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The Narrative Lens: Understanding Eudora Welty's Fiction through Her Photography.

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The Narrative Lens:
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ABSTRACT

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Eudora Welty's brief photographic career offers valuable insight into the development of her literary voice. She discovers many of the distinguishing characters of her fiction during the 1930s while traveling through Mississippi writing articles for the Works Progress Administration and taking pictures of the people and places she encountered. Analyzing the connections between her first collection of photographs, One Time, One Place: Mississippi during the Depression: A Snapshot Album, and her first collection of short stories, A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories, reveals the writer's sympathetic attitude towards her characters, the prominence of place in her fiction, and her use of time in the telling of a story.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the first living author included in the Library of America series and as a member of the Academy of Arts and Letters, Eudora Welty received wide acclaim from readers, writers, and scholars of fiction during a career that spanned several decades. Among her awards were Guggenheim fellowships, four O. Henry Short Story Awards, and a Pulitzer Prize. Welty was responsible for seven collections of short stories, five novels, and many book reviews, essays, and lectures—making her one of the most prominent writers of the twentieth century.

When Welty returned home from college in the early 1930s, she began her writing career as a script-producer, editor of Lamar Life and Radio News for the WJIX radio station in Jackson, Mississippi, and correspondent for the print publication Commercial Appeal. In 1935, she became the publicity agent for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in Mississippi and was responsible for traveling through the state to gather materials for her articles. Welty's fiction career began with the publication of two of her short stories, "Death of a Traveling Salesman" and "Magic," in the 1936 edition of the literary magazine Manuscript (Bryant 6).

In the following years, several national literary publications including The Southern Review, Atlantic Monthly, The New Yorker, and Harper's Bizarre featured her short fiction. By 1941, Welty reached a wider audience with the release of her first collection of short stories, A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories. Victor H. Thompson, author of an in-depth Eudora Welty reference guide, claims that A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories allowed Welty to "[gain] the attention of the literary world" (vii).

Thompson states in his introduction that in the years since their original publication, Welty's stories "have inspired a wide, though largely uncoordinated critical response" (vii). Initially, book reviewers and critics note Welty's preoccupation with the gothic and the use of vulgarity in several of the stories. Welty scholar, J. A. Bryant, discusses in his book Eudora Welty:

> the characters included murderers, psychotics, suicides, deaf-mutes, the mentally retarded, the senile, and a host of people whom southern gentility used to refer to as "common" . . . there were enough such characters, in fact, to prompt metropolitan reviewers to use terms like "gothic," "grotesque," and "caricature." (7)

The abundance of abnormal characters in Welty's stories is recognized in a Time magazine review, for example, which states that a majority of the prominent characters are "demented" and "deformed" (qtd. in Thompson x). The Springfield Republican also comments that the stories are "groupings into the morbid" (qtd. in Kreyling, Understanding 9).

This critical approach to Welty's first collection of short stories draws directly from the themes and opinions presented in Katherine Anne Porter's introduction to A Curtain of Green. Recognizing the difficulties in selling a collection of short stories by a relatively unknown writer, Welty's literary agent chose to elicit the help of Porter, a popular writer at that time. As Michael Kreyling notes in Understanding Eudora Welty, "a published recommendation by a well-known writer, with her name smack in the middle of the dust jacket" would help the book sell (12). Although Porter praises all of the stories to some degree, she focuses her attention on the vulgarity contained in several of Welty's early stories. In one instance Porter refers to the narrator of "Why I Live at the P. O." as a "terrifying case of dementia praecox" and claims,

> "The Petrified Man" offers a fine clinical study of vulgarity—vulgarity absolute, chemically pure, exposed mercilessly to its final subhuman depths. Dullness bitterness, rancor, self-pity, baseness of all kinds, can be most interesting material for a story provided these are not also the main elements in the mind of the author. (969)

Thus Porter, through her introduction, affects critical studies of Welty's fiction from that point forward. Critics rely on this gothic approach to Welty's stories but seem to ignore other elements in her life that may have affected her fiction, such as her interest in art and photography.

Although Welty's stories and novels generate intense and contrasting criticism, over the years scholars have largely avoided a close critical examination of her photography and its relationship to her fiction. However, the connections between her early images and short stories reveal the author's motivations and the perspective from which she wrote many of her most controversial works. Suzanne Marrs, Welty scholar and biographer, states

> Most interviewers of Welty have been unconcerned with her photography. . . . As a result, Welty's career as a photographer, the elements of change and continuity that characterize her photographs, and the relationship between Welty's photographs and her fiction require further study. (Marrs, Images 280)

Literary scholars, including Marrs and Patti Carr Black, have recently researched the themes present in Welty's photography; however, critics of fine art have yet to examine Welty's photographic portfolio holistically. Despite their appearance in magazines and other publications, Welty's photographs have not received close examination in respect to perspective, composition, and aesthetic vision compared to other artists working during the same time period. One reason for this may be the humble attitude Welty takes towards her photographs. For

example, she titles her first major photographic collection One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A *Snapshot* Album (emphasis is mine), which she reiterates in the preface, stating that the pictures contained in the album are "all snapshots" (One Time 9).

In their textbook on photographic composition, The Photographic Eye: Learning to See With a Camera, Michael F. O'Brien and Norman Sibley discuss the elements that differentiate a snapshot from a well-planned photograph: "A photograph is, or should be, an artistic interpretation of an event or person or object. Its purpose is to tell the viewer—any viewer—something about its subject" (51). However, they define a snapshot as, "a casual record of some event or person or object" (51). Although definitions vary, a photograph typically exhibits a more careful construction with emphasis on the elements of composition. Welty's modesty leads her to refer to her work as simple snapshots, but the images in her portfolio prove she understands the aesthetics of photography as well as the importance of purposeful, artistic composition.

Photographer Lisette Model discusses her fascination with the snapshot in a special issue of Aperture dedicated to the topic: "A snapshot is not a performance. It has no pretense or ambition. It is something that happens to the taker rather than his performing it. Innocence is the quintessence of a snapshot" (6). Although Welty's "snapshots" display a characteristic innocence and spontaneity, close examination of her images reveals thought and attention to visual elements, making them more than casual snapshots.

Welty's powerful subject matter overshadows the technical aspects and artistic composition of her images. Chopping in the Field, the first image in One Time, One Place, depicts a woman working in an empty field. Welty's careful positioning of the lens in relationship to the subject, and her ability to release the shutter button at exactly the right

moment, creates an image in which the handle of the hoe runs almost perfectly parallel to the horizon line in the distant background. The arrangements of the visual elements in Hog-Killing Time produces an image that is not only balanced—all of the prominent visual objects are evenly distributed over the image plane so that one area does not seem heavier than another—but also creates the illusion of depth. By including information in the foreground, background, and in between, the image becomes visually stimulating and allows the viewer to gauge distance through the physical proportions of the four most prominent visual elements. The arrangement of vertical and horizontal lines and shapes in Washwoman makes the photograph dynamic and directs the viewer's eye across the entire picture plane. Although the woman is the focus of the piece, the proximity of the tire to her foot and the back of the chair that appears to almost touch her back subconsciously directs the viewer's eye from the bottom left corner of the image to the top right. Welty's knowledge of the quality of light in Washwoman and many other photographs makes them more visually stimulating, and her careful use of highlights and shadows are used to hide or reveal portions of the final print. The diffused side lighting in Storekeeper, for example, not only generates a somber mood that complements the subject's facial gesture, but also reveals the texture of the produce, the wrinkles on his face, and the texture of his shirt.

In spite of the aesthetic beauty of Welty's photographs, her use of unsophisticated equipment may have limited the popularity of her work among fine art critics. Other photographers practicing during Welty's time used more advanced cameras and even artificial lighting. In the preface to One Time, Welty remarks on the basic camera she used to take most of her photographs, referring to it as "a popular Kodak model one step more advanced than the Brownie" that only allowed limited shutter speeds of 1/25, 1/50, and 1/100 of a second and used size 116 film. In addition to acknowledging that her equipment is not advanced, Welty also

belittles her role as the photographer, stating "what merit the pictures do have has nothing to do with how they were made: their merit lies entirely in their subject matter" (One Time 8). In the introduction to Eudora Welty: Photographs, Welty again remarks on her lack of photographic knowledge and simple method of capturing images, calling herself "the instrument" (qtd. in Marrs, "Enduring Images" 73). By applying this label to herself, Welty takes emphasis away from the artist and reduces her role in the creation of the image.

Despite consistently downplaying her technical knowledge of photography, she nevertheless produces images that contain all of the essential elements of composition and careful construction. Sections in One Writer's Beginnings, memoirs taken from a series of lectures at Harvard University, and a letter she wrote to photographer Margaret Bourke White, reveal that the ever-humble Welty did indeed possess some mastery of the skills needed to produce fine art photography. In One Writer's Beginnings, Welty recounts the time when she "stumbled into making pictures with a camera" and first became aware of "frame, proportion, [and] the values of light and shade" (862). When she first became interested in photography, Welty wrote a letter to Margaret Bourke White, whose photography she admired, asking for information about a photography class offered by White. In the letter, Welty professes little knowledge for the technical aspects of photography but mentions: "I have had lessons in painting and know something of certain principles of photography, therefore" (Marrs, "Enduring Images" 35).

As she worked on projects for the WPA, she carried her camera and produced many of her most popular images that later appeared in One Time and Photographs. Although Welty photographed extensively while on assignment with the WPA, her job responsibilities for the agency only included interviewing individuals and composing articles. She took the photographs

on her own initiative. In 1935, Welty assembled several short stories and photographs in a project she titled Black Saturday and attempted to find a publisher for the work. Smith and Hauss rejected the book because of several reasons, including an oversaturated market and the expense in publishing such a piece (Black 35). However, Welty's pursuit of the endeavor shows her awareness of the connection between literature and photography as well as an image's ability to tell a story. In Black Saturday, Welty further experiments with the narrative quality of photography by pasting together several contact sheets containing sequential images. Although the stories and photographs are not directly related in subject matter, Welty uses both to document a typical Saturday in Mississippi in both black and white communities. Although Black Saturday was never published, many of the stories in the book were later included in A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories and The Wide Net.

In 1936, Lugene Inc., Opticians, hosted a gallery showing of forty-five of her photographs in New York City. Many of the photographs depicted black life in Mississippi during the Great Depression, including images of

> women in long dresses and in men's hats strolling through town, church members displaying the costumes they have made for a bird pageant, the dappled light surrounding a washwoman who is taking a break, workers in Jackson's new mattress factory, two young black girls carrying their white dolls, a couple in tattered clothes making a date, and a schoolteacher who is window shopping. (Marrs, "Enduring Images" 15)

In March of 1938, Samuel Robbins, who helped organize the first exhibit, convinced Welty to display more of her images at The Camera House, a new business he had recently opened in New York City. Robbins asked Welty to take photographs of poor white citizens in Mississippi.

The second exhibit featured some of her church and graveyard photographs as well as images depicting the effects of the Great Depression on the white population (Marrs, "Enduring Images" 15). Welty's success in the two shows encouraged her to pursue a career in photography. Life Magazine published seven of her photographs along with one story in 1937, and in the same year she applied for a photography job with the WPA but was rejected.

Welty's writing career also began to blossom in the late 1930s, and she spent less time on fine art photography. By 1939, she had nearly ceased producing images for magazines and gallery shows, although she later published several books containing her images including One Time, One Place in 1971, Photographs in 1989, and Country Churchyards in 2000 (Black 39). Despite putting down her camera to pursue a full-time writing career, Welty's work as a photographer was essential in her training as a fiction writer.

Although Welty enjoyed some success with her photography in the 1930s, the popularity of her work among art critics has been minimal because she did not publish a major collection of photographic work prior to One Time in 1971. Welty had already established herself as a prominent literary figure and had been removed from the photography scene for more than thirty years. Combined with the poor quality reproductions in the original publication of the book, many critics dismiss Welty's photographic career as a mere footnote in the life of a great fiction writer.

However, thorough examination of Welty's life and her interests in both photography and writing reveals that a majority of her photographs were taken in the years immediately before and during the time period in which she composed many of the stories that appear in A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories. The height of her popularity as a photographer in the 1930s

coincides with beginnings of a productive fiction career, suggesting a strong correlation between the two art forms.

In One Writer's Beginnings, Welty discusses the events and people who most affect her artistic vision. She recounts a time when she would feign sleep in order to listen to her parents talk, not to invade their privacy, but instead to become a part of their world—observing their conversations in the same sympathetic way she would later create her images and portray the characters of her fiction. She writes, "I suppose I was exercising as early as then the turn of mind, the nature of temperament, of a privileged observer; and owing to the way I became so, it turned out that I became the loving kind" (One Writer's Beginnings 862). Many years later, this passionate and empathetic observer used the lessons learned in childhood when taking pictures in Mississippi. Welty was able to enter and interact in a predominately black community without drawing attention to herself or experiencing hostility from her subjects.

