The desire for interpersonal fusion is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion, it is the force which keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, the society. The failure to achieve this means insanity, self-destruction or destruction of others. Without love humanity could not exist for a day.

Although Miss Welty's characters are haunted by a constant sense of isolation, her works do not end on a note of despair. She firmly believes that man can make a seamless coat out of the torn, fragments of life. Love, according to her, offers an affirming faith in a quagmire of negation. She feels that the only way a man can escape the zone of loneliness by which he is surrounded is, by establishing communicative links with others. Love is not only a hope of salvation, it is his basic need. Miss Welty studies this most vital mode of communication in all its aspects. Parental love, which holds the roots of an individual's personality; familial love, which helps him to grow up as a balanced person; social love, which strengthens his bearings and lends him confidence; marital love, which makes him a complete person. All these aspects are essential and important, and they provide him psychological security in his battles with the world and the "self".
Parental Love

The first human relationship an individual has is with his parents. This first contact has the deepest impact upon his mind and it serves as a foundation for the structuring of his whole life. Parental love, especially that of the mother, is a child's basic need, because mother's love by its very nature, is unconditional. In the words of Eric Fromm, all that a child has to do is "to be - to be her child. Mother's love is bliss, is peace, it need not be acquired, it need not be deserved. ... Not only it does not need to be deserved, it also cannot be acquired, produced or controlled. If it is there, it is like blessing, if it is not there, it is as if all beauty had gone out of life." Miss Welty, in her earlier works, depicts a number of orphans who are hungering for mother's love. In their desperate bid to belong they cling on to a mother substitute. But what they learn in the process of their growth is that there is no substitute for a mother, and that they have to seek strength from their own resources. Her longer and later works present a broader and mature view of the parent-child relationship.

Laura McRaven in Delta Wedding and Joel Maye in "First Love" are both motherless children. Laura is nine, Joel twelve. They yearn to attach themselves to a parent figure for warmth
and emotional security. Laura uses all her childlike ingenuity to win over the hearts of Uncle George and Aunt Ellen, while Joel watches Aaron Burr night after night with a puppy-like devotion. In both cases love remains unreturned as their adult deities are too preoccupied with their pursuits. Both, in the end, realize the futility of desiring that which is not and turn to meet life in its own stride. Joel's predicament is more hopeless than Laura's because his love has no mode of communication. "The boundaries would lie between him and others, all the others until he died," says Miss Welty.

Some children are fortunate enough to have loving parents, but these parents in their over enthusiasm about the welfare of their wards impose so many restrictions upon them that they deprive them of their natural growth. After a certain age it is natural for a child to grow out of parental dependence and seek love outside. With proper psychological understanding and guidance the parents can make their child's life a bliss, and with tyranny and discipline, a disaster. The latter is the theme of "At the Landing" "Clytie" and "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies."

Jenny Lockhart, in "At the Landing" is a virtual prisoner of her grandfather's notions of respectability. He keeps her shut away in his big isolated mansion: "Jenny could go from room to room and room and out of the door. But at the door her grandfather would call her back, with his little ummer." Jenny has been denied the freedom to find herself;
She has never been given a choice to act on her own. Her grandfather never realized how devastating it may be for the young girl to be denied her basic right of growth. Jenny is like a little seed buried under the weight of snow. But when suddenly the snow melts and the birds announce the arrival of spring, the seed sprouts into a blossom which is too delicate to stand the burden of its own youth. When love enters Jenny's life, it breaks all barriers and gushes forth like a river in spate, and Jenny is washed away under its force. Her restricted channels of emotion suddenly find a release and she goes headlong for the wrong man.

Billy Floyd, like Cash McCord of "Luvvie", represents pure nature and sexuality. He is a wild creature of mysterious origins. Some people say that he is "really the bastard of one of the old checker-players, that had been let grow up away in the woods till he got big enough to come back and make trouble." He fishes on the river and rides along the flood. He initiates the frightened obedient Jenny into the world by violating her after her grandfather's death. Little does he know about the havoc he has played in Jenny's life. Had Jenny been given a little more parental understanding and the opportunity to develop in the normal way, she would not have landed up the way she did in a river-side hut, raped by a number of uncouth fishermen.

Clytie Farr, like Jenny, is a prisoner of the orthodox notions of aristocracy. She lives in an old isolated mansion
with her sick father, a drunkard uncle and an elder sister. Indeed, so hard have been the crushing demands of familial responsibility, that Clytie has almost lost her sanity. In the end she gives way under the pressure of orthodoxy and commits suicide.

Lily Dey, however, is luckier than her two unfortunate sisters, because her love is accepted and reciprocated. It gives her strength and dignity. She succeeds in convincing the three ladies of the village, who in their matronly zeal try to save her chastity by sending her to an Institution for the retarded, to help her marry the deaf xylophone player. Thus, she starts a new life with the hope of finding fulfillment in womanhood.

Whereas some children suffer due to excessive parental concern, others suffer due to a total lack of it. Billy Boy in "Petrified Man" is a typical example. Billy's mother Leota runs a beauty-parlour where she constantly prattles with her female customers. Their usual topics for gossip are the latest scandals in town, the debasement of pregnancy and the male inadequacy. Billy spends his whole day among pins and rollers. All he gets by way of motherly attention is a rebuke here and an occasional thrashing there. The result is that Billy Boy turns into a back-answering bully. "If you are so smart, why aren't you rich?" he cries. The seemingly irrelevant question becomes pertinent when studied as a metaphor. "Richness" means, being natural. The petrified man
at the sideshow despite his unruliness and impulsiveness is at least natural, whereas the women at the beauty-parlour, with all their attempts at beautification, are actually insecure, unnatural and thus, poorer as human beings.

"Why I Live at the P.O." presents a different aspect of parental love, discrimination. Sister is a victim of a gang which comprises of her mother, a sister, an uncle and a grandfather. All of them seem to form a league against Sister, misinterpreting her each word and deed. They think Sister is jealous, petty, peevish and mean. Little do they understand the cause of sister's sinister behaviour. Sister has been cheated of love by her younger sister Stella Rondo. The result is that Sister has no option but to leave the house and live in a room at the P.O. where she is post-mistress.

Stella Rondo, on the other hand, is accepted without reservations by the same mother, uncle and grandpa who discarded Sister. Not only do they accept her when she returns home after a broken marriage and a child born too early, they also play up the game that ShirleyT. is an adopted child and not Stella's own.

The "Winds" is a study in contrast-between love and lovelessness, belonging and alienation - represented by two child characters, Josie and Cornella. Josie is a little girl standing on the threshold of adolescence, weaving beautiful dreams about the future. With a pair of dancing shoes secretly tucked in her string-bag, and a heart full of hope and anticipation, she is awaiting the day when she would be invited to a hay
party like the other big girls. Josie lives with her parents and a little brother in a "good strong house" which her father built before she was born. She is secure and sheltered. Her parents are deeply concerned about her emotional upbringing, therefore, one midnight when a wild storm starts blowing, Josie finds herself being softly lifted by her father and brought down-stairs into the parlour where she lies closely tucked in her mother's lap. The little family sits waiting for the storm to subside. Josie, in her momentary wakefulness, cannot decide as to what is going on outside. "It is a moonlight picnic?" She asks. "This is the equinox" replies her father. Suddenly Josie jumps out of her mother's lap and runs to the window to see the storm outside. In a flash of lightening she sees Cornelia with her golden hair - standing outside her house, near the gate - at her usual place.

"I see Cornella, she's on the outside, Mama, outside in the storm, and she's in the equinox." She cries.

"Josie, don't you understand - I want to keep us close together," says her father. She looks back at him. "Once in an equinotial storm,... a man's little girl was blown away from him into a haystack out in a field." "The wind will come after Cornella" says Josie. But her father calls her back.

Cornella is the Goddess whom Josie has placed on the altar of her heart. She is a young girl torn between the longings and loneliness of adolescence and no parental love to support her. Cornella lives with a large family of eight
children but she is not a daughter. When the children play a ring-game, Cornella is never in it. Josie often sees her making her way straight to the front gate and looking sadly into the vacant street. The more Josie is forbidden contact with Cornella, the more she is attracted by the mystery that surrounds her.

At the end of the story one suddenly sees the contrast between Josie's protected growth from innocence to experience and Cornella's hopeless groping for a straw in the midst of life's uncertainties. According to Ruth Vande Kieft there are echoes of Miss Welty's own secure childhood and also an indication that no amount of parental love can prevent the child from growing up into the knowledge of chaos.\(^{11}\) Josie's love for Cornella and her fearful wail that "the wind will come after Cornella" echoes throughout Miss Welty's work.

Probably Eudora Welty's most perfect example of parental love lies in her short story "A Worn Path". It has a deceptively uncomplex organization. The major portion of the story simply recounts the journey of an old Negro woman to Natchez at Christmas time to obtain medicine for her ailing grandson. But beneath this apparently simple account there lies a constantly irking feeling that there is more to it than appears at a casual reading.

