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THE EMPEROR OF ICE CREAM VISITS EUDORA WELTY: THE USES OF THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

THESIS

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Eudora Welty and Wallace Stevens share important aesthetic beliefs, especially regarding uses of the creative imagination by artists in acts of creation and characters in acts of living. A close reading of seventeen of Welty's stories, accompanied by references to related ideas in many of Stevens' poems, reveals how the imagination functions as epistemology and eucharist, while governing the shape of individual human views of the quotidian. The more abstract patterns of thought in their later works seem to move Welty closer to belief in a world beyond the quotidian than they do Stevens.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Eudora Welty's short fiction has often been compared to the fiction of writers such as Anton Chekhov, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Henry James, Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson, and William Faulkner. She has been linked to some through claims of influence and to others because of similar aesthetic concerns. However, her basic aesthetics probably more nearly resemble those of a poet, Wallace Stevens, than those of her fellow fiction writers.

Writers who have been influences on Welty's work include Chekhov and Woolf. In an interview with Linda Kuehl in 1972, Welty admitted a kinship to Chekhov and credited Woolf with opening the door for her (74-75). She expresses admiration for Chekhov's realism and masterful portrayal of detail in her essay "Reality in Chekhov's Stories." However, she equally delights in Chekhov's use of the imagination in the lives of his characters as a means of alleviating their painful, bleak realities. His affirmation of fantasy as a means of creating one's reality does not, however, take flight from the actual world. Welty explains that what is real in a Chekhov story does not mean "invariable, or static, or iron clad, or consistent"; in fact, it may be at the same time what is "transient, ephemeral, contradictory" (Eye 63). These elements also distinguish Welty's fiction.

Ruth Vande Kieft's treatment of influences on Welty's work places her among Southern writers, particularly with Faulkner, but she credits a greater influence to James, Proust, Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf because, ". . . all extended the range of fiction by developing new methods of catching and conveying the inward atmosphere, the subtle nuances of human thought and feeling" (177). Joyce and Woolf's contributions to Welty's work are evident in her interest in fictional time as opposed to real time and in her interest in the interior world of her characters.

Charles E. Eisinger, in his essay "Traditionalism and Modernism in Eudora Welty," discusses her similarities to other writers. He describes her as a transitional figure, her work reflecting a combination of "traditional qualities that give it a teleological cast and of modernist qualities that elevate technique to a primary place and value the tour de force for its own self-contained sake" (4). However, Welty's work keeps well away from the extremes of either the traditional or the modern. She believes that it is not the calling of the writer to crusade or preach morals (Eye 147); neither does she write for "art's sake." Instead, fiction should have as its primary purpose the revealing of human truths, defined by her not in an absolute sense, but as truth that arises out of life (Eye 149). Her greatest affinity with the moderns is her high esteem for the supremacy of the imagination in fiction. Eisinger identifies her with Pound because of their similar ideas about the fusion of impact and image (7).

Welty's similarity to Elizabeth Bowen has been discussed primarily in terms of the poetic qualities in Welty's fiction. Vande Kieft points out the similar beliefs of these two writers. Bowen says that "'. . . the short story is linked with poetry and is therefore lyrical and passionate,'" while Welty says that a writer's stories "'take on their own quality, carry their signature, because of one characteristic lyrical impulse of his mind'" (181). Many of Welty's stories achieve a poetic quality by the accumulation of meaning through the use of imagery, myth, and symbol.

Although Welty has been compared to these various prose writers, she has not previously been linked to Wallace Stevens, either for any influence on her work or as one with whom she can be compared in both artistic theory and practice. Nevertheless, her definition of fiction, her synthesis of the real and the imagined as a way to perceive and experience human truths, and her place in the Romantic tradition are important areas in which Welty is remarkably similar to Stevens. Welty's fiction is primarily used here to demonstrate these similarities; Stevens' poetry is secondarily used as a source of his critical and aesthetic positions.

Welty and Stevens both define fiction in a broad sense. Even though they prefer different genres, their views join at the lyrical. For both writers, fiction is born out of the emotional response to place--the feelings produced as the imagination fuses the external world of sight and sound with the interior world of thought. Welty says that "place can focus the gigantic, voracious eye of genius and bring its gaze to point. The act of focusing itself has beauty and meaning; it is the act that continued in, turns into meditation, into poetry" (Eye 123). Stevens explains the effect of place on the emotions and creative expression of the artist in his essay "John Crowe Ransom: Tennessean," in which he says that Ransom's poems are "composed of Tennessee." Stevens describes the relationship of the artist to a land he loves as a "vital affair . . . an affair of the whole being . . . so that one's cry of O Jerusalem becomes little by little a cry to something a little nearer and nearer until at last one cries out to a living name, a living place, a living thing" (OP 257). Welty's and Stevens' uses of the words poetry and fiction can be defined as synonymous with the creative imagination, which is expressed in many forms, not limited to verse or to the novel. Welty says: ". . . the novel exists within the big symbol of fiction. . . . I think that fiction is the hen, not the egg, and that the good live hen came first" (Eye 138). For her, fiction, or the creative imagination, is a lifegiver, a producer, a creator; the novel is an offspring. Frank Doggett explains that Stevens' statement "poetry is the supreme fiction" means that poetry creates a supreme fiction. This broader definition of supreme fiction is implied in a letter to Renato Poggioli in which Stevens' use of this phrase in connection with the translation of certain poems shows that ". . . he means any important human abstraction or conception" (Act 18).

Welty's analogy of the hen as the creative imagination and Stevens' description of poetry as the creative power that results in a conception both imply the eventual birth of a "live" thing. These images appropriately point to their common belief that the primary purpose of fiction is to present or show forth human life. She says, "Human life is fiction's only theme" (Eye 129). Stevens agrees that ". . . the all commanding subject-matter of poetry is life, the never-ceasing source" (NA 28).

Welty and Stevens are also alike in the belief that the use of the imagination provides a valid approach toward finding and knowing truth. Although both believe in a reality separate from the individual, neither believes that this reality must necessarily be the same for all who see it. In an interview with Charles T. Bunting, Welty said:

> Anything lighted up from the side, you know shows things in a relief that you can't get with a direct

> beam of the sun. And the imagination works all around the subject to light it up and reveal it in all its complications. (53)

Stevens makes a similar claim for the imagination as a way to know in his gloss on "The Blue Guitar," written for Hi Simons:

> 'I don't know that one is ever going to get at the secret of the world through the sciences. . . . It may be that the little candle of the imagination is all we need. In the brilliance of modern intelligence, one realizes that, for all that, the secret of the world is as great a secret as it ever was.' (Beckett 119)

Welty's "direct beam of the sun" and Stevens' "brilliance of modern intelligence" describe the empirical scrutiny of reality by modern science. Both believe an indirect, intuitive approach might better reveal a truth, as demonstrated by their preference for the lesser light of "the candle of the imagination," which in a more subtle way "works all around a subject to light it up." Welty's theory of the relationship between reality and imagination is demonstrated in much of her fiction. Vande Kieft notes that many of Welty's stories show the interrelated worlds of dream and reality, in which Welty does not imply that one is more real than the other. Welty indicates that strict lines cannot, and need not, be drawn between the two worlds (174). Stevens agrees that the poet does not have to choose between the two but instead should recognize that "between these poles, the universal interdependence exists, and hence his choice and his decision must be that they are equal and inseparable" (NA 24).

Santayana, a major influence on Stevens' thought, is described by him as one who exemplified not only an aesthetic in which imagination and art were central but a life lived in the imagination (NA 147). Santayana, then, fulfills the requirements that Vande Kieft proposes for the reader of Welty. She says that Welty "must be met with, an active creative imagination, the free exercise of intuition, rapid shifts in mood, the ability to perceive by way of metaphor and symbol, and the power to feel with interest, concern, and love" because Welty "does not rely greatly on logical and rational powers, hers or her readers'" (186).

Welty's and Stevens' common belief in the primacy of the imagination in determining or interpreting reality places them in the Romantic tradition of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Nancy Beckett points out that Wordsworth and Coleridge had already explored the idea of the marriage of reality and the imagination and that ". . . each had once observed himself as a solitary modern poet exerting like Stevens his own imagination against the pressure of reality to make some sufficient sense of the world . . ." (136). Joseph N. Riddel says that with Stevens' publication of The Necessary Angel and his proposal of a life lived in poetry, the question of romanticism was raised in our time:

> In an age angrily secular, romantically antiromantic, and resignedly naturalistic, this was a credence no wise popular or well-founded and hardly conducive to the ordinary life of poetry. For it demanded that the poet justify his poetry even as he wrote it, to prove the poem by way of proving himself. Such was

> Stevens' task as he inherited it from his romantic predecessors and shared it with his peers. (4)

Although Welty and Stevens express views close to those of Wordsworth and Coleridge concerning imagination and reality, they differ from them in that neither explains human reality in any type of Christian structure, as Wordsworth and Coleridge eventually did. Both modern writers express a faith in human truths, those that can be known through the experiences of daily living, those that can be known in the human heart. Vande Kieft claims of Welty:

> Through the experience of her characters she seems to be saying that there is no final meaning to life beyond the human meanings; there is no divine "surround," no final shape to total reality, no love within or beyond the universe (for all its ravishing beauties), however much of it there may be burning in individual isolated human hearts. (33)

Stevens also begins, as Riddel says, "with the very real problem of a self that is no longer a soul" (25). Riddel describes Stevens as "the voice of an age which no longer accepts the illusion generated by the human tendency to project the ideal beyond the self. . . . The ideal he seeks lies in the 'central' of the self" (34). Doggett agrees that Stevens "sharply restricts the possibilities of being to the earth that holds it and the moment of its life" (Poetry of Thought 4). Nevertheless, Welty's and Stevens' romantic qualities and tendencies do not lead toward solipsism even though man is presented as essentially alone and dependent upon his inner perception of the world. The characters in their fiction who use their imaginations often do so in an attempt to make a connection in the world--to join the self to Stevens' "major man," as Welty and Stevens attempt to do through their fiction.

By advocating a consummation or connection with the world, Welty and Stevens take a full look at the worst, as Hardy says we must in order to find a better way. Stevens' romantic poet is "one who still dwells in an ivory tower but insists that life would be intolerable except for the fact that one has, from the top, such an exceptional view of the public dump" (OP 253). His determination to see the worst and the best is affirmed by Samuel French Morse, who says that Stevens protected himself from swallowing Pater whole by asserting that "'It is life that we are trying to get at in poetry'" and that "'art involves vastly more than the sense of beauty'" (70). Welty's statement that time cannot change human realities or truths apprehended by the imagination, truths apprehended by all men, such as "love and hate, hope and despair, justice and injustice, compassion and prejudice, truth-telling and lying" (Eye 157) is evidence of her ability to see life clearly in all its diversity.

Welty's and Stevens' views blend skepticism and faith. Even though both writers reject absolute answers, they nevertheless believe in human truths that can be known through the imagination. In his essay "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction: A Commentary," Bloom credits Stevens with bringing to a climax the whole movement of poetry in the Romantic tradition because he has created "a fictive hero who quite simply will become the real." He describes the poem as "an attempt at a final belief in a fiction known to be a fiction, in the predicate that there is nothing else" (76-77). However, Riddel's remarks that the expected forms of anguish are absent from Stevens' work because of his "'passion for yes,' . . . his retention of the imagination and thus the will to act joyfully in the fact of absurdity" (25) are equally applicable to Welty. Vande Kieft in describing Welty's response to a world of uncertainty says:

> Through an inevitable act of mind and heart (which is like a blessed reflex, because love comes willy-nilly, or a compulsion, because the mind must impose its order), the individual makes whatever meaning is to come out of chaotic reality, and this is the existential act. (33)

This thesis demonstrates how important the creative imagination is in determining an individual's reality in the work of both Welty and Stevens. Chapter Two sets forth their aesthetic theories concerning the epistemological and eucharistic functions of fiction. In Chapters Three and Four, Welty's short stories are analyzed in the light of a few poems by Stevens in order to demonstrate their shared concern with the roles of the creative imagination. Chapter Three examines works that are primarily epistemological in nature; Chapter Four deals with eucharistic themes. Chapter Five postulates that both Stevens and Welty in their later works depart somewhat from the quotidian and move into more abstract patterns of thought. It concludes with some conjectures about their attitudes toward a world beyond this one.