Welty's perspective and attitude toward her subjects allows her to take unique photographs that differ dramatically from those taken by others working in the same area during that time, such as Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange. Welty discusses her style in One Time:

> A better or less ignorant photographer would certainly come up with better pictures, but not these pictures; for he could hardly have been as well positioned as I was, moving through the scene openly and yet invisibly because I was a part of it, born into it, taken for granted. (9)

Welty realizes that her "invisibility" puts her in a "powerful position" (One Writer's Beginnings 931). Her ability to observe environments without disrupting them allowed Welty to become acquainted with areas and people of Mississippi she had never seen before. In the Foreword to One Time, William Maxwell, fiction writer and editor for the New Yorker, states:

> A writer's material nearly always derives from experience. Because of this job she came to know the state of Mississippi by heart and could never come to the end of what she might want to write about. One Time, One Place is a record of her schooling. (3)

Welty concurs with Maxwell's notion when she states, "the WPA gave me a chance to travel, to see widely and at close hand and really for the first time the nature of the place I'd been born into" (One Time 7). As she photographed Mississippi while working for the WPA, she became inspired by people and places she experienced and later develops and perfects these themes and attitudes in her fiction.

When drawing a relationship between Welty's fiction and photography, many scholars too often focus their attention on the images that appear in both of her chosen art forms. For example, they cite scenes such as graveyards, gardens, and city streets that appear in both her photographs and writing. However, such scholars fail to explore the relationship between her artistic processes. Her process for creating photographs helps explain how she approaches writing.

A careful analysis of Welty's photography reveals the sensitive relationship between artist and subject, the prominence of place in artwork, and the importance of time as a narrative tool. As Marrs notes:

> Welty's interests as a photographer parallel the course of her writing career, and taking snapshots left her with a store of indelible memories that would be available when she needed them. Her photographs of encounters prefigure her fictional concern with human relationships, with love and separateness; her increasing emphasis on locale prefigures her increasingly detailed and

> emblematic use of setting in her stories and novels; and her photographs of cemeteries and parades prefigure the central role of these images in the symbolic structure of her fiction. ("Images into Fiction" 294)

By comparing her photographs with her early short stories, one gains a new perspective towards her work and is better able to clarify the conflicting criticisms of Welty's fiction.

Welty claims to pursue the same artistic and sympathetic ends in her fiction as with her photography. Therefore, it seems highly unlikely that she, who was so careful not to exploit the individuals in her photographs, would present them as "grotesque" and "deformed" in her fiction. Welty states, "I wanted to show the life in front of me. I wouldn't have taken a mocking picture; I wasn't taking it to exploit them. I was taking it to reveal them, the situation in which I found them" (Photographs xxv). Her attitude contradicts the assumptions made by critics who claim Welty's fiction focuses on vulgar and unnatural characters. As Charles Mann states in his article for History of Photography, "Welty's characters are often wispy, strange, and even bizarre, but none of this intrudes upon or diminishes the humanity in her '30s portraits on film or in prose" (149). Although "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden" deals with a side-show act in which a captured black man is forced to eat live chickens for the amusement of spectators, the ultimate revelation at the end of the piece comments on the absurdity of the situation. In Welty's photographs of county fairs and carnivals, she focuses primarily on the spectators and sideshow posters—never on the attractions themselves. While some argue that the protagonist of "Why I Live at the P. O." suffers from some type of mental distress, the story comically depicts a dramatized version of the conflicts existing between family members. The "vulgar" characters in "Petrified Man" comment on the relationship between men and women in the piece. Welty's short stories, like her photographs, are brief glimpses of a moment of time in which a group of

people must interact, and her "instinct and knowledge was to take a group of people whose being together shows something" (Marrs, "Image into Fiction" 283). Viewed in this light, Welty's early characters exhibit physical and mental abnormalities that symbolize their emotional or social conditions.

Welty explores place in her photography through the inclusion of background detail and capturing distinctly Southern gestures. She states that taking photographs throughout the state of Mississippi heightened the sense of place in her fiction. In the foreword to Passionate Observer: Eudora Welty among Artists of the Thirties, René Paul Barrileaux states,

> It is impossible to separate any discussion of Eudora Welty as a writer and a visual artist from her life in Mississippi. A southern sense of place pervades everything she made, and it is through her words and pictures that one shares in Welty's celebration of her home and people. (7)

The inclusion of place differentiates her photographs from those of artists such as Diane Arbus, who took an individual out of the context of place and focused on physical and mental eccentricities. By showing information in the background of her images, Welty provides more of a context for her subjects and thus places them at a specific time and place. She expresses her belief that place was an important consideration in fiction stating, "the truth is, fiction depends for its life on place" (Welty, "Place in Fiction"41-42). Place and location determine what actions are likely to occur in a given story and may even dictate a character's actions.

In addition to place in her fiction and photography, Welty also aims to capture fleeting moments of time and present them to her audience. One Time is Welty's photographic attempt to show life in Mississippi at one particular time in history. Welty comments on the nature of photography: "A good snapshot stopped a moment from running away. Photography taught me

that to be able to capture transience, by being ready to click the shutter at the crucial moment, was the greatest need I had" (One Writer's Beginnings 928). Both short stories and photographs preserve moments of time, and in both media the subject's main battle may be with time. Time becomes the ultimate tool for creating tension in a short story because it binds individuals.

Ironically, Welty's initial attraction to photography because of its ability to capture a moment of time is the same interest that eventually leads her towards writing. Welty realizes that human life consists of a series of chronological events, and

> in their significance to ourselves they find their own order, a timetable not necessarily—perhaps not possibly—chronological. The time as we know it . . . is the continuous thread of revelation. (One Writer's Beginnings 914)

Welty's stories take a diachronic approach to time through the use of memories and dreams. She can provide references to a character's past, present, and future in a single story, whereas a photograph can only suggest events beyond the moment recorded. As Welty states, "I had to go into fiction from photographing. That's the only way you can really part the veil between people, not in images but in what comes from inside, in both subject and writer" (qtd. in Marrs, "Enduring Images" 24). Welty reveals her general interests in humanity along with clues to her creative process through her recorded images. However, it is only through her writing that she is able to fully explore and sometimes resolve these universal themes, social conflicts, and tensions.

CHAPTER 2

PERSPECTIVE

"If exposure is essential, still more so is the reflection," claims Welty in her introduction to One Time, One Place (12). Understanding one's true artistic perspective must occur over time, and as Welty acknowledges, it is only through hindsight that she understands the processes and reasons for her art. Welty admits that as she photographed the people and places of the South, she was ignorant of the truth captured by her camera's lens. According to Welty, "It was after I got home, had made my prints in the kitchen and dried them overnight and looked at them in the morning by myself, that I began to see objectively what I had there" (One Time 11). As a result, Welty's photographs represent her initial interests in subject matter and composition; yet the edited and published prints appearing in several collections exemplify the selection of images that Welty realizes to be important in her career as an artist. Because she hand-picked the photos in One Time, One Place, those images best exemplify her perspective on art. Welty states:

> I presume to put [these photographs] into a book now because I feel that taken all together, they cannot help but amount to a record of some kind—a record of fact, putting together some of the elements of one time and one place. (One Time 8-9)

As Welty implies in the introduction, the record she creates with the publication of One Time is far more than a collection of powerful images. The book showcases the artistic sensibilities that dominate her career as a fiction writer. The photographs comprising the collection feature subjects that one might expect to find in her short stories and novels—rural towns, abandoned buildings, graveyards laden with tombstones and religious icons, and most importantly, scenes of individuals interacting within their comfortable communities and performing routine tasks.

During the Great Depression, many photographers ventured into the South, where evidence of the economic hardships facing the entire country was especially visible. Welty chooses not to make the poverty and sub-standard living conditions in 1930s Mississippi the primary focus of her photographic record. Instead she creates photographs capable of exploring the nuances of Mississippi culture without passing judgment on her subjects. Unlike the photographs of many of the more well-known photographers of the time period, Welty's images lack a strong political or social agenda. Alternately, she uses her camera to emphasize human relationships and presents viewers with scenes that suggest stories. Welty achieves this effect by releasing the shutter at such a moment that individuals' gestures and body language reveal the intended meaning of the piece. In doing so, she allows her subjects to generate the meaning of the piece instead of implanting her own ideas. Using a similar technique, Welty often adopts the role of observer in her fiction and allows the characters and their actions to determine the direction of the stories.

In his book, Eudora Welty's Achievement of Order, Welty scholar Michael Kreyling comments on the connections between the development of a photograph and the way Welty crafts her fiction.

> [this] photographic metaphor for the artist's vision—the snapping of the shutter, the slow process of development, the examination in objectivity and solitude – may also be the best way of reading these early stories. (Achievement 5-6)

As Kreyling suggests, many of the stories in A Curtain of Green emphasize an idea or theme more than an action-driven plot. Through the metaphor of printmaking, Krelying shows how Welty develops a story from an idea. Analyses of each story as a separate work of art or

photograph reveal the symbolic nature of her characters and a deeper understanding of the intended meaning of the piece.

Charles Mann also discusses the relationship between Welty's literature and photography. In his 1982 article for History of Photography magazine, Mann recognizes Welty's often overlooked talent for photography and draws interesting connections between her photographic and literary styles. He states:

> In 1971 when [Welty] wrote the preface to the collection of 100 of her photographs published by Random House, she again drew attention to the moment, and underlined the sense of trust, the interchange between herself and her subjects. Only when she made her prints did she realize what was there. Similarly, as a short-storywriter, she sought to be aware of the moment when men and women reveal themselves. (149)

Welty's artwork, both visual and written, have to go through this development process.

The time period in which Welty practices her art is important in isolating and analyzing her style. Since the invention of the photographic process, people were amazed at the medium's ability to truthfully convey scenes from the natural world. Not long after the invention of the daguerreotype, one of the first photographic processes that involved printing photographs on a sheet of silver-coated copper, Edgar Allen Poe expressed his enthusiasm for the medium in a series of three articles beginning in 1840. In the first of his articles, "The Daguerreotype," Poe claims the camera "must undoubtedly be regarded as the most important, and perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science" (38). Poe and others interested in the discovery of the photographic process considered it to be superior to other forms of art, such as painting, because of its ability to record minute details and correctly show perspective and proportion.

As photographs became less expensive and easier to produce, individuals began exploring a broader array of subjects than was feasible with the earlier, more cumbersome forms of photography. Newer materials and techniques required less light to create photographic images and allowed photographers to explore a variety of new subjects, including humans. In the early days of photography, portraits often required a subject to remain perfectly still for several seconds or even minutes. However, new technology allowed photographs to be made using much faster shutter speeds, and the camera's ability to capture a single moment of "real" life was discovered. Soon photographs of people became relatively easy to capture, and with the emergence of the snapshot came a vast array of moral questions for both the photographer and his or her subjects.

By 1905, photographers used their medium to bring the horrid living conditions of the industrial age the to the public's attention. Renowned photographer Lewis W. Hine began photographing the poor immigrants at Ellis Island in 1905 and traveled the country seeking images of the nation's downtrodden in hopes of raising awareness about dangerous working conditions, poor housing, and a variety of other social concerns. When discussing his portraits of young workers in a cotton mill, Hine states, "With a picture . . . sympathetically interpreted, what a lever we have for social uplift" (111). However, he also warns:

> The photograph has an added dimension of realism of its own; it has an inherent attraction not found in any other forms of illustration. For this reason the average person believes implicitly that the photograph cannot falsify. Of course, you and I know that this unbound faith in the integrity of the photograph is often rudely shaken, for, while photographs may not lie, liars may photograph. It becomes

> necessary, then, in our revelation of the truth, to see to it that the camera we depend upon contracts no bad habits. (111)

In his essay, Hine foreshadows the type of exploitative photography that became more popular during Welty's time. Welty addresses the moral implications surrounding photography and avoids creating images that rely on shock-value alone to convey meaning. Although Welty photographs individuals in one of the poorest regions of the country, her images celebrate pride and focus on the interactions between people.

In her popular collection of photography essays, On Photography, Susan Sontag explores moral and ethical questions surrounding photography. She warns that the popularity and acceptance of photographic images depicting the bleak and "ugly" parts of human society have created a feeling of disassociation with many viewers and changed what people consider art, calling into question what parts of human lives should be viewed by others.

Elizabeth Barret's documentary Stranger With a Camera, explores the moral implications raised by Sontag. The film investigates the issues surrounding the murder of a popular Canadian filmmaker, Hugh O'Connor, while working in rural Appalachia in the late 1960s. It illustrates two contrasting approaches to creating artwork.

In the 1960s, reporters, photographers, and camera crews flooded rural Appalachian towns in Kentucky collecting information and exploring the living conditions of the mountain inhabitants in what was called "the war on poverty." Eventually, some citizens began to feel like they were being exploited by the media. In 1967, O'Connor was shot and killed leaving a rural town in Kentucky while filming a documentary exploring different American lifestyles. Barret suggests that this distrust and negative attitude towards the media led to O'Connor's death.

