CHAPTER - II

Moral Consciousness in the novels written between 1941 and 1946

A distinct kind of moral consciousness is writ large in the writings of Eudora Welty. The fourth decade of the 20th Century was very productive for her. Two of her best collections of short fiction came out during those years – ‘A Curtain of Green’ (1941) and ‘A Wide Net and Other Stories’ (1943) and two novels – ‘The Robber Bridegroom’ (1942) and ‘Delta Wedding’ (1946).

While assessing the craftsmanship of Eudora Welty, the scholar finds that she was highly impressed by the works of 19th Century Russian writer Anton Chekov and British writers like Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf. Her short stories appeared to be quite different from conventional fiction. They do not have linear plot construction. She describes about the benefits of sheltered life in her short fiction. Her short stories can easily be understood like a poem or a photograph. She conveys through story a feeling for the interior life of the people she depicts. In her works Welty is clearly conscious of the narrator of her stories which she tells. Like Austen she has a gift of keeping her
narrators at just the right distance from the stories. In other words, the narrator does not condescend to character or situations. Similarly she is indebted to Chekhov and Austen in the visual and structural quality of her stories. The organizations of her short stories are based on human meaning. Welty said about Woolf ‘the extreme beauty of her writing is due greatly to one fact, that the imprisonment of life in the world was as much a matter of the senses with Virginia Woolf as it was a concern of the intellect. The scent, the gesture, the breath on the lips, the sound of the hour striking in the clock, the rippling texture of the surface in the moving year - of these things she sought with all her being to apprehend, through out a life time - for they were the palpable shadows and coloured reflections of the abstract world of the spirit, the matter that mirrored the reality’.

There is a perceptible lyricism in her short fiction. She has described intimate gestures that shape the individual and his behaviour. Her eyes go as far as her heart can feel. The reader is totally impressed with the beauty of the emotions described in her works. The wonder sound and cadence of her story can carry a reader through it with dream like intensity. In her stories the reader finds an unusual form and some times they are not able to
look beyond the surface described in the form of human emotions.

‘A Curtain of Green’, Welty's first book has a collection of four stories - Clytie, Petrified Man, Lily Daw and the three ladies and a Curtain of Green. This book is quite remarkable in range, style, matter and theme. That is why it has been given the subtitle ‘experiments in fiction’. This collection of short stories brings forth Welty's concept of individualism. In it, she gives a limited autonomy to the sheltered individual. They explore the difficulties of the women leading their life in a troubled society. Society tries to subjugate them while showing to shield them from danger. A Lily Daw is a prime example of this sort of situation of ultimate subjugation. She is almost sent to a psychiatric hospital by the three women openly looking out for her. She has no family so they become her guardian souls. They sheltered her until she almost felt pity on her. They sent her to a mental hospital so that her limited brainpower might not lead to any kind of physical assault. She was able to escape from this hospital confinement by marrying a Xylophone Player from the circus who himself seems intellectually retarded at best. In other words, Lily Daw shows Welty's attitude of sheltered life as described in ‘A Curtain of
Green’. Lily finds herself in two options and she accepts that option which becomes helpful in treading her life joyfully. The other idea that comes from this collection is one feels despair in being isolated.

The other character that gets significance is Ruby Fisher. She attains a freedom of spirit after getting married with Clyde. She was able to remain physically in that marriage bond although psychologically a drastic change has taken place. Despite leading that sheltered life, she got a deeper understanding of the various phases and forms of married life.

Welty’s second book of stories-‘The Wide Net and Other Stories’ show a slight opening out of the sheltered life. In ‘A Curtain of Green’ women are described in piquant situations but here they leave no stone unturned in loosening their tight bonds. Livvie shows the collapse of Livvie and Solomon’s marriage. In the beginning it appears that this may be liberation for Livvie, a young black girl, but later on she nursed the sick and old Solomon. After some time a cosmetic sales agent Baby Marie comes to the house. In the exchange of thoughts that took place between Livvie and Baby Marie the readers come to know that how isolated Livvie has become It cannot be said that she never
tried cosmetics or brought anything from a sales agent but she also does not have any money of her own. “Lady, but I do not have no money, never did have”³. In that way, Solomon has disturbed very cultural arrangement that remains between husband and wife. It entails that wife who is in-charge of domestic duties be given domestic purse to meet out daily expenses. In that way, Welty shows that Solomon feels to have acquired her as the final treasure in his quest for respect. Livvie is the bird in Solomon’s cage. The image of the bird defining Livvie comes up to the end of the story. “Solomon had never let Livvie go any further than the chicken house and the well”⁴. The change that came into her life comes in the wake of the arrival of the cash. In his life time Solomon felt that cash would be instrumental in taking Livvie out of her shackles. Welty describes cash as a cat who wants to get hold of Livvie like bird “He seized her deftly as a long black cat, and all at once they began out side the full song of a bird”⁵. The story comes to an end with a difficult striking image than that of a bird “Out side.................the Sun was in all the bottles on the imprisoned trees and the young peach was shining in the middle of them that the

⁴ Ibid., p. 232
⁵ Ibid., p.239
busting light of spring”\textsuperscript{6}. The image of the blooming peaches among the bottle trees suggests freedom for Livvie. The flowering tree forecasts a flowering for her as she is out of the cage and her branches no longer entrapped in glass like bottle trees. She began to lead a new free life with Cash. In that way Livvie represents the bright side of Welty’s view of the sheltered life. Cash provides freedom to Livvie but he has maintained a kind of possessive views towards women like that of Solomon. Taking an overall view we feel that Livvie will not go far either physically or psychologically from the confines of Solomon's house. Livvie remains unaware of her limitations.

Like Clytie, at ‘The Landing’ shows the darkest side of the isolated life for Welty’s young woman. This story describes the recluse like life of Jenny in her grand father’s house, until his death. “Up the light scattered hill, in the house with the galleries, the old man and his grand daughter had always loved they were the people least seen in the landing. The grand father was too old and the girl was too shy of the world and they were both too good - the old ladies said – to come out so they stayed in side”\textsuperscript{7}. In this story the condition remains the same as that of Livvie. Here we

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p.239
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 241
find a real grand father of Jenny while Livvie has her husband quite old to be his grand father. In the whole story of ‘In Landing’ Jenny is virtually under house arrest.

The story opens with the death of Jenny’s grand father. The progression is not linear as it is typical with Welty’s stories. When Billy Floyd came into her life she thought of her in purely idealistic terms. The high romanticism of her thoughts only leads her to her down fall. Her downfall is a strong condemnation of her sheltered life. Eudora Welty wants to describe that Floyds making love to Jenny carries a significant interest and weight in the scheme of the story. In fact he does not make love, he violates her “when her eyes were open and clear upon him he violated her and still he was without care or demand and as gay as if he were still clanging the bucket at the well. With the same thoughtlessness of motion, that was a kind of grace, he next speared a side of wild meat from an animal he had killed and had ready in his boat, and cooked it over a fire he had been burning on the ground”\(^8\). The writer has made a contrast between Floyd’s thoughtfulness and Jenny’s romantic obsessions. She has been exploited by Floyd in the name of saving her life. When the flood water recedes, Floyd

\(^{8}\) Ibid., p. 251
leaves Jenny and she returns to her deserted house. She has love for Floyd and wants to search him and for that she goes out of her house. In her search for Floyd, Jenny entered into the fishermen's camp. There she was gang raped in a chicken house by a bunch of fishermen while their wives and children sit outside around the dying embers of a fire. The grave harm done to Jenny in the form of Floyd's deception and the fishermen's group violence can be attributed in large part to her up-bringing. By keeping her apart from the society, Jenny's grand father kept her from learning how to interact, how to understand the varieties of love and lust and how to protect herself from violation. She has not been able to recognize evil. The story gives us a clear cut message the more strictly a person is guarded, the greater, the danger she faces when she goes out into the world.