CHAPTER II

THE QUOTIDIAN CONFRONTED

Since Welty and Stevens believe that a writer must address himself to his own time and place, they find themselves writing about human life in a fragmented world--a world of flux, chaos, and disorder, a world in which man suffers alienation and isolation, a world of nihilism and despair. Interested in confronting the human condition honestly and with compassion, they offer the creative or artistic imagination as a means for discovering truths within ourselves and as a way to "help us live our lives"; thus, fiction for them serves as both an epistemology and a eucharist.

Eudora Welty sets forth her views concerning these purposes of fiction in *The Eye of the Story*, a collection of her critical essays and articles. Many of her statements are similar to those made by Wallace Stevens in *The Necessary Angel*. They agree on four important facts about fiction. First, both say that fiction should provide a means of perceiving and revealing human reality; second, fiction, if it is to present human reality, must always adhere to the real world; third, fiction creates and preserves life through the written word; and fourth, fiction offers an escape from "the pressure of reality" (NA 30) by providing "something to hold on to" (Eye 18). The first two of these functions are epistemological; the second two are eucharistic.

First, Welty and Stevens propose that the creative imagination functions as an epistemology by producing a fictive reality of life which is, nevertheless, real and therefore true. Welty's extensive examination of this idea can be seen in such statements as these: "Fiction is made to show forth human life, in some chosen part and aspect" (Eye 137). The way a writer accomplishes this task is ". . . to disintangle the significant. . . . It is a matter of his selecting and, by all that implies, of changing 'real' life as he goes" (Eye 120). For Welty, the significant is that which expresses a unique perception of reality. Not everything needs to be included because "the spirit of things is what is sought" (Eye 125). She continues by saying, "Before there is meaning, there has to occur some personal act of vision" (Eye 137). Welty argues: "If the personal vision can be made to order, then we should lose, writer and reader alike, our own gift for perceiving, seeing through the fabric of everyday to what to each pair of eyes on earth is a unique thing" (Eye 151). She maintains that there is no blueprint or we lose the mystery of life. Stevens agrees that the personal vision is the thing that gives meaning to life:

> poetry is the imagination of life. A poem is a particular of life thought of for so long that one's thought has become an inseparable part of it or a particular of life so intensely felt that the feeling

> has entered into it. . . . [T]he world is a compact of real things so like the unreal things of the imagination that they are indistinguishable. . . . (NA 65)

Welty puts essentially the same idea in these terms:

> Making reality real is art's responsibility. It is a practical assignment, then, a self-assignment: to achieve, by a cultivated sensitivity for observing life, a capacity for receiving its impressions, a lonely, unremitting, unaided, unaidable vision, and transferring this vision without distortion to it onto the pages of a novel, where, if the reader is so persuaded, it will turn into the reader's illusion. How bent on this peculiar joy we are, reader and writer, willingly to practice, willingly to undergo, this alchemy for it! (*Eye* 128)

Although every writer creates a new reality by allowing the imagination to define what he sees in the real world, this act is not limited to the artist; as Stevens says, ". . . few people realize that they are looking at the world of their own thoughts and the world of their own feelings" (NA 66). He believes that the poet defines his own meaning for reality. Human reality, which is the subject matter of Stevens' poetry, "is not that 'collection of solid, static objects extended in space' but the life that is lived in the scene that it composes; and so reality is not that external scene but the life that is lived in it" (NA 25). For the poet, epistemological reality, then, is a life being lived--human life. The life he celebrates is one that uses the powers of the mind to create and give order to his world. The external world of solid objects merely provides a place for this life to be lived in, a life that composes, that exercises power over the external by his internal imaginative power.

A second epistemological purpose of fiction is to produce a reality through the eyes of the writer who allows his imagination to create a unique reality by fusing the exterior fact with the interior response; therefore, the work of art _must_ adhere to the real, the objective thing that exists apart from the writer. This reality is then transformed by the artist's imagination into an unreal or even abnormal reality--a fictive reality; thus, fiction serves as an epistemology, providing us with a rich variety of known realities through the eyes of each individual artist. Although Welty and Stevens mandate that human life and truth as presented by fiction must, as Welty says, "touch ground with at least one toe" (_Eye_ 126), both make it clear that their approaches to truth are not restricted to the scientific method. Each believes that the creative imagination acting upon the external object produces as many versions of the reality as there are eyes to behold it. Welty says that this fictive reality "is organized around anything but logic" (_Eye_ 150). According to Stevens, the poet pursues truth in a way different than does the philosopher. He describes poetic truth as the "difference between logical and empirical knowledge . . . an agreement with reality, brought about by the imagination of a man disposed to be strongly influenced by his imagination, which he believes, for a time, to be true" (NA 54). He even ventures to say, "It may be that the imagination is a miracle of logic and that its exquisite divinations are calculations beyond analysis, as the conclusions of the reason are calculations wholly within analysis" (NA 154).

Any reality of experience, then, depends on the personal use of the imagination, which transforms the external fact into a meaning by causing it to be seen, by giving it form. Here is the place--Stevens' "central place"--where the exterior thing and interior act of the mind fuse in the form of fiction to produce a new reality. Welty's analogy of the china night-light appropriately describes this process:

> The outside is painted with a scene, which is one thing; then, when the lamp is lighted, through the porcelain sides a new picture comes out through the old, and they are seen as one. . . . The lamp alight is the combination of internal and external, glowing at the imagination as one; and so is the good novel. Seeing that these inner and outer surfaces do lie so close together and so implicit in each other, the wonder is that human life so often separates them, or appears to, and it takes a good novel to put them back together. (Eye 119-20)

She says that the novel "must be given a surface that is continuous and unbroken, never too thin to trust, always in touch with the senses. Its world of experience must be at every step, through every moment, within reach as the world of appearance" (Eye 120).

For both Welty and Stevens, place has been a major influence on their thought, emotions, and expression in fiction. Riddel comments on Stevens' firm footing in the real world in the following passage: ". . . Stevens' images adhere to a world of things--as often ordinary and commonplace as exotic and rare--with striking fidelity, but only in the sense that they catch the moment in which mind and thing marry" (12). Stevens says, "The imagination loses its vitality as it ceases to adhere to what is real. . . . It has the strength of reality or none at all" (NA 6,7). Welty explains the importance of maintaining a connection to the real world, of knowing a given reality, in her essay "Place in Fiction":

> It is by the nature of itself that fiction is all bound up in the local. The internal reason for that is surely that _feelings_ are bound up in place. The human mind is a mass of associations--associations more poetic even than actual. (_Eye_ 118)

She defines place in fiction as "the named, identified, concrete, exact and exacting, and therefore credible, gathering spot of all that has been felt" (_Eye_ 122). The importance of place on the human imagination is shown both in its power and its fragility in Welty's statement:

> It is only too easy to conceive that a bomb that could destroy all traces of places as we know them, in life and through books, could also destroy all feelings as we know them, so irretrievably and so happily are recognition, memory, history, valor, love, all the instincts of poetry and praise, worship and endeavor, bound up in place. (_Eye_ 122-23)

Not only does fiction serve as an epistemology, but also as a eucharist, as can be seen in Welty's and Stevens' statements concerning the life contained in the written word. Fiction must create and impart life. Stevens proposes in his poem "Description Without Place" that the "artificial thing" is the "canon central in itself" (CP 344-45). Referring to the Apostle John's thesis of the word as Creator, he draws a parallel to the fictive word created by the artist. This same power to create and impart life resides in the artist's word that is communicated, "made in sound" (CP 346). Welty says, "If fiction matters . . . there can be, for the duration of the book, no other words" (Eye 137). "If this makes fiction sound full of mystery, I think it's fuller than I know how to say. . . . The mystery lies in the use of language to express human life" (Eye 137). Similarly, Stevens states, "A poet's words are of things that do not exist without the words. . . . Poetry is a revelation in words by means of the words. Croce was not speaking of poetry in particular when he said that language is perpetual creation" (NA 32-33).

In fact, Riddel suggests that for Stevens poetry is life: "Indeed, his willingness to let his poems stand for what they (and he) were at the time of their composition, with a minimum of revising, would suggest his satisfaction that poetry must be the 'cry of its occasion / Part of the res itself and not about it'" (8). Welty states much the same thing when she says that the writer cannot write the same novel again. The novel may be revised, but not its idea, because it "has passed through that station on its track. . . . a journey rather strange . . . altogether personal" (Eye 138). Stevens, too, describes the process of writing in terms of alchemy when he says:

> The way a poet feels when he is writing, or after he has written, a poem that completely accomplishes his purpose is evidence of the personal nature of his activity. . . . [H]e shares the transformation, not to say apotheosis, that makes him think of poetry as possibly a phase of metaphysics . . . that teases him with that sense of the possibility of a remote, a mystical *vis* or *noeud vital*. . . . (NA 49)

Stevens' use of the word "mystical" and Welty's use of the word "mystery" lend a supernatural tone to what they are saying about fiction's ability to present or show forth life. The fiction becomes a eucharist; its purpose is to present life--not represent it. It is to present a living word. This word is not symbolic--static in the sense of being dead, unmoving; it is not the representation of something once alive--it must still be alive, producing life in the receiver. By means of the written word, the writer and reader participate in a communion with each other and with the life that the fiction brings forth. In a sense, the artist seems to fulfill the priestly function of mediator, imparting to the reader the life that has been produced in him by the creative imagination. The writer and reader "give and take," sharing in this communion of the written word that has become transubstantiated--alive, unique, experienced in both.

This idea of the life-giving, creative power of the written word is developed in Welty's statement that the "writing of a novel is taking life as it already exists, not to report it but to make an object, toward the end that the finished work might contain this life inside it, and offer it to the reader . . . the possibility of a shared act of the imagination" (Eye 147). She is offering nothing less than life itself. The life springing from this process not only results in a written word, but also, for the duration of the process, creates and shapes the writer's own reality. Welty says, "All writers great and small must sometimes have felt that they have become part of what they wrote even more than it remains a part of them" (Eye 132). She suggests that in this process, the creative imagination not only changes the writer's reality, but also produces a fictive reality, or supreme fiction, which can be shared with the reader. Fiction should induce the reader to give his regard to beauty, to wonder--this is the reality of fiction (Eye 29). The effects of the fiction are ongoing, producing continuing feelings of wonder, becoming a part of the flesh and blood of the writer and reader--a changing force that alters their realities. An example of how this word becomes part of the life of the reader is demonstrated in Welty's belief that Faulkner's work "increases us"; thus, his work of imagination is a reality (Eye 157).

Providing "something to hold on to" emerges as another eucharistic purpose of fiction because the modern world in which each author writes is one of flux, uncertainty, violence, and despair. This world is described by Welty as one in which ". . . each passing day makes some threat or other not only against continuing reality on earth but against our illusion of it . . ." (Eye 29) and by Stevens as a "leaden time" (NA 64). For these reasons, both are concerned with the pressure of reality on human life and see fiction serving the eucharistic purpose by creating an order that preserves our lives, by offering comfort and meaning, and by providing pleasure, joy, and hope. Welty believes that ". . . it is [by] the reading of novels by one of ourselves that we live on as never before, and this is not absurd, for in novels, if they are good, life on earth is intensified in its personal meaning, and so restored to human terms" (Eye 29). Likewise, Stevens believes that poetry is "a purging of the world's poverty and change and evil and death. It is a present perfecting, a satisfaction in the irremediable poverty of life" (OP 167).

