have the Banner school bell, which she reportedly explained to her nurse in nonsense jingles.

That Miss Lexie might have hastened Miss Julia's descent into madness seems quite likely. Yet on the other hand, one cannot know, from Miss Lexie's stubborn, self-assured account, just how much sense Julia could have retained in Lexie's ignorance, or whether Julia could have only pretended to madness, even, as a device for tormenting her tormentor. The other major sustained perspective toward Julia during this same recent period of her life, that of Judge Moody, offers reason to question Lexie's assumption that Julia was totally mad. While Lexie's perspective projects Julia's perspective indirectly through the irony of misconception and moral impotence, the Judge's projects it sympathetically, through Julia's own writing and correspondence. In other words, if Lexie's perspective only represents an extreme potential for grotesque, ironic distortion in the collective one, then the Judge's reflects or monitors the comprehensive perspective of the author.

Judge Moody reads aloud a couple of documents in Julia's own words, written apparently before she had reached her extreme stage of mental failure. One is her "will," and the other is a letter to the Judge. Willy Trimble introduces the first document to the reunion, offering up a curious book that he has taken from Julia's kitchen table and that Miss

Beulah recognizes as Julia's old speller. Closer examination of the speller discloses pin scratchings on its cover that identify it now as "'M-Y-W-I-L-L' . . . ," and the Judge, who says that he is an old friend of Julia, takes it, studies it and informs the gathering of its "substance." As the Judge speaks for Miss Julia, her perspective shifts a degree closer to explicit development. According to her will, Miss Julia has constituted the entire Banner School "roll call" (i.e., all her former students) as her mourners and has instructed the body to assemble in the school yard, where she is to be buried, so the will declares, under the doorstep of the school. The document concludes, "'"And then, you fools--mourn me."'" The reunion first jokes and then balks at this last command of the schoolteacher, as Miss Beulah typifies its reaction by saying, "'. . . Trying to regiment the reunion into being part of her funeral!'"

Judge Moody himself introduces the second document, a recent letter summoning him to Miss Julia's home. Because the hour is late, the company sits in virtual darkness as the Judge reads this letter, but he explains that he can do so in spite of the poor light because he has read the letter to himself already. While there is a chance that the Judge might be changing the letter's contents or adding to them here and there some of his own comments (to make his reading as scathing as possible to his listeners, as he might conceivably have felt moved to do), the narrator says that the Judge "reads," and although the narrator is restricted in this part of the novel, there is no positive basis in evidence to argue that the Judge does alter the letter's contents. The question, therefore, remains a matter of conjecture, and the Judge's reading of the letter is probably best taken as a faithful account of its literal contents.

First in her letter Julia develops explicitly her concept of teaching as a losing battle against ignorance. Her tone in this part of the letter is a mixture of the philosophical and the personal, and while she recognizes that her work has been imperfect, she has no desire to turn back time. Expressing frustration but not despair, she alludes to both the ineptness of her attendants and her recognition of the encroaching failure of her mind. Against the latter obstacle she asserts her seemingly characteristic faith in stoical persistence regardless of the odds. "'". . . From flat on your back you may not be able to lick the world, but at least you can keep the world from licking you. . .,"'" quotes the Judge, in words that suggest that Miss Julia faces old age as a code-hero of Ernest Hemingway might. Yet Miss Julia also alludes to her having once been on "'". . . the verge of disgrace. . .,"'" although no member of the reunion has intimated knowledge of any such circumstance in her past. Then going on, she writes a warning to the Judge against innocence, against holding his tongue in conspiracy with the ignorant and the wicked, lest it bring about his own mortification. Calling for the Judge to pay her a visit with his lawbooks, she then refers to a "story" that "'". . . leads to a child."'" She concludes, "'"If I'm finally to reach my undoing, I won't be surprised to meet it in a child."'" This part of the letter is ambiguous, but it would seem to raise the possibility that Miss Julia had once given birth to a child. If so, it further raises the question, "Is Gloria that child?" This is a question that occurs from more than one source of speculation in the novel, and Julia's words to the Judge are just one possible aspect of the confusing material of Gloria's background. The question of her parentage, in fact,

is so important that it constitutes the second major motif of Part 4, and there are other, even more interesting leads than Julia's letter to the Judge, though none appear to be conclusive.

Gloria's relationship to her husband, Jack, is the real matter involved in the question of her parentage, and it is of central concern to the reader in the whole novel. Gloria herself makes the question a topic of discussion when she brings it up in connection with Miss Julia Mortimer. In addition to what Gloria reports from Miss Julia's perspective, the other major sources of vision toward this second motif are Gloria's own perspective and those of three other ladies, including only one not already developed in connection with the first motif. That one is Granny Renfro's, subject to her mind's increasing failure to distinguish between past and present, which makes one question the accuracy of her memory.

Early in Part 4 Gloria recalls having sought Miss Julia's advice concerning marriage. The old schoolteacher by that time had retired, and Gloria was then filling the position at Banner School. Julia had been negative in her response to Gloria, cautioning her against taking either her professional duty too lightly or her young emotions too seriously, and also warning her to find out more about her family connections before marrying. Gloria says that Julia had mentioned a "dark thread" in her past and had promised help in solving its mystery. This informations starts speculation among the others, and much of the motif develops from other sources before a passage complementary to the first one occurs in Part 5. In that subsequent passage Gloria tells of having later received two letters from Miss Julia on the subject of her forthcoming marriage to

Jack. More pointed than the earlier warning, the first letter advised Gloria to call off her wedding, while the second one, according to Gloria, declared that such a marriage would only be nullified, that Jack would be sent to prison and that any child might be deaf and dumb. Gloria now tells the reunion that she simply ignored Julia's overt warnings, and except for Julia's letter to Judge Moody and, of course, her motherly care for the young orphan, there is little else in the novel that can even be regarded as circumstantial evidence that Julia really knew anything factual, much less that she herself was Gloria's mother.

Shortly after the reunion has taken up the subject of Gloria's parents, Granny Renfro declares rather summarily that Gloria's mother is Rachel Sojourner, a poor Banner girl, long since dead, who had boarded with the Renfros just prior to the time of Gloria's conception, when Julia was likewise staying with the Renfros. Beulah seems only slowly to recall Rachel at first, but gradually she comes to credit Granny with having pronounced the truth, for she claims to observe a clear-cut resemblance between "mother" and "daughter," especially in the red hair common to both. Gloria, however, does not want to be Rachel's; scorning such a mean origin, she would prefer to remain no one's at all and concentrate independently on the future.

Before any more real evidence develops, Miss Lexie Renfro tells of Julia's account of taking Rachel to Ludlow just prior to that girl's death, sometime around the supposed date of Gloria's birth. According to Lexie's version of Julia's story, which Lexie says Julia told her after she had become Julia's nurse, Julia had picked Rachel up in an automobile one evening shortly before the girl's death from pneumonia. Rachel had

been standing on the Banner bridge, and Miss Julia had determined to take her to a doctor in Ludlow. Miss Lexie turns her version of Julia's account into an occasion for anecdote that probably reflects her own humor more than the schoolteacher's, and the only significant reflection that Lexie finally makes is that Julia had not mentioned there being a baby any way involved in the experience. Aunt Beck, however, quickly conjectures one into it anyway, supposing that Rachel had just had the child recently before Miss Julia met her on Banner bridge. The speculation about this account settles no problem but does raise an interesting question for the reader: although Miss Beulah refers to "Rachel's story" as common knowledge and asserts positively that Rachel's baby must be somewhere, the details of such a story, at least those that would confirm the existence of a baby in the first place, never are discussed, so that the reader never learns exactly how it can be known for sure, if indeed it can be (as Beulah seems to think), that Rachel was pregnant and delivered of a living child at all about the time in question. Aunt Birdie's subsequent remark that she thinks Rachel had the baby by herself would only seem to suggest that the very existence of such a baby is a matter of conjecture. Yet once again it is Granny Renfro that provides a tantalizing clue to the mystery.

Granny once again speaks up, just as summarily as she had previously, this time declaring that "'Sam Dale Beecham was going to marry fox-headed Rachel.'" Sam Dale was Beulah's youngest brother, who died in Georgia at an army camp during World War I. Although his other brothers protest now that Sam Dale was "too good" to have been the father, Granny produces a postcard that she has kept secret until this occasion. It is

addressed to Rachel from Sam Dale in Georgia; Granny says that Sam Dale never mailed the card himself, for it came bundled with his other things after his death. Beulah reads it aloud, and all hear Sam Dale's reference to "'". . . a--present for our--baby"'" and "'" save it for when he gets here. . . ."'" The postcard is signed, "'"Sincerely your husband."'" Matters are far from settled even with this document, however, for if one were to conclude that Rachel at least was carrying Sam Dale's baby, there is still only a scant amount of circumstantial evidence that their lost daughter might be Gloria. Furthermore, Miss Beulah has a story of her own--one that Granny and probably the surviving brothers already know. In Part 5 Beulah relates a personal experience that explains an old sense of guilt and also reveals Sam Dale's incapacity for fatherhood, if its implication is a fact. According to Beulah, Sam Dale was stricken in the lap by a piece of hot coal from the hearth when he was a small child, and she has felt herself blamed ever since for the accident and its supposed harm to the boy because she was responsible at the moment of the accident for watching him and then took too long searching for the medication that Granny had sent her for. Thus, if Beulah is correct, Sam Dale could not have been anyone's father, and the postcard itself becomes a mystery. Again, however, Granny offers some plausible solution to the immediate question.

Again in Part 5, Granny finally declares that she had never claimed that Sam Dale was the father of Rachel's child. She asserts only that Sam Dale was going to marry Rachel, so that, in spite of the signature on the postcard, their actual marriage might not have taken place at all. Sam Dale, so Granny thinks, "'. . . was pulling her out of a

pickle.'" Exposition that occurs in Part 5 prior to Granny's remarks here, however, is necessary to understand their full range of suggestion. This exposition has to do with Uncle Nathan's secret, which Beulah tries vainly to suppress. Uncle Nathan is the oldest of the Beecham brothers, and according to the story that he insists on telling himself, he now wanders from place to place a converted Christian because he once killed a man and let an innocent Negro hang for the crime. The victim of Nathan's violent act was a Mr. Dearman, who also figures prominently in the question of Gloria's parentage. According to prior exposition by Mr. Renfro, Dearman was an opportunistic lumber cutter that had once taken unfair advantage of him, and according to Granny Dearman was also one of Julia Mortimer's sweethearts. Miss Beulah adds that Nathan told Miss Julia about the crime and that she had given him the stoical and moral advice to start over in life and be good. Once more, however, it is a pronouncement from Granny that affords the most interesting clue to the immediate mystery. Concerning Nathan's killing of Dearman, she comments that he, "'Did it for Sam Dale'. . . ."

With little else to develop of particular importance concerning the motif of Gloria's parentage, Part 5 moves on to other subjects and leaves the reader wondering. Instead of solving the mystery of Gloria, the reunion has only raised others of Rachel and Sam Dale. A strong suggestion growing out of the material surveyed is that Nathan's motive for killing Dearman might be a key to the riddle of Rachel, but this motive is never explained except in the form of Granny's vague statement that he did it for Sam Dale. Conjecture affords a multiple choice of possible solutions within the contexts developed by the relatives' discussion, but

whether Sam Dale really was impotent, or whether Rachel was really pregnant, or why Nathan killed Dearman (who reportedly had courted Julia) and what Julia or Nathan might have known all are questions that elude final answers. Conjectural intelligence narration proves to be an excellent device in Losing Battles for developing suspense and controlling narrative pace and tone, for much of the drama and realism of Part 4 depends upon the conversational and digressive movement of the story-telling and dialogue. Moreover, by allowing frequent shifting of the focus to occur in the fictional illusion, conjectural intelligence narration lends itself to variety and contrast in content as well as technique.

iii

There are at least five more stories by Miss Welty in addition to Losing Battles that contain sustained or conspicuously developed conjectural intelligence perspectives. These notable five are all from the two volumes A Curtain of Green and The Wide Net. Their study in this chapter is important in showing Miss Welty's achievements with character perspectives in restricted narration early in her career and prior to Losing Battles. The first three to be discussed are similar in development to Part 4 of Losing Battles in that dialogue is their chief mode of developing conjectural perspectives. The last two stories discussed in this chapter, however, are conspicuous in that they illustrate the use of subjunctivity as a means of conjectural narration.

Steve, the conjectural intelligence character in "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden," from A Curtain of Green, is a character obsessed by a sense of guilt. It arises from his shocking recognition of personal involvement in an immoral crime against another person's identity and

manhood. Steve now sees that his complicity in this particular guilt for degrading a fellow human results from his former ignorance and indifference to circumstances, and besides concerning Steve's own painful account of the experience, this story also contains the external narrator's objective account of Steve's subsequent search for moral restoration and the means of making restitution to the victim for his supposed humiliation. The story focuses upon two settings, the present locale in Cane Springs, Mississippi, where Steve has sought out his former victim after two years of inner torment, and the earlier setting of Steve's narrative, Little Oil, Texas, where he was first made to realize his share in contributing to a monstrous act.

Steve's former victim is a dwarfish, clubfooted Negro called Little Lee Roy in Cane Springs but once known as "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" after he was allegedly abducted by a circus. Steve reports the narrative of Lee Roy's abduction second hand, as one of his co-employees of that circus had told him of it, but he reports the rest of Lee Roy's ordeal first hand, for he was there, a part of the circus with Lee Roy at that time, working as barker for Lee Roy's act. This act, Steve contends, consisted of eating live chickens, and his role as barker was the source of his involvement in the crime against Lee Roy, who, again according to Steve, was told that he must not talk and that he must act violently if anyone even approached him. Steve tells his story to an incredulous white man of Cane Springs called Max, who has agreeably escorted Steve, a stranger in Cane Springs, to Lee Roy's doorstep.

Steve's whole story is more than exposition for its present sequel, for it becomes a revelation of self-recognition and of the

traumatic discovery of one's part in evil. Steve explains to Max, for instance, that he himself had not comprehended Lee Roy's male identity, his captivity or his ability to communicate until a "man" with apparently enough compassion and perception to recognize Lee Roy's plight had effected his freedom by going to the police. Steve, then, wants Max to believe not only that the facts occurred just as he says but also that he was morally blind to their significance and came to understand his guilt only after the compassionate man had demonstrated the fraud and exposed the atrocity.

Because of Steve's obsession and need to confess, he makes himself the center of his own narrative, just as he is the center of the action occurring in the present. Yet, as interesting as Steve's narrative is by itself, Ruth M. Vande Kieft has correctly observed in Eudora Welty that the story's primary emphasis is upon the present situation of Steve's desperate effort to make Max believe the circus story while Little Lee Roy looks on with no sense of having ever been wronged at all.[1] Although she describes Steve's "guilty ignorance" as well as his subsequent anxiety, she recognizes that the story's main design depends as much upon the characterization of Max and Lee Roy as it does upon Steve's:

> Steve needs a shared response of horror at his guilty action, a knowing, appalled sympathy, a moral judgment; but all he gets from Max is a bit of mild bafflement, bored patience and tolerance, tired little ironies, and irrelevant generosity. Because Steve isn't taken seriously, the fatal sense of responsibility settles on him more heavily than ever. He is even denied the satisfaction of making reparation, since he has no money to give Little Lee Roy.[2]

Little Lee Roy, moreover, only compounds Steve's frustration while aggravating his moral isolation, for the Negro ". . . has no more than a child's moral intelligence, and even less than the child's capacity to remember

pain."[3] Robert Penn Warren, in his essay "The Love and Separateness in Miss Welty," relates this story's ultimate significance to the legend of the Wandering Jew by associating it with Samuel Coleridge's The Ancient Mariner; like that poem, Warren says, Miss Welty's "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" concerns a man that has committed a crime and must reestablish his connection with humanity.[4] But Steve, even after striking Max, gets only his offer of a free meal.

By developing Steve's perspective to convey the story's exposition as his recollection, Miss Welty represents that material in the form in which it is chiefly relevant as exposition, for "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" primarily concerns the moral isolation and frustration to which Steve's special view of evil, however obtained, has driven him. Basically the narrator is the center of consciousness throughout the story, treating Steve's perspective objectively, so that it develops within the primary perspective's immediate focus and never really controls the impression of the fictional illusion. Yet Steve's narrative is reasonably coherent and complete in spite of Max's frequent interruptions and the narrator's occasional comments. It is also quite concrete. There is, however, no sure way to know the perfect veracity of Steve's story, for it might easily be affected by Steve's obvious agitation with Max, although the extent of Steve's implied derangement is never clear enough to form a criterion for his reliability. Circumstantially confirming Steve's story are only Lee Roy's statement that he remembers Steve and a later one, made after the white men have gone, that seems to confirm that he did spend some time with a circus, although his children do not want to hear about it. Yet the perfect veracity of Steve's story is not a crucial

factor in interpretation, for Miss Welty is more concerned with what Steve thinks he remembers and the way he seeks to cope with his current impressions than she is with what really happened to Lee Roy, and by representing the story of Lee Roy himself from a conjectural intelligence perspective, Miss Welty manages to assemble the necessary elements of her theme without taxing either the credulity or the sensibility of her reader by forcing him to accept the horribly detailed account of the past as completely factual.

The story-within-a-story device that "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" contains occurs again in "The Petrified Man," another story from A Curtain of Green that has a restricted external narrator and a conjectural intelligence character. "The Petrified Man" is also like Part 4 of Losing Battles in that one of its major characters develops exclusively from a conjectural intelligence perspective, never appearing directly in the narrator's vision. The interior of a beauty parlor is the immediate setting throughout "The Petrified Man," and in this static context Miss Welty creates the essential situation of internal narration with an auditor. The conjectural intelligence character is a small-town beautician called Leota, who reports information concerning interrelated motifs to a friend and customer, Mrs. Fletcher, during two of Mrs. Fletcher's appointments, one week apart. This story is designed greatly for effects, and much of its lasting impress depends upon an ironic reversal that reportedly occurs during the week between the two appointments and comes out only gradually in Leota's dialogue during the second visit.

Dialogue and accompanying reactions are the only action that occurs in the narrator's perspective. While the narrator focuses on Leota

and Mrs. Fletcher, however, Leota concentrates on her experience with a recent friend, Mrs. Pike, the character that receives only conjectural development. Leota expresses proud yet superficial admiration for Mrs. Pike on the occasion of Mrs. Fletcher's first visit, but by the second visit Leota's attitude seems to have changed to one of angry resentment, and her friendship with Mrs. Pike seems to have been short-lived, all because of what reportedly occurs between visits. Leota (a low-bread Southerner if her colloquial slang is any indication) explains during the first visit that Mrs. Pike and her jobless husband, formerly of New Orleans, have just rented a room from her and her likewise jobless husband, Fred. Leota, insisting on Mrs. Pike's attractiveness and "sharp" eyesight, obviously is impressed by that lady's outward style and youthfulness (she is thirty-three, according to Leota). Then, however, with just so much exposition, Leota seems to drop the subject of Mrs. Pike as she notes that Mrs. Fletcher is losing some hair. This observation further occasions Leota to remark on Mrs. Fletcher's being pregnant, and although Mrs. Fletcher does not try to deny that she is, she makes it clear that she had been keeping the fact a secret, even from her husband. Mrs. Fletcher is in fact so perturbed by the secret's having come out that she hastily conducts an inquisition in the beauty parlor to learn who could have divined and so divulged it. Although Leota seeks to mislead her customer at first, she admits at length that her source was her new friend, Mrs. Pike. Mrs. Pike and she had seen Mrs. Fletcher on the sidewalk, Leota says, and Mrs. Pike had immediately perceived Mrs. Fletcher's condition. With this information, Mrs. Fletcher unalterably fixes her opinion of Mrs. Pike, and one of the narrator's principal functions

thereafter is to characterize Mrs. Fletcher's attitude toward Mrs. Pike by describing her manner of reply each time one of Leota's points about her friend elicits a telling response. Leota herself goes on then to tell of having visited a freak show with Mrs. Pike, describing certain monstrosities that had intrigued them, including a "petrified man" that was supposed to be turning gradually to stone.

Each character's dialogue during the first visit contains a pattern that implies the speaker's tone. First, several times that Leota makes a point about Mrs. Pike, Mrs. Fletcher has to insinuate her own superiority by moral comparison. For example, when Leota cites Mrs. Pike's conviction that passionate romances never last, Mrs. Fletcher has to assert that she and her husband are as much in love as they were on the day they were married. Mrs. Fletcher's speech, moreover, is less colloquial and less governed by slang than is Leota's, and these defensive comparisons suggest that she wants to keep a lofty opinion of herself and resents being subjected to this rash of superlative plaudits for Mrs. Pike. Later, though, during the second visit, Mrs. Fletcher makes a remark that seems to reflect her concept of morals rather curiously: referring to her pregnancy, she says, "'If a certain party hadn't found it out and spread it around, it wouldn't be too late even now' . . . ." Although her meaning is vague, Mrs. Fletcher is possibly saying that Mrs. Pike has spoiled her chance for a secret abortion, especially in view of Mrs. Fletcher's keeping the pregnancy a secret from her husband and also her earlier avowal that she does not care much for children. Leota's pattern, furthermore, is just as obvious as Mrs. Fletcher's (and suffers an even clearer reversal in the latter half of the story): she

often quotes Mrs. Pike, directly and indirectly, for knowledgeable authority upon usually trivial topics (e.g., where Jax beer is made, the petrified man's freakish digestion and the fortune teller's "sixth mind"). Leota declares too that she has made Mrs. Pike her complete confidant, trusting her with intimate personal history as well as believing her word on virtually every subject. Mrs. Fletcher clearly resents Leota's making such an authority of Mrs. Pike and her using of that lady's friendship as a status symbol.

When Mrs. Fletcher returns a week later for her next appointment, an ironic turn of events seems to have vindicated her defensive skepticism toward Mrs. Pike. A reader presently senses a change in Leota's predisposition, for instead of making one-track conversation about Mrs. Pike, the beautician now is not particularly eager to discuss the lady at all. Thus the reversal of Leota's attitude foreshadows the underlying reversal of events before their details are ever disclosed. Desire for gossip and verbal castigation, however, soon overcome Leota's reticence, and she explains indignantly that Mrs. Pike has used her own detective magazine to indentify the petrified man of the freak show as a former New Orleans neighbor, wanted--so the magazine says--for raping four women in California. Mrs. Pike has reported the man's whereabouts to the police, over the weak objection of her husband that the man had loaned them some money, and has collected a $500 reward. Because it was her magazine, and because the freak show was just next door to her beauty parlor, Leota feels unjustly deprived, as though these facts had given her rightful claim to any reward. Leota's sense of personal deprivation is just as irrational as Mrs. Fletcher's during the first visit, however, for neither lady has

been deprived by anyone; each has just been overshadowed by Mrs. Pike, at least in her own egotistical mind. As the story draws to its conclusion, then, Leota points out that her room will again be vacant, although Mrs. Pike's small boy, Billy Boy, who has hovered in the background at the parlor throughout the story, is still lurking there. The final event is Leota's thrashing of Billy Boy for meddling in her purse, an act of vengeance that both Leota and Mrs. Fletcher obviously relish in spite of the child's parting retort, ". . . 'If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?'" Thus what is only a mock reversal in the first place is capped by this cheap banality that puts the whole satire in comprehensive perspective.

Ruth M. Vande Kieft sees "The Petrified Man" in her study as a comic satire on female perversities and perversions, especially those by which women can come to reduce their men to practical impotence and dominate the battle of the sexes.[5] She discovers the key to the satire in the three women's relationships to their husbands, writing that "Through a variety of physical, psychological, and cultural irregularities or perversities, the roles of male and female are ironically reversed."[6] She also finds two specific purposes of satire behind the image of the petrified man: first, she remarks of the women that "Having destroyed the normal and natural in marital relations, their taste runs to the sensational and freakish,"[7] and then, of the petrified man himself, she comments that he ". . . settles literally and symbolically into the mode of impotence which characterizes his sex," and that "one feels the pathetic defeat, the helplessness of the man, the horror of his victimized state."[8] Finally, the critic views the hallucinatory interior of Leota's

beauty parlor as a chamber of horrors where devices and methods are applied to make women "physically horrible."[9] Only in Billy Boy's closing retort does Miss Vande Kieft find any sign of masculine assertiveness within that hellish world, but she recognizes it as being just as cheap and vulgar as the women's machinations. Although in afterthought one might consider that Mrs. Pike possibly thwarts an illegal abortion and does indeed help bring a rapist to justice, it still would seem that her chief significance to the story lies in the perverse way she affects Leota by her companionship and behavior, and that the conjectural intelligence perspective is appropriate and effective in representing that lady as a contorted image in Leota's mind. This conjectural intelligence character is much like "Sister," the internal narrator of "Why I Live at the P.O.," in her transparent moral rigidity.

After publication of A Curtain of Green, Miss Welty's only subsequent use of conjectural intelligence narration prior to Losing Battles occurs in three stories from The Wide Net, her second short-story collection. The mode of conjectural intelligence narration that she uses in "The Purple Hat," with extensive reliance upon a conjectural intelligence perspective, is similar to that of "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" and, to some lesser extent, that of "The Petrified Man," in that its internal storyteller relates a fairly coherent sketch involving character and action to a couple of auditors. "The Purple Hat" concerns three characters in the immediate setting and a fourth one, an alleged ghost-lady, that has only conjectural development. The restricted external narrator never shifts his own perspective from the small interior of a New Orleans barroom. The action in that setting begins around four o'clock in the

afternoon of a rainy day, after a rather haggard-looking young man has entered the place, followed by a fat man. They enter separately and never disclose their names, and the narrator infers near the beginning of the story that the bartender, who is the third character, obviously does not know either of the other two. Without introductions, however, and without any apparent pretext, the fat man momentarily breaks the silence with a cryptic remark that leads him on to explain with a thoroughly bizarre tale of repulsive yet intriguing mystery. Although during the fat man's narrative he makes no indication that he is speaking more for one listener's benefit than for the other's, he eventually does seem to reveal partially a purpose for narration, near the conclusion of the story, that directly concerns the young man. Yet the fat man's tale is hardly credible in full because it raises the question of the supernatural, so that its degree of truthfulness, as well as its effect upon the young man, who reacts without response, is no less subject to conjecture than is the fat man's ulterior motive.

The proceeding abstract of the fat man's tale by Ruth M. Vande Kieft condenses details that the fat man reports calmly yet suspensefully and draws out with a curious, mysterious interest:

> The fat storyteller is an armed guard who circles the little catwalk beneath the dome of a large New Orleans casino, the "Palace of Pleasure." From his uniquely exalted vantage point, he has seen a rather old, shabby woman with a strange purple hat who has been coming to the casino for years and has been luring a series of young men with the intrigues of her fabulous crown--an "ancient, battered, outrageous hat" decorated with "awful plush flowers" and "a little glass vial with a plunger." The catwalker is convinced that the woman is a ghost, because he has seen her twice murdered by one of her young men--once shot point-blank; the second time stabbed by the long flashing jeweled hatpin which she wears to balance the weight of the attractive little plunger. But each time after an absence of a week or two, she reappears, and the whole process is repeated.[10]

Miss Vande Kieft resolves the question of supernatural elements by consigning them to an allegorical function. She sees the story as a rather sophisticated morality-play study of man's paradoxical pursuit of forbidden pleasure--deathless yet ever frustrating, never fulfilling.[11] Evidence for such a reading lies in the fat man's explanation of the young murderers' motives: he asserts that the ghost-lady lures their interest with the vial and plunger until she removes the hat and it becomes a sexual fetish. According to the fat man, the lady then leads the young men on, exciting their desire to know what the vial contains but never satisfying them, so that they begin to wonder whether it might not be empty. Fear of having fallen in love with an illusion, the fat man seems to say, finally so distracts the young men that two of them have sought to kill the lady.

The fat man pauses in his explanation of the vial's attraction just as cathedral chimes announce the hour of five o'clock, the hour at which, according to him, the ghost-lady always meets her young man at the casino. At the same moment, the young customer rises and leaves the bar. Miss Vande Kieft considers that he is already doomed to become ". . . the next murderer that very night, and that he and the fat man know it."[12] The narrator has indeed characterized the fat man's face as hynotic, and Miss Vande Kieft believes that he represents unsympathetic knowledge, detached curiosity, and that he nourishes himself with an illusion of power that he is able to have in his position on the catwalk.[13] Such a supposition implies that his position on the catwalk defines his conjectural intelligence perspective and that in its detachment and overhead perspective his view of the gambling hall is a privileged view. He does indeed

report that he was the only person that saw the second murder of the lady. Yet because he is a conjectural intelligence character, the fat man is subject to dramatic involvement in his narration, and there are in fact some suggestions that he might be quite involved, perhaps more involved than the young customer in the bar will ever be. There is, first of all, no compelling reason to regard the elements of supernaturalism as anything except illusions or lies, for there is no basis in the story for verifying them. Since they are quite unrealistic, there is every reason to disbelieve their part of the fat man's story. The allegation that the vial repeatedly works upon young men as an overt fetish is also questionable, for it is somewhat easier to believe that one fat man would attribute fetishism to many young men than to believe that many young men would actually succumb to the same fetish in the same place, over a period of years.

By excepting the murders and the fetishism, however, it is not impossible to believe the other details of the fat man's story, and it becomes even less difficult to in view of what the fat man says to the bartender after the young man has gone: when the former two are to themselves in the bar at the end of the story and the bartender asks the fat man whether the lady is really a ghost, the fat man replies that he will let the bartender know the next day. This reply seems to suggest two likelihoods that go some distance to confirm the other details of the fat man's story. First, the reply makes it seem likely that such a woman as he has described is to be found at the casino around five o'clock, and secondly it also makes it appear possible that the fat man does plan for the young man to try to kill this lady. The fat man has, in effect, not

only informed him as to how she might be murdered with her own hatpin but also assured him that she will be at a given place at five o'clock, as well as implying that her murder would go unnoticed except by himself, and also go unpunished, since he is presumably the only armed guard there. It is still not clear, however, that the young man has any intention of going to the casino, or that if he has, he has any other motive than to satisfy his curiosity about the fat man's story. There is really no basis on which to suppose very strongly that he will be so enticed by what he finds there if he goes, whatever it might be, that he will commit a murder, for one has only the fat man's dubious authority concerning the power of the vial. Although the young man has been drinking, the fat man's power of suggestion can hardly be felt to have gone that far. Neither is it finally clear why the fat man would want such a woman killed, if he does. Perhaps he has had hallucinations and believes his own story, so that he is now seeking to test the lady's mortality. Perhaps again he is only weary of seeing her for thirty years, or possibly the strange lady is his wife. A balanced understanding of the story, in any case, might finally be to regard the alleged fetishism as fabrication to suggest a motive for murder, and likewise the alleged murders themselves as more fabrication to suggest a practical means of murder. Thus the fat man, not his strange lady, would appear to be the real Tempter.

iv

Dialogue of a special kind is once again a central mode of narration in "Asphodel," from The Wide Net. Miss Welty devises a technique for that story that represents the use of alternating voices of

characters to recite an inner narrative contained within the framework of the outer story. An external narrator that remains restricted throughout the story focuses upon three oldish maids who become agents for a mutual perspective toward a shared history of one lady's tragic life. These character-storytellers, as the three maids become, occupy the fictional illusion of the outer story while their voices alternate harmoniously and smoothly to develop the conjectural illusion of the inner story, their story of Miss Sabina and her husband, Don McInnis. Cora, Irene and Phoebe, as the three maids are called, are on an outing, an excursion at high noon to the ruins of Asphodel, an old Southern home built in the Doric style of architecture, which is still recognizable in the six columns that still stand. Although the three maids project themselves rather flatly into their own narrative, its central figure--at least from their point of view--is Miss Sabina, who never appears in the outer story's fictional illusion (for her funeral has occurred only one day preceding the maids' outing). Her husband, Mr. Don McInnis, is also a centrally important character in the maids' story, but although they have supposed him to be dead, the climax of the outer story occurs when he seems to appear, naked and bearded, directly in the narrator's perspective to become a part of the outer story. As dramatized action, his appearance no less surprises the maids in his being aboveground than it shocks them by his nudity. Most of his characterization receives conjectural development, however, from the maids' perspective in reciting their story, as does all of Miss Sabina's.

The maids actually have little dialogue except that of their reciting, and that form of dialogue has little psychological value for

insight into individual characters in "Asphodel," for the three maids seem almost to be formally repeating, one after another in turn, the consecutive portions of a commonly accepted version of a community folk-legend. This so-called "dialogue" is not really dramatized speech and cannot reliably reflect motive or character, certainly not by direct implication. For this reason alone the maids' recitation is not a valid vehicle for genuine development of any conjectural intelligence perspective except the formal, mutual one that seems a built-in part of the recitation itself, and it becomes a virtual process of ritual as the three ladies proceed in hardly distinguishable patterns, tones and images. Their recitation is finally very chorus-like, much like a Greek chorus, in fact, so that it correlates with other overt allusions to the classical "golden age" in the story, such as the Doric columns, the bearded man who appears naked with a herd of goats, and the placid composure of the serene setting (at least before the bearded man, Mr. Don, appears, for he represents not classical serenity but that other aspect of ancient Greek temperament associated with Bacchus, Pan or Dionysius).[14] An individual perspective, however, is finally conjectured at the very end of the story; it is attributed to the maid called Phoebe and developed by a special device in restricted narration, that of "subjunctivity," or the narrator's use of the subjunctive mood to conjecture a character's perspective.

Cora, Irene and Phoebe each recite segments of their story of Miss Sabina, who whipped her husband out of her own house after he was reportedly unfaithful and intending to go with his other woman to his own family home, Asphodel. Miss Sabina, according to the story, had been forced by her father to marry Mr. Don McInnis, who was the last of his

family just as Sabina was the last of hers. The maids say that they were at the elaborate wedding and that the McInnis men's reputation for wildness and profaneness was evident in Mr. Don that night, contrasting with the rigidity and stiffness of Sabina. The maids represent themselves also as the bearers of news about Mr. Don's infidelity to Sabina, and they recall the curse that she called down upon all concerned when she was told. This event was after all three of the McInnis' children had grown to adulthood and then died, two by accident and one by suicide. The maids seem sure that Mr. Don was unfaithful that once, although they seem unsure that he was at other times as well.

