CHAPTER II

FANTASY IN THE SHORT STORIES OF EUDORA WELTY
Eudora Welty's significance as a short story writer is to be found in the inter-relationship she works out in her fictions between reality and imagination, between the "skin of the day" and "what remains over."

In her fiction the world of fantasy, reflecting the irrational world in which we live, goes out to meet the world of reality, by means of a logic in the relationship of ideas. Fantasy does not serve as an escape from ordinary experience. It contributes finally to showing reality in a fuller light and helps in its interpretation. Either at the beginning of a story or at intervals in its narration, or perhaps at the end of the story, fantasy achieves a fusion with reality bringing about a reconciliation. What appears improbable is sometimes reality magnified and becoming fantasy. In Miss Eudora Welty's exploration of inner life, hard and fast lines are not drawn between the world of fact and fantasy. As Ruth Vande Kieft has observed, "the distinct difference and the comforting gap between dream and reality, irrational and rational, fantasy and
fact, are continually threatened by Miss Welty's fiction." Nevertheless, "in the dream and fantasy life that Welty depicts there is a firm footing in reality."¹

Welty depicts her characters and situations in such a way that a "technique simultaneity"² is seen to be in operation in her short stories. By virtue of this device she often gives us an account of something from more than one consciousness. As a consequence, she is able to introduce into her stories various versions of reality entertained by different characters — versions bordering on fantasy. Welty's characters represent certain ideas and they are not fully realised as individuals per se. She is not interested in telling us everything about her character. She deliberately fixes her boundaries and arranges the elements within a particular area of experience. Her characters are not caricatures though they exist in a small sphere. They are never oversimplified because Welty's keen psychological insight and


her understanding of the subtleties of human behaviour come into play in giving life to her characters. Her short stories, especially the collections *A Curtain of Green* and *The Wide Net*, illustrate her art of characterization, her blending of fact and fantasy, and her ability to show inner life sustaining itself against the prevailing disorder.

The publication of *A Curtain of Green* in 1941 is a landmark in the sense that Eudora Welty, as a writer of short stories, is identified with the Gothic South. Several of the early reviewers of this volume of short stories saw Eudora Welty's preoccupation with the abnormal in these stories. Her technique seems to be to depict mood and atmosphere rather than incident. Her characters in general suffer from some form of insanity. For the most part bitterness, pessimism and horror predominate in the attitudes and the psychological make-up of her characters. The gothic or the grotesque or the mobid - these were generally the epithets used in order to describe Welty's characters and also with regard to her creation of mood and atmosphere. The pictures that immediately come to the mind of the reader are Keela's deformity and his act of eating live
chickens, and the image of Clytie's legs protruding from the rain barrel in which she drowns herself. But one of the important features of the collection, *Curtain of Green*, is that in spite of Welty's preoccupation with the abnormal, the grotesque and the elements of fantasy, there is an exposure of the state of mind and the mood of a character contributing to the achievement of a heightened sense of reality. Again, in the very process of magnifying reality or heightening it, the mode of the fantasy is employed. A prominent feature of some of the short stories is that some of these "unfortunates" in Miss Welty's stories exemplify their tendency to assume individual dignity from an inner direction. There are the economically oppressed and the racial minorities, and the shut-ins in the grip of social forces. Little Lee Roy, a negro man in the story, 'Keela, The Outcast Indian Maid' does not need the reparation of injuries offered him for the terrible wrong done to him. Partly because of their lack of comprehension of the reason for this, those who have done him wrong become their own victims. In the story, 'A Worn Path', the nurse at the clinic become aware of a barrier between herself and Grandma, an old Negro woman. She is unable to explain
the nature of the barrier. In the story, 'Lily Daw and Three Ladies', the half-witted girl is seen to be superior to those credited with misdirected efforts to help her. The patronising but well-meaning ladies around her show a pathetic inability to cross the distance between themselves and her so as to grasp her real needs. In all the short stories, the pattern noticeable is that those who are tangibly superior become the really unfortunate ones because of a more important deficiency within themselves. Miss Welty shows us the individual pitted against modern society, a society which is diseased and which finds its reflection in distorted minds and lives. The neuroses which result from the individual's inability to reconcile himself to the society are thoroughly realised in Miss Welty's characters. She writes of those who have become circumscribed by corruption involving its manifestations such as triviality, malignity, vulgarity, snobbery, self-pity, bitterness, maniacal hunger for power and human cruelty. In the treatment of characters possessing these qualities of the mind, Welty employs a technique which focuses on exposing the bare reality. She does not spread the grossness before our eyes. She does not show even the slightest tendency to
sentimentalise her picture. Nor does she hint at anything like a negative collusion with characters who exemplify certain symptomatic wrongs. Her attitude toward her characters is one of tolerant magnanimity, as Eunice Glenn has pointed out. What is an important characteristic of Welty's art of the short story is that she transcends sensationalism and moral teaching. Her tone is controlled with sureness and delicacy. While her satire sharply points out the evil, there is in her writing compassion and just condemnation.