Welty's concern about the threat to our continuing life on earth is echoed by Stevens in his remarks about the effects of the pressure of reality on human life and imagination. Because of the extraordinary pressure of the news following World War I, he maintains:

> We are confronting . . . a set of events, not only beyond our power to tranquillize them in the mind, beyond our power to reduce them and metamorphose them, but events that stir the emotions to violence, that engage us in what is direct and immediate and real, and events that involve the concepts and sanctions that are the order of our lives and may involve our very lives. (NA 22)

He further defines the pressure of reality as "a pressure great enough and prolonged enough to bring about the end of one era in the history of the imagination . . . and the beginning of another" (NA 22). Concerning the effects of this pressure on the artist, he states that it is "the determining factor in the artistic character of an era and . . . in the artistic character of an individual" (NA 22,23).

If the fictive world provides an anchor for the reader, then the imagination provides the writer with a means of escape from this pressure. Welty says that "it is not to escape his life but more to pin it down that he writes his fiction (though by pinning it down he no doubt does escape it a little)" (Eye 141). However, she does not advocate a withdrawing from life, for her fiction constantly emphasizes the importance of communication and human relationships. Rather, she seems to be proposing a means of bringing order and meaning into one's life in the midst of the violence and uncertainty. Similarly, Stevens says, "The poetic process is psychologically an escapist process. . . . My own remarks about resisting or evading the pressure of reality mean escapism, if analyzed" (NA 30). However, he agrees with Welty's definition when he says, "Escapism has a pejorative sense, which it cannot be supposed that I include in the sense in which I use the word. The pejorative sense applies where the poet is not attached to reality, which, for my part, I regard as fundamental" (NA 30, 31). Stevens argues that poetry should possess a nobility of "violence from within that protects us from a violence without." He defines the violence in this way:

> It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality. It seems, in the last analysis, to have something to do with our self-preservation; and that, no doubt, is why the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives. (NA 36)

According to Welty and Stevens, then, fiction should provide a way for the reader as well as the writer to say "yes" to life in full face of the heaviness of reality.

One way that fiction serves a eucharistic purpose is by creating order--by giving life a shape out of all its fragmented, unpredictable experiences. The importance of achieving order, a moment of stasis, is exemplified in Stevens' statement that "the imagination is the power that enables us to perceive the normal in the abnormal, the opposite of chaos" (NA 153). Welty explains the importance of order in her discussion of Henry Green's novels: "Surely, his concern, like his delight, his hope implied, his deepest feeling, seems to abide in indelibility in the face of chaos, and through his novels, in every one, a shape for indelibility is what he has made" (Eye 26). She continues, "And this, discovering a shape or pattern to some set of experiences, is the way we all take of imagining what life is up to" (Eye 26). By giving a shape or meaning to experience, the fiction helps to preserve life, to prevent its obliteration by the chaos. In a sense, fiction offers immortality because of its ability to capture and preserve human life. Welty describes the novel as a finished house:

> A work of art is a work: something made, which in the making follows an idea that comes out of human life and leads back into human life. A work of art is the house that is not the grave. An achievement of order, passionately conceived and passionately carried out, it is not a thing of darkness. . . . The fine physical thing has become a transparency through which the idea it was made to embody is thus made totally visible. . . . We see human thought and feeling best and clearest by seeing it through something solid that our hands have made. (Eye 58)

Fiction also serves a eucharistic purpose by providing comfort and meaning. Stevens believes the poet should ". . . create the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive it" (NA 31). This dependence occurs because the "deepening need for words to express our thoughts and feelings which, we are sure, are all the truth we shall ever experience, having no illusions, makes us listen to words when we hear them, loving them and feeling them . . ." (NA 32). Similarly, Welty says that "great fiction shows us not how to conduct our behavior but how to feel. Eventually, it may show us how to face our feelings and face our actions and to have new inklings about what they mean" (Eye 154). Stevens even believes that through poetry ". . . there may yet be found a reality adequate to the profound necessities of life today. . ." (NA 102). One of the responsibilities of the poet to his readers is "to lift, or help to lift, that heaviness away" (NA 63). He does this by making "his imagination theirs and he fulfills himself only as he sees his imagination become the light in the mind of others" (NA 29).

Fiction is also eucharistic because it provides supreme pleasure, joy, and hope. Stevens says that the role of the poet is "to help people to live their lives" and that he "has had immensely to do with giving life whatever savor it possesses" (NA 30). He presents this idea in the following statement:

> It is the mundo of the imagination in which the imaginative man delights and not the gaunt world of reason. The pleasure is the pleasure of powers that create a truth that cannot be arrived at by the reason alone, a truth that the poet recognizes by sensation. (NA 57-58)

Welty makes these statements concerning the higher satisfactions fiction can offer: she says that it is the ordering, the shape of the fiction that "may do the greatest thing that fiction does: it may move you . . . the beauty of order imposed" (Eye 144). She speaks of Katherine Anne Porter's fiction as "a bestowal of grace" (Eye 40) and praises Henry Green's ability to give pleasure because his works possess the magic of illusion (Eye 19).

Welty describes old Phoenix's journey in "A Worn Path" as a parallel to the journey a writer makes in his stories.

She says:

> Like Phoenix, you work all your life to find your way, through all the obstructions and the false appearances and the upsets you may have brought on yourself, to reach a meaning--using inventions of your imagination, perhaps helped out by your dreams and bits of good luck. And finally too, like Phoenix, you have to assume that what you are working in aid of is life, not death.
>
> But you would make the trip anyway--wouldn't you? --just on hope. (Eye 162)

Phoenix is often spoken of as the perfect blending of a life lived in reality and in the imagination. She has achieved an order that has preserved her life--a meaningful pattern to her existence; she has achieved a means of determining her individual reality or truth, and she has achieved joy, pleasure, and hope by having "something to hold on to."

Human life, for Welty and Stevens, determines fiction's theme and purpose. Presenting this life to the reader, a life that portrays a reality created by the imagination, provides meaning, truth, beauty, comfort, and pleasure for both the reader and writer. As Stevens says of poets, "Their words have made a world that transcends the world and a life liveable in that transcendence" (NA 130).

CHAPTER III

FICTION AS EPISTEMOLOGY

Welty's and Stevens' common beliefs concerning the epistemological role of the creative imagination find expression not only in their statements about artistic theory but also in their "fictions." Both writers believe that the interaction of the imagination with objective reality determines our individual realities and is therefore a valid approach to the discovery of human truths. For Stevens, both purpose and theme in his work are determined by his sustained interest in the primacy of the imagination as a means of discovering and interpreting the outer world of the senses. Welty's work demonstrates this epistemology most often through a particular character's perception of his reality, which is strongly influenced by his imagination. Stevens says that "poetry is an instrument of the will to perceive the innumerable accords, whether of the imagination or of reality, that make life a thing different from what it would be without such insights" (OP 239). Similarly Welty says:

> . . . In writing, as in life, the connections of all sorts of relationships and kinds lie in wait of discovery, and give out their signals to the Geiger counter of the charged imagination, once it is drawn into the right field. (Beginnings 99)

In many of her stories the characters are making discoveries about themselves and the world outside by the use of their charged imaginations.

Although Welty and Stevens believe that the intuitive approach to truth is valid, they consistently maintain the necessity of keeping in touch with the world of the senses. Like the Geiger counter, the imagination must be in touch with an objective reality before any kind of discovery is made by the individual. According to Riddel, Stevens' purpose in poetry was "to bring a mind to expression, by way of understanding how much of its ambience was of its own making and thus what reality obtained in the imagination's transformations" (11).

Certainly, many of Welty's characters live in worlds almost totally of their own making, worlds that are shaped and understood by their imaginations. Basically, these characters are of two types. The first type lives in a confined world, one of isolation and separateness. The fact that these Welty characters are all handicapped in some way perhaps partially explains their isolation and consequent need to define and enhance their lives through the imagination. The young girl in "A Memory" is naive and immature; Albert in "The Key" is deaf and dumb; Mr. Marblehall in "Old Mr. Marblehall" is senile; Lily Daw in "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" is feebleminded; and Ruby Fisher in "A Piece of News" is barely literate. For these characters the inner imaginative life dominates; they are never successful in making connection with their quotidian worlds and achieving a balance between their inner and outer worlds.

Unlike these characters, the second type of character has been able to move beyond the confines of his inner vision and has successfully made connection with the outer world. These characters are appropriately described by these lines from Stevens' "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon":

> Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,
> And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.
> I was myself the compass of that sea:
>
> I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
> Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
> And there I found myself more truly and more strange.
> (CP 65)

In fact, Hazel in "The Wide Net," Jenny in "At the Landing," and Livvie in "Livvie," go far beyond merely dreaming or acting out a fantasy. Each one relies on the imagination to interpret what she perceives in the larger world. The strong inner life of the imagination makes each respond to the calling of the outer world, with a desire to make a connection with it.

Whether she is depicting the first type of unsuccessful character or the successful second type, Welty implies that every human quest depends primarily on intuitive powers rather than on empirical reasoning. We interpret by symbols, gestures, myths, rituals. Welty's use of these devices underscores her emphasis on the imagination's power to discover truth and to relate specific human activities to the past, to ongoing human truths. Thus a human can get beyond the self, can touch the actual, can participate in the quotidian, and thereby find an identity. Each person becomes an individual reality, but one created through the connection to the objective world, not through fantasy.

Often fantasy gets in the way of the first type of character. These characters rely primarily on the inner vision to determine a too personal kind of reality, one seemingly created more by the pure imagination than influenced by and adjusted to the objective reality. The person attempts to control the world by imposing an order onto it rather than by allowing the outside world to influence the perceptions, thereby limiting his knowledge of the quotidian. These characters are much like the speaker in Stevens' "Comedian As the Letter C," who presents the inner world of the imagination and the outer world of the senses as separate, with Crispen attempting to discover which world provides him with the best means of discovering truth. His quest is described in these lines:

> Thus he conceived his voyaging to be
> An up and down between two elements,
> A fluctuating between sun and moon. (CP 35)

Like Crispen, who at the beginning of his voyage depends mainly on his imagination to interpret his reality, many of these Welty characters depend primarily on their imaginings to shape their views of the world. Even though they appear to be removed from and unaffected by the objective world of the senses, solipsistic and separate, they are in fact usually trying to make some sense of the world. Most often, though, these characters, all handicapped in some way, fail to make vital connections with the world, either because of a self-imposed confinement or because of a confinement imposed upon them by people and events outside themselves. They remain in a box, isolated and restricted in their views of the world.

The girl in "A Memory" best exemplifies the character who imposes a restricted view of the world upon herself. She does this by imposing an order onto the world. In fact, she does not experience much contact with the world; instead, she keeps apart, selecting and rejecting various events for her picture of reality. Framing her vision with her hands, as she does for her painting lessons, she chooses and defines her scene. She prefers to fix her reality, to capture it in a still form, one that is predictable and controllable. She says of her life as a dreamer and observer, "I felt a necessity for absolute conformity to my ideas in any happening I witnessed" (CS 76). She believes that from each observation a secret of life is revealed to her. However, her immaturity hinders the revelation of a reality that is still beyond her comprehension and that stimulates in her a fear of the chaotic.

Her disposition to interpret what she sees mainly through her imagination can be seen in her remark that ". . . from the smallest gesture of a stranger I would wrest what was to me a communication or a presentiment" (CS 76). The experience of her love for the boy in her class takes place solely in her imagination. He is not her friend; nor has she ever exchanged a word or nod of recognition with him, yet after deliberately touching his wrist one morning, under the guise of its being accidental, she says that she is able "to think endlessly on this minute and brief encounter which we endured on the stairs, until it would swell with a sudden and overwhelming beauty" (CS 76).

Her encounters with the ugliness and unpredictable events of life strengthen her desire to control her reality. She has already seen things that are "weak and inferior" in life before she witnesses the nosebleed of her young love one day in school. Now, her morning on the beach adds to those remembered feelings of horror and fear as she watches the rowdy, "common" family cavort upon the beach. As they intrude upon her dream of the boy, she explains, "I still would not care to say which was more real--the dream I could make blossom at will, or the sight of the bathers" (CS 77). Forced to observe the ugly, vulgar, demeaning activities of this family, she attempts to retreat to her dream of the boy. The lack of self-control, the unthinking, chaotic behavior of these people evoke in her a deep fear and a desire to escape to her inner world--a controlled world.