The maids represent Sabina as having always been strong-willed (although she seems to have submitted to her father), and after driving Mr. Don out of her house, which was located near Asphodel although the passage between the two houses was difficult to travel, Miss Sabina seems secretly to have had the latter house burned. Although the maids refer to the burning with no explanation, Miss Sabina's responsibility is not hard to infer. After that, no more is said of Mr. Don, and Miss Sabina seems to have sought to exercise the same rigid control over the community that she had failed to exercise over her husband (and possibly over her children also). She began not only to interfere personally, with an iron hand, in the private lives of the community, but also to make that community indebted to her for various supposedly altruistic endowments. There was, however, one stronghold that Miss Sabina could not invade, where the local citizens could still entertain dreams that had no need of Miss Sabina, and that was the post office. Her death eventually occurred the day she tried to storm it, too. The three maids claim to have been

there and to have watched Miss Sabine destroy all the mail. After she had ripped it to shreds, they say, she had simply fallen down dead, as of a stroke.

There are two traits that chiefly characterize Miss Sabina as the three maids describe her: first, there is her puritanical urge for order and control, and secondly there is her passionate obsession with honor. The maids report that her father was dead when she learned of her husband's infidelity, so that she had no one to "right the wrong." They also report that after the burning of Asphodel Miss Sabina had forbidden any further mention of that place or of Mr. Don McInnis. Yet now, just one day after Miss Sabina's funeral, the three maids have gone to the ruins of Asphodel for a noontime outing and a thorough retelling of Miss Sabina's whole tragic story. This irony itself is the only indication of attitude among the ladies toward Miss Sabina until the closing words of the story, after they have been rudely surprised by the bearded man that Cora insists is Mr. Don and just as rudely chased off in their buggy by his hungry heard of goats. As they flee, the narrator uses subjunctivity to evoke an impression of Phoebe's sense of the whole experience:

> . . . Phoebe laughed aloud as they made the curve. Her voice was soft, and she seemed to be still in a tender dream and an unconscious delebration--as though the picnic were not already set rudely in the past, but were the enduring and intoxicating present, still the phenomenon, the golden day (WN, 113).

Here the narrator merely conjectures that Phoebe's tone and laughter mean that she is unconsciously celebrating, yet his impression provides the key response to the whole story, for he imagines that Phoebe is celebrating more than just the death of Miss Sabina or even the resurrection, as it were, of Mr. Don. In the narrator's mind, Phoebe's sense of celebration

combines the placidity of the earlier setting with the Dionysian wildness of its interruption, for to him she does not feel the incongruity that the other two feel in the sudden contrast of situation. The narrator conjectures that for Phoebe it is still her perpetual "golden day" after Mr. Don and his goat herd have disrupted the peaceful scene at the ruins. Her perspective, given by the narrator really as his own, is that rare balance of the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses that characterize the Greek ideal, or its "golden age." For the narrator, then, it is Phoebe who, having rejected Miss Sabina's puritanical code of honor along with the others, alone among the three goes on to embrace just the right mixture of two other "codes" or outlooks from an earlier age than either that of chivalry or that of Puritanism.

In addition to the conclusion of "Asphodel," subjunctivity occurs also in "The Wide Net," from the same collection, where it receives more extended development in creating a conjectural intelligence perspective than it receives in the precedingly discussed instance. The narrator of "The Wide Net"--restricted throughout the story--conjectures a pattern of response to nature for the central character, William Wallace Jamieson of Dover community, who returns home after a night of innocent carousing with some neighboring male companions to discover a note from his wife Hazel, who is three-months pregnant, saying that she is going to drown herself in the nearby Pearl River because she will not put up with him any longer. This note climaxes a period of erratic, alienating behavior by Hazel, and after destroying it William Wallace proceeds out of the house to raise a river-dragging party with the help of one of his companions for the evening, named Virgil. The month is October,

with just a foretaste of season change in the Mississippi climate.

Virgil assumes as much responsibility for raising and coordinating the group as William Wallace does, and shortly they have collected a group of Doyles, a group of Malones, and a couple of white children as well as a couple of black--an all-male body quite ready for diversion and excitement. It then proceeds to the house of the one remaining person to go along, the patriarchal old Doc, who ruminates aloud like a walking almanac and has to go along, although he does not really believe that Hazel is in the river, because he is the one that owns the wide net. After the party reaches the Pearl River and its dragging and diving commences, it reaps a bountiful haul of catfish and other assorted items from the river, but it recovers no trace of Hazel. A catfish meal, however, seems to divert the group's attention from this failure to accomplish its increasingly nominal mission; the meal so occupies even William Wallace that after a time he along with the rest is fast asleep. Not sleeping for long, though, he is the first to awake, and after rousing the others he performs an antic dance, with a catfish hooked to his belt. Following his dance and a brief appearance of "The King of the Snakes," which allegedly looks William Wallace in the eye, a sudden electrical storm turns the idyllic riverbank setting into a theater of nature's imposing might, setting a tree ablaze all over at once. With the subsidence of the storm, the party forms a muddy but lithesome procession back to the town of Dover, which seems to come alive after the storm at the sight of so many persons and so many catfish. William Wallace abruptly sells the whole string for three dollars, right in the middle of

the newly washed town, and then, turning away from Hazel's mother, whom he suddenly sees coming out her front door, he suffers the dragging party to break up. Before going home, however, he fights hand-to-hand with Virgil in a quasi-combat to determine whose dragging party and whose net they really were, forcing his friend into amicable submission. Finally, upon entering his own house once again, he hears Hazel's voice and learns that she has been safe at home all the time--that she had been watching him even as he had read and torn up her unfinished note. The couple's reunion seems happy and complete, although Hazel ambiguously threatens that she might try the same thing again and that the next time would have a different outcome.

Ruth M. Vande Kieft interprets the river-dragging episode as being analogous to both a fertility ceremony and a ritual of endurance in the personal struggle against evil forces.[15] She sees in the story a series of tests that forms William Wallace's initiation into fatherhood and the fundamental mysteries of life, and she recognizes his ritual as being in touch with ancient sources of comedy. If, as her discussion of the story suggests, its action structures itself as a ritual, it is also true that its dialogue is digressive in structure, undulating, like the river, and reflecting this fluid undulation in its movement of alternating foci and motifs. The digressive aspect of structure thus implicates the whole company in the symbolism of the river itself.

The river is a symbol of nature as process, representing the flow of time or of the varied life through time that it contains within an instant. Both full and constantly moving or changing, the river reflects nature microcosmically in its manifold content. Because it moves one

cannot sleep or remain fixed by its side for long (as the narrator indicates when he says that ". . . it was impossible to stop and sleep by the river"), and because it moves through changes yet is ever full, it suggests the potency to reconcile opposites (as Doc implies when he says, "'The excursion is the same when you go looking for your sorrow as when you go looking for your joy' . . ."). Finally, the storm shrouds the river-world in the likeness of a world of Biblical vision (e.g., the burning tree with a purple cloud over it), where nature has become a source of religious feeling. Doc, too, is somewhat like the river--an enclyclopedia of natural lore and a chronicle of local life.

The pattern of subjunctivity in "The Wide Net" concerns William Wallace's conjectured response to nature as a result of his experience, which is basically a quest for knowledge of his wife, and thus for knowledge of nature itself, which the image of Hazel, the manifold, ambiguous female, personifies. Hazel in effect is the river, although William Wallace does not possess the sophistication to articulate such insight to himself. For this reason, Miss Welty represents such insight as might lie open to him through his experience with Hazel and the river as the narrator's own conjecture. Only several of the more significant passages of subjunctivity should suffice to illustrate the purpose of the pattern. Once, with Virgil, before the dragging party has collected together, William Wallace becomes fascinated by a rabbit he has caught, and to the narrator, "He acted as if he wanted to take it off to himself and hold it up and talk to it." The next instant the narrator observes a clue to William Wallace's regard for the hidden source of life: "He laid a palm against its pushing heart. 'Now . . . There now . . .'" One need only

question why this husband would stop to hold a rabbit so intimately while on a search for his supposedly drowned wife to recognize the true nature of his search--a quest for understanding of the phenomenon that has affected her for three months and will continue to do so until April comes, and spring. What the narrator conjectures is the essential privacy of William Wallace's quest, an inward motif contrapuntal to the outward one of plentiful companionship. The inward and the outward dimensions of his quest are thus represented by conjectural and cognizant modes of narration, respectively.

Somewhat later in the story the narrator conjectures that William Wallace's presumed identification of Hazel with nature emerges to consciousness. Just after Doc comments that in October everything looks made of gold before it changes, the narrator conjectures that William Wallace ". . . looked . . . as though he thought of Hazel . . . looking straight before her, like a piece of pure gold . . . ." Then, only moments afterward, when William Wallace puzzlingly asks the name of the familiar Pearl River, the narrator conjectures that he is obsessed with a sense of profound mystery in the river's name:

> They looked at him as if he were crazy not to know the name of the river he had fished in all his life. But a deep frown was on his forehead, as if he were compelled to wonder what people had come to call this river, or to think there was a mystery in the name of a river they all knew so well, the same as if it were some great far torrent of waves that dashed through the mountains somewhere, and almost as if it were a river in some dream, for they could not give him the name of that (WN, 49).

The familiar symbolism of the "pearl," i.e., a "good woman," becomes here a multiple correlative that conjoins Hazel, woman, river and nature in a single expanding focus of implication.

Even the climactic passage of the story is only speculative query, but by this query the narrator makes William Wallace appear for an interval to have become almost the center of consciousness, and by it he also articulates what he, the narrator, recognizes as the fundamental mystery of the whole story. This conjectured climax occurs during William Wallace's most prolonged dive into the river:

> All day William Wallace kept diving to the bottom. Once he dived down and down into the dark water, where it was so still that nothing stirred, not even a fish, and so dark that it was no longer the muddy world of the upper river but the dark clear world of deepness, and he must have believed this was the deepest place in the whole Pearl River, and if she was not here she would not be anywhere. He was gone such a long time that the others stared hard at the surface of the water, through which the bubbles came from below. So far down and all alone, had he found Hazel? Had he suspected down there, like some secret, the real, the true trouble that Hazel had fallen into, about which words in a letter could not speak . . . how (who knew?) she had been filled to the brim with that elation that they all remembered, like their own secret, the elation that comes of great hopes and changes, sometimes simply of the harvest time, that comes with a little course of its own like a tune to run in the head, and there was nothing she could do about it--they knew--and so it had turned into this? It could be nothing but the old trouble that William Wallace was finding out, reaching and turning in the gloom of such depths (WN, 56-57).

In its theme of ambiguity and its structure of departure-and-return, "The Wide Net" is similar to Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "Young Goodman Brown," except that the Puritan Brown finds his wife in the forest after thinking her to be safe at home, whereas William Wallace finds his safe at home after thinking her to be in the river. Brown's faith is simple, as is William Wallace's love; Brown's wife Faith, moreover, is identified with the forest, just as Hazel is with the river, and both protagonists are searching for a kind of knowledge as they go farther from their homes into their respective elements of mystery. Yet William Wallace escapes Brown's damnable fate of despair; even if he like Brown is not

greatly wiser after his journey, at least he is more fortunate than Brown in his return.

Dialogue and subjunctivity can now be recognized as resourceful devices in restricted external narration for Miss Welty, for by using them she augments the sense of vision in a story through character perspectives. She is also thus able to increase suspense, to develop psychological motifs without overt commentary, and to create a realistic relationship between the reader and certain story material in restricted external narration. The conjectural intelligence perspective is not extensive in Miss Welty's fiction, but it is effective and quite important to understand.

Footnotes

[1]See Eudora Welty, pp. 77-79.

[2]Vande Kieft, p. 78.

[3]Vande Kieft, p. 79.

[4]Robert Penn Warren, "The Love and the Separateness in Miss Welty," Kenyon Review, VI (Spring, 1944), 246-59. Reprinted in Warren's Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1958), 156-69.

[5]See Vande Kieft, pp. 72-75.

[6]Vande Kieft, p. 73.

[7]Vande Kieft, p. 74.

[8]Vande Kieft, p. 75.

[9]Vande Kieft, p. 72.

[10]Vande Kieft, p. 89.

[11]See Vande Kieft, pp. 89-90.

[12]Vande Kieft, p. 89.

[13]Vande Kieft, p. 90.

[14]See Vande Kieft, pp. 57-59. Miss Vande Kieft not only recognizes the Greek chorus-like effect of the narration, but also associates Mr. Don and his goats with Pan and his satyrs and interprets the story as an unambiguous celebration of the pagan values.

[15]See Vande Kieft, pp. 65-67.

CHAPTER VI

EXTERNAL NARRATION AS PRIVILEGED PRIMARY PERSPECTIVE

i

So far this study has concentrated on the restricted modes of narration, which can occur with either an internal or an external narrative voice, but the privileged modes, to which this chapter now turns, must have an external voice, since internal voices are dramatized as characters and must be human-like. Privileged narration is analogous to conjectural narration, except that the material that a privileged narrator reports is of cognizant rather than conjectural status, and because a reader must accept the privileged narrator's convention of cognizance even when he reports a character's private unspoken thoughts, such a narrator cannot be dramatized as a character himself. He must remain outside the fictional illusion and occupy a separate "narrative" illusion. Since the restricted external narrator also remains outside the fictional illusion, however, the only significant difference between the narrators now to be studied and those already studied in the the two preceding chapters lies in their respective ranges of cognizance. Yet seldom does even the privileged narrator in Miss Welty's fiction purport to be cognizant of absolute meanings, and often he does not even purport to be cognizant of motives or causes. Miss Welty most often seeks to adapt

privileged narration to primary objectives of psychological realism.

This chapter and the two that follow it devote themselves to a study of Miss Welty's use of privileged external narration: this chapter concentrates on the privileged narrator's primary perspective, while Chapters VII and VIII concern the secondary perspective of the character in privileged narration, or the "central intelligence perspective." Chapter VI now studies the primary perspective in several stories, from A Curtain of Green, The Wide Net and The Bride of the Innisfallen, as well as in two novels, The Robber Bridegroom and Delta Wedding. It begins with a relatively simple illustration from A Curtain of Green.

ii

Miss Welty's first collection of fiction includes "Clytie," a story in external narration about an eccentric old maid who belongs to a once well-to-do family of Farr's Gin, Mississippi. The family is now reduced to both social and moral impotence, however, owing not only to dissipation and disease but also to the central old maid's sister, Octavia, who fears intrusions upon her privacy and keeps the house doors locked and the windows closed, except whenever the central old maid, whose name is Clytie, secretly opens one. The story's general theme seems to be Clytie's fatal recognition of the reality of mutability, as discovered in her own face's reflection in a rain barrel. The external narrator uses privileged narration to give enough exposition concerning both Clytie Farr's search for the "right" face and her family's pathetic background to make her eventual death by drowning in the rain barrel

somewhat but not much more intelligible to the reader than it is to the former family cook that comes and finds her body.

The story does not begin in privileged narration, however; at first the narrator provides exposition from a collective perspective of local ladies, using a method of restricted narration that is similar to the first part of "A Curtain of Green." The local view of Clytie is rather ordinary, regarding her as simply losing her wits, for instance, when one day she stands still in the rain in the middle of the street. The narrator goes on, however, later in the story to give not only a privileged view inside the Farr's house, a look into its pattern of life, but also a private incursion into Clytie's mind and her secret inner life. These internal views of the isolated household and covert protagonist create most of the story's interest as the narrator alternates between restricted and privileged reporting.

The alternating methods of narration become a device for achieving irony in "Clytie," for after the narrator has introduced the protagonist from the local ladies' point of view, he shifts to privileged narration and recounts Clytie's own impressions during the opening scene, when the ladies watch her stand out in the rain. What the ladies cannot have known is that Clytie remained motionless because she was thinking about the face of a child she had just seen. The narrator then goes on to develop Clytie's intense obsession with faces and to explain that she is such a careful, exact observer of faces that each one, to her, is unique and individual. He also explains that Clytie's reason for walking in the streets every day (a habit for which she is indirectly, perhaps jokingly, accused by both her sister Octavia and her brother Gerald of being a

prostitute) is to find a face that she had once seen long ago, in a secluded place and a happy time. The remembrance of this face's vision is for Clytie a sign of hope, seemingly the hope of love and contact with the world, or of the fulfillment of some desire. All the narrator says to explain Clytie's mind further at this point is that the faces of the others of her family have now come between her and the fact that she vaguely remembers for its intimacy and familiarity.

The narrator uses both direct and indirect means of developing exposition of the other characters' background; its purpose is to clarify Clytie's private relationships to them and thus to make her sense of them as barriers between her and her vision of the face more intelligible to the reader. One of the indirect means that the narrator uses to develop the character of Octavia is to represent her image implicitly as what Clytie herself has conjectured about her sister by looking at her face. One already knows that Clytie scrutinizes faces when the narrator makes the following observation in his own voice, reflecting Clytie's personal vision:

> . . . It was not that ruin in itself could distress Octavia. Ruin or encroachment, even upon priceless treasures and even in poverty, held no terror for her; it was simply some form of prying from without, and this she would not forgive. All of that was to be seen in her face (CG, 163-64).

The narrator's last statement suggests that, as he has assumed privileged access into Clytie's mind by this point in the story, he is conveying Clytie's real sense of Octavia's character: the view of Octavia is still "restricted," i.e., it is from Clytie's secondary perspective, but the narrator is infallibly reflecting the essence of her view; he is not conjecturing about Clytie, although she herself is conjecturing about

Octavia. Clytie actually becomes a central intelligence character, for she is the only principal character in the story toward whom the narrator assumes privileged access; here one learns only what Clytie sees in Octavia, the fear of "prying from without," but Clytie's sense reflects her milieu.

Scenic narration with dialogue develops further exposition that helps to relate Clytie's father and her brother Gerald (another brother, Henry, committed suicide) to her milieu and the motif of family decline. The blind and paralyzed father lies helpless in one scene while Clytie and Octavia argue senselessly over who shall feed him, and in another scene Gerald, who is an alcoholic, declares that his broken marriage is due to his former wife, Rosemary's failure to understand that his threats to kill her and the beatings he gave her were juse in play, just his way of expressing perfect contentment. Clytie's family milieu and personal past are completed by direct exposition that develops two more figures, the dead brother that committed suicide, and a former cook and nursemaid to the father, Old Lethy, who still comes to the Farr house to see the father, although Octavia never does permit her to enter. It is Old Lethy that discovers Clytie's body at the end of the story, face-downward in a rain barrel, while it is the other four--Octavia, the father, the brother Gerald and the dead brother Henry--whose faces the narrator says come between Clytie now and her vision of the familiar face.

After developing much of this exposition, the narrator shifts back to the conjectural, collective view of the local ladies, and it is singular and interesting that from their point of view Clytie herself seems to conceal her face from passersby, to ". . . dart behind a bush

and hold a small branch in front of her face until the person had gone by." This is just one of several suggestions that Clytie has, over the years, grown more and more like her sister, Octavia, who thus appears to possess a stronger, more dominating personality than Clytie's and, for that reason, to have succeeded largely in reducing the weaker sister to obeying her will and reflecting submission to her in all outward facets of existence. Another such suggesion in the story is that Clytie now goes by herself to the family's vegetable patch to curse aloud, which is a practice that Octavia has "been known" to indulge in also.

Another group of observations about the Farr family should be singular and interesting to anyone familiar with William Faulkner's novel The Sound and the Fury, the story of the Mississippi Compson family. Like the Compsons, the Farr family, once prominent, has declined into various states of invalidism, neurotic self-pity and -indulgence, and even "madness." Some rather close parallels can be drawn between the two "houses": like Jason Compson, Gerald Farr has a brother that committed suicide and calls his home a "madhouse," in so many words, attributing most of the problem to the perverse nature of women. He also, like Jason, seems openly to insinuate that his sister is a whore. Finally, like Jason, Gerald runs a local store, and he often keeps his own room at home barricaded. Clytie, on the other hand, seems to combine the older Quentin's narcissism and suicide by drowning with the younger Quentin's streetwalking and being called a whore by her brother. It seems improbable that Clytie's streetwalking has led to prostitution, however, and it is also noteworthy that weakness has not bred dependence in the Farrs as it has in the Compsons, for whereas the Compson household cannot function without

Dilsey, the Farr household depends mainly upon Clytie and has "exiled" Old Lethy from the premises, on orders from Octavia. For all of these parallels, however, there are yet few if any close resemblances between the two works in narrative technique.

The emphasis in the story of Clytie shifts from exposition to action only near its conclusion, when a local barber, Mr. Bobo, the only local resident allowed to call inside the Farr house, comes for his weekly appointment to shave the father. Through some impulse of natural curiosity, Clytie reaches out to touch Mr. Bobo's face just as they are passing each other in one of the halls. He immediately runs away at Clytie's touch--although he is a minor character, the narrator assumes privileged access toward him to develop his forbidding notion of the sisters--and Clytie similarly recoils in utter revulsion at his moist and green-eyed face. Then she too runs outside and hugs the rain barrel, looking into it. As she looks down into the water, she realizes that she has again found the one singular face that she has been looking for--the face of her vision--and that it is her own face's reflection. Repelled again as she had been by Mr. Bobo, Clytie feels betrayed and sick at heart. When she hears Octavia calling from inside the house for water to use to shave the father, she does what the narrator says is the "only thing she could think of to do": she puts her head into the rain water and drowns herself. Submerging her head is perhaps the only thing that Clytie can think of to do in response to Octavia's voice, because it says only ". . . 'The water! The water!'" without any more explanation, and Clytie perhaps follows a distorted impulse, in her sickened state, to obey Octavia's voice.

Chester E. Eisinger, in Fiction of the Forties, sees Clytie as caught in a meshwork of self-delusion about herself, from which she is unable to escape. He remarks that "Clytie has created in her inner world a view of herself that does not correspond to the reality that she presents to the external world," and also that being "Unable to eradicate or even to mitigate the irreconcilable differences between the two worlds, she commits suicide."[1] Miss Ruth Vande Kieft also argues that for Clytie there is only one kind of world, although she is more sympathetic toward the character. This critic, explaining Clytie's death in Eudora Welty, suggests that Clytie perhaps ". . . realizes that the only love in that house, if not in that town, was the love she made: there was no one then to embrace, no nature to plunge into but her own, no love possible but narcissistic love, no reality but her own reality, no knowledge possible but the knowledge of death . . . ."[2] Miss Vande Kieft also sees the narrator as calling for a mixed response, one balancing the grotesque with the pathetic.

Both Eisinger's and Miss Vande Kieft's observations seem valid enough, for a search for meaning in this story must coincide, as it were, with Clytie's search for a face that means whatever her own youthful face has meant to her, although she has long-forgotten the connection, can only half-remember the face itself, and only vaguely comprehends what it means until the end of the story. Then she must realize, as she looks at a somewhat different version of that face in the rain barrel, that it has stood for the selfhood and identity that Octavia and her father and brothers have stifled, and that time itself has altered almost beyond recognition. Clytie feels that her vision has been "betrayed" when she

does recognize the old face in spite of the weatherbeaten, age-worn features that now almost conceal it. Time and change have betrayed Clytie's self-centered hope, and she is isolated, though not so isolated as Octavia is, for Octavia's closing up of the house and refusing to admit callers inside are active expressions of the passive narcissism that she has probably helped to breed in Clytie. So, when Clytie hears Octavia's cry for water, she knows of nothing else to do except to submit to the face that Octavia and the rest have made for her--to accept a physical death along with the spiritual one that she has suffered--obedient to Octavia unto the end.

Privileged narration thus serves several vital functions in "Clytie." It first creates a basis for irony in the discrepancies between "inner" and "outer" views of both the Farr household and Clytie's mind. Then, while this irony helps to build interest in the central character and her family, the privileged narration also provides exposition necessary to understand both that family's circumstances and Clytie's inner search for a face. One basic difference between Miss Welty's internal narrators and her external ones is now possible to discuss: that whereas the internal narrators all represent separate individuals, the external ones all have the same quality of vision, one that is largely Miss Welty's own. While this difference is not too significant among the restricted external narrators, who often just serve as mediums, it becomes quite appreciable among the privileged ones, who make frequent and overt use of their sensibilities. For that reason, it is not necessary in this chapter to study each privileged narrator in complete detail, as he moreover often employs methods and devices that are similar to another's. Perhaps Miss

Vande Kieft's concept of the narrator's vision in "Clytie" typifies all of these narrators' "authorial" vision as well as any concept might; as she points out, the narrator of "Clytie" sees the grotesqueness in life, yet he also feels its pathos. While, too, the privileged external narrator usually sees a great deal more besides grotesqueness and pathos, an example of another narrator that applies vision similar to that of the narrator in "Clytie" occurs in the proceeding story from A Curtain of Green, "Old Mr. Marblehall."

The story of Mr. Marblehall is another study of eccentricity and family decline. Like "Clytie," it concerns the pitiful remnants of a once-proud, old family, and like "Clytie" also, it mixes restricted with with privileged narration and develops both a collective public view of the central character and a private inward view. The irony of perspective that develops in this story is an even more focal center of interest than is that of "Clytie." Throughout much of "Old Mr. Marblehall" the narrator addresses a "you" figure and devises that figure's probable perspective toward Mr. Marblehall were it to represent the community of Natchez, Mississippi, collectively and were such a figure then ever to notice old Mr. Marblehall. The narrator knows Mr. Marblehall's secret of leading a double life, however, which the community of Natchez does not know and, according to the narrator, would not care about if it did. By assuming one degree of privileged access, the narrator enters into both of Mr. Marblehall's "lives" and sketches both their outward differences and their essential inward similarities, and then by assuming a further degree of privileged access, the narrator enters finally, near the end of the story,

into Mr. Marblehall's mind to represent his concept of himself and also his motive for deception.

There is hardly any action at all in the story. The narrator controls the story's structure by presenting most of its material as his own exposition and characterization: the story is actually little more than a character sketch, comparing as well as contrasting the two faces of Mr. Marblehall, with the only action being his going from one home to the other, his reading and his thinking, all of which is represented as the narrator's report of Mr. Marblehall's customary routine and not as any one particular dramatized scene occurring at a given time. During most of the story the narrator represents himself as being a spokesman for the only individual in Natchez interested enough in Mr. Marblehall ever to have observed what there is to observe about him. Although the narrator acknowledges the persona, it becomes an effective measure for creating a tone of familiarity in him toward his subject. From such an assumed perspective, then, the narrator looks first at the life that Mr. Marblehall would be leading altogether were he not actually leading a double life.

The acknowledged Mrs. Marblehall, an oftentimes rather abstract and remote lady, lives in the Marblehall ancestral home in a vintage section of Natchez. She does participate actively in historical-patriotic ladies' societies, however, in spite of chronic nervousness and self-consciousness. Mr. Marblehall and she were married late in both their lives; he was sixty then, and his present age in the story is sixty-six. He has been leading his double life, actually, only since his sixtieth year. Mrs. Marblehall even has a small boy by him, an elf-like child,

six years old and expensively dressed. The narrator moves from Mr. Marblehall's public image to the less public, more personal image of Mrs. Marblehall in the family home, and then he moves to the outward image of the child: in this orderly survey the narrator seeks to generalize, to summarize, to represent typically, in of course concrete terms, although he does manage to convey rather intimate information about Mrs. Marblehall's effete sense of insecurity with authority hard to come by through ordinary observation: "Do people know of her perpetual amazement? Back in safety she wonders . . . ," and ". . . servile, undelighted, sleepy, expensive, tortured Mrs. Marblehall, pinning her mind with a pin to her husband's diet." Although the narrator says nothing very specific about Mr. Marblehall's personal past before he reached sixty, he does inform the reader that the Marblehall family came to Natchez in 1818 and that the original Marblehall had come, curiously, as an actor. The present Mr. Marblehall is outwardly sedate and somewhat secretive; he uses the excuse of having to travel frequently for his "health" as a pretext for being continually absent, first from one home and then from the other, as he pursues his double life.

After portraying Mr. Marblehall's establishment in one part of Natchez, the narrator follows him on one of his "travels" to the home he keeps in a less refined part of town. The neighborhood is inconspicuous; its dwellers are common and vulgar, including his "second wife." She supposes that her name is "Bird," and she divulges all her private, personal affairs to neighbors in their yards. These affairs include her puzzlement over "Mr. Bird's" strange habit of lying in bed with his clothes on, reading cheap "thriller-story" magazines. He reads them under a bulb

without a shade, she will say, and that he is "killing time" the narrator comments, as though with some superior knowledge. "Mr. Bird" has a child at this house, too, very much like his other child in appearance, yet this "second" child is "smarter" than the other one. The narrator seems then to conjecture in future tense that some day this child that is the smarter will follow his father to his other house; that this child will discover his father's secret of leading a double life. Although this pattern of conjecture develops at some length as the narrator's own, a parenthetical comment, "Mr. Marblehall can imagine it," suggests evidence that one should take the pattern of conjecture upon some firm degree of narrative authority as being one that has occurred, probably often, to Mr. Marblehall. And indeed, as the narrator then assumes overt access to Mr. Marblehall's mind, one learns that Mr. Marblehall has not only anticipated being found out but also quite relished the idea of its shocking and scandalizing the community. The narrator reveals that Mr. Marblehall also believes himself to have finally "caught on" to what people are supposed to do: to suffer inwardly for a while so as to "store up life" or "establish a memory." Although the narrator is not precise as to whether "caught on" means "discovered" or "seen through," it is clear that for Mr. Marblehall the storing up of life is not enough. He "kills time" waiting for the future, the day his secret becomes known and creates the shock and scandal that he so patiently anticipates. The narrator implies that Mr. Marblehall wants more than a past--he wants also a "glorious finish."

Miss Ruth M. Vande Kieft is not sure whether or not Mr. Marblehall's double life is real; she recognizes that it might be interpreted as complete

fantasy in the old gentleman's mind.[3] Yet she contends that in any case the "kernel" of the story lies in his ". . . courageous attempt to give his life glamor and significance and the irony of the futility of his effort in the face of public indifference. . . ."[4] Certainly the narrator reveals this irony, yet however much one chooses to regard Mr. Marblehall as courageous in defying public indifference, the narrator also reveals a deeper irony that is even more damning than the indifference itself: the public is far more indifferent than Mr. Marblehall realizes, for the narrator makes it known that while Mr. Marblehall speculates on the future, his speculation is as futile as his "courage," for the public does not even care what he might be doing and would not react at all if it were to find him out. The narrator also suggests a possible moral in Mr. Marblehall's self-delusion, an appropriate moral for this story without any action: it is to be a story without a climax, too ("You will think, what if nothing ever happens? What if there is no climax . . .?"). The key to this story lies ultimately in the sameness of Mr. Marblehall's empty existence, no matter which of the two lives he happens to be leading at any given moment: the narrator carefully reveals that Mr. Marblehall just spends his nights reading his thriller magazines under a naked bulb, killing time, whether he is at the ancestral home or at the cheaper home. The narrator seems actually to put the real truth for once in the view of the collective public perspective:

> . . . Big fingers could pick him up off the Esplanade and take him through the air, his old legs still measuredly walking in a dangle, and set him down where he could continue that same old Natchez stroll of his in the East or the West or Kingdom Come. What difference could anything make now about old Mr. Marbehall--so late? A week or two would go by in Natchez and then there would

> be Mr. Marblehall, walking down Catherine Street again, still exactly in the same degree alive and old (CG, 183-84).

Essentially, then, Mr. Marblehall is wasting two lives, giving himself conpletely to neither the one wife and child nor the other, but only killing time. His predicament reflects T. S. Eliot's format in The Waste Land, II ("A Game of Chess"), where Eliot ironically juxtaposes the sterility and boredom of the upper class with exactly the same symptoms of moral futility in the lower class. The same poverty of spirit goes with Mr. Marblehall everywhere, wasting both his lives (and doubly wasting him!), for his concept of life is twistedly and decadently romantic, and his design for giving his life significance is only a cheap, artificial gimmick. Privileged narration in "Old Mr. Marblehall" thus creates a comprehensive perspective similar to the ones in "Clytie" and "A Curtain of Green." The narrator not only knows Mr. Marblehall's secret but also sees his motive for deception, just as he recognizes the community's obdurate indifference to his purposeless life.

A different application of the comprehensive perspective in privileged narration occurs in "A Still Moment," from The Wide Net. This story contains the multiple perspective device that Miss Welty develops extensively in the novel Delta Wedding, whereby several central intelligence characters, representing internal perspectives, develop with secondary status and alternate with the primary perspective of the narrator as foci of vision. "A Still Moment" is perhaps Miss Welty's most overtly meditative and philosophical short story; the characters themselves represent little more than perspectives, and the whole narrative is hardly more or less than a veritable, intensive study in points of view.

This story has three central intelligence perspectives, characterized for the respective historical personages whose visions they represent. Yet it is the developed vision, not the historical personage, that in each case receives characterization; the personage is essentially just a measure for locating the perspective in conceivable reality, and historical characters serve such a purpose better than would purely fictitious ones. The narrator himself is primarily a "fourth" perspective, and although he relates himself no further toward the action than in comprehending the other three perspectives, he yet speaks in his own voice and uses his own rhetoric (except when he deliberately paraphrases one or another character's thoughts) to relate the entire narrative from the primary perspective, which thus remains a detached, independent and ultimately unifying source of vision. The narrator therefore contributes a fourth perspective that could not be realized in the world of the fictional illusion at all, but that illuminates that world with its own special range of perception and depth of insight.

The story's external action is almost as simple as is that of "Old Mr. Marblehall." There are three men upon separate urgent quests, Lorenzo Dow the itinerant evangelist, James Murrell the outlaw, and Audubon the naturalist, who converge at sunset upon a wild spot in the Natchez Trace and silently watch a lone white female heron feed in a marsh a short distance away. When the naturalist presently kills the bird with a rifle or pistol, the three men disperse with only Lorenzo calling back, to the heron: "'Tempter!'" The story's center of interest lies in the nature of each man's individual quest and its bearing upon the peculiar effect that his seeing the heron and the killing of it have upon him.

The preacher Lorenzo Dow is introduced first: he hungers for souls to save and reads nature as though it were a testimony of God, a Biblical supplement. He fears, however, that he too often mistakes the voice of Satan for that of God and thus unwittingly relies too much upon the craft of evil instead of divine, Godly protection. The criminal Murrell, on the other hand, proudly identifies himself with the devil and stalks victims to kill in search of the mystery of their being. His quest for such knowledge seems his only motive for his many past murders, and he is introduced contemplating Lorenzo as his next victim. Murrell seems to have some conjuring effect upon Lorenzo's Spanish race horse, slowing it from its original lightning speed down to a trot. Murrell's head is full of evil plans for rebellion and seizure of earthly power, and he has only contempt for the innocent. He finally does not seem to see nature at all. Just as he is preparing to kill Lorenzo, however, the third traveler, Audubon, appears. He is an observer of life, and he sees natural beauty in terms of recordable facts. He wants to miss none of these facts, and he kills the heron because he seeks to know it well enough to paint it; yet he recognizes that his painting is only a partial view, mechanical and dead. The narrator, observing from his own perspective, concludes interpretatively that the common denominator for all three searchers is their mutual scope of desire: each one wants "all." Lorenzo wants to save all souls, Murrell wants to destroy all men, and Audubon wants to know all facts about nature. The narrator and reader, then, have this much privileged exposition on which to base a judgment as to the effect of the heron and its death upon each of the silent observers.