Years later, Barret, a documentary filmmaker raised near the location of the shooting, began to explore tension between the media and the local townspeople. Although her investigation involved interviewing some of the same individuals, Barret encountered no open hostility and was not viewed as an outsider. In Stranger with a Camera, Barret asks herself and viewers to question the responsibilities of photographers and reporters toward their subjects. She notes that a camera can be threatening, invasive, exploitative, can be manipulated to state a message, and never shows the whole story. She asks if it is possible for photographers "to show the poverty and despair of a region without humiliating the people they portray" (Stranger with a Camera). Welty addresses Barret's concerns in her approach to art. Although Welty photographs in economically poor regions, she emphasizes human relationships and happiness in her images.

Interviews show that Welty, like Barret, is interested in studying the human condition without exploiting her subjects. She successfully enters into neighborhoods and areas inhabited by predominately poor, black individuals, and takes candid photographs without disturbing her surroundings. Welty sometimes became friends with her subjects and cannot remember being met with any type of hostility. Like Barret, Welty carefully creates images of her subjects that show their personalities, the personal triumphs of the community, and a sense of hope in a time of nationwide uncertainty and despair.

Welty's style and methods of photography contrast other photographers who explore similar subject matter. Margaret Bourke-White, for example, published You Have Seen Their Faces (1937), a book about the South featuring her photographs along with text by Erskine Caldwell. In the book, Bourke-White describes the process through which she creates some of her images in Mississippi. In the introduction to the text she states,

> We decided to slip lightly equipped into the Holiness church after the sermon was started, Mr. Caldwell with his pocket full of bulbs, and I with Ikonta and synchronizer attached. I believe the only reason we were successful was because the minister had never had such a situation to meet before. Photographers walking into the middle of a sermon and shooting off flash bulbs were something he had never had to contend with. (Qtd. in Black 36)

Bourke-White's assertive style and lack of consideration for the members of the Holiness church show her insensitivity towards her subjects. In addition to disrupting the sermon, Bourke-White brings another outsider with her, and the two fire off several flash bulbs. Her main concern is to create an image whether or not the scene is natural.

Welty, on the other hand, shows respect for her subjects when photographing at the Holiness church. Because she fears disrupting the service, Welty not only asks permission to photograph but also refrains from using a flash during the sermon itself. Welty takes the role of an interested and affected observer rather than taking control of the scene and the people in it. Welty explains the way in which she gathers her images:

> I asked and received permission to attend the Holiness Church and take pictures during the service; they seated me on the front row of the congregation and forgot me. . . . The pictures of the Bird Pageant were made at the invitation, and under the direction, of its originator, Maude Thompson; I would not have dared to interfere with the poses, and my regret is that I could not, without worse interfering with what was beautiful and original, have taken pictures during the Pageant itself. (Qtd. in Black 36)

Although Welty realizes photographing the pageant would allow her to create interesting

artwork, she sacrifices the opportunity in order to be respectful of her subjects' wishes.

Diane Arbus, a famous photographer who worked from the early 1940s through the 1970s, states, "I always thought of photography as a naughty thing to do—that was one of my favorite things about it and when I first did it I felt very perverse" (qtd. in Sontag 12-13). Although she also photographs traditional subjects such as landscapes and still lifes, her personal favorite and most popular images are studies of the perverse. Her subjects include transvestites, nudist colonies, individuals with physical abnormalities, and people in costumes. Despite making great efforts to get to know her subjects on a personal level and develop a trusting relationship with them, her photographs nevertheless focus on their grotesque characteristics. This emphasis not only exists in the photographs themselves but also in their titles. Puerto Rican Woman with a Beauty Mark; A Jewish Giant at Home with His Parents in the Bronx, N.Y.; Two Men Dancing at a Drag Ball; Transvestite at Her Birthday Party; Hermaphrodite and a Dog in a Carnival Trailer; Masked Woman in a Wheelchair; Seated Man in a Bra and Stockings; Transvestite with Torn Stockings; and Albino Sword Swallower at a Carnival are all titles of images in the 1972 edition of her work, titled Diane Arbus. In describing her interests in subject matter, Arbus comments,

> Freaks was (sic) a thing I photographed a lot. It was one of the first things I photographed and it had a terrific kind of excitement for me. I just used to adore them. . . . I don't mean they're my best friends but they make me feel a mixture of shame and awe. (3)

Unlike Arbus, Welty purposefully avoids pictures of the grotesque. While Arbus feels shame for her subjects, Welty shows compassion and interest. Welty's photographs are free of judgment and emphasize universal themes in everyday activities. When photographing a subject who had

never seen a camera before, Welty would sometimes share a copy of the final print.

Instead of photographing the “cow with a human face” at the fair, Welty chooses to capture images of the banners advertising the attraction in a photograph titled Sideshow Wonders, State Fair (Figure 1). In Hypnotist, State Fair (Figure 2), the three boys with matching stares and gestures look out of the frame toward some mysterious focal point. The photograph is much stronger and more visually appealing because it excludes the object of the boy’s attention. Careful framing hides this information, while the use of lines and shape in composition direct the viewer’s eye in the same direction as the children’s. The moderately blurred background provides the viewer with enough information to place the children in context but not so much that it detracts from the primary subjects of the piece.

Celebration of the human spirit along with the quest to find love dominates Welty's photography and is seen in her images taken at fairs. The Rides, State Fair (Figure 3) depicts three black women with their arms lovingly around each other. Although only their backs are visible in the image, their entwined arms imply a happy family or a group of close-knit friends. Welty centers the three women, who are the only subjects in focus despite the other people surrounding them. The group appears to be looking at a series of large ferris wheels in the distance. Welty enhances the sense of happiness and optimism in the photograph through a bright and cloudless sky. Although visible, the depth of field is small enough in the photograph so that the structural lines of the ferris wheel do not distract the viewer's eye from the three individuals in the foreground. Metal letters spanning the fair attraction spell out "Royal American" and reinforce the themes of happiness and family present in the rest of the photograph.

In Beggar at the Fair Gate, with Jigging Dolls (Figure 4), Welty downplays the man’s

poverty by emphasizing his relationship with the two boys he entertains. Welty achieves compositional balance in the piece through the placement of objects within the frame as well as through her camera's position. This balance creates a psychological ease that corresponds with the pleasant feeling of the subjects. The inclusion of a car on the opposite side of the image balances the visual weight of the man on the other side of the picture. The cars in the top of the frame balance the children at the bottom. Implied lines guide the viewer's eye from the rightmost boy to the car's running board and fender, to the street in the background, to the face of the musician, and finally down the violin and back to the face of the other child.

Beggar at the Fair Gate, with Jigging Dolls; Hypnotist, State Fair; and The Rides, State Fair all feature groups of three, an element that appears in much of Welty's photography and fiction. Welty admits photographing groups of people "whose being together shows something" and frames and crops the images in a way that emphasizes the relationships of her subjects (Marrs, "Images" 283). Unlike Arbus, Welty's titles often convey the same type of human relationships as the subjects they describe. Tomato-packers' Recess shows a large group of both young and old individuals enjoying a moment of relaxation while listening to another worker play the guitar. Schoolchildren Meeting a Visitor shows the favorable reaction of a group of children towards Welty and her camera. Making a Date for Saturday Night and Making a Date are both seemingly candid shots featuring black couples presumably working out their plans for the weekend. Because Welty never intrudes upon a scene, the subjects in these photographs feel comfortable continuing on with their regular activities.

During the 1930s, Walker Evans, along with several other photographers, was responsible for taking photographs of the South for the Farm Security Administration. Photographer John Szarkowski states that the group had a

> coherently conceived function . . . to make pictures that would explain and dramatize the plight of the rural poor to the urban poor—and thus help preserve the tenuous coalition which had brought the New Deal to power. (Taglia 14)

Project leader Roy Stryker instructed the group "not to mock the rudeness of rural America, nor to capitalize on the more sensational aspects of poverty" (Taglia 4). Like Welty, Evans shows the triumph and dignity of his subjects through in his work. Daniel Taglia notes in his discussion of Evans's work during the Depression years, "Evans recorded people when they were most themselves and in command, as they impose their will on their environment, seeking normal human realities" (15). In his documentary style of photography, Evans attempts to show the truth in the conditions and individuals he photographs.

Although he attempts to preserve the reality of his subjects, the Farm Security Administration used Evans's images as propaganda—they were created for a specific political agenda. Evans photographic style differs from Welty's. Evans's subjects are aware of his presence, and most of the people in his portraits look directly at the camera and photographer. Although this type of photography may be best for documenting specific individuals, it produces flat images that show little of anything except the primary subject. His images of sharecroppers in Hale County, for example, feature subjects positioned in the center of the frame with eyes looking directly at the lens. His subjects appear large in the frame because Evans uses either one-third or one-half body shots.

A large number of Welty's photographs feature subjects whose eyes are averted from the camera and photographer, which lessens the perceived relationship between the photographer and the subject in the final print. Because the subject's gaze falls outside the frame, the viewer is aware that the photograph relates to something unseen, something not contained in the picture

itself. Through the use of this simple technique, Welty's photographs relate to more universal aspects of the human existence. Welty also downplays the interaction between photographer and subject in her images by exploring different angles in taking the pictures. In Free Gate, State Fair, Welty shoots from the side of her three subjects, only one of which looks at the camera; in Hypnotist, she chooses to shoot from an angle somewhere between the front and the side; and in The Rides, State Fair, she shoots from behind her subjects.

Welty's photography offers subtle comments on racism and stereotyping which also appear in her short fiction. A majority of the images contained in One Time feature black subjects. To Play Dolls (Figure 5), perhaps her most effective photograph with social undertones, shows two young black children holding identical dolls with light skin and blonde hair. The contrast (the difference between the light and dark areas in an image) is such that the dissimilarity between the color of the dolls' skin and that of the young girls is striking. However, Welty makes the statement of the photograph less intrusive through the use of a pleasant, non-descript title.

It seems logical that Welty's sensitivity and compassion as a photographer would continue through her career as a fiction writer. As previously mentioned, many critics label Welty's short stories, particularly her earlier fiction, as studies of the "grotesque" and explorations into the gothic. Welty expresses her own ignorance of the gothic tradition and defends her fiction as something that focuses more on the human condition, the quest for love, and mood. Like her photographs, Welty's early short stories are essentially based upon exploring the connections between people. Marrs notes, many of Welty's short stories "show the need for love and the difficulty in finding it" ("Images" 284). Welty, who claims to be a visually-minded person, states that she frequently uses visual descriptions to discuss the emotions of her early

characters. Viewed in this light, her early short stories are neither gothic nor grotesque. By examining “Petrified Man,” “Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden,” and “Why I Live at the P. O.” in terms of not only their literary characteristics but also the elements they share with her photography, a new understanding of Welty's early fiction becomes possible.

In reviewing her early fiction, Welty admits to using visual clues to describe her characters’ personalities and their situations:

> I hoped to differentiate characters by their physical qualities as a way of showing what they were like inside—it seemed to me then the most direct way to do it. . . . it is easier to show somebody as lonely if you make him deaf and dumb than if you go feeling your way into his mind. (Conversations 84)

Welty’s use of physical characteristics to describe emotional traits appears in most of the stories in her first collection of short fiction. Examples include Lily Daw, whose mental disability is symbolic of her oppressed condition in society; the Morgans' deafness and muteness represents their isolation from the rest of the world; the mental distress of the sister in “Why I Live at the P.O.” deals comically with family frustration; and the health of the traveling salesman relates to his unsuccessful search for love.

Although circus sideshow personalities appear in two of Welty’s early short stories, she approaches them in the same way as she does in her photographs. In both “Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden” and “Petrified Man,” Welty presents peculiar characters to readers in a sympathetic manner that focuses not on their physical oddities but on their relationships with the others around them. Readers' glimpses into the circus acts themselves come from other characters in the story, never from an omniscient narrator. In fact, a character's interest in the sideshow may be a way of addressing that same character's emotional flaws or deficiencies.

Welty states,

> Keela . . . came about in a special way. In my job I would go to different county fairs and put up booths for the WPA. Once some of the people on the midway . . . were talking about the sideshow act of something *like* Keela, the outcast Indian maiden. I don't remember now, but it involved a little black person that had been carried off. Well, of course my story is not about that; it's about the moral response to it made by three different people. It troubled me so and I tried to write my story in response to that situation. (Conversations 178-79)

Examining the attitudes of the three primary characters in Welty's "Keela, Outcast Indian Maiden" illustrates the motivating factors behind her work. In addition to exploring the reactions of the three characters, Welty also briefly describes the reaction of another important group at the story's conclusion.