As she lies on the beach alternately opening and closing her eyes against the sun, much like Crispen's fluctuating between sun and moon--or the physical world and the inner world of the imagination, she describes the brilliance as day and darkness as night. In the darkness, illuminated only by her imagination, she can experience the dream. When she opens her eyes to the brilliance of the physical world, she feels victimized by the disorderly, ravaged appearance of the beach. Her eyes return to the little white pavilion--the focus of her picture framing before the family intruded upon her view, a view that represents a clean, orderly world, a world with people in "fixed attitudes."

As she lies on the beach continuing to square her vision of the world with her hands, she comes to the realization that life cannot be controlled, that despite what she may feel about this boy, he remains "solitary and unprotected." She imagines the boy coming into the schoolroom during the next school year and knows that her love for him will have been modified by what she has seen on the beach. But she also knows that his own reality will not be changed, that he will still "stare back, speechless and innocent, a medium-sized boy with blond hair, his unconscious eyes looking beyond me and out the window, solitary and unprotected" (CS 80).

Her imagination, then, does more than provide a means of escape from the darker elements of life: it also enhances her understanding of the world by adding meaning to and acceptance of the paradoxes of her reality, similar to the paradoxes Stevens expresses in "Anecdote of the Jar." The juxtaposed images of the wilderness and the artifact demonstrate the role of the imagination in creating and preserving order and beauty in the midst of a volatile, changing world.

As the girl in "A Memory" boxes out ugly reality, so Albert in "The Key" isolates himself from his wife Ellie as a way to protect his inner life of the imagination, a life he has found considerably more satisfying than the practical world Ellie lives in. Paradoxically, because Albert is open to the mysteries and adventures of life, he must tenaciously cling to his self-imposed isolation. He knows that Ellie simply talks to fill the void in their lives--as if talking were the equivalent of living. Since both are deaf and dumb, it is relatively easy for Albert to protect his inner life from Ellie and for Ellie to feel that the movement of her hands simulates living.

Welty often uses fire as a symbol of the imagination. In this story the young man who stands off to himself in the station, tossing a key into the air and then catching it, is symbolic of the fire of the imagination--the color of his hair is described as seeming to "jump and move, like the flicker of a match struck in a wind" (CS 30). With a gesture of abandonment, this god-like figure throws the key into the air and deliberately hesitates to catch it. When it falls to the floor, sliding to a stop at Albert's feet, "as if it had fallen from the sky," Albert is ready, prepared for his baptism of fire:

> This was just as unexpected, shocking, and somehow meaningful to him. Albert sat there holding the key in his wide-open hand. How intensified, magnified, really vain all attempt at expression becomes in the afflicted! . . . His lips were actually trembling. (CS 31)

Albert immediately interprets the appearance of the key as significant. In his first rush of joy and excitement, he attempts to share its import with Ellie, who predictably responds: "'You are always talking nonsense. Be quiet'" (CS 32). But the key has bestowed a special blessing and unction on Albert; it gives him power, a sense of his uniqueness and importance. For a moment both concentrate on understanding the meaning of the key; then Albert, perhaps fearful that Ellie will rob him of this unexpected gift, turns from her and slips the key into his pocket, close to his heart.

Ellie is described as being the dominant one, content to capture Albert and lead their lives separate from others. Perhaps this is why Albert withdraws from Ellie at this point: "There was something--something he could almost remember but not quite--which would let him keep the key always to himself. He knew that, and he would remember it later, when he was alone" (CS 34). The basic struggle between Ellie and Albert is that of the plodding, practical person who plans for happiness-which is after all thwarted--against that of the imaginative person who is open to spontaneity and mystery. Her calculated postponing of happiness--planning for it--is directly opposite Albert's watchful openness. In his attempt to control his own reality, Albert retreats to his self-imposed isolation, preferring the richness of his inner, imaginative life to that offered him by the outer world.

In "Old Mr. Marblehall," Welty presents yet another character who lives an isolated, separate life, but in his case it is a life of confinement imposed upon him by the outside world. The narrator informs us that Mr. Marblehall is a neglected, forgotten member of the community. To compensate for his lack of connection with others, Mr. Marblehall simply creates his own reality by imagining, not one, but two different lives. Thus, he demonstrates the enormous potential of the imagination to determine one's reality. Although the citizens of Natchez are unaware of and completely uninterested in the life of senile, old, Mr. Marblehall, he continues to imagine that they do care. Through the life he creates by his imagination he pathetically and valiantly affirms the importance of human relationships and connections. Even in his senility, his flights of fancy are not inspired by a desire to escape the physical world he lives in. In fact, his imagined lives have as their setting the very real world of Natchez. Stevens describes this type of imagination as being "intense enough to convert the real world about him into an imagined world" (OP 79). Mr. Marblehall "has even multiplied his life by deception; and plunging deeper and deeper he speculates upon some glorious finish, a great explosion of revelations . . . the future . . . imagining that if people knew about his double life, they'd die" (CS 96-97).

While the characters in "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" do not appear on the surface of events to be as far removed from actual happenings in an actual world as Mr. Marblehall, they do, nevertheless, demonstrate the imagination's power to interpret or impose a particular reality on a given situation. When they hear about the feeble-minded Lily's adventure at the tent show and her announcement that she is going to marry a man she met at the show the previous night, their imaginations are fired with all kinds of speculations. Each lady imagines a different reality for Lily, illustrating Welty's statement that there are as many realities as there are eyes to perceive an event. Stevens' poem "A Virgin Carrying a Lantern" bears a striking resemblance to this story. As the virgin makes her way to a farewell duty, a negress spies on her, assuming that the virgin awaits some kind of passionate rendezvous. The fact that her view of the situation is incorrect is seen in the description of her as "Only a negress who supposes / Things false and wrong." Even though the negress imposes an untrue reality on the virgin, the reality created by her imagination is true enough for the negress to stir her with a vicarious passion. The speaker says of the virgin:

> The pity that her pious egress
> Should fill the vigil of a negress
> With a heat so strong! (CP 71)

Lily Daw has very likely stirred the imaginations of her three ladies in much the same way.

The role of the imagination in creating a particular reality for a character is powerfully demonstrated in "A Piece of News." Ruby Fisher is another Welty character who lives an isolated, lonely life. Confined in a rural setting, without much contact with the larger world, Ruby, neglected by her husband Clyde, compensates for her restricted view of life by indulging her imagination. Although Ruby's intellectual capacity and reading skills are limited, and her youth and immaturity leave her ignorant in many ways, she is rich in imaginative resources. In fact, Stevens could have been speaking of Ruby when he said: "Perhaps there is a degree of perception at which what is real and what is imagined are one: a state of clairvoyant observation, accessible or possibly accessible to the poet or, say, the acutest poet" (OP 166). Even though the event that Ruby reads about in the newspaper--Ruby Fisher's being shot in the leg by her husband--does not pertain to this Ruby Fisher, she nevertheless makes this experience hers. As she succumbs to the daydream of Clyde's shooting her, a change occurs in her. For a short time her imagined life becomes her reality, a reality so real that she later attempts, although in vain, to share it with Clyde.

After "hitchhiking" with a traveling salesman again and returning to the cabin with his gift of a sack of coffee wrapped in newspaper, Ruby begins talking to herself, slipping almost immediately into her imagined world. Apparently, Ruby's loneliness causes her to resort quite regularly to her imaginary world, for her actions almost appear to be ritualistic: "Her little song about the rain, her cries of surprise, had been only a preliminary, only playful pouting with which she amused herself when she was alone" (CS 12). Now Ruby lies down full-length on the outspread newspaper, close to the fire, which again symbolizes the imagination, and as the fire stirs, she trembles in response, her mouth having fallen "into a deepness, into a look of unconscious cunning" (CS 12). At this point Ruby decides to sit up and read the newspaper.

Actually she watches it "as if it were unpredictable, like a young girl watching a baby" (CP 12-13).

For Ruby, the actual, concrete subject in front of her eyes is transformed by her imagination into something warmly alive and unpredictable, like a baby, which demonstrates how completely open she is to perceive by means of her intuition. Her approach to reading is not empirical, not an attempt to learn cold facts from a newspaper. The written word is full of mystery for Ruby; she reads expecting something special to happen to her. And it does.

The poet in Ruby takes over, and she for a time is able to imagine that she is that Ruby Fisher, the one who has been shot. She makes this experience hers. Moreover, Ruby elaborates on the story as she allows her imagination full play. Lying down again on the paper, she looks "at length into the fire," described as "a mirror in the cabin, into which she could look deeper and deeper . . . trying to see herself and Clyde coming up behind her" (CS 13). Ruby imagines that Clyde, in his jealous love, shoots her in the heart. She even imagines herself dying, dressed in a "brand new nightgown, her heart hurting with every beat." Ruby is so caught up in her fictive world that she cries real tears to accompany those she imagines "running down in a little stream over the quilt," as Clyde stands over her saying, "'Ruby, I done this to you.'" She answers, "'That is the truth, Clyde--you done this to me'" (CS 14). At the moment in her daydream when she dies, Ruby lies on the floor "silently for a moment, composing her face into a look which would be beautiful, desirable, and dead," imagining that Clyde would be "wild, shouting, and all distracted, to think he could never touch her one more time" (CS 14).

When Clyde returns to the cabin, demanding supper, Ruby is jolted out of her reverie. However, her imaginative experience has been so real for her that it affects her immediate reality:

> Ruby was going through the preparations for the meal gently. She stood almost on tiptoe in her bare, warm feet. Once as she knelt at the safe, getting out biscuits, she saw Clyde looking at her and she smiled and bent her head tenderly. There was some way she began to move her arms that was mysteriously sweet and yet abrupt and tentative, a delicate and vulnerable manner, as though her breasts gave her pain. She made many unnecessary trips back and forth across the floor, circling Clyde where he sat in his steamy silence, a knife and fork in his fists. (CP 15)

Filled with happiness and hoping to share her experience, Ruby ventures to show the newspaper story to Clyde, who tells her, "'It's a lie.'" Nevertheless, Ruby maintains joyfully, "'That's what's in the newspaper about me.'" For a moment both seem to be able to imagine the possibility of this event happening between them. Then, Clyde, unable or unwilling to allow this imagined event to become a reality or to make a difference in their relationship, throws the paper into the fire, telling Ruby how ridiculous she is because the Ruby

Fisher in the paper is from Tennessee. Ruby, still clinging to her fantasy, contends: "'It was Ruby Fisher. . . . My name is Ruby Fisher!'" And for Ruby, this fictive reality was in fact for a time her reality. Her fertile imagination created for her a very real experience and gave her insight into a possibly different relationship with Clyde. Only reluctantly does she return to her actual situation, one much less satisfying than that created by her imagination: "Ruby folded her still trembling hands into her skirt. She stood stooping by the window until everything, outside and in, was quieted before she went to her supper" (CS 16).

The imagination, then, plays a large role in helping many of Welty's characters to sort out and interpret what they see--for some a world still largely internal and restricted; for others, a larger world of adventure, mystery, and connections.

Both types of characters under discussion here are involved in romantic relationships; but the second type, in contrast to Mr. Marblehall, Ruby, and Albert, succeeds to a greater degree in securing, or in offering the hope of securing, a satisfying relationship. Hazel, Jenny, and Livvie are representative of Welty's successful characters, those who are able to use their imaginations as instruments to gather, sort and define information from their environments, particularly as this information affects their learning about themselves in relationship to others.

Welty consistently associates her successful imaginative characters with shining, light-filled, golden colors, either in describing their physical appearance or their surroundings. These golden characters succeed in causing their imaginative lives to carry over into an actual reality. They are strong, adventurous spirits who do not have the handicaps of the first type. In addition, their worlds are less restrictive, more open to possibilities, more under their control. As the golden ointment rains from their minds, they do indeed find themselves more truly and more strange.