Thus we come to the conclusion that the story in ‘Wide Net’ seems to function as Welty's laboratory where she is able to develop situations that she puts forward in ‘A Curtain of Green’. The story ‘At The Landing’ epitomizes her findings and murky discoveries about the nature of the sheltered life.
Eudora Welty has pent up emotions in her heart and to articulate it she made use of creative writing. She herself said in a preface to her collected stories, ‘In general my stories, as they have come along home reflected their own present time, beginning with the depression in which I began; they came out of my response to it’. The present story the ‘Lily Daw & Three Ladies’ is a clear instance of the ambiguity felt by the novelist. She describes the dichotomy between materialistic values and spirituality. There remains a never ending chase and pursuit of these two driving forces of life. Lily appears to be accepting the easy life of getting married with xylophone player but the three ladies are able to transform her decision in accepting the career of teaching the feeble minded in Ellisville Institute. These three ladies - Mrs. Watts, Mrs. Carson and Aimee Slocum helped to a great extent the upbringing of the heroine of the story. She got baptized and so they felt that she should enter into an arena of social cause to get the real blessings of the almighty. The novelist
once said, ‘What I do in writing of any character is to try to enter into the mind, heart and skin of a human being who is not myself. This fact is quite perceptible in this story too. She unravels the inner recesses of the mind of Lily. Despite insisting on being getting married with Xylophone player, she retraces her steps towards joining Ellisville Institute. By this the novelist wants to delineate the fact that Lily accepts the life of pleasure on a prime facie basis, but when she understands that she has a noble aim to attain, she promptly agrees to the suggestions made by these three ladies.

The selection of three ladies again denotes the value of number three. The number three has religious overtones and so it lends credence to the words spoken by them. At the fag end of the short story the novelist perplexes the minds of the readers by suggesting that the hat worn by the xylophone player was hanging from the telephone wires and the three ladies gave their consent for the marriage of Lily with the xylophone player.

This short story raises a number of questions and tries to solve them without any ratiocination. Only the first meeting becomes instrumental for attracting Lily towards xylophone player. This has been the tendency in the contemporaries of E.
Welty to describe the superficial understanding of the ladies of that time. Lily does not understand the background of that player but even then she expects to get contentment from that relationship. Even three ladies feel that this proposed marriage should be successful. So in that way after reading this short story the scholar comes to the conclusion that a general predicament of the young people of the period has been pointed out in the backdrop of milieu of the period. Lily appears to be vacillating between twin desire either to succumb to the pressure exerted by the three ladies or to abide by the wishes of her heart. Ultimately she is guided by the latter.

**A Piece of News**

Eudora Welty portrays the wavering of mind of the ladies of her time in her short story ‘A piece of News’. Here with the help of news item in a newspaper the novelist brings out the subconscious mind of heroine of her novel. Ruby Fisher, who is the main character, was in front of fire place and happened to glance through a news item. ‘Mrs. Ruby Fisher had the misfortune to be shot in the leg by her husband this week’. On reading this piece of news, Ruby Fisher starts internalizing the pain and starts imagining a sequence of events which include her
painful heart, expected behaviour of her husband. The novelist tries to show that the lady of the period were far away from reality and lived in a make belief mental world.

The novelist portrays a very important aspect of character of ladies of the period by describing that whenever Ruby Fisher commits any lapse, her husband, Clyde, thrashes her and wherever he thrashes her she goes out and commits another lapse by asking for lift from strangers and enjoying drinks with them. This shows the fickle mindedness and superficial character of the ladies of the period.

Another important theme in the story is the symbolic destruction of violence between wife and husband which is shown by burning of the newspaper in the fire accompanied by a blasting sound. Both feel relieved and sublime. In fact, here novelist shows a transformation in the relationship through a subconscious process of imagination on the part of Ruby Fisher and a matter of fact approach on the part of her husband, Mr. Clyde.

The central theme of this short story is coming out of Mrs. Ruby Fisher from depression symbolized by her indecisive, mystery, autosuggestion and realization of shamefulness. Along
with her husband she has also been transformed from a brutal and blunt person to a loving and caring one.

**Petrified Man**

The setting of the short story, ‘Petrified Man’ is the beauty parlour owned by one of the characters Mrs. Leota, who is beautician. Mrs. Leota by way of conversation with one of her regular customers Mrs. Fletcher, explains about various characters of the story. On the one hand Mrs. Montjoy is shown as mad after her looks even at the time of delivering her child in the hospital. She visits the beauty parlour just about an hour before the delivery, even though she was undergoing pains, contrary to this Mrs. Pike is portrayed as smart, attractive and intelligent woman. Because of her presence of mind and sharp memory of faces of persons, she wins five hundred dollars by intimating the whereabouts of Mr. Petrie who is acting as Petrified man in the traveling freak show.

All the male characters are portrayed as men of no consequence and having no influence on their wives. Ladies have been depicted in command of their husbands, be it Mrs. Pike who is the heroine of the story or Mrs. Montjoy who is mad after her looks even an hour before her giving birth to her child.
In this short story the novelist has portrayed woman of the period in a far better light compared to the heroines of other stories such as ‘Lily Daw and the three ladies’ and ‘A piece of News’. It seems that her feminine characters are surging and male characters are taking back seat.

A child character, Billy boy is portrayed as a bright but naughty boy of three whose remark, ‘If you're so smart, why ain't you rich’ to Mrs. Fletcher and Mrs. Leota who were paddling him as a punishment for troubling them in their conversation, shows that he was mature enough to understand the gist of the conversation of these two ladies.

**The Key**

The novelist through the characters of Ellie and Albert Morgan, a deaf and dumb couple, portrays constant craving for happiness and peace. Ellie Morgan and her husband Albert Morgan work hard in life to visit Niagara Falls which is symbol of beginning of love in their life. Due to their situations of deafness and dumbness, they develop seclusion from the outside world and compensate their life with mutual understanding between each other. Though they miss the train to Niagara fall and are dismayed at it, they found a secret hope of happiness in their life
of which the key which dropped from the hands of a stranger and is picked up by Albert Morgan. The character of Albert Morgan is portrayed as if having deep sense of individual dreams whereas Ellie is shown to have dissolved her individuality at the altar of relationship with Albert. Just before the departure, the stranger places second key in the hand of Ellie which is of star hotel, room No.2. This is symbolism of empowerment of women as Ellie is treated at par. The story is basically depiction of search for love and happiness as a motive of force in life.

**Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden**

In the short story Keela, the outcast Indian maiden, the novelist describes the plight of niggers in the society dominated by whites. A club footed nigger, named little Lee Roy, is used by the traveling show in Texas. The show on their journey from place to place picks up a nigger and put it on show as Keela, the outcast Indian maiden to attract crowds and earn money. Little Lee Roy is presented as Keela, the outcast Indian maid and given an iron bar to swing in case any visitor happens to come near to it. Steve, the character through whom story is narrated is the announcer. Highlight of the show is that the Keela, the outcast Indian maiden eats nothing but living things. It is shown biting
off head of chicken, suck its blood and then eating it while it is still alive.

The novelist depicts the pitiable condition of niggers and their exploitation by the white even to the extent of treating them as objects rather than subjects. An animal like existence of nigger is shown. Ultimately a tall person exposes the fakeness of the show which is symbol of some hope for the niggers. The story also depicts prevalence of superstitions in the society, represented by the exhibition of Keela, the outcast Indian maiden who can beat out brain of any body coming close and then eat it, a symbol of occult feelings.

In this way, the novelist tries to present that fact that bizarre things are also used to attract people and to amuse them. This shows the unhealthy sense of getting entertainment which borders on the concept of sadistic pleasure.

**Why I Live at The P.O.**

In the short story ‘Why I live at the P.O.’ the novelist has portrayed the freedom of thought and assertiveness of heroine who is denied the expression in the family. She asserts herself and takes an independent stand even at the cost of leaving her parents.
The younger sister of the heroine of the novel is depicted as a spoiled person who is habitual of getting whatever she envies and then losing is at the earliest opportunity.