"Keela" focuses on the interactions between Little Lee Roy, Max, and Steve that take place on a seemingly typical afternoon in Cane Springs. The story begins as two characters approach Little Lee Roy. Steve, a sunburnt man in his twenties, speaks rapidly to Max, who owns a tavern not far from Lee Roy's dwelling. Steve explains that several years ago he has worked at a fair as a promoter for an attraction called "Keela, the outcast Indian maiden." Steve explains that Keela has dressed in "this red dress an' stockin's," eaten live chickens in front of spectators, "growled like an animal," and swung an iron bar at audience members who have ventured too close to the attraction (49-50). Max initially doubts Steve's story, and although he eventually believes him, he never fully understands Steve's desire to find Keela or recount the atrocities that happened to him. Feeling frustrated, Steve attacks Max and knocks him to the ground. After helping him up the two return to the tavern for dinner. Lee Roy (Keela) tries to tell

his children about the events of the day once they return home, but they are quick to change the subject, stating “hush up, pappy” (56).

The characters and their reactions to each other symbolize the race relations of the time period. Little Lee Roy represents the oppressed Negro; Max, who “just from his look you could tell everybody knew [him],” represents the typical white southerner; and Steve symbolizes the activist who wants to alleviate the problem but ultimately has no ability to do so (49).

In “Keela,” Welty does not exploit her black characters; instead, she mocks the bigotry and ignorance of the white characters. Steve’s age, loquaciousness, and sunburned complexion speak of his energy and determination to his cause. As the story progresses, Steve expresses his unending guilt for exploiting Lee Roy in the past and recounts to Max the distance and time he has spanned in order to find Lee Roy. Steve continually relates his grief to the other white character but never apologizes to Lee Roy. Interestingly, in spite of his regret for past actions, he still refers to Lee Roy as *it*, never relating to the man as an individual—“*it* didn’t want to hit him,” “you know what *it* wanted,” “none of us knowed *it* could talk” (emphasis is mine) (53). Eventually Steve becomes so frustrated with Max’s inability to understand Lee Roy’s sufferings that he hits Max without warning. Steve is also frustrated with himself, for although he finds Lee Roy, he does not know what to do next. Steve states, “Well, I was goin’ to give him some money or somethin’, I guess, if I ever found him, only now I ain’t got any” (55). Steve’s situation represents the lack of direction in sympathizers’ attempts to alleviate black suffering during the early 1930s and shows that simply realizing the problem will not resolve to it.

Max’s dialog with Steve reinforces his closed-mindedness. When asked if he has ever heard the story of Keela, Max replies, “Bud, I don’t hear anything. I got a juke box, see, so I don’t have to listen” (50). Max is uninterested in Lee Roy’s story because it does not directly

affect him. Later on he tries to disengage himself from the conversation again: “Suppose I was to listen to what every dope comes in Max’s Place got to say, *I’d* be nuts” (51). Max knows it would be overwhelming to listen to everyone’s opinions, and he finds it easier to remain unreceptive than to digest other people’s thoughts and concerns.

Unlike the other characters, Little Lee Roy remains silent throughout much of the story. While Max and Steve discuss the sideshow act and even ask Lee Roy for verification, Lee Roy expresses himself only through a few terse sentences and several animated gestures. His inability to communicate with the white men illustrates the Negroes’ inability to vocalize their problems against the white-dominated society. The only words he contributes to the conversation are in response to one of Max’s questions about Steve: “Naw suh, don’t think he crazy, mista” (50). Readers witness Lee Roy’s animal-like gestures and sounds. In several ways, he finds it just as difficult to communicate with the white men now that he free than while he was held captive at the carnival. The narrator describes Lee Roy as trembling all over his body, grinning incessantly, and laughing in a hysterical fashion. Even when his children return home, and Lee Roy tries to relate the events of the day to them, they promptly hush him. These children represent the younger generation of southern blacks and do not want to talk about the hard life of their father. By the story’s conclusion, no one is genuinely interested in listening to Lee Roy’s story, and no one is willing to deal with the moral implications of his time in captivity. Although the characters discuss Lee Roy’s pitiful condition, Welty is careful not to exploit the character. As in her photographs, the meaning of the story is more universal. Readers learn that many of Lee Roy’s freakish qualities are imagined, and his physical condition is used as a symbol of race relations during that time period.

“Petrified Man,” Welty’s other short story featuring a sideshow character, “seems in part

inspired by the circuses that came to the Jackson fairgrounds in the late 1930s; Welty photographed them assiduously—including a side-show poster touting as 'Ossified Man'" (Schmidt 79). Like "Keela," the characters' physical traits create and propel social commentary. In this instance, however, the narrator exposes the relationships between men and women.

The interaction between two women in a beauty parlor reveals the central conflict of "Petrified Man." Leota, a beautician at the parlor, gossips with Mrs. Fletcher at her weekly hair appointments. Readers learn that Mrs. Fletcher is pregnant, although she has not yet told her husband the news. Leota has recently rented a room to Mrs. Pike and has become friends with her. During one of the visits, Mrs. Fletcher and Leota casually gossip on a myriad of subjects including a freak show that has recently opened in the vacant shop next door to the beauty parlor. Leota is extremely interested in several of the attractions at the show such as a bottle containing a set of deceased conjoined twins, several pygmies, and a petrified man, whose body is turning to stone at his joints. At the second appointment, Leota informs Mrs. Fletcher that Mrs. Pike has identified the Petrified Man as an individual wanted for four rapes after recognizing him in a pulp magazine furnished by Leota. Leota expresses her frustration at the turn of events because Mrs. Pike wins a $500 bounty for the wanted felon and promptly decides to move out of the rental property.

While the story exhibits its share of freak characters, Welty focuses on the personality flaws of the women customers and workers of the beauty shop. As noted by Kreyling, "the patrons of Leota's beauty parlor display the selfish and vulgar behavior of women who demand that society (control of which they have seized) punish all men for repeated transgressions" (Kreyling, Order 8). Welty uses the ironic setting of the beauty shop to further develop this theme, for although the women are beautifying their exteriors, readers witness the corruption and

degradation of their personalities as the story progresses. To add to the irony, the description of the parlor's interior resembles a torture chamber more than a place of business. Mrs. Fletcher is "hidden in [a] den of curling fluid and henna pecks," Leota has a "black part in . . . yellow curls" and "strong red-nailed fingers" that "press into Mrs. Fletcher's scalp," and Thelma has "blood-red lips" (22-24). Vande Kieft comments that the parlor "suggests torture more than indulgence, including such things as wave pinchers, dryers, henna packs, cold wet towels, permanent machines, [and] pungent fluids" (73). At least two of the women in the parlor are smoking, an occurrence that augments the musty, dungeon-like feeling already established in the description of the setting.

Welty also applies irony in describing her characters' behaviors. Elizabeth Evans argues that the Petrified Man's

> astonishing condition is fake, of course, but the complete insensitivity of the women in the story toward men in general, and their respective husbands in particular, is not. The presence of a supposed freak brings the real freaks—those who figuratively turn men to stone—to prominence. (54)

The women's complete dominance over and "insensitivity" towards the men in the story is evident through the gossip and conversation between the women in the parlor. Mrs. Fletcher repeatedly ridicules her husband with comments such as: "Mr. Fletcher can't do a thing with me. . . . If he so much as raises a voice against me, he knows good and well I'll have one of my sick headaches, and then I'm just not fit to live with," and "Mr Fletcher takes bending exercises every night of the week. I make him" (28). Mrs. Fletcher provides an excellent synopsis of the women's attitude in her statement,

> Women have to stand up for themselves, or there's just no telling. But you take

> me—I ask Mr. Fletcher's advice now and then, and he appreciates it, especially on something important, like is it time for a permanent—not that I've told him about the baby. (31-32)

Leota's husband is portrayed as an out-of-work bum, and she further emasculates him by making jokes about his size: "Fred's five foot ten . . . but I tell him he's still a shrimp, account of I'm so tall" (27). The story ends with Leota beating Mrs. Pike's young son, a symbolic act that shows the women's influence on even the younger generation of men. This symbolism is made stronger and more obvious by the many women that stop to watch the occurrence:

> Leota's eleven o'clock customer pushed open the swing door upon Leota paddling [Billy] heartily with the brush, while he gave angry but belittling screams which penetrated beyond the booth and filled the whole curious beauty parlor. From everywhere ladies began to gather round to watch the paddling. (36)

Gasping, Leota calls Billy her "little man" (36). Throughout the story, all of the males are either sideshow freaks, unable to contribute financially to their relationships, unable to influence the events occurring around them, or are left unaware of the real world because of their wives. However, the women behave in such a self-destructive, thoughtless manner that readers begin to sympathize more with the men, even with a man who raped four women, than with any of the female characters. While Welty avoids freaks in her images, she constructs her story in such a way that that they are the most "normal" characters presented in it.

"Why I Live at the P. O." is about a young woman who decides to leave her family's home and move into the post office where she works. The decision occurs in the heat of an emotional but ridiculous family quarrel in which the narrator, referred to only as "Sister," feels slighted by her younger sister and the rest of the family. After an afternoon of arguing, she

gathers her belongings and moves to the town's small post office. Although the narrator is highly emotional and even silly at times, the story is more of a comical view of family dynamics than a character study of a mentally-disturbed individual, as suggested by Porter.

The main conflict in the piece arises when Sister's younger sister suddenly returns home after separating from her husband, Mr. Whitaker. The first paragraph of the story reveals two important facts that may have led to the animosity between the sisters—Stella-Rondo is exactly one year younger than Sister and has been spoiled her whole life, and Sister has dated Mr. Whitaker before Stella married him. From that point on, sibling rivalry and childish reactions escalate to the point that Sister feels compelled to leave her home. Stella-Rondo tells a lie at dinner that makes Papa-Daddy mad at Sister. When an intoxicated Uncle Rondo appears for the Fourth of July celebration, he also turns against Sister and lights fireworks in her room the following morning. By the end of the story, Mama is also perturbed, and, like the rest of the family, vows never again to return to the post office.

The narrator's perspective reveals much humor in the story. Instead of relying on an omniscient narrator, Welty chooses Sister to relate the series of events to readers. Sister expresses her frustrations with the rest of her family and continues to argue her point of view to the implied reader of the story. While critics such as Porter believe the story to be a study of an individual with mental problems, the comedic element allows viewers to perceive the events more as a candid snapshot or glimpse into a typical family. Sister tries throughout the retelling of the story to convince the reader that she is correct in feeling persecuted and goes to great lengths to reinforce her belief that the entire family has unfairly turned against her. She attempts to build sympathy for herself by stating how sensitive she is. After Uncle Rondo throws firecrackers into the bedroom, Sister reminds her audience, "Well, I'm just terribly susceptible to noise of any

kind, the doctor has always told me I was the most sensitive person he had ever seen in his whole life, and I was terribly prostrated" (65). In addition, the readers hear only told her side of the argument. The actions of the other family members are retold through Sister and must be assumed to be skewed. The concluding paragraphs further expose the humor of the situation when readers find out that Sister only has been out of the house for five days. Sister explains to her imagined audience, "And if Stella-Rondo should come to me this minute, on bended knees, and *attempt* to explain the incidents of her life with Mr Whitaker, I'd simply put my fingers in both my ears and refuse to listen" (69). Sister ends the story with a final act of childishness emphasizing her own immaturity.

Elizabeth Evans agrees that there is definitely an abundance of "abnormal" characters in Welty's fiction but is quick to point out that "In Miss Welty's stories, these abnormal characters are . . . absorbed, not exploited" (53). Kreyling and others concur with Evans's observation. Kreyling notes that in many stories in A Curtain of Green, "a main character with some defect, physical, psychological, or moral, is universalized, and a point about the nature of individual human existence is made" (Order 9). Welty praises the imperfect nature of human existence. She recognizes that flaws and defects bind individuals to each other because insecurity is universal. As a keen observer, she pinpoints elements of human existence in the smallest details, and as an artist, she transforms it into a universal statement with associations that reach beyond a page or a print.

CHAPTER 3

PLACE

In his speech delivered at the State Historical Museum honoring the publication of a collection of Welty's photographs, Robert MacNeil comments on the relationship between Welty's photographs and her fiction, stating the collection "throws into fresh relief the qualities that have made her one of the great writers of the twentieth century, the qualities that link her to the great writers of other centuries. . . . Her largesse shines from this book" (15). MacNeil elaborates on these characteristics as he analyzes Welty's unusual approach to photography, particularly noting Welty's ability to clearly render time and place in her images. Welty's awareness of this quality is evident in the title of her first major published collection of photographs <u>One Time, One Place</u>. MacNeil states, "Someone who studied these photographs carefully would know in what time and place they were taken" (10). Critics widely discuss Welty's use of place in both her short stories and novels and many consider her a "regional" or "Southern" writer. However, few scholars have analyzed the relationship between the use of place in her photography and her fiction. Examining this connection provides a valuable insight into the development of her artistic voice and may even explain her fascination with place and its many functions in literature and photography.

Place, as Welty uses it, is more than a visual or verbal description of the setting of a particular photograph or story. Unlike a static description of a specific area or space, place in either of Welty's artistic media enhances the ambience, making the action believable and emphasizing the central conflict of the piece. In Patricia Reynolds Price's essay on place in Welty's fiction, she states that place

> consists of setting and scene; the present, past, and future; traditions and customs; atmosphere; the whole exterior world plus the interior world which includes the emotion and reason of the characters. Place, then, is inclusive of landscape, weather, time, and influence on character. (43)

In both her fiction and photography, Welty uses many of these qualities of place to both define her characters and propel the action of the piece.