Katherine Anne Porter, in her introduction to the collection, *A Curtain of Green*, admits her preference for stories like 'A Piece of News', 'A Memory', 'Death of a Traveling Salesman', 'A Worn Path', 'Powerhouse' and so on, 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, one reality refusing to admit or confirm the existence of the other, yet both conspiring toward the same end." The stories mentioned above mingle dream and waking and banish time and ordinary chronology. These stories are a pointer to the later fiction

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of Eudora Welty.

'A Piece of News' depicting a rather trivial incident presents a fine blend of reality and reverie bordering upon fantasy. The illiterate girl, Ruby Fisher, accidentally comes upon a newspaper story in which a girl with the same name is shot by her husband. The incident reported in the newspaper spurs the tendency of Ruby Fisher to indulge in fantasy and associate herself and her husband with the incident. Ruby's reverie is interrupted by the return of her husband who, on his part, is momentarily shocked by the coincidence of names. But with an overriding common sense, he throws the newspaper into the fire. Ruby's reverie is broken by Clyde's appearance with a gun. His act marks a return to reality. But the irony is that the very fact of Clyde's standing there with the gun in his hand ties the fantastic and the reality. It appears to Ruby for a moment that the imagined situation has become real. But she draws herself in, still holding the empty plate, facing him straightened and hard, and they look at each other. The moment fills with their helplessness. Slowly they both flush, as though Clyde might really have killed Ruby and as though Ruby might really have been dead at his hand. Rare
and wavering, some possibility stands timidly like a stranger between them and makes them hang their heads.

The technique employed in this story, as in 'The Hitch-Hikers,' 'A Memory,' 'Powerhouse' and 'A Worn Path,' mingles dream and waking, and "banishes time and ordinary chronology."  

The story, 'Old Mr. Marblehall,' is a typical example of Welty's unique device of interweaving fantasy and reality. In the early stages of the story the element of fantasy does not emerge at all. There is simply the portrait of Mr. Marblehall given in realistic terms. Mr. Marblehall's appearance to society lacks any importance of possessions and he is acutely aware of this. As the story progresses, the real and the imagined world impinge upon each other. To Mr. Marblehall both become so real that he loses the power to distinguish them, one from the other. This coalescence of the real and the fantasy world takes place in Mr. Marblehall's mind particularly when he catches on,

... he thinks, to what people are supposed to do. That is it: they endure something inwardly - for a time secretly; they esta-

In Miss Welty's exploration of the inner life, hard and fast lines are not drawn between the world of fact and fantasy. There are half-states, mixtures of dream and reality, or rapid shifts between the two worlds. The opening lines of Miss Welty's second volume, *The Wide Net and Other Stories*, imply a variety of contexts and methods in and through which illusion, fantasy and the dream world are presented.