Phoenix's journey is full of hazards. She braves all difficulties to get medicine for her grandson. On the way to her destination she has to go through a barbed-wire fence, a
barking dog of a white hunter and a scare-crow. But Phoenix is undeterred by these obstacles. Rather, she makes good her way by talking with the thorns, dancing with the scare-crow and stealing a nickel from the hunter. She pronounces incantations to keep unwanted animals from crossing her path and when thorns catch her long skirt she patiently stoops to extricate the cloth from their grasp, knowing that the thorns are merely doing their appointed work. Phoenix has no bitterness toward any body because her whole being is saturated with love. Her life has a meaning and a direction. In her recent essay "Is Phoenix Jackson's Grandson Really Dead?" Miss Welty tells that she has frequently been asked the above question by curious scholars and admirers. According to her, the question whether the grandson is really alive or dead, is a matter of least importance. What is important is, the journey which is undertaken for the sake of love. Love is an activity, a standing by, a giving out, without expectations. It is the highest form of potency. Thus, as long as the human heart throbs with parental love, hazardous journeys will be undertaken with joy and pride. William Jones points out that "her (Phoenix's) long journey shows that all her struggles, all her fears, even her petty theft of a nickel from the hunter, were endured almost gaily because she was filled with a love which would cause rejuvenation at the end of the journey." A triumph of love it is indeed, as we see old Phoenix marching down the worn path with medicine (Life) in one hand and toy (Joy) in the other. Like the Phoenix of antiquity she will return to the source of her youth again and again.
In her longer works Eudora Welty presents a much broader and maturer view of the parent-child relationship. It is studied at a greater length both from the parent's and the children's point of view. Its key note is objectivity. The parent-child relationship, according to Miss Welty, is not only the most important, it is also the longest lasting and more variable than any other. In the beginning the child is totally dependent upon the parent; eventually the parent and child may completely change positions and the parent may become totally dependent upon him. Secondly, almost all people, at some point in life, maintain both the relationships at the same time. Thus, the circle moves. Laurel in The Optimist's Daughter sums up: "Parents and children take turns back and forth, changing places, protecting and protesting each other."

Thirdly, though the closest, this relationship is an ever-pervading mystery. Parents, who bring the child into the world and give him his very existence, cannot fully know that child. Likewise, the child who spends all his early years with the parents cannot fully know them.

In her short stories Miss Welty considers the importance of parental love and the damage its absence may cause, in her novels she presents an ideal parent-child relationship standing firmly upon the basic principles of variability, mystery and freedom.

Miss Welty's first novel The Robber Bridegroom reveals both, the parent's and the child's point of view. Rosamond, the
daughter of Clement Musgrove and his first wife Amelia, is beautiful and innocent. Her father loves her deeply, but Salome, his second wife, hates her. Clement, in his ignorance, is convinced that he has "married a woman who would look after my child." But Salome locks Rosamond up when Clement is away or sends her upon errands to the deep forest hoping that evil would fall upon her. Rosamond is an obedient daughter, obedient both to her father and step-mother, until she falls in love with the bandit of the woods. Then she leaves both, the father she loves and the step-mother she endures, to seek the man she desires. However, the irking thought that she had not said good-bye to her father, compells her to return home. Clement is so relieved to see his daughter back that he embraced his daughter time after time, and was so filled with the joy of seeing her that he could not think upon a single question to ask her.

After Salome has left the room, Clement asks his daughter about her husband and makes this statement: "If being a bandit were his breadth and scope, I should find him and kill him.... But since in addition, he loves my daughter, he must be not the one man, but two, and I should be afraid of killing the second." Clement is happy in her daughter's happiness. Only one thought bothers him. He tells Rosamond, "It breaks my heart not to have seen with my own eyes what door you are walking into and what your life has turned out to be." In spite of this grief, he accepts his daughter's freedom to choose for herself and respects her decision.
Salome's attitude toward Rosamond is different. Instead of supporting Rosamond with love as Clement does, she reduces her to her own level of wickedness. So that when Rosamond returns to her robber bridegroom, she is no longer the innocent girl he had loved. She has a sinister purpose. She carries a recipe given to her by one who should have made her stronger in her love and devotion to her husband, the recipe to remove the colour from his face and know his identity. This behaviour is understandable because Salome is a step-mother. A step-mother in Miss Welty's world is invariably vicious.

In the end, when Rosamond and Jamie settle down to a respectable life with their twins, Rosamond meets her father in the streets of New Orleans. Clement is now quite alone, having lost his two wives, his only son and now a daughter in marriage. Rosamond asks him to come and live with them. But Clement refuses. His daughter must live her own life as he has lived his. Rosamond is now a wife and a mother and the circle has started again. She owes her duty and responsibility to her own family. Clement wisely declines the invitation and returns to his home as they return to theirs. And a perfect balance is struck between love and freedom.

Delta Wedding is another novel about a healthy parent-child relationship. Ellen is the nerve centre of the Fairchild household. A mother of eight, she watches her brood with loving concern and joyful pride. She is an intelligent mother who makes every effort to understand the problems of her children. Shelley is her eldest and Dabney the second daughter, but it is Dabney who
is getting married first. Ellen realizes Shelley's uneasiness about it. She tries to analyse her daughter's nature. "There was something not quite warm about Shelley, her first child. Could it have in some way been her fault?" Similarly, Ellen also clearly sees the risk Dabney is taking in marrying Troy Flavin, the plantations overseer. It bothers her to think that Dabney is marrying beneath the family status. But she does not directly reproach her for her decision. Dabney too senses a strange distance between herself and her mother.

"Only when she forgot herself, flashed out in the old way, shed tears, and begged her pardon, did Dabney feel again her mother's quick kiss like a peck, her watchfulness, the kind of pity for children that mothers might feel always until they are dead."20

The Fairchild children love Ellen. "She was one of those little mothers that the wind seems almost to hurt and they know that they needed to look after her."21

Though Ellen is a mother, she is still a daughter. She remembers that when Shelley was born, her mother came down from Virginia to be with her. She also remembers and her mother ran away to England with another man, and when she came back, life resumed its old pattern and things went on as before. She realizes how little she knew about her mother, her silent sorrows, her inner compulsions, her innate loneliness, and now, how little she knows about her daughters despite her tender concern about them.
Battle, on the other hand, who is seen only indirectly in the novel, is more pompous and bilateral in his dealings with his children. He tries to get Dabney to take a trip to Europe instead of marrying Troy Flavin. But when she consistently refuses, he accepts her decision without protest and confers his parental blessings upon the child. Dabney senses that she has escaped her father's restraining power, but she treasures the fact that he honours her decision. She and her father can now meet on an adult level, like friends in league: "She felt a double pride between them now. It tied them closer than ever as they laughed, bragged, reproached each other and flaunted themselves." Thus, we see that the Fairchild children love their parents but they insist on being themselves. They exact the freedom they feel is their right.

Another parent-child relationship which seems to be meaningful in the novel is that of Troy Flavin and his "little mother in the hills" who belongs to a different social class from the Fairchilds. When Troy tells Ellen of his mother's living alone in a small cabin, Ellen senses the love and pride in his voice. Then, when Troy brings the quilts his mother has sent to him and Dabney as a wedding gift, he says "My little old Mama made the prettiest quilts you ever laid eyes on." He reads to the Fairchilds the note his mother sends with the quilts. It says:

"A pretty bride. To Miss Dabney Fairchild. The disappointment not to be sending a dozen or make a brides quilt in a haste. But send you mine. A long life, many sons, loving daughters, God willing."
His mother has sent the quilts as a symbol of her love, but she will not tie her son down. He is independent, yet he loves his mother and sees her as the epitome of womanhood.

*Losing Battles* presents the other side of the coin, that is, if the parent has a responsibility toward the child, then the child too has a duty toward his parent. *Losing Battles* shows four generations living together in complete harmony with each other. There is Granny Vaughn, the pivot of the Renfro-Beecham family, her grand-daughter Beaulah and her five children and Jack's little daughter, Lady May. Miss Beaulah, herself a middle-aged woman, watches over Granny's every need and notices even the minutest changes coming over her. "Granny had begun to look from one face to the next, her breath coming a little fast. Miss Beaulah saw and went to stand beside her."26

Both Miss Beaulah and Aunt Cleo realize that Granny has now changed, that she is now dependent upon others and therefore, it is their duty to look after her. Aunt Cleo says, "The thing to remember is they change... and me and you will do the same. ... I hate to tell you."27 However, they are confident that when they too change, they will have their children to look after them as lovingly as they are watching Granny.

It is considered a matter of pride when a child makes a sacrifice for the parents, and a shame if he does not. Uncle Curtis feels that he has failed in his role of an ideal parent because his sons do not live with him. "May be me and
Beck did raise a house of sons, and may be that not one of them had to go to Parchman, but they left home just the same. Married and moved over to look after their wives folks, scattered.

Jack Renfro, on the other hand, is considered an ideal son, because he helps his father and mother by living with them. Jack is brought up in Grandpa Vaughn's house where he has learned from his elders that drinking, dancing, spot-card playing is a sin, but he still goes ahead and steals Curly Stovall's safe, for which he has to spend two years in Parchman's jail. The family, however, does not consider Jack's act as a crime. They are proud of the fact that Jack did it for defending the honour of his sister. Uncle Curtis expresses the opinion that Jack has acted as he should have. "To me at the majority," says Uncle Curtis, "Jack has acted the way a brother and son could act, and done what any other good Mississippi boy would have done in his place." Curly Stovall had put Ella Fay's ring in his safe and had refused to give it back to her, so Jack simply went ahead and took the safe away with him. His mother is proud of his action. "My boy would do anything for the family, anything in the world," she says.