Welty makes her interest and respect for Mississippi and its inhabitants widely known through her art. This geographical and cultural area is the setting for a majority of Welty's published fiction, and she frequently discusses the region in her interviews and non-fiction. However, Marrs offers evidence that the young Eudora Welty did not view the area with the same reverence as did the mature writer. Marrs references a letter written by Welty to Virginia Woolf in which Welty describes Mississippi as "ghost-like . . . (for nothing may ever happen)" (Biography 39). Marrs states that Welty "longed for a vital cultural life and would continue to do so" (Biography 39). In a personal letter to Frank Lowell during the same time period, Welty again expresses her discontent by stating she was "sick of Jackson" (Marrs, Biography 50). Through photography, Welty witnesses firsthand the diversity of Mississippi life and becomes aware of the richness surrounding her.

Welty makes her best photographs in the counties of her home state. Although she photographed in Paris and New York City, all the photographs she chooses to publish in One Time show life in Mississippi. Her photographs in New York City, for example, often feature crowded streets packed with individuals and large metal structures. Her Mississippi portraits describe the personalities of her subjects through the use of closer shots and more inviting gestures. The subject matter of her rural photographs and her attitude towards these subjects

reveal her appreciation of and close relationship to the agrarian lifestyle. Many of the images in Welty's first published volume of photographs feature individuals working on farms or participating in activities that demonstrate an agricultural reliance and self-sufficiency. While the portraits show the poverty of the region, the way in which she chooses to produce these photographs celebrates the independence and pride involved with a simple lifestyle.

The Mississippi Welty discovers through her photographs offers the young writer a plethora of subject matter. Her travels through the state in the early 1930s gave Welty the raw materials she needed to construct her many characters and also introduced her to the themes she implemented in her fiction. Welty, who led an admittedly sheltered life, saw and photographed a variety of social and economic conditions she would not have otherwise viewed. Through her interactions with and photographs of Mississippians, Welty witnesses the strong personalities, economic and social conditions, dialect and patterns of speech, and even plots that appear in her fiction.

Although Welty chooses to blur the background in some of her portraits, the photographs contained in One Time, One Place exhibit a strong sense of place. In several of these images, Welty keeps individuals small within the frame, allowing the inclusion of a large amount of background information. In Fisherman and his Boys Throwing Knives at a Target, Welty chooses a vantage point for her lens that allows her to show the property on which the family presumably resides. Welty crowds the focal point of the photograph, the father and his two boys, into the center of the frame. A forest, dirt road, the family truck, and an indistinguishable structure in the far background surround the family. Through the inclusion of these visual elements, viewers witness not only the action of the scene but also the land on which the family lives. In Village, a mother and her two children are such minute details within the scene that the

landscape appears to overshadow the human elements in the photograph. Welty's angle of view allows the viewer to follow the dirt road and the series of buildings adjoining it to its vanishing point in the distance. The two vehicles parked on the street and the advertisements on the foremost building allow viewers to better place the scene in a specific time period and location, thereby strengthening the sense of place in the piece. Confederate Veterans Meeting in the Park showcases two small individuals conversing on a park bench under the shadow of a massive tree. Due to artistic decisions in either the taking of the negative or the production of the final print, details in the faces and clothing of the two men are reduced to silhouettes. In this image, Welty uses place as a symbol for the two old men. The aged tree and the two men sitting under it share a common bond and are both representative of a past time. As Welty describes, "place has a more lasting identity than we have . . ." (On Writing 42). The tree's size shows it age, and while the two men sitting underneath it may move, change, or die at any moment, the tree has more permanence.

In her photography during the 1930s, Welty explores the ways in which place enhances the subject matter of a piece. As previously discussed, subjects in Welty's photographs are often set to scale through the inclusion of background information that allows viewers to place the photograph in a particular geographic region and time period. Welty explores the permanence of land and place's ability to store feelings in much the same way that she does in her fiction. Her many photographs of homes, dilapidated buildings, and graveyards illustrate her sensibility of this particular function of place.

Home, Ghost River Town (Figure 6), while free of human subjects, explores themes of loss and man's relationship to the land. Viewers sense that there may be a wonderful story in the events that led to the abandonment of the homes, and the title of the image suggests that they are

a part of a larger town vacated some years before. Presumably, land was cleared to make room for the construction of the homes, and the images show that the inhabitants of these dwellings constructed fences to keep nature out of their domesticated area. By the time Welty creates the picture, the original individuals living in the dwellings have moved on, and time, weather, and vegetation have encroached on the place once again. Soon the houses will be absorbed, the fences will rot, and there will be little left to mark man's existence at this location.

Home after High Water (figure 7) shows the remains of a once impressive plantation-style home. However, the natural elements have reclaimed the land and destroyed much of what was once inhabited by humans. The path leading to the front door of the home is now covered with grass, and small trees grow where neatly groomed grass once flourished. The large columns, stained by weather, are all that remain of the original structure. Close to where the front door used to be located, a small animal, perhaps a goat, bends to eat some grass.

In 2000, Welty published a collection of seventy-five photographs she made in cemeteries across the state of Mississippi. In the introduction to the collection of photographs titled Eudora Welty: Country Churchyards, Hunter Cole presents some of Welty's comments and insights as she is reacquainted with the images decades after creating them. Welty's comments reveal her fascination with place, and as she discusses some of the many cemeteries she visited over the years, she recognizes that each location has its own distinguishable characteristics. She states, "At Churchill everything was a unit, church and churchyard. Compared to most other cemetery people, the buried dead there were rich, Episcopalians" (Country Churchyards 9). She continues to discuss Vicksburg, commenting that it "had the best statuary of all. Nothing was too good for them to use" (9). The cemetery in the town of Rodney, whose thriving economy was sustained by its proximity to a river, reflects the wealth of its inhabitants before the river dried.

Welty states, “There had been more money down there in Rodney than in some of the other places, as you can note by comparing the cemeteries” (Country Churchyards 9). Welty uses place to define the individuals buried in the cemeteries.

While cemeteries provide an obvious way to relate place to people, Welty also focuses on gestures to add depth to place in her images and fiction. As noted by several critics, Welty’s images often feature noticeably southern gestures. The physical closeness of the individuals in her pictures as well as their smiles alludes to an intimacy and hospitality associated with the South. Clothing such as suspenders, overalls, and hats, reflects stereotypical southern fashion for the time period. Gesture and attire reveal much about the setting for the photographs and are the visual equivalent of colloquial speech patterns present in her fiction. In Crossing the Pavement, concern on the woman’s face as she surveys the streets for oncoming traffic is so obvious that it serves the same function as spoken words. Similarly, one can almost hear the dialog between the two men in her photograph, Tall Story (Figure 8). The gentleman on the left side of the image holds his right hand defensively as if swearing that his story is true. He directs his eyes at the intended receiver of the story, who, at the moment Welty trips the shutter, closes his eyes. The receiver’s face shows a hint of a smile and possibly disbelief. He holds his hands to his side, creating a feeling that he is willing to listen to what the speaker has to say. The woman in In the Bag (Figure 9) smiles widely as she turns her head away from an unseen speaker (possibly Welty). Through the use of a relatively slow shutter speed, Welty slightly blurs the woman’s left arm, creating a feeling of motion in the photograph. Although the image is only a small slice of time, approximately 1/60 second or less, the viewer is able to imagine the subject’s movement and reaction to an unheard question.

Despite Welty's ability to effectively use place to enhance the mood of a photograph and reveal information about the individuals she portrays in her images, she eventually chooses a literary outlet for her creative energy. Carol Shloss attempts to explain this decision in the conclusion of her book, In Visible Light. Shloss states that for Welty, "photography, as an activity of looking-at and gathering-in, no longer [served] as an adequate way to identify the writer's mode of entering into and embracing the world" (262). She continues her analysis of Welty's artistic ideals by stating that Welty, as well as other photographers transitioning into the literary mode, "knew from the deepest meditation that his or her craft proceeded from sources that originated in vision but left vision behind as sight was joined to insight, as observation gave way to identification" (262). Welty's fiction shows her understanding of the power of place, which she initially learned through her camera. Because of the limitations of photography to explore all aspects of place, Welty turns to writing as a means of thoroughly capturing and controlling the way place is used in art.

Dialog between characters in Welty's fiction serves the same function as the use of southern gestures in her photographs. Colloquial speech allows her to indirectly enhance the feeling of place in the work without overtly describing a particular location. Although most of the stories that comprise A Curtain of Green and Other Stories feature dialog between characters, "The Hitch-Hikers" best illustrates Welty's mastery of the technique. While all of the characters speak with a southern accent, Welty uses variations in speech to denote an individuals' race, socio-economic status, and gender. The story centers on the interactions between Tom Harris, who is a thirty-year-old traveling salesman, and two hitch-hikers. Other characters include Mr. Gene, a proprietor of a hotel; a boy who appears on the porch of the motel; a black individual

outside of the hospital; and Ruth, a woman Tom has befriended on previous trips through the town.

The narrator states, “Harris spoke to the hitch-hikers almost formally” when he first offers them a ride (76). He greets them with a customary “how you do” and retains more formal patterns of speech throughout his interactions with the pair (76). A slightly longer conversation with Mr. Gene reveals Mr. Harris’s southern accent but also shows his speech as more formal than the others in the piece. Mr. Harris’s formality highly contrasts the casual speech of the hitchhikers. Mr. Harris’s use of slang is significantly less than that used by the two drifters that he picks up. Welty uses his speech to describe Mr. Harris’s education or occupation.

While Mr. Harris and the hotel owner are talking, a boy enters the conversation to alert them of the events occurring outside. Through the use of carefully selected words and speech patterns, the dialog Welty writes for the young male character, named Cato, reinforces the character’s age and personality. Upon entering the room, Cato exclaims,

> They was tryin’ to take your car, and down the street one of ‘em like to bust the other one’s head op’m with a bottle. Looks like you would ‘a’ heard the commotion. Everybody’s out there. I said, “That’s Mr Tom Harris’s car, look at the out-of-town license and look at all the stuff he all time carries around with him, all bloody.” (80-81)

Words such as “stuff” and phrases such as “bust the other one’s head op’m” not only show Welty’s keen observational skills relating to dialog but also reference the speaker’s age and experience. After Tom arrives at the hospital, the narrator describes speech from another child character who is African-American. Based on the lexicon used in the second boy’s utterances, one can reasonably assume that this child is somewhat younger than the first one. The second

child uses patterns of speech that were common for black individuals in Mississippi during the 1930s.

When Mr. Harris phones Ruth, a female friend who lives in the city, readers notice that the two were at one time involved in a romantic relationship. Welty communicates this information indirectly through Ruth's flirtatious talk. Readers learn much about Ruth's personality through the language and sentence structure she employs. Unlike most of the other characters, Ruth does not use contractions, colloquialisms, or incorrect grammar in her speech. She reveals herself as slightly more sophisticated than Mr. Harris.

Welty uses place to supply information about the characters in "The Hitch-Hikers," but in other stories she uses it to influence the characters. In her story "A Worn Path," the narrative depends greatly on place to guide the action. Welty not only uses the setting to provide a backdrop for the story but also transforms the landscape into its own character. The story centers on the struggles of an elderly woman who must travel through a forest and into a nearby city in order to procure medicine for her sick grandson. As the title indicates, the path Phoenix Jackson travels is a familiar one, and by the conclusion of piece the narrator reveals that she has made this journey for the past two or three years. At the beginning of the story, Phoenix shows her knowledge of the woods as she is leaving her home in the deep country. Upon entering the thicket, Phoenix knows that the animals in the brush may get in the way of her long journey, and she address each one with a warning to stay away:

> 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. (171)

Phoenix's reference of the trail as "my path" as well as in the descriptions of her physical appearance implies a strong connection between Phoenix and the landscape. The narrator attributes an earthiness to Phoenix's face and compares her features to elements of nature. Because of her age, "[her] skin had a pattern all its own of numberless branching wrinkles and as though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forehead" (171). Later in the story, Phoenix's gestures mimic the movements of plants and animals in their natural settings. At one point a dog startles her, causing her to fall into a ditch "like a little puff of milkweed" (174). Moments later, after a hunter finds Phoenix trapped in the underbrush, she tells him that she has been "lying on [her] back like a June-bug waiting to be turned over" (174). Welty anamorphs Phoenix's in order to make her fit more naturally with the wilderness setting.

Phoenix is so acquainted with the path that she has her steps memorized. As she approaches the hill, which she knows to be one of the more difficult sections of the trail, she mutters the directions to herself, "Up through the pines. . . . Now down through oaks" (172). As she descends, a thorn bush catches part of her clothing and entangles her at the base of the hill. As she tries to free one part of her clothing, another is snagged by the thorns, causing her to speak aloud to the plant, "Thorns, you doing your appointed work. Never want to let folks past, no sir" (172). Throughout the story, the land acts as an independent character, impeding Phoenix's journey. Phoenix builds upon this personification by attributing character traits to the forest early in the journey. The attribution of human characteristics to the land is a common element in both Southern and Appalachian literature. Southerners have traditionally been dependent on the land for survival and have thus seem to have created a more personal bond with it.