The younger sister, Stella Rondo by falsehood steals the fiancée of heroine, her elder sister. The family sided wrongly with Stella Rondo and did not care for heroine's feelings. The heroine takes a stand and faces the bull by horns. She works in a Post Office and decides to shift to the post office incurring the wrath of her family members and their close relations.

The short story depicts determination and love of freedom in the progressive women of those days. It presents the assertiveness of the new woman who is ready to forsake all types of troubles for the full blossoming of her capabilities.

**The Whistle**

The novelist in short story ‘The Whistle’ narrates the helplessness of a couple, Jasson and Sara Mortem. The couple lives in the locality where they fight a twin battle against the cold. On the one hand they have to protect their tomato plants from the frost and on the other they have to keep themselves warm inside the house.
When the freeze threatens, there is a system of blowing a great whistle to warn the farmers. The farmers on hearing this whistle go out and cover the tomato plants with whatever is available including their personal clothes. When Mr. Jasson and Sara after covering their plants come inside the house they found that house is not warm enough and the fire is about to extinguish. Mr. Jasson brings a broken chair to keep the fire burning. When the cold in the house increases so much and no firewood is left to burn Jasson brings his thirty years old table and breaks into pieces and put pieces in the fire to keep himself and his wife warm. The story portrays the condition of helpless farmers who fight the cold and, thus the uncertainty of their life is presented during winters.

The story depicts the poverty of the farmers who have to sacrifice their previous belongings to ward off the impact of chilly winter season.

**The Hitch-Hikers**

In the short story, ‘The Hitch-Hikers,’ the novelist describes the kind of life the Hitch-Hikers and a salesman live. It is a reflection of relationship between Tom Harris, a thirty years old salesman and his girlfriend, Carol Thames is also.
Tom Harris, the salesman while traveling gives lift to two hitch-hikers. One of the hitch-hikers, Sanford who is having the piano is shown to be talkative character. The other hitch-hiker, Sobby is an impulsive character. Opposite to Sanford who is thoroughly ungrateful person Sobby is shown as a grateful person. On the way Tom Harris found that these two persons were not mere Hitch-Hikers. They were tramps. After reaching Dulcie hotel, Harris stops the car and goes to meet one Mr. Gene, who is the proprietor of the hotel to arrange for the night stay of these two tramps. In the meanwhile a boy who knows Mr. Harris comes to inform him that one of the hitch-hikers was trying to steal his car. On reaching, Harris finds that Sobby is standing on the curve with two men holding him and some other person standing around. Sanford, the other tramp was lying injured on the back seat of the car. Sobby had hit him with the empty beer bottle.

Sanford was taken to the hospital. Harris rings up one Ms. Ruth who is having her birthday party in the town. They had met on an earlier occasion. On invitation he goes to attend the party. Harris inquires from Ruth about the whereabouts of his date, Carol Thames. Ruth told him that she was in Leland. Ruth and
Harris along with others went to bring Carol. He meets his date and comes back to the Dulcie Hotel alone. After sometime Ms. Carol comes back to the lawns of the hotel. He lies on his bed and started thinking of two tramps, their conflict, sudden action and brutality. His thoughts wander to things happening in the town such as often rain and a party, violence, sudden love making. He found himself free but helpless. All of a sudden he heard somebody calling his name. When he goes to the window he finds that it was Carol from the party. He joins Carol and then they go to all night club to get coca cola. There during the conversation it turns out that Harris tells Carol that may be you have got the wrong man and he is not her date. They had black coffees. Thereafter, he leaves her to the taxi and waves to her and says that he appreciated what she said and that she was sweet. On mentioning this he cries and Harris adds that what he meant to say is he appreciated her coming like this in the rain. Next morning on inquiring from hospital he found that Sanford had died of injuries. Harris gets his car cleaned and gets ready to go and group of colour boys approach him and one of them inquires whether Harris needs the guitar and adds that even policeman did not want it. Harris gives the guitar to the boy and goes off.
The short story basically portrays that the society of the time had lot of poor people like hitch-hikers and tramps. Also it brings forth the theme of lack of values in the town and fragility of relations amongst men and women.

**A Memory**

‘A Memory’ is a short story by Eudora Wetly. The story is narrated in first person. It is of a school going girl. During one summer she was lying on the sand on the bank of a small lake in a park. While she was staring at nothing in particular with her hands on the sides of her eyes, she recollected a brush at the hand of a boy of her class on the stairs. She realized that she was in deep love with that boy. She does not know any details of the boy’s family. She starts imagining about the unknown fears like that his parents may be in shabby condition and sometime this boy may die. She feels a mystery deeper than the danger about this boy. On the sand she is changing from a dreamer to an observer. She recollects an incident in the Latin class when this boy’s nose starts bleeding and he leaves the class with handkerchief on his face.

She was in love for the first time and it was a secret safely kept in her heart. She expected danger to her love and more than
that everything was full of mystery. She imagines even the way this boy will look back, innocently.

This dreaming and imagination is disturbed by the arrival of a group of one man, two women, two boys and a girl. All this clumsiness and distracts and displeases her. They do a lot of running around, laughing and talking which annoys her. She wishes that they should be dead. After sometime this group leaves the place and she is left alone. Again, she starts dreaming about the boy and imagines the manner of the boy while he enters the class, the way he looks back.

The theme of the story is the world of a teenager whose heart is undergoing the upheavals of one sided first love. She is wonderstruck, lost in day dreaming and preserves the secret of inner self.

The feelings and emotions of a teenager have been depicted succinctly and elegantly. These feelings are made of sweet dreams, fear of losing the most cherished secret of first love and above all cemented by the all pervasive mystery.

**Clytie**

‘Clytie’ is a short story of a girl of the same name who lives in a small village, Farr’s Gin, with her elder sister, Octavia,
brother Gerald and her father James Farr. Her father is bedridden due to a paralytic attack and is blind as well. Octavia is alone. Gerald married one lady, Rosemary, who had deserted him and is not responding to his threats or requests. Clytie, herself, is highly eccentric. She has developed habit of watching faces and often gets lost in that act. At any disturbance she becomes disappointed and rushes towards her home. Before the paralytic attack of her father there was an old lady, Lathe, in the house who was working as cook since the days when their father was young. Now she has been sent out due to loss of income. Lathe likes to come to see Mr. James Farr but Octavia does not allow her to enter the house. Only person, other than members of the family, who is allowed, is one Mr. Bobo. He comes once a week for shaving Mr. James Farr. On one of his visits when Mr. Bobo was waiting in front of the door of James Farr’s room for being allowed to start shaving, Clytie comes, near to him and touches his face smoothly. Mr. Bobo ran out of house past Gerald’s room. Gerald gets annoyed and shouts at his sisters saying now you have started bringing your men also in this house. Octavia asks Clytie to bring rain water from the barrel for shaving. Clytie goes to the barrel and sees her own face into the water. She gets obsessed of
the face and plunges into the barrel with her legs in the air. This way Clytie kills herself.

The main theme of this story is tragedy. Within this main theme there is undercurrent of relationships among family members and between this family and others in the locality. Octavia always shouts and remains angry. On the smallest of pretext, she gets upset and starts shouting, especially on Clytie. Clytie is an underdog and has completely withdrawn to herself. She does not mix with anybody outside the house. Even if some ladies in the neighbourhood try to speak to her by asking her opinion on something trivial, she replies in monosyllables such as ‘nice’, ‘very nice’. She is obsessed by the sight of a face. These faces keep on coming to her mind again and again. This is obvious from the observation: “The most profound, the most moving sight in the whole world must be a face”9.