The vision of the heron causes each traveler to alter temporarily his customary mode of vision toward life and reality in the "still moment" before Audubon fires his shot at the bird. The bird itself seems to concentrate the "all" of space into a single, phenomenal concretion--whether of beauty, meaning or blur--just as its sight seems to contract the "all" of linear time into a single moment, like a kind of eternity in its disclosures and revelations. Lorenzo, who moves in accord with inner voices and inner lights, looks characteristically "upward" to God to find in Him the ultimate Reality. Yet, although for this reason he sees nature as God's Word made visible, the vision of the heron makes him look "outward" (as the narrator specifically characterizes Audubon as doing by habit). Looking outward makes Lorenzo see the bird in and for itself--not seeing it as a sign of God's love, finally, or of anything else, but rather as a tangible, earth-bound concentration of sensuous beauty. Such a view of anything in the world so beautiful then makes Lorenzo doubt the moral perfectness of God, for he can explain God's first allowing the sight of the bird and then permitting its loss only in terms of His apparent failure to comprehend "Time," which would thus imply His indifference to the human grief and tragedy of temporal loss--such loss as Lorenzo has just suffered in losing the sight of the bird forever. Lorenzo at last, however, escapes this dilemma raised for him by "looking outward" by regarding the heron as temptation from the devil, apparently to make him doubt God's perfection through subjecting him to the vain desire (i.e., "lust") for sensuous delight. Lorenzo thus seeks to preserve both his faith in God and his allegorical view of nature.

James Murrell, in contrast to Lorenzo, looks characteristically "inward" to the self: his native element seems to be night, for he only uses nature for concealment without actually seeing it at all, and he only "gets through" each day. While Murrell's mind is usually taken up with the schemes of self-advancement in the name of evil that fill his head, his vision of the heron, while amounting only to a blur of white in the midst of darkness, seems strangely to make him look "upward," to have a momentary twinge of conscience, a sudden though brief sense of guilt, and in self-pity to foresee the day when all the trees in the forest will be cut down and his own poor spirit be revealed. Yet just as Lorenzo rejects his momentary change of outlook, so does Murrell: he finally sees in the naturalist's killing of the heron a confirmation of his own evil "faith" in innocence (that it is always vulnerable to destruction) and "knowledge" of ruin. He too, like Lorenzo, adjusts his final vision of the experience to compensate for the disquieting developments and resolve all its details in terms of his own preconceptions and habitual outlook.

Audubon, as the narrator explicitly states (giving the present key to the story), looks characteristically "outward" upon nature: he wants to record its beauty as known fact. His vision of the heron, however, makes him look "inward" toward himself and see the limitations of his art. He discovers that he can hope to render only one perspective toward his subject without ever capturing its essence. Despite his coming to see his art as something mechanical and dead, however, Audubon continues on just as the others do, basically unchanged; he is last observed going deeper into the woods, recording what he sees in his notebook. No permanent change has occurred to any of the three observers, and the most

significant revelation that the whole experience seems to contain for reflection appears to be the way that each man's complete mental absorption--whether it be with God, self or nature--prevents any exchange of sentiments whatsoever during the short meeting. Each figure is essentially isolated, and each man's story is essentially a different story: the meeting itself and the mutual observation of the heron are neither separately nor together adequate to fuse the three men's spiritual biographies for even a still moment. As this is the kind of biography Miss Welty records as fiction in this story, the meeting and the heron are only foci for the narrator, who alone can see all three stories at once and know all three personages together with equally objective clarity. It is his fourth perspective, not the meeting or the heron, that makes the three stories one coherent narrative.

The narrator's consistent "authorial" perspective thus represents a single mind between the reader and the secondary perspectives, and the narrator's impressions and inferences come to unify the action for the reader in terms of a comprehensive perspective. In addition to providing special privileged insight as a basis for contrasting the three characters' separate modes of vision, the narrator's perspective also provides single-minded interpretation as well as unity of structure and vision. Yet only in a story could such meaning as the narrator sees ever find a mind on which to register itself, for that meaning is more comprehensive than any one character in the world of the action could ever grasp.

The comprehensive perspective in a subsequent story, "No Place for You, My Love," from The Bride of the Innisfallen, is less unifying and single-minded, and even less comprehensive in depth, than is that one just

observed in "A Still Moment." The narrator of "No Place for You, My Love" focuses upon two central characters that meet as strangers, through mutual friends, at a dinner gathering one Sunday afternoon in New Orleans. Neither the man nor the woman is presently attached to companions that cannot be abandoned after the meal, so the couple decide to drive into the country south of New Orleans in his rented Ford car. During their journey to the "end of the road" at Venice, the Eastern businessman and Ohio lady discover a strange setting and experience a strange relationship that the setting somehow exposes. The narrator accompanies them, surveying the common vista along the road as well as providing fragmentary glimpses into first the one's mind and then the other's: he reveals the man's background enough to indicate his character-context reasonably well, but he sees the woman often through the man's eyes and finally leaves her background only vaguely suggested by ambiguous clues. A feeling seems to grow between the two Sunday travelers in spite of themselves--in spite of their consciousness of other commitments, perhaps, and of their deliberate imperviousness as well, but most of all in spite of their self-consciousness and the lady's peculiar feeling of exposure. The "other" feeling that is between them culminates in a silent moment of contact between their faces on the return drive, but it is let go of when the couple reach New Orleans, abandoned forever as both he and she realize that they have returned to "safety." Basically they have seen some interesting sights and they have understood each other in a limited but significant context.

The structure of this story might be defined as "Departure--Descent--Return": the couple leave New Orleans headed southward toward a

ferry that crosses the Mississippi River. On the other side of the river they see an old Catholic churchyard cemetery and a priest in underwear with a catfish left for him outside his door. Animal life abounds on and along the road; so does plant life and likewise human life, especially colorful aboard the ferry--dark people in bright clothing, used to their casual pace. The descent carries the couple at dusk to Baba'a Place in Venice, where there is about to be a "Shrimp Dance." The couple dance themselves, a spontaneously contrived dance to recorded music that quite perfectly allows them to balance their detachment with informal gestures of coordination, their imperviousness with faddish, mechanical "communication": nothing is ventured except signals, and nothing is lost except, perhaps, some remaining secrecy. Their dancing at Baba's, however, is just a capsulate image for the whole story, for any promise held in that speciously harmonic moment leads only to a moment's more of silent communication in the rented car along the dark road, before that road finally returns them, willy-nilly, to the city and to their separate anonymities unto each other. As far as the reader knows, neither has learned the other's name; it is clear only that they are from different parts of the Northeast, and that the man has a wife back home, though not one particularly anxious for him to come home.

Early in the story the narrator observes and comments on the couple's "deliberate imperviousness," and later he cites a thought that occurs to the man that keynotes the couple's affected posture and especially his own reserve:

> Had she felt a wish for someone else to be riding with them? He thought it was more likely that she would wish for her husband if she had one (his wife's voice) than for the lover in whom he

> believed. Whatever people liked to think, situations (if not scenes) were usually three-way--there was somebody else always. The one who didn't--couldn't--understand the two made the formidable third (BI, 12).

Although this thought occurs literally to the man, the narrator paraphrasing even his sense of his wife's voice, Miss Welty's own discussion of this story in her essay "How I Write" (1955) suggests that when the narrator cites a mood-controlling motif such as this, one should attribute the thought's cause to a mutual sense, if not exactly a bond, of relationship. She speaks specifically of the story's point of view in that essay; to her, it was meant as ". . . a sort of third character . . . an identity . . .: the relationship between the two and between the two and the world. . . . Its role was that of hypnosis--it was what a relationship <u>does</u> . . . ."[5] She also speaks of the "third character" as though he were the mutual awareness of the other two, and of the journey itself as ". . . the shallowest provocation to sympathy and love . . . ." Finally in this essay Miss Welty relates the setting to a basic theme of exposure, but the important thing here to note from her comments is that she apparently does not identify "point of view" in this story exclusively with the narrator; rather, through his privileged sense of a shared mood and a common vista, there develops a mutual perspective that assumes his voice though operating alternately from the primary and two secondary visions, and that personifies the hypnotic relationship as a thing of consciousness, perhaps too exclusively a thing of consciousness or a thing of too much consciousness.

One function of the narrator in this story, then, is to create a mutual perspective by surveying the common, shifting vista of setting

along the road south of New Orleans: it suggests a remoteness, something quaintly provincial yet not lacking either a touch of the exotic or a trace of the primitive. It is everything that the Eastern businessman and the Ohio lady stand out against in clear, bold relief. It is thus partly through the couple's own sense of this setting that they feel "exposed," each unto the other as well as himself. Yet the narrator also deploys his vision as a form of "selective omniscience" to give each secondary perspective some limited measure of individual development. Through this development the narrator accommodates his basic voice and primary vision to needful functions of exposition and characterization that are best served by secondary perspectives. For example, the narrator represents the man's thoughts of his wife in such a way as to reveal her essential lack of sympathy toward her husband and her probable lack of interest in their marriage: the man reflects that his prolonged visit to New Orleans is caused by his wife's not wanting him "underfoot" while she entertains a group of unmarried friends from her college days. The narrator also relates quite early in the story the way the man regards the woman--seeing her as "settled" in some "predicament," probably married--yet the narrator refrains from developing any special insight into the woman's personal background; this matter is to be projected just as the mystery it is for the man. Only near the beginning of the story does the narrator reveal her reflection that she is "in love" and that consequently she must ". . . give away the short cuts to everybody's secrets." This passage of thought is, however, just one in a pattern of objective central intelligence reporting at intervals to develop the woman's oppressive sense of self-consciousness: Later in the story she fees that her

"waiting" must be exposed for all to see as she stands high up on the ferry, and in the same episode she admires the tough hide of a captured alligator aboard the boat, reflecting to herself, "Deliver us all from the naked in heart. (As she had been told.)" Finally, as she dances at Baba's, she feels certain that a bruise on her temple (which remains an unsolved mystery in the story) must have ". . . come out like an evil star." As the couple separate in front of her hotel at the end of the story, the narrator reports that ". . . had she waked in time from a deep sleep, she would have told him her story," but after just silently acknowledging his kiss in the car and then sleeping all the way back to New Orleans, she only disappears into her hotel, although ". . . he thought a figure in the lobby strolled to meet her."

Although this story can be felt to have a valid comprehensive perspective, its insight must be regarded as limited and its authority judged as only tentative, except within the limited range of its vision. While the narrator does make comments on such motifs as deliberate imperviousness and being strangers in New Orleans, his genuine knowledge seems restricted chiefly to what the couple themselves both see and understand; yet the narrator is not restricted just to one character's vision, either, so that one does have, for instance, more exact knowledge about the man's relationship with his wife than the woman ever has, although what she might finally infer for herself is another mystery (especially after he responds to her sole query about his wife with only a blank stare). By thus capturing fragmentary impressions, however, the narrator develops central intelligence perspectives just sufficiently "incomplete" to convey the characters' own senses of each other, leaving the woman's

background especially ambiguous. Then, in addition to this function, the narrator also develops a "blended" perspective toward the mutually hypnotic setting and renders occasional detached commentary of his own, so that by using alternating focus and selective omniscience, the narrator makes the context of the couple's relationship richer and more suggestive for the reader than it would have otherwise been.

"It is, finally, the storyteller," writes Miss Ruth M. Vande Kieft, "who reveals sophistication in the stories of The Bride of the Innisfallen,"[6] and although he usually does so by developing one central intelligence perspective to a complex degree, "Going to Naples" is another story from that volume like "No Place for You, My Love," which particularly illustrates the function of the external narrator's perspective in the development of large contexts of meaning as well as incidental motifs. "Going to Naples" differs from the preceding story, however, in that only one character becomes a central intelligence figure at all, and also in that this character receives somewhat fuller development, within the context of the story, than does either of the two partially developed central intelligence characters in "No Place for You, My Love." "Going to Naples" is actually more typical of Miss Welty's application of privileged narration in The Bride of the Innisfallen than is "No Place for You, My Love," if they are judged on the basis of the foregoing statement of contrast. In other respects, however, the two stories are similar: both are studies of "doomed" male-female relationships, caught for analysis in their early stages of development, which prove to be also their only stages of existence. At the same time, though, one might contend that the relationship in "Going to Naples" is both more fruitful as

experience and more meaningful as symbol than is the one in "No Place for You, My Love." The action in "Going to Naples" occurs during a sea voyage that might have provided material for various themes; the narrator concentrates, however, on the subject of "youth and age," developing it around the chief characters in terms of his own incisive reporting of selected scenes and impressions.

The voyage described is that of the Pomona from New York to Naples. On board with a large group of Italian-American pilgrims of a Holy Year are Mrs. C. Serto and her youngest of six daughters, Gabriella, the only one to have reached eighteen unwed. Gabriella forms a rather tentative connection with the eligible but independent Aldo Scampo and becomes a central intelligence character in a considerable part of the story. Mrs. Serto's goading of Gabriella to push the innocent affair further and further serves only to make the young man, who is going to study music under the G.I. Bill, just slightly even more suspicious of romance than he ordinarily is by his inherently cautious nature. Yet he, like Gabriella, is young and full of life; she is literally alive inwardly, with a passion for the fullest enjoyment of every opportune moment, although her playful exterior does conceal a painful sense of frustration, for she is fat, she is nagged at by her well-intentioned mother, and she is no fool: she can see that Aldo is not a permanent catch for her and foresees the end of their shipboard acquaintance quite realistically.

It is, however, Gabriella's ability to wrest the most personal enjoyment she possibly can from even difficult situations, to become her own inner source of pleasure upon even the unlikeliest of pretexts and to forget her frustrations for at least a moment whenever she can, that

interests the narrator in her youthfulness. He observes her strong will to be excitedly alive and juxtaposes it with the aged passengers' recollections of their own similar feelings at one time. Developing both Gabriella's perspective toward herself and the older passengers' perspective toward Gabriella and Aldo, the narrator finds a common center for all humanity, young and old--something that the young possess while the old seek vicariously to relive its experience. Yet in developing his own perspective toward Gabriella, the narrator makes use of no devices or techniques not already discussed in this chapter or later discussed in connection with other works, and to study this story's rich thematic texture, however tempting such a study might be, would only delay further discussion relevant to narrative technique in other works. Just one cited passage from "Going to Naples" will, perhaps, be adequate to illustrate the narrator's concept of theme and his use of narrative commentary to develop it from his own external perspective. As a circle of older passengers watches Aldo and Gabriella caper on deck, the narrator observes:

> And it lifted the soul--for a thing like crossing the ocean could depress it--to sit in the sun and contemplate among companions the weakness and the mystery of the flesh. Looking, dreaming, down at Gabriella, they felt something of an old, pure loneliness come back to them--like a bird sent out over the waters long ago, when they were young, perhaps from their same company. Only the long of memory, the brave and experienced of heart, could bear such a stirring, an awakening--first to have listened to that screaming, and in a flash to remember what it was (BI, 166).

iii

The Robber Bridegroom is another work that does not require thorough analysis for any unique or novel techniques of narration. Published in 1942, it has been called Miss Welty's earliest novel, although

by precise definition it is more of a romance than a novel. It is an extensive compilation of source material from legend and literature that reflects both the flexibility of romance and an almost ceremonial arrangement of incident and sequence. Then, in addition to its flexible and ritual-like qualities of structure, it also has some literally incredible or "unrealistic" content of the kind peculiar to the romance as opposed to the novel, as such writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James have understood that distinction. In The Robber Bridegroom Miss Welty completely departs from both the use of contemporary materials and the method of psychological realism, and it is chiefly her adaptation of privileged external narration to such a rare context for her that needs study here.

Miss Ruth M. Vande Kieft has conveniently catalogued the major sources for The Robber Bridegroom in her book Eudora Welty, and the following paragraph from that study should indicate Miss Welty's interest in traditional fantasy and the American folk past as material resources for this narrative:

> From Grimm's Fairy Tales (such stories as "The Robber Bridegroom," "The Little Goose Girl," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfts"), Miss Welty drew several familiar character types, themes, and situations: the beautiful golden-haired heroine, the wicked ugly stepmother, the bandit bridegroom, the forest hideout, the warning raven, the locket talisman, the talking head in a trunk, the counting out of gold in the robber's lair. From Mississippi history and legend are drawn such folk heroes and types as Mike Fink, champion keelboatman; the Harpe brothers, bandits noted for their barbarous cruelty ("Harpe's Head" being to this day the name of a place where the decapitated head of one of these bandits was placed as a warning to other outlaws); Clement Musgrove, the innocent and successful planter; and Indians, outlaw bands, mail riders, and rich New Orleans merchants.[7]

The narrative perspective is actually germane to the half-legendary, half-historical Mississippi world of the story, its vision characterized

by the easy assumption of larger-than-life dimensions, the patterning of events according to ritual formula and the unrealistic fluidity of fantasy literature, so that with the vaguely quaint, occasionally archaic though clearly American idiom of his voice, the narrator becomes a native persona, detached from yet comfortably at home with the world of the fictional illusion. Freely shifting his focus from scene to scene and disregarding the time-barrier, the narrator of The Robber Bridegroom occasionally intrudes comments for exposition and characterization, although he usually allows a character to develop thematic motifs or ideas in his own voice, with one or two exceptions. The narrator of this work also withdraws from scenes of dialogue except for occasional minor observations and sometimes withholds enough information in spite of his privileged status to create intentional suspense or ambiguity. He moreover occasionally adapts his range and perspective of vision to a secondary perspective, although his central intelligence reporting never concentrates sufficiently on a given character for its perspective to project a sustained degree of primary vision in the work.

Although there are a variety of characters in The Robber Bridegroom, only four command any measure of direct or even implied vision toward the action:

> In the novel Clement Musgrove is the weak father whose second wife, Salome, is the wicked stepmother to beautiful Rosamond. Salome forces Rosamond to appear to Jamie Lockhart as a kitchen slattern. Jamie is the gentleman highwayman who destroys his enemies, reforms himself, marries Rosamond, and lives happily ever after with her, in prosperity.[8]

Clement Musgrove's perspective occasionally seems to represent a moral and philosophical norm in the story, as when, for instance, he comments on

the double identity of Jamie Lockhart and of all things in the world, or when he speaks his mind on the loss of innocence in the Mississippi frontier country and the coming of evil with the inevitability of seasonal change; indeed, speaking on mutability, Clement almost sounds as though he were paraphrasing the wisdom of Ecclesiastes: "'The savages have only come the sooner to their end; we will come to ours too. Why have I built my house, and added to it? The planter will go after the hunter, and the merchant after the planter, all having their day.'" Here Clement's innocence, which the narrator asserts with seeming objectivity, through explicit commentary, quite early in the narrative, appears indeed to be of a noble character. Yet the narrator also develops a comprehensive view of Clement's innocence, both shortly after it is introduced and in later parts of the story, from which it assumes some clearly comic aspects and appears variously as shortsightedness, imprudence and gullibility. Moreover, the conclusion of the whole narrative does not bear out either the melancholy resignation or the philosophical vision that Clement adopts; it is much rather a moral triumph for Jamie Lockhart, who is characterized as a man of action, shouldering lightly the burden of guilt, as opposed to the reflective and meditative Clement Musgrove. Although Clement is able to take joy in Jamie's moral triumph, the resolution of the action has led the critic Chester E. Eisinger to assert that The Robber Bridegroom fails to exploit its potentials for theme in the motifs of cultural innocence and self-identity.[9]

If Clement Musgrove does represent at least a tentative, provisional moral norm for certain large, speculative themes that might not receive full development or resolution, it is Jamie Lockhart that is

both the moral center of interest and the sole protagonist of the book. Jamie's initiative is what causes the plot to develop, a plot that is actually quite logical and coherent despite its fluid presentation, and his moral reformation, depicted in fairy-tale fashion as the death of the "evil" self and victory of the "good" one, is finally the basic "good" in the story, making it possible for the otherwise innocent but melancholy Clement to be happy in spite of the loss of his daughter. Although simplified by standards of analytical fiction, the course of Jamie's moral change tends to draw more sympathy from the reader than do Clement's meditations and passive escapes from danger (one such escape owing more to Jamie's wit than to Clement's innocence, anyway). Although Jamie keeps his true identity concealed from Rosamond, his "bride," and both wins her love and for a while maintains her with his "evil" self, the narrator provides enough special insight into Jamie's other self to establish his redeemability and qualification for reward: at one point the narrator tells of Jamie's suppressed dream of true love, which he ". . . was saving until the last . . . ," while at another the narrator reveals Jamie's softness of heart by explaining the bandit's gradual foregoing of his plan to rob Clement as being due to the latter's trusting innocence. The real symbol of evil in The Robber Bridegroom, in fact, is not Jamie Lockheart, nor is it the Indians, either (though one might gather so from Clement Musgrove's perspective); rather, it is the hardened outlaw Little Harp, who invades Jamie's lair by learning his identity and proceeds to bring about its burning at the hands of vengeful Indians by murdering one of their young women. It is finally Little Harp that Jamie has to overcome in mortal combat, knowing too, before they fight their

epic struggle, that it is only an Indian girl and not Rosamond that Little Harp has killed. Thus Jamie's victory over Little Harp, the defeat of the central evil in the story, is not motivated by self-seeking revenge.

The Robber Bridegroom, despite all its fairy-tale schemata, is finally a serious study of life's complexities: it considers the ambiguity of innocence, for example, when Clement seeks to judge the security of an inn by visible signs of the innkeeper's past honesty, only to sleep finally with a highway robber and his own would-be murderer. Even more importantly, the story also considers the irony of love's involvement with good and evil. This irony has expression in the fact that, in this story, the young maiden first knows and loves "evil" and then ruins her "paradise" in the forest when the wicked stepmother prompts her curiosity to know her lover's other, i.e., "good," self, causing her to violate her lover's trust and to bring about her own "fall" into the painful world. Yet the primary function of the narrator throughout all of these ironic inversions of story-book and mythic experience is to accept them as quite real, along with the larger-than-life dimensions, the incredible incidents and the ritual-like action. He thus becomes a device whereby, instead of the elements of fantasy's rendering the vision of truth invalid, the complex vision itself lends a moment of credibility to the elements of fantasy. Perhaps in the last analysis it will be admitted that Miss Welty has subordinated vision to the execution of technique in this narrative, and such a conclusion is possibly what lies behind Mr. Eisinger's negative overall reaction to the book, but if the artist's vision does succeed in transforming pure art into the apparent substance of reality, that success

would seem finally to be the highest kind of testimony to the power of that vision.

iv

If one balks at calling The Robber Bridegroom a novel because of its thorough orientation toward the traditions of romance, then Delta Wedding, which Miss Welty published in 1946, becomes her first full development of the regular novel form, to be followed by The Golden Apples, The Ponder Heart, Losing Battles and The Optimist's Daughter. In Delta Wedding, possibly the most expert of all of her novels from the standpoint of technique and form, Miss Welty first employs a device for achieving unity on several levels that she repeats in two of her later novels. This device is that of centering the action around some formal family occasion that becomes a suggestive or symbolic context. She first uses the wedding as such a context in Delta Wedding within which to study "the meaning of love--of familial and marital love."[10] Her next use of the device has already been observed in the discussion of Losing Battles, where it occurs in the form of the family reunion, and the last occasion of the device, in the form of the funeral, occurs in her most recent novel, The Optimist's Daughter. In each of these novels Miss Welty seems to be examining the extent to which family relationships and traditions can become psychological and even spiritual entities or forces in private, inward life. Delta Wedding, besides being the earliest of these "family" novels, is also in many respects the most inward or private in terms of focus and development, for its narrative technique tends to emphasize the unspoken reflections and thoughts of several characters portrayed as isolated beings.

Delta Wedding's external narrator assumes privileged access to these several characters' minds, developing each one as a secondary perspective and allowing each to serve as a central intelligence character during segments of the story. There is considerable shifting of focus from one secondary perspective to another, no one character's mind receiving its complete development uninterruptedly in a single period of concentration. This frequent shifting of focus on the secondary-perspective level of vision is one factor, however, that continually attests to the activity of the primary perspective of the narrator; it points up his role as an ordering agent behind the secondary perspectives, capable of knowing each one and moving with as much pattern and coherence as possible from one to another and then to still another, and so back to the first at due length. The narrator's voice, too, is the consistent vehicle of narration throughout the novel, and it likewise provides evidence of the primary perspective through its unbroken superstructure of language that posits a single source of vision. Other forms of evidence for the narrator's function include his objective treatment of most of the secondary-perspective material--i.e., the objective mode of central intelligence reporting--as well as his distinctively "literary" style of articulation. Because the mode of central intelligence narration is objective, this style controls the rhetoric common largely to all of the central intelligence perspectives except on rare occasions, when a character's idiom modifies it. Finally, the narrator's comprehensiveness, his comprehensive perspective toward the whole fictional illusion, gives further evidence of the narrator's role by encompassing each individual character's frame of reference and vision as well as the narrator's own

external ones. These forms of evidence for the narrator's activity serve to suggest his principal functions in the novel and also to reveal a basic tension that is germane to the novel's theme of fact and meaning, or outward chaos and internal order. The principal functions of the narrator's perspective in Delta Wedding are, broadly speaking, these four: (1) to articulate the private visions of the central characters; (2) to provide a measure distance, a detached perspective toward each private vision and also the fictional illusion as a whole; (3) to secure a coherent vision of all the action, external and internal, from such a detached perspective (making use of authorial powers of articulation); and (4) finally to achieve a comprehensive, integrated viewpoint toward the action and the secondary perspectives bound up in it. These four functions of the narrator's perspective can be understood better after considering the tension in the narrative fabric of the novel that is so important to one of its themes.

The "common" story in Delta Wedding consists of the surface events of Dabney Fairchild's wedding in which all the characters share an immersion, but this surface action is only sometimes directly engaged by the character perspectives; at other odd moments it is an almost half-forgotten framework for the "real" story of the novel, the central characters' inward dramas of private reflections and responses. The tension that lies in the multiple-perspective form of central intelligence narration is caused by the fact that so much of the internal story is split apart by the isolated predicament of each separate self, fragmented into discreet segments of this or that character's vision, yet tentatively integrated at the same time by the narrator's perspective at the level of

his immediate vision. The tension inherent in such a disposition of primary and secondary perspectives, and such as orientation of external voice and internal vision, becomes a dominant metaphor for the whole novel, as such a technique of narration naturally accommodates itself to the development of one of our literature's major themes, the universal struggle within the individual consciousness to impose interpretation, meaning, upon the outside world of raw experience, disconnected facts and chaotic events. The narrator, through his association with the author's art as its "agent" in touch with the fictional illusion, is always implicitly restoring cohesive consciousness after breakdown of communication or psychological disintegration occurs within the world of the characters. Yet the narrator's perspective is only a device, ironically unreal to the fictional illusion, so that its degree of comprehensiveness is hardly approximated by even the ". . . favored center of consciousness in the novel, Ellen [Fairchild] . . . the most balanced of the major characters, the most mature and objectively 'reliable.'"[11]

The narrator's function of articulating the unspoken depths of the various focal characters' minds is an attempt to suggest, albeit from outside the actual world of the story, the possibility of sympathetic communication; this the narrator suggests by developing divergent points of view with basically the same rhetorical tone and writing style, and also by comprehending the inviolable depths as a prerequisite for their articulation. The objective mode of central intelligence narration in Delta Wedding is therefore the literal substance of the author's faith in the power of consciousness to redeem chaotic experience, for it seeks to bridge both the chasm between fact and meaning and the gulfs separating

one isolated psyche from another. Through that mode of narration the narrator's voice and vision suggest a basis for the subjective ordering of life's manifold details, even though the characters do not frequently measure up to the task. It is the attempt of each focal character to succeed, however, that renders the character admirable and sometimes even heroic within himself: it is Laura's attempt to reconcile her home with her father in Jackson with Shellmound, the home of the Fairchilds, just as it is Robbie's attempt to correlate her love for George with her experience of him, or Dabney's to assimilate change, or Shelley's to resist, weather and contain it, or finally Ellen's to harmonize herself with the rhythms of nature and, just as vitally, to coextend her views of each of these struggles through her modulating mind, that makes the character admirable or heroic. Yet much of that heroism is lost upon the character perspectives, even Ellen's, and it would be lost for the reader, too, were it not for the narrator's method of articulating the characters' thoughts not only to indicate their essential modes of occurrence in the mind but also to analyze them occasionally beyond the particular character's own capacity to dissect and know them.

There is perhaps no better passage in the novel to illustrate the narrator's seemingly simple, yet suggestive, probing of consciousness through the art of central intelligence narration than the opening paragraph of the first chapter, where Laura is seen aboard the "Yellow Dog" entering the Delta. Although the narrator begins the passage with an overly matter-of-fact tone of exposition, he continues by drawing Laura's perspective into focus while still maintaining a detached, implicitly analytical perspective of his own toward her:

> The nickname of the train was the Yellow Dog. Its real name was the Yazoo-Delta. It was a mixed train. The day was the 10th of September, 1923--afternoon. Laura McRaven, who was nine years old, was on her first journey alone. She was going up from Jackson to visit her mother's people, the Fairchilds, at their plantation named Shellmound, at Fairchilds, Mississippi. When she got there, "Poor Laura, little motherless girl," they would all run out and say, for her mother had died in the winter and they had not seen Laura since the funeral. Her father had come as far as Yazoo City with her and put her on the Dog. Her cousin Dabney Fairchild, who was seventeen, was going to be married, but Laura could not be in the wedding for the reason that her mother was dead. Of these facts the one most persistent in Laura's mind was the most intimate one: that her age was nine (DW, 3).

Besides serving as an economical means of providing some very valuable exposition at the beginning of the novel, this opening paragraph also articulates a central character's background and immediate context of consciousness, and it furthermore asserts the clear and the appreciable measure of distance between the external narrator and this character (as well as the fictional illusion as seen from her point of view) by identifying the "most persistent . . . most intimate" focal point of her perspective as one probably not so central for the reader. Yet just such distance later in the novel proves helpful in recognizing that much of Laura's subsequent development of perspective is controlled by her age and her acute sense of it.

Although Laura's opening passage illustrates the narrator's functions of achieving articulation and distance within a very concrete setting, and although the commentary on it suggests its relevance to securing both narrative coherence and comprehensiveness of vision later in the novel, the foregoing discussion of Delta Wedding in this chapter has admittedly been somewhat abstract. It is intended, however, as a general introduction to the external narrative technique of the novel, and it should provide a firm basis of acquaintance with method for studying the

development of the central intelligence perspectives in the novel in Chapter VII, where they are immediately examined in detail, following this discussion. This preliminary study of the external narrator in Delta Wedding has concentrated upon demonstrating three aspects of Miss Welty's technique in creating him, and those three aspects, once again, are the observable and felt signs of his active functions, his four broad functions themselves, and finally his participation in a dominant metaphor of chaos versus order that controls a considerable portion of the book's thematic design. This design and the narrator's relationship to it becomes yet clearer in the next chapter as study turns to the character perspectives rather than the comprehensive overview of the narrator.

Footnotes

[1]*Fiction of the Forties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 267.

[2]Vande Kieft, p. 40.

[3]Vande Kieft, p. 85.

[4]Vande Kieft, pp. 85-86.

[5]"How I Write," *Virginia Quarterly*, XXXI (Spring, 1955), 240-51. Reprinted in Brooks and Warren, *Understanding Fiction*, 2nd ed., 1959, pp. 545-53.

[6]Vande Kieft, p. 159.

[7]Vande Kieft, p. 86.

[8]Eisinger, p. 272.

[9]See Eisinger, p. 275.

[10]Eisinger, p. 275.

[11]Vande Kieft, p. 99.

CHAPTER VII

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE PERSPECTIVE: OBJECTIVE MODE

i

This chapter, after continuing and concluding the discussion of Delta Wedding by concentrating on its five principal character perspectives, goes on to study Miss Welty's further uses of central intelligence narration in the objective mode in other stories and novels. These other works due for discussion in this chapter include the novel The Optimist's Daughter, several stories from A Curtain of Green and The Wide Net, and three chapters from The Golden Apples. Detailed analysis of all of these works, however, will not be necessary in order to illustrate the range of Miss Welty's objective central intelligence narration; Delta Wedding is practically representative of the full range in itself, and subsequent discussion needs only to bring out special achievements, unique contexts or unusual problems not adequately treated in the discussion of Delta Wedding.

As preceding chapters of this study have already indicated, the central intelligence perspective is a focal secondary, or character, perspective developed by a privileged external narrator. Because he is privileged, the narrator has cognizance of such a character's mind, so that while the character's perspective itself is not infallible or even

necessarily reliable as a source of vision toward the story world, the narrator is both infallible and reliable as a source of vision toward the character's mind; he is infallible because he is privileged, and reliable because he is external to the fictional illusion. The difference, again, between the objective mode of central intelligence narration and the subjective mode lies in the location of the center of consciousness: if it remains located in the narrator's perspective, the mode is objective, and a reader gets essentially the narrator's view of the character's mind, but if it shifts from the narrator to a character's perspective, then the mode is subjective, and the reader gets basically that character's own view of himself and his world of experience. This kind of view is of course fallible and sometimes very unreliable. Delta Wedding is so complex in narrative technique, especially in the area of shifting focus from one perspective to another, that certain passages in the novel are more subjective than objective in mode, but the objective mode predominates and sets the narrator's tone throughout most of the work, and that mode receives naturally most of the study and illustration in an examination of the novel's central intelligence narration.

ii

Structurally Delta Wedding is unified by two central events, one in the narrative present and the other having occurred a couple of weeks in the past. The present event is the wedding of Dabney Fairchild to Troy Flavin, the Fairchilds' plantation overseer. While that event provides unity on the level of external action, the other event that lies in the past provides similar unity of internal action: this other event is

George Fairchild's act of risking his life on a train trestle to save the life of a nine-year-old retarded niece, while his young wife Robbie looks on pleadingly, only wanting George to save himself for her. The novel thus has coherence on both important levels of action, the external and the internal, for the meaning of George's identity, especially in view of his act on the trestle, is a common concern of the several major characters who develop into central intelligence figures; with Robbie it is almost an obsession. Furthermore, as Chester E. Eisinger observes, the novel is unified by the Fairchild family, which is a throbbing unit of inner diversity within which Dabney's wedding and the trestle incident both find a relevant context. Mr. Eisinger's concept of the relationship between these unifying devices and the multiple-perspective technique of narration in Delta Wedding deserves consideration here:

> . . . The shaping is a triumph of unifying forces over diversification. The novel is told from various points of view, so that the narration of the story takes place simultaneously with an exploration of the individual consciousness of a given character. The method could easily lead to a series of scattered portraits, but Miss Welty controls the book by the use of two devices. One is the family, which in the present context functions as technique to hold things together. The other is the episode of the train crossing the trestle, which is told or thought about by several different characters in the course of the novel. Since it recurs so often and so crucially, it is a device which helps to unify the novel.[1]

Within these unifying contexts each of the five female central intelligence characters undergoes a private spiritual ordeal, largely hidden from the others (at least so in its true form and depth), each one's somehow felt to be related to George and the essence of character that he recently demonstrated on the trestle. Yet except for Robbie, the characters have their own problems apart from George, for which George himself

is only a reference point: as surveyed in the preceding chapter, their problems include Laura's struggle to achieve identity and emotional security, Dabney's adventure into the unknown realm of marriage, Shelley's effort to thwart the force of change and preserve moral security, Robbie's ordeal to understand her husband in relation to his family as well as herself, and Ellen's anxiety and concern for all of these, Laura, Dabney, Shelley and Robbie, as well as her own need to define George for herself in order truly to know herself. As also indicated in the preceding chapter, Miss Welty chooses to begin the novel with Laura's perspective, that of an alert nine-year-old, just as she also chooses to end the novel with it.