Jack works at the farm to help his father and is even eager that his wife Gloria should realize her obligation toward Jack's parents. He asks Gloria, "Wouldn't you like to keep Mama company in the kitchen while I am ploughing or fence-mending, give her somebody she can talk to?" But Gloria wants to have her own little world where she and Jack would live by themselves and raise all their children to be both good and smart. Jack is
the torch-bearer of a traditional Southern family. He would rather sacrifice his own happiness than bring pain upon his parents.

Responsibility rather than freedom is the key-word of the parent-child relationship in this novel. Both, the parent and the child owe something to the other, and each is free only within this boundary. Ellen and her husband Euclid Beacham (Parents of Beaulah and her brothers and sisters) sought freedom from this responsibility and met their death. Jack in fulfilling his responsibility went to Parchman jail but became the hero in the eyes of the whole community.

The idea of responsibility and freedom is further developed in *The Optimist's Daughter*, a novel more autobiographical than any other. While Judge McKelva and some other characters of the story are imagined, Backy is in most respects Miss Welty's own mother who died in 1966. "Lately I have been haunted by my mother's life," she says, and hundreds of details in the book succeed in bringing back Miss Welty's past to life. In the novel, when Laurel hears the news about her father's eye operation, she at once flies from Chicago to New Orleans to be near him at the time of his need. She looks after him tenderly as he recovers after the eye-operation. Laurel had also nursed her mother when she went through her fatal illness. Her own private loss and loneliness became secondary when parental love knocked at the door. However, Laurel's vision about love-relationships is largely determined by an
image of her grandmother's pigeons, that has remained latent in her subconscious mind since childhood. Toward the end of the book Laurel recalls her childhood vacations "uphome" in West Virginia with her mother and grandmother (The Welty's went to West Virginia every summer too, and the trip was a week long adventure. Miss Welty remembers her father driving while her mother gave directions from the Automobile Blue Book). Laurel recalls the image of the pigeons:

"...Laurel had kept the pigeons under eye in their pigeon house and had already seen a pair of them sticking their beaks down each other's throats, gagging each other, eating out of each other's craws, swallowing down all over again what had been swallowed before; they are taking turns. ...They convinced her that they could not escape each other and could not be escaped from. So when the pigeons flew down, she tried to position herself behind her grandmother's stiff skirt, but her grandmother said again, - 'They're just hungry like we are.'"

The idea of such crippling dependency is frightening to Laurel. As love is man's primal need, so is freedom. She shudders at the idea of people eating from each other's craws, gagging and suffocating each other, all in the name of love. Laurel comes to the conclusion that love means opening out, not folding in. It means giving its object the freedom to flourish; it means expansion. So, with the tender memories of her pa's love safely tucked in her heart, Laurel emerges a stronger person, and she goes out once again to meet the impersonal world of Chicago.
"Perhaps more than any other American the Southerner knows the meaning of responsibility. He feels it on a multiplicity of levels. ... He feels, first, and foremost, a bond inseverable and permanent with his family, his kindred, his immediate neighbours," says Corrington.

A child's first commandment in the South is still "Honour thy father and thy mother", and he grows up with the belief that loyalty toward the family is his first responsibility.

"I was raised to believe that whoever harmed my kinsman was also my enemy and whoever befriended him was a friend of mine and that the closer the relationship the greater the obligations and the privilege to stand near," says Hodding Carter.

The modern sociologist and philosopher is frequently pointing his diagnostic finger in the direction of the increasing alienation of man and he attributes it to the decaying of family ties and a poisonous infiltration of permissiveness. The modern novelist, says Miss Welty, too often prefers to look at the world "through knotholes of isolation," ignoring family relationship and the meaning that only they can fix on experience. Miss Welty has never ignored family relationships. Indeed they are central to four of her novels: Delta Wedding, The Ponder Heart, Losing Battles and The Optimist's Daughter. The family she writes about is never the isolated modern family consisting of mother, father and children. The family unit as Miss Welty depicts it
includes parents, children, sisters, brothers, grand-parents, even great-grand-parents, uncles and aunts. What she portrays is the strength that individual members derive from this great related circle and the obligations they owe to this group. Family ties bring security and at the same time limitations to individual freedom. According to her, freedom is valuable only when it is nourished and strengthened by familial love.

Eudora Welty's vision has matured with time. Where as in her short stories she closely examined human isolation, in her novels she studies in detail the many aspects of family relationships. She now looks upon isolation as an essential human condition. Even while living within a family the individual can have his independence and identity. There is, however, in all her novels, a conflict between the family and the individuals—between those who have conformed and the those who have not. In this struggle, the author makes it clear that both the conditions are valuable — conformity and liberty. She believes in a healthy synthesis between the two.

*Delta Wedding* may be termed as Miss Welty's most complete statement about a family. In this novel the multidimensions of human relationships can be seen, intricately woven like a rich pattern in a beautiful tapestry. The novel tells the tale of the Fairchild family at Shellmound in Mississippi. The Fairchilds are a privileged upper-class plantation family of the Delta region. They are accustomed to dominance in the Delta, from the time their ancestors first cleared the land.

The action of the novel consists of a few days at Shellmound in the Fairchild home in September 1923. The entire family has
gathered to participate in the marriage of Dabney Fairchild to Troy Flavin. Among those present are Battle and Ellen Fairchild and their eight children; Battle's two spinster sisters, Primrose and Ellen; George and Robbie Fairchild, and Tempo and Pinckney Summers with their daughter Lady Clare. Also come to participate in the wedding is Laura McRaven, daughter of the dead Annie Laurie Fairchild, Battle's sister.

In terms of time there are only about seven days (Monday to Saturday) which are depicted in the story. But within this short period Miss Welty uncovers a long span of time ranging from the beginning of the plantation days reaching up to the present, Because, to the Fairchilds, the past is a part of the present, and the past is very significant to them indeed. Elmo Howell points out that "The purpose of the novel is to show the importance of family ties and the way one generation impinges upon the other." The older generation in the family constantly reminds the younger people of their rich heritage and links them to a common past, thus inculcating a sense of family pride. The visit of Dabney and India to the oldest Fairchild home, the Grove, is a journey into the past. There everything belongs to the past; the furniture, the lace curtains, the picture of Mary Shannon hanging on the living-room wall; all these serve as constant reminders of the time that has gone by. Besides, the two aunts, Shannon and Mac, who both lost their husbands in the Civil War, constantly remember events from the time before the war when the first Mississippi Fairchild was still alive. Aunt Shannon in her senility talks about
nothing but the people, long dead. So much so, that even the younger Fairchild children are as familiar with the events of the distant past as if they had happened yesterday. Laura, who comes from outside Shellmound, knows that "All they remembered and told her about was likely to be before she was born." 38

The family is intensely proud of the Fairchild achievements. Neil Isaacs sees the family as "constantly rehearsing, celebrating and expanding its store of heroic legend and ritual." 39 The story of the family's encounter with the train on the trestle is told over and over again till, like the other long past events, it becomes a part of the heroic legend to be brought forth and narrated to the coming generations. The telling itself becomes a ritual.

The members of the Fairchild family are immortal. They are constantly spoken of and remembered as organic parts of the family structure. Denis who died a long time ago is still the hero of the family. Annie Laurie is referred to half jokingly, as if she was still alive.

One of the main characteristics of the Fairchilds is their faithful adherence to the legend of "happiness" and although the origin of the legend is obscure, it is a self-concept that shapes the family relations to the world and to one another. Happiness is with them a legend, a tradition, a compulsion. It prevents them from acknowledging the unexpected and the unhappy. In fact, anything that threatens their happiness is looked upon with
scepticism and apprehension. Thus, the world outside the Delta represents chaos, uncertainty and unhappiness, whereas Shellmound stands for peace, prosperity, security, assurance and happiness. One consolation to the family about Dabney’s marriage is that after marriage she would continue to stay in the Delta. Aunt Jim Allen, for instance, repeatedly consoles herself by reminding her niece, “It’s not as if you were going out of the Delta, of course.” Such a move to the Fairchilds would be as grave as expelling one’s self voluntarily from Eden.

The Fairchild family is viewed from two stand-points, the insiders and the outsiders. Dabney’s impending marriage gives her an outsider’s distance from which to view her family. It occurs to her, as it does to Laura, that one’s personal feelings are of no value to the Fairchilds. The family values its legend of happiness so much that it avoids to recognize anything that is even slightly unpleasant. Dabney knows that her marriage to Troy is not looked upon favourably, yet the family would not resist the move. They may “indulge” or “forgive” a member instead of “recognizing” him, because indulgence and forgiveness involve no risk of friction. Her mind rebels at the family’s complacency. All her ego screams for recognition as an individual. She tries to shock her old aunts by musing loudly “I hope I have a baby right away,” she says. But there is a paradox. On the one hand Dabney wishes to be recognized as an individual, on the other, being a Fairchild, she
looks upon herself as a superior. When she realizes that George considers other people as individuals, all the Fairchild in her screams at his caring about anything in the world but them, the Fairchilds. Shelley too, thinks that her father takes the family all together and loves them by the bunch, whereas George takes them one by one.