Octavia is an eccentric character. To her mind rain and Sun is the sure sign of ruin. She can’t tolerate any window or door left open. Once, when Clytie served breakfast to Gerald, Octavia screamed, “Where in the devil is my thimble, you stole my thimble, Clytie Farr, you carried, my little silver thimble”10. Gerald

---

9 Ibid., p. 83
10 Ibid., p. 88
commented, ‘It’s started. How can a man live in the house with women? How can he?’ This shows that there is a relationship of frustration and intolerance among these three siblings. Gerald is broken by the desertion of him by his wife. He is not able to reconcile. He had shown his passion and love by issuing threats to her of shooting and killing her if she does not agree to come back. He was in deep love which he shows by his extreme actions. Only good relationship in the family is the attachment of two sisters to their father. They are competing for feeding their father. Octavia prevails and takes plate from Clytie and feeds her father. She consoles Clytie that she may do it next day.

**Old Mr. Marblehall**

‘Old Mr. Marblehall’ is a short story of an ordinary person who leads a double life. Mr. Marblehall has no interest in the people around him and nothing to do in life. He remains bachelor until sixty and then marries. People around him wonder on both the accounts i.e. why did he not marry till sixty and why did he marry at this old age? Mr. Marblehall is often seen walking on Catherine Street. He has got a wife who is grotesque looking and a son who looks like a monkey as his eyes are very penetrating. Mr. Marblehall doubles up as a husband since he keeps another
wife in another part of the town. There also he has got son who is worse in looks and behaviour than the first one. To his second wife he is Mr. Bird. Mr. Marblehall keeps on wondering whether his secret of having two wives would be discovered some day by his son or others.

The novelist has depicted, through Mr. Marblehall, a character in the society who is never at ease with himself or with others. The character is shown as a sample of duplicity. He is shown wondering what will happen if he confesses his duplicity. How his two wives and two sons belonging to two different families will sort out? He is multiplying his life by deception, he chooses to continue to kill time and he gets up every morning imagining what will happen if people come to know of the reality? The novelist in this case has simply mirrored the life of a duplicity and seclusion led by an ordinary citizen who is keeping aloof from the rest of the society.

This shows the hypocrisy adopted by the society. Mr. Marblehall becomes a representative of that class of society which indulges in duplicity and deceit for their short term personal benefits. It is a depiction of a torturous life which is based on impulse.
Flowers for Marjorie

In this short story the novelist portrays the plight of an orphan unemployed person named Howard. Howard goes in search of job at Columbus Circle and remains unsuccessful. When Howard comes home after his day long unsuccessful attempt in getting any work, he notices a flower fixed on his wife's old coat. He develops strange feelings towards this flower and in his imagination snatches this flower and destroys it. He enquires from his wife, Marjorie, how much period is left for her to deliver the baby and thereafter a long discussion starts about the expenses to be incurred on account of delivery which is linked to their earning and therefore getting job. Howard is totally pessimistic about getting the job and mentions that even if he gets the job now he has forgotten even how to carry out because of long unemployment. Marjorie is hopeful of the better times and consoles him accordingly. Marjorie enquires whether Howard has eaten anything. Howard takes out his leather purse and shows it to Marjorie that it is empty. Howard catches hold of butcher's knife from the kitchen and then picks up a small sauce pan which he puts down again and suddenly he changes his hold on the knife and thrusts it under her breast. Everywhere blood
spreads in the room. He washes his hands, picks up his purse and goes out. He comes to the 6th Avenue where a lot of people are present. He goes to the bar and drinks whisky from where he comes to one Miss. Fergussion. Miss. Fergussion was busy in her job in her office. Howard requests her to listen to him but she says that she is busy and asks him to come sometimes later. He goes to a large arcade and there he happens to be a ten millionth person to enter radio city. In recognition of this fact, he is given a heavy key and lot of bright red roses. Some questions are asked from him. On getting a chance he runs from that place and reaches his street. He enters his house and he sees Marjorie on the little trunk. He sees Marjorie's hand has fallen down and concludes that she is no more. He becomes conscious of fragrance of roses there. Then he comes to the street and sees a policeman and takes him to the house where Marjorie was lying still. The policeman remarks that red drops on the pant of Howard are not rose petals and he arrests Howard and takes him away. The roses fall down from Howard's hand and get picked up by little girls who took them and fix in their hair.

In this story the author portrays the acute unemployment situation in America at the time of recession. Secondly, the
author depicts the sensibilities of girls and young women and their craving for flowers. In other words their craving indicates hope for the better future even in the difficult times.

**A Curtain of Green**

In the short story ‘A Curtain of Green’ the author describes the preoccupation of Mrs. Larkin with her garden. After her husband's death in an accident she is busy from morning till evening in tending her garden. Garden is of green without any proper layout for the plants. Rather than trying for any order in the garden, she was drawing satisfaction just by working in it. She herself used to dig and break soil with the hoe and do transplanting and tending of plants. She engages one Negro boy named Jamey for helping her in the garden. The main character, Mrs. Larkin has been used efficiently to show a kind of aggression, anger, desire for loneliness with preoccupation of natural things such as garden in this case. It is depiction of a person who is under the shock of her death of life partner. The climax of the story depicts the surging anger of Mrs. Larkin towards Jamey, the Negro boy. Dragging her hoe through the flowers she approaches this boy while he is working in the garden and comes very near to him with a feeling of hopelessness and
ferocity without any provocation from the Negro boy. She raises her hoe above head holding the handle of the hoe very tightly with her mind not bothering about life and death. At that moment the arrival of the rain and consequently cool touch of rain drops and their sound in fact cools down Mrs. Larkin. She does not think of necessity of answering anything to Jamey. The rain has overtaken the whole show. Mrs. Larkin gets exhausted and slips down on the leaves and branches with the rain falling on her. Jamey, the Negro boy stirs her by calling Ms. Lark! Ms. Lark! Thereafter he jumps and runs out of the garden.

**A Visit of Charity**

The author in the short story ‘A Visit of Charity’ portrays the situation of old women in an ‘Old ladies Home’. The human relationship between two inmates of ‘Old Ladies Home’ together is shown as pathetic. There is no agreement between the two even in the presence of a young girl, Marian, who comes to see them and present flowers. For this, Marian will get a minimum of three points as reward by the class teacher. At no point of time Marian is at ease in the company of two old women. The oldest woman Addie is highly critical of the other woman who lives with her in the same room in the Old Ladies Home. Whenever the other
woman says anything to Marian, Addie contradicts and exposes the real character of first woman. Addie tells that the other woman does not know anything, has nothing in her heart or hand and her purse and box are empty too.

The other woman proves this by holding Marian at the time of departure and begging for a penny.

Marian, who comes for the sake of points, right from her arrival to ‘Old Ladies Home’, is impatient to leave at the earliest opportunity. Here, the author makes a point that ‘Old Ladies Homes’ are not the right places for elderly women, nor is the system of sending little girls from school to these homes is of any good use.

**Death of a Traveling Salesman**

In the story ‘Death of a Traveling Salesman’, the author depicts the sequence of events of a feverish and weak person, R.J. Bowman, who works for a shoe company.

The Salesman has some premonition. He recalls his dead grandmother. He is angry for no reason as if anger is an offshoot of his frailty. While driving, he loses the way and reaches the dead end of a dusty rural road where his car slips over the bank and falls into a ditch. For help, he goes to a small home on the nearby
hill. He gets exhausted and asks the woman in front of house for help. The woman's husband, Sunny helps the car out of ditch and asks him to go. Mr. Bowman in the meanwhile, alone with the woman, imagines about the woman and tries to converse with her. The woman is very confident. Bowman requests for a night stay which Sunny grants after preliminary clarifications. Sunny arranges for fire and drinks and Sunny's wife prepares food. When the fire is lit Bowman finds that woman is young like Sunny and figures out that they are wife and husband. Earlier, he thought that woman is about fifty and Sunny is about thirty years and so he may be her son. This happened since he saw her in semi darkness. Bowman proposes that he will sleep near the fire. Sunny agrees and Sunny goes to bed where his wife had already gone. Before this Sunny mentions that his wife is pregnant.