Immediately before becoming ensnared in the thorns, Phoenix exclaims to herself, "Seems like there is chains about my feet, time I get this far. . . . Something always take a hold of me on this hill—pleads I should stay" (172). As she travels farther from her home, the land becomes more insistent in its message. After freeing herself from the thorns, Phoenix enters the leg of the journey she calls "the trial" (172). Her first obstacle is a stream, which can only be crossed by balancing on a fallen log. Phoenix closes her eyes, and using her cane for balance, easily transverses the make-shift bridge. After a moment of rest, Phoenix has to crawl under a barbed-wire fence in order to reach the field on the other side. The setting becomes even more ominous after she emerges on the opposite side of the fence. At the onset of her journey, Phoenix feels comfortable with her surroundings. She knows the animals that reside in the area, and the descriptions used by the narrator depict a benign environment. The pine needles are "almost too bright to look at" and cones "[drop] as light as feathers" from the tall trees around her (171). On the other side of the fence, Phoenix encounters a darker scene filled with bleak imagery, dead trees, and perceived dangers. A buzzard replaces the mourning dove at the beginning of the story. Bright, colorful needles become black trees and the dead "stalks of the withered cotton field" (173). Phoenix views the trees as "black men with one arm" and even asks them "Who you watching?" (173). The scene becomes more threatening as she leaves the path and must find her own way through a maze of dead corn stalks that seem to whisper and shake as she approaches. She remembers a two-headed snake that surprised her on a previous journey and mistakes a scarecrow for a ghost. Eventually she emerges from "the trial" unscathed and continues into what she considers the easy part of her journey. However, Phoenix is almost immediately surprised by a black dog appearing from the underbrush along the side of the path and falls helplessly on her back into a ditch.

The personified landscape tries repeatedly to deter the old woman but eventually allows Phoenix to reach the city. Ringing bells and brightly-lit Christmas lights greet her as she arrives at the city and offer a dramatic contrast to the dark forest from which she emerges. Her first encounter in the city is with a woman carrying colorful "red-, green-, and silver-wrapped" Christmas presents. Although the city initially appears as the friendly and comfortable leg of her journey, this place, too, presents obstacles Phoenix must overcome. She realizes almost immediately that she must tie her shoelaces, which have been untied since the beginning of the story. She explains to the woman carrying the packages, "See my shoe . . . Do all right for out in the country, but wouldn't look right to go in a big building" (176). The vibrant colors of the electric Christmas lights confuse the old woman and force her to complete this part of her quest from memory alone. The narrator states, "Old Phoenix would have been lost if she had not distrusted her eyesight and depended on her feet to know where to take her" (176). She must also climb "a tower of steps" before reaching the door leading to the doctor's office. The city discombobulates her to the point that, once inside the doctor's office, she forgets the reason for her journey entirely.

Welty rarely presents an overtly positive view of any large city, and as Jan Gretlund discusses in Eudora Welty's Aesthetic of Place, she chooses to focus her attention and careful detail to those settings which feature a simple life, close to the land (1-14). Although Welty was not an official member of the group, she maintained close ties to several members of the Agrarian movement including Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks. The Agrarians celebrated self-sufficiency and believed that a return to small family farms could alleviate much of the poverty that afflicted the South since the Civil War. In addition to using "A Worn Path" to

comment on the negative aspects of modernization in the South during the 1930s, Welty also explores the agrarian belief that nature has the means to support human existence.

Although Phoenix's journey through the forest is a difficult one, nature provides everything that she needs to complete this part of her quest. After reaching the foot of a hill where she catches her dress on a thorny bush, Phoenix must cross a creek. While nature has created this obstacle, it also presents an opportunity for her to overcome the "trial." The fallen log, although Phoenix has difficulty balancing on it, allows her to pass safely to the other side of the stream and is nature's way of looking out for the old woman. Similarly, nature offers Phoenix a much-needed drink of water after she enters the easy part of the old path. Nature not only provides the silent spring but also sweetens the water for Phoenix. She says, "Sweet-gum makes the water sweet . . . Nobody know who made this well, for it was here when I was born" (174). Nature owns and maintains the well. After a black dog startles Phoenix, she loses her balance and tumbles into a ditch on the side of the trail. A hunter traveling along the path stops and asks if she needs assistance, and Phoenix answers "No sir, them old dead weeds is springy enough" (175). The naturally occurring mass of dead plant-life eases her fall and prevents her from being injured.

Both the episodes detailing Phoenix's hardships and the scenes in which nature protects her relate to the Agrarian sentiments of John Crowe Ransom and other members of the movement, who believe that the rewards of self-sufficiency through the land can only be achieved by hard work. Phoenix Jackson overcomes the many obstacles along her path because of her "agrarian" determination. However, her entrance into the modernized city with its paved streets and electric lights marks a dramatic turning point in the story. She is no longer able to take care of herself and is dependent on the help of others to progress further in her journey. The

capable woman of the country must ask another individual to tie her shoe laces once she reaches the city. She is almost unable to find her way to the doctor's office, and once inside, the receptionist labels her as a "charity case" (177). Phoenix fulfills this characterization a few moments later when she appears to be unable to hear or respond to the office staff: "[The] old woman waited, silent, erect and motionless, just as if she were in armor" (178). When Phoenix arouses from her thoughts and does respond to the other individuals in the room, she cannot even remember the reason she made her long journey. Although Phoenix is quite capable of providing for herself in Old Natchez Trace, she becomes embarrassed of her lack of formal education in the doctor's office and even apologizes for her ignorance, "I never did go to school. . . . I'm an old woman without an education" (178). At the conclusion of the story, Phoenix symbolically reveals the ultimate failure of modern city life of which the Agrarians warn. Readers learn that Phoenix's sacrifices to obtain the medicine to obtain will do little or nothing to improve the condition of her grandson because his is an "obstinate case" (178). Although Phoenix is financially poor, she chooses to spend the nickel she is given at the doctor's office on a toy for her grandson. She tells the attendant, "I going to the store and buy my child a little windmill they sells, made out of paper"(179). Not only does she succumb to the materialistic culture of the city, but she chooses to buy a delicate paper toy that has little chance of surviving the long journey back to her home.

Welty uses place and landscape to achieve similar results in "The Whistle." Like "A Worn Path," "The Whistle" relies on place as a personified character to emphasize the connection between the protagonists in the piece and the land they inhabit. "The Whistle" explores the themes of dedication, self-sufficiency, and pride, which are integral parts of the Agrarian belief system. The story centers on the struggles of two characters, Jason and Sara

Morton, who make a living farming tomatoes in a rural community called Dexter. Although it is officially springtime and the two have already planted their crops for the summer growing season, they are forced to contend with a late frost that may destroy their small plants as well as their only hopes for prosperity this year. The narrator describes their meager situation in a number of passages. Their sleeping arrangements, for instance, show them as "lying between the quilts of a pallet which had been made up close to the fireplace" (70). Readers learn that the Morton's spends their nights "trembling with cold" living in "poverty which may have bound them like a disaster too great for any discussion but left them still separate and undesirous of sympathy" (70). On the night of the story, Sara stays awake and "[feels] sure that she would die before the cold [is] over" (71). At some point late in the night, Sara hears a whistle that warns the farmers of an impending frost. She wakes her husband and the two take all of their quilts to the field and drape them over the vulnerable plants. Without speaking, Sara removes her dress and uses it to shield the remaining plants from the cold. After the two return indoors, Jason gathers the last of their chopped wood and rebuilds the fire. Eventually the fire dies again, and Jason sacrifices their table and chair to keep the fire lit. The story ends with the couple listening to the whistle sounding through the night air.

Although the story shows the Morton's poverty and sacrifice, an element of hope surrounds the piece. Earlier in the story, Sara daydreams about the warmth, cheer, and abundance of the summer and fall months. She remembers the shipping season when Dexter transforms into "a theatre for almost legendary festivity, a place of pleasure" (71). The narrator describes Sara's thoughts: "On every road leading in, smiling farmers were bringing in wagonloads of the most beautiful tomatoes" (71). The story, like Welty's photographs, presents the struggles and hardships of life in Mississippi during the 1930s but also presents elements of

hope and persistence. As the narrator states, the Mortons do not accept sympathy from anyone and are willing to sacrifice comfort in order to maintain their way of life. The Mortons exemplify the agrarian philosophy that a life tied to the land is both exceptionally difficult and extremely rewarding.

In addition to providing a backdrop through which Welty explores the theme of sacrifice, place defines the Mortons and is used to compare time. Although the events of the story center upon a few hours in early spring, Sara's daydreams allow Welty to establish the couple's relationship to the land throughout the years. Indirectly, Sarah's dreams also allow Welty to explore the future of the two characters. By noting the cyclical progression of the seasons, both the characters in the story and readers realize that conditions will improve for the couple in the coming months. While they are able to plant their crops every spring and invest their lives protecting their tomatoes, the land ultimately determines whether they will survive or perish.

As Price notes, "even in the opening description of the night and the farm house, Miss Welty is careful to suggest the couple's relationship to the scene" (44). In the conclusion of her opening paragraph, the narrator states, "The moonlight covered everything, and lay upon the darkest shape of all, the farmhouse where the lamp had just been blown out" (70). The light from the moon blankets the Morton's home and through the windows illuminates all of their possessions. The narrtor continues a few lines later, "its exhausting light beat up and down the wall, across the rafters, and over the dark pallet where the old people lay, like a bird trying to find its way out of the room" (70). The moon illuminates the couple's rows of young tomato plants, which represent their only hope for future prosperity. Price states, "This 'darkest place of all' encloses the Mortons and in it the man and woman live. Their lives, as the story develops,

are bound and modified by this farm and the living they try to eke from it" (45-46). The environment determines their lifestyle and livelihood.

Welty continues to show place's power over the story's events in the scene in which the Morton's emerge from their dwelling into the cold night in order to protect their crop. The narrator states, "Everything was white, and everything looked vast and extensive to them as they walked over the frozen field" (73). The Mortons, like the subjects in some of Welty's photographs are engulfed by place. Light from the moon continues to cover the entire scene, and the individuals are set to scale by the vast fields around them. The frozen soil becomes a central figure in the story that the characters must confront before they achieve resolution.

CHAPTER 4

TIME

As previously discussed, Welty photographs her subjects at such a moment that the resulting image produced not only freezes a particular instance in time but also allows viewers to infer the actions before and immediately after the picture is recorded. The narrative quality in images such as Front Yard, Window Shopping, Crossing the Pavement, Tall Story, In the Bag, and Carrying the Ice Home for Sunday Dinner make these photographs function as short stories. French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson states, "Sometimes there is one unique picture whose composition possesses such vigor and richness, and whose content so radiates outward from it, that this single picture is a whole story in itself" (23). Welty's photographs exhibit many of the characteristics discussed in Bresson's 1952 essay, "The Decisive Moment," which is still considered one of the most influential writings on photography.

Bresson uses the term "decisive moment" to express his belief that there exists an exact moment in time at which the release of the shutter produces the best possible photographic image. This moment, which Bresson believes may exist only for a fraction of a second or less, occurs only when all of the elements that comprise a photograph align perfectly with one another. These elements include concrete or implied lines and shapes controlled by camera angle, the placement of shadows and highlights, the use of positive and negative space, and the subject's gesture or facial expression. Bresson asks, "What is there more fugitive and transitory than the expression on a human face?" (31). By waiting for this moment to reveal itself, Welty tells an entire story with a single gesture or frame.

As Welty and Bresson realize, time can be the determining factor in the production of a quality image. A sensitive photographer must set the correct shutter speed (the amount of time

the camera's shutter allows light to strike the photo-sensitive film) and wait for the best moment to release the shutter. Because photography can preserve a small moment of time, the photographer must often ensure that the moment recorded is one that will hold a viewer's attention throughout time. Both Bresson and Welty use the camera's shutter in ways that stop and render the transitory. Bresson describes his methodology for creating images:

> I [prowl] the streets all day, feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce, determined to "trap" life—to preserve life in the act of living. Above all, I [crave] to seize, in the confines of one single photograph, the whole essence of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes. (22)

In One Writer's Beginnings, Welty explains her similar motivations for making photographs and states that learning to describe fleeting life on film also helps her understand the function of time in literature. She states,

> Life doesn't hold still. A good snapshot stopped a moment from running away. Photography taught me that to be able to capture transience, by being ready to click the shutter at the crucial moment, was the greatest need I had. (928)

The camera allows Welty to easily stop and record time.