Laura McRaven is an "outsider" to the company of Shellmound, not only because she lives in Jackson, a city, outside the Delta, but also because her mother, the Fairchild parent, is dead. For a sensitive child seeking acceptance and participation in that mystery called "family" and even that maze known as "society," Laura is only naturally and predictably affected by her mother's death the preceding winter. It has created a latent identity crisis for Laura that her visit to Shellmound for Dabney's wedding brings to the level of consciousness. Laura wishes very much to be a part of Shellmound, which in the present context means to her being a flower girl in the wedding, but initially she is excluded from any role in the wedding because her mother is dead. Only when Lady Clare, Laura's little "technical rival," comes down with chicken pox does Laura gain her wish. Yet her feelings toward immersion in the life of Shellmound are ambivalent: while the vibrant, thickly textured life there (presently heightened in excitement and intensity by both Dabney's wedding and

Robbie's "unofficial separation" from George) appeals to Laura, she has pleasant memories of her past life before her mother's death and recalls her present home with her father in Jackson with fondness. Each place has its own character, its own appeal, for Laura, and if her being currently caught up in the immediacy of Shellmound's full mobilization for "crises" and "occasions" is not enough to complicate Laura's sense of roots and home, then Ellen's statement to her late in the novel that the Fairchilds want her to stay and live with them at Shellmound most probably is. And in spite of the fact that the novel shortly thereafter ends on a note of Laura's perfect assimilation into the Fairchild "clan," the narrator has previously reported her feeling that she will return to her father in Jackson.

Laura's perspective is the second most extensively (not necessarily most deeply) developed perspective in the novel (Ellen's being the most extensively developed). Laura appears as a central intelligence character in Chapters I, III, V, VI and VII, her consciousness enveloping the whole narrative design if seen structurally. She functions in Chapter I to provide the reader's first view of the Fairchild family, and although she is admittedly a minutely sensitive observer as well as a child gifted with a vivid memory, her uses of the two faculties--observation and memory--upon first arriving at Shellmound seem to reach beyond the ordinary, even extraordinary, capacities of a nine-year-old. The reason for such an effect, however, is the impression that the narrator achieves by articulating Laura's conscious sense of things beyond her own probable ability to articulate it. The essential vision is Laura's--she provides the raw material of the fictional illusion from her perspective--yet the

center of consciousness belongs to the narrator, for in providing the articulation he also implies a detached perspective toward Laura's mind from which the reader can infer some analysis and a measure of judgment of it. Two examples of such narration in Chapter I should serve to illustrate this principle of articulation behind Laura's perspective. Both of the following excerpts are from the same passage, which develops Laura's impressions of the Fairchilds; in the first one, she reflects on her notion that it is the male and not the female Fairchilds that "define" the family, or impart identity to it:

> . . . When she looked at the boys and the men Laura was without words but she knew that company like a dream that comes back again and again, each aspect familiar and longing not to be forgotten. Great Great-Uncle George on his horse, in the portrait in the parlor--the one who had been murdered by the robbers on the Natchez Trace and buried, horse, bridle, himself, and all, on his way to the wilderness to be near Great Great-Grandfather--even he, she had learned by looking up at him, had the family trait of quick, upturning smiles, instant comprehension of the smallest eddy of life in the current of the day, which would surely be entered in a kind of reckless pleasure. . . (DW, 14).

In the next excerpt, reflecting on "change" in the Fairchilds, Laura seems to sense action occurring around her on two different levels:

> Laura from her earliest memory had heard how they "never seemed to change at all." That was the way her mother, who had been away from them down in Jackson where they would be hard to believe, could brag on them without seeming to. And yet Laura could see that they changed every moment. The outside did not change but the inside did; an iridescent life was busy within and under each alikeness. . . (DW, 15).

In the first excerpt quoted the narrator articulates Laura's sense of the Fairchild character, while in the second one he articulates both Laura's feeling for "inner" as well as "outer" phenomena and her forming apprehension of "the one and the many" also. He develops these aspects of Laura's vision as functions of her psychology as well as the narrative

point of view; her vision focuses upon the fictional illusion for the narrator, although he provides the immediate perspective for the reader toward her vision as psychological phenomena.

There is for Laura, however, a dark underside of Shellmound as well as the bright surface glimpsed in the portrait of Great Great-Uncle George as well as in the present George Fairchild. At the beginning of Chapter III, for example, the narrator reports that for Laura the atmosphere of preparation makes ". . . Dabney's wedding seem as fateful in the house as her mother's funeral had been. . . ." Reflecting Laura's vague, early sense of fate, this statement echoes in a later passage from Chapter V, where Laura's concept of Shellmound as a "closed" world, a self-contained microcosm, underlies an explicit sense of being "doomed":

> . . . When people were at Shellmound it was as if they had never been anywhere else. It must be that she herself was the only one to struggle against this.
>
> She tried to see her father coming home from the office, first his body hidden by leaves, then his face hidden behind his paper. If she could not think of that, she was doomed; and she was doomed, for the memory was only a flicker, gone now. Shelley and Dabney never spoke of school and the wintertime. Uncle George never spoke of Memphis or his wife (Aunt Robbie, where was she?), about being a lawyer or an aeronaut in the war. Aunt Ellen never talked about Virginia or when she was a little girl or a lady without children. . . .
>
> And it was as if they had considered her mother all the time as belonging, in her life and in her death (for they took Laura and <u>let</u> her see the grave), as belonging here; they considered Shellmound the important part of life and death too. . . (DW, 134).

Whenever Laura avoids such serious reflection, however, and seems to follow instinct and caprice, she usually proves to be compatible with the unpredictable life at Shellmound, although when she seeks to force or contrive her acceptance by the Fairchilds, she is ostensibly thwarted. For example, in Chapter V, when she and her young cousin Roy make a

secret, impromptu excursion to the abandoned Marmion (which is to be Dabney and Troy's home but is possibly really Laura's property by virtue of a legal complication that the Fairchilds only allude to), her cousin hurls her into the Yazoo River, simply because she says that she has never been in a river before, and then proceeds to rescue her. The whole adventure culminates quite naturally in pleasure and excitement for the two children, who share it as a deep unspoken bond of danger and discovery between them. Yet on the other hand, in Chapter VI, when Dabney and her sisters (and one small brother) are splashing in the bathroom on Dabney's wedding day, and Dabney is going through a "parting ceremony" of giving Bluet, the baby, certain simple precepts of advice ("'Now, Bluet, you mustn't ever brag'"), Laura seeks to participate in the ritual too by assuming Dabney's role, failing to see its significance for Dabney as a bride leaving home:

> "And, Bluet," said Laura comfortably, "you mustn't ever steal."
>
> "Don't you tell me," said Bluet gently, "just Dabney," and they all dashed her with water (DW, 208).

Yet this water recalls the water of the Yazoo River in serving a similar baptismal function, and Laura's initiation into family and society proceeds even here by trial and error.

Laura's most important recognition in the novel occurs in the last chapter, as a result of a memory-flashback in her mind to a stormy morning in Jackson when her mother was still alive. Just returning with her parents from a trip, a visit to Shellmound, Laura has a sudden desire for a new doll. As she recalls the incident, no sooner had she made her request than was her mother busily devising a stocking doll from the

things in her sewing basket. Reflecting on her instant gratification and immediate satisfaction, Laura now recognizes to herself that never again will her wishes be so instantly complied with: she realizes that this fact, as she takes it, is the true meaning for her of her mother's death, and her sense of it seems to go vaguely but surely beyond the self-centered view to grasp in it the fundamental value of her mother's relationship and appreciate the meaning of her mother as a person she has known. The narrator, however, forces the reader to evaluate the impact of Laura's recognition for himself; he only supplies a minimum of articulation to suggest the tone of Laura's mind. Similarly, the narrator leaves the question of Laura's future unresolved: despite Ellen's invitation to Laura to stay on at Shellmound and the closing scene of the novel, where Laura seems fully to accept the Fairchilds and they to accept her, there is a sinister note that looks back to Laura's reflection that her mother seems to "belong" to Shellmound in both life and death. This note reverberates for the reader in Ellen's invitation to Laura (couched as it is in persuasive reasoning), as though through Ellen the whimsical Fairchilds were "playing God" with Laura. A reader does wonder about this aspect of the Fairchilds, just as he wonders whether Laura can summon enough courage to make an independent choice: might she determine for herself to return to Jackson and try to fill the void in her father's life, or might she just as easily succumb to the benevolent but possessive charm of Shellmound?

Laura is psychologically more like Dabney than any of the other central intelligence characters: a little unsure of her future but characteristically, inherently confident; having certain reservations about

Fairchild tradition and character but not openly, obviously rebellious (as Robbie Reid Fairchild is). Dabney's perspective reflects these same tendencies of character disclosed in Laura's. Dabney, in marrying Troy, the overseer, is causing her father Battle some discomfort and her mother a notable (though far from noticeable) degree of anxiety. George, Battle's brother, has married beneath his social class too in marrying Robbie, and now just at the occasion of Dabney's wedding the "upstart" young wife has "up and left" her Fairchild husband. Yet like Laura, again, Dabney is bold and even sometimes risky. Rejecting the Fairchild honor-code (that caused her grandfather's death in a dual), for instance, as "life-denying" in clear Faulknerian sentiments, she allies her love for Troy with the life-principle and thus raises it in her mind above class distinction and family opinion.

Basically a girl of action and not, like Shelley, one of thought, Dabney nevertheless intuits valuable insight into the problem of "knowing" her Uncle George. In Chapter II, for example, where Dabney's perspective is introduced into the novel, she reflects on a vision that she once had of George at a picnic, gazing at a butterfly in ". . . a way to make her imagine all at once that in that moment he erected an entire, complicated house for the butterfly inside his sleepy body." The narrator continues then to articulate Dabney's understanding of George as a vessel of insight:

> She had then known something he knew all along, it seemed then--that when you felt, touched, heard, looked at things in the world, and found their fragrances, they themselves made a sort of house within you, which filled with life to hold them, filled with knowledge all by itself, and all else, the other ways to know, seemed calculation and tyranny (DW, 34).

In this very poetic yet profoundly philosophical meditation, Dabney is herself reflecting on the poetic sense of the outer world--the world of the "not-self." Inspired by George, she develops in her thoughts an almost mystical epistemology that is moral at the same time that it is philosophical--moral insofar as it presupposes love as a basis for epistemology, or knowledge as a principle of love. It is as though the better Dabney, or anyone else, comes to know George, the better he or she can come to understand the world through knowledge that is love, for George himself, as Dabney and Ellen both recognize, is a form of universal love. Sharply individual, he yet contains the potential for impartial love, disinterested love--the kind of love celebrated by Coleridge in The Ancient Mariner or alluded to by Browning in "My Last Duchess." Dabney recalls too, in the same chapter, her earliest recognition that George could care about beings other than Fairchilds. Coming as a shock, the recognition had occurred to her as an epiphany while watching George reconcile two little black boys that he had discovered fighting. Although she still retains some remnant of the will to protest that had moved her then, watching George and the two black boys, Dabney has so far redeemed her own concept of love as to be able now to understand George poetically and also at least to relate her own partial kind of love for Troy to a deep respect for universal life as absolute in its claim for survival.

The effect of George's influence upon Dabney's feeling of love for Troy is alluded to in the closing passage of Chapter III, where the image of the house recurs in Dabney's reflection about her future with Troy and the meaning of her marriage. The narrator alludes to Alexander Pope in introducing the reflection in Dabney's mind to suggest Dabney's

sense of being highly sanctioned in her adventurous undertaking of a strange new role, but the more important allusion is to the passage in Chapter II of the novel on George's knowledge of the butterfly:

> She would walk on the clear night--angels, though, did that--tread it with love not this lonely, never this lonely, for under foot would offer the roof, the chimney, the window of her husband, the solid house. Draw me in, she whispered, draw me in--open the window like my window, I am still only looking in where it is dark (DW, 90).

George sanctions Dabney's love for Troy (the comprehending narrator seems to imply) through his own "classless" love for Robbie, and through his gift to Dabney of inspiring this poetic vision of her love he also sanctifies it.

On the morning of the day of the rehearsal, Dabney rides out alone to Marmion, vacant since its completion in 1890, when James Fairchild, Dabney's grandfather, was killed in a duel over cotton. Dabney and Troy are now to occupy the house, and as though in defiance of its history of grief, Dabney reflects that ". . . all the cotton in the world was not worth one moment of life!" She rejects both "honor" and the death that it necessitates, as though determined to fill the house with an alien principle, ". . . her real life there with Troy . . ."--the "juice of life . . . ." Yet the conclusion to the section in Chapter V that describes Dabney's ride to Marmion reveals that Dabney is balanced enough to take the measure of danger and uncertainty in her future, too--to look upon the fearful aspect of life as well as the inviting one. Pausing by a whirlpool in the woods on her way back to Shellmound, Dabney looks directly into it, ". . . feasting her fear on the dark, vaguely stirring water":

> There were more eyes than hers here--frog eyes--snake eyes? She listened to the silence and then heard it stir, churn,

> churning . . . . She saw how the snakes were turning and moving in the water, passing across each other just below the surface, and now and then a head horridly sticking up. The vines and the cypress roots twisted and grew together on the shore and in the water more thickly than any roots should grow, gray and red, and some roots too moved and floated like hair. On the other side, a turtle on a root opened its mouth and put its tongue out. . . (DW, 123).

Here is the "juice of life" under another aspect--the implicit sexuality of the passage is less deniable than even that of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"--yet Dabney ". . . was never as frightened of it as the boys were." For her, gazing upon the whirlpool is a ritual purgation of fear connoting the demise of innocence.

Fear of the future, of change and the breakup of familiar order--this fear, though not as extreme in Dabney's older sister, Shelley, as it is in William Faulkner's obsessed character the older Quentin (in The Sound and the Fury), is yet far more active and intense in Shelley's mind than it is in Dabney's. Shelley is not as balanced in perspective as Dabney is; although she is not a female prufrockian, a neuresthenic victim of paralysis of the will, either, Shelley does tend to reflect too often without an adequate basis in experience for realism and objectivity. Miss Ruth Vande Kieft, in her excellent discussion of Delta Wedding in Eudora Welty, has this to say about Shelley, referring to the example of George on the trestle:

> Troy and Dabney respond by immediately taking their own pledge for a leap into experience--they decide to marry. Shelley responds with an initial terrorized retreat from experience, sexual involvement, mature relationships, and accident and death. For a while she closes even more tightly into her own "shelley" self and into her family shell, "communicating" only with her diary, setting her will against her sister's plunge into experience. She is greatly troubled, feeling that "alarm and protest should be the nature of the body," that life is "too easy" and can change too quickly,

> that it is never "inviolate." But during the course of the novel she begins to mature, becomes reconciled to the closing of her girlhood relationship to her sister, and is earnestly trying to conquer her various fears.[2]

Where Shelley's perspective is first introduced into the novel in Chapter III, the narrator quotes a lengthy passage from her diary, and this document's content so revealed sets the tone of her perspective as a central intelligence character in that chapter as well as Chapters V and VI. The following excerpts from the passage quoted in the novel reveal the mixture in Shelley of a strong rationalizing tendency and a superficial capacity for insight:

> When T. proposed to D. I think it was just because she was already so spoiled, he had to do something final to make her notice, and this did. That is not the way I want it done to me.
>
> . . . . .
>
> He considers D. not anything he is taking a chance on but a sure thing and wants her for sure.
>
> . . . . .
>
> I do not know and cannot think how it was when Papa and Mama wanted each other. Of course they don't now, and don't suffer by now. I cannot think of any way of loving that would not fight the world, just speak to the world. Papa and Mama do not fight the world. They have let it in. Did they ever even lock a door. So much life and confusion has got in that there is nothing to stop it running over, like the magic pudding pot. The whole Delta is in and out of this house. Life may be stronger than Papa is. He let Troy in, and look, Troy took Dabney (DW, 85).

In justice to Shelley, though, if these excerpts show her to be simplistic and shortsighted toward that which she fears or does not understand from experience, there are other passages in her diary that show her to be perceptive of at least one thing that she does know by direct experience. That is the privacy of one's inward life, the isolation of the

self, of which she is conscious in writing the following descriptive criticism of her family:

> We never wanted to be smart, one by one, but all together we have a wall, we are self-sufficient against people that come up knocking, we are solid to the outside. Does the world suspect? that we are all very private people? I think one by one we're all more lonely than private and more lonely than self-sufficient. I think Uncle G. takes us one by one. That is love--I think (DW, 84).

Comparatively, judging by this sense of George's love, Shelley's perspective is more abstract than Dabney's and partakes of both the clear virtues and narrow limitations of abstraction.

Shelley's perspective illustrates something usually true of any central intelligence perspective treated objectively--that it is designed to develop issues of thought more than to register scenes of action, and to develop its own character more than to relate the outward story (which would tend to make it a center of consciousness and cause its subjective treatment). When Shelley's perspective focuses on outward incident, it usually does so in retrospection, after the fact, as her reflection on the trestle incident in Chapter III, one of several versions or reflections of it in the novel, illustrates. In this passage the narrator first articulates the scene in Shelley's mind, which affords the most elaborate description of that incident in the novel up to that point (two oral accounts, by Orrin and India, respectively, preceding Shelley's private recollection). Then, continuing to see into Shelley's mind but reporting her thoughts as though they were organized for exposition, the narrator lists four sources of "uneasiness" for Shelley among the events of the afternoon of the trestle incident. Because the mode of central intelligence narration is objective, the authority for their being real sources

is not Shelley's mind but the narrator's voice. First, there is Shelley's "boyish" way of having " . . . led them all in walking too fast for Robbie in her high heels . . . ," secondly there is her ". . . own shame in not being able to walk the trestle herself" (which she blames on George's "recklessness"), and thirdly there is ". . . the terror with which the engine filled her . . ." (a fear that she denies is inborn); but the source of deepest uneasiness for Shelley over the events of that afternoon is Robbie's comment in anger to George after the incident, "'You didn't do this for me!'" From having heard these words Shelley has divined that the trestle incident lies behind Robbie's decision to leave George.

Reflection in Shelley's perspective once again manifests itself as a burden in Chapter V: earlier in the story, Dabney had accidentally broken a wedding gift, a treasured night light and family heirloom given by her two maiden aunts. She had not reacted at all at the time, rushing off to meet Troy instead, but later she had cried naturally over the loss. Still later, Shelley reflects that Dabney's crying was over the inevitability of the breakage, as though the light were a portion of other persons' lives that ". . . should be shattered now" that Dabney is marrying Troy. This idea is Shelley's, though, and it leads her on to a sentimental reflection upon pain in all things and an exaggerated sense of protectiveness toward George and her young brother Ranny, whom she deems susceptible to all pain through their infinite risk and sacrifice.

Shelley participates in just one genuine encounter with experience outside her "shell" in all the novel; that encounter occurs in Chapter V when she is sent to Troy's office to fetch the tardy groom

for the wedding rehearsal. Arriving at the overseer's office, she walks abruptly into a scene of recent violence. One field Negro has a "knife" drawn (actually an ice pick, observes the narrator, though it is first called a "knife"), while two more stand with their faces slashed and a fourth stands apart. The trouble between Root M'Hook (the one with the "knife") and the others seems to be over Pinchy, a Negro girl who vaguely "comes through" (passes through some obscure Negro religious rite of passage) and apparently does more than that during the course of the novel. With cautious self-control, however, Troy disperses the group and averts further bloodshed by threatening Root with a gun. Yet Shelley's immediate impression is that "Nobody could marry a man with blood on his door," while later, running back home, she reduces the meaning of the incident to an impotent circular abstraction:

> . . . Shelley could only think in her anger of the convincing performance Troy had given as an overseer born and bred. Suppose a real Deltan, a planter, were no more real than that. Suppose a real Deltan only imitated another Deltan. Suppose the behavior of all men were actually no more than this--imitation of other men. . . . (Suppose her father imitated . . . oh, not he!) Then all men could not know any too well what they were doing (DW, 196).

Subsequent development of Shelley's perspective in Chapter VI suggests that she does seek a tentative resolution of her anxiety over Dabney's marriage. Yet regarding it as a closed door and an avowal of "an unreal world," she still prefers vague romantic fantasy to that inner core of marital life she knows so little of. Its secrecy and privacy in Dabney's case seem only an affront to Shelley's family pride, as the narrator suggests. For a "footnote" to Shelley's perspective, Laura's is used to recount a scene just before the family retires for the night after Dabney's wedding day: it is between Shelley and her parents--one

that Laura has overheard. Shelley is upset because her mother is pregnant, and her parents have to cope with her as though she were much younger than her actual years. They do not exactly humor her, though, and overhearing the pointed victory for the older side causes Laura to have second thoughts as to Shelley's overall stature of intelligence. Laura intuits the commentary on Shelley as she questions her elders' sexual life, and it is ironic that the scene is recorded in the mind of a nine-year-old.

Shelley is correct in thinking that the trestle incident has caused George's wife to leave him, and confirmation for the reader comes in Chapter V, when the narrative focus shifts to Robbie's perspective. She has remained an obscure figure in the novel up to this point, her image being chiefly the "official" Fairchild projection of her as a presumptuous little troublemaker (an image, though, to which no thought by George contributes). She is discovered in Chapter V, however, in rather semi-private exile in the Fairchilds' store, and when she shortly sets out on a dusty walk from the store to Shellmound, returning in her own way to her husband, the narrator begins to articulate her thoughts. Robbie's basic problem is central to her relationship with George, and actually the trestle incident only brings it to a point of crisis for her; it is the problem of knowing her role in marriage by understanding what to ask for or require of George. She is of simple stock, and her idea of the male-female relationship is also simple: the male should be dominant over the female. She is conscious, however, of George's family. That, to be sure, is part of her problem, but its core is the sense that she has of female dominance in the alien, aristocratic Fairchild tradition, which is

a mystery to her that she is trying to solve through conjecture. She devises to this end a private myth, something to use as a tool for understanding: according to it, the land really belongs to the Fairchild women, as something they "exact" from the men in return for something given them, so that the women only suffer the men to live on the land and hold it for them. Thus, so Robbie thinks, when she pleaded for George to regard her and save himself on the trestle, she was only seeking to fill the role proper to a Fairchild woman, or to assume the "Fairchild mask." Yet, to her mind, George had simply thrust the "working" of that mask right back at her, so that in her current perplexity she wonders whether female Fairchild pleading, the fact the mask resembles, is really not just a mask at all but rather a perpetual lack of fulfillment to which the Fairchild women are doomed.

Stopping on her walk to Shellmound to rest in a cotton shed, however, the inherently confident wife seeks to counter momentary misgivings (and manifests her deep sense of her own worth) by reflecting on the difference between her own love for George and ". . . the fond, teasing, wistful play of the family love for . . ." him:

> Nothing was worthy of him but the pure gold, a love that could be simply beside him--her love. Only she could hold him against that grasp, that separating thrust of Fairchild love that would go on and on persuading him, comparing him, begging him, crowing over him, slighting him, proving to him, sparing him, comforting him, deceiving him . . . (DW, 148).

Breaking off this nearly subjective passage rather abruptly, the narrator then proceeds with detached analysis of Robbie's continuing thoughts. "Robbie desired veracity--more than she could even quite fathom . . . ," he reports objectively: "It meant coming to touch the real, undeceiving world within the fairy Shellmound world to love George . . . ." If

Robbie's thoughts do proclaim her more of a realist than an egotist, much of the novel from the Fairchilds' points of view suggests that George's reality is more difficult and complex to fathom or touch than Robbie in her passion and resentment makes out. Yet Robbie is not like "Sister," in "Why I Live at the P.O.," either--given to gross oversimplification of reality for the sake of instant self-exoneration. Robbie senses the difficulty of loving George with credit, even though she might not understand fully its complexity.

Robbie's perspective continues to develop in Chapter V as she reaches Shellmound and defends herself against the Fairchilds. In a scene of dialogue she faces Ellen while the other Fairchilds (except for George, who has gone visiting elsewhere) chase a bird (an ill-luck omen) that has come into the house with Robbie. During her open confrontation with Ellen Robbie is both petty and incisive: she argues that the Fairchilds love themselves in each other and that their possessive hold on George has prevented him from giving identity to his relationship with her. She implies that the family finds itself spiritually self-sufficient, and much like Laura, she senses in the Fairchilds, taken collectively, a closed system of love; they do not need to let anyone else in, Robbie thinks, nor do any of them ever feel the need to get out. Thus, Robbie contends, it is this closed system of love that keeps George orbiting with the family and not separately, with her. Later in the same chapter, after she is reunited with her husband, Robbie again reflects on his need for her kind of love:

> The Fairchilds were always seeing him by a gusty lamp--exaggerating, then blinding--by the lamp of their own indulgence. While she saw him lighted up by his own fire--no one else but

> himself was there, a solid man, going through the world, a husband. . . (DW, 191).

Here Robbie might well fail to appreciate the complexity of the Fairchilds' vision, misconceiving of her own plainsightedness as being the only valid measure of things "in reality." She clearly has trouble understanding the Fairchilds' views of George, but in Chapter VI she does come close to recognizing his role in the Fairchild "myth," coming close also to acknowledging her own obscurity of vision toward her husband:

> He was sensitive to all they asked of life itself. Long ago they had seized on that. He was to be all in one their lover and protector and dreaming, forgetful conscience. . . . If anything tried to happen to them, let it happen to him! He took that part, but it was the way he was made, too, to be like that.
>
> But there was something a little further, that no one could know except her. There was enough sweetness in him to make him cherish the whole world, but in himself there had been no forfeiture. Not yet. He had not yielded up to that family what they really wanted! Or they would not keep after him. But where she herself had expected light, all was still dark too (DW, 212-13).

Thus Robbie's perspective appears in two chapters, providing interesting though sometimes questionable ways of looking at the Fairchilds, as well as some basis for understanding George's character from a thoroughly human point of view and much insight into her own concepts and motives. Its mode of development has been illustrated especially to show that the narrator must occasionally analyze not only Laura's thinking but also that of the adults more clearly and exactly than they themselves are capable of doing. This articulation by the narrator in Robbie's case not only helps to fuse her perspective with other sources of vision in the novel, but also contributes to the idea that one problem Robbie must overcome to find fulfillment with George is that of her own limited consciousness and self-knowledge.

The narrator's articulation is least noticeable in connection with Ellen's perspective, because she of all the central intelligence characters has the perspective that lies closest to the narrative center of consciousness. Comparing her to Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Ramsey in To The Lighthouse, Miss Ruth M. Vande Kieft observes that Ellen "knows everybody from the inside . . ." and with grace and sympathy "works for harmony in patient ways . . . ."[3] Also calling her "a favored center of consciousness," Miss Vande Kieft seeks to catalogue Ellen's receptive consciousness, centrally located as she is, ". . . in the midst of the family as mother, wife, sister . . .":[4]

> . . . she sees everything: Dabney's wild hope and expectation of life; Laura's pathetically eager desire to be drawn into the family and stay on at "Shellmound"; Shelley's emotional tightness, her inward fear and outrage at her younger sister's marriage; Battle's and his sisters' disapproval of Dabney's marriage to an overseer; Robbie's grievances against the Fairchild's; George's apartness . . . .[5]

Ellen's perspective appears as a central intelligence device in five of the book's seven chapters (absent only in Chapters II and III), although it has more extensive development in the latter half of the novel than it has in the former. During the passage in Chapter I that introduces it as a source of vision, she reveals her anxiety over Dabney's marriage, connecting its motif in her mind with the other motif of George and Robbie: their marriage's success or failure, Ellen there thinks, is materially to affect the course of Dabney and Troy's, for both George and Dabney have chosen to love beneath their social standing. It is as though in her thoughts Ellen is here making George protector of Dabney's happiness, and at once the reader begins to recognize the working of George's role in the family myth. Yet not until Chapter IV does the

reader learn of Ellen's concrete basis for anxiety in spite of the myth: "George was so tender-hearted, his directness was something you forgot; when he was far away, . . . she thought of him--as she always thought of the man or the woman--as at Robbie's mercy. Robbie, anywhere, was being direct."

As the development in Chapter IV indicates, Ellen is capable of a measure of detachment from the family's mythical image of George, and as a further development in the next chapter likewise indicates, she is also capable of similar detachment from the other members of the family (she herself is not Fairchild by birth). There she is reflecting on Robbie's recent statement that George had begged her to marry him:

> The family of course had always acknowledged by an exaggerated and charming mood of capitulation toward George that George was mightily importunate--yet they had to reproach him, something made them or let them, and they would reproach him surely that they had never been granted the sight of him begging a thing on earth. Quite the contrary! Surely he took for granted! So he begged love--George? Love that he had more of than the rest of them put together? He begged love from Robbie! They would disbelieve (DW, 162).

Such detachment in Ellen, however, must be seen as balanced by an "education" in complexity that she has received from the Fairchilds--an education that seems to have centered around George:

> Not her young life with her serene mother, with Battle, but her middle life--knowing all Fairchilds better and seeing George single himself from them--had shown her how deep were the complexities of the everyday, of the family, what caves were in the mountains, what blocked chambers, and what crystal rivers that had not yet seen light (DW, 157).

Somewhat later in Chapter V, as Ellen faints in the aftermath of her confrontation and debate with Robbie, Ellen's "imploring look" at George reflects to the narrator a curious context for her oblique inward rapport

with George: ". . . she seemed to commit herself even further to him and even more deeply by wishing worse predicaments, darker passion, upon all their lives. . . ." Yet one must note that the reflection here is in the mind of the narrator; the passage is conjectural narration, based on Ellen's "imploring look," so that one must finally judge the reflection as evidence of the narrator's "refusal" to assume "moral omniscience." Since the reflection represents no cognizant insight, one can only conjecture as to the substance behind it.

Much of Ellen's perspective during the remainder of the novel is occupied with considerations of George and the meaning of his behavior. Her perspective is essential to rounding his character and making it a chief center of interest in the book. In her study Miss Vande Kieft writes this descriptive account of the development and function of Ellen's character subsequent to her fainting:

> Ellen's further reflections on the meaning of what has transpired form a major part of the concluding sections of the novel. In odd moments she thinks about George's "resembled indifference"--his apparent lack of intense concern over such major events as Dabney's marriage or Robbie's anguish; "but little Ranny, a flower, a horse running, a color, a terrible story listened to in the store in Fairchilds, or a common song, and yes, shock, physical danger, as Robbie had discovered, roused something in him that was immense contemplation, motionless pity, indifference." There is a "wild detachment" in him which she finds akin to her own feeling--"perhaps she had fainted in the way he was driven to detachment."[6]

One important scene in this later development of Ellen's perspective is that of her dancing with George after Dabney's wedding ceremony, and another Welty critic, Alfred Appel, finds the essence of Ellen's education in her thoughts during that scene:

> Ellen Fairchild's new perspective is informed by her sense of George's detachment. At the wedding dance she realizes that

> "their legend was happiness. 'The Fairchilds are the happiest people!' They themselves repeated it to each other." But George risks more than their "legend" allows. As she dances with him, Ellen intuitively knows that her solicitude for him had been gratuitous because George is "ready for anything all the time." He alone, of all the Fairchilds, confronts experience unflinchingly, "stretching the opposite ways the self stretches" (222). George is the one person "who relieved the heart's overflow" for her; he epitomizes the need for both love and separateness . . . .[7]

In another important passage of Ellen's later development she again makes use of her critical detachment from the collective family perspective, defining that perspective to herself; then she goes on to reflect on George's own detachment and inviolability--a reflection that might seem to be the ultimate word possible on George in this novel: referring back to the trestle incident, she first thinks,

> No, the family would forever see the stopping of the Yellow Dog entirely after the fact--as a preposterous diversion of their walk, resulting in lovers' complications, for with the fatal chance removed the serious went with it forever, and only the romantic and absurd abided. They would have nothing of the heroic, or the tragic now, thought Ellen, as though now she yielded up a heart's treasure.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Georgie had not borne it well that she called him heroic, as she did one day for something; but this, she saw now, was not for the reason that the heroism was not true, but that it too was after the fact--a quality of his heart's intensity and his mind's, too intimate for her to have looked into. That wild detachment was more intimate than desire. . . . Would Robbie's unseeing, fighting anger suit him better, then, than too close a divination? Well, that depended not on how Robbie loved him but on how he loved Robbie, and on other things that she, being mostly mother, and being now tired, did not know (DW, 188-89).

During the concluding scene of the novel in Chapter VII, all of the Fairchilds and their remaining guests seem to join in perfect harmony on a final outing before George and Robbie return to Memphis, and Ellen's thoughts upon this occasion about her own womanhood--she is pregnant with

child as well as wonder--seem to make a point of culmination for the pastoral motif that both Alfred Appel and Chester Eisinger observe in the novel:

> The repeating fields, the repeating cycles of season and her own life--there was something in the monotony itself that was beautiful, rewarding--perhaps to what was womanly within in her. No she had never had time--much time at all, to contemplate . . . but she knew (DW, 240).