The second group is that of the outsiders who by their very virtue of not being blood relations are considered intruders. The Fairchilds have a tendency of cutting off such a individual before accepting him into their folds. One cannot have an ego and be among the Fairchilds. Robbie Reid is one such outsider. Though she loves her husband intensely, she is not prepared to give up her individuality. As a result, she has to suffer separation from him, get humiliated by his relatives, and not until she has given up her ego and has completely conformed to the rules of the game, that she is taken back into the family's fold. Laura, the second outsider, wonders if the family sets little traps for one another because they love each other so much. She observes:

They looked with shiny eyes upon their kin, and all their abundance of love, as if it were a devilment, was made reckless and inspired, or was belittled in fun, though never, so far, was it said out. They had never told Laura they loved her. 42

Even Ellen is, at times, considered as an outsider. Aunt Tempe's Yankee son-in-law is always spoken of in derogatory terms. Troy Flavin, Dabney's fiance, is an outsider because
he comes from the mountain region of Mississippi and not from the Delta. Indeed, so great is the family's dislike for the outsider that when the Fairchild children "came as far as the overseer's house, Laura saw all the cousins lean out (of the automobile) and spit, and she did too." Robbie understands this narcisist tendency of the Fairchilds and she tells Ellen, "You're just loving yourselves in each other — yourselves over and over again." And Troy Flavin who is about to enter this great unit complains that, "They're all high-strung. All ready to jump out of their skins if you don't mind out how you step."

To those within, the family stands as a great source of strength. Each individual returns to it for rejuvenation, whether it be Uncle George or Aunt Tempe. The members of the Fairchild family know their obligations and responsibilities. The great aunts had supported their nieces and nephews and are supported by them in return when they are old. Ellen and Battle are bringing up Denis' brain-damaged child, Maureen. As the novel ends Ellen invites Laura to come and stay with the family. Shelley recognizes the Fairchild's pride in their solidarity and she writes in her diary: "We never wanted to be smart, one by one, but altogether we are a wall, we are self-sufficient against people that come up knocking. We are solid to the outside."

In the words of Louise Gossett, "In The Pender Heart Miss Welty delineates the conflicts and eccentricities of
Southern families viewed from the eye of Edna Earl Ponder who spends her life explaining her family to the world as its "official apologist." There are two types of families depicted in The Ponder Heart. The Ponders, Clannahans and Sistrunks, come from the upper class of the society and the Peacocks of Folk belong to the lower social order. The Ponder family is made up of two groups: those who moved out of Clay and those who stayed behind. Edna Earl's father and his other children left the family home to make a living outside while Uncle Daniel, Edna, Grandma and Grandpa stayed and kept the torch of the Ponder family glowing. This group enjoys a great respect in the eyes of the people. Dr. Ewbank tells the court, "It would never occur to him to doubt a Ponder word." Indeed, the family's magnanimity and generosity is phenomenal. When asked about his occupation during the trial, Uncle Daniel says, "My father Mr. Sam Ponder left me with more money than I'd ever know that to do with." Uncle Daniel's greatest pleasure is to give away this money to anyone who would have it. Edna Earl who has received the Beaulah hotel from Uncle Daniel and is also the heir to all his property is kind and considerate toward the eccentricities of Uncle Daniel. She never stops him from his indulgence. She loves him despite his shortcomings and wants him to be just what he is. Edna Earl is concerned about her uncle's relationship with his wife Bonnie Dee Peacock. Though she feels that Bonnie Dee is in no way compatible with Uncle
Daniel, she still supports his cause and even inserts an advertisement in the Memphis "Commercial Appeal" asking Bonnie Dee to come back to Clay. Even Teacake Maggie, Uncle Daniel's previous wife, is referred by her without malice.

The eccentricities of Uncle Daniel may be a matter of shame and indignation to his father Sam Ponder, who worked hard to earn that money; but to Edna they are a characteristic trait of the Ponders inherited by birth and thus, deserves respect. Uncle Daniel inherited his eccentricity from Grandpa who never allowed electricity to be installed in the house for fear of it being electrified. The second trait of making meaningless threats is inherited by him from Grandma, though this is observed to be a universal trait in the South. Wilbur Cash identifies this tendency as a part of Southern romanticism. With Miss Welty's characters, the threat to kill is an expression both of affection and irritation, for example, Battle Fairchild tells his children to kill or whip their mother to make her rest. Troy Flavin is about to marry Dobney and Aunt Tempe thinks of drowning him in a bayou. Uncle Daniel is ridiculed and laughed at for these traits, but Edna Earle knows them to be his compulsions. She is proud of them. She stands as a solid wall between him and the harsh world, protecting and justifying him at every step.

The Peacocks of Polk come from what is commonly called the white trash of the South. They are illiterate and uncouth, but there is no doubt about their familial love for each other.
Losing Battles presents a distinct warfare between two forces - the family and the antifamily, a modern alternative to the traditional family. In the words of M.E. Bradford, it is an "elegiac novel" lamenting for, but resigned to the ultimate demise of a way of life. This life according to him, had its own charm and its hilarity as well as its isolation and hardships.

Miss Welty chooses the 1930's, the Great Depression, as the time for her narrative. The action has been set in Banner, Mississippi a barren land. It offers a bleak landscape, a hungry parched drought-stricken earth emitting heat and a human plenitude. The central characters around whom the action is woven belong to a closely-knit community of the Renfros and Beechams - two families knitted into one great whole.

The occasion for the family gathering is to participate in the birthday celebrations of Elvira Jordon Vaughn, the ninety-years old Granny of the Renfro-Beecham clan. Her children, grand-children, great-grand-children and acquaintances have gathered for their annual reunion which is held this day. Together they recall the events of the past and remember the pastoral plenitude of the place. Banner, once, was Edenic. Uncle Noah Webster recalls his childhood when "the old place here was plum-stocked with squirrel..."
But that was long ago. Many years have passed since then and the Eden is lost. Now, in the world of Losing Battles the barren and begrudging land is set apart from, and is even in conflict with man. The new commercial spirit has devastated the land and reduced human relationships to the level of commercialism. People in their bare necessity to survive have moved away from the mother-earth. Even four of Granny's grandsons Curtis, Noah Webster, Dolphus and Percy have left their home-place to make a living outside.

In the midst of this hard new world, undergoing changes and fragmentation, there stands the Remfro-Beecham family. In many ways it is similar to the Fairchild family of the Delta Wedding. But whereas Shellmound was Miss Welty's vision of an Eden, consisting of natural plenitude, changelessness, innocence, and tranquility, Banner is the lost Eden surviving solely on endurance and familial closeness. Shellmound was a world of butterflies and flowers. It was set in the glorious past of the South when the beautiful plantation ladies sat in their richly decorated parlours doing delicate embroidery on satin cloth. In contrast, Banner consists of poor and deprived people standing steadfastly together in the face of commercial struggles. Beulah proudly says that "this is a strict law-abiding, God-fearing, close-knit family, and everybody in it has always struggled the best he knew how and we've all just tried to last as long as we can by sticking together." The family is proud and self-contained, strong and self-respecting. The world has relegated it into a dried-up corner of the
Mississippi earth, yet its each member believes that he is amongst the chosen few. They gather every year this day and reaffirm the family solidarity by endless repetitions of a bygone saga. Its collective identity stems, in part, from its heightened awareness of a shared past, a common background. It is almost an unwritten law that at every reunion the family history must be repeated before all the members in order to give them a sense of oneness. Brother Bethune is enlisted to perform the ceremony of narrating at least the more public and well-known facets of the family history. But because Bethune is an absent-minded outsider, relatively unacquainted with the events, this role is shared by anyone and everyone who knows anything to supplement the information. Thus, the crucial history is delivered with less ceremony but with more authority, piece-meal, in its entirety by the family members themselves before the reunion is over.

However, the Renfros and Beechams are not without their petty jealousies, little bickerings and temporary disagreements that generally exist in big a family. Miss Beaulah, for example, never says a kind word to Miss Lexie Renfro, her sister-in-law, who has been taking care of old Miss Mortimer. Similarly, we see other members mocking and sniping at each other, but when it comes to facing the outside world, the Renfro-Beechams stand as one solid group, undivided. Indeed, their solidarity is so great that they look upon an outsider with apprehension and misgiving.

Just as Miss Beaulah is the high priestess of the traditional family, Miss Julia Mortimer stands as the oracle of the anti-
family. Miss Julia is for a wider outlook toward life. Her ambition is to form a brotherhood of the enlightened people who, by virtue of their prowess in the intellectual field, would bring glory to Banner. Her warfare is against ignorance and backwardness. Such ideas entail the disintegration of rural families who derive their bread from the soil. In these traditional families each member is counted as a working hand. So naturally, Miss Julia’s pragmatic views threaten to disrupt the accepted family structure, and they are met with utmost antagonism. This combat between the family and the antifamily is presented impartially, with virtues and liabilities of both sides, leaving the scales almost perfectly balanced in the end.