Welty's interest in time, particularly in the camera's ability to arrest a moment of time, may be related to the death of her father, Christian Welty. Shortly after returning home from Columbia University Graduate School of Business in 1931, Welty witnessed the death of her father during a blood transfusion. Christian, who suffered from leukemia, desperately needed a transfusion, and Welty's mother offered to be the donor. The blood types did not match, and Welty viewed the life pass from her father's body almost instantly. Marrs states that Christian's death affected Welty by embedding in her the "[need] to transfuse her life's blood into fiction, to

create new life in the face of death, to write stories conveying the ephemeral nature of human experience" (Marrs, Biography 36). While she continued to write both fiction and non-fiction, her creative energies were for a short time focused on photography. Marrs suggests that this may be because Welty was at that time "unable to translate her deepest concern into fiction" (Biography 37). In addition, Christian Welty had always enjoyed photography, taking many pictures of Eudora and her brother when they were young (Marrs, Biography 39). He photographed vacations and other events, developed the negatives and prints at home, and even helped start the first photographic supply store in Jackson many years before. Welty may have chosen to pick up the camera in an effort to continue his legacy or retain some type of connection with her deceased father. Christian's death also transformed the style of and themes Welty explored through her camera. Like Henri-Carter Bresson, Welty quickly became aware of the camera's ability to isolate a seemingly insignificant moment of time and transform that moment into something more monumental. After her first-hand exposure to time's power over humans, Welty must have enjoyed the camera's ability to forever stop and preserve a small slice time.

Although Eudora Welty claims there is nothing exceptional about her photographs except their subjects, her published collections show her understanding of the decisive moment. In Front Yard (Figure 10), for example, Welty waits until the precise moment when the visual elements align perfectly before releasing the shutter. This patience, combined with a carefully selected camera angle, creates striking images whose composition mirrors the powerful subjects themselves. Through her camera position, Welty echoes the oval shape created by the young girls holding hands in the tire lying in the lawn. As O'Brien and Sibley note in The Photographic Eye, "This kind of recurring (repeating) shape is often used to create visual harmony in a

photograph. It makes the photograph interesting because the human eye automatically looks for such similarities" (107). The large white shape of the nearest girl's shirt in the bottom left corner of the photograph balances the bright clothing in the top right corner of the image. Welty's precise manipulation of her shutter and perfect exposure time defines the background lighting so that it retains details in the shadows yet emphasizes the subjects in the foreground. The careful exposure allows viewers to learn much about the living conditions of the young girls by providing important visual clues. The barely visible adults in the background add depth to photograph and enhance the composition by providing another area of interest. The inclusion of these figures complements the action in the image by developing a sense of security. The photographs relatively slow shutter speed suggests motion, and thus time, but is still fast enough so that the children's faces are not blurred beyond recognition. Thus Welty effectively preserves a brief moment of time, uses the camera's settings to suggest movement, and intimately describes a specific place.

In Window Shopping (Figure 11), Welty waits until the woman stops and glances toward the window, striking her distinctive pose. The woman's pensive stance and Welty's attention to detail allow the visual elements of the image to fit together like puzzle pieces. The vehicle on the left side of the frame appears to fit neatly under the woman's right elbow and forearm. The three men talking in the background creates a silhouette congruent with the shape of the woman's other arm. The near-touching of lines and shapes creates visual tension and adds to a viewer's interest in a photograph. As O'Brien and Sibley note, "the tension is strongest when objects almost, but don't quite, touch. Michelangelo's painting of the hand of God reaching out to the hand of Adam is a famous example of this effect" (107). Welty positions a reflection of the three men talking in the storefront window and also ensures that her own reflection does not enter the

frame. By including the front portion of the car in the frame, Welty's viewers instantly recognize the time period during which the photograph is taken. From any other camera angle this clue would not be present. Welty provides this same type of clue in a number of her other photographs, including Carrying the Ice Home for Sunday Dinner (Figure 12). The ice blocks children carry reference a period of time in which people still utilized ice boxes to refrigerate food. Although Welty is deliberate with her composition, the photograph still has an air of candidness because the children, who appear to be performing a household chore, seem unaware of or unaffected by Welty's presence. As Bresson notes, sometimes compositional interest is achieved by simply moving the position of the camera by a few millimeters:

> Inside movement there is one moment at which the elements in motion are in balance. Photography must seize upon this moment and hold immobile the equilibrium of it. The photographer's eye is perpetually evaluating. A photographer can bring coincidence of line simply by moving his head a fraction of a millimeter. (33)

While Welty does not dictate her subjects' actions, as a photographer she realizes the importance of controlling a photograph's composition by altering her camera position. Welty's camera angle depicts the boys as well as both of the blocks of ice they carry. By photographing the boys from behind and slightly to the side, Welty places emphasis on the long dirt road the children must follow to get home. The placement of both subjects near the bottom of the frame lengthens the distance in front of them, suggesting their journey is far from complete. In a similar manner, choosing a camera position closer to the ground than usual allows the boys to appear larger and more prominent than they would from a higher location. Looking down at children through the lens of a camera can often make them seem insignificant or even distort their facial features and

other physical characteristics. Welty's choice of lens position also aligns several other elements in the picture. The rim of the hat worn by the closest figure follows the implied line of the brush on the side of the path. The distant shape of what may be a building appears to rest on the shoulder of the child in front.

The most explicit use of time in Welty's photography appears in her images of churchyard cemeteries. In addition to being the focus of several photographs, Welty uses Mississippi cemeteries as scenes and backdrops in much of her fiction ("Images into Fiction" 290). Marrs states,

> Certainly [Welty] was amused by the Victorian sentimentality and excess to be found in the monuments, but beyond this must lie Welty's concern with time and mortality. . . . Time moves inexorably and life is short. Welty's cemetery photographs tell us. (291)

The use of time in Welty's cemetery photographs goes beyond the desire to freeze a moment, for they also symbolize the fact that time can never truly be stopped. In her cemetery images, Welty approaches the statues as if they are living, and therefore composes the photographs like personal portraits. The angel in the Jackson Greenwood Cemetery (Welty, Country Churchyards 48), for example, has its back turned to the camera and seems to be watching over the other graves at the site. Welty uses a similar lens position to achieve the same pose with the Brandon Cemetery Angel (Figure 13). These images, and several others that make such statues appear lifelike, are interesting because Welty attributes human characteristics to inanimate objects typically associated with death. Welty also infers time in these photographs by including the birth and death dates present on several of the tombstones and monuments. Welty's photographs during the Depression capture moments of happiness, contentment, and pride despite

unfavorable economic conditions. Welty achieves a similar result in her cemetery photographs by focusing her attention on the living characteristics of these statues. She photographs statues depicting babies sleeping, lambs lying on the ground, birds, and even a man sitting atop a monument with his dog.

Welty's cemetery photographs also present the cyclical progression of time through less obvious symbolism. Many of the photographs comprising Country Churchyards show cemeteries overgrown with vegetation, suggesting that life exists even in the presence of death. Several cemeteries in the Natchez Trace area depict deteriorating grave markers, although the primary emphasis in these photographs is the large trees laden with Spanish moss. In addition to achieving a ghost-like effect, the plant life shows that death is not the only force at work in these cemeteries. Several photographs also contain grass and weeds that seem to overpower the old markers, and two photographs taken in the Natchez Trace area feature vibrant and healthy lilies growing atop some of the graves. This deeper understanding of the function of time provides the foundation for her explorations of the subject in her fiction.

Bresson states, "We cannot develop and print a memory. The writer has time to reflect. He can accept and reject, accept again; and before committing his thoughts to paper he is able to tie several relevant elements together" (27). Although Welty effectively uses time in her photography, she realizes that the medium restricts her ability to tie all of its elements together in a single, coherent work because it does not discuss the elements leading to or resulting from the action portrayed in an image. In order to tell the *entire* story Welty would need to provide background information and remove elements that distract from the central message of the story, which is something that is not always possible when composing a photographic image. Barbara

McKenzie remarks on the difference between a photographer's artistic vision and the resulting image:

> The eye responds to what the heart and mind, during the act of perceiving, deem important, but the photograph confronts the viewer with everything in the scene that [reflects] enough light into the camera for form an image. Clearly, the photographer's vision and *not* the photograph itself is the closer to the writer's way of seeing. (388)

Welty states, "In my own case, a fuller awareness of what I needed to find out about people and their lives had to be sought through another way, through writing stories" (qtd. in Meese 410). Upon this realization, Welty decides to turn her efforts back to fiction, but the literature she later produces exemplifies what she learned about time through her camera.

In an interview with Charles Bunting, Welty states, "I see things in pictures" (qtd. in Mckenzie 389). Drawing from her photography background, Welty claims to be reliant on visual information, finding and using the decisive moment between characters to drive her narratives. A number of Welty's short stories exhibit this quality, but the technique is most evident in "Petrified Man." The story consists of a series of snapshots created by dramatic pauses in the characters' dialog and actions. These pauses, and subsequent descriptive passages, give the story a photographic quality. By moving quickly from one brief event into another, the reader feels as if he or she is viewing a collection of photographs. In several instances, characters' reactions to time reveal much about their personalities. Welty also uses symbolism to explore the power of time throughout the piece.

Welty establishes the connection between the characters and time early in the piece. She labels and distinguishes the story's characters according to time. In the first sentence, Leota

refers to Mrs. Fletcher as “her ten o’clock shampoo-and-set customer” (22). Later in the piece, Thelma remembers that Mrs. Hutchinson had “come in on Thursday” (24). Welty uses the description of these appointment times to establish a regular, predictable business relationship in these characters. By emphasizing the expectedness of the customers’ visits, Welty plays on the casual atmosphere of the salon and is able to juxtapose the drama of Leota’s relationship with Mrs. Pike against her unexciting relationship with the customers and coworkers at the beauty shop. Through Welty’s use of the frame story, she presents extremes of emotion and action in one continuous timeline.

Unlike the regular visitors with established appointment times, Welty shows that the characters not defined by time are unstable elements in the story. Mrs. Pike and her husband are not customers of the salon and therefore do not fit into the predictable setting of the beauty parlor. Instead, the Pikes are more closely associated with place than a specific time. At the beginning of “Petrified Man” Leota tells Mrs. Fletcher that Mrs. Pike is from New Orleans, which draws suspicion from the people in the parlor because they believe that “Ever’body in New Orleans believes ever’thing spooky” (29). Mrs. Pike’s spontaneity sharply contrasts the salon customers that seem unable to abandon their established routine. She plays the role of instigator, encouraging Leota to visit the freak show and accompanying her to the fortune teller. The events at the fortune teller prompt Leota to remember a past boyfriend and question her current relationship with her husband. The Pikes carry the story’s central conflict and act as foils to the conventional characters at the beauty shop.

Many of Welty’s more meaningful descriptions in “Petrified Man” occur during moments of pause, not during times of action. Often, this imagery reveals a moment of time or a feeling that occurs within the moment instead of simply describing physical characteristics in a scene.

These pauses, which propel the action of the piece, are the decisive moments that define and emphasize the relationships between characters. Like her photographs, Welty's careful attention to simple gestures in her fiction, such as a stare or the slight movement of a hand, allows a story to transcend its own plotline by speaking of universal human events. The first of these pauses occurs at the beginning of the story as Leota styles Mrs. Fletcher's hair: "[Leota] dashed the comb through the air, and paused dramatically as a cloud of Mrs. Fletcher's hennaed hair floated out of the lavender teeth like a small storm cloud" (22). By focusing her attention on this pause in time, Welty emphasizes the importance of a single gesture. The instant Mrs. Fletcher's hair falls from the comb is a striking moment for Leota as she realizes Mrs. Fletcher may actually be pregnant. As a result, Leota feels comfortable asking Mrs. Fletcher if the rumors concerning her pregnancy are true. Her question leads to the next pause in which the two women share understanding glances in the mirror, and Mrs. Fletcher confirms Leota's suspicions. Mrs. Fletcher does not need to provide a verbal answer to the query; the look on her face provides answer enough.

Perhaps the most prominent descriptions of pauses in time occur in the story as Welty presents the individuals at the freak show. Unlike a circus, whose entertainment value is related to a strong series of actions, Welty's freak show appears more like still images in an art exhibit. The attractions at the show are individuals without action and are frozen in time. Each freak appears to be "stuck" in a moment. Leota describes a pair of Siamese twins preserved in a type of glass bottle: "They got these two twins in a bottle . . . must have been full time, all right . . . Kinda pathetic" (26). Although the twins are full term, they have died prior to birth and both Leota and Mrs. Pike see the strangeness and sadness in the twins' situation. The twins, who were never able to enter time, are forever stuck in it. Similarly, the pygmies, described as "the tee-

niest men in the universe" are so small that one can "hardly tell if they're sittin' or standin'" (27). Mrs. Fletcher is shocked when Leota tells her that the pygmies are actually forty-two years old. Although they are middle-aged, the pygmies are so small that they appear more like children than adults. While the twins are stuck in a time they never experienced, the pygmies are unable to escape from their "childhood."