While lying near the fire Bowman wishes that he should have been the father of her child. He understands the deprivation of simple family life; he was mistaking their sense of privacy as secretiveness. Sunny and his wife were so full of life and had simple married life. This thought prompted Bowman to start for his place and he picks up his coat and makes a move towards the
car. He rushes towards the car but as he reaches there his heart starts thumping and fails. He dies there.

The author in this story has portrayed the uncertain and difficult life of a salesman of that time in Southern Mississippi. She has portrayed this by comparing his life with that of a farm-hand and his wife. Though salesman is having money but he is deprived of simple basic joys of life whereas Sunny and his wife are enjoying fullness of life even though they are poor. In this way the writer has explained the dignity of labour. The person who works hard enjoys the life to the brim. Others who observe this condition become full of despair and dies in frustration.

**Powerhouse**

In the story ‘Powerhouse’ the author narrates the performances of Negroes band leaders. The main character is ‘Powerhouse’ who is assisted by one ‘Valentine’ on bars, ‘Little Brother’ on clarinet and others. They are on tour from city to city and entertain public by their performance in different places.

Powerhouse motivates his troop on performance by hailing them rather than guiding them. He is lost in the performance. He receives a telegram while performing on which it was written that his wife is dead. They all discuss the reasons for death and arrive
at a conclusion that one Uranus Knockwood is responsible for that. When the band is on tour, Uranus knockwood woos their wives. He stalks them. When they are out, he comes in and when they arrive back, he goes out.

In this story the author brings alive the kind of culture of Negroes of that time. Even after receiving the telegram, the show continues and Powerhouse is shown thoroughly devoted to the performance. Story ends while Powerhouse is still playing a ‘Somebody loves me’.

**Worn Path**

‘Worn Path’ is the story of an old Negro woman describing her journey on foot from her hamlet to the city for fetching medicine for the ailing throat of her grandson. The journey for the old and tough woman goes through pine forests up to the ridge, then through oaks down hill, continuing through a ravine, open fields and marsh, ultimately leading to the charity hospital in the city.

This Negro woman, named Phoenix is very stout and involves herself in a self talk. She is so much jelled in with the path and nature around that she has inseparable relationship with the natural world. Her response to the scarecrow in the field
is full of innocence of a child. Similarly, when she picks up the Nickel which fell from the pocket of a white man who helps her out of ditch in which she slipped, her self talk, “God watching me the whole time. Come to stealing”\textsuperscript{11} is reflective of her piousness as well as of pressing need for money. Her self talk is in fact a purification process for her. She is getting rid of guilt by admitting it to herself.

Again her self talk about the dog watching her in the ditch is very supportive comment. She takes every thing in its own stride, adding humour from her side.

Phoenix is very reflective. While she is in the charity hospital she wonders why they only two - she and her grandson - are left in the world. She is full of native wisdom and at the same time her childlike innocence has not parted her.

\textbf{The Robber Bridegroom}

Eudora Welty is normally associated with the description of human relationships in her short stories. Here she presents the intricacies of inner thoughts which engender emotions for maintaining different set of relationships at one and the same time. This is articulated in the serene atmosphere of Mississippi.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 146
The stories appear to be effusion of lyricism in prose. In The Robber Bridegroom, the narrator is just the part of all the actions taking place in the story. It is a story which revolves sound the heroine Rosamond. She is seduced by a bandit Jamie Lockhart in the beginning and later she starts loving her. Rosamond has a father Clement Musgrove and step mother, Salome. The father’s love for his child is expressed in very emotional terms. He was ready to do anything for the well being of his daughter; on the other hand Rosamond’s step mother, Salome, was bent upon ruining her. She sent her deep in the forest to collect forest herbs for the pot. She says to her, ‘well, lazy thing’ said she, “I need fresh herbs for the pot. There are some extra large ones growing on the other side of the woods at the farthest edge of the indigo field. Go and pick them and don’t come back till your apron is full”\(^{12}\) and the narrator unravels her evil intentions in these words, “And for a thing like this she would send Rosamond out alone every morning while her father was away, when he knew nothing of it. She would think that perhaps the Indians might kidnap the girl and adopt her into that tribe, and give her another home, or that a leopard might walk out between two trees and

---

carry her off, in his teeth before she could say a word”\textsuperscript{13}. Her jealousy towards Rosamond was due to latter’s bewitching beauty. Rosamond was as beautiful as the day and Salome was as ugly as the night. Besides, she entrusted the responsibility of eliminating Rosamond to Goat and bringing her clothes as proof. And as a reward he would be given a suckling pig. This character has been described in this way, “Near Clement’s house, down in a gully, lived a poor widow and her six gawky daughters and her only son. The son, who was the youngest, was named Goat, because he could butt his way out of the door when his mother left him locked in and equally, because he could butt his way in when she left him locked out”\textsuperscript{14}. Goat was a dull witted character. That is why he could not materialize the intention of Salome into reality.

There remains a mystery behind the real identity of Jamie Lockhart. In the beginning of the story, this character saved the life of Clement Musgrove from Mike Fink who wanted to kill both of them for their gold, at Rodney on the Mississippi River. This cemented their relationships up to the last. When the clothes of Rosamond were stolen, Jamie Lockhart was searched

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 25
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 29
by Clement to take revenge against that fellow. He was invited by Clement to his home. He was oblivious of the fact that he was the man responsible for that entire misdemeanor. Jamie Lockhart was a bandit and he was able to win the heart of Rosamond. She started living in the deep forest in the company of these bandits. This gives an opportunity to the novelist to describe the workings, behavior and life style of these people. Jamie Lockhart had covered his face with the berry juice. This is reflected in the words of Rosamond, “He brought me his love under a mask, and kept all the truth hidden from me, and never called anything by its true name even his name or mine, and what I would have given him he liked better to steal. And I had no faith; he had little honor, to deprive a woman of giving her love freely”.¹⁵

In the back drop of the attractive natural scenery, the novelist points out the transformation of Rosamond from being a happy go lucky girl to a mournful one and later to a dejected and disillusioned entity. Salome takes her to be her rival and so wants to finish her off. Clement brings beautiful dresses for Rosamond and she appears quite attractive in them. But Salome could not digest this fact. The marriage between Clement and Salome had a

---

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 105-106
painful history as was told to Jamie Lockhart by Clement. “I was once married to a beautiful woman of Virginia; her name was Amelie. We lived in the peaceful hills….. On the flat boat around our fire we crouched and looked at one another and my first wife, Amelia, Kentucky Thomas and his wife Salome and the little twins like cubs in their wrappings”\(^{16}\). After the killing of Amelie and Kentucky Thomas at the hands of the Indians, they got married for the well being of the children. But Salome from the very beginning wanted to make an end of the life of Rosamond.

The short fiction is full of mysterious facts which are not revealed up to the end. This indicates the Welty’s concept of the mysteries of life. Clement has a son and a daughter. Nothing is described about his son. Clement reposes his trust on Jamie Lockhart for taking revenge of his daughter’s disrobing and promises him to give his daughter as a reward for this action. Really he was the person responsible for it. He invited him to his house. Jamie masked his face and did different roles at different times. In the end he accepted the role of the husband to Rosamond. He became a merchant and was found earning his livelihood in a fair way. “Then the yellow haired Jamie ran and

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 14
took him by the hand, and for the first time thanked him for his daughter. And as for him, the outward transfer from bandit to merchant had been almost too easy to count it a change at all, and he was enjoying all the same success he had ever had. But now, in his heart Jamie knew that he was a hero and had always been one only with the power to look both ways and to see a thing from all sides.”