In 'A Memory' the girl lives in a dream world which is co-existent with the real world. The same is the case with the heroine of 'Clytie'. In the former story, the narrator is a young girl who is sensitive and austere. She tells how her daydreams on a city beach were interrupted by the appearance of a disquieting group of bathers - a man, two women and two boys, "brown and roughened, but not foreigners." The sight of these well-meaning but ugly people cavorting a public beach erases the subject of her morning

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reverie. The disorder the people leave behind makes her feel keenly for both the beauty and insubstantiality of most youthful dreams. The story does not ask us either to laugh or to condemn. It does not ask us to agree with the girl. Nor does it try to persuade us that the girl has achieved a real understanding of her experience. As the memory of the young boy rushes back now compounded with the morning's unpleasantness, she weeps inexplicably for "the small white pavilion" that endlessly ornaments the discredited beach.

Little Lee Roy, a Negro man in the story, 'Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden,' does not wish or need the reparation offered him for a terrible wrong. Those who have done him the wrong are the ones who suffer. They are their own victims. Steve's sense of isolation results from guilt acquired when, as a Barker in a carnival, he drummed up trade for a small clubfooted Negro man who was dressed up as an Indian woman and forced several times a day to eat a live chicken. Fortunately the show was raided and the Negro sent home to Cane Sorings, Mississippi; but the young man, though legally exonerated, has ever since led an Ancient Mariner-like existence. He wandered from place to place,
confessing. We see him at his moment of ultimate confrontation. Having come at last to Cane Springs, he has found a restaurant operator, named Ma, who takes him to the club-footed Negro's home. There he hopes to receive forgiveness. There he finds a grinning little man without a sense of injury and thus incapable of forgiving.

Unlike Poe, Miss Welty is far removed from creating scenes of horror for their own sake. She uses them for a specific purpose which is to make everyday life appear as it often does to the person with extraordinary acuteness of feeling. Her fantastical characters become actual persons. Her incongruous events are those that take place every day.

In her first collection of stories, *A Curtain of Green*, Eudora Welty focuses unerringly on the grotesque which is seen to be the natural habitat of real things and people. She probes for the wholeness that lies at the root of humanness. The vividness and the immediacy of an instant's shock is ultimately placed in a timeless state of connection. Mrs. Larkin in 'A Curtain of Green' is the most compact example of this style and meaning. She has seen her husband killed in what the newspapers might describe as a freak accident. It was on a summer day that a tree fell on his
car and crushed him to death. Mrs. Larkin tries in retaliation to busy herself in the non-human. The accident has shown her chaos. She rushes toward it. Michael Kreyling describes Mrs. Larkin's tendencies thus:

To a certain extent, she seemed not to seek for order but to allow an overflowering, as if she consciously ventured for ever a little farther, a little deeper, into her life in the garden.

Mrs. Larkin will look upon the curtain of green, expose its truth and then find the rest she needs. She approaches her black helper, Jamie separated from her by his sex and race, with a hoe raised in her hand. Jamie's head is vivid to her in its reality, its "hot wooly hair, its intricate, glistening ears, its small brown branching streams of sweat." Ready to strike off Jamie's head, Mrs. Larkin faces the world the accident had revealed:

So deeply did she know, from the effect of man's danger and death, its cause in oblivion; and so hopeless was she, too helpless to defy


the workings of accident, of life and death, of unaccountability.  

In this moment of revelation, Mrs. Larkin sees the wholeness of which life and death are parts. In this crucial action Mrs. Larkin belongs to the line of Welty's heroes and heroines which includes Clement Musgrove in *The Robber Bridegroom*, and Virgie Rainey in 'The Wanderers.' When Mrs. Larkin paints among her flowers, and the rain streaks her face, Jamie feels a sense of panic which is misplaced. She is merely sleeping after an exhausting battle with grief. Seeing the things around her in their state of co-existence and natural antithesis enables Mrs. Larkin to acquire the sense of particularity as well as of wholeness. That is her saving gift. She endures the shock and enters behind the curtain into the realm of innocent acceptance of life.