In "The Wide Net" Hazel creates the possibility that she has gone off and drowned herself in the Pearl River because her husband William Wallace has neglected and worried her by staying out all night, drinking with his friend Virgil. Hazel, shining, golden-haired, and pregnant, symbolizes ambiguity, creativity, and fecundity. She not only creates and sustains life within her womb, but she creates and sustains life in her imagination. Her suicide note to William Wallace triggers a scenario that enables both her and William Wallace, as well as others in the story, to discover things about themselves and their worlds through the full play of their imaginations. And play is what goes on in this story--an entire day of "Let's Pretend." The humor in William's and Virgil's remarks early in the story is Welty's invitation for us to join in the game. However, William knows this is a serious game. Realizing the magnitude of Hazel's action, he makes certain to follow the proper procedures and to appear duly concerned. He says to Virgil, "'This will take the wide net.'" He then proceeds to gather a dragging party, complete with two little Negro boys.

Perhaps what Hazel wishes William Wallace to learn through this fantasy is the possibility of a greater knowledge of and delight in each other, that a relationship should not grow static and dull. She wants him to understand and experience the sheer joy of living that she is experiencing. William does appear to have grown complacent about Hazel, because when Virgil asks him how long he and Hazel have been married, he answers in surprise, "'Why, it's been a year. . . . It was this time last year. It seems longer.'" He tells Virgil about his first encounter with Hazel, which reveals Hazel's playfulness and the importance she gives to certain rituals. For example, when they initially meet each other, she tells him to mind his manners because he has spoken to her without their being properly introduced; then she capriciously relents and teases him: "'If you want to walk me home, take littler steps.'" As they come down the hill to Dover, her home, they stop at a well for a drink. When William asks what kind of water is in the well, she replies, "'The best water in the world.'" However, William tells Virgil, "'I didn't think it was that remarkable, but I didn't tell her'" (CS 170). This incident illuminates a major difference between William and Hazel. Her senses are more finely tuned than William's; she sees more, tastes more, experiences more from the mundane activities of her everyday world. He still exists in embryonic form, half-asleep, awaiting his birth. It will take the waters of the Pearl River to deliver William into Hazel's world, a world that offers "the best water in the world"--an imaginative view of life, a new epistemology.

Unlike Clyde Fisher's response to Ruby, William's reaction does show his capacity to enter into Hazel's fabricated situation readily and even do a little fabricating of his own. He is able to imagine why she chose this particular type of suicide: He says to Virgil:

> "She jumped in the river because she was scared to death of the water and that was to make it worse. . . . She remembered how I used to pick her up and carry her over the oak-log bridge, how she'd shut her eyes and make a dead-weight and hold me round the neck, just for a little creek. I don't see how she brought herself to jump." (CS 171)

All doubt of their taking Hazel's possible death seriously is removed when Virgil matter-of-factly answers, "'Jumped backwards. . . . Didn't look'" (CS 171). Their creating of the story as they go along, making Hazel's fiction a reality for themselves, knowing full well that it is a fabrication, demonstrates precisely what Welty says fiction should do--it should change us, enhance our ways of living, and create for us a new reality.

As William enters more deeply into the imaginary event, he says in the same way he might speak of going on a picnic, "'It's a pretty *day* for sure. . . It's a pretty *day* for it.'" This remark further emphasizes the fiction making that is going on. Seeing no signs of Hazel anywhere as he walks along, he suddenly jumps, "as if he could almost hear a sound of himself wondering where she had gone." William, at this point, appears to have become so completely caught in fantasy that he is removed from reality; he seems to be outside of his body, watching himself. Suddenly he experiences "a descent of energy" when he sees a rabbit and captures her with his hands. This event is similar to the rush of emotion Albert experiences with the key that seemed to fall from the sky. Both men have received a baptism of imaginative power. Albert's key and William Wallace's rabbit become the objects or symbols by which each is able to learn. William draws an analogy between his relationship with the rabbit and his relationship with Hazel. Virgil also sees the parallel as he chides William Wallace: "'Was you out catching cotton-tails, or was you out catching your wife? . . . I come along to keep you on the track.'" Hazel, like the rabbit, is elusive, hard to catch, hard to hold. Yet William succeeds in capturing the rabbit, while at the same time allowing that "'She can go if she wants to, but she don't want to'" (CS 172). These words apply to Hazel, in William Wallace's mind, and they foreshadow their reunion at the end of the day.

From this point on, William Wallace is completely caught up in the purpose of the wide net, which is described as "golden, strung and tied with golden threads." He has entered a golden imaginary world that requires him to perceive and interpret what he finds by his imagination. Doc says, "'We're walking along in the changing-time. . . . Only today . . . in the October sun, it's all gold--sky and tree and water. Everything just before it changes looks to be made of gold.'" William Wallace's whole world is changing because he can now see it through the eyes of his imagination. As he looks down on the river, he thinks of Hazel "with the shining eyes, sitting at home and looking straight before her, like a piece of pure gold, too precious to touch." The intensity of William Wallace's fantasy and the degree of his mental and emotional displacement from his actual surroundings are revealed when he asks the others, "'What is the name of this river?" (CS 176). He is now operating not in the everyday world that he knows so well, but in a new wondrous, golden world. He stands "looking down at the river as if it were still a mystery to him . . . . it was transparent and yellow like an old bottle lying in the sun, filling with light" (CS 177).

William Wallace dives all day, looking for Hazel. When he reaches the deepest part of the river, he finds her, but not bodily:

> 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 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. . . . (CS 180)

He now sees the "old trouble"--the difficulty of communicating with another human being, of entering imaginatively another's heart and understanding it.

William Wallace emerges "in an agony from submersion, which seemed an agony of the blood and of the very heart. . ." (CS 180). In his hand he holds, not Hazel, but "a little green ribbon of plant," symbolizing a new life, a new relationship with Hazel. His suffering and shedding of blood, his descent into the deep, his resurrection, his bringing of life with him, his subsequent cooking and eating of the fish with his friends parallel the redemptive death of Christ. Both vicariously suffer and share the death of others in order to live more fully, especially in community relationships. After William Wallace comes ashore without Hazel's body, he and his friends celebrate her life, symbolized by the green plant. They build a fire and eat fish together before falling asleep. Welty's use of fire imagery now identifies William with the golden people; he has been transformed: "His sunburned forehead and cheeks seemed to glow with fire." He awakens full of emotion, crying, laughing, dancing, celebrating. His two days growth of beard begins "to jump out, bright red" (CS 181) like a flame.

With his new powers, William Wallace stares down the King of the Snakes, and then holding his string of fish high in the air, he leads a triumphant procession through Dover, proclaiming that his fish are free for whoever wants them, that he only wants his wife. Now unafraid of Hazel's mother, he simply turns his back on her when she asks, "'What have you done with my child?'" (CS 185). He knows Hazel is not her mother's child; she is his wife. He has suffered the agonies of the Pearl River to find her.

The purpose of the wide net is to find and retrieve death; however, for William Wallace the net becomes a tomb/womb, taking him to his death in order to give him a new life. Hazel's imaginary death has prompted William Wallace to risk his life, searching for her in the depths of the Pearl River. His life is enriched with a new dimension, for he now can envision a different kind of relationship with Hazel. He returns home and finds her behaving as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened. She smiles mysteriously, pleased that he has spent the entire day searching for her dead body, thinking only of her. When she tells him that she had watched him read the note that morning from her hiding place, he turns her across his knee and gives her a spanking. Then he turns her loose, giving her the opportunity to escape, reminiscent of the episode with the rabbit. Instead, as he hopes, she lies back in the crook of his arm and smilingly promises him not to do such a thing again. But true to her playful approach to life, Hazel, happy and successful, teases him: "'I will do it again if I get ready. . . . Next time will be different, too'" (CS 188).

Like Hazel, Jenny Lockhart, in "At the Landing," uses her imagination to define her world, to shape her reality. Unlike Hazel, who is already married and involved in a successful relationship with William Wallace, Jenny is uninitiated. Her grandfather has kept her isolated on the hill above The Landing in a monastic existence. She resembles Ruby Fisher in that she too has been cut off from the outside world, with only an occasional interruption or glimpse of it. The books on the shelves of her grandfather's library stand unread, serving only as stimuli for Jenny's imagination, symbols of the mysteries that exist out in the world. She, like Ruby, relies more on her imagination than on her reading. In fact, Welty presents Jenny as almost virginal in every respect. She seems to have arisen out of the landscape, unpolluted by schooling, playmates, or travel. Certainly, she has attended school, she has gone down into the town, she knows the villagers, but she lives so completely apart that she seems to be nothing more than an observer.

Jenny's knowledge of life is largely imagined. Her inwardness and quietness are emphasized by the paucity of dialogue in the story. The narrator tells Jenny's story for her, for Jenny does not have the knowledge or vocabulary to put into words what she is learning about the world. Her physical world is described as golden, light-filled, the imagery Welty uses regularly to describe an intensely imaginative view of life: The bottom-lands "lay in a river of golden haze"; Floyd, the stranger who becomes her initiator into the outside world, "passed like a dreamer through the empty street and on through the trackless haze toward the river" (CS 241). Golden-haired Floyd, like the golden Hazel, is identified with the golden river. Just as Hazel initiates William Wallace into a larger experience of life by leading him to the Pearl River, Floyd, too, initiates Jenny by bringing the river to her, which is a metaphor for an imaginative journey and quest, a means of learning about and getting into the world.

Jenny's grandfather speaks prophetically on the night he dies when he comes into her room, still dreaming, and tells her, "'The river has come back. That Floyd came to tell me. . . . That Floyd was right.'" In his dream, Floyd has a catfish hung on his wrist, and with the flooding of the river, the old man laments, "'That Floyd's catfish has gone loose and free. . . . And all of a sudden, my dear--my dears, it took its river life back, and shining so brightly swam through the belfry of the church, and downstream'" (CS 240). With his death Jenny's new life begins. Again, Welty uses the imagery of the pursued, caught animal being allowed to go free. When the flood does come, Floyd comes to Jenny and takes her into his boat, as he would a catfish. They float high above the village, which is completely flooded, up on the bluff where her mother and grandfather are buried. The boat bumps into the tops of the grave markers. Here Floyd finds some dry ground and violates her. Jenny is initiated into her new life, knowing that she rides above the graves of her mother and grandfather--symbolizing the death of her confined past and the freedom she has been given by Floyd to take back her life and escape shining brightly downstream, which she does both figuratively with Floyd and literally later when she follows him down the river.

Before her grandfather's death, Jenny's life is markedly internal. He protects and isolates her from outside contact because he fears she will suffer the same madness Jenny's mother died from after some mysterious trauma in her life. Perhaps her husband deserted her, which explains her desire to go to Natchez. However, she is prevented by her father from leaving the house--her room has bars on the door and she is guarded constantly by a servant. Jenny's mother's desire to "get to Natchez" has been passed on to her. But Jenny's shy, compliant nature prevents her from ever disobeying her grandfather.

Although she wants passionately to become a part of the larger world, she wishes for it to come and take her. In fact, she almost has a fetish about not touching things. Her activities in the house consist mainly of looking at the objects that make up her world. In the parlor she can look "back and forth between her mother's two paintings," or in the dining room she can "walk around the table or sit on one after the other of eight needlepoint pieces her mother had worked," or she can count the plates in the closet. In the library she can make up songs and dance on the bare floor, or gaze at the books "arranged up high and nearly unreachable" (CS 241). The rooms contain relics of her mother's life--the house is a museum. Although the rooms are dead, static and confining (even Jenny's "box-like canopied bed" held her in) (CS 242), the house is filled with moving prisms, objects that catch and reflect light in ever-changing patterns. Jenny's imaginative nature parallels the prisms. Both wait for an outside stimulus to set them in motion; neither can reach out and touch their worlds on their own: "It was her way not to touch them herself, but to let the touch be magical, a stir of the curtain by the outer air, that would also make them rainbows" (CS 241). Jenny, too, watches and waits for the magical touch from the outside world to set her into motion, to reveal to herself all of the ambiguity, the many facets of her being. She is more than a mirror reflecting one image--her nature is highly imaginative, open, free, changeful, her response to the world always new. However, her essential quietness is not a dullness: "She was calm the way a child is calm, with never the calmness of a spirit. But like the distant lightning that silently bathes a whole shimmering sky, one awareness was always trembling about her: one day she would be free to come and go" (CS 242).