Despite the note of epiphany and harmony here, however, Alfred Appel finds that "There are ominous undertones in this final scene . . . ."[8] His evidence is substantial and backed by an overview that suggests a comprehensive "moral":

> Confusion, violence, and death are overlooked, if not denied by them. Within the family shell the past is kept alive. The portraits of Fairchild ancestors are hung everywhere through Shellmound, their books and diaries are about; under the aegis of the elderly Fairchild aunts, the family continually rehearses the past in an effort to order the present.[9]

Mr. Appel's chief design seems to be to disprove certain negative criticism of the novel that Miss Welty's vision of the Fairchilds is not morally critical, and in so seeking he reaches finally a general observation of the overall scheme of vision in the novel, one built around multiple character perspectives but carefully, centrally dominated by an external, narrative, comprehensive perspective:

> . . . in presenting the Fairchilds' story, Miss Welty does exercise moral discrimination. The pastoral vision is <u>their</u> view of themselves, and Miss Welty submits it to her subtle irony. The novel's pervading irony lies in the way several individual Fairchilds belie that vision, examine it, and find it wanting.[10]

Not only Fairchilds themselves but also non-Fairchilds like Laura and Robbie contribute ironic insight to the book's comprehensive examination of the family as an invisible world. Yet however much these characters

conduce to irony and moral criticism in the comprehensive perspective, that perspective must also recognize such positive moral values as Dabney's range of hope and Ellen's scope of awareness.

iii

Even were Delta Wedding excluded from her canon, the objective mode of central intelligence narration would remain Miss Welty's most extensively used method of developing character perspectives. Her most recently published novel, The Optimist's Daughter, is largely developed by some of Miss Welty's most brilliant objective central intelligence narration outside Delta Wedding, and to its examination this study now turns as its next logical step. As observed earlier, The Optimist's Daughter can be grouped with both Delta Wedding and Losing Battles as another "family" novel reflecting the two earlier one's similar formats: in this late novel (published in its present book-form in 1972 but appearing earlier in a shorter form in The New Yorker), the funeral serves the same function of acting as a unifying occasion that the wedding and the family reunion both serve in the earlier works, and like them also The Optimist's Daughter concentrates upon an individual family's moral heritage and prospects as they are revealed in its members temporarily drawn together in one place for their occasion. Yet The Optimist's Daughter is perhaps even better understood as forming part of still another pattern in Miss Welty's fiction--one including Delta Wedding again and also the short story "Kin," from The Bride of the Innisfallen, studied in Chapter II of this work in connection with internal narration. This other pattern appears based on the development of a particular character, though her

name changes and her minor circumstances alter from story to story, over a period of about thirty-five years of her life. The character that first appears as nine-year-old Laura McRaven in Delta Wedding in 1946 appears again on the verge of adulthood in 1952 as Dicey Hastings in "Kin," and then once more she appears twenty years later, in her middle forties, as Laurel McKelva Hand in The Optimist's Daughter. Although one can discern the same marked degree of sensibility and the same unusually sympathetic development in the characterization of all three versions of the character, Dicey's identification with Laura is not readily apparent unless one has read The Optimist's Daughter, so that while the pattern has actually been developing itself in Miss Welty's fiction for over twenty years, it has emerged into light only with the publication of The Optimist's Daughter.

Laurel Hand, like Dicey Hastings, is a native Southerner who has gone to live in the North shortly after completion of childhood and has only her childhood's memories with which to identify herself as a part of the South. Both Dicey and Laurel appear during visits back to their homes in Mississippi, and both experience a rediscovery of their roots and heritage, both cultural and personal, as they affect identity and selfhood. Moreover, both characters' journeys of rediscovery take them ultimately back to the old family home, in which they learn of the meaning of the South, as well as the significance of the past and its involvement with both place and self. Each leaves Mississippi to return North after only a short stay with a much deepened, radically adjusted perspective toward the South as heritage, as a component and determinant of continual, unbroken selfhood. Laura McRaven likewise learns of family

history and the implications of kinship in the family home of Shellmound; her name--Laura McRaven--is undeniably suggestive of Laurel McKelva, and both Laura and Laurel have mothers that are dead, while Dicey seems to have neither parent alive. Miss Welty creates in these representatives of character an unusually impressive psychology. It is so close to the narrator's sensibility in Laura's and Laurel's cases that it seems to reflect their books' moral norms, while Dicey is herself the narrator in her story. It is also close to the narrator's perspective in Laurel's novel, although it is understandably not so close in Laura's, her age alone accounting for the distance. Yet Laura's achieved potential promises the later development that one can see in both Dicey and Laurel, and both of these characters seem to be at little if any distance from their respective books' comprehensive perspectives. As an internal narrator, moreover, Dicey is also her story's center of consciousness. These characters' perspectives suggest clearly a pattern of development, and one might judge it to represent an autobiographical projection of the author's ideal self, or her ideal memory of self-development. This ideal self-image, first only correlating with the narrator's feeling in Delta Wedding, later functions as the internal narrator in "Kin" and finally almost mirrors the narrator's comprehensive perspective in The Optimist's Daughter. One might further judge that if these characters represent a composite figure, that figure is to be identified by an explicit myth of departure, loss, return and re-discovery. Finally, one might deem it possible that such a myth, identified with three central characters, could represent an artistic projection of the author's concept of her own spiritually autobiographical journey from childhood to middle-aged

adulthood. Because the pattern is obvious and does concern two central intelligence characters as well as a first-person, internal narrator, it is of some importance to recognize it in a study of Miss Welty's narrative technique.

Thus The Optimist's Daughter, as well as extending the "family" theme and format to include one additional novel, also provides a basis for provocative theorizing about spiritual autobiography and personal myth in a portion of Miss Welty's fiction. Like Delta Wedding and such stories as "Why I Live at the P.O." and "A Still Moment," The Optimist's Daughter is, thematically, a virtual study in perspective and point of view, and like "Kin" this late novel achieves structure in and through the dramatic development and modification of a single, central character perspective. Both it and the short story "Kin" are studies in the recovery of a certain kind of awareness--that of the self in terms of its roots in history and locale. Both also study the adjustment of perspective and change of character that this kind of recovery brings about. Moreover, if "Kin" treats of cultural and social changes in the South in compact, often symbolic or implicit terms (as a short story often must if it treats at all of society at large), the novel The Optimist's Daughter also develops these forms of change in the South, and does so on a large, explicit scale because, being a novel, it can afford the measure of extension and literal development of theme that a short story cannot very often accommodate. Furthermore, The Optimist's Daughter joins its theme of social and cultural change with some traditionally drawn comedy of manners and satire on the frequent incongruity between form and conduct in society.

The Optimist's Daughter has nothing like the shifting and multiplicity of perspective to be found in Delta Wedding; there is only one central intelligence character in the later novel. Nor does that novel possess the degree of reliance upon dialogue and conjectural perspectives to be found in Losing Battles, either. The Optimist's Daughter is largely consistent in the use of objective central intelligence narration, although there is some commentary by the narrator, as well as occasional subjective central intelligence narration and by no means a scant amount of dialogue.

The method of objective central intelligence narration in The Optomist's Daughter should be quite familiar to one that has read Delta Wedding: the narrator's voice never disappears although his perspective is mostly limited to the range of the central intelligence character's. Without presuming to interpret Laurel's mind with omniscient moral absolutism, the narrator yet projects a comprehensive perspective sympathetic toward her point of view and reflecting the basic moral norm in the book. He achieves his comprehensive perspective by viewing Laurel objectively enough to keep her thoughts focused within his own external perspective and impose his own narrative and expository schemes upon the world around her. Yet he is not so completely objective in perspective that his schemes of ordering outward and psychic action prevent its reflecting Laurel's sentiments and modes of vision most of the time. This carefully measured degree of objectivity characterizes the central intelligence narration in Delta Wedding also, so that the "mirror-like" rhetoric that is yet articulation that occurs in that novel occurs also in The Optimist's Daughter.

The central intelligence character of this novel, Laurel McKelva Hand, is a fabrics designer living in Chicago but coming originally from Mount Salus, Mississippi. During a visit back to Mississippi to accompany her father on a trip to an eye specialist in New Orleans, the father, Judge McKelva, is hospitalized for a complicated operation. The operation proves unsuccessful, however, and the father, his optimism as well as his ability to communicate failing him during his last hours, dies rather unexpectedly. The defective vision that had caused the trip to New Orleans had at first been thought of as only minor eye trouble, but it necessitates the problematic operation that leads to the Judge's death. The physically defective vision that thus causes the Judge's physical death is actually symbolic of his morally defective vision, which has caused him to marry Fay, his second wife, after ten years of being a widower. He has been remarried for only a year and a half, but that period has proved sufficient time for the "blind" marriage of the well-bred judge to the vulgar, lower-class Fay of Texas small-town extraction to have brought about the Judge's spiritual death. Furthermore, the Judge's spiritual death represents the spiritually decrepit state of Mississippi, Southern and all modern culture as the traditional modes of class distinction begin to crumble in the "new South" and post-war world under the oppressive weight of those like Fay who are vulgar enough to exploit weaknesses in the old, genteel stock.

After her father's death in New Orleans, Laurel returns to Mount Salus for the duration of her father's arrangements and funeral. Although Fay and Laurel entirely fail to become friends, Laurel must cooperate as best she can with a difficult person at an equally difficult time.

Although in New Orleans Fay had said that she was without family relations in the world, a whole host of her family, the Chisoms, arrives in Mount Salus for the funeral, coming all the way from Madrid (accent on the first syllable), Texas. Laurel is quite shocked at Fay's earlier lie, but it is just one of a number of vulgarities that Fay commits which illustrate not only her low level of integrity in general but also her lack of feeling for "family" in particular (a deadly, cardinal sin in Miss Welty's world of fiction).

Laurel's perspective develops within the context of her father's death and funeral, growing in both critical awareness of that which Fay stands for and sympathetic understanding of her family past as she imaginatively recovers it while under the influence of her childhood home. Fay exhibits mean and nasty behavior in New Orleans, but when her group of relatives from Texas arrives, the funeral becomes a context for satire, opposing the Texas characters to the Mississippi characters. Fay's lie that she has no family sets the shallow, loose tone of the Chisoms' feelings for one another, which comes to contrast, on the surface, with the sincere solidarity of Laurel's "bridesmaids"--her original group of bridesmaids, still together in Mount Salus and still loyal to Laurel. Yet despite the sincerity of the bridesmaids' loyalty, much of their understanding of solidarity is speciously sentimental, so that Miss Welty's satire is not all one-sided. The Mississippi characters, bridesmaids and other Mount Salus friends of Judge McKelva alike, commit their own forms of faux pas that politely parallel the cruder blunders of the Chisoms, and vulgarity, Miss Welty seems to suggest, is vulgarity at any level of refinement.

Dicey Hastings' insight and new perspective in "Kin" comes less painfully to her than Laurel's comes to her, and as Laurel's inherent sensibility responds, often shockingly but never overtly so except in private, to what is happening, her perspective becomes a medium for not only her character-growth but also much of the novel's social satire. Miss Welty manages occasionally to combine such satire with reflections by Laurel that provide exposition of the background and action as she views them from her perspective. One such passage of satirical-expository central intelligence occurs during the reception at the McKelva home. Wendell, Mrs. Chisom's small grandson, begins to cry, and the narrator observes that

> Laurel wanted at that moment to reach out for him . . . guard him. He was like a young, undriven, unfalsifying, unvindictive Fay. So Fay might have appeared, just at the beginning, to her aging father, with his slipping eyesight (**OD**, 76).

Although the narrator carefully articulates the terms of characterization for Fay and the exposition is finally conjecture, the thoughts are Laurel's and the satire on Fay's immaturity is critically valid. This passage also illustrates perfectly the valid use of objective central intelligence narration: it is not essential that one know whether Laurel's theory of her father's attraction to Fay is true or not, but it is essential, to the development of Laurel's character and perspective, that one know infallibly what her theory is. Laurel's insight into the Chisom family forms valid criticism for satire because, for her, the essential difference, the only one of importance, between the Chisoms and her father lies not in wealth or status but in responsiveness to meaning in experience. This quality of responsiveness is what Laurel learns to

value most in the products of her breeding, and her set of values lies close to the book's moral norm when she observes to herself that the Chisoms are part of "the great, interrelated family of those who never know the meaning of what has happened to them."

Laurel's perspective provides not only explicit social satire but also implicit cultural criticism. During the funeral, which takes place in the new part of the cemetery that is shaken daily by traffic on the new interstate highway, she is conscious only of the flashing windshields and sounds of cars, not even hearing the words of the service. Along these monotonous interstate routes, a region tends to lose its distinctive cultural image; bypassing city and town alike with their drab modern sameness of structure and format, these highways soon cancel one's responsiveness to local culture, as only nature remains to give its inhuman identity to a particular place. It is as though for Miss Welty, writing of the Judge's funeral from Laurel's perspective, these new highways point out the direction of the future, for the loss of cultural identity and obliteration of the sense of place as people are what she seems most to suspect in the forms of social change that she treats of in The Optimist's Daughter. The burial of Judge McKelva beside the interstate highway is thus symbolic, and Laurel discovers after the funeral that all along she has been ignoring something important to her life: that as family heritage is lost from memory, family identity crumbles and splinters. It is the same lesson in the involvement of the past with the present that Dicey learns in "Kin"--that identity is a continual process, given in heritage and rooted in place. Miss Welty extends her meaning in The Optimist's Daughter, just as she seeks to do in "Kin," to suggest

that if family identity first is lost through individual loss of heritage, then next of consequence is the loss of cultural identity throughout the community, the society and the world. The Chisoms stand for the negation of all meaningful identity, just as Fay negates hers in lying about her family. This negation Laurel senses and the narrator articulates in the novel. Yet for all his concentration upon Laurel's perspective, he occasionally makes his broader than hers, as during the reception, for example, when he makes notations and observations that she, in her concentration upon her father, is not said to make.

During the next few days after the funeral, before leaving Mount Salus, Laurel discovers old familiar things in the McKelva home that activate her memory and inspire imaginative recollection. Laurel is alone in the home, for Fay has decided to go back to Texas for a week with her own family. Although some subjective central intelligence narration occurs, most of this psychological material in the latter part of the novel is objective in development and contains no radical departures in technique from objective methods studied already in this chapter. Immersing herself in the relics and mementos of her childhood and her mother, Becky, Laurel re-experiences her childhood visits to Becky's original home in Virginia and recalls lore from out of Becky's own past. Becky's life had been remarkable; she had been a strong woman, a good mother to Laurel, but she and the Judge had nonetheless experienced both pain and happiness as husband and wife, and she had died an unusually horrible death, in the throes of psychic disorder and mental anguish. Laurel recalls one incident near her mother's death, when she had asked her husband to allow her to see her Virginia home once more, before dying. The Judge had

promised to take her back there himself, but, "'Lucifer!' she cired. 'Liar'":

> That was when he started, of course, being what he scowlingly called an optimist; he might have dredged the word up out of his childhood. He loved his wife. Whatever she did that she couldn't help doing was all right. Whatever she was driven to say was all right. But it was not all right! Her trouble was that very desperation. And no one had the power to cause that except the one she desperately loved, who refused to consider that she was desperate. It was betrayal on betrayal.
>
> In her need tonight Laurel would have been willing to wish her mother and father dragged back to any torment of living because that torment was something they had known together, through each other. She wanted them with her to share her grief as she had been the sharer of theirs. She sat and thought of only one thing, of her mother holding and holding onto their hands, her own and her father's holding onto her mother's, long after there was nothing more to be said (OD, 150).

Laurel remembers her mother's death in this way:

> After a stroke had crippled her further, she had come to believe--without being able to see her room, see a face, to verify anything by seeing--that she had been taken somewhere that was neither home nor "up home," that she was left among strangers, for whom even anger meant nothing, on whom it would only be wasted. She had died without speaking a word, keeping everything to herself, in exile and humiliation (OD, 151).

So might her memory have become to the Judge, in Fay's hands; the passage continues:

> To Laurel while she still knew her, she had made a last remark: "You could have saved your mother's life. But you stood by and wouldn't intervene. I despair for you" (OD, 151).

Nor had Laura intervened when her father came to marry Fay; before the end of the novel, Laurel is able to recognize in Fay and the Chisoms exactly those insensitive strangers that had appeared to her dying mother:

> For Fay was Becky's own dread. What Becky had felt, and had been afraid of, might have existed right here in the house all time, for her. Past and future might have changed places, in some convulsion of the mind, but that could do nothing to impugn the truth of the heart. Fay could have walked in early as well

> as late, she could have come at any time at all. She was coming (OD, 174).

Laurel's perspective is thus fully developed when, after a week's absence, Fay returns from Texas to assume legal possession of the McKelva home. But on the day of Fay's return Laurel has discovered her mother's treasured breadboard, neglected and defaced, another victim of Fay's obtuse carelessness. The object represents a fine piece of craftsmanship, but it also represents far more to Laurel, for it was wrought by her deceased husband, Phil. That fact, she seeks to explain to Fay, is the reason the object is beautiful, but Fay cannot understand why Laurel should be upset, nor can Fay's utilitarian mind begin to comprehend the value that Laurel is trying to communicate. The scene is excellent drama in contrasting points of view and the breakdown of communication: "'You desecrated this house,'" Laurel charges, adding, in her thoughts, "You <u>are</u> the weather . . ." when Fay does not understand and asks a foolish question, "And the weather to come: there'll be many a more like you, in this life." Yet Laurel finally tells Fay to take the breadboard; it is not finally important to Laurel that she possess it now, for, "Memory lived not in initial possession but in the freed hands, pardoned and freed, and in the heart that can empty but fill again, in the patterns restored by dreams." In this scene and other passages like these, the narrator gives voice to Laurel's redeemed perspective, as it gives firmness to the book's moral vision.

iv

The foregoing studies of <u>Delta Wedding</u> and <u>The Optimist's Daughter</u> characterize Miss Welty's finest sustained achievements in developing the

central intelligence perspective objectively. Her earliest accomplishments in this method of narration occur in her first volume of stories, and only selected works from that and later collections need be discussed in this chapter to illustrate Miss Welty's objective treatment of central intelligence characters in short fiction before and after Delta Wedding. There are dominant central intelligence characters in four stories from A Curtain of Green, although one of these, "Death of a Traveling Salesman," is discussed in the next chapter as conspicuous for its subjective development of perspective, while of the other three ("Flowers for Marjorie," "A Visit of Charity" and "The Hitch-Hikers"), only "The Hitch-Hikers" need sustain concentration in this chapter.

Concerning "The Hitch-Hikers," Alfred Appel has conveniently described the basic terms of its action, while Miss Vande Kieft has likewise provided those of its central characterization:

> Tom Harris, a thirty-year-old traveling salesman of office supplies, gives a ride to two hitchhiking tramps. One learns at the end of the story that the hitchhikers have been on the road together for two weeks. One of them carries a guitar, which he sometimes strums; the other, whose name is Sobby, is sullen and only speaks once. The three pause briefly at a roadside joint for hamburgers and beer. This is the extent of their fleeting relationship. Harris then drives on and stops the car at his usual local hotel; while he is inside, a boy enters and announces that the hitchhikers have tried to steal the car and that Sobby has attacked and almost killed the man with the guitar. That night, Harris goes to an especially dreary party. He returns to his cheap hotel room and recognizes his isolation. Later that night he has a pathetic encounter with a girl from the party, after which he learns that the man has died. In the morning he leaves town. He gives the dead man's guitar to a little Negro boy.[11]

> In "The Hitch-Hikers" and "Death of a Traveling Salesman," two salesmen have a flash of insight into their own identity, which is pathetically and paradoxically that they have no identity because they have no place and no focus of love to define them. . . .
>
> Tom Harris is a wise, tolerant, generous sort; people naturally confide in him and women are attracted to him, but he will not be

> held back by anyone. He is beyond surprise or shock because of his wide experience. With a peculiarly detached kind of suspense he views the events surrounding a murder committed in his car by one of the hitch-hikers, and this is because any strong emotion or violence in his life has always been something encountered, personally removed. There had been "other fights, not quite so pointless, but fights in his car; fights, unheralded confessions, sudden love-making--none of any of this his, not his to keep, but belonging to the people of these towns as he passed through, coming out of their rooted pasts and their mock rambles, coming out of their time. He himself had no time. He was free; helpless." Without an ounce of exhilaration in the knowledge of his freedom, and embracing with apparent resignation his knowledge of helplessness, he is found in the last scene poised for yet another flight, a puzzling, touching American phenomenon, exceptional only in the degree of his self-awareness.[12]

Mr. Appel in his study further observes the story's unity in that "Harris' isolation is formulated in the actions, characters, and details of each scene; the senselessness of the sudden murder; the roadside joint; the party scene; and the run-down, two-story Dulcie Hotel."[13] Mr. Appel concentrates also upon the conspicuous absence of localizing details of "place," suggesting that the anonymously portrayed setting for the story is intended as a metaphor for the central character's rootlessness and lack of identity, which in Miss Welty's fiction is always connected with place. This, however, is to suggest only that the setting is a metaphor for Harris' spiritual condition, and not to imply that Harris' dramatized vision affords the impressions of the fictional illusion. Again, Mr. Appel cites the organic relationship between narrative technique and the idea of Harris' isolation by demonstrating that both lack of formal transition and deliberate vagueness of facts create a nightmarish quality of discontinuity and ambiguity throughout the account of the party scene. The disoriented effect of the narration during that scene again suggests Harris' drifting, fragmented, incoherent experience. Yet though one grant that lack of transition and vagueness of fact are

functions of narration, one must also recognize that they are ultimately aspects of structure and content rather than of focus and rhetoric, so that the nightmarish quality of vision is achieved during the party scene without shifting of narration to the subjective mode of central intelligence. Mr. Appel indicates that he recognizes this basic fact of the story's objective focus upon Harris, and also that he perceives the difference in focus between this story and "Death of a Traveling Salesman," when he writes that

> There's obviously more "plot" and "action" in "The Hitch-Hikers" than in "Death of a Traveling Salesman." Although the story is also told from the salesman's point of view, the unfolding is not as subjective as in "Death of a Traveling Salesman." The telling seems to be straightforward. But like all of Miss Welty's stories, it has its special perspective: the attempt to portray Harris' growing sense of isolation and his acceptance of it as conclusive and perhaps touching, yet essentially nondramatic --for the truth does not loom up before Harris, as it does for Bowman, whose whole life appears to him in that one instant of vision. Harris' self-knowledge is not so devastating; his life goes on, empty as it is. He is still young.[14]

One other thing that Mr. Appel here shows that he perceives is the working of a comprehensive perspective in the story--what he calls a "special perspective" and defines as being "essentially nondramatic." This nondramatic comprehensive perspective is, however, as ironic as it might be assuasive in vision, and it is developed not exactly in spite of the seemingly "straightforward" narration but rather to some degree because of it. Miss Welty uses objective rather than subjective central intelligence narration in "The Hitch-Hikers" because the reader is to see Harris as a lonely, drifting outpost of mankind, detached in his spiritual isolation. If his detachment is to conduce to certain thematic ironies in the story, then the reader must not be given the fluidity and unique kind

of drama of subjective treatment that reduces distance between the narrator and the central intelligence character and conduces to the reader's identification with that character.

There are two central ironies that grow out of Harris' inward detachment from time and place--history and society--but they require also a certain detachment from Harris' perspective in the reader's, a detachment afforded the reader by the comprehensive perspective. Both of these central ironies concern ways that Harris might be said to have been responsible, as a "social factor," for the eventual death of Sanford, the hitchhiker with the yellow guitar. First, in a socially negative way, Harris is indirectly responsible because the murder weapon is an empty beer bottle that Sobby, the apparently impulsive murderer, had earlier in the story wanted to return to the carhop at the beer joint; Harris had already put his car back in motion, however, when Sobby had silently indicated his wish to Sanford, who had spoken up to Harris, and Harris had refused to turn the car around, being unwilling to let himself be given directions by tramps. Had Harris, himself a spiritual tramp, been socially unconscious at that point, Sobby might never have attacked Sanford, because he would not have had the bottle. Yet the other way Harris can be said possibly to have contributed to Sanford's murder disqualifies any attempts, on the basis of the first way, either to reduce Miss Welty's vision in the story to something like environmental, deterministic naturalism or to simplify Harris' character in terms of spiritual (as opposed to social) isolation: when Harris can again be questioned as contributing to Sanford's murder, the salesman is in the Dulcie Hotel seeking overnight accommodations for the two homeless hitchhikers, while

they wait outside. According to both Sobby and the boy Cato, who reports the violence to Harris inside the hotel, the car figures in the motive for the attack, so that one might conjecture that if Harris had not told the men to wait while he sought places for them to sleep, then again the murder would not have occurred. Yet Cato's report does not make the motive clear; one can only conjecture as to Cato's basis for inferring an attempted car-theft, just as one can only wonder about Sobby's later declaration that it was Sanford that had wanted to steal the car. In any case, when Sobby does give an account of his motive at the end of the story, he seems to attribute it to his inherent dislike of Sanford for the man's bragging, "uppity" style. This account, though, is hardly any more reliable than Cato's.

Whatever the motive is--whatever, one might add, could be the circumstances involved to which Harris may or may not have contributed--the fact remains that Miss Welty's narrator leaves one room to speculate about the ambiguity of Harris' nature and extent of possible "involvement." Isolation, Miss Welty again demonstrates, is not a simple thing, nor is experience, or truth itself: there is irony in Harris' not wanting to be ordered by the tramps; then there is a possible double irony in his allowing an opportunity for murder to develop behind his back while he only seeks to provide quarters for the two strangers--an unselfish act, at least. And there is still further irony in the fact that the notion of violence could have occurred to Sobby as a result of both Harris' superior behavior in the car and his subsequent offer of help at the hotel. Yet finally, there is that ultimate irony that Harris himself will never know the truth, and that predicament is something that joins both Harris and

the crowd of bystanders in a fundamental human "bond of ignorance" toward the meaning of experience that surrounds them. "'The way I figure this thing out is,' said a penetrating voice, . . . 'the men was left to 'em-selves. So--that 'n' yonder wanted to make off with the car--he's the bad one. So the good one says, "Naw, that ain't right."'

"Or was it the other way around? thought Harris dreamily."

Miss Welty does seem to suggest one positive conclusion in the story, that Harris is doomed to be involved somehow in the experience of others, if only in the ambiguity of their experience, or only in the sharing of others' ignorance. Harris seems involved, though not willfully committed; his is a negative form of involvement by accident. Finally, the story seems to suggest that if one, like Harris, is not positively involved with other lives by choice, he might then become destructively involved by chance. Yet Harris himself does not ever appear to recognize these ironic implications of his experience that evening, and neither would a reader be particularly induced to recognize them were he restricted to Harris' subjective sense of the action.

Objective treatment of the central intelligence perspective occurs again prior to Delta Wedding in several stories from The Wide Net. The preceding chapter has examined the narrator's perspective in "A Still Moment" in connection with three character perspectives that it develops with cognizant insight. The multiple perspective technique used in "A Still Moment" resembles the narrative approach in Delta Wedding, but there are four other stories with central intelligence narration in The Wide Net that are like The Optimist's Daughter in that they each contain just one consistently developed central intelligence character. These stories are

"First Love," "Livvie," "The Winds" and "At the Landing," and the proceeding observations on central intelligence narration in "The Winds" and "At the Landing" complete for its purpose this study of Miss Welty's objective use of the technique early in her career.

"The Winds" contains a dream sequence during which the narrator approaches the subjective mode of central intelligence narration by allowing his comprehensive vision almost to disappear, permitting the center of consciousness to move close to his character's perspective. The story is remarkable for this unusual dream sequence and close approach to subjective central intelligence narration, as well as for its relatively suppressed development of a comprehensive perspective and its complex manner of representing time. Yet the dream material is filtered and ordered through the narrator's rhetoric, so that while a reader can be said to experience its dreamlike focus and imagery, he does not experience the dream's content as immediate reality in the way that the character does while actually dreaming. What the reader experiences is the narrator's articulation of the dream's content, as his perspective functions to order that content into the exposition necessary to understand the central character and her story.

The central intelligence character in "The Winds" is a young girl known as Josie. Her story concerns her experience during an equinoctial storm at the end of summer in Mississippi. Cyclical imagery governs the story's structure and thus becomes one of the means of developing an implicit comprehensive perspective, for it has symbolic relevance to the story's theme of passage from innocence to experience. Literally the story moves from night to morning, and it centers around the concept

of the equinox and seasonal change, which comes to symbolize the journey from youth to maturity. The image of the equinoctial storm further centers around the character Cornella, the "big girl" that Josie observes in the "double-house" across the street. Josie's dream likewise centers around Cornella, reflecting her focalization of Josie's childhood world as the narrator develops it in articulating Josie's dream of the preceding summer. The dream, too, is cyclical, represented not in dream-pattern but in the conscious order of morning to nightfall that the narrator imposes upon it in his search for meaningful articulation. The story thus begins in the night of the present and then shifts backward as Josie begins to dream, but the flashback is only in terms of summary and exposition, and not in terms of dramatized dream experience. Then, having covered the events of Josie's past summer that supposedly occur in her dream--conveniently they form a typical and poetic impression of her whole past pattern of childhood--the narrator brings the focus up to the evening of the present day, when Josie visits a local Chautauqua. Finally, the story moves forward to the morning following the dream during the storm, which by then has subsided.

Cornella is herself a "natural" child that Josie invests with all the mystery and lore at her disposal in familiar fairy tales and nursery rhymes: . Cornella is "natural" first in the sense that she is apparently without parents, but she is also a "child of nature" in that she incarnates its wildness and beauty for both Josie and the reader. For Josie, Cornella (whose name Josie associates with "corn") reflects a world that is seemingly alien to that of her parents' home, for they forbid Josie knowledge of Cornella, who seems to be without a real home. Yet

Josie finds Cornella's world strangely magnetic (she first hears the storm as sounds of the "big girls'" merry-making), and it is as though Cornella gives Josie some inkling of a destiny that is ultimately to link her with Cornella's world and is in time to reveal that her parents' world is really the one to which she is alien. The concept developed through Josie's relationship to Cornella is similar somewhat to that of Nathanial Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," a story in which the central character (also one passing from innocence to maturity) finds a kinship with mankind at large that is more deeply profound than his particular family kinships.

Although the reported content of Josie's dream represents childhood innocence in the world of her parents, that world is not without tension; its imperfection for Josie is that her parents are always calling her back from pursuing whatever mysterious source of imaginative fulfillment she happens to be drawn toward. Cornella, "being nearly grown and being transformed by age," is for Josie the ultimate source of such fulfillment, but its reach lies beyond Josie's grasp not only because of her parents' protectiveness but also because of Cornella's aloofness. Since Cornella is rarefied but not real for Josie except as a "forbidden playmate" and one of the "big girls," Josie's quest must be an imaginative one within a private context occupied by her "mythical" sense of Cornella. She, as a figure in Josie's childhood myth-world, represents something compelling but not given or obtainable in her parents' world.

In making her journey from childhood to maturity, Josie's task will be to leave both her myth-world and her parents' world that protects it, as her house protects her family from the storm: she must leave

worlds to come to know Cornella's world, that surrounds her family as the storm hovers about the house. Significantly Josie dreams of her past while assembled with her parents and brother downstairs; her father has gathered his family together there to keep it close by him during the storm. Yet, looking out at one point when she is awake, Josie says that she sees Cornella out in the storm. Actually, Cornella is more than "in the storm": despite more than one critic's assertion that Cornella is "lost" in the storm,[15] she is the storm--it is her wild body and mysterious soul. If she is homeless in the sense of not having a family like Josie's, she is nevertheless for Josie quite "at home"--not lost--in the world of nature; moreover, her presence in any home is just as eventually inevitable as it is in the "double-house" or in Josie's dream.

During one part of her dream, Josie reexperiences Cornella's incommunicativeness: "It seemed . . . that Cornella would have turned into a tree if she could . . . and that the center of the tree would have to be seen into before her heart was bared . . . ." Josie has watched Cornella intently; following her gaze has made Josie inexplicably sad in beholding "the emptiness of their street." But Cornella, instead of being moved to pity by the same scene, is only made angry by it, and Josie vaguely feels that in her anger Cornella is saying, "'You will never catch up.'" Yet the morning following the storm, when Josie goes outdoors, she finds on her porch a soaked, fragmentary note written in indelible pencil; it is a message left there by the storm, and Josie, after reading it, takes it to her room. "The name Cornella was on it, and it said, 'O my darling I have waited so long when are you coming for me? Never a day or a night goes by that I do not ask When? When? When?' . . . ." Cornella's

private "message" is for Josie something shared; it fulfills the search for the vision into the center of the tree and denotes mutual feelings, common predicaments. Josie possesses the scrap of paper as a token of Cornella's heart, with respect for its inviolability, hiding it away in ". . . her most secret place, the little drawstring bag that held her dancing shoes." Recognizing Cornella's heart and identifying it with her own, Josie possesses it secretly and protectively. Her reverent admission of Cornella's secret burden is at once both the fulfillment of the child Josie and the proof of the adult Josie that is to be; it is a testimony of her successful initiation of the passage from childhood myth to adult reality, for it is an act that brings both worlds into single focus, so that passage is made possible.

It is, however, the narrator's vision that has kept both worlds in single focus throughout the story: his perspective has kept an implicit balance between external and internal, and between child and adult, viewpoints. It has moreover balanced myth and reality in terms of articulation that is often poetry and of a structure that is also symbol, and Josie's act of secret possession merely confirms the underlying wisdom of the comprehensive perspective. Perhaps the objective mode of central intelligence reporting has led some critics to ignore the essentially poetic character of "The Winds" in pronouncing its theme to be the value of family security, but clearly this story, certainly one of Miss Welty's most overtly poetic, implies that Josie's family is more stifling than steadying to her and that only in the storm of passage will Cornella, the beauty and the pain of natural-spiritual suffering, be truly found. So, with glimpses and fragments, Josie has at least begun her passage promisingly.

"At the Landing," which concludes The Wide Net, is similar in some respects to "The Winds": there is the same articulating narrator and objective central intelligence narration, the same occasional approach to subjectivity in the character perspective, the same shifting of time as a structural device and the same rite of passage theme. Yet "At the Landing" concerns a heroine older and more complex than Josie and an action more complicated and ambiguous than that of "The Winds." Certain controlled ambiguities in "At the Landing" raise questions of literal interpretation that recall instances of conjectural intelligence narration and foreshadow the novel Losing Battles.