The short fiction is full of vicissitudes of life. It describes the selflessness of Rosamond and Clement in the world of selfishness and brutality symbolized by little Harp, Boat and Salome. It shows the deep attachment of Rosamond with her lover despite all his cheatings and obnoxious behaviour. Salome misleads her husband against Rosamond but his affection towards his daughter never shakes and he leaves no stone unturned in making her life smooth and trouble free. The last sentence of the fiction ‘God bless you’ uttered by Clement to Rosamond at their life in New Orleans symbolizes his abiding love in her.

---

17 Ibid., p. 134
First Love

In the story ‘First Love’ the novelist elucidates the ideas and feelings which arise in the mind of a deaf boy, Joel Mayes, who is twelve years old and works as a boot-boy in an inn in Natchez during the winter of 1807. Joel, who is an orphan boy, understands events and process of human relationships in a mysterious way. Mystery of all creation and human relationships are made sense by Joel in his own way. During the summers Joel Travels along with a group of white men and women led by an old man named McCaleb. On the way, Joel gets separated from his parents. The group negotiates a thick jungle of canes, to reach Natchez and hide from Indians who happen to pass by. Having reached Natchez, Joel starts working as a boot-boy in an inn. In this inn, he is having a room to live.

One late night Joel gets up and gets mesmerized seeing two persons sitting on stools facing each other. These two men keep on talking to each other unaware of Joel. Joel makes out that one of them who does the talking is with a taut face and the to other person’s face changes from ardor to gloom and then again to ardor.
The first man is Mr. Aaron Burr who does most of the talking. The other one is Harman Blennerhassett who does the listening. Joel finds his room illuminated by a light which comes from the face of Mr. Burr and after sometimes spreads to the whole of the room. Joel is seized and possessed by the mystery. He thinks of ghosts or Indians. When the incident starts repeating every day, he overcomes his fear and joy comes over him. He starts offering them food.

One idle morning he wanders to Esplanade and realizes that river which was a part of forest, suddenly comes to life. The forest symbolizes the qualities of being gentle and to be watched over, whereas river is depiction of churning. This scene to him is like the unfolding of spell in the night in his room. Thoughts of his separation from his parents come to him like a noose.

One of the late nights when Burr and Blennerhassett are talking, Blennerhassett’s wife who is not much older than Joel comes to the room with a fiddle and starts playing it. She plays it with stern allurement. This was the last night of the adventure which Joel witnessed during all previous nights. Only addition was lady with violin. After Blennerhassett and his wife leave the room, Burr sleeps on the table. Watching Burr sleeping, Joel
turns to contemplation. He knows that he is witnessing the moment after which Burr will ride away as a punishment. He is feeling a broken heart and reasons out that it is because of the fact that nothing has been told. Further, he thinks “If love does a secret thing always, it is to reach backwards, to a time that could not be known – for it makes a history of the sorrow and the dream it has contemplated in some instance of recognition”\(^\text{18}\).

Joel had terrible wish to speak out loud but it was not possible due to his constraints. What Joel could not feel due to his situation of being deaf, he realized by a sense of touch when he clasps the hand of Burr. It was a feeling of silent love and affection.

Next day Joel was given a notice to paste which was for trial of Mr. Burr at Washington. After the trail, Burr comes to the inn and then goes away. On the way he meets the girl with whom he used to dance. After this meeting she turns back and Burr goes further near a gate where the slave hands over a horse to him. He whips the horse and rides away. Joel follows in the same direction behind Burr. On the way he watches birds falling dead

\(^{18}\) Welty, Eudora., The Collected Stories, op. cit., p. 165
and dead buds of camellia bush. This is an ill omen for Natchez and its people.

The main theme of the story is the inner world of a deaf boy whose parents are no more. He understands the world around him in a very subtle ways, when he thinks and feels, ‘It might seem to him that the whole world was sleeping in the lightest of trances, which the least movement will surely wake’ – he is understanding the working of world around him. He is seized and possessed by mystery. This memory recoils back and remembering the moment of his separation from his parents he starts trembling. His world is full of wonder and patience which is reflected from the month long adventure, he undergoes in his room during the nights.

**The Wide Net**

The novelist, Eudora Welty, in her short story ‘The Wide Net’ depicts the character of an ordinary person, William Wallace who is the husband of the most beautiful lady of the town. His wife, Hazel, is pregnant and is due to deliver a baby in six months but acts as if she is going for delivery tomorrow. She becomes playful with her husband, William Wallace,
One night William Wallace goes out of house with two friends and comes in the next morning. On reaching home he does not find Hazel in the house. He chances upon a small letter written by Hazel in which it was written that she is going to the river to drown herself. Immediately, William Wallace contacts his friend Virgil, collects some nigers and arranges for a Wide Net from Doc who is expert in river dragging. They come to Pearl River and start dragging up stream. The day long dragging could not trace Hazel and the mission is abandoned. However, during this day long dragging William Wallace comes through an agony from arranging the dragging mission and then finally in the river from submersion in the deep waters. From the deep water he comes up holding the little green ribbon of plant, a root and other parts and on coming to the surface of the water he is surprised to see that it was not Hazel or her evidence. Broken by the day long search, he returns to the house without any hope. On the way he is scared to face Hazel’s mother. The story takes a U-turn when William Wallace on entering his house finds that Hazel was very much in the house. In fact, when he came in the morning to his house, Hazel was already there and hiding from his view. The story describes human nature of ordinary people along with a beautiful
description of nature. Symbolically William Wallace recovers his wife by braving life in the deep waters of Pearl River. The hero and heroine of the story again start life as usual, of course, with a renewed understanding. The author, in fact, narrates symbolically the good omen by the sight of rainbow by William Wallace in the light of moon as he enters in his house after a day long adventure of dragging the river. Here rainbow has been depicted as a symbol of hope.

**A Still Moment**

‘A still Moment’ is a story of meeting of Lorenzo Dow, an evangelist, James Murrell, a murderer and Audubon, a naturalist, in the wilderness on the edge of low marshland near a great oak tree in Old Natchez Trace, Mississippi. Lorenzo Dow rode on his newly acquired Spanish horse back to speak to locals about love of God. He wishes that Lord may give him the strength to see the angels when he is in paradise. His wife, Peggy and he share the fear of death and not that of separation. His journey was full of dangers in the wild.

A dark man, James Murrell meets Lorenz on the way and slows down his horse to go side by side with that of Lorenz. James thinks of Lorenz as one of his would-be-victims. He used
to tell tales to his would-be-victims which were distant in time and place and at the end he would say he is the murderer in the story and this is the place and time. Like this he will kill innocent traveler. Lorenz and James reach near the edge of a swamp where they both stop and get down from their horses. At that point of time a naturalist, Audubon reaches the same place. Lorenz greets Audubon. For a moment it was the deepest silence. Then a white Heron appears not too far in the sky and lands on the edge of the marsh. All of them watch this bird and had their different visions about it. Lorenz said, ‘Praise God, his love have become visible’.

James looks at the bird with the whole plan of mystic rebellion darting from him as if he was bound to become the leader of slaves, the brigands and outcasts of entire Natchez country. Audubon embraces the object in distance and could see it as carefully as if he held it in his hand. He thinks what structure of life bridges the reptile’s scale and the heron’s feather? He knew that the bird was defenseless in the world except for the intensity of its life and he wonders how heat of blood and speed of heart can defend it. He aims his rifle and shoots the bird, went to it and puts it in his bag for drawings and
study. Then he walks away. Lorenz also goes away leaving James alone there.

The main theme of the story is the yearning love of human beings, their desire for response and a basic loneliness. Three persons watch nature and an object of nature with a different vision. All the three have their different missions, yet for a moment they are together. Lorenz is gazing upwards offering thanks to God for the love personified in the form of snowy heron. James is lost in the dreams of being the leader of dark forces and Audubon is thinking of the life in motion and is centered on the detailed study of facts of nature and their relationships. In that silent moment they are together only in space and times. In their view of world and nature around them they are totally different. This is because of their different missions. The story portrays that our nature is greatly influenced by the mission we adopt in our lives.