Those looking in for a deeper meaning in the novel, find a more cosmic view presented in it than it appears at the surface. Michael Kreyling, for example, considers Losing Battles not only a combat between family vs. antifamily, but a battle between Myth and History, the Timeless and the Temporal, the Circle and the Line. The mythical consciousness, according to him, entails the repetition of the archetypes. Its movement is circular. No wonder, therefore, that the union is an annual feature, the gold wedding ring plays an important part in the unravelling of the past (starts from the present to past and back), Jack Renfro is considered the reincarnation of Sam Dale Beechaun who died in World War I at the age of Jack himself, the reunion begins at sunrise and
ends at sunset. The family itself has been symbolized by Miss Welty as the 'Bois de arc tree' called 'Billy Vaughn's Switch'. Its rings of growth record the lives and events of the family and hold all generations in permanent and equal relation. The tree recalls to mind The Great Tree Igdrasil, the Norse symbol of Human Existence, so aptly illustrated by Carlyle in his essay on "Hero as Divinity". According to this theory, the past, present and future are inter-related, each over-lapping the other, just as the roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit and seed are related to each other—the seed turning into fruit again. Thus, the circle of human existence goes on. The upholders of the traditional family ignore the chaos around them and believe in drawing the wagon on their allotted path. The historical consciousness, on the other hand, leads people to believe that man finds himself surrounded by the chaos of the universe with a challenge to use his brains and make some order out of it. The written word of enlightenment is on his side, while the force of sentiment is on the other.

In the modern times this struggle between traditionalism and progressivism has acquired larger dimensions. The traditional family is fighting a losing battle against the mighty forces of intellectual and technical advancement. Miss Welty depicts this struggle with a forceful objectivity and reaches the conclusion that all human ventures are ultimately losing battles. The family's effort to remain prosperous during the worsening
conditions of the Great Depression fails; Ralph Renfro's attempt to keep his store from the predatory Herman Dearman fails; Gloria Short tries to 'save' her husband from the family and fails; and perhaps, most important, Miss Julia mortimer's life work seems so characterized by frustration and failure that her last words - "what was the trip for?" Questions the value of her outward journey in the world. Kreyling aptly remarks, "when the adversity is mortality itself, all battles are losing battles." 57

Miss Welty's concern about the disintegration of the family is manifested all through her later works.

A Circle is Miss Welty's most outstanding image about the family. Laura in Delta Wedding looks upon the Fairchilds as a circle. When her cousins play a game together, they form a circle into which an outsider is not allowed. Laura longs to be a part of the circle at the same time wants the freedom of outside. "It is funny how sometimes you wanted to be in a circle and then you wanted out of it in a rush..." 58 she muses. Josie, in "The Winds" is always left out of the circle-game which the numerous children of her house play. In Losing Battles, toward the end of the novel, Miss Beulah cries, "The joining of hands! ... Now we're all a circle." 59 They begin on the porch, go down the steps and out into the moon-lit yard. Yet, even with their moving, the family circle has not been disturbed. They sing "Blessed be the tie". What is
important to them is love - love welded together with kinship and memory. As the Renfros and Beechams leave the reunion, they leave to lose the battles, but they atleast have strength to face them, strength derived from the blessed ties of the family.

(III)

The family circle enlarges itself into a community which, Robert Holland calls a "Regional family". Despite the intrusion of urban values, life in a Southern small-town is essentially simple and united:

In the South you have neighbors for better or for worse and you drop in to see them and send them some hot rolls when the cook bakes them especially well. People make any excuse to get together; be it a wedding, a funeral, or a court trial. Women go to bridge parties and sometimes they don't even play bridge, they just talk. Southern women are known for their penchant for endless prattling. The usual place for an informal get-together is a public concert, a recital, a post-office, a church or a court of law. People from all walks of life gather there to know "what's new?" Life of the individual in this community, where every word is within every body's hearing, is not a private matter. "Their integrity is the integrity of knowing and being known." But despite this surface intimacy, the individual is constantly struggling
to preserve that which is entirely his own, his separateness.

Miss Welty has stayed in Jackson, Mississippi all her life, although neither of her parents come from the Deep South. This lends her a desired distance as well as intimate attachment to the place and it proves valuable to her as a writer. Her portrayal of the small-town life and attitudes shall be studied under four broad categories, namely, (a) The decaying aristocracy, (b) The rich townspeople, (c) The poor whites and occasionally, (d) The Negroes.

_Delta Wedding_ is primarily a study of the upper class society, a family of rich planters on the Yazoo River. The time is 1923. The other members of the community are only studied in relation to the Fairchilds, who have a strong control over the life of Shellmound. The Fairchilds draw their living from the rich cotton-bearing land on which they have a numerous work-force and an overseer. They have a high sense of honour and family pride which they consciously inculcate into the younger generation. The disturbance in the otherwise peaceful life of Shellmound arises when Dabney decides to marry Troy Falvin, the overseer— a mountain man— and therefore, an outsider. The family has not yet reconciled to the marriage of George Fairchild and Robbie Ried. It is obvious that inter-marriages between cross-sections of society are not looked upon favourably. When such a thing happens, it causes the same kind of disturbance as the sudden entry of a stray planet into another hemisphere. Robbie is a city girl. Her people
had never owned land, and inspite of her Delta origin, her moorings are no deeper than the rented city flat. The Fairchilds, on the other hand, love the stability and continuity associated with the land. The older generations always remind the younger ones of their ancestral achievements linking them to a common past. Thus, both Robbie and Troy are looked upon as a force that will eventually destroy Shellmound. All this because they possess a different reservoir of experience.

The Fairchilds are conscious about their name and status in the community. They pride themselves for their loyalty toward each other. Therefore, when Robbie goes away leaving George, Aunt Tempe says, "I've racked my brains to think of something we can tell the Delta." It hurts their sense of honour to think that a daughter-in-law of the family has deserted a Fairchild husband. And when George announces his decision to come back to the Grove and plant vegetables instead of cotton, Aunt Tempe cries in horror, "What will the Delta think?"

At the wedding (though the wedding itself is disposed of in a sentence), one gets a glimpse of the top brass of the community and also the social status the Fairchilds enjoy in it. Miss Dessie at the ice-house sends baskets of roses for Dabney; Miss Parnell Dorch sends late cape jasmines; Miss Bonnie Hitchcock sends her fern; Mr. Rondo, the preacher, who does not belong to the same social group as the Fairchilds, pays a social call before the wedding; The mayor of Fairchilds and his wife come to the reception in a car lighted from within, and the negroes
watch the whole show from the periphery. Despite their physical proximity, the white and black worlds of Shellmound are distinct.

Miss Welty has often been criticized for her pre-occupation with the upper-class in this novel. Critics such as Isaac Rosenfeld and Diana Trilling complain about her lop-sided treatment of the community and say that Shellmound is only an idealized and unrealistic version of the community. Even John Crowe Ransom accuses her of a lack of social conscience. He wonders if Miss Welty is not being unduly sentimental about the past. She, according to him, identifies herself with Laura (being roughly Laura's age in 1923) and presents a nostalgic picture of a kind of life that has already passed beyond recognition. There is no doubt about the note of sentimentality in the novel. Miss Welty values those ties of communication that bound the families together into a wholesome community. The rapid severence of those ties in the modern times is a matter of grave concern to her which she voices time and again in her novels. Implicit in the apparent musicality of Delta Wedding is the apprehension that, "The closed little world of Shellmound is doomed", and that "there will be disorder, change."  

Another charge that Miss Welty often faces is about the tone of the novel. Delta Wedding was written during the last stages of World War II, but the impression it conveys is that of melodious peace. How could the author be so oblivious
to her present is rather perplexing. It may be noted that Jane Austen too created her serene novels in troubled times when "Napoleon might have been on the English doorstep," and yet there is no reflection of the outer turbulence in her pages. In this connection it may be stated that Eudora Welty's primary interest is in the individual rather than the surface happenings. She tells Charles Bunting, "At all times, I'm interested in individuals, as you may have gathered, and in personal relationships, which to me are the things that matter; personal relationship matter more than any kind of generalizations about the world at large. So the date doesn't terribly matter. You can get stories at any time and place you wish."  

Kieft suggests that Delta Wedding may be read as an experiment designed to show the possibilities of human love and isolation under the best circumstances. "In this small, closely-knit society there are no outside causes of grief or pain: no war or natural catastrophe, no extremes of poverty or wealth, no sense of rootlessness or insecurity which are the by-products of competitive urban society, no serious racial or social disharmony..." In short, the little world of Shellmound is congenial to the flourishing of nothing but love and security. Yet, in every heart there are potentials of fear, distrust, selfishness and unhappiness. Despite the ostensible closeness, familial solidarity and a sheltering community, its individual members remain essentially lonely and isolated.
The upper class is also presented in Miss Welty's short stories like "Clytie" in *A Curtain of Green*; "Asphodel" and "At the Landing" in *The Wide Net*; and "The Burning" in *The Bride of the Lambs Fallen*. In all these stories the aristocracy is presented as a dying order clinging stubbornly to its age-old values, fighting a losing battle against the oncoming vulgarity of the new era. The clash is further presented in *The Optimist's Daughter* which would be studied at a greater length in a separate chapter.