The light-haired Floyd symbolizes freedom for Jenny, the call to the mysteries of the outer world: "He was almost unknown, and one to himself. . . . In the long shadows below they could see his figure with the gleaming fish he carried move clear as a candle over the road that he had to himself, and out to the blue distance" (CS 243). Floyd becomes Jenny's animus, lighting her way into a deeper knowledge of life's mysteries.

Jenny's grandfather and Floyd are one-sided in their natures and polar opposites. Her grandfather represents an almost Oriental approach to life. He denies the body, disdaining the fits Jenny's mother suffered. He wears long, flowing robes. He demands complete obedience from Jenny. His life is reclusive, quiet, ritualistic. Her repressed existence with him has encouraged an imaginative life of the mind. So far, Jenny has not participated in a world of the senses. When she gets permission from her grandfather to visit her mother's grave, she hides behind some grapevines to watch Floyd, who represents untamed nature, the ultimate romantic hero. In her first encounter with him in the sunny pasture, he stands "facing her in a tall squared posture of silence and rest, while a rusty-red horse that belonged to the Lockharts cropped loudly beside him in the wild-smelling pasture" (CS 243).

Clearly Jenny's attraction to Floyd is a physical awakening. The time is spring. Their meetings take place outdoors in the pastures, and they are described as "two mockingbirds that were about to strike their beaks and dance" (CS 244). They are much like the butterflies that fill the pasture, circling rhythmically in their mating dance, barely touching, for Jenny and Floyd are silent, speaking to each other mostly with their eyes and the motions of their bodies. Even in close proximity, Jenny hesitates to make a real connection. Floyd is still perceived by her as if in a dream. She desires "to catch him and see him close, but not to touch" (CS 244). So greatly does her imagination rule her reality that she fears her touching of the actual world will destroy the beauty she can imagine. Jenny does, however, realize that she has lost her innocence, though not yet physically, because "she could watch his" (CS 244). Only when she thinks of him as unreal, in a dream, does she muster the courage to touch him. When she thinks of following him, of leaving her imaginary world, she hesitates, knowing that he will be "equally real with herself" and that she "could not touch him then." Because she knows of her own inviolate separateness, she knows "a fragile mystery" exists in everyone, in Floyd.

Floyd's sexual initiation of Jenny symbolizes her union with the physical world. She is now liberated both physically and spiritually. When he leaves The Landing and Jenny to go down the river, he provides an example for Jenny to follow. The restricted life of The Landing cannot hold either of them. Her initial connecting with the world through her encounter with Floyd leaves her for awhile in "a shock of love," for she has learned that there is a "fragile mystery" in everyone (a sacred place that cannot be violated) and that, though love be the motivating impulse producing a desire to become a part of another's life, it should never encroach on the essential legitimate separateness of a free being. Therefore, the impulse to become a part of the world brings forth both joy and pain.

Jenny learns to take responsibility for her own life after Floyd leaves. Her cleaning of the house, removing of the mud and debris left by the flood waters, represents her confrontation with and triumph over the outside world. In addition, she restores order to her life by putting the past in perspective. She finally touches every item in the house.

She now sees herself

> like a house with all its rooms dark from the beginning, and someone would have to go slowly from room to room, slowly and darkly, leaving each one lighted behind, before going to the next. It was not caution or distrust that was in herself, it was only a sense of journey. (CS 254)

Not knowing what lies before her, she looks "outward with the sense of rightful space and time within her, which must be traversed before she could be known at all. And what she would reveal in the end was not herself, but the way of the traveler" (CS 254).

Jenny has learned that there is "a clear love in the world," existing on its own, and it is this love that she has connected to, that has expanded the experience of life:

> She had one love and that was all, but she dreamed that she lined up on both sides of the road to see her love come by in a procession. She herself was more people than there were people in The Landing, and her love was enough to pass through the whole night, never lifting the same face. (CS 256)

Jenny leaves The Landing in July, the peak of summer. Her maturation coincides with the ripeness of nature: the golden pears lie warm on the ground, the bees "put their little holes of possession" in the ripened figs. The strong scent of lilies fills "the golden air of the valley" as the mourning dove calls. She is ready for the next stage of the journey. She is again lost in dream and wonder and so determines to find Floyd, who will lead her into the next knowledge. "If she could find him now, or even find the place where he had last passed through, she would gain the next wisdom. It was a following after, now--it was too late to find any way alone" (CS 256). Floyd again symbolizes the call to life. The journey he leads her on is a journey out of herself, for she cannot learn about the world in isolation. Her imagination must interpret the outer world to her, but to gain wisdom she must allow her imagination to call her into relationships with the wider world.

Her passage through the woods and swamps which "closed behind her" when she left her house, represents a new birth. As she leaves the house, which had looked like a womb to her when she returned to it after the flood, she passes through the dark woods and swamps and is reborn when she reaches the river, where "all at once the whole open sky could be seen." She is allowed to wait for Billy Floyd at the fish camp on the river, where she is further initiated into knowledge of the world as "One by one the men came in to her" (CS 257). She finds that she can speak to them "in a vague stir of welcome or in the humility that moved now deep in her spirit" (CS 257-58).

Almost a counterpart to Jenny is Livvie, a young black girl. Both are very young women (Livvie is twenty-five), and both are kept prisoner by old men. In Livvie's case, however, the old man is her husband Solomon, who married her when she was sixteen and carried her off twenty-nine miles away from home to his isolated farm on a road untraveled since "a day she did not know about." Everyone said that Solomon did not want anybody to ever find his wife because he was an old man and feared that she would be lured away from him. Solomon, like Jenny's grandfather, leads a studied, well-ordered life. He has worked all of his life to earn dignity and respect and is "a colored man that owned his land and had it written down in the court house." He tells Livvie this fact before he marries her, and her attitude toward him from the beginning is like Jenny's toward her grandfather: a child's respect for an elder, for "whatever she said, always, was because he was an old man . . . while nine years went by. All the time, he got older, and he got so old he gave out. At last he slept the whole day in bed, and she was young still" (CS 228).

Now, Livvie has nothing to do while Solomon sleeps but wander about the orderly house and look out into the orderly yard that Solomon has built. Although Livvie differs from Jenny in that she has married at a very young age, she is still no more initiated into life than Jenny is. She is merely another acquisition, another necessary appurtenance to Solomon's well-appointed kingdom. He has spent years building and furnishing his palace and lives in it with his queen, with all the aloofness of royalty. Livvie is never really a part of it--her only possession is the snapshot nailed to her bedroom wall of the little white baby she once cared for.

Although he has brought her to his "bright iron bed with the polished knobs like a throne," he has not brought life to Livvie, whose very name is suggestive of life. She represents the energy and spontaneity of life in contrast to Solomon's wise plannings. In the yard he has hung a colored bottle on the end of every branch of the crape-myrtle trees that line the old path to the house to keep evil spirits out, but when the light hits the bottles Livvie thinks their brilliance is prettier than the "nice house" Solomon is protecting. Inside the house, everything is orderly. The palmettos are hung on the living room wall, "spaced at careful intervals." Even the dishes of food left out on the table at all times are preserved--"pickled peaches, fig preserves, watermelon pickles, and blackberry jam." And here, too, he has taken precautions to prevent outside intruders and devourers of his possessions: ". . . there were four baited mousetraps in the kitchen, one in every corner" (CS 229).

The desire to live a full life is strong in Livvie, and having no other recourse because Solomon forbids her to have any contact with the outside world, she often surrounds herself "with a little reverie," much like Ruby Fisher does. As she watches Solomon sleep, she pretends that the quiet she keeps is "for a sleeping baby, and that she had a baby and was its mother." She envies the field hands whom she can hear shouting and laughing at a distance, "with hats set on their heads and bright with tall hoes and forks as if they carried streamers on them and were going to some place on a journey." She even sees the rows of earth as "wave-like": the field is an ocean teeming with life. The outer call of the world is strong upon her as she feels "the stir of spring close to her" (CS 231). The entire world is in motion--except for Solomon who is "like a little still spot in the middle" (CS 232).

However, even in the confines of the house the sweet smell of the earth invades, and Livvie asks herself what it would be like to "walk now into the heart of the fields and take a hoe and work until she fell stretched out and drenched with her efforts, like other girls, and laid her cheek against the laid-open earth, and shamed the old man with her humbleness and delight?" (CS 232). Her desire to shake off the imposed aloofness and isolation appropriate for royalty--to humble herself and become one with the common people, those close to the earth, again parallels the humility and sympathy Jenny learns after her initiation by Floyd.

Like Jenny, Livvie eventually ventures out of the house and meets the young man who will initiate her into the larger world of experience and relationships. Cash McCord, one of Solomon's field hands, is as unacceptable to Solomon as Floyd is to Jenny's grandfather. Both young men are of a lower social status, and each of the old men unhappily knows only moments before he dies who will inherit what he has so carefully guarded.

However, the first intrusion from the outside world comes in the form of Miss Baby Marie, who has miraculously driven a car right up to the house; "it had come without a road" (CS 233). Miss Baby Marie, though a pushy and gaudy seller of cosmetics, nevertheless symbolizes for Livvie the wonder, the excitement of the outer world. She unlocks her cosmetic case with a "gold key." Her face "drew the light, the way it was covered with intense white and red" and her "Little red tassels of hair bobbed under the rusty wires of her picture-hat" (CS 233). She, like the young man who offers the key to Albert, offers a new life to Livvie. The golden lipstick transforms Livvie: It "popped open like magic. A fragrance came out of it like incense" (CS 234). In fact, she seems to have an out-of-body experience as the scent of chinaberry flowers from the lipstick transports her back in time:

> . . . and in an instant she was carried away in the air through the spring, and looking down with a half-drowsy smile from a purple cloud she saw from above the chinaberry tree, . . . her home that she had left. On the side of the tree was her mama holding up her heavy apron, and she could see it was loaded with ripe figs, and on the other side was her papa holding a fish-pole over the pond, and she could see it transparently, the little clear fishes swimming up to the brim. (CS 234)

Obviously, the vision of her parents symbolizes a fruitful and lifegiving relationship. The lipstick not only stimulates images that represent life and fecundity, but it transforms

Livvie. As she looks at herself in the wavering little mirror on the front porch, her face dances before her "like a flame." When Baby Marie leaves, Livvie goes to sit by the dying Solomon. Her heart beats so strongly that she puts her hand out to touch the place; she feels that "her heart beat and her whole face flamed from the pulsing color of her lips" (CS 235).

Knowing that Solomon is dying, Livvie takes a little walk down the Natchez Trace and suddenly Cash McCord rises up before her, "looking like a vision." Decked out in new clothes of pink, yellow, plum, and green, he begins acting like a peacock performing a mating dance. Starting with his pointed shoes, he lifts his trouser leg to reveal his bright socks. Then he opens his long, green coat "like doors" so she can see his "high-up tawny pants and his pants he smoothed downward from the points of his collar." His shirt is "luminous baby-pink satin." For his finale, he "reached gently above his wide platter-shaped round hat, the color of a plum, and one finger touched at the feather, emerald green, blowing in the spring wind" (235). Much like Floyd, he stamps through the grass, jumping down from his side of the ravine and then up to her side, having the same effect on Livvie that Floyd does on Jenny. She looks at him as Jenny does when she knows she has lost her innocence. Livvie sees in Cash's eyes "hope in its insolence looking back . . . as if he could break through everything in the way and destroy anything in the world." She knows that "if he had not appeared that day she would never have looked so closely at him, but the time people come makes a difference" (CS 236).