'Powerhouse' is one of the most characteristic stories in which Welty's methods and themes are most typically exemplified. An enigmatic story of a Negro Orchestra leader, 'Powerhouse' shows no development in terms of action. The

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scene is a dance-hall and the characters are Negro dance-band musicians. The principal level of the action concerns itself with the playing of the musicians, their removal to the cafe and their return to the dance-hall. Another thread of action is suggested through Powerhouse. He receives a telegram saying that his wife is dead (or so he says). As Ruth Vande Kieft has pointed out, "Much of the discussion of the story is in the vein of heated argument and dogged insistence that Powerhouse's wife Gypsy, positively is or positively is not dead." Powerhouse weaves a sequence of details about the telegram suggesting the complications introduced by a man named Uranus knockwood to whom he attributes all of his misfortunes.

That no-good pussy-footed crooning creeper, that creeper that follow around after me, coming up like weeds behind me, following around after me everything I do and messing around on the trail I leave. Bets my numbers, signs my songs, gets close to my agent like a Betsy-bug; when I going out he just coming-in.  


According to Powerhouse's legend, somehow Uranus knock wood is the cause of his wife, Gypsy's death. In the unusual plot which this story has, questions whether Powerhouse actually has a wife and so on have no certain answers. The compulsive reality surrounding these questions (which acquire a touch of fantasy) is placed against the background of vivid, concrete details such as the playing of the orchestra, the visit to the cafe, the meeting with the waitress and the local hero. There is no certainty that the events concerning Powerhouse's wife are true in the sense that they actually happened. This story dealing with the musicians follows a thematic progression on the analogy of music.\(^{13}\) This story, in the development of its musical motif, is more about the relationship of Powerhouse, the creative artist and his companions to the fiction that he concocts. The subject matter of 'Powerhouse' may thus be taken to be the relationship between fiction and fact. Welty's sure touches of reality as she describes the musical progression and the reaction of the local whites and Negroes to

Powerhouse are embodiments of the sense of place which is central to her art. She attaches precise local value to feeling. The particular significance of Eudora Welty's short stories lies in the internal relationship of the external and the internal and reality and imagination. As the band plays "Pagan Love Song," the privately constructed world of Powerhouse clashes with reality. The story points out how Powerhouse's addressing his song to the dancers out of a sense of private need and his improvising the details of his Gypsy's death are a mode of formulating doubts and suspicions. Powerhouse ultimately is an artist who gives form to the doubts and fears of the race.

The Wide Net, published in 1943, is a collection which possesses, according to Michael Kreyling, "the resonance and lyrical wholeness of Welty's later fiction." In each of these stories, Eudora Welty presents at least one character who confronts a mysterious or dream-like situation. Each encounter contributes to an awakening or a renewal.

It helps the character acquire emotional enrichment or experimental meaning. In this collection there are eight stories dwelling on a single theme and related by the common setting of the Natchez Trace. Even though the stories have a grounding in the history and geography of the Natchez Trace, as fiction they take place in a situation of imagined possibilities. As Eunice Glenn has mentioned, "Somewhere between the prose fiction as regarded "realism" and that, on the other hand, which purports to deal only with the inner life of the mind, is the fiction of Eudora Welty." The heroes and heroines in this collection of short stories find themselves in two worlds simultaneously. They discover how the two worlds are ultimately one in their movement from the world of history into the region of dream and back again into the world of history. The element of fantasy comes in order to strengthen the sense of realism.

This vision continues in the title story of the collection, 'The Wide Net,' for which Welty was awarded the O'Henry Prize in 1942. Wallace Jamieson learns that his

new wife, Hazel, pregnant and depressed by a sense of neglect, has left a note saying that she would jump into the Pearl River. Hazel, of course, is not going to resort to drowning but her threat provides an occasion for William Wallace and his friend Virgil to borrow the net from Doc for a river dragging. There is in the story an allusion to the medieval Christian poem in which Dante sets out in search of Beatrice. Hazel assumes the character of a Madonna. William Wallace performs feats of physical daring in the Pearl. In his search for Hazel, the initial apprehensiveness for her life vanishes. Wallace becomes an explorer of an endless world of mystery.