*The Ponder Heart* presents the small-town life of Mississippi complete with the rich heirs, the poor whites, the blacks, the intellectuals and the illiterate, all living in harmony with each other. It is centred around the little town of Clay. The sense of an organized community is so strong in *The Ponder Heart* that William Peden considers it is as the "central character" of the novel. The people of Clay live in a closed society of intimate relationships. Robert Holland looks at it as one family existing at two levels, "The blood family" and the "regional family".

In the scheme of Clay every one has his own allotted place. Marriages usually occur within one's own set up, but when a person of the status of Uncle Daniel marries Bonnie Dee Peacock, who works at a five-penny store in the town, it is considered an incongruity. But the Ponders, like the Fairchilds, have a grace by which they will not let their family
down. So Edna Earle goes all out to justify Uncle Daniel by telling the people of Clay that people do marry beneath them everyday and the world does not come to an end.

In this little community of Clay the atmosphere is informal and relaxed. It is, therefore, not surprising that the judge interrupts the trial of Uncle Daniel Ponder when Edna Earle's 'girl' comes to see how many people will come to dinner. "Just a minute," says the Judge, 'Miss Edna Earle's girl is standing in the door to find out how many for dinner. I'll ask for a show of hands', and puts up his first."

Like in all small communities of the South there is a place for its retarded and the feeble-minded. The community considers it as its duty to look after the welfare of such individuals. Uncle Daniel is incapable of managing his own affairs because he lacks in worldly wisdom. When Grandpa takes Uncle Daniel to the asylum to be treated for his 'ailment', Edna Earle says, "Everybody missed Uncle Daniel so bad while he was gone, they spent all their time in the Post Office sending him things to eat." Even the bank, supposedly a cold and impersonal institution, cares about such members of the community. Edna Earle says "the Bank never, never, never let Uncle Daniel get his hands on cash." It is only when a person like Eloise Clamahan breaks the law of love and allows Uncle Daniel to have his money that the catastrophe occurs. Uncle Daniel gives away all his money to the people present at his trial for murder, and becomes a pauper.
The questions whether Uncle Daniel knowingly murdered his wife Bonnie Dee or was he really playing "creepy mouse" with her, or whether Bonnie Dee dropped dead with a sudden heart attack caused by the fear of lightening, become of secondary importance. In fact, matters become increasingly opaque as the story proceeds. What becomes clear is that in the present materialistic world the primary interest is self interest. From the idealized and romanticized world of love of Delta Wedding Miss Welty has come down to earth in The Ponder Heart. That explains why the people of Clay accept money from Uncle Daniel despite knowing that he is incapable of understanding the gravity of his own deeds. Not that they love him less, but that they love themselves more. They know and do not know, the meaning of their action. Miss Welty seems to point out that despite the moralistic and idealistic code of conduct which every society sets up for its members, when it comes to individual human beings, their behaviour is generally determined by self interest.

In The Ponder Heart there is another section of society which emerges as strongly as the one discussed above. This is the poor white — the common man — generally described as the 'White Trash' of the South. The Peacocks belongs to the mountain community. Edna Earle, the narrator of the story, being herself a wealthy urban woman looks upon these hilly inhabitants as inferiors, "The Peacocks are a kind of people who keep the mirror on the front porch, and go out and pick rail-road lilies to bring inside the house, and wave at trains till the day they die," she says.
One of the great events for these isolated hilly people is the watching of a courtroom trial. For every one the trial is a time of immense excitement as it offers a chance to visit the town with neighbours. That explains the buzzing excitement in the court trial of Uncle Daniel for the murder of Bonnie Dee. They love the trial which serves as a hope for justice and revenge.

When Edna Earle goes to attend Bonnie Dee's funeral, she is shocked to see the coarseness of the atmosphere. The place is crowded with people, flowers, and chicken running right under the feet. The coffin itself is placed right across the hearth on kitchen chairs and Mrs. Peacock goes about in her tennis shoes. A similar coarseness of conduct is witnessed in the Chisoms and the Dalzels in *The Optimist's Daughter* and many short stories of Eudora Welty. "A piece of News," for example, tells briefly about a couple, Clyde and Ruby. Clyde Fisher owns a whisky still far out in the woods while Ruby, his wife, keeps clandestine relationships with other men. The story goes on with the description of Ruby's imagination as she reads a piece of news from a scrap of an old newspaper saying that one Ruby Fisher was shot dead in Tennessee by her husband, Clyde. The accidental similarity of names transports Ruby into a world of fantasy. In "A Memory" the girl on the beach witnesses a group of vulgar bathers romping obscenely on the sand. There is destruction of form in the way the bathers protrude their flabby figures from their costumes. There is a terrifying
violence in their abuse of each other, their pinches and kicks, and the thud and the fat impact of their ugly bodies upon one another. Implicit in these pictures of the common man is Eudora Welty's concern about the kind of people who are going to inhabit the world.

The times to come, however, are not purely dark. There are people among the poor who hold the traditional values of kindness, hospitality, courage and family-pride above everything else. For example, Sonny and his wife, in "The Death of a Traveling Salesman" are a self-respecting, hard-working, hospitable young couple. They give food and shelter to a sick stranger and refuse to accept anything in return, not even a matchstick. Similarly, the community of Banner stands as a contrast to the well-to-do world of planters of Shellmound or the rich towns-people of Clay. In Losing Battles the inhabitants of Banner are poor, uneducated and stubborn country-people living in the hilly area outside the Delta. The Renfros have a strong feeling of clannishness. They own their homes and manage to keep themselves through the Great Depression. Just as Miss Welty chose the 1920s as setting for Delta Wedding in which circumstances were congenial from all sides to show the inter-relations of individuals in a family, in Losing Battles she wanted to get a year in which to show people at the rock-bottom of their whole lives, which meant the depression. "I wanted the poorest part of the state, which meant the north-east corner, where people had the least, of all... to show them when
they had no props to their lives, had only themselves, plus
an indomitable will be live even with losing battles, you know,
the losing battles of poverty, of any other kind of troubles,
family troubles and disasters, I wanted to take away everytying
and show them naked as human beings."78

The fact that the people of Banner are isolated and poverty
stricken knits them more closely together than either the people
of Fairchilds or Clay. Both these communities have had outside
influences, Banner has had none, except Miss Julia Mortimer
whose teaching Banner has rejected. Throughout the novel the
community of Banner is contrasted to the outside world. The
families of Banner stick to one another even if they do not
like one another. They are ever ready to offer support at the
time of any calamity. Noah Webster says, "The majority of
Banner community is there, right behind us."79

There are certain families who do not get along well with
one another for generations: Renfros and Beechams are one,
Willey Trimble belongs to a friendly family, Comforts never
get along with the Beechams, nor do Stovalls. But as the
novel ends one learns that the Stovalls bury with the Beechams
and now they may marry with them. Despite their allegiance to
different moral values the Stovalls, Comforts, Renfros and
Beechams live and accept each other for what they are. Even
Miss Julia Mortimer, the spiritual alien, is finally buried
in the same cemetery as the rest of the community, because she
belongs in her life and in her death, here at Banner.
The people of Banner are a group strong in its isolation, holding on bravely to old ways and old beliefs. True, they have restricted their boundaries in establishing this strength, but united they are able to fight their battles with drought, poverty and ignorance.

In *The Golden Apples* Eudora Welty presents a class that appears not very often in Southern fiction—the middle class of a small town in Mississippi. Morgana is Miss Welty's own creation. There are no plantation homes here and life-pattern is essentially democratic. The community comprises of a handful of families who know intimately the personalities, habits and misfortunes of each other. The majority of those born in Morgana live and die there, with only brief and intermittent communication with the outside world. And because it is relatively cut off from the world beyond, Morgana remains largely unchanged. Marriages occur between the members of the changeless leading families. The community is largely hostile to outsiders like Miss Lotte Ekhart, while it is protective about its own deprived members like Snowdie MacLain. The ladies of Morgana send their children to learn music so that the money earned by Miss Ekhart may go toward the payment of room rent to Snowdie.

The upper middle class women of Morgana spend their time in card parties, music recitals, summer-camps at the Moon Lake. They try all means to keep their children away from the traumatic experience of reality. To prevent such an introspection, the
community compulsorily engages its members in a myriad of distracting activities. When, for example, King MacLain abandoned his wife Snowdie, "Miss Lizzie Stalk let her be incharge of raising money for the poor country people at Christmas that year."80

The Golden Apples presents Eudora Welty's darkest vision about the world. All the major characters in the novel are seen fleeing. Whether King MacLain or his two sons Eugene and Ran, or Miss Ekhart and Virgie Rainey, they try to escape one kind of isolation from the community and seek another. But in their panicky flight their home-sickness merely increases and they come back to where they belong. King MacLain comes back to Morgana after spending all his life as an aimless wanderer; Eugene considers San Francisco an exile, he looks back with longing to the comparatively primitive life of his boyhood, eventually he returns home; Ran rejoins the life of Morgana to become its mayor; Virgie Rainey comes back home after her mother's funeral, the rain having washed away her grief and misgivings. The community, thus, provides a psychological security to its members in the face of the hard realities of life.