The narrator of "At the Landing" articulates the perspective of Jenny Lockhart: using her mind to project scenes, he tells the story chiefly as she perceives it, but he maintains some detachment from her throughout most of the narrative and seems to begin it with an independent focus and to shift outisde her mind again at the conclusion. Beginning on the night that Jenny's maternal grandfather dies, when he dreams of high water in the town of The Landing and comes to Jenny's door with his vision still in his head, the narrative then shifts back to a scene in the past, in a pavilion on a knoll, where Jenny and her grandfather are eating. During these opening scenes a reader learns that Jenny's mother has died much earlier in an apparent state of mental disorder and that she had been confined in her illness much as Jenny now seems confined in her grandfather's house. In what seems to be articulation of Jenny's deep consciousness, the narrator suggests the awareness of the futility of trying to "plead" for her mother: the whole situation--the death of the mother in mental disorder, the daughter's muteness--seems to suggest the

death of Laurel Hand's mother Becky in The Optimist's Daughter. There is no discussion of Jenny's father in the story at all, but the narration implies that it was her grandfather that had charge of Jenny's mother during her confinement.

Before returning to the present, the story shifts to another scene on a day that Jenny had visited her mother's grave in The Landing's cemetery. On this occasion Jenny had watched a mysterious local boy about her own age, Billy Floyd. He had fascinated Jenny and seemed to acknowledge her, though without actually speaking; as she had looked silently upon him, ". . . she felt it come to her dimly that her innocence had left her, since she could watch his." Finally she had returned to her grandfather's house that day, but on another, with the same young man again in the cemetery, she had walked along a spring there with him, the two on opposite sides of the spring, hers being the side the graves were on. That day Jenny had watched Billy Floyd ride the red Lockhart horse, having as she watched what Alfred Appel terms "anticipatory thoughts of the male and female sexual postures."[16] Still before returning to the present, the narrator surveys the strange occurrence to Jenny on the day following the preceding scene: then she had thought herself watching Billy Floyd scamper with "old" Mag Lockhart at the Lockhart place, but as Mag had suddenly disappeared as soon as Billy Floyd had gone off, Jenny seems only to have been having a hallucination. Yet the narrator acknowledges that "she had felt whatever Mag had felt," and thus acknowledges the reality of the vision for Jenny in terms of her need to project a being with whom to share its experience, having virtually none of her own. During all of these scenes with Billy Floyd in the past, Jenny had

furthered her awareness of the difficulty of love "in the world," in view of the inalienable, inviolable, forever secret identity of the individual.

When finally the narrator returns to the present, it is the morning after Jenny's grandfather's death. The scene is her going into The Landing to report the death, but the center of interest lies in her seeing Billy Floyd under an entirely new aspect, which shocks her. She finds him in the local store, where he appears all worldly, as though somehow stained--not at all as he had seemed in the woods by the cemetery. Jenny's mind affords the image of Billy Floyd here as at nearly all points in the story, but in spite of (or perhaps because of) her having sensed so much of a clue to his identity, Jenny refrains from pursuing unpleasant leads any farther and leaves the store, the young man's identity still as much as a mystery as ever--if not more so. Marking Jenny's premonition of Billy Floyd's impending departure from The Landing, the narrator then breaks this scene off and shifts forward to "a later day" (the "story present" is still "past" for the narrator--a fact that underscores his separate perspective): on this day Jenny and Billy Floyd meet by a little river that flows from the familiar spring to the Mississippi. Jenny once again finds communication impossible, although it is clear to her that Billy Floyd is about to go away, and ". . . when the moment ended, he went." After that the rains come to The Landing; then flooding. At the height of the flood Billy Floyd returns, rescues Jenny (who has been quite alone in her plight) and then sexually claims her--". . . violated her . . ." is the narrator's phrase for this act. Billy Floyd finally cooks Jenny food--still there is no recorded dialogue

between them--and it is as though the rescue, the "violation" and the cooking were all in a good day's work, or in the course of nature. During all of this passage Jenny's mind continues to reflect upon the mysteries of love, but after an unspecified time the water goes down, and Billy Floyd goes back down the river.

In the concluding scenes, which carry forward the present action, Jenny first returns to her grandfather's house alone and there indulges in an "ecstasy of cleaning," while at the same time she is searching futilely for a hiding place, wanting just to feel "out of sight." She at last recovers her strength, though, and seems "healed of the shock of love." During walks through The Landing at this time she hears old ladies' talk of Billy Floyd and his mysterious origin: some versions connect him with Gipsies or with local scandal, while others build around him a romantic legend of lost Atlantis. Jenny continues also to develop insight into love and identity quite apart from anything she has ever heard: conscious at last of her own "passage" and its meaning, she concludes that she must follow Billy Floyd on to "the next wisdom." So, in the month of July, she leaves The Landing to go looking for him in wild country; she draws near a fishing camp by the river, where the fishermen begin to tell her that Billy Floyd (and he alone of their whole group) has dared so soon after the rains to brave the rapid water on the river. They explain bluntly the danger of his being drowned before he can return, but nevertheless Jenny will wait for him. Upon learning the situation of Jenny's love and determination to stay, the fishermen place her inside a grounded houseboat and then, "one by one," enter it and rape her.

Miss Welty's critics have offered differing interpretations of Jenny's character and her story's conclusion. Chester E. Eisinger regards Jenny as a victim of isolation in her grandfather's house, whose sentimental and undisciplined heart leads her to hope for too much; he views her eventual fate as rightful punishment for ". . . the presumption that leads her to probe the mysteries of love and personality . . . ."[17] A key factor in Eisinger's argument is his assertion that Billy Floyd does not love Jenny, an assertion that the narrative neither confirms nor denies with certainty, but one that would seem believable in view of his treatment of her and the fact that they never share any dialogue in the story. Alfred Appel, however, deemphasizes the basis for determining Jenny's "presumption" by concentrating in his study on Billy Floyd's role as "natural force," a field and river god; on its surface, at least, Appel's reading appears less psychological and more archetypal than Eisinger's. Differing with Eisinger over the meaning of Jenny's fate, Appel regards it as fortunate, a fate leading to knowledge (and thus fulfilling the immediate quest in the "passage" theme implicit in his interpretation): he writes that, "To gain full knowledge of the world--the flowing river--one must know and endure both the good and evil possibilities of experience or, in the terms of the story's sexual symbolism, the delights of fishing and the painful assaults of knives."[18] (The "knives" that Appel refers to are phallic symbols used in sport in the background of Jenny's last scene as she is being raped.) Appel's interpretation is close to that of Ruth Vande Kieft, although Miss Vande Kieft concentrates even less than Appel does on plot and more than he on the inward development of Jenny's new insight as the chief center of thematic interest in

the story. To her, the unifying theme of the story is that, "The most two people can do is to travel together for a while,"[19] but like Appel she appreciates the deep elaboration given to "ideas" in the story by its study of Jenny's consciousness. She argues that Jenny's experience is valuable to her not because of what she does (and has done to her), as Appel might suggest in his view of symbolic action, but because of what she learns about the value of love, the limitations of sex and the mystery of identity.

There is, however, a pattern of precise ambiguity concerning Billy Floyd's parents in the story that qualifies its portrayal of successful "passage" to maturity: in spite of the value of Jenny's new insight into love and identity, and in spite of her possible symbolic "arrival" at the point of adulthood in the last scene, this pattern of ambiguity is precise enough to raise an irony of potential reversal that indicates truly the complexity of success and failure, triumph and tragedy, in human experience. In condensed form, the ambiguity is that Jenny could be pregnant by Billy Floyd and that he could be her own cousin or even half-brother, while the irony created is that she might indeed have to pay a large price for her knowledge of experience--that of a defective child. While this irony need not imply that Jenny's known fate in the last scene is "punishment" (except for being human, perhaps), neither does it very well correlate with the view of that fate as ultimately fortunate. It is, however, compatible with Miss Vande Kieft's idea that Jenny's knowledge itself constitutes a value for her regardless of what "happens" to her, externally.

The pattern of ambiguity might appear readily to one that has read Losing Battles, where the same sinister question of inbreeding is raised in connection with Jack and Gloria Renfro, and one should note that at the times Appel, Eisinger and Miss Vande Kieft were writing their studies, Losing Battles had not appeared. While the pattern is based on the mystery of Billy Floyd's identity, which is commonly observed, the not so commonly observed ambiguity is apparently developed with special care to raise specific sinister possibilities, just as the ambiguity surrounding Gloria Renfro's parentage is developed in Losing Battles. Miss Welty suggests not only that Billy Floyd is possibly an offspring of some close relative or even a parent of Jenny, but also that she might be carrying his child during the action that proceeds the flood. How, then, does Miss Welty develop this precise ambiguity, and what exactly does it imply?

During the latter part of the story, the narrator characterizes a specific observation about Billy Floyd to be attributed to a certain three old ladies: "They said he was half-wild like one family they could name, and half of the time he did not know what he was doing, like another family." For there to be any discoverable purpose to this passage in the story, it must be taken as referring to the only two families that the story develops any sort of impression of. These are Jenny's grandfather's family, including her mother, and the Lockhart family, whose rather wild-looking house is described in terms that might suggest that it is slowly returning to nature (indeed the flood pulls the house's front away!). One has only to recall that Jenny's mother apparently died in raving madness (at least this notion is Jenny's recollection) to see that some basis

exists for identifying the two families that the three old ladies refer to. Although their basis for opinion is conjectural, Miss Welty seems here to be raising a specific point for conjecture that is purposeful to the story (or else it would not occur at all). Other facts, when consulted in the light of the old ladies' opinion, make their implication even more precise: first, the only thing that the story ever asserts about Jenny's father is that he is a Lockhart. It never indicates whether he has died or just disappeared. Then secondly, when Jenny is watching Billy Floyd on a red horse and seems to think of sexual postures, the narrator points out that this red horse belongs to the Lockharts. It is true that while Billy Floyd seems to make free with whatever the Lockharts possess, they do not seem ever to have claimed him as theirs, but if one wishes he can recall that Jamie Lockhart, in The Robber Bridegroom, also rides a red horse, a stallion called Orion. Both The Robber Bridegroom and "At the Landing," moreover, are stories that center around the Natchez Trace, so that one might assume that these are all the same Lockharts. Furthermore, Billy Floyd's larger-than-life, romantic image is similar to that of Jamie Lockhart, not to mention the fact that Jamie "violates" Rosamond without wasting breath for words, much as Billy Floyd "violates" Jenny. Finally, Jamie's dual nature seems reflected in Billy Floyd's character when Jenny finds him "changed" and worldly-looking in local store. Parallels between "At the Landing" and The Robber Bridegroom have only slight, conjectural value, to be sure, but material in the short story certainly encourages speculation about them, and if Billy Floyd is to be regarded as a modern descendant of Jamie Lockhart, then he is very likely a close relative (or possibly even a son) of Jenny's father. The

other possibility that the three old ladies raise--that Billy Floyd might belong to Jenny's mother's side of the family--does not have quite so much additional suggestion in the narrative, yet it does state that Jenny's mother had been "torn" by "a desire to get to Natchez," and if Billy Floyd is a "natural force," then he and she might stand for the same Dionysian energy. It is thus at least within the scope of the three old ladies' suggestion that Billy Floyd's parentage lies in both Jenny's father's and her mother's sides of the family.

Miss Welty gives her ambiguity a further twist when, having returned to her grandfather's house after the flood, Jenny immediately begins the "ecstasy of cleaning." While one might be expected to clean house after a flood, the narrator makes it clear that Jenny is ". . . driven on" despite the fact that ". . . the shock of love had brought a trembling to her fingers . . . ." Besides the possibility that any physical weakening of Jenny after the kind of "shock" she has had could be an early sign of pregnancy, there is also the suggestion here that Jenny's "ecstasy" might be a manifestation of the "nesting instinct," sometimes observable in pregnant women that indulge in extreme housecleaning and arranging. Furthermore, the narrator never precisely explains why Jenny wants at this time to feel out of sight, and when Jenny's strength does return to her, that occasion might mark the end of the common period of early sickness ("morning sickness") in pregnancy. It is thus conceivable that by July, when Jenny sets out in search of Billy Floyd, she suspects herself that she is pregnant, although the narrator gives no such indication, and the whole idea of pregnancy remains implicit and uncertain for the reader.

Yet Miss Welty has gone further than leaving open the mere possibilities that Jenny could be related to Billy Floyd and that she could be pregnant; the author has taken special care, it would certainly seem, to suggest that these possibilities might be true. In doing so Miss Welty has suggested a concrete correlative for Jenny's spiritual frustration over the mystery of Billy Floyd's inward identity, her purpose appearing to be to insist upon the sinister and "real" as well as the attractive and "ideal" aspects of the mystery of selfhood. Her purpose in using objective rather than subjective central intelligence narration in "At the Landing" is now also perhaps clear: it would seem to be the same purpose for which she uses it in "The Hitch-Hikers." A reader must maintain enough detachment from Jenny's perspective to be able to see more than just the personal implications in the ambiguous possibilities; he must not finally identify with Jenny, for he must be dissociated from her predicament to see the thematic ironies of life's complexity.

V

Miss Welty's only considerable achievement in objective central intelligence narration between Delta Wedding and The Optimist's Daughter occurs in one book, The Golden Apples, and since the chapters of this novel are designed as short stories, it is possible to discuss them in different parts of this study, out of their printed sequence, in order to preserve this work's organization. The two chapters of The Golden Apples that contain internal narration are therefore discussed in Chapter III of this work, while of the remaining five that contain external narration, the three that develop central intelligence perspectives objectively are

discussed in this chapter and the remaining two that develpp them subjectively are discussed in the next chapter.

The basic framework for the action in The Golden Apples consists of developments in the lives of two families of Morgana, Mississippi--the MacLain family and the Rainey family. The preceding discussion of "Shower of Gold," the first chapter in the novel, introduces and explains the motif of King MacLain the absentee husband and local "hero-villain," and its subsequent discussion continues in the succeeding section on "The Whole World Knows," examining a further portion of the novel that concerns King's immediate family. "Moon Lake," Chapter 4 of the novel, is the earliest chapter in its sequence to adhere basically to objective central intelligence narration; it follows the two chapters that contain subjective central intelligence narration ("June Recital" and "Sir Rabbit," respectively). "June Recital" introduces the character Loch Morrison at a relatively early age and gives him a central intelligence perspective; he appears again in "Moon Lake" as a somewhat older boy and performs a crucial role in that chapter, although he does not again have a secondary perspective of any significance. "Moon Lake" concerns an episode during a church camp for girls at a local resort near Morgana, and as part of the novel it represents an interlude outside the principal framework of action. Allusions in the mind of Nina Carmichael, however, invoke the novel's quest motif, which relates it throughout to William Butler Yeats' poem about the "golden apples" of fulfillment ("The Song of the Wandering Aengus"), so that Miss Welty succeeds in integrating this chapter thematically with the other portions of the novel.

The purpose of "Moon Lake" is to form a negative comment upon respectable, Christian Morgana society that has counterparts in all major episodes of the novel. This comment is made in "Moon Lake" through ironic satire upon the ineptness and incompetence of Morgana (and, by extension, Protestant American) society in adapting its youth to the problem of facing and coping with reality. The fault is recognized through the comprehensive perspective as one that stifles the process of maturity and cultivates illusion and withdrawal from experience. Loch Morrison is a boy scout serving as camp lifeguard and living alone on the edge of the encampment; there is a group of local orphans sharing the camp with girls whose parents constitute Morgana society, and it is when Easter, the detached "leader" of the orphan group, is rescued from the bottom of Moon Lake and finally resuscitated by Loch Morrison that orphans and Morgana girls alike demonstrate their inadequate preparation for "reality." Loch stands for reality insofar as he represents the male principle in the story setting, and his role as male is underscored by the sexual suggestions in his up-and-down motions while he is astride Easter, giving her artificial respiration. The lake itself is also a symbol of reality, dangerous for the nonswimmer, and Loch's name connects him with it: thus reality in "Moon Lake" both takes life and restores it.

Nina Carmichael is the central intelligence character in "Moon Lake," representing a counterbalance of sanity (only somewhat disturbed by her romanticism) between the extremes of detached density in Easter and egotistical self-projection in Jinny Love Stark. Jinny Love is another Morgana girl, like Nina, who completes the triad of girl characters that the story concentrates on. As Loch works to revive Easter, who falls from

stupid aloofness into inevitable reality (by plunging accidentally into the lake), Jinny Love acts out a pretended role of personal importance by waving a towel to keep mosquitoes away. Ironically the towel is white, suggesting the frustration of surrender even as Loch refuses to give up his efforts. During the same long interval Nina both faints at one point and has some limited insight into the nature of what is happening. Some minor breakthrough occurs in Nina's consciousness as she affords a modest measure of thematic exposition, but her insight remains limited, and more of the story in this as well as other passages is felt at first to be from her point of view than close examination can verify as such. She stands at the center of the narrator's focus, but she is not the story's center of consciousness because she lacks the vision and depth of understanding to rise to that function.

Of the two adult counselors at the camp, the older one, Mrs. Gruenwald, is too self-preoccupied to give the girls any supervision, floating off to herself when she is in the water, while Miss Moody, the younger one, is too hopelessly romantic to give them any solid guidance. They are thus unprotected both physically and morally, and their moral vulnerability is exposed through Nina and Jinny Love's impressionable admiration and envy of the dirty and uncaring Easter. They see her as specially mysterious and self-sufficient behind what is, in reality, only a shallow front; Nina builds romantic fantasies around Easter while the orphan sleeps beside her--fantasies that Nina wishes she herself could fulfill instead of the supposedly favored orphan. Yet Easter's sleep in this context as well as in the one at the story's conclusion is a symbol

of her muteness and impotence before any challenge of involvement in real and radical experience.

Easter's own vulnerability to Exum--whose name suggests the power of fate to "cancel out"--is what betokens her inevitable collision with reality and the masculine world. Exum is the small son of Elberta, the Negro camp cook. By nature mischievous, Exum touches Easter's heel as she stands on a diving board above the lake, not intending to dive at all, and the insinuation of Exum's touch "forces" her off into the water. The results are literally overwhelming: although Loch finally revives Easter, she remains dazed and helpless and has to be superintended by Twosie, Elberta's sister, at the story's conclusion. As she sleeps then, Easter no longer appears to be the magnet to which the orphans cluster; she appears rather as a collapsed facade. Before Loch eventually succeeds in bringing Easter back to life, some of the girls grow "tired of Easter" and wish that she would "go ahead and die." Even the orphans cease "to own or protect Easter any more": Geneva, the one closest to Easter, anticipates getting her coat for winter if she dies. Nor do the adults display themselves any better than the children, for while Mrs. Gruenwald proves ineffectual, Miss Moody screams repeatedly at Loch to "'Give up! . . . .'" Yet worse even than the counselors, as though there were not enough damnation already, Jinny Love's mother has to visit the camp during the ordeal and is so shocked by the spectacle of Loch's suggestive acts above Easter's body that she cries out for him to stop and be ashamed of himself. All of this inexcusable ineptitude proceeds as Jinny Love behaves with foolish irrelevance to any real need, and despite Nina's moments of illumination during the crisis, which are to be observed

shortly, she seems almost as far from maturity at the end of the chapter as Jinny Love does.

Toward evening on the fateful day, Nina and Jinny Love walk off together while Easter sleeps and catch a glimpse of Loch, wholly naked, just inside his tent on the edge of the camp. Detecting his bragging mood--or supposing that they do--the two girls try to spite the "hero" by making fun in their minds (this action reported as implicit collective thought), but it is still only Jinny Love that plots to expose the boy's "flaws" in public, and it is likewise she that conclusively announces to Nina that, "'You and I will always be old maids . . . .'" Nina has potential for maturation that neither the careless Easter nor the egotistical Jinny has, and there is some hope that on her own Nina will be able to escape her friend's prediction, but she must depend on her inner resources, though, for her society seems capable of offering no help for the long journey that lies ahead of her.

Nina's resources are stronger than those exhibited by Easter or Jinny Love, but her formative vision lacks as yet the coherence necessary to develop a permanently integrated concept of any complex experience. That she is a central intelligence character at all suggests her superior consciousness, but an inconsistent narrative focus also suggests the undeveloped and fragmentary state of her outward vision: although the narrator's voice and vision afford a consistent perspective as center of consciousness, he assumes several kinds of foci during the chapter, and the resulting looseness of narrative structure lessens the measure of integration felt to mark Nina's consciousness. While the narrator creates the chief center of interest in Nina's mind, he also maintains his own

external perspective at a high level of development and activity throughout much of the story; then, in addition to these two principal foci, he also seems occasionally to look into Jinny Love's mind as well as reporting some impressions in implicitly ambiguous terms and others in terms of collectivity. Both cognizant and conjectural narration thus occurs in "Moon Lake," although the collective impressions are not felt as conjecture since the narrator makes himself so flexible in focus; because they appear to partake of his cognizance toward individual perspectives, the element of conjecture involved in collectivity is largely a matter of reliable generalization in "Moon Lake."

Instances of Nina's perspective reveal both her capacity for romantic illusion and her sense of genuine fulfillment as fruit of a difficult quest. They also reveal her capacity for meaningful interpretation of parts of her experience, especially those instances where she provides some spokesmanship for the author in giving terms of articulation for certain apsects of theme. Nina wishes at one point to know first-hand the condition of being an orphan, but her uncultivated sense of Easter's destiny obscures for her that girl's pathetically shallow soul and drab prospects. In the scene where Nina speculates over the sleeping Easter at night in their tent, Nina conceives of the night as a giant Indian coming subserviently to Easter as an exotic lover. A form of wish-fulfillment by transference under anticipation of frustration, Nina's night fantasy reveals her exaggerated romanticizing of both Easter's image and the male's, just as it shows her sentimental pessimism toward her own future role as a woman: seeking to replace Easter in the fantasy, Nina urges the night to take her instead of Easter, but the urging is in vain. Nina's real

problem is an unconscious fear of the male, for when she sleeps that same night she dreams that the hand that she would have offered to the night is torn by the teeth of wild beasts. Awake, Nina can envision her ideal fulfillment, but she can imagine it possible only for someone else--someone like Easter, she supposes. Asleep though, without her conscious mechanism for denying the fear of sex, Nina transforms the exotic Indian lover into a pack of savage animals; the Indian image is for her the male image in relation to Easter, while the animal image becomes the male image for her in relation to herself.

Other instances of Nina's perspective suggest her fascination with identity, her sense of reversal and reality in Easter's accident and her speculative longing for the ideal that looms in the mind of every major character in the novel at one time or another. These aspects of Nina's character redeem her from some of her faults of distortion and shortsightedness as they afford some isolated thematic exposition in terms of her thought. Nina's fascination with identity is apparent during an excursion to a secret bank of the lake with Easter and Jinny Love: after writing her own name repeatedly in the sand, Nina seeks to correct Easter's spelling of her name. The orphan spells it as "Esther," but calls it "Easter"; Nina is concerned to point out Easter's mistake to her because she feels that the name will be "real" if only Easter will spell it correctly. Then later, as Loch works to revive Easter, Nina has this reflection, as reported by the narrator: "Nina thought, It's I that's thinking. Easter's not thinking at all. . . . Easter had come among them and had held herself untouchable and intact. Of course, for one little touch could smirch her, make her fall so far, so deep. . . ." Here Nina's

sense of moral irony in the reversal of Easter's accident, and her consequent inference of Easter's reason for remaining so aloof, both contribute to clarifying a major thematic implication in the story, while her moment of insight heightens her awareness of her separate, autonomously thinking identity as an individual perspective--a self-contained unit of consciousness. Her fascination with her own self-awareness here suggests a healthy curiosity that might in time counteract her present fear of sex, a fear that her society has probably planted in her mind. Nina contributes thematic exposition again in a subsequent moment of insight that she has after Easter regains consciousness. Then, Nina reflects,

> At least what had happened to Easter was out in the world, like the table . . . . There it remained--mystery, if only for being hard and cruel and, by something Nina felt inside her body, murderous (GA, 154).

Here Nina vaguely senses a value in having reality out in the open, which is something of a rarity in the camp and in the whole society that it represents. Yet even now, at Moon Lake, Nina does not always have to wait for reality to be "out in the world" in order to face it honestly: in a personal reflection arising from a "thought of a pear," Nina conceives that, "It's not the flowers that are fleeting, . . . it's the fruits--it's the time when things are ready that they don't stay." Here Nina comes to share with characters in other chapters a collective intuition that is expressed in Yeats' "The Song of the Wandering Aengus" and incorporated within the overall theme of the novel.

Like so many other formative seekers in The Golden Apples, Nina struggles inwardly against a malfunctioning world to develop an authentic

sense of experience. She struggles deeply below the crust of social influences, frequently in spite of them and sometimes in spite of herself, too. Although she is susceptible to questionable influences and lacks as yet the adequate development of her capacity for penetrating guise and pretense, she yet contrasts favorably with both Easter and Jinny Love: while their innate capacities for maturation are already twisted and stunted if not stifled by Morgana society, Nina's do seem resilient, intact and alive. Thus her intermittent and qualified role as an objective central intelligence character in "Moon Lake" reflects the threatened and conditional independence of her moral vision.

Moral vision is again a basic motif in Chapter 6 of The Golden Apples, "Music from Spain," where it is developed in connection with Eugene MacLain, one of King MacLain's two known sons. The objective mode of central intelligence narration likewise recurs in "Music from Spain," but the technique of this chapter is considerably different from the one used in "Moon Lake." These two story-like chapters, in comparison with each other, represent the two extreme degrees of concentration on the central intelligence character in the objective mode that Miss Welty practices in The Golden Apples and perhaps in all of her fiction. While "Moon Lake" has limited and intermittent development of the central intelligence perspective, "Music from Spain" has extensive and consistent development of it. The central intelligence character in the latter chapter determines not only the scope of the fictional illusion but also the depth of explicit narrative penetration into his own consciousness. For these reasons, and because the narrator makes almost no interpretive commentary, there is only a minor distance in vision between the narrator and the

central intelligence character, and frequent proximity of the development of Eugene's consciousness to the subjective mode of central intelligence. Yet, while occasional passages in "Music from Spain" are unequivocably subjective, the basic technique still remains objective because of several factors: these include the episodic structure and transitions in scene, the calm, observer-like tone and carefully chosen imagery and diction of the narrator, and finally the narrator's frequent references to Eugene in third-person. (Third-person references occur also in subjective central intelligence narration, but coupled here with the two preceding factors they contribute toward a minimal detachment between narrator and character in "Music from Spain" that locates the center of consciousness outside the fictional world.) For all the literal factors that might be cited, however, the narrator's objective tone is often more implicit than explicit, depending largely on a subtle though pervasive sense of noncommitment and uninvolvement suggested by his vision as well as his voice--as though the measured pace and almost calculated design, and also the controlled irony, of Eugene's circular, day-long story were possible only through a perspective capable of affording a comic as well as tragic view of him. While pace, design and irony are as much a part of tragedy as they are of comedy, they appear to proceed not entirely from Eugene's perspective in "Music from Spain" (although he does have some sense of comic irony) but at least partially from the narrator's noncommittal tone, which reflects the comic irony in Eugene's situation without reflecting the tension and tragic confusion that it focuses upon.

Eugene's moral confusion culminates on the day of the story after he strikes his wife at breakfast, without knowing why, for some

innocent remark she makes. Feeling vaguely that he has committed himself to a bold course of protest, something unaccustomed in his routine, Eugene must follow through with the strange new role and act out this "different" identity until the compulsion has run its course. Consequently he absents himself from his job as a watch repairman at a jewelry store and roams the streets of his hometown, San Francisco, in expectation of some unusual vision or revelation: ". . . he had a moment of believing he would know anything that happened, anything that threatened the moral way, or transformed it, even, in the city of San Francisco that day. . . . as if he and the city were watching each other--without accustomed faith. But with interest . . . boldness . . . recklessness, almost." This passage is only so much bold, reckless, romantic rhetoric that the narrator reflects in Eugene's mind; that Eugene does believe it while the narrator identifies it as only his belief illustrates quite well the subtle detachment of objective central intelligence narration.

Eugene seeks at first to form some mystical relationship with the city itself, taking in the manifold life around him as though in pursuit of some Whitman-like state of consciousness. Yet shortly after deciding not to go to work Eugene thinks of joining an ideal companion, someone who "would turn out to have done a whole lot worse" than he had done in striking his wife. Then, in the next scene, he recognizes a Spanish guitarist walking along the street--one that he and his wife had heard perform at a concert just the preceding evening. As Eugene begins to follow the Spaniard he suddenly has to rescue the huge fellow from the path of an oncoming vehicle, and this act of Eugene becomes a pretext for the two men to accompany each other, even though the Spaniard speaks no

English. They go to a restaurant in Maiden Lane to have lunch, and the Spaniard proceeds to an upstairs dining room where Eugene has never been before in his life. More and more the mystery of the Spaniard's identity intrigues Eugene's imagination and becomes a focal point for the energy and variety that he had earlier sought to discover in the city's swarming activity. Yet two discordant motifs recur intermittently in Eugene's mind from the time he begins his day's experience to the time it ends: the more frequent motif is his half-acknowledged guilt-feeling over having struck his wife, and the less frequent one is his thoughts of King MacLain, his long-lost father, and of his Mississippi childhood. Not only does the ideal companion that Eugene conceives of before meeting the Spaniard bear a resemblance to King in Eugene's mind (being one who would have done worse than he), but also Eugene makes an overt mental connection at one point between "the life of an artist, or a foreigner . . ." and that of "a wanderer" (or his own father, "who had never seen him or wanted to see him").

Alfred Appel recognizes in his study that, "Eugene's day-long odyssey can partly be seen as his search for a father,"[20] and both he and Ruth Vande Kieft view the Spaniard as an ideal father-companion for Eugene, one with whom Eugene can finally communicate in terms of "a primal form of communication, an almost blood-knowledge . . . ."[21] Both of these critics see the Spaniard as a fearless manifestation of the life-force who momentarily imparts his energy to Eugene as the former lifts the latter over his head while standing at the edge of the ocean and Eugene has a vision of his wife transformed from her normal state of coldness and self-pity into a warm, responsive lover. Yet the perception that some of

Eugene's problems could be resolved by a change in his wife is not the kind of insight commensurate to a day-long odyssey with Dionysius, and in fact, after Eugene leaves the Spaniard outside a cafe, looking up at the sky, he returns home only to find that his wife is not only the same drab housewife but also the same self-centered drudge, having forgotten about the incident at breakfast that Eugene has worried about all day in favor of some later accident in the house to dwell on.

One can observe layers of mixed comic and tragic irony in Eugene's overall predicament as Mrs. Herring, his wife's friend and guest, thinks that she has also seen Eugene's Spaniard and reduces him to anecdotal status; Eugene's wife even recalls the guitarist's name so that even the mystery of identity seems taken out of Eugene's adventure. As the story concludes on this note, one can reflect that not only has Eugene worried about a forgotten incident, but he has also missed his job without having anything more than cloudy romantic rhetoric with which to replace it, left his native home without ever having seen his real father only to search for him in rootless futility, and sought an ideal father in a chance companion that seems as lost as he, and as much in need of a father. Eugene's moral confusion, however, as he wanders around San Francisco away from his job, stems directly from the fact that whereas the Spaniard is an artist, Eugene is not, and while the Spaniard has channeled his creativity into guitar-playing, he does not play his guitar or function as an artist on the day that Eugene accompanies him. Eugene has in effect "gone behind" the art he has heard the previous evening to encounter the pitiful, helpless form of man in "reality" that always stands behind the art. At the concert the "music from Spain" might have transformed

Eugene's vision--might have been a thing that he and his wife could have shared, transcendent as One--but it seems to have been lost on them both, for neither remembers the music with much enthusiasm. On the street, however, the artist himself is no guide for Eugene but only a reflection of his wasted father and wasted life, having nothing more to do than waste a day himself with a stranger with nowhere to go.

Objective central intelligence narration occurs once more in The Golden Apples, in the concluding chapter, "The Wanderers." The focal character of this chapter is Virgie Rainey, the daughter of Kate Rainey (narrator of "Shower of Gold"). Virgie's development as a central intelligence character lacks the consistent concentration and frequent proximity to subjective presentation given to Eugene's in his chapter, but Virgie is more thoughtful and complex than Eugene is, and there is more depth to her perspective to be developed than there is to Nina's in "Moon Lake." Furthermore, the kind of thematic irony seen in connection with several other central intelligence characters is not developed in connection with Virgie Rainey in "The Wanderers"; as the novel draws to its conclusion in that chapter, Virgie's perspective comes closer to reflecting a comprehensive vision than does any other character's anywhere else in the book. Besides bringing the career of King MacLain to an uneasy domestic resolution, "The Wanderers" also develops a motif of general change involving most of the familiar characters of the novel and studies the character of Virgie Rainey largely within the context of the local community's funeral customs and conduct. The chapter centers around the death of Virgie's mother, whose funeral collects both Rainey relatives and Morgana citizens together in one setting, and for this reason the

chapter is classifiable with Delta Wedding, Losing Battles and especially The Optimist's Daughter--other works in which family occasions bring hosts of related characters together. Indeed, Miss Welty's treatment of social ineptitude and private presumptiveness during the funeral of Mrs. Rainey suggests both the same skill and the same attitude with which she treats the same motifs again in The Optimist's Daughter. Yet, like The Optimist's Daughter also, "The Wanderers" is more than satire, as Ruth Vande Kieft has observed:

> The final section of The Golden Apples . . . has many functions in the structure of the book as a whole. As an epilogue, it provides the denouement of several careers followed, lends perspective to the meaning and interrelations of these life histories, and gives a sense of mutability. It also provides a fully detailed portrait of the Morgana community by showing it engaged in a major tribal ritual, that of the funeral; furthermore, it recapitulates and makes concluding statements of the major themes of the book. But it is also, and perhaps chiefly, the story of Virgie Rainey, who, as a woman now past forty, is the most perceptive and emotionally mature of the wanderers and is getting a belated start (after an early abortive attempt) on her long search for the golden apples. The ending of the book is really, therefore, another beginning, and the sense of an epic cycle is achieved.[22]

The external narrator functions as one unifying device in "The Wanderers," holding these various motifs together within his objectively focused perspective. On the immediate literal level the narrator is localized as a consciousness, in time as well as space: when King MacLain, for instance, appears in the stretch of his own life, from behind a dead boxwood tree, at Kate Rainey's funeral, the narrator seems quite at home with the fact and does not feel called upon to explain King's presence at the funeral as soon as he appears, even though at that point the reader has no way of accounting even for King's presence in Morgana. Thus reflecting an immediate consciousness of present life (i.e., since King

has actually been back in Morgana for several years, his presence would be no surprise to one familiar with the immediate context), the narrator does not always bridge gaps between past and present in the reader's knowledge--at least he does not always do so at once, formally and overtly. Yet he does, at the same time, imply a historical overview through passages of background and exposition that help to characterize specific changes, in character and in scene, so that finally his perspective is dual, representing both an immediate sense of present circumstances and an overall, detached and comprehensive sense of evolutionary developments over the years contained within the bounds of the novel.