Miss Welty often employs the element of the fantasy in order to suggest the grotesque and thereby intensify and magnify into unreasonable proportions as it were the life of the everyday world. If in 'Clytie' the spectacle of the old maid drowning herself in a barrel of rain water with her feet sticking up ludicrously is one such example, the morbid river dragging party in 'The Wide Net' is another example. While Poe employs in his fiction certain scenes of horror for their own sake, Welty uses them to illuminate every day life. The incongruous events in Welty's short stories are those that take place everyday.
As in Thomas Mann's novel of the grotesque *The Transposed Heads*, gruesomeness sharpens the sense of social and individual distortion. William Wallace, in his perfunctory dive for the body of his wife, has somehow fathomed the cause of her unhappiness. He returns to town to discover the impracticability of his expedition. As Doc puts it, "the excursion is the same when you go looking for your sorrow as when you go looking for your joy." Hazel comes upon the knowledge that William Wallace loves her. While she discovers time as an inexorable flow, the men find it a series of bursts of wonder with intervals of boredom. The whole story appears to concern itself with change. Doc says: "We're walking along the changing-time. Anyday now the change will come. It's going on from hot to cold, and we can kill the hog that's ripe." The change visible in Hazel is that she grows from womanhood to motherhood. Virgil, who takes a pessimistic view of the change associates it with physical aging. William Wallace too, in diving into the


depths of Pearl River, faces the depth of change without knowing it!

So far down and all alone, had he found Hazel? Had he suspected down there, like some secret, the real, the true trouble that Hazel had fallen into, about which words in a letter could not speak ... how (who knew) she had been filled to the brim with that elation that they all remembered, like their own secret, the relation that comes of great hopes and changes, sometimes simply of the harvest time, that comes with a little course of its own like a tune to run in the head, and there was nothing she could do about it - they knew— and so it had turned into this? It could be nothing but the old trouble that William Wallace was finding out, reaching and turning in the gloom of such depths.

The knowledge which William Wallace reaches in the end takes the aspect of a true rebirth emphasized by the rite of immersion in water. His journey, though it is painful, is ultimately beneficial since it brings about understanding and love. Hazel, like Joel Mayes and Mrs. Larkin, responds to the phenomenal world affirmatively.

with love and thus turns random incidents of existence into meaningful aspects of life. William Wallace, who merely asserts his youthful potency in a ritualistic dance suggesting phallic rebellion, does not fully comprehend that the real trouble is not the King of Snakes. At the end of the long day’s search, having found no trace of Hazel in the river, he returns to the house which he finds wrapped in a night time rainbow illuminated by moonlight so that it looks "small and of gauzy material, like a lady’s summer dress."\(^\text{19}\)

'First Love,' the first story in The Wide Net, tells of two political conspirators and a deaf boy who watches them without hearing the characteristic schemer, Aron Burr. It is a touching story in which in his encounter with Aron Burr, Joel Mayes, deaf-mute and orphan in the Natchez of 1807, finds his first opportunity to communicate love. The silent world of the deaf-mute is at first juxtaposed and then merged with the strange and hardly comprehensible world of high politics and treason associated with the paradoxical figure of Aron Burr. Although it is the bitterest winter