Eudora Welty has often been assailed for not giving a due place to the Negro in her fiction. The critics attribute it to her lack of social consciousness. It is true that Miss Welty does not concern herself with the problem of race-relations in the socio-economic or political sense, but it is also true that a writer need not necessarily occupy himself with particular
social issues no matter how meritorious their consideration may be. He knows his talent well enough to reject external, though well-meaning, directives. Unlike Faulkner, who affiliates his character to a distinctive group, or Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers, who take up the burning issue of the race-relations as a major backdrop for their isolation, Eudora Welty concentrates upon the innermost feelings of the individuals irrespective of their class, colour or creed. Her consistent themes, regardless of whether she deals with the Blacks or Whites, are that of man's isolation and his search for a world of love. Her Negroes are first and foremost human beings with a capacity to suffer and to experience life in all its fullness.

"A Worn Path" is done entirely from the point of view of the central Negro character, Phoenix Jackson. This story embodies several of the patterns that are more or less characteristic of the country Negro. First, the Negro is considered to be at a close physical and spiritual proximity with nature, with the land, with fields, streams and lower animals. Thus, Phoenix can communicate with thorns and trees and birds and beasts of the woods. Similarly, Cash McCord in "Livvie" is shown as the embodiment of a field God. Troy and George Fairchild in Delta Wedding have the animal virility in them because they are closest to the working-hands of the field. George's hands are smeared with Negro blood as he intervenes between
two black boys fighting with knives. Phoenix's encounter with the white hunter, as he gives her a helping hand and rebukes her good humouredly for undertaking such a long journey, reveals another aspect of the black-white relationship: "I know you old colored people," he says, "would never Miss going to town to see Santa Claus." The white man, we see, is condescending, but he does not understand the Blacks as thinking, feeling, suffering human beings.

Another episode, when old Phoenix tells the story of her little grandson to the white nurses who are not interested in it at all, illustrates the same point. The nurses are impatient with the old woman, indifferent to the infirmity of her old age and consider the child as merely a "stubborn case."

Miss Welty shows a great insight into the Negro behaviour in the comical episode of Phoenix getting her shoe-laces tied by a well-to-do white woman. This little episode has the quality of folk humour in it. "Miss Welty has a very keen eye for this sort of a thing — the way in which southern Negroes have learned to take subtle revenge on the 'superior' race, to exploit, for their own material and psychological advantage, the weakness of white pride."

"Keela, The Outcast Indian Maiden" is a story of a black club-footed Negro who is made to eat live chickens in a side show. It is told from the point of view of a white man, Steve, who worked as a Barker in the same show. The fact that the
gawk in the story is a Negro allows Miss Welty to suggest the broader and more complex sources of the white man's exploitation of the black as a scape-goat figure for his own dark nature.

"Powerhouse" is the name of a Negro musician who plays in night clubs and enthralls the hearts of his white audience. Such crooners are a very common sight in America. They form a large chunk of the musical world. In the story one sees two distinct worlds, that of the Blacks and the whites. Though both share the same food of the soul they do not eat together. However, Miss Welty's concern is with the world of love. Powerhouse's song "Somebody Loves Me! Somebody Loves Me, I Wonder Who? ... May be it's You," is the center of the story.

The treatment of Negroes in Delta Wedding has brought severe criticism upon Miss Welty. The basic note of the novel is that of acceptance. It seems that Miss Welty is nostalgic about the old social structure in which black subservience was accepted as natural and just. John Edward Hardy suggests that the Negroes were a matter of convenience because at the expense of these "rude swains" the Fairchilds could be the "Gentle swains", and that "Miss Welty implicitly recognizes the 'convenience' for what it is." Hardy considers this to be a serious flaw in the novel. "The darkies were sometimes
a little too charmingly typical. And where the attitude went beyond one of placid acceptance—this remains, I think, one of the most genuinely distressing flaws of the novel.86 Diana Trilling assailed Delta Wedding as indulgence of the "narcissistic southern fantasy, devoid of moral discrimination."87

However, it would not be right to say that Eudora Welty is indifferent to the Blacks as human beings. In the Eudora Welty symposium, a teacher at a Black college complimented her on her deep understanding of the Black mind. Her students have always felt that of all the Southern writers Eudora Welty is the only one who writes about the Blacks as they would write about themselves. Miss Welty explained that when she writes she sees everybody as a person, as a human being:

Whether one is writing about Black or White or old or young, man or woman, makes no difference. You look at them as people, from the inside. You don't shift gears when you switch from one person to another. You feel with your feelings as they would feel with theirs.88

Miss Welty is nostalgic about a relationship which existed once between the Blacks and Whites. In "One Time, One Place" a selection of photographs which she took of the Whites and Blacks, way back in 1930, Miss Welty has recalled:

In taking all these pictures, I was attended, I know, by an angel a presence of trust. In particular the photographs of black persons by a white person may not testify soon again, so much intimacy. It is trust that dates the pictures now, more than the vanished years.89
Being a sensitive writer, she is pained by the fact that the relationship of trust is no more.

(IV)

The closest and the most fulfilling relationship between a man and woman can be achieved through marriage. The institution of marriage has social and religious sanctions by which it provides a tremendous psychological and emotional security to an individual. But to assume that marriage comes as a happy ending of one's separateness is a fallacy, because despite all the physical and mental proximity between man and wife, there still remains a thin veil between them—the veil of privateness. After years of marriage an unexpected, inexplicable act of a partner may still take the other by surprise. Such are the ways of human mind. In this connection Ruth Vandekieft remarks:

What happens when love finds fulfillment in the most natural and happy way possible, physically and emotionally when it is both communicated and returned and is solidly in the world, socially and legally through marriage? Is there then an end to the mysteries of the self and the other? In several of her stories Miss Welty shows there is not; she indicates, in fact, that the one thing any person cannot do is to assume knowledge of the other...90

This "otherness" of one partner must be respected by the other. If it is not done, and if one tries to force his will too hard upon the other, a marriage may end up in bitterness.
In certain parts of India it is customary to provide glass bangles to a girl when she gets married. These she wears throughout her married-life. It indicates that the relationship between a husband and wife is as delicate and fragile as a glass bangle. If it is not preserved with tenderness and care, marital happiness may shatter into a myriad pieces.

What then, is the answer to a happy marriage? "A relationship of love can be kept joyful, active, free, only if each partner steps back now and then to see the other with a fresh sense of his inviolable otherness, his mystery, his absolutely sacred and always searching identity."^1

If this basic need is denied, then one partner may simply run away from the other, withdraw and go into a temporary retreat. Miss Welty deals with this complicated relationship in all its shades and meanings. She shows a deep insight into feminine sensibility in presenting characters like Sabina, Rosamond, Ellie Morgan, Robbie Ried, Gloria and a number of other women. According to her, when a woman loves, she loves with such intensity that the man becomes the centre of her whole existence, whereas for the man she is just a part of his other interests in life. A woman finds happiness in an unreserved surrender of mind, body and soul and she expects the same in return. Therefore, her whole life is a struggle to possess that which is denied to her. In this process she may fret and fume and cause destruction, she may cry and resign herself to her fate, or she may run away from home and escape into a world of
fantasy. Sabina in "Asphodel", for example, becomes so embittered about her failure to domesticate Don McInnis, that she brings complete destruction upon herself; Ellie Morgan, with all her efforts to make Albert into a "homespun" husband, cannot understand why he keeps the key to himself; The American girl in "The Bride of the Imisfallen" runs away from home to forget her woes; the woman in "No Place for you, My Love" escapes temporarily to New Orleans while the bruise on her temple speaks the tale of her unhappiness; Hazel, in "The Wide Net", hides herself from her husband for a day, so that he may realize her worth and pay her some more attention; Robbie runs away from home because she can't bear the thought of being secondary in her husband's mind. Each woman in the above mentioned stories is possessive, but is denied total possession, each tries to exert her personality upon her husband and fails in the endeavour. But the bonds of love prove to be stronger in almost all the cases.

Eudora Welty's male characters have a different concept of love. Their love is not particularized. The husbands in her fiction can be bunched together as the independent, illusive type of males, who maintain their separateness in the face of all opposition. They represent an unrestrained Life-Force. Traditions, customs or social norms cannot bind them to their marital obligation. Thus, Don McInnis runs away from home to escape Sabina's domination; Albert Morgan refuses to share
the key with his wife; Janie Lockhart vanishes into the night when Bosamand wipes off the colour from his face; King MacLain spends all his life in wandering the countryside; George refuses to bind himself to his wife's wishes.

A major conflict between the husband and wife arises when the woman in her extra-possessiveness refuses to share her husband with his family. She is even jealous of the time he spends on any other pursuit. Robbie Ried, in Delta Wedding, wants her husband's undivided attention, but when George risks his life in saving Maureen, the brain-damaged child of his brother, Robbie takes it as a personal injury. This, however, does not mean that George does not love her. He loves her and needs her and has begged her to marry him, but he must not lose the right to be himself. After their re-union he kisses her and says, "I'm damned if I wasn't going to stand on that track if I wanted to! Or will again."