The narrator develops Virgie Rainey's perspective as another unifying device, treating it inwardly and exclusively at times but at other times relating it to the other outward motifs of social and personal change and community satire. For example, Virgie's inability to act or feel compatibly with collective expectations of her during her mother's funeral contrasts sharply with the superficial sympathy of Cassie Morrison, who in "June Recital" (Chapter 2) is a sensitive, bright young girl but in "The Wanderers" is a rather sickly sentimental, morbidly self-centered woman in middle-age. Having suffered her own mother's death by suicide, Cassie seems tied by some vague inward bond to her home and her past, growing flowers on her front lawn that spell out her mother's name. At the funeral she can see nothing in Virgie's condition except a desired reflection of her own, but Virgie thwarts Cassie's diseased effort to use her to hang on to a dead past by leaving Morgana the day after the funeral.

Virgie's character as a seeker after the "golden apples" and as an independent-minded "outcast" from respectable Morgana receives treatment in "June Recital," where she has an affair with a sailor and shows promise as a piano student. In "The Wanderers" the narrator allows enough exposition to indicate that, after only a brief period away from Morgana while still a teenager, Virgie has remained for all the subsequent years (roughly twenty-five) at home with her mother in Morgana. Yet by subjecting herself to an office job, domestic chores and her mother's discipline, Virgie has learned more at home during these years than she would likely have learned away from home during the same period: as Alfred Appel recognizes,

> The long years at home are perhaps a necessary ordeal . . . the rebellious girl learns that while fulfillment cannot be achieved without a modicum of freedom, neither can it be made meaningful without discipline and control.[23]

Out of a sense of loyalty to her mother Virgie has remained at home, yet out of a sense of duty to herself she has also resisted all pressure and temptation to submit and conform inwardly to the superficialities and sentimentalities of the Morgana social code. Both of these acts are heroic, yet the duty to herself has cut Virgie off from her community, while the loyalty to her mother has cut her off from life itself. In this latter fact lies the basis for the "change" that Virgie finds most significant in her mother's death: she is now free to go--to live. Yet once on her way, she pauses for awhile in the MacLain community, a short distance from Morgana, where she can survey the MacLain cemetery and contrast the deer park of the past with the store fronts of the present. Meditating thus, while sitting in front of the courthouse, Virgie suddenly

recalls a picture that Miss Eckhart, her old piano teacher, had once hung: it is a picture showing Perseus vaunting over the slain Medusa, and the meaning that Virgie now conceives for it speaks to her of the past as well as future because it speaks to her of heroism. The meaning of the recollected picture for Virgie now, sitting in the rain on her way "out" into the world, is that victory and defeat, ecstasy and suffering, beauty and horror, all lie quite ambiguously close together in the heroic act, but that (as both Alfred Appel and Ruth Vande Kieft have observed[24]) the greatest gift of man lies in the talent for objectifying that act in the timeless and painless world of art. Identifying Miss Eckhart as an artist who had tried to give her such a gift, Virgie suddenly comes to an authentically tragic recognition of her own worst loss (an ironic reflection upon the refrain so often repeated to her during the funeral, "'. . . you just don't know what you lost . . .'"); she recognizes "the gift she had touched with her fingers that had drifted and left her." This gift, or talent, is the "golden apple" that Virgie grasped for only a moment, early in her life, without then realizing what she might have held. Now, in her forties, she realizes it enough to balance youthful promise with adult wisdom in her mind--in short, to experience tragedy through recognition in the midst of suffering and defeat. Her "beginning" is thus a qualified departure, in full awareness of human limitation and the ambiguity of experience, yet in ultimate recognition that she is only part of the endless human cycle that must go on from tragedy to rebirth. Her perspective is shared in the closing moment of the novel with an old black "beggar woman" as they listen to "the world beating in their ears."

This discussion of Virgie Rainey's perspective in "The Wanderers" concludes the study of Miss Welty's objective central intelligence narration, but the next chapter continues to examine The Golden Apples before going on to other works. It includes a discussion of Chapter II of that novel ("June Recital"), which develops Virgie's youthful relationship with Miss Eckhart.

Footnotes

[1]Eisinger, p. 276.

[2]Vande Kieft, p. 107.

[3]Vande Kieft, p. 100.

[4]Vande Kieft, p. 99.

[5]Vande Kieft, p. 99.

[6]Vande Kieft, p. 101.

[7]A Season of Dreams: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Southern Literary Studies, Vol. 1 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 204.

[8]Appel, p. 202.

[9]Appel, p. 200.

[10]Appel, p. 203.

[11]Appel, p. 124.

[12]Vande Kieft, p. 38.

[13]Appel, p. 126.

[14]Appel, pp. 124-25.

[15]E.g., see Appel, p. 186, and Vande Kieft, p. 64.

[16]Appel, pp. 189-90.

[17]Eisinger, p. 272.

[18]Appel, pp. 192-93.

[19]Vande Kieft, p. 43.

[20]Appel, p. 228.

[21]Vande Kieft, p. 134.

[22]Vande Kieft, p. 138.

[23]Appel, p. 231.

[24]See Appel, p. 235, and Vande Kieft, p. 142.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE PERSPECTIVE: SUBJECTIVE MODE

i

In a relatively small segment of her fiction, Miss Welty makes use of the subjective mode of central intelligence narration, in which the focal character becomes the center of consciousness although the voice remains that of the external narrator. There is thus a split in the subjective method between the narrative voice and the vision that defines the impression of the fictional illusion: while the objective method maintains identification of voice and vision with the same source, the narrator outside the story, the vision toward the fictional illusion in the subjective approach is the central intelligence character's, even though the narrator continues to afford the voice that provides the rhetoric of the story. This rhetoric is influenced, however, by the consciousness of the central intelligence character, whose vision it reflects, and the narrator does not control the primary perspective so as to present the mind of the focal character as an object for external study. Rather, the character controls the primary perspective, making it a medium for his vision.

The preceding chapter has shown that some stories, though basically told through objective central intelligence narration, yet

contain some measure of subjective or near subjective development (the "line" between the two is very fine, sometimes ambiguous), and now this chapter is to show that subjective central intelligence narration is hardly sustained as the exclusive mode of development in any story; it is always mixed with objective development and direct commentary by the external narrator. Shifts from objective to subjective central intelligence are significant to mark since they represent shifts in center of consciousness.

This chapter is somewhat selective, omitting some subjective central intelligence narration that occurs in works previously discussed--works like The Optimist's Daughter, for example, in which the basic objective approach is so predominant as to make the subjective central intelligence minor in comparison. There are a few of Miss Welty's works, however, that make extensive enough use of subjective central intelligence for it to become structurally noticeable or to become itself the basic approach. "June Recital" and "Sir Rabbit," from The Golden Apples, are such works, as well as "Death of a Traveling Salesman" (A Curtain of Green), a couple of stories from The Bride of the Innisfallen and one uncollected story. First, this chapter's discussion continues the unfinished study of The Golden Apples.

ii

Subjective central intelligence narration is noteworthy in only two of the seven story-like chapters of The Golden Apples, the earliest instance being that of "June Recital," the second chapter of the novel. This chapter is important in developing the relationship between Virgie Rainey and her childhood piano instructor, Miss Eckhart, that is alluded

to in "The Wanderers" as a context in Virgie's memory out of which some much belated insight grows. The present time in "June Recital" is around 1920, which is some years after the termination of Virgie's student-teacher relationship with Miss Eckhart, but a dramatic sequel to that relationship occurs during the story's present, while a secondary perspective provides exposition of the relationship itself in the form of memory. There are actually two central intelligence characters in "June Recital," Loch Morrison (at a somewhat earlier age than he is in "Moon Lake") and his older sister Cassie, who is around seventeen in the present. Both Cassie and Loch are developed subjectively in portions of the story, although the concluding portion is largely seen from the external narrator's perspective except for the final scene, where Cassie's interpretive reflections are reported in objective central intelligence narration.

"June Recital" is central to several motifs in The Golden Apples, not only because several major characters reappear in later chapters for further development, but also because a particular stage in the relationship between King MacLain and his wife Snowdie is reflected in the setting. This setting is the MacLain house, next door to the Morrison's; already partially occupied by roomers that share it with Snowdie and her twins by the time Virgie takes piano lessons, the MacLain house is virtually vacant in the story's present and is finally seen in ruins in "The Wanderers," more than two decades later. King's return in "June Recital" for a momentary visit to the house vacated by his family is thus indicative of his deteriorating relationship with his family, and since the Morrison house also shows signs of the same pattern of deterioration in "The Wanderers," the pattern of house imagery that spans most of the book

symbolically implicates the Morrison family in the same fatal frustration that besets King, finally. Yet Cassie, quite seriously, and Loch less so, are both involved in the "fate" of the MacLain house as early as "June Recital," although Loch's ability to project his own meaning upon the events that he observes in the house (because, unlike Cassie, he is not directly bound up with its past) foreshadows his ultimate capacity for having a life of his own, away from Morgana, at the time of "The Wanderers."

In her study of "June Recital" in Eudora Welty, Ruth Vande Kieft describes the long-range effects of its narrative technique:

> The point of view . . . is divided between that of Loch Morrison and his sister Cassie. Loch is a restless youngster supposedly confined to his bed with malaria, but through a telescope and later from the branches of the tree into which he scrambles from his window, he curiously views the events which transpire in the large abandoned MacLain house next door. Cassie, who in her own room is busy dyeing a colorful scarf in preparation for a hay-ride, has a more limited view of the activities in the MacLain house from her window, but through her consciousness and memory we learn the implications of the mysterious goings-on next door. Throughout, the reader enjoys a richly multiple, almost cinematic perspective, from which he sees both the Morrison and MacLain homes; the variety of persons, rooms, and activities in and around both; and the comings and goings on the street. Loch's eyes and boy's imagination record, sometimes inaccurately; Cassie remembers and ponders; the reader is left with the delightful task of sorting, constructing, relating the parts, interpreting. [1]

Continuing, Miss Vande Kieft characterizes the general vision of each central intelligence character:

> From his window and tree posts Loch observes . . . what at first appear to be two unrelated little dramas taking place on two levels of the MacLain house. . . . In one of the bedrooms upstairs Virgie Rainey is gaily romping with a young sailor--making love on a bare mattress . . . . Downstairs an old woman, whom Loch mistakenly takes to be the mother of the sailor, comes in; with quantitites of shredded paper, she elaborately and ritualistically "decorates" the room in preparation for burning. On the piano she places a large magnolia and later a ticking

> metronome. Before lighting the fire she plays, three times over, the opening bars of a piece called "Fur Elise." Cassie hears the theme, and from a kind of conditioned response she murmurs, "Virgie Rainey, danke schoen." Then, through Cassie's thoughts, we learn how the two little dramas are related: the old lady is really Miss Eckhart; the mysterious and grotesque ceremonial below is her desperate, vindictive act of thwarted love, hope, ambition, which is directed against the breezy, abandoned young lady upstairs.[2]

Because a delicate relationship between past and present is central to the thematic connection between the "two little dramas," Miss Welty uses shifts in point of view to develop the story structurally in terms of the two perspectives, past and present. The first part of the story is from Loch's perspective and concerns the "rising action" of what later becomes a composite climax of the two dramas. After Loch observes the separate comings of first Virgie and her sailor and then the old piano instructor to the MacLain house, the latter plays her three sets of identical notes, which are the link between the two basically separate fictional illusions. Cassie as well as Loch hears the notes, and from her perspective thus begins the narrative development of the past. Through her memory, Cassie reconstructs the period when Miss Eckhart was rooming in the MacLain house and giving piano lessons to some local children, mostly girls. Cassie had had a unique opportunity then to observe the characters of both Miss Eckhart and Virgie--extraordinary characters of which Cassie lost little in her impressions. Her section of memory first takes the form of exposition, developing the disciplinarian yet vulnerable character of the teacher and the talented though unsubmissive one of the student. Then, in a comprehensive, detailed recollection, Cassie reconstructs a typical "June Retical," the decorations for which coming to contrast with the "decorations" for burning in the

present, as the past glory of Miss Eckhart in Cassie's generous mind comes to contrast with the grotesque image of a dangerous old woman with dynamite (as Loch interprets the metronome) in Loch's mind. With so much exposition and dramatic contrast, the narrative then shifts back to Loch's perspective to view the actual starting of the fire next door, the chance arrival of the town marshal and his fishing companion, who put out the fire and subdue Miss Eckhart (who appears passively insane by this time), and also the arrival and departure of King MacLain, whom Loch mistakes for another former roomer, a Mr. Voight.

The reader, understanding Cassie's perspective toward the past, regards this second segment of present action with deeper insight than he could have had in regarding the first segment; as Miss Vande Kieft suggests, one function of Cassie's perspective is to impart a depth of knowledge and sense of feeling to the range of vision afforded by Loch's. This is an important way the separate perspectives complement each other to give a degree of unity to the overall story. But, as Alfred Appel also suggests, Loch's perspective does more than afford a unique "boy's-eye" view of the action; observing that Loch's "youth, fever, and imagination" combine to cause him to interpret what he sees "in the melodramatic terms of the movie serials at the Bijou theater,"[3] Mr. Appel suggests a source for a grimly comic aspect within the overall comprehensive perspective. Combined for the reader, Loch's and Cassie's views form a composite perspective that they could probably never devise for themselves through all the communication they might be capable of. Cassie sees Miss Eckhart's predicament as pathetic at the time she appears in the present; later the reader sees it approach tragedy as he gains more

insight into the theme of quest and frustration announced in the allusion of the novel's title to Yeats' poem. Yet Loch's imaginative construction of the events--having the old woman be the sailor's mother about to carry out a dynamite plot--has a power of suggestion that insists upon a perversely comic turn within the pathetic and the tragic views. Nor do Loch's particular mistakes occur without meaning: his not recognizing either Miss Eckhart or King MacLain (However explicable in terms of experience) suggests the fading identity of each "seeker"--the former unwanted, and the latter "wanted" only too literally--while his version of the metronome as a timed explosive device ironically suggests Miss Eckhart's insane outburst of the present afternoon, since in Cassie's recollection Miss Eckhart had reverently identified herself and what she had stood for with this instrument for keeping perfect measure.

Loch's sections of the narrative are more consistently subjective in development than is Cassie's section of memory, and his section that opens the chapter illustrates several distinguishing characteristics of subjective central intelligence narration. These characteristics are all subtle means of locating the center of consciousness in the mind of the character. For example, the narrative voice contains imagery that reflects the character's mind as its source, as in this passage from Loch's perspective describing the MacLain house:

> A table showed in the dining room, but no chairs. The parlor window was in the shadow of the porch and of thin, vibrant bamboo leaves, clear and dark as a pool he knew in the river. There was a piano in the parlor. In addition there were little fancy chairs, like Sunday School chairs or children's drug store chairs, turned this way and that, and the first strong person trying to sit down would break them one after the other (GA, 21).

Again, while observing a later passage from Loch's perspective, in which he identifies Virgie Rainey as she makes her appearance with the sailor, one notes the particularly subjective mode of exposition as well as the subjective pattern of coherence:

> The girl was the piano player at the picture show. Today she was carrying a paper sack from Mr. Wiley Bowles' grocery.
>
> Loch squinted; he was waiting for the day when the sailor took the figs. And see what the girl would hurry him into. Her name was Virgie Rainey. She had been in Cassie's room all the way through school, so that made her sixteen; she would ruin any nice idea. She looked like a tomboy but it was not the truth. She had let the sailor pick her up and carry her one day, with her fingers lifting to brush the leaves. It was she that had showed the sailor the house to begin with, she that started him coming. They were rusty old fig trees but the figs were the little sweet blue. When they cracked open their pink and golden flesh would show, their inside flowers, and golden bubbles of juice would hang, to touch your tongue to first. Loch gave the sailor time, for it was he, Loch, who was in command of leniency here; he was giving him day after day (GA, 24).

Finally, there is subjective editorializing in a passage that reflects Loch's critical impressions as he watches Miss Eckhart's preparations for burning the house next door:

> Everything she did was wrong, after a certain point. She had got off the track. What she really wanted was a draft. Instead, she was keeping air away, and let her try to make fire burn in an airless room. That was the conceited thing girls and women would try (GA, 33).

Every word of the three preceding quotations is structurally germane to the narrative voice belonging to the external narrator; there is no direct quotation, even of Loch's thoughts. Yet the vision is clearly that of Loch and not that of the external narrator because such narrative devices as imagery, exposition and editorializing, as well as basic modes of articulation and coherence, are all made to reflect the secondary perspective belonging to the central intelligence character.

Cassie's perspective reflects a sensitivity that is needed to balance the implicit tone of Loch's sections, as well as an insight into the background of the action next door that is needed to correct Loch's misconceptions and to interpret the true significance of that action. What Cassie remembers that is most significant to developing the connection between that action and other action in The Golden Apples is the way in which Virgie Rainey, once Miss Eckhart's prize pupil, has both failed and humiliated her former instructor. When, as Cassie recalls, Virgie had refused to use Miss Eckhart's metronome, the refusal had been tantamount to a humiliating rejection of Miss Eckhart herself; the metronome had occupied a prominent place in Miss Eckhart's "studio" as well as an honored one within her heart. This fact Cassie sees, and she also sees that Virgie's act of rebellion was as though she were declaring no further need for Miss Eckhart, for Virgie in fact had been so talented as to have had no need for the metronome. Cassie further sees the humiliation that Virgie had caused Miss Eckhart to suffer: having found a vulnerable place in Miss Eckhart's psychological armor, Virgie had cruelly exposed it: "Anybody could tell that Virgie was doing something to Miss Eckhart. She was turning her from a teacher into something lesser," Cassie recalls. Virgie's rejection of the metronome only prefigured her ultimate failure of Miss Eckhart, for in spite of the teacher's efforts to make Virgie persist in serious, life-long study of the piano, the rapidly maturing young girl stopped taking lessons when she was fourteen and went to work playing popular accompaniments at the Bijou theater. Apparently Miss Eckhart has taken Virgie's prostitution of talents worthy of the classics very personally, for as Alfred Appel observes of Virgie's relationship to

Miss Eckhart, Virgie "is the piano teacher's last hope--the only consolation and artistic justification for her boring and frustrating existence."[4] Now Miss Eckhart's early love for Virgie seems turned to hatred, just as Virgie's early hatred of Miss Eckhart later seems almost turned to love in "The Wanderers."

While aware of Virgie's cruelty to Miss Eckhart, Cassie also realizes that she herself had been capable of like cruelty: she recalls an instance once when, defining a musical term for Miss Eckhart, she had deliberately alluded to a Mr. Sissum, the teacher's secret love at an earlier time--a local merchant and occasional musician that had finally drowned accidentally in the Big Black River. Occurring after Mr. Sissum's death, Cassie's allusion had recharged the grief in Miss Eckhart that she had suddenly displayed publicly at the man's funeral. Cassie had known then the effect of her allusion, and now she realizes that, like Virgie, she too could have closed any door to Miss Eckhart's happiness that she might ever have had the option to keep open herself. Yet in many respects Cassie is not like Virgie, for Cassie only vaguely senses the moral implication of the conflict that Virgie had faced with Miss Eckhart. The teacher, seeking to fulfill her own life through Virgie's, had in effect sought to mold the girl into a creature of her own will. This effort to mold her, then, is what Virgie had successfully resisted, using her knowledge of Miss Eckhart's vulnerability in her own self-defense, for any such allowing of herself to be molded would have been for Virgie a fatal reduction of her soul's independence.

During the climactic scene, Cassie runs outdoors to join Loch there and watch: assuming complete control of the narrative vision in

this segment as center of consciousness, the narrator reports the action of Virgie and the sailor's running abruptly from the MacLain house in different directions, after the fire has been put out and the marshal and his friend have begun escorting Miss Eckhart away safely in their custody. A group of local ladies, including Mrs. Morrison, is returning at the same time from a social gathering in the same neighborhood, and the lofty-spirited Virgie quickly paces by, first past Miss Eckhart and her escorts and then past the group of knowing ladies, without a word to either. Virgie's silence and refusal to stop even for Miss Eckhart seem to surprise Cassie, who is certain just beforehand that Virgie will acknowledge her former teacher. Yet later, in the concluding section of the chapter, Cassie's reflections upon the incident, reported objectively by the narrator, seem to be her attempt to interpret much that she has witnessed by accounting for the silence of both Virgie and the Teacher:

> What she was certain of was the distance those two had gone, as if all along they had been making a trip (which the sailor was only starting). It had changed them. They were deliberately terrible. They looked at each other and neither wished to speak. They did not even horrify each other. No one could touch them now, either (GA, 96).

Earlier, during the passage of the incident, Cassie observes the same lack of horror in the group of ladies, in her mother as well as the others, that she observes finally to have characterized Virgie and Miss Eckhart at the moment of their meeting. Cassie recognizes that such indifference in these ladies is only a symptom of a deeper evil that is partly accountable for Miss Eckhart's fate: it is the whole community's willingness to stereotype--in Miss Eckhart's case, to stereotype her as an alien and a misfit (after all, she had been a German living in Morgana during

the years of World War I, and she had been an artist as well as a preparer of exotic dishes!). Chester Eisinger is probably correct in describing "June Recital" as concerned with the "expansion of the limited vision of a growing girl,"[5] for it is the understanding pathos in Cassie's perspective, as well as its measure of critical insight into the world around her, that makes it capable of redeeming the story of Miss Eckhart from the grotesque impressions and unrealistic fantasies of Loch, which perhaps too closely reflect the way Morgana society would regard that story, if it were interested in regarding Miss Eckhart at all.

After "June Recital," subjective central intelligence narration occurs again in The Golden Apples in Chapter 3, "Sir Rabbit," the only other chapter in which it is of major formal significance. Like "June Recital," "Sir Rabbit" has a dual narrative focus, concentrated partly upon one time and partly upon a later. Unlike the preceding chapter, however, "Sir Rabbit" has only one central intelligence character, who is the center of consciousness throughout much of the chapter. "Sir Rabbit" concerns the development of the local King MacLain legend and also the development of a particular young woman's perspective toward King MacLain. The focal character is Mattie Will Sojourner (at first; later Mattie Will Holified), who at fifteen encounters King's two young sons, Ran and Eugene, while she is digging worms for fish bait, and at a somewhat later age encounters King himself while she is in the woods with her husband. These two encounters form the two principal sections of the narrative, but just as the first section concludes with a passage in future perspective, so does the second one conclude with retrospection toward the first encounter, so that the narrative technique contributes toward an integrated action.

The chapter begins subjectively, from Mattie Will's perspective, in such a way as to suggest that Mattie Will's meeting with the MacLain twins is really a meeting between her and a lone man, identified in her first words as King MacLain. Shortly, however, she corrects her error in vision, though not before she calls out that she knows all about King MacLain and his ways (for she is secretly only too eager for a private meeting with King). For her impudence the twins subject her to some mild teasing, which leads to an innocent romp on the ground. Then the three share a sack of candy before the twins depart. As they are going, however, Mattie Will calls out, "'I just did it because your mamma's a poor albino!,'" seeking at once both to depreciate the incident and to deflate any suspicion that the other parent had been her source of motive in going along with the fun.

The external narrator breaks into the action just after Mattie Will's parting words to the twins, and in what should be called reporting in future perspective he directs attention to the way Mattie Will is going to recall the incident with the MacLain twins after she is married. After quoting her future thought with apparent cognizance, the narrator continues in future perspective by representing her later thinking in third-person but essentially subjective narration. The entire passage in future perspective is as follows:

> She would think afterwards, married, when she had the time to sit down--churning, for instance--"Who had the least sense and the least care, for fifteen? They did. I did. But it wasn't fair to tease me. To try to make me dizzy, and run a ring around me, or make me think that first minute I was going to be carried off by their pa. Teasing because I had to open my mouth about Mr. King MacLain before I knew what was coming."
>
> Tumbling on the wet spring ground with the goody-goody MacLain twins was something Junior Holifield would have given

> her a licking for, just for making such a story up, supposing, after she married Junior, she had put anything in words. Or he would have said he'd lick her for it if she told it <u>again</u>. Poor Junior! (GA, 100-01).

The future-perspective passage is transitional as well as foreshadowing, for in the next scene, which is sectioned off from the future-perspective passage, Mattie Will is married: she and her husband Junior, along with a Negro called Blackstone, are on a Saturday outing in the woods near Morgana during the month of October (symbolically, the encounter with the twins occurs in early spring). Junior and Blackstone have been firing old ammunition, for recreation and for the purpose of getting rid of it, when a voice from some trees nearby identifies itself as that of King MacLain. Dressed in a starched white suit, the newcomer can be seen intermittently as he darts from tree to tree, claiming to be bird hunting in the area.

When, however, King says, "'Thought I'd see if the birds around here still tasted as sweet as they used to,'" there is a double meaning in his words that, for all Junior's tendency to overreact, he does not misconceive, because he is acquainted with King's reputation and understands the kind of "game" that King is usually after. Junior warns King to keep his distance, and warns Mattie Will to keep hers likewise, but she defies her husband; saying that she is curious to discover what the man is after, Mattie Will starts up a bank toward King while Junior just looks on, threatening King with shooting if he makes a wrong move.

King and Mattie Will both show more subtle handling of their respective interests (which are really quite mutual) than Junior shows of his own: the implicit league between the former two (although they have

never before met) is manifest in their both laughing while Junior keeps quite solemn, as well as in their both openly mocking the husband--Mattie Will by putting out her tongue, "to show Junior how he'd acted in public," and King by firing two loads of buckshot down over Junior's head. As the second load pierces Junior's hat, he jumps up and lands sprawled across a fallen tree, completely unconscious--whether from the blow or from fear it is not plain to say. Then, as King comes toward her, Mattie Will simply tells Blackstone to look the other way.

The chapter's climax quickly follows, as King and Mattie Will have their own way while Junior lies unconscious: for King the act is just another of his routine escapades, and when he is finished he goes off to himself and falls asleep, only to awaken a short time later and order Mattie Will away from him when he finds that she has been watching him in his sleep. He appears horrified at first that he has been so unsuspectedly observed. For Mattie Will, however, the experience has been developmental inwardly: for one thing, it has brought her a step closer to understanding the real King MacLain, for

> . . . he put on her, with the affront of his body, the affront of his sense too. No pleasure in that! She had to put on what he knew with what he did--maybe because he was so grand it was a thorn to him. Like submitting to another way to talk, she could answer to his burden now, his whole blithe, smiling, superior, frantic existence (GA, 108).

Alfred Appel finds in this passage "the only hint at complexity in the characterization of King," "the suggestion that for some dark, inexplicable reason, King will always remain unsatisfied."[6] This suggestion is the ambiguous "burden" that King communicates to Mattie Will, which she understands because her own quest in life is similar to King's, except that

she is not as literally free as King is: she must finally return to Junior and take care of him.

As a result of her new burden of knowledge, Mattie Will experiences an expansion of her own sense of identity, but as though her mind were running in cycles, it develops this new sense in terms of the legend rather than those of the concrete experience: ". . . she was Mr. MacLain's Doom, or Mr. MacLain's Weakness, like the rest, and neither Mrs. Junior Holified nor Mattie Will Sojourner; now she was something she had always heard of." Thus in her mind Mattie Will must return to the realm of popular myth and its tacit sanctioning quality in order to temper and contain the burden of her new knowledge, which is really as much self-knowledge as it is knowledge of King.

According to Ruth M. Vande Kieft, "Miss Welty seems to be working simultaneously with what is common and uncommon in the action" of "Sir Rabbit"--"the quality that makes it at once actual and mythic. The use of Mattie Will's consciousness," adds Miss Vande Kieft, "makes possible both wonder . . . and a reduction to the commonplace . . . ."[7] This observation suggests Mattie Will's way of managing her new sense of identity, and another manifestation of the circuit between myth and actuality in Mattie Will's mind occurs in the retrospection at the end of the chapter: there the girl recalls suddenly her earlier encounter with the MacLain twins, and for the first time she thinks of them as being "mysterious and sweet." Now that Mattie Will's maturation process has removed much of the mystery from her idea of King MacLain, the same process has brought about a subtle transformation of the early innocent encounter with the twins; it is no longer the "reality" to be depreciated in view

of the "mystery" that lies somewhere in the future, in adulthood, for it has become itself the mystery, lying back in the past, worthy of ideal dignity in view of the burdensome knowledge of the present.

Finally, then, Mattie Will's consciousness appears to function as a means of suggesting a mystic link between the father and the sons within the King MacLain legend. Perhaps it is ironic that only through Mattie Will's mind do the twins ever gain any kind of meaningful relationship with their father in the novel, yet it is not ironic for Mattie Will herself that, by her experience, the separate trails of father and sons do significantly cross because the gulf of time does not isolate the two encounters from each other in her mind. Rather than existing apart there, as, ironically enough, they do in "outer" reality, they touch each other in her mind through the mythical world that King MacLain evokes. One can now moreover see the importance of developing Mattie Will's consciousness subjectively, for only through her immediate perspective can the story materials gain their maximum possible significance, yet by allowing her immediate perspective to control the chapter's structure, the author can render that maximum significance objectively in terms of art form.

iii

There is some subjective central intelligence narration in The Optimist's Daughter and bits of it in Delta Wedding, but since these instances neither control narrative structure nor suggest innovative approaches, this study now turns to those few short stories by Miss Welty that do contain controlling measures of subjective central intelligence. There is only one such story from A Curtain of Green, and that story is

"Death of a Traveling Salesman," certainly one of Miss Welty's most carefully developed short stories. Containing elemental meaning, this story is yet concrete in character and setting: it concerns the death of R. J. Bowman, a traveling shoe salesman, who loses his way in the "desolate" Mississippi hill country. It is his first day back on the road after a month in the hospital with influenza, and his erratic, malfunctioning heart only complicates his weakness. His sickness and weak heart moreover suggest his moral condition of rootlessness and social impotence: his fear that someone might notice his heart's sound and his failure on several occasions to communicate are concrete images of this moral condition that recur throughout the story. Bowman is also feverish and aflutter, so that he, like Loch Morrison in "June Recital" (in one respect), is a central intelligence character with a sometimes "blurred" perspective.

The story develops as Bowman's Ford drops from the dead end of a "rutted dirt path" into a "red erosion." Quite lost, Bowman seeks help at a nearby cabin, where he first misconceives its "contents," taking a young wife to be an aging mother, and then confronts his own pitiful identity, sentimentally yet head-on, only to discover later that the "aging mother" is actually the pregnant wife of the man he had taken to be her son. This man, meanwhile, has "raised" Bowman's car from the pit, "raised" fire for the cabin from a neighbor's source, and "raised" a bottle of whisky from a buried jug. Having suspected the "mother" and "son" of some dark conspiracy against him, Bowman yet feels "cheated" upon learning that the only mystery the house contains is the ordinary fact of a "fruitful marriage," a "simple thing" that "anybody could have had . . . ."

Wanting no more favors once he knows what the house contains, Bowman finally runs from the cabin in the middle of the night (while the couple sleeps), feeling that "he must get back to where he had been before."

One of the last things Bowman notices before leaving the cabin in desperation is a half-cleaned lamp, one side blackened because his coming had interrupted the wife's cleaning of it. Under this lamp he leaves all his money before he goes. Then, although he rushes toward his car, which is back on the road, he never does reach it, for he succumbs in the road to a heart attack, brought on apparently by his overexertion. His overexcitement, however, is perhaps equally contributory, and the half-cleaned lamp is a central symbol in the story explaining the true inner cause of Bowman's death. The wife is holding this lamp when she first appears in the story; later she places it on a table centrally located in one of the rooms. After Sonny, the husband, brings a burning stick of fire from a Mr. Redmond's (the man Sonny "farms for"), the wife lights the lamp and it shows its "dark and light." Associated with the wife, this lamp, dark and light, is symbolic of womanhood, and it also reflects Bowman's "darkened" and "enlightened" views of the wife's identity. Its dark and light suggest the two aspects of woman, the motherly and the sexual, the eternal and the temporal, but the dark and light also foreshadow Bowman's imminent death as a "darkness" suffused ironically with knowledge, or "light." On one level of meaning, Bowman's darkened view ironically "sees," in the literal darkness of the cabin, the dark side of woman in the young wife--the mysterious, eternal side, connected with motherhood. Yet just as ironically, his enlightened view, after he recognizes the wife's true age and Sonny's true relationship to her, sees in

the literal light from the lamp only the sexual and temporal side of woman--the relatively "unmysterious" side, as Bowman himself conceives. He thus feels that he has been "cheated," or forced into painful self-recognition not by a dark mysterious force at all but by a "simple thing"; he feels that he has been aided and hosted through auspices "anyone could have had." Yet Bowman's resentment of the literal truth he discovers suggests the spiritual disease that causes him spiritual death when complicated by self-knowledge. His reaction to his discovery reveals his inadequate concept of life, for it reflects his inability to recognize the dark and the light as one. Bowman fails to recognize what his experience implies--that marriage is not a "simple thing" at all but a complex mystery, and that it is not something "anyone could have had." He himself could not. Before recognizing the true nature of the couple's relationship, Bowman reflects that the man and woman ". . . withheld some ancient promise of food and warmth and light." Then after his recognition, he somewhat differently reflects that "There was nothing remote or mysterious here--only something private. The only secret was the ancient communication between two people." From believing himself the victim of a "conspiracy," Bowman comes to believe himself the butt of "some sort of joke." In each case, however, Bowman's only concern is for himself (as self-concern is actually the only motive Bowman feels throughout the story, even when he wishes, in the moment of recognition of his loneliness, to "flood" his heart with love); self-concern, therefore, is what prevents Bowman from seeing that the "ancient communication" is the same as the "ancient promise." His "weak heart" is ultimately symbolic of his weak insight into the nature of love and the meaning of marriage, and

this weakness of insight is the disease that alienates Bowman inwardly from those who share the communication and claim the promise. Although Bowman senses his loss, he never comprehends why he is life's victim.

The chief device for achieving structural subjectivity through narration in "Death of a Traveling Salesman" is the incorporating of the couple's mistaken identity into the vision of the fictional illusion. This device gives Bowman's misconception the dramatic intensity it needs both to bring its thematic implications into focus and to suggest the measure of Bowman's shock at discovering the truth. The device of mistaken identity as a function of narration occurs also in both "June Recital" and "Sir Rabbit," although in neither of these narratives does it define structure so clearly as it does in "Death of a Traveling Salesman." Mattie Will Sojourner, however, is finally able to achieve complexity of vision through later experience by relating the earlier false and true identities (i.e., King's and the twins') to each other, whereas Bowman's radical separation of the false and the true into absolute categories indicates moral limitation and an impotent vision toward the outside world of others.