They walk together back to Solomon's house, and Cash throws a stone through the bottle trees, symbolically intruding into Solomon's world, for Solomon cannot keep life out, and life is what both Livvie and Cash represent. He races horse-like into the house, stamping his feet. Livvie runs past Cash into the bedroom, calling Solomon's name. Solomon lies there asleep, still clutching, as he always did, his watch. As they watch Solomon sleep, they know he has spent his life contriving respect, that "it grew to be the same with him as a great monumental pyramid and sometimes in his absorption of getting it erected he was like the builder-slaves of Egypt who forgot or never knew the origin and meaning of the thing to which they gave all the strength of their bodies and used up all their days" (CS 238). And this is his epitaph.

When Solomon awakes and sees the two of them, he says, "'Young ones can't wait. . . . So here come the young man Livvie wait for. Was no prevention. No prevention . . . Cash McCord, growed to size, growed up to come in my house in the end--ragged and barefoot'" (CS 238). Even though he disapproves of Cash, he makes his final speech, giving a brief history of his life with Livvie, but ending with a prayer of forgiveness "'for carrying away too young girl for wife and keeping her away from her people and from all the young people would clamor for her back'" (CS 239). He lifts his hand up toward Livvie and offers her his watch, symbolically offering her his blessing of time and life, then dies.

Solomon is dead, the house is dead, but Cash is joyfully alive. Clearly he symbolizes the creative, imaginative, life-giver as he catches Livvie and whirls her around and around, circling the floor as his "shiny shoes" move "in spangles," his feather shining "like a light in his hat," the circling dance emphasizing the continuity of life. Finally Livvie goes limp in his arms and Solomon's watch falls "somewhere on the floor," marking the end of her measured, watched, controlled life, as "all at once there began outside the full song of a bird." They dance around and around, out into the sun that is "shining in the middle of them with the bursting light of spring" (CS 239).

Whether Welty's characters, then, are confined to limited and isolated worlds (deafness, illiteracy, feeble-mindedness) by physical or mental circumstances largely beyond their control or are free (like Hazel, Jenny, and Livvie) to escape from other kinds of confinement, they discover what freedoms they do have and what lives they do live through the power of the imagination. They "know" their worlds not through empirical study but through imaginative living. They "learn" to escape, momentarily or apparently permanently, from their restricted lives through the "shaping power of the imagination."

CHAPTER IV

FICTION AS EUCHARIST

For both Welty and Stevens, the artistic imagination provides an avenue by which they are able to explore not only their outer physical worlds but also their inner spiritual worlds. Art, for these writers, provides the primary means of serving man's spiritual needs. In fact, the artistic imagination for Welty and Stevens fulfills many eucharistic functions: it creates and imparts nothing less than life itself; it immortalizes life by preserving it in the art form; it gives order, shape and meaning to the chaos of life, and finally, because of its limitless possibilities, it enhances life, thereby offering the hope and comfort of a meaningful human existence and the possibility of a joyous celebration of life's fecundity and freedom. By the powers of the creative imagination, man can say "yes" in the face of the absurdities of life and thus transcend his defeats, his confinement, his chaos, his despair.

Stevens' call for us to live in fiction appears throughout his works. In "The Rock," one of his last poems, he calls the poem an icon, continuing his earlier argument to the high-toned old Christian woman that the creative imagination can produce a reality and a faith that satisfies man's spiritual needs just as well as, if not better than, her old forms of traditional religion did. For Stevens, fiction must serve man's needs and be grounded solidly in the physical paradise of this world, as he propounds in "Sunday Morning."

In her autobiography, One Writer's Beginnings, Welty tells of her early love, as a pre-schooler, for the written word and the special awe and satisfaction it filled her with. She says, "I live in gratitude to my parents for initiating me--and as early as I begged for it, without keeping me waiting--into the knowledge of the word, into reading and spelling, by way of the alphabet" (9). The sounds of the letters of the alphabet and even the way they look on the page captured Welty's imagination as a child. She says, "In my own story books, before I could read them for myself, I fell in love with various winding, enchanted-looking initials drawn by Walter Crane at the heads of fairy tales. In 'Once upon a time' an 'O' had a rabbit running it as a treadmill, his feet upon flowers" (9). Already for Welty, even as a small child, the written, fictive word was interwoven so tightly with reality, with life, that the two were as inseparable as the 'O' and the rabbit on the treadmill, symbolic of the continuity and fecundity of life that can be preserved, captured in the written word. Later in life she experienced an apotheosis with the alphabet. She says, "When the day came, years later, for me to see the Book of Kells, all the wizardry of letter, initial, and word swept over me a thousand times over, and the illumination, the gold, seemed a part of the word's beauty and holiness that had been there from the start" (9).

Certainly, for Welty the written word is full of wizardry, magic, and transforming powers. Her association of gold (a kingly symbol) with the beauty and holiness of the word emphasizes her high esteem for the power of the creative word to transport us into worlds beyond ourselves, into the very mystery of life. Welty's statement echoes Stevens' message in "Description Without Place," in which he sees as analogous the role of the artist, who speaks worlds into existence by the power of his imagination, and the role of the Creator, as described by the Apostle John, to speak worlds into existence. For both, the word made manifest becomes life, reality--and this alchemy is the mystery of fiction.

Clearly, for Welty poetry is a living thing with a reality and force of its own. Relating her first experience with the "immediacy of poetry" as a young student in a poetry class at Mississippi State College for Women, Welty says, "Often that year in Survey Course, as Mr. Painter read, poetry came into the room where we could see it and all around it, free-standing poetry" (80). For Welty, as for Stevens, the artistic imagination, or poetry, performs the priestly role of imparting life. She states in One Writer's Beginnings:

> I painlessly came to realize the reverence I felt for the holiness of life is not ever likely to be entirely

> at home in organized religion. It was later, when I was able to travel farther, that the presence of holiness and mystery seemed, as far as my vision was able to see, to descend into the windows of Chartres, the stone peasant figures in the capitals of Autun, the tall sheets of gold on the walls of Torcello that reflected the light of the sea; in the frescoes of Piero, of Giotto; in the shell of a church wall in Ireland still standing on a floor of sheep-cropped grass with no ceiling other than the changing sky. (33)

Welty's religious feelings are tied inseparably to art. The creative imagination in humankind is the icon of God for both Welty and Stevens. Through the artistic, creative act, man is freed to be most like the Creator. Welty's imagination, too, has "no ceiling other than the changing sky." Through her art she creates a fecund, limitless, ever-changing world, a free world.

Not surprising, Welty's first book purchase upon arriving at college was William Alexander Percy's book of poetry, _In_ _April_ _Once_. Her meditative nature was fired by these lines from "Home," the first poem in the collection:

> I have need of silence and of stars
> Too much is said too loudly. I am dazed.
> The silken sound of whirled infinity
> Is lost in voices shouting to be heard.

As she walked in the quiet of a beautiful spring night, repeating the poem to herself, she relates that she felt "dedicated to wanting a beautiful spring night." She states, "To be _transported_ to it was what I wanted. Whatever a poem was about--that it could be called "Home" didn't matter--it was about somewhere else, somewhere distant and far" (79). Welty further describes her response to "the immediacy of poetry" in a story as yet not completed, which she discusses in her autobiography. A teacher of linguistics, speaking of his disillusionment, says to a woman,

> "And I happened to discover Yeats, reading through some of the stacks in the library. . . . I read 'Sailing to Byzantium,' standing up in the stacks, read it by the light of falling snow. It seemed to me that if I could stir, if I could move to take the next step, I could go out into the poem the way I could go out into that snow. That it would be falling on my shoulders. That it would pelt me on its way down, that I could move in it, live in it--that I could die in it, maybe. So after that I had to learn it. . . . And I told myself that I would. That I accepted the invitation." (81)

Welty says, "The experience I describe in the story had indeed been my own, snow and all; the poem that smote me first was 'The Song of Wandering Aengus'; it was the poem that turned up fifteen years or so later, in my stories of The Golden Apples and runs all through that book" (81). The following lines are the last two of this poem and provide Welty with the title for her collection, as well as the eucharistic theme of the quest for the beauty, happiness, and pleasure of life and the preservation of it in art:

The silver apples of the moon
The golden apples of the sun.

Welty's early experiences with Yeats' poems about the immortality of art and the imaginative quest for the unknown place her firmly in the tradition of those artists who believe that art is both lifegiving and transcendent. The Golden Apples has a timeless, almost epic, quality about it that affirms man's endurance and lasting significance. Although the fictional town of Morgana serves Welty as one unifying factor, as Albert J. Devlin says, "It is finally time itself which supplies the most capacious vessel for Welty's remarkable innovation and technical daring" (133).

Although Welty devotes only one entire story to King MacLain and although she places "Sir Rabbit" after "Shower of Gold" and "June Recital," it might easily be placed first in the collection, because King, Sir Rabbit, rules the entire collection. He, or one of his offspring, appears in every story. As symbol of the creative imagination, King demonstrates the eucharistic nature of fiction: as Sir Rabbit he is the fecund procreator of life. By stimulating their imaginations he enhances the lives of his subjects in Morgana; his elusive nature represents a way to escape the confines and pressures of life; his activities provide a pattern, an order for the inhabitants of Morgana (the shaping of their history is marked in time by his goings and comings), and finally like Stevens' "The Emperor of Ice Cream," King celebrates the ephemeral nature of life and pleasure, something that both Welty and Stevens think fiction should do. Stevens says, "Poetry sometimes crowns the search for happiness. It is itself a search for happiness" (OP 171), which is essentially the same message in Yeats' "The Song of Wandering Aengus," the touchstone poem of the Welty collection that describes the questing spirit of King MacLain.

The first story in the collection, "Shower of Gold," introduces us to Miss Katie Rainey, who in turn introduces us to Morgana and its inhabitants. This is the touchstone story for all the stories. The story's central character is King MacLain, who symbolically rules Morgana, just as Stevens' jar in Tennessee rules the wilderness around it. The significance of his name is inescapable. Welty again uses the color of gold to symbolize the creative or artistic imagination, and in this case King's "Shower of Gold" emphasizes the supremacy of the creative imagination to produce, enhance, and preserve life. His god-like role is demonstrated by his mysterious comings and goings. His supposed drowning after his marriage to Snowdie is obviously a hoax, a means of escaping the confinement of an ordinary life. He remains free, elusive, filling everyone in Morgana with wonder and awe. He is the principal lifegiver and ordering principle for life in Morgana. Moreover, his offspring, his "Shower of Gold," show a special kinship with him. Virgie, Loch, and Easter, an orphan, are his illegitimate children, and Randall ("The Whole World Knows") and Eugene ("Music from Spain") are his legitimate children--Snowdie MacLain's twins. In all of his children runs a strong, highly imaginative, restless current. They, too, keep the life principle in motion by venturing out into the unknown. However, his illegitimate offspring most reflect his paternity, for they, like King, are freer from the constrictions of society and orthodox behavior; Randall and Eugene both marry and unsuccessfully attempt to lead more traditional lives, which are disastrous for both of them. From Mrs. Rainey, we learn that King has children "growing up in the County Orphans' [Home], so say several, and children known and unknown scattered-like" (CS 264). Thus Easter could very well be one of them, as she shares with Virgie and Loch many of the traits that describe King. Later, in "June Recital" we are given many clues that King may also be the father of Loch.

Whatever his child-producing qualities, King is the focus of Mrs. Rainey's life; the story she tells of her own life, as well as of others in Morgana, is held together by the thread of King's comings and goings. She, too, has to suffer the "enduring his being gone" (CS 264). Most likely she, too, has met King in Morgana Woods, and Virgie is probably the offspring of one of those rendevouz. Katie's story is sprinkled with hints that she, like Snowdie, King's wife, has been blessed by King's "Shower of Gold." In relating what she imagines King did the Halloween day that he allegedly returned to Snowdie's, describing his physical appearance and how he probably stood at the door, Katie exclaims, "'Oh, don't ask me to go on!'" But she does, enjoying the ecstacy of fabricating a story about King. The facts do not matter to Mrs. Rainey. What matters is her experience of imagining King's alleged return. She ends her gossiping story by dropping a big hint: "'But I bet my little Jersey calf King tarried long enough to get him a child somewhere. What makes me say a thing like that? I wouldn't say it to my husband, you mind you forget it'" (CS 274). Perhaps Welty is suggesting through these free spirits, symbols of the creative imagination, that the artist is genetically endowed with a special vision of the world, just as Stevens argues that others do not see and cannot perform the priestly role of the artist, cannot impart this special reality of life through the eucharist of fiction.