And Robbie answers, "But you're everything on earth to me." Now at last, Robbie realises that she must accept his independence if she is to keep their marriage going. Gloria, in Losing Battles, resents the idea of being wedded to the entire family. She dreams: "Oh, if we just had a little house to ourselves, no bigger than our reach right now... and no body could ever find us." Jack, on the other hand, considers the family as a safety valve against the chaos of the outer world. Gloria's ideas are beyond his comprehension. But despite their different views, both Jack and Gloria share the secret of love and communication between them. Miss Welty seems to say that when
a marriage is based on love, there is always a gradual movement toward adaptability, but if the basis is not love but convenience or compulsion, then the result is a meaningless vacuum in the lives of the two partners. The Ponder Heart depicts two marriages of Uncle Daniel, but both of them end in disaster, because Uncle Daniel's love finds no reciprocity. Tescake Maggie, his first wife, divorces him, while Bonnie Dee agrees to marry him on trial. This trial lasts for five years and at the end of it Bonnie Dee decided not to carry on with the marriage. Another marriage, that of Livvie and Solomon in "Livvie," is a marriage between December and May, completely incompatible. Since the basis of this marriage is convenience and not love, there is no communication between the couple. Similarly, Clement marries Solome in The Robber Bridegroom for convenience. Having lost his first wife Amalia whom he loved dearly, he brings home Solome to look after the house and be a mother to Rosamond. The marriage of Judge Clint McKelva and Fay in The Optimist's Daughter is also performed for convenience. It may be pointed out that all these marriages end in fruitlessness. None of the couples have children to enrich their lives and bring fulfilment into it.

The Eugene MacLains, the Rainey, and the Morrisons in The Golden Apples show a lack of understanding or tolerance of each other, and have practically no mutual interest. The men find compensation in their jobs or resign themselves to female
domination. The women fill their days with bridge parties, church work or similar activities of the community. All the marriages in this novel are incomplete in one way or the other. There is always a lack of communication between the husband and wife. In each of these partnerships one or both the partners take a long trip either literally or figuratively and come back to the spring of love for refreshment. But too often the spring is dry and the relationship becomes more barren than before.

The happy, communicative and fruitful married lives can be seen among the older couples in Miss Welty’s later fiction. However, her very first published story “The Death of a Traveling Salesman” cannot be ignored in this connection. This story brings about a contrast between the state of love and lovelessness. “It is the meeting of two worlds, the past and the present, the simple and the complex, the loved and the loveless.” The relationship of Sonny, the backwoodsman, and his wife is “full of silence” yet it speaks of the age-old communication between man and woman. Sonny’s wife is pregnant. The future holds out a promise of continuity of their love and happiness. Theirs is a relationship of dignity, belonging and fruitfulness.

Though the wedding between Dabney and Troy gives the title to the book Delta Wedding yet it is the marriage of Ellen and Battle Fairchild that lends the basis to the story. It is their marriage which has produced the atmosphere of peace and
communication that holds the family together. The maxim that a man is made or marred by the image his wife creates for him holds true in this household. Ellen constantly praises her husband before the children and Battle is always solicitous of Ellen's health. When Ellen faints, Battle becomes pathetically helpless in his nervousness, and when she recovers from her faint, she "leans back against Battle's long bulk" and holds his arm tenderly. In the end when the whole family goes for a picnic after Troy and Dabney return from their honeymoon, the relationship of Ellen and Battle is shown as one of peace, quietness and love - one in which love has grown with age — and in which each has grown to accept the otherness of the partner. "Ellen at Battle's side rode looking ahead, they were comfortable and silent, both with their great weight, breathing a little heavily in a rhythm that brought them sometimes together." Beaulah and Ralph Renfro, Jack's parents in Losing Battles, married many years ago. They have come to accept each other's virtues and follies. Life has not been easy for them but they have arrived at that point in their relationship where there is no longer any need to stand on formalities. The times are hard and the family large, but together they are pulling through the hardships of life, losing battles, but always together!
Love, thus, involves two basic things if it has to flourish and prosper - Care and Respect. That love implies care is evident in any relationship if it is genuine. "Love is the active concern for the life and growth of that which we love. Where this active concern is lacking, there is no love," says Eric Fromm. All the relationships of love in Miss Welty’s fiction, whether between parent-child, family members, community life, or marriage partner’s adhere to this principle. The second element, that of Respect, means the ability to accept a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is. This can happen only when there are no complexes between the partners, when each is free within the limits of his obligations toward the other, when each can stand without needing crutches. "Respect exists only on the basis of freedom: An old French song says—love is the child of freedom, never that of domination," says Fromm.

Endora Welty’s attitude toward sex is not determined by the traditional code of morality. She considers sex as man’s natural need, like hunger and sleep. Therefore, the sexual exploits of her characters are dealt with in the passing, without any moral undertones. Infidelity in marriage is a
frequent theme in her fiction, but this is generally limited
to male-infidelity. Female promiscuity is often frowned upon
in her society. The maxim that every man is at heart a bachelor
and every woman a mother, holds true for Miss Welty's characters.
Thus, Don McInnis has extra-marital relations; King MacLain is
unruly; Marblehall actually has two wives living in the same
town; Maudal MacLain seeks consolation in the country girl
Maideen; George Fairchild sleeps with a beautiful young girl
in the woods, Cash McCord and Billy Floyd roam around in pursuit
of sensuality. Miss Welty accepts these characters as the
representatives of Life-Force. Sexual act, according to her,
is an ancient form of celebration. It celebrates the fertility
of nature and of man.

Women, on the other hand, are often shown as pregnant
or having lots of children. Marjorie, Sonny's wife, and Hazel,
for example, are expectant young mothers; Ellen Fairchild,
Mrs. Chisom, Mrs. Dalzel, Mrs. Peacock, Miss Beulah Remfro are
women with lots of children. Motherhood to them is a matter
of joy and pride as it signifies an extension of love.

Sex is no obsession with Miss Welty. She dwells more
deeply upon the essential human need of love and communication.
Unlike Carson McCullers, who exalts the platonic and the
spiritual while causing the sensual love to doom, Eudora Welty
celebrates love in both its aspects, physical and emotional.
In McCullers, for example, the invariable pattern of love is
something like this: a longing for spiritual union with the
beloved, a lack of reciprocity, a frustration leading to self destruction, or a reversion to irremediable isolation. Thus, her Singer shoots himself in desperation, Jake Blount flees the town; Dr. Copeland sinks into the last stages of tuberculosis; Mrs. Langdon maims herself; Captain Penderton shoots Private Williams and himself. And so go McCuller's spiritual lovers! Miss Welty, on the other hand, presents characters living on many plains of reality—performing the roles of sons, lovers, spouses, and parents—at the same time. That there is only one person in the world who can provide meaning to one's life, is not Miss Welty's idea about love. Mature love, according to her, is a union under the condition of preserving one's identity. Love is a strange paradox in which two individuals become one and yet remain two.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. Ibid., p.38.
5. Ibid., p.208.
6. Jackie M. Smith in Face to Face (Richmond Virginia: John Knox Press, 1973), tells about an experiment done upon an adolescent girl. This girl lived in extremely destructive family relationships. With the result she could not respond to classmates, teachers, or school counselors. Then a teen-age tutor was employed to meet her individually for an hour a week. Result: the girl suddenly began entering into class activities, responded positively to teachers and children, developed concern for her personal appearance. Such is the miraculous power of love.
9. Ibid., p.117.
10. Ibid., p.118.
11. Miss Welty's parents were solidly upper middle class living in a double storey house on a respectable street. She lived her childhood fully and even managed to carry over "that primal sense of wonder, awe and delight into her adulthood." But no amount of security could stop her from seeing that life was not everywhere secure and orderly. Says Kieft in Eudora Welty, p.160.


17. Ibid., p. 127.

18. Ibid., p. 127.


20. Ibid., p. 45.

21. Ibid., p. 96.

22. Ibid., p. 33.


24. Ibid., p. 93.

25. Ibid., p. 113.


27. Ibid., p. 286.

28. Ibid., p. 66.

29. Ibid., p. 359.

30. Ibid., p. 360.

31. Ibid., p. 360.


40. Welty, *Delta Wedding*, p.44.
41. Ibid., p.48.
42. Ibid., pp.16-17.
43. Ibid., p.6.
44. Ibid., p.48.
45. Ibid., p.141.
46. Ibid., p.84.

50. Ibid., p.109.

51. At the Eudora Welty symposium at Oxford, Mississippi, an interesting episode took place. The proceedings were interrupted by a brief announcement. There was a message from one Mr. Smith asking his wife to come home immediately or he would "kill her". Needless to say that there were guffaws of laughter among the audience.

54. Ibid., p.344.


64. Ibid., p. 243.


69. Elmo Howell, p. 476.


74. Welty, *The Ponder Heart*, p. 94.

75. Ibid., p. 16.

76. Ibid., p. 49.

77. Ibid., p. 29.


80. Ibid., p. 8.


82. Ibid., p. 288.


86. loc. cit.


88. The Eudora Welty Symposium, op. cit.


90. Kieft, *Eudora Welty*, p. 44.

91. Ibid., p. 44.


95. Welty, *Delta Wedding*, p. 188.

96. Ibid., p. 240.


98. Ibid., p. 30.