Discussing the language and imagery of "Death of a Traveling Salesman" Alfred Appel observes in his study several particular functions of the story's subjective narrative approach: he notes and traces the use of "floating" imagery to create the effect of Bowman's delirium, the use of sun and fire imagery to convey Bowman's impotent fear of natural vitality, and the use of other images and motifs germane to Bowman's mind to make his death wish apparent in the narrative fabric and assumed setting.[8] For example, Appel notes that Bowman's mistaking of the young female

for an old one reflects his inward desire to identify with the past, to go backward in time to childhood and finally to death: Bowman seeks, according to Appel, to identify the woman in the cabin with his own grandmother (whom he recalls in the story with connotations of security, comfort, a "big feather bed . . ."). Thus the wife's red-and-yellow quilt, for instance, looks to Bowman "a little like his grandmother's girlhood painting of Rome burning."

These and other devices of subjective central intelligence narration in "Death of a Traveling Salesman" ultimately extend the image of the world of Bowman's recent illness throughout the fictional illusion to suggest the moral "sickness" that so conditions the perspective that Bowman has, not just on the last experience in his life, but actually on that whole life as well. This is the way Bowman himself recalls his period in the hospital:

> He had lived a month in which nothing had happened except in his head and his body--an almost inaudible life of heartbeats and dreams that came back, a life of fever and privacy, a delicate life which had left him weak to the point of--what? Of begging (CG, 240).

As described here, this "inaudible life of heartbeats" is an appropriate metaphor for the world that is seen, the life that is felt, through Bowman's perspective in the story. Periodically during the narrative Bowman is conscious of his heartbeats and fearful that someone else will hear them--especially so in the concluding scene of his death. In that concluding scene, however, as Bowman covers his heart with his hands to muffle its noise, the external narrator seems to break the otherwise almost uninterrupted process of subjective narration to comment, "But nobody heard it." Perhaps, though, Miss Ruth Vande Kieft, in noting the

companionship of "Death of a Traveling Salesman" to "The Hitch-Hikers," cites the best rationale for Bowman's perspective in quoting Miss Welty's own words (Place in Fiction):

> The best comment on the two salesman stories is Miss Welty's own in quite another context--her essay on the importance of place in fiction: "Being on the move is no substitute for feeling. Nothing is. And no love or insight can be at work in a shifting and never-defined position, where eye, mind, and heart have never willingly focused on a steadying point."[9]

By developing Bowman's perspective subjectively, making him a center of consciousness, Miss Welty shows that he projects his own self-image into every corner of his shifting and never-defined world. He pauses, finally, inside the remote cabin, just long enough to bring this self-image into steady focus, and then, appropriately, he dies, trying to get back "on the move"--seeking to escape knowledge of that very self he is so obsessed with.

In Miss Welty's later work, subjective central intelligence narration occurs significantly again in both "The Burning" and "Ladies in Spring," from The Bride of the Innisfallen, but it is sufficient to characterize Miss Welty's use of the technique after The Golden Apples if this study considers only the more complex of these two later instances, that of "The Burning."[10] This story has a central intelligence character whose mind, during a crucial subjective portion of its development, is affected by a state of shock, somewhat like Loch's feverishness and Bowman's delirium. "The Burning" is partly a Negro slave's story of the destruction of Jackson, Mississippi and of her home by troops of General Sherman during the Civil War; this action concerns the slave, Delilah, and two white ladies, Miss Theo and Miss Myra:

> Two of Sherman's soldiers, with a white horse, invade the home of the two ladies; though it is not clear how the soldiers attack the women, it is implied that at least Miss Myra is raped, and all three women are put out; the house is looted by soldiers and Negroes, then burned with a child named Phinney [sic] in it. The three women, who witness the burning, then wander toward and through a devastated Jackson; Miss Theo murders her sister by hanging; then, with Delilah's help, she tries to hang herself but apparently succeeds only in breaking her neck and dies by inches in the grass. After a day or two Delilah returns to the blackened ruins of the house, finds and takes Phinney's bones, and is seen, finally, with a "Jubilee cup" set on her head, advancing across the Big Black River.[11]

Not all of the narrative is subjective development of Delilah's perspective, but her vision is central to creating most of the impressions and recording most of the scenes: "The point of view is difficult to locate, but the narrator is usually hovering in and around the consciousness of Delilah, recording what is said and done in a language subtly adjusted to the minds, mode of life, relationships, and idiom of the three women. . . . Frequent gaps in the action have the effect of averted eyes; confusion and ambiguities are abundant."[12]

The central ambiguity concerns the birth of the child Phinny. He is kept upstairs isolated from the world before Sherman's men come. When the house burns, the sisters are the last to leave, and they leave without him (never really questioning this action later). During the part of the story when Delilah returns to the ruined home and finds Phinny's bones, her action confirms for the reader that the child did not somehow miraculously or luckily escape, as Delilah earlier hopefully implies. Yet Phinny's death seems to be the only fact reliably asserted about him in the whole narrative: in earlier dialogue, when Miss Myra declares that she "had Phinny," Miss Theo calls the claim nonsense, even though Myra insists and even names one of their "beaux" that had hunted

with their brother Benton (now missing in action) as the father. After denying that the child is Myra's, Miss Theo then asserts that this missing brother is Phinny's father, and although she does not indicate the mother, she makes the further explicit statement that the child is black. Myra's reply, however, only complicates the dialogue more by alluding to the burning: "'He was white.' . . . 'He's black now' . . . ." Nothing is resolved in the dialogue, and perhaps Ruth Vande Kieft is correct in calling the ambiguity an ". . . unnecessary . . . flaw in the narrative structure."[13] Yet the same critic is perhaps also fair in observing that "Delilah's nature . . . could . . . be used to justify the ambiguity surrounding Phinney's parentage."[14] That is, Delilah's nature is that, "Like Little Lee Roy in 'Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden,' she is incapable of the moral comprehension of her experience."[15] According to Miss Vande Kieft, then, Delilah simply does not know who Phinny is, even though she takes care of him. One might think, however, for all Delilah's incapacity for "moral comprehension," that she would be capable of knowing one thing, if she takes care of the child; she seemingly in that case ought to know at least whether the child is white, black or mixed (and she ought, moreover, to know whether Phinny is her own child or not--a possibility not to be discounted at all, especially since he is kept along with Delilah in the sisters' house). Since Delilah's mind is a central intelligence perspective, it might be a flaw in the narrative that such knowledge as the young woman herself ought to have is never disclosed, yet concentration upon her state of shock after the burning might explain the lack of focus on Phinny from her perspective. Just once, during a vision she has at the ruin after looking into a fire-damaged Venetian mirror,

does Delilah ever contemplate Phinny while she is alone: envisioning a whale as her mind reaches some private climax, she identifies the whale with the one associated with the Biblical Jonah; then she associates that Jonah with another Jonah, who ". . . was her Jonah, her Phinny, her black monkey; she worshiped him still, though it was long ago he was taken from her the first time." Articulating a deep response in Delilah, the narrator's voice is devoid of any exposition that would clarify whether "her Phinny" means that "her Jonah" is the child that is burned. Yet, whether Phinny is white, black or mixed--a child of incest, miscegenation or nature--Delilah's association of him with "her Jonah" suggests a link between her past and that of the white sisters, for indeed Delilah's past world is linked with the sisters' world through her dependence upon it, just as her future is also linked with the sisters' fate.

In the most sustained passage of subjective central intelligence narration in the story, Delilah's vision in the ruined Venetian mirror and her subsequent hallucination evoke the larger, historical context of the action in images that seem to surge up from her subconscious mind:

> Where the mirror did not cloud like the horse-trampled spring, gold gathered itself from the winding water, and honey under water started to flow, and then the gold fields were there, hardening gold. Through the water, gold and honey twisted up into houses, trembling. She saw people walking the bridges in early light with hives of houses on their heads, men in dresses, some with red birds; and monkeys in velvet; and ladies with masks laid over their faces looking from pointed windows. Delilah supposed that was Jackson before Sherman came. Then it was gone. In this noon quiet, here where all had passed by, unless indeed it had gone in, she waited on her knees.
>
> The mirror's cloudy bottom sent up minnows of light to the brim where now a face pure as a water-lily shadow was floating. Almost too small and deep down to see, they were quivering, leaping to life, fighting, aping old things Delilah had seen done in this world already, sometimes what men had done to Miss Theo and Miss Myra and the peacocks and to slaves, and sometimes what

> a slave had done and what anybody now could do to anybody. Under the flicker of the sun's licks, then under its whole blow and blare, like an unheard scream, like an act of mercy gone, as the wall-less light and July blaze struck through from the opened sky, the mirror felled her flat.
>
> She put her arms over her head and waited, for they would all be coming again, gathering under her and above her, bees saddled like horses out of the air, butterflies harnessed to one another, bats with masks on, birds together, all with their weapons bared. She listened for the blows, and dreaded that whole army of wings--of flies, birds, serpents, their glowing enemy faces and bright kings' dresses, that banner of colors forked out, all this world that was flying, striking, stricken, falling, gilded or blackened, mortally splitting and falling apart, proud turbans unwinding, turning like the spotted dying leaves of fall, spiraling down to bottomless ash; she dreaded the fury of all the butterflies and dragonflies in the world riding, blades unconcealed and at point--descending, and rising again from the waters below, down under, one whale made of his own grave, opening his mouth to swallow Jonah one more time (BI, 44-45).

Thus, ". . . the mirror's decoration (images of aristocratic Venetian life) are [sic] blended with images of 'Jackson before Sherman came' . . . And finally, in a phantasmagoria of destructive images, Delilah sees and feels her world violently shattered."[16] Delilah's vision is both psychic and archetypic, and in its context it is also apocalyptic: its closing cyclical suggestion calls up the general theme of mutability, but its aristocratic and pastoral imagery, grotesquely transformed into specters of nightmare, specifically foretells the fate of the agrarian, plantation South after the Civil War. Of the substance of Delilah's perspective, the vision links her inward experience to the outside world and also to the fate of the collective South, as it adds a mythic dimension to the story's fictional illusion. "The Burning" is possibly Miss Welty's closest approach to allegory, yet Delilah's perspective controls the development of motifs and renders them in terms germane to her mode of comprehension.

There is one more significant instance of subjective central intelligence narration in Miss Welty's later fiction before The Optimist's Daughter, that of "The Demonstrators," an uncollected short story originally published in The New Yorker (November 26, 1966).[17] In relation to "The Burning," "The Demonstrators" is also an instance of Miss Welty's further use of archetype in her fiction, as from the "dark night of the soul" the protagonist and central intelligence character, a doctor struggling with physical and spiritual death, has a vision of hope and of confirmation of self. His experience of vertigo during the narrative further reminds one of Delilah's state of shock as well as Bowman's delirium and Loch's feverishness.

"The Demonstrators," however, is different in tone from any of Miss Welty's collected stories; it is different even from The Optimist's Daughter, although it depicts the same period of Mississippi history that this novel is set in, the period of the 1960's. The contemporary mood of the South and of Mississippi especially is inherent in the tone of "The Demonstrators," which reflects a sense of the civil rights era of protest, of some initial breakthrough toward social change, of racial consciousness and of private self-consciousness, too. Yet, while there is a popular awareness of race apparent in the narrative, there is also apparent along with it a collective rationale against recognizing any guilt, urgency or responsibility in connection with the Negro and his social condition. This modern Southern mood is reflected in the image of the diseased and darkened town of Holden, as seen through the sensitive eyes of its doctor, Richard Strickland: its chief symbols are its sick mayor, Herman Fairbrothers (who "feels low in his mind"), and its power failure on the

evening that most of the story occurs. The darkness in setting symbolizes the spiritual death that is imminent in the blindness and moral evasion that Dr. Strickland resists inwardly on personal grounds while Mayor Fairbrothers and others only contribute to it publicly on false premises (convictions of "white supremacy," refusals to diagnose problems or admit "trouble"--an optimistic pretense to health by flouting all the symptoms of disease). While Dr. Strickland observes some forms of light during the blackout, they are either diminuitive (as the lamp in the Negro home he visits), remote (as the moonlight), "flickering" (as the light he observes in the church), dead (as the gaseous glow of the grass fire, "like an anesthetic made visible") or transient (as the train's headlight at the crossing where the doctor waits in thought). These forms of light in the midst of darkness suggest both old Miss Marcia Pope (a retired schoolteacher, perhaps a prototype of Miss Julia Mortimer in Losing Battles), who stands for knowledge rejected and unused but also for the immortality of idealism itself, and the doctor, whose medical background and personal perspective separate him from the collective darkness of public spokesmen (the civic leaders that the local newspaper is fond of quoting).

Dr. Strickland's story begins without much exposition as he is called in the night to the bedside of a young Negro mother; she has been stabbed in the chest about the heart and lies with obviously internal injuries. The doctor tries to learn the identity of her assailant but succeeds only with difficulty: it is her common-law husband, Dove. The doctor's manner is not extraordinary for a Southern doctor--he is familiar but detached, interested but professional, toward the host of black women in the bedroom. Gradually, by the light of a lamp held by one he takes

to be the victim's mother, the doctor begins to make out faces and recognizes the victim to be the maid in the building that houses his office, a girl named Ruby Gaddy. Her manner, while the doctor attends to her and further recognizes her sister and her baby in the room, is one indicative of female pride: she insists upon covering the wound and tries to keep anyone from touching her. During the first part of the story, the narration, while concentrating on Dr. Strickland's perspective, is seemingly objective; there is, however, little distinction to be made at first between the doctor's perspective and that of an external narrator, because the doctor is largely objective and observant until he finishes doing what he can for Ruby.

The doctor's perspective, however, becomes an increasingly full vessel of consciousness as he recognizes more and more faces from the past: there is Oree, an old amputee, a "fixture" for twenty years in the Holden square and a case that Dr. Strickland has inherited. Then, before a similar recognition, the doctor asks for a drink and receives the contents of an old china teacup; it holds fresh water from the pump outdoors, but for the doctor it also holds "the whole smell" of that Negro house. To the doctor the cup further appears as though it were of white ownership originally--as though it could have come from even his own family. Drinking from this cup causes the doctor a momentary feeling of vertigo as he is departing, and later, while waiting in his car for a train at a crossing and still feeling the cup's intoxicating effect, he reflects:

> He had been carried a cup tonight that might have been his own mother's china or his wife's mother's--the rim not a perfect round, a thin, porcelain cup his lips and his fingers had recognized. In that house of murder, comfort had been brought to him at his request. After drinking from it he had

> all but reeled into a flock of dresses stretched wide-sleeved across the porch of that house like a child's drawing of angels.[18]

Comfort in a "house of murder" here suggests the "light in the midst of darkness" motif, but Ruth Vande Kieft has made these further observations on the whole incident of the cup and the dresses:

> He [Dr. Strickland] had recognized the dresses as those of his mother, sister, and wife. They were stiffly starched, like the spines of independent people who can also "stand alone"; flying about they could even "scratch his forehead"--irritate or wound the mind or feelings. For a moment the clothes seem to be disembodied, nobody's property. They make a vision of peace and blessedness, of his whole family linked with this Negro family, of white man linked with black, older generation with younger. All wear the same clothes, drink from a fragile, common cup with an imperfect rim, share the same human joys and griefs; they are linked by society, tradition, common responsibility and service, personal and impersonal forms of love. But they are also separate, and therein lies the tragedy of human life.[19]

As the doctor continues to wait for the train, he reflects back over the losses and tragedy in his own recent life: not only are his parents now dead and his sister married and moved away, but also within the past year alone he has suffered both the death of his mentally retarded daughter and a separation from his wife. These sudden and recent changes in the doctor's life seem to reflect the sudden and recent changes in the social order of Mississippi, except that the doctor's changes are real and not pretended losses--true and not imagined discontinuities with the past order of things. Yet still as he waits for the freight train, the doctor seems to recover some hope for the successful continuity of identity, or self, from past to present, even in his personal situation. Connecting his sense of renewal with the events of the present evening, the doctor thinks:

> . . . he had been patient, but patience had made him tired. He was so increasingly tired, so sick and even bored with the bitterness, intractability that divided everybody and everything.
>
> And suddenly, tonight, things had seemed just the way they used to seem. He had felt as though someone had stopped him on the street and offered to carry his load for a while--had insisted on it--some old, trusted, half-forgotten family friend that he had lost sight of since youth. Was it the sensation, now returning, that there was still allowed to everybody on earth a <u>self</u>--savage, death-defying, private? The pounding of his heart was like the assault of hope, throwing itself against him without a stop, merciless.[20]

After putting his car back in motion (the doctor had counted seventy-two cars while waiting for the freight!), he drives around Holden even though the hour is late, preferring not to go home just yet. Then the lights of the doctor's car discover the figure of Dove, Ruby's alleged assailant and commonlaw husband: he is lying prone, wounded and covered with blood. After Dove asks the doctor to hide him he begins to hemorrhage, and the night scene fades into summary narration from the narrator's perspective. Covering briefly "the other half of the night," the narrator then skips to the back-page of "next week's" local newspaper, the <u>Sentinel</u>. The story that the doctor reads appears quoted in the text of the narrative, and it provides factual details (as many as were ever made available) concerning what has now become the double murder of Ruby Gaddy, 21, and "Dave" Collins, 25. The story asserts that "no cause was cited for the fracas." The account also represents various points of view concerning the incident, the town, and race relations: comments from local officials are realistic portrayals of the defensiveness, evasiveness, determined optimism and fearful prejudice that characterize the public life of the diseased town. "'It warrants no stir,' the Mayor declared."

As the story concludes, the doctor considers ". . . that in all Holden, as of now, only Miss Marcia Pope was still quite able to take

care of herself--or such was her own opinion." Yet, Dr. Strickland has seen what the rest of the town (except for Miss Marcia) is sick for failing to see: he has seen the vital nature of race relationship, and he has found out how much more that means than anything the protest demonstrators are of themselves capable of effecting through coercion or agitation. The concept of civil rights and the civil rights movement in Mississippi during the 1960's form a subtle context to which "The Demonstrators" alludes in nearly every paragraph, for during his eventful night the doctor discovers the reality behind all the abstractions--the truth behind all the causes. He discovers also that it is a truth deep, complex, and concrete, making for continuity rather than for the breakup of selfhood, place and culture. Incapable of the doctor's ecumenical vision of mankind, the rest of the town will misconceive and misconstrue inevitable social changes and make them possibly the downfall rather than the fulfillment of Southern culture. In "The Burning," Delilah fancies that she savors the dregs from a Jubilee cup of white origin; in "The Demonstrators," this cup of common heritage, an interracial communion cup, is passed back darkly and uncertainly to its original owner.

In a few of Miss Welty's stories, then, subjective central intelligence narration is extensive enough to control certain aspects of narrative development: chiefly, in "Sir Rabbit" and "Death of a Traveling Salesman" it helps to define structure, while in "June Recital" and "The Deomonstrators" it provides exposition as well as interpretation and in "The Burning" it also provides interpretation. The preceding discussion of Dr. Strickland's perspective concludes this chapter and

also the examination of all the fiction to be included in this study of Miss Welty. The concluding chapter now follows.

Footnotes

[1]Vande Kieft, p. 116.

[2]Vande Kieft, pp. 116-17.

[3]Appel, p. 210.

[4]Appel, p. 213.

[5]Eisinger, p. 280.

[6]Appel, p. 208.

[7]Vande Kieft, p. 114.

[8]See Appel, pp. 111-24.

[9]Vande Kieft, p. 39.

[10]The collected version of this story (studied here) is considerably altered from the original version in Harper's Bazaar, No. 2872 (March, 1951).

[11]Vande Kieft, pp. 154-55.

[12]Vande Kieft, p. 154.

[13]Vande Kieft, p. 156.

[14]Vande Kieft, p. 156.

[15]Vande Kieft, p. 156.

[16]Vande Kieft, pp. 156-57.

[17]Reprinted in Barbara McKenzie, ed., The Process of Fiction (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969), pp. 327-41.

[18]Welty, "The Demonstrators," in Process, pp. 335-36.

[19]Vande Kieft, "Demonstrators in a Stricken Land," in Process, pp. 342-349.

[20]Welty, "The Demonstrators," in Process, p. 337.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

i

This study has shown that for each of her stories Miss Welty creates a self-contained world, a fictional illusion, that is modeled usually after the contemporary world in Mississippi though occasionally after its historical or mythical antecedents. Seen through a perspective or set of perspectives developed and focused to regard it from some fixed mode of vision, it is described by a voice that is consistent structurally and represents sometimes the narrator's perspective but at other times instead a non-narrating character's, developed either objectively or subjectively. Miss Welty's first volume of short stories, A Curtain of Green, contains narration representative of all the kinds she uses in her later works, and the methods used in the stories of this first volume cover the range of general possibilities inherent in her concept of point of view.

A Curtain of Green contains stories with internal as well as external narrators: "A Memory" illustrates the use of the "character" narrator without an auditor or an immediately dramatized context of narration. Much later in her career Miss Welty returns to that method of narration in two stories from The Bride of the Innisfallen ("Circe" and

"Kin"). These are the only incidents of internal narration without an auditor subsequent to "A Memory" in all of Miss Welty's works, except for "The Whole World Knows," from The Golden Apples, yet this later narrative creates an internally dramatized context of narration and its narrator pretends or imagines that he is addressing an auditor. The only other story of internal narration from A Curtain of Green is "Why I Live at the P.O.," which illustrates internal narration with an auditor. Both "Why I Live at the P.P." and "A Memory" have implied comprehensive perspectives at ironic distances from their "transparent" narrators, but the narrator of "Why I Live at the P.O." is the more transparent of the two, and that story's irony and narrative distance from the reader is the more clear-cut and readily perceived. Again in a chapter of The Golden Apples Miss Welty uses internal narration with an auditor, but Kate Rainey in "Shower of Gold" is nowhere as transparent as is "Sister" in "Why I Live at the P.O.": while Kate's narrative context and auditor are more clearly drawn than are "Sister's," Kate's character is more sympathetic (if not more complex) than Sister's, and the irony that does develop in "Shower of Gold" is more subtle and subdued than that of "Why I Live at the P.O." The distance between Kate and the reader is thus more flexible and ambiguous than is that between "Sister" and the reader, and in this respect "Shower of Gold" is more like "A Memory" than "Why I Live at the P.O." Yet "A Memory" has one unique feature that distinguishes it from both "Circe" and "Kin" as well as those stories with auditors: the narrator of "A Memory" is the same person as the story's central character, but while the character is a child, the narrator is that child's grown-up self. After "Shower of Gold" and "The Whole World Knows," Miss Welty returns to internal narration with an auditor only once more, in The Ponder Heart, a

novel formed upon the convention of the dramatic monologue, having a character-narrator, an auditor and a dramatized narrative context, just as "Shower of Gold" and "Why I Live at the P.O." do. Except for the use of an auditor or a supposed auditor, then, there are only two devices particularly germane to internal narration that Miss Welty makes special use of in her fiction, the devices of transparency and recollection. Recollection is used in only one story, "A Memory," and concerns there being distance in time between the narrator as character and the narrator as actual reporter. Such distance can be conducive to irony, and in "A Memory" irony derives from the fact that an implied comprehensive perspective "understands" more about the narrator as character than the narrator as reporter does. Transparency, another device for achieving irony in internal narration, is used more frequently than recollection in Miss Welty's fiction. Transparent narration, or narration in which irony develops out of the discrepancy between the narrator's level of awareness and the reader's level of inference, occurs in both "A Memory" and "Why I Live at the P.O.," but never again in her later works does Miss Welty exploit transparency as overtly as she does in either of these early stories: while some degrees of it occur in The Golden Apples, The Ponder Heart and even "Circe," it would seem that with such later internal narrators as Kate Rainey, Ran MacLain and Edna Earle Ponder there is more psychological ambiguity than there is in "A Memory" or, perhaps the better example, "Why I Live at the P.O.," and consequently less irony, less transparency and less narrative distance.

ii

Some of the most interesting instances of Miss Welty's restricted external narration also occur in A Curtain of Green. There are, for example, "A Piece of News" and "A Curtain of Green," stories with a mixture of restricted and privileged external narration. "A Piece of News" has an interval of privileged narration, while "A Curtain of Green" contains a shift to privileged narration in the latter part of the story. Much later, Miss Welty repeats this pattern of shifting from restricted to privileged external narration late in the story in "The Bride of the Innisfallen." Still other examples of restricted external narration in A Curtain of Green are "Powerhouse," which (along with "A Curtain of Green") illustrates the use of the collective perspective, and also "The Key," which has a couple as co-protagonists who are deaf-mutes. Finally from A Curtain of Green there are "Petrified Man" and "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden," two stories that develop conjectural intelligence perspectives through dialogue, a device that Miss Welty repeats in "The Purple Hat," from her next volume of short stories, The Wide Net. Yet the conjectural intelligence perspective also occurs in two other stories from The Wide Net, "Asphodel" and "The Wide Net," developed in those stories not so much by dialogue as by the more subtle technique of subjunctivity, or the use of conjectural, often subjunctive language to infer a character's perspective without actual cognizance of it. Subjunctivity, the conjectural intelligence perspective and the collective perspective are all special devices particularly germane to restricted external narration that Miss Welty makes refined use of in her fiction. After The Bride of

the Innisfallen, Miss Welty makes use of restricted external narration in one other work, the novel Losing Battles. This recent novel is the only one of Miss Welty's novels or longer narratives to contain restricted external narration, and like the two early stories from A Curtain of Green it develops the conjectural intelligence perspective (several, in fact) through dialogue; moreover, like "A Piece of News" from that first volume also, Losing Battles has an interval of privileged external narration--a relatively brief one, to be sure.

iii

Finally, A Curtain of Green contains selections of privileged external narration, representative of both the objective and the subjective modes of developing the central intelligence perspective as well as of the use of the primary perspective in privileged external narration to develop a comprehensive perspective. The stories "Clytie" and "Old Mr. Marblehall" contain comprehensive perspectives that are not just implied, as are those found in internal narration, but made more or less explicit in the voice of narration, which serves as the agent of the external narrator. In "Clytie," for example, the external narrator has special insight, or "cognizance," toward more than one character's mind, and he can not only observe the life within Clytie's house but also reveal the impressions of the townspeople. Likewise, in "Old Mr. Marblehall," the external narrator not only knows what Mr. Marblehall thinks the town would feel if it knew of his secret but also understands what the town would really feel. Knowing also of Mr. Marblehall's double life, the narrator finally comprehends the protagonist's motive for deception. Thus the narrators of "Clytie" and "Old Mr. Marblehall" afford a range of vision

impossible to any mind operating strictly within the fictional illusion. Just as the implied, ironic comprehensive perspective of internal narration has thus its counterpart in external narration, so does the conjectural intelligence perspective of restricted external narration have its counterpart, the central intelligence perspective, in privileged external narration: in A Curtain of Green, "The Hitch-Hikers" represents one mode of developing the central intelligence perspective--the objective mode--while "Death of a Traveling Salesman" illustrates the other mode--the subjective mode. The central intelligence perspective differs from the conjectural intelligence perspective in that the former is direct, cognizant representation of a character's mind while the latter is only conjectural representation. Then, the objective mode of central intelligence differs from the subjective mode in that, with the latter approach, there is a "split" between the narrative voice and the actual vision or point of view as the center of consciousness becomes identified with the perspective of a non-narrating character--a "secondary" perspective (not connected with the voice of narration). In the objective mode of development, the voice and vision do not split apart and the external narrator remains the center of consciousness.

Privileged external narration is Miss Welty's most frequently used narrative technique: it is basic to other stories than "The Hitch-Hikers," "Death of a Traveling Salesman," "Clytie" and "Old Mr. Marblehall," even in A Curtain of Green (e.g., "Flowers for Marjorie" and "A Visit of Charity"). In both her later short story collections, privileged external narration occurs frequently (in five stories from The Wide Net and four more from The Bride of the Innisfallen), yet there is only one

significant refinement upon the method in all the works subsequent to A Curtain of Green. That refinement, or special device germane to privileged external narration, is the creation of "multiple-character-perspective" narration, first in "A Still Moment" (from The Wide Net), then later in Delta Wedding (where the device is made to function most elaborately and most complexly), and later still in "June Recital" (from The Golden Apples). In both "A Still Moment" and Delta Wedding several character perspectives alternate as objects of the narrator's focus, while the external narrator's privileged perspective remains for the most part the center of consciousness and serves as a "live," active medium for both moderation and comprehensive vision. In "June Recital," on the other hand, there is neither quite as much shifting of focus nor as much overt development of external comprehensive vision as there is in "A Still Moment" and Delta Wedding: "June Recital" has only two central intelligence characters, fewer than either of the other two works has, yet these two characters are developed subjectively during their respective focal segments of the narrative, so that each becomes a separate center of consciousness for particular structural units of the story, although finally the center of consciousness in "June Recital" does shift outside the fictional illusion. It is moreover interesting to note here that in Miss Welty's fiction "narrative shifts" occur not only in center of consciousness (from character to character and also from character to external narrator) but also in mode of vision (from restricted to privileged access, as in "A Curtain of Green" and "The Bride of the Innisfallen"), as well as in direct, objective focus (or again from character to character, as in "A Still Moment" and Delta Wedding). There are, however, no shifts from

internal to external voice, or from external to internal either, in all of Miss Welty's fiction: in every one of Miss Welty's individual works of fiction, the continuity of the voice of narration, regardless of shifts in focus, mode of vision ("access") or center of consciousness, affords the first principle of structural unity to its narrative.

Two other novels in addition to Delta Wedding and The Golden Apples contain privileged external narration; these are The Robber Bridegroom, written relatively early in Miss Welty's career, and The Optimist's Daughter, the author's most recent work. While neither The Robber Bridegroom nor The Optimist's Daughter contains "multiple-character-perspective" narration, they are yet vastly different in their respective applications of privileged external narration. There is actually not much central intelligence narration in The Robber Bridegroom--there is not enough concern for psychological realism in that novel for the narrator to develop any serious kind of focus toward a character's mind that would result in a sustained central intelligence perspective. In The Optimist's Daughter, however, by far the bulk of the narrative is devoted to central intelligence, concentrating, usually objectively though occasionally subjectively, upon the single secondary perspective of Laurel Hand. The Optimist's Daughter, like Delta Wedding--and like most of Miss Welty's other fiction as well--is seriously concerned with psychological realism, and narrative technique, in one form or another, is the chief means she has for achieving this realism in The Optimist's Daughter and most all her work that precedes it. Yet, in the last analysis, any contrast between The Robber Bridegroom and The Optimist's Daughter reveals ultimately both the masterful range of storytelling techniques at Miss Welty's disposal and the

level of power she has sustained in narrative technique from her early works up to her most recent publication.

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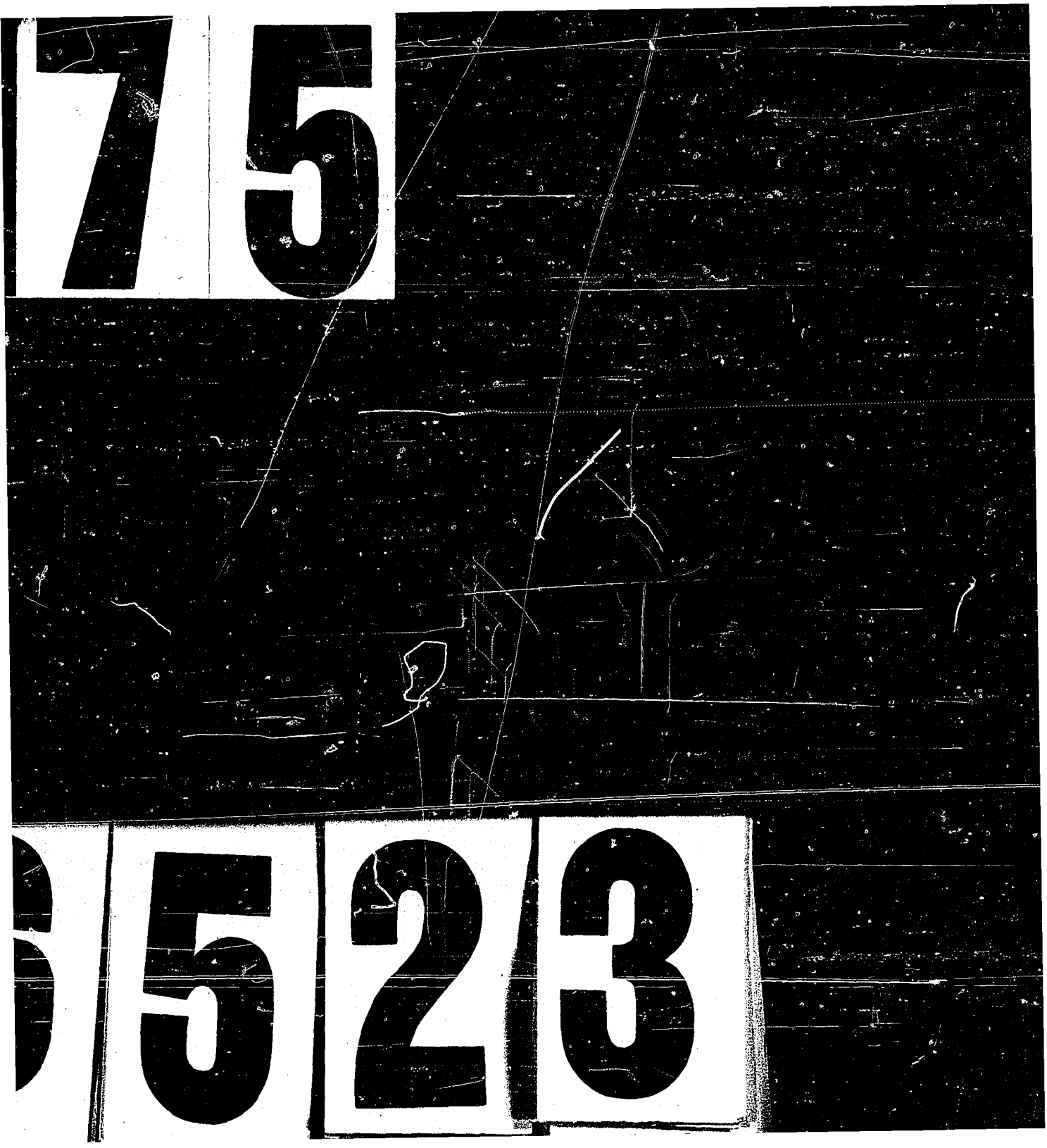
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