In "June Recital" we meet Virgie Rainey and Loch Morrison, both of whom are King's children, at least spiritually. Two recitals are occurring simultaneously, one in Cassie Morrison's dream-like memory as she stands looking out her window at the MacLain house next door, and the actual recital that the now deranged piano teacher, Miss Eckhart, is presently preparing for--the grand finale of all her recitals. Virgie is now sixteen. Snowdie MacLain no longer lives next door, with her boarder Miss Eckhart. Young girls no longer go there for piano lessons, and the last recital is a part of the past, living only in the memory of a few. Miss Eckhart now lives in the county home. Virgie Rainey, her student of genius, the special one whom Miss Eckhart thought should leave Morgana and "be heard from out in the world," now plays the piano for the local Bijou theatre and is currently in the upstairs bedroom of the abandoned old MacLain house with her sailor boyfriend, reminding us of King MacLain's similar sportings.

Through Cassie's eyes, turned inward, we are given the story of the past--the activities that once took place in the MacLain house, while through Loch's eyes, turned outward, we see what is currently happening; however, what we see of the present is filtered through Loch's highly imaginative "special vision." King MacLain's house is the focus of the story, and his daughter Virgie is the central character, the symbol of the creative, free spirit.

Cassie's "window" on the world offers her the same objective reality that Loch's "window" does; however, Cassie's inward vision is tied to the past, tied to Morgana. Typical of her restrained manner, Cassie locks herself in her room with a "No Trespassing" sign on the door, lost in her dreaming, while Loch, on the other hand, leaves his bed, where he is confined with malaria, and crawls out of his second story window into a tree in order to get closer to what has become "his" house. In addition, he extends his vision by using his father's telescope, and he creates a totally different perspective by hanging upside down in the tree by his legs: "Some whole days at a time, often in his dreams day and night, he would seem to be living next door. . . . They could do what they wanted to to him but they could not take his pompadour cap off him or take his house away" (CS 276-77). It was his "summer's love."

Loch's fertile imagination gives an entirely different interpretation to what is actually going on in the story. He believes that Mrs. Eckhart's metronome is a bomb, and in one sense it is. Eventually he realizes that she is decorating the place as if for a recital--streaming paper all over the room, but, that, in fact, she is preparing to burn the house down, with the old piano serving as the altar for the sacrifice by fire. Suddenly Loch hears a tune, _Für Elise_, played by Mrs. Eckhart, float through the summer's air. He is surprised to find tears rolling from his eyes. The tune is a reminder of a time past, a time of innocence and love between himself and Cassie. This experience is a foreshadowing that Loch's life will be different from that of most inhabitants of Morgana: The tune "came like a signal, or a greeting--the kind of thing a horn would play out in the woods" (CS 280). Loch is being called out of childhood into a larger world, one more solitary, like that he is presently experiencing, one "where he looked out all eyes like Argus, on guard everywhere" (CS 280). One German meaning of Loch's name is "aperture" or "eye," and he does, in fact, later become a watchman, a lifeguard at Moon Lake, saving Easter's life. Loch eventually leaves Morgana, his special vision calling him to a larger, unknown world. Like his father, he possesses god-like qualities--he is irrepressible, creative, elusive. He desires to control the activities next door--he has watched Virgie come and go, watched Mr. Holifield sleep, and has kept all of them his secret, pretending that their presence in the house is by his permission only. In addition, his nature is inherently adventurous and unorthodox. He is described as "bird-like," hanging free in the tree. His imagination sets him free to venture into the unknown and gives him a special ability to see life from perspectives that ordinary people do not have. He soars above, looking down at a larger, freer world.

Cassie, too, is a dreamer, but unlike Loch, she is just as confined in her spirit as the stellar Casseopia is in her stellar chair. Her imagination continually leads her to the past; she lacks the ability and courage to allow her imaginings to take her into unknown places. Even her artistic activities are ordinary, predictable, as she spends an entire afternoon tie-dying a scarf. However, running through her head are the lines from "The Song of Wandering Aengus":

> Though I am old with wandering
> Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
> I will find out where she has gone. . . .

As she looks out her window, she also hears _Für Elise_ coming from the old MacLain house, the focus of her vision. The house has become "part of the world again," its appearance changing with the seasons, the "way a natural place like the river bank changed" (CS 285). The cyclic changing of the appearance of the house represents enduring life. To Cassie, the house is alive; "though all looked still, there was agitation. Some life stirred through. It may have been *old* life" (CS 286). The changefulness of the MacLain's house and the changing of occupants in the house reflect the questing spirit of King MacLain:

> Ever since the MacLains had moved away, that roof had stood (and leaked) over the heads of people who did not really stay, and a restless current seemed to flow dark and free around it (there would be some sound or motion to startle the birds), a life quicker than the Morrisons' life, more driven probably, thought Cassie uneasily. (CS 286)

These three stimuli of the past overwhelm her: "Like a wave, the gathering past came right up to her. Next time it would be too high. The poetry was all around her, pellucid and lifting from side to side." Cassie does not go "out into" the poem the way Welty describes her own desire to go "out into" the poem as a young college student. Instead, Cassie is immersed *by* the poetry: "Then the wave moved up, towered, and came drowning down over her stuck up head." Cassie's is a reluctant baptism. She keeps her head up. Though her imagination can lead her into a new experience of living, a different vision of life, she still shrinks back.

Virgie is Cassie's "secret love, as well as her secret hate" (CS 292). As Cassie's reverie takes her back in time, Virgie assumes the primary role--Virgie is the free spirit, the natural one. Cassie remembers Virgie at ten or twelve, with dark curly, unruly, probably dirty, uncombed hair, and "full of the airs of wildness." Virgie "swayed and gave way to joys and tempers" (CS 291). Rebellious Virgie, angry at having to stay inside for recess on a rainy day, threatened "to butt her brains out against the wall" and then "really tried" when the teacher ignored her. Virgie also possessed an "air of abandon" in Sunday school that made people think that she would one day go "somewhere away off," mistakenly thinking she would become a missionary. Virgie drank vanilla out of the bottle and told them it "didn't burn a bit." _Für Elise_, everybody knew, was Virgie's piece and they also knew Virgie was gifted. Virgie was above them all, even as a young girl. Cassie remembers that Virgie was the only one who refused to "play another note" with Mrs. Eckhart's sacred metronome. Her freedom is inherent, natural. Her artistic gifts are inherent, natural. Virgie is in a very real sense always virginal: she is never possessed by anything or anyone other than herself. At socials, she ran wild, "let herself go," revelling in the pleasures and fecundity of life. Holding one of her mother's fig ice cream cones, in each hand, she symbolizes the goddess of pleasure, reminiscent of Stevens' "The Emperor of Ice Cream." Virgie knows instinctively to seize the ripe moment, the ephemeral moment of pleasure in just "being."

Miss Eckhart represents the artist's almost religious devotion to art. Her studio seemed like a "sacred place." She "worshipped her metronome," locking it up in a safe every night, much like the priests lock up the bread of the eucharist until the time of worship. Miss Eckhart, too, makes a little ritual of bringing out the metronome every day and placing it on her altar, the piano. This sacred nature of art is demonstrated one morning by the high priestess Eckhart when she suddenly begins playing "some brilliant thing too splendid for Miss Eckhart." On this particular morning, Cassie and Virgie are caught in the studio by a sudden summer storm that completely transforms Miss Eckhart. She seems to experience a baptism of creativity, playing a piece

> so long and stirring that it soon seemed longer than the day itself had been, and in playing it Miss Eckhart assumed an entirely different face. . . . It was the face a mountain could have, or what might be seen behind the veil of a waterfall. There in the rainy light it was a sightless face, one for music only. . . . What Miss Eckhart might have told them a long time ago was that there was more than the ear could bear to hear or the eye to see, even in her. The music was too much for Cassie Morrison. (CS 300-301)

On recital nights all of Miss Eckhart's students "partook of the grace of Virgie Rainey" (CS 315). Miss Eckhart, calling Virgie's name, hugged her students, sharing the love she felt for Virgie. But Virgie rejects the sacrifice of love Miss Eckhart makes for her. Clearly Miss Eckhart recognizes the artistic talent in Virgie and is humbled before it. Nevertheless, Virgie persists in her unconventional path and goes straight to playing in the Bijou, hardly promising that she would "be heard from in the world." However, this final June recital has gathered a quite different group of performers. King MacLain returns after ten years' absence (according to Loch's mother, who has kept count) to witness undaunted the burning of his house. Miss Eckhart, too, has returned to shake the dust off her feet against Morgana, against those who never understood her gift or accepted her as one of them, and particularly against Virgie, the one to whom "she gave all her love" (CS 307). Virgie has also returned to the house, but her performance has moved upstairs to the bedroom, directly above the recital room; and Loch, guarding his house, defies gravity by hanging upside down in the tree, his "spread-eagled back in the white night drawers," seeing with his special vision that Old Man Moody the marshall, Mr. Fatty Bowles, and Mr. Holifield "could easily be lying on their backs in the blue sky and waving their legs pleasantly around, having nothing to do with law and order" (CS 317).

The fire in the house is eventually put out, but not in King, Virgie, Loch or Miss Eckhart, all of whom are actually outsiders. They belong to Morgana, but Morgana's law and order cannot hold them. King, defying confinement, escapes again. Virgie marches out of the house, down the sidewalk, and right through the ladies returning from their rook party, scattering their conventional walking formation while they criticize her unconventional behavior with the sailor. Cassie looks out at Loch now "as stricken as if she saw him hurt, from long ago, and silently performing tricks to tell her" (CS 316). And Miss Eckhart is taken away. Cassie knows, however, that

> She could never go for herself, never creep out on the shimmering bridge of the tree, or reach the dark magnet there that drew you inside, kept drawing you in. She could not see herself do an unknown thing. She was not Loch, she was not Virgie Rainey; she was not her mother. She was Cassie in her room [seated like Cassiopia in her chair, moving only with the constellations, never apart from them], seeing the knowledge and torment beyond her reach. (CS 316)

Cassie, locked in her room with her "keep out sign" posted on her door, can use her imagination as an epistemology to interpret her world and her relationship to it, but for Cassie the imagination stops there. It cannot lead her into the unknown--hers remains only a partial baptism into poetry. But then perhaps her role is to give support and love to the priesthood of those who possess the questor's gift, those like Miss Eckhart and Virgie, whom Cassie sees as "human beings terribly at large, roaming on the face of the earth" (CS 330).

As she sleeps the night after the fire, Cassie awakens suddenly and remembers the entire poem and says aloud, "Because a fire was in my head." This line of the poem is an answer for Cassie, an explanation of the King MacLain's, Virgie's, Miss Eckhart's, and Loch's: each one has received a baptism of fire, like those previously discussed of Albert, Ruby, Hazel, and William Wallace. In contrast to these characters who actively search for the beauty and the terror of the unknown, Cassie "did not see except in dreams that a face looked in; that it was the grave, unappeased, and radiant face, once more and always the face that was in the poem" (CS 330), a transcendent face like that of Miss Eckhart when she played, an icon of art.

Essentially, "June Recital" and "Moon Lake" are counterpart stories. Easter, another of King MacLain's probable offspring, is, like Virgie, the central character. The fascination Easter commands from Nina Carmichael parallels Virgie's influence on Cassie. Further, Easter, without any effort whatsoever, becomes everyone's focus and, with the same absolute lack of concern for power that Virgie has, becomes the leader of the Moon Lake camp, the primary mover and shaper of the activities. Easter, like Virgie, symbolizes freedom and openness and mystery. Loch Morrison also appears in this story, now a Boy Scout and Life