The petrified man has the most complex relationship with time of all the individuals in the freak show. As Leota explains, this individual has apparently become increasingly frozen in time throughout his adult life: "But they got this man, this petrified man, that ever'thing ever since he was nine years old, when it goes through his digestion, see, somehow Mrs. Pike says it goes to his joints and has been turning to stone" (27). As he ages, he is immobilized in place and time. Ironically, Mrs. Pike and Leota later realize that the act is a total façade, and readers discover that he is actually one of the only characters in the piece not constrained by time. The only clue to his true identity is also "lost" in time, for the copy of *Startling G-Man* with his description as well as information on the reward for his capture had apparently been in Leota's house for several weeks.

Welty uses the realization of the petrified man's true identity to explore the power of time over human relationships. The day after Leota and Mrs. Pike visit the fortune teller and reminisce about past lovers, Leota tells Mrs. Fletcher, "Course it don't last. Mrs. Pike says nothin' like that ever lasts" (30). This statement indicates that Mrs. Pike understands time's control over emotions and also foreshadows the fleeting relationship between Leota and Mrs. Pike. In only one week's time, the two women have gone from being best friends to enemies, due primarily to Leota's jealousy over the reward money. Mrs. Pike, who seems to better understand time's power, is not affected as deeply as the other characters. She is not tied to a specific region,

having recently moved to the area from New Orleans, and by the end of the story she is already planning to relocate again. She seems accustomed to periods of absence from both her husband and young child. In fact, Mrs. Pike leaves Billy at the beauty parlor so that she can go claim her reward money.

As discussed earlier, many of Welty's images use careful exposure to reveal interesting background details. Like the adults in the background of Front Yard, Welty frames "Petrified Man" with a seemingly insignificant detail. At the beginning and end of the piece, Leota comments on the peanuts in her purse. Initially, she states "honey, them goobers has been in my purse a week if they's been in it a day" (22). She does not seem to care about how long the peanuts have been in her purse, just that they are a gift from Mrs. Pike. At the conclusion of the story, Leota realizes that the peanuts, like her relationship with Mrs. Pike, have become stale and worthless. These peanuts serve a symbolic purpose, providing evidence of time, aging, and change in the piece.

In "A Curtain of Green" Welty uses many of the patterns of time established in "Petrified Man." Her focus on the regular and routine at the beginning of the story quickly establishes the connection between the theme of time and the central conflict of the piece. The narrator states, "Every day one summer in Larkin's Hill, it rained a little. The rain was a regular thing, and would come about two o'clock in the afternoon" (130). Welty builds on the connection between time and plot in the story through the use of repetitive events, such as Mrs. Larkin's gardening routine and summer rain showers, in order to show that the woman's struggle has continued for quite some time. In the third paragraph, for example, the narrator begins a description of Mrs. Larkin's daily routine: "Every morning she might be observed walking slowly, almost timidly, out of the white house . . . she worked without stopping almost invisibly, submerged all day

among the thick, irregular, sloping beds of plants," working until darkness fell on her garden (131).

As Marrs notes, Welty may have had first-hand experience with the themes explored in the story, for her mother, like Mrs. Larkin, worked tirelessly in her garden after her husband's death. Marrs states, "in 1938 [Welty] finally felt able to transform her mother's sense of loss into fiction and to transform her mother's garden into an evocative symbol" (Biography 59). Both Welty's mother and Mrs. Larkin feel responsible for their husbands' deaths, and both women retreat into their comfortable gardening routines as a way of dealing with their inability to protect their loved ones. Part of Mrs. Larkin's routine involves revisiting and reevaluating the moment that her husband died. Her "motion[s] she was now forced to repeat as she hoed the ground [enabled her to] see again the tree that was going to fall" (132). In "Some Notes on Time in Fiction" Welty states, "fiction penetrates chronological time to reach our deeper version of time that's given to us by the way we think and feel" (100). Mrs. Larkin is trapped in time and thus unable to achieve resolution because of her daily routine. She wishes, above all, to be able to travel back in time and save her husband from his accidental death. Her resolution comes at the end of the day when she finally realizes that she can never alter the past.

Like "Petrified Man," "A Curtain of Green" uses instances of dramatic pauses to aid in the story's progression. Welty states,

> Fiction does not hesitate to accelerate time, slow it down, project it forward or run it backward, cause it to skip over itself or repeat itself. It may require time to travel in a circle to meet itself in coincidence. It can freeze an action in the middle of its performance. (On Writing 97)

Before Mrs. Larkin begins to work in the garden, the narrator describes her awkward movements and momentary hesitation. “Every morning she might be observed walking slowly, almost timidly, out of her white house” (130). Once she gets to the garden she pauses and thinks again: “. . . a sort of sturdiness would possess her—stabilize her; she would stand still for a moment, as if a blindfold were being removed; and then she would kneel in the flowers and begin to work” (130-31). Through the inclusion of several descriptive scenes such as this one, Welty shows the mystical relationship between Mrs. Larkin and the garden. Her daily struggle in the garden is her way of understanding and interacting with the natural force that killed her husband. Ironically, Mrs. Larkin was unable to protect her husband from the falling tree and is either unable or uninterested in maintaining control of her garden. The same natural force that has ended her husband’s life is responsible for creating the abundance of life in her garden. Jamey, Mrs. Larkin’s hired helper, disrupts the established gardening routine and is at least partially responsible for another dramatic pause in the story. Something in his gesture or smile makes Mrs. Larkin remember the day her husband died. Marrs states, “[Mrs. Larkin] finds that the garden provides not solace but immersion in a hostile force,” and because of Jamey’s happy demeanor, “she seeks to penetrate and participate in the mystery of nature, which has killed her husband and destroyed both her faith in the power of love and her ability to partake of visions like Jamey’s” (Marrs, Biography 60). The routine raindrops at the end of the day awake Mrs. Larkin from her trance and prompt her revelation.

Mrs. Larkin, like Leota, must come to terms with time’s power before she can address her more immediate problems. Leota’s beauty parlor routine and her inability to comprehend the effects of time distinguish her from Mrs. Pike who is able to leave both the city and parlor in search of a better life. Similarly, Jamey is able to appreciate and enjoy the garden that seems to

cause Mrs. Larkin great grief. Mrs. Larkin must break her gardening routine before she can truly accept her husband's death. Both women realize, by the end of their stories, time's progression cannot be stopped and love cannot combat its effects; a lesson Welty learns from her father's death. These stories, and others, showcase the understanding of time that Welty first develops through her photography.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Artists of any media rarely confine themselves to one form of creative output. For example, Stephen King plays bass guitar in a rock band composed primarily of other writers including humor columnist, Dave Barry, and novelists, Amy Tan and Barbara Kingsolver. In addition to writing six best-selling books, Jim Carroll appears in several popular movies and was the front man for an extremely popular rock and roll band that experienced the height of their fame in the 1980s. Gordon Parks began his photographic career with the Farm Bureau Administration in the 1940s but went on to create images for fashion magazines, publish novels, write and direct a Hollywood film, and compose soundtracks for Hollywood movies. Jack Kerouac recorded several albums featuring works spoken over background jazz piano and saxophone music.

Similarly, painting courses introduced Eudora Welty to the principles of artistic composition early in life, and Christian Welty imparted his love for photography to his daughter before his death. Regardless of the medium and source of inspiration, one must assume that all of Welty's art springs from her instinctively creative core, and is thus intimately tied to one another. Analyzing her photographs brings to light aspects of her artistic spirit that may not be observable through her fiction alone. A holistic analysis of both her fiction and photography allows for a more thorough understanding of both forms of art. To discount Welty's photographic career, especially its connection to the development of her literary voice, is to disregard those characteristics that define her artistic style and make her one of the most prominent American literary figures.

Although Welty's interest in literature remained a constant throughout her life, she produces her best work only after exploring Mississippi and her own sensibilities through photography. Analyzing Welty's fiction in relation to her photography reveals the writer's motivations and offers insight into some of the conflicting criticisms of the stories in A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories. Through her photography, one gains tangible evidence of her sympathetic approach toward her subjects, the importance of place in all of her works, and intricate understanding of the many functions of time.

Because Welty offers little to explain her processes for writing fiction, literary scholars must face the challenge of examining the whole of Welty's life experiences to discover the influences on her art. However, she did not believe that the events of her life were worthy of mentioning and refrained from writing an autobiography on the basis that no one would be interested. Because Welty was secretive and because her ties to the New Critics led her to believe that her work could explain itself, critics must look elsewhere to understand how she wrote her fiction.

Although this thesis examines a particular selection of stories in Welty's first collection of short fiction, these specific works lead to a fuller awareness of the themes and motivations present in everything she writes in that volume. "The Key" uses the character's deafness and muteness to present characters separated from society. "Old Mr. Marblehall" uses two distinct places to illustrate the two different lives led by the story's protagonist. "Flowers for Majorie" presents a strong relationship with time, as represented by the narrator, who eventually throws a clock out the window of a New York apartment building. This essay proves that Welty's initial fiction is closely connected with her photography and that her approach to photography may also be applied to her later stories and novels, such as The Wide Net, and Other Stories.

Many scholars focus on particular elements and imagery that appear in both Welty's photography and fiction. For example, some choose to study themes of poverty and community represented in both art forms. Several critics also examine the symbolic use of cemeteries in Welty's fiction. However, in addition to recognizing the repetition of themes between her visual and written arts, understanding the development of these elements in her photography allows for a deeper understanding of its function in her fiction.

Of course to understand the origins of Welty's photographic interests, an examination of Welty's biography is necessary. James Baggett's article, featured in a 2006 issue of Perennials magazine, explores Eudora Welty's garden, another interesting area of study contributing valuable insight into Welty's artistry. After the death of her husband, Welty's mother worked extensively in her garden as a way of dealing with her loss and the guilt she felt for not being able to save her husband. Welty uses this material in the construction of "A Curtain of Green." Welty also maintained the garden while she lived at the residence for over 75 years and photographed it extensively. Baggett states that Welty's awareness of the powerful symbols of plants and the abundance of plants and nature in her fiction springs from this experience. Examining the author's biographical connection to the garden along with the photographs she took of the garden and what she chooses to write about gardens may be an interesting way of approaching Welty's close relationship with place in all of her fiction.

Ultimately, understanding Welty's art begins with understanding her life and interests. Although her fiction alone is evidence of her insightful, artistic voice and skill as a storyteller, her photographic images provide another way to approach her life's work and show the development of her distinctive writing style.

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---. Home, Ghost River Town. Mississippi Museum of Archives and History. Welty, One Time, One Place 46.

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APPENDIX: Photographs

Fig. 1. Sideshow Wonders, State Fair; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 80.

Fig. 2. Hypnotist, State Fair; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 79.

Fig. 3. The Rides, State Fair; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 81.

Fig. 4. Beggar at the Fair Gate, with Jigging Dolls; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 77.

Fig. 5. To Play Dolls; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 50.

Fig. 6. Home, Ghost River Town; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 46.

Fig. 7. Home after High Water, photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 47.

Fig. 8. Tall Story, photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 61.

Fig. 9. In the Bag, photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 63.

Fig. 10. Front Yard; photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 36.

Fig. 11. Window Shopping, photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 58.

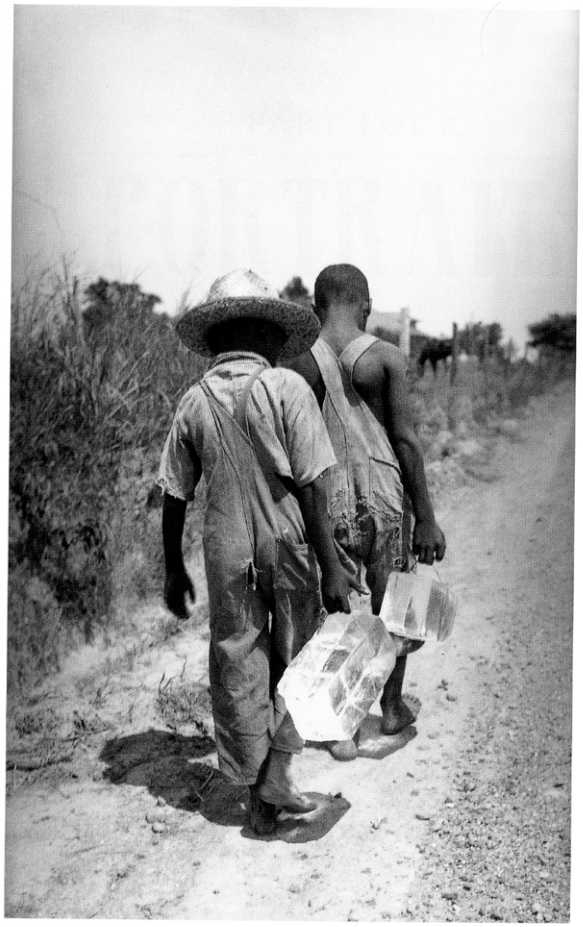

Fig. 12. Carrying the Ice Home for Sunday Dinner, photograph by Eudora Welty, One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album (Jackson, 1996) 101.

Fig. 13. Brandon: Cemetery Angel, photograph by Eudora Welty, Country Churchyards (Jackson, 1996) 52.

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