Eudora Welty is one of the outstanding southern writers whose interest in fiction is less in action and plot than in a sense of atmosphere, an awareness of place, and a concern for the nature of the emotions experienced by her created characters. Her novel, Delta Wedding, depicting contemporary Southern life, established her reputation as a regional writer, as a lyricist celebrating "the enchanted maternal garden." Her novel The Ponder Heart won the Howells Medal in 1955 given by the American Academy of Arts to the most distinguished work of American fiction of the preceding five years. But the chief accomplishment of Eudora Welty is the shorter fiction where her art is at its most compelling. In her "Introduction" to Eudora Welty's A Curtain of Green, Katherine Anne Porter noted that Miss Welty portrayed moments in characters' lives in which "external act and the internal voiceless life of the human imagination" almost meet and mingle "on the mysterious threshold between dream and waking." This remark characterizes a number of Welty's stories in other collections like The Wide Net, The Golden Apples and The Bride of the Innis-fallen and Other Stories.
Further, *The Wide Net* stories like 'First Love,' 'A Still Moment,' 'The Wide Net' show Welty's ability to use historical background and explore the mystery of human relationships and the meaning of love and individual destiny and incorporate levels of truth. Historical settings are used as backgrounds to intensely private searchings. It is here that Welty's ability to map the Southern sensibility is seen. While Faulkner revels in a dynastic sweep of externalised passion and obsessions in his self-drawn map of Yoknapatawpha County, Welty, McCullers and O'Connor depict a feminised Southern landscape. The most important writer in the South since Faulkner, Welty shows not the diseased femininity of McCullers and O'Connor but an affirmative portrayal of women's lives. No matter how satirical she is about the strangling ideal of Southern ladyhood, no matter how deep her sense that the South is falling away from the ancient verity of the land into suburbanisation, Welty remains a lucid analyst of the Southern woman's, indeed all women's experience. Although Welty shares in the southern tradition of the neo-conservatives and a defined social scheme is present in her work, the centre of her concern as an
If in a novel like The Robber Bridegroom there is a blend of the European fairy tale and folklore with the tall tales and legends of the Mississippi River country of pioneer days enabling Welty to draw several familiar character types, themes and situations, in a collection like The Golden Apples is present inter-related stories based on three generations of families in Morgana, Mississippi, whose lives reveal at once a regional particularity and a universality suggested by the mythic dimensions of the stories. Fiction, according to Eudora Welty, depends for its life on place. While time for her, is abstract and fluid, place enables man to measure himself against it. Place is an aspect of her fiction which enables her narratives to have a realistic focus at one level. But the craft of Welty's fiction shows how place is closely allied to feeling, and feeling is evoked by means of a capturing of mood and atmosphere through fantasy which itself must finally touch ground. Fantasy is a mode by which Welty creates the interior of a mind or an allegorical landscape to investigate "the truth of the human heart." For all her strange and dream-like settings, Miss Welty never strays far from the Natches.
Trace in Mississippi which is an evidence of the sense of reality she conveys. She has caught the tendency of man to dream and without violating reality greatly, used it as a device in fiction to achieve realism.

The interior life is the subject matter of much of Welty's fiction. She stresses through her treatment of characters cut off from the world, alienated and locked into their own subjectivity, such themes as isolation, love and separateness. Eudora Welty's characters are a compelling part of the story. Two modes of character portrayal are distinguishable in her fiction. The first kind presented from the point of view of an observing narrator or some other character in the story is of a non-developing kind like the fascinating and exotic powerhouse or the richly poetic Old Phoenix. The second kind of character is presented from the inside and is shown in the process of being educated into life as for example Joel Mayes and Virgie Rainey and several of the characters in the novel, Delta Wedding. Both types of characters are given a large measure of their credibility by being tied to their place and time and thus existing, already developed, as "instruments of awareness."

In The Bride of the Innisfallen and Other Stories, a "descriptive impressionism" is present creating a vivid sense
of place, mood and atmosphere with characters forming part of the texture of the stories in that collection. Eudora Welty's range and variety, the vivid tapestry and the evocative power found in her writing, her sense for place and Southern regionalism, her fusion of myth, fantasy, and everyday Mississippi—all these characteristics show Eudora Welty to be a sensitive and discerning artist of great importance in the twentieth century American literary canon.

The present study focuses on Eudora Welty's sense of place, the element of fantasy in her short stories with special reference to the first two collections, A Curtain of Green and Other Stories and The Wide Net and Other Stories, her use of myth with reference to The Golden Apples and the major thematic preoccupations of The Bride of the Innisfallen and Other Stories. Together, these various aspects of Eudora Welty's writings constitute her craft which reveals tendencies of the fiction of the forties in America apart from showing a detached approach to the South.

I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to my research supervisor, Dr. C.R. Visweswara Rao, for his advice
and guidance. I have pleasure in thanking Prof. A. Ramakrishna Rao, Head of the Department, and the staff of the English Department for their suggestions and encouragement. I thank my husband, Sri P. V. Balaji Rao, for all his loving help. My thanks are also due to Sri P. Venugopal of Hyderabad for his help and Smt. D. Vasantha for so neatly typing the manuscript.