**Asphodel**

‘Asphodel’ is the story of impact on a woman whose husband turns out to be unfaithful. The setting of the story is an old Natchez Trace. Miss. Sabina who is the daughter of a rich person has a big house on hillock which overlooks the town. Sabina’s
father brought Mr. Don Mc Innis home and proposed Sabina’s marriage to him. Sabina was not young enough to be an attraction for suitors. They got married. There are three middle-aged maids of Sabina in her house to help her. One day, these maids came running to Sabina and declared that her husband has been seen with a women running towards Asphodel—a golden ruined building with columns and part of roof intact. Hearing this Sabina went out of control and was full of anger cursing all including her three dead children. She stopped taking food. She asked her maids how she can hate him enough and how she can show all the hate she had for him. She implored the maids to tell her without waiting for God to punish him. She took upon this task on her and drew out Don out of house with a whip in the broad daylight. People from the town gathered there. He walked straight ahead with her following him with a buggy whip. She asked the unknown woman to come out so as to hit her with whip but none came forward. Sabina was beautiful and terrible. She was a big figure in the town and used to decide about common and personal matters of inhabitants. She moved from the house and came to post office where she found her three maids with letters in their hands. She took letters from their hands
reprimanding them saying that they were lovers. Then she tore all letters. Then she tore all other letters in the post office and shouted. She was full of rage and in this fit of anger and feeling of being cheated, she fell down and died. Next day three maids of Sabina, who got her property, as there was nobody to take it since Sabina’s father had died earlier and it was thought that Don had also died, went to Asphodel in their buggy for a picnic. They sat in front of Asphodel. After some time they saw a man coming out of Asphodel. He stood near one column and was naked. Three maids ran towards their buggy and riding it came back. They could make out that it was Don in the Asphodel. They decided to report him to the law.

The main theme of this tragic story is the effect of an act of unfaithful husband on his wife. It is also about the loyalty of three maids of Sabina who told the truth of Sabina. Sabina could not tolerate this act of cheating on the part of her husband and could not lead normal life feeling that her dignity in the society has been lowered. She had an emotional breakdown and ended her life.
The Winds

‘The Winds’ is the story of a girl, Josie, who lives with her parents and her younger brother, Will. Their house is in a town on the edge of Old Natchez Trace which is also called lover’s lane.

In the night, Josie’s sleep gets disturbed by the equinoctial windstorm. Her father and mother try to allay the fear of Josie and Will. Josie hears the sound of big girls and boys and sees in her imagination girls with white stockings on one side of hay on the Wagon. On the other side of hay are seen boys in black socks. They are moving while singing and rejoicing. Josie’s father comforts her and persuades her and Will to sleep. Josie has a friend in the house in front. This is double storey house and her friend is Cornella who is elder to her and stays in that house. In Cornella’s house there are eight younger children who thrust themselves in neighbourhood and are not liked by anybody. Second day also storm comes in the night and then it was followed by rains.

The main theme of this story is what keeps on going in children’s mind when unpredictable natural events like a wind storm happen. They start imagining wild scenes and long for meeting their friends when the storm stops. The story depicts the
world of children. Their thought process is entirely different than that of adults.

**The Purple Hat**

The ‘Purple Hat’ is a short story by the author. The setting of the story is a bar in New Orleans. A fat man and a young man come to the bar and start drinking. A bartender serves them the drinks. The fat man is a security person in a gambling house called ‘Place of Pleasure’.

The fat man does all the talking addressing young man as well as bartender. He narrates the story of middle aged lady who comes every evening in the ‘palace of pleasure’ for gambling along with a young man. She always comes wearing a purple hat. The hat is well decorated and everyday before going back the lady takes off her hat. The young man is her lover. But the lady is always in decisive position about how the love should proceed. Further, the fat man tells that she is a ghost. He himself is witness to her being murdered by her lover twice. The story ends abruptly when after the young man had gone and fat man starts going, the bartender asks the fat man whether she is a real ghost. The fat man replies that he will tell this tomorrow.
The theme of the short story is the mystery of life. It dwells on the way ghosts who are lovers or lovers who are ghosts conduct themselves. It hints about the various ways of loving of living and ghosts. It is also a pointer to the fact that unpleasant incidents in the gambling places are hushed up and are not talked about or complained.

**Livvie**

‘Livvie’ is the short story about the life of a woman by the same name. Solomon is a rich old man who marries Livvie, a black young woman, and takes her to his big farm house which is on the Old Natchez Trace in Mississippi. She was much younger to him. He was good to her. He had instructed her not to go out of the house. Solomon was so week that for most of the time he will be on the bed sleeping or half awake. He won't eat much and was wasting away. His health was deteriorating day by day. Livvie was a dutiful wife and used to cater to his comforts. She used to fan him and make healthy food for him. One Miss. Baby Marie who dealt in cosmetics came to meet Livvie and proposes that she may buy some of these. Livvie wants to buy but she tells that she does not have any money. Solomon had not given her any money and she can’t ask him for it.
One day Livvie goes out on Old Natchez Trace and there she happens to meet one young man Cash, who had been a farm hand on the farm of Solomon. Cash and Livvie walk back to the house. There, both of them reach to Solomon’s room and stand near to him. Cash was considerate in the presence of Solomon. Solomon was wide awake and seeing them together commented, ‘Young ones can’t wait’. Livvie shuddered violently and bent for a glass of water for Solomon. Solomon lifted up his arm gave Livvie his silver Watch. She was in tears. Solomon died and Livvie was sobbing. Livvie went out of the room. Cash followed her and in the front room Cash seized her deftly and dragged her hanging by the waist round and round him. Watch fell somewhere and she was limp.

The main theme of the story is the liberation of a woman who got married to an old and ailing rich man. She got all comforts but one, the most important, that of love. She honoured the social institution of marriage by remaining loyal to her husband even though he was no husband. He was only provider of livelihood and physical comforts. Her meeting with young man of her age, death of Solomon and flying of red birds outside and their crisscrossing are the indications of the fact that Livvie was
free now. Livvie was too young to be the wife of Solomon, who tended him in his last days of life. She was lucky to get out of the monotonous, boring situation in life. In essence, it was a case of hope getting fulfilled before it was too late.

**At The Landing**

‘At The Landing’ is a story by Eudora Welty where she has brought out the subtleties of love between a young girl, Jenny and a boy named Billy Floyd, in the settings of a Hemlet near the river bank.

Jenny’s mother had died and now she lives with her grandfather. Her grandfather is very frail and old. He and Jenny remain confined to the house. In the evening they come out in front of the house on a knoll. From here they can see the landing which is the bank of a river that has shifted three miles now. Billy Floyd, a young boy is a very unusual sight who is always carrying a big cat fish in his hand. Floyd is of mixed blood between an Indian and an English man. In fact his origin is unknown. Whenever Jenny goes out of the door of the house, she is called back by her grandfather. She was made to live a protected life.

Jenny is very soft natured girl and always obeys her grandfather. She was truly the calm personified. However, she
used to think that one day she would be free to come and go out of this house. She always desired to go to Natchez, small town. She had heard that Natchez was a nice little town on Saturday with a crowd moving around.

Jenny would not do any act of her own. Even she won’t reach the hanging prisms in her house. In fact those prisms will touch her whenever she walked around. Only moment of hope in her life was when she would see Floyd walking through landing carrying the big fish he had caught.

One day when Jenny was sitting on the stile, across the ravine she saw Floyd standing. He came near her and she kept on watching him. He stood watching her. She waited and he smiled. Thereafter he went to the grass and threw himself on the ground. On seeing this Jenny felt that her innocence has left her but, she was not sure what has occupied the vacant space.

Another day they walked together on the either side of stream. They could feel for each other among the butterflies which were moving ground in rhythm. Jenny felt that the kiss they exchanged was as tender as the love itself. When Jenny touched Floyd’s sleeve, he went away. He went away in the field
and smiling. This smile to Jenny acted as a barrier for her to come.