of all, the very cold itself, so terrible in its treatment of land and men alike, brings to Joel the wonder of communication. Joel realizes that Burr and his confidante are using his room as a meeting place. The boy moves from being a lonely person through the danger and dark of "violent and suspicious men" toward where he comes to see his defect as a kind of hospitality for his two nightly visitors. Joel is protected by his infirmity from perceiving the disturbing things about Burr's personality. He notices Burr's need for love. The story does not invoke our sympathy for Burr. It asks us to see Burr's part in Joel's awakening. The grim and the grotesque seem to be the characters dealt with to a greater extent in *The Wide Net* collection than generally in *A Curtain of Green*. The grotesque, Eudora Welty says, is a device to differentiate characters by their physical qualities as a way of showing what they were like inside. Further the deaf boy, Joel Mayer, solved a problem for the writer by means of his deafness. Aaron Burr was a real person. Welty found it difficult to invent conversation for him. So the deaf boy offered the point of view by reporting and interpreting Aaron Burr. For Joel Mayes, Burr brings motion and
panorama and brightness, that is, life and beauty in the midst of ugliness and death. After Burr's departure, Joel feels that he cannot stay any more at the inn where he had been burrowing and where he had resented the traveller's presence as a sort of violation. Burr is, in some ways, a marvellous stranger who stands out as an unusual character. Attractive and mysterious, he brings into the environment an atmosphere of excitement suggestive of fantasy. Thus after Burr's arrival in Natchez the town seems to emulate his elegance as it is touched by his grace. "People now lighted their houses in entertainments as if they copied after the sky,"20 The people are affected by it:

and a radiance as soft and near as rain fell on their hands and faces, and on the plumes of the breaths from the horses' nostrils, and they were as gracious and as grand as Burr.21

Burr's arrival shakes Natchez caught fast in the grip of the cold, and shakes it through the lethargy of the snow.


21 Ibid., p. 19.
In this story, 'First Love,' as Michael Kreyling has analysed, the fiction actually dwells in Joel's heart and Joel's understanding of love. In Burr's grasping of Joel's hand, in that touch anticipated from the beginning of the story, a sense of communion and growth in love are achieved:

The fingers closed and did not yield; the clasp grew so fierce that it hurt his hand, but he saw that the words had stopped.

As if a silent love had shown him whatever new thing he would ever be able to learn, Joel had some wisdom in his fingers now which only this long month could have brought. He knew with what gentleness to hold the burning hand. With the gravity of his very soul he received the furious pressure of this man's dream.

At the end of the story, Joel follows in Burr's path on foot along the frozen path out of the Natches country. Historically the route is called Liberty Road. Thus symbolically Joel's liberation is real. A world which looked so oblivious and estranged now enables the growth of Joel.


'A Still Moment' has a distinct legendary flavour.
It is embodied in a setting of the nineteenth century
Natchez Trace at sunset. With the air and silence filled
with dark phantoms, strange bees and hostile aborigines,
the story concerns three persons who come across a snow­
white heron in the woods. The three persons are the evange­
list Lorenzo, riding in the wilderness, Murrell, the bandit,
who too wishes to solve the mystery of life, and Audubon,
the student who seeks only radiance and beauty for his art.
They are marked by their worldly desire to conquer the world.
The evangelist, Lorenzo Dow, practises his warning to the
people as he gallops through the dust: "Inhabitants of Time!
The wilderness is your souls on earth! ... These wild places
and these victims of awesome loneliness lie nowhere, but in
your heart."24 This ironic exhortation not only describes
Lorenzo Dow, but the bandit, James Murrell, cloaked in his
conspiracy and rebellion against all life, and also the
naturalist Audubon. Each member of this unlikely gathering
seeks his own goal in the depths of the American wilderness.
Dow wishes "to save all souls," Murrell "to destroy all men,"

24 Eudora Welty, 'A Still Moment,' Selected Stories
of Eudora Welty, (New York, 1971), p. 78,
and Audubon "to see and record all life." Each man in his isolation is locked in the privacy of his own pursuits. Each of these three men acknowledges the basic isolation in which he exists. "A Still Moment" provides an antithesis to the theme of renewal and union pursued in the other stories. Garvin Davenport makes the persistent observation that Lorenzo's musing on the order in which love and separateness were created by God seems an avoidance—rather than a confrontation—of the essential questions. Rest and love to them are inaccessible. For one brief moment the snowy shy bird lays quiet over them and unburdens them of their furious desires. Audubon signifies the mystery and ruthlessness of art. He puts the bird in his bag, later on to draw and point out the futility of trying to fathom the even more mysterious life surrounding him. This story is Miss Welty's finest example of her use of fantasy. It is largely allegorical in its presentation of characters and ideas. The links with actuality in this fantasy are in fact provided largely by its setting in the historic past.