One night she dreamt that her grandfather came to her room and said ‘River has come back’. He further said “All the people in the Landing are gliding off and upward to darkness”\(^\text{19}\). It was an omen of impending flood. That night Jenny’s grandfather died. She went to the post office to give the news of her grandfather’s death. There she broke the news to five old men. In the post office she found Floyd standing behind the post master. When she wanted to talk to Floyd, she got reminded that her grandfather had forbidden her to talk to Floyd.

After some days there was heavy rain in the area and the river came with full fury and all the houses at landing got submerged. People reached high areas. Jenny also took shelter on a hill. There Floyd came in his boat and went away with Jenny in it. He took Jenny to a small place where water has not risen. He cooked meat and fish for Jenny and Jenny along with Floyd ate belly full. Sublime love develops again between the two and here they mated. After floods receded, Jenny came back to her house. She scraps the house off river water residues. Thereafter she goes

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 240
to landing in search of Floyd. There, she comes across a fisherman with whom she waits for the arrival of Floyd who according to him has gone fishing and would come back.

The main theme of the story is the inner world of love and sense of belonging of a young girl who has remained confined in the house during her childhood. Floyd also has not been part of society as he used to spend time mostly in woods and in the river. Love blooms in their mind and body in a very natural way. On either side there is no attempt to exhibit or thrust love as passion. It is about natural flowering of love.

Jenny’s encounters with Floyd are the expositions of her love in a gradual way. During the first encounter, she waited and watched Floyd. However, she felt that innocence has left her for the first time. During the second encounter, there was harmony in the movement of Jenny and Floyd something like the rhythm in the movements of a pair of butterflies. There was an exchange of a kiss and soft touch. The third encounter was during the boat journey when Floyd and Jenny enjoyed the fruit of love, the love which Jenny could never forget or rest without. The author illustrates it as “shock of love had brought trembling to her fingers that made her drop what she touched and made her
stumble on the stair”\textsuperscript{20}. Remembering Floyd, particularly during night, Jenny would think, “Ought I to sleep”\textsuperscript{21}. She feels that her love may be coming at any moment. She used to wonder what more love would be like and know that more love would be quiet and into quiet her love would go. She remembers Floyd so fondly that whenever she touches Floyd in her dreams he smiles and turns away – not from her but towards something. She imagines as if she is lined upon both the sides of road and her love comes by in procession. Jenny thinks that she had known the most when she saw Floyd riding the horse in the field of butterflies; she had known also when she watched him cook the meat and eaten it with him. She further wishes that she would gain the next wisdom if she could find him now. Through love she is getting insights of life. As she proceeds in search of Floyd, she passes through a stretch covered by the blooming passion flowers. This is symbolic of what is happening in the heart of Jenny. For Floyd, her love, she has left the comfort of her home and waits patiently, inside a grounded house boat, for him to come. Symbolically, her love is equated to waiting for the beloved. About the nature of love it is described that the flowering of love is not a slave to words.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 253
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 253
Jenny reflects, ‘It is heavy heart that makes me clumsy’ and further add that nobody can say, “Forgive the heavy heart that loves more than the tongue can say or the hand can do. Look back every time I look at you and never feel pity, for what my heart holds this minute is better than what you offer the least bit less”22. She feels that all the grace belongs to the future. At one point during the second encounter Jenny realizes that essential characteristic of love is the moral knowledge of the mystery that is in the heart of the other. A fragile mystery was in every one and she felt that whatever she did would hurt Floyd. She concludes within herself that the secret of life is the terror of it. This theme of flowering of a nascent love has been elucidated superbly by the author. However, a feeling of sadness and darkness is left on Jenny at the end as the love remains unfulfilled.

**Delta Wedding**

In the novel ‘Delta Wedding’, Eudora Welty dwells upon a marriage party which takes place at a house at a plantation called Shellmound, Mississippi. The Fairchilds family is a combined family of people having a plantation for their livelihood. Laura McRaven, a nine year old motherless girl comes through a train

---

22 Ibid., p. 249
journey to attend the marriage. Her mother belonged to the Fairchild family. After reaching the Shellmound, Laura feels very comfortable with the family members of Fairchilds. She finds a friend in India who is also a nine years old girl. In the Fairchilds family, there are aunts, great aunts, uncles and lot of children and house is always, except during their sleeping hours, busy with the activity.

Dabney is a young girl in the family who is the daughter of Mrs. Ellen and Mr. Battle. She is getting married to Mr. Troy Flavin.

Even though the most of the activity in the family centers on the girls and women, in fact, the boys and men define the family. Most of the discussions center around the dining table conveying the idea that style and consumption of food is the main activity in the house. However, there are visits by Dabney and her uncle, Mr. George to the great aunts, mostly on horseback.

A very touching incident has been described. It is about Mr. George trying to save a girl of the family, Maureen, whose leg has been entangled in the railway line and had a chance of being run over by the upcoming train named ‘Yellow Dog’. Mr. George’s wife, Robbie, is witness to this incident. Mr. George was struggling to
get the girl out even when the train was approaching very near. Fortunately, the driver applies brake strongly and the train stops a little before the girl and Mr. George were saved. Before the train stopped Robbie called out George to move lest he should get run over by the train. George did not move. Robbie takes this as an offence interpreting the incident that George did not care what would happen to Robbie if he got run over by the train. Because of this incident Robbie runs away. George goes to join the family at Shellmound. After wandering Robbie also comes near the Shellmound plantation where Mr. Troy meets her and invites her at the wedding. Later on Robbie and George get on well with each other.

The novelist through the above mentioned incident is touching upon the deep and emotional attachment of a wife towards her husband. The Fairchilds family to which George belongs is, in fact, proud of his heroic action whereas Robbie thinks that it was a misadventure. Robbie, while on a visit to her great aunts makes an observation that all Fairchilds are very intelligent people. Uncle George indulged too, but they could never hurt him as they could hurt her. This observation of
Dabney is in reference to the ways of Fairchilds in getting anything they want.

Another theme which the novelist describes is that children in the family would take full liberty on the wedding occasion and will fly out of the house without even pretending to ask permission and elders are not energetic enough to keep control over them and especially when all of the children are together.

Laura, a motherless child, before doing anything keeps in her mind what her mother in heaven would think to see her doing what she is doing. Once, Maurren pushed a pile of logs on Laura. She extricates herself with difficulty from the pile and before she could think what harm caused to her by Maurren by pushing the logs of wood she thought that her mother in heaven would cry to see her now if she had not cried so far. This incident portrays the working of the mind of a young girl child.

Laura wanted to be a flower girl for Dabney at her marriage. She was always giving hints to her aunt, Ellen. Ultimately, she got the chance when one of the flower girls became ill. She relished becoming a flower girl. In fact, she enjoyed the entire Shellmound estate and preferred to continue to stay there. When asked by her aunt, Ellen preferred to continue rather than going
back to her father. She relishes the company of other children and in that she found proper conditions for her growth.

Fairchild men have been depicted to be living on a kind of sufferance. They were tolerated but not actually wanted. Women knew but what to ask from their men. They sought adoration and step by step everything and they will boast, “he would do anything for me’. Each of the Fairchilds men, according to Robbie, wore a pleading mask. It is clear from this novel that women in the society were basically confined to the house, depending on a man and always showing themselves as helpless so that men will always work for them for their petty pleasures too. Robbie has been of a different kind who wants rational relations based on themes and common sense. She desires veracity.

The marriage of Ms. Dabney and Mr. Troy takes place and so also reunion of Mr. George and Ms. Robbie. Laura feels happy and contended. The novel is a comedy which describes a marriage in the plantation family where one of the visitors is a motherless child. Moreover, it is a celebration of life depicting relationships among family members. It is also about flowering of love.