of all sorts used to roam the forest, Serru Juice disguises, bragging contests, Indian dances, and massacres actually took place in this historical setting. The atmosphere, the type of events in the story, are real to that place and time. The descriptions of nature are faithful to the setting. Welty's concern in this story seems to be to bind together local history, legend, and fairy tale. It depicts an imagined encounter between three actual historical personages known in letters, journals, and legends. The story signifies the waiting for the still moment of Audubon's killing of the white heron and the search for the meaning of the event. In 'First Love' and 'A Still Moment,' the historical settings and times are used as backgrounds to intensely private searchings. There is a similarity in the theme of 'A Still Moment' and Hawthorne's story 'The Artist of the Beautiful,' particularly in the treatment of fantasy. In 'A Still Moment,' with the disintegration of their separate purposes the three characters gain a common insight into the mystery they sought. "As he (Audubon) had seen the bird most purely at its moment of death, in some fatal way, in his care for looking outward, he saw his long labor most revealingly at the point where
it met its limit. This is the experience of Hawthorne's artist, Owen Warland who leaves half his conception on the canvas to sadden us with its imperfect beauty, and goes forth to picture the whole in the hues of heaven. Most striking is the resemblance in the use of symbols in the two stories: the heron in Welty's and the butterfly in Hawthorne's.

The skill with which Welty gets inside the minds of her characters in establishing motivation from within is an essential part of her technique. She implies inner states of mind by physical description. A fine example of this is 'Death of a Traveling Salesman' where description does not exist for decoration but gives a portrait of the salesman's mind. And where description and depiction of the inner states of the mind are involved, there is a productive tension between the real and the imagined. Fantasy exploits this tension in order to render the idea. Miss Welty's distinction lies in her illumination of the underlying causes of the compulsions and fears of the modern man. Kafka too analyses the backgrounds of abnormal human behavior and the psychology of the feelings of guilt. He is concerned with the ambiva-

lence of the modern man, with the potentialities that are within him of dispensing with the rationalizations that grow out of a diseased society. The impression gained from his work and that of Eudora Welty is that that which we regard as actual is irrational. The actual world becomes a dream and the one created by the imagination the reality. But there is a difference in Kafka's use of the fantasy and Miss Welty's. Welty's use of fantasy implies much of the factual. She employs fantasy to reveal the heightened consciousness of man. She relates it to surface reality. The individual, even in his irrational state, becomes rational and capable of choice. In fact, for all her dream-like settings, Welty does not move farther than the Natches Trace which is itself evidence of the sense of reality she conveys. In the words of Eunice Glenn,

She has caught the tendency of man to dream, to build a world of his own, and, without violating reality greatly, used it as a device in fiction. Actuality is placed on the plane of the dream; and thereby a more perfect realism is attained.  

For Eudora Welty reality is "the combination of the internal and the external" out of which can be intuited "the spirit of things," "the essence of life." She speaks of

... the interesting disparity between integrity - which merges in a story as truth or validity - and plausibility. The validity of everyday life is notoriously dependent on certain things. The validity of a story - not quite so notoriously - depends on things of an entirely different order ...

The term plausibility comes from the everyday world and if put to measure the story world, the plausibility falls down, not the story.\(^{28}\)

There is no question of the validity of everyday life and the validity of fiction "tallying." There is no sense of crisis in this issue for Welty because she feels that, measured against artistic integrity, the mere plausibility of the external world "falls down." It is just not as valid, not as mysterious as it seems. A great mystery indeed is the use of language to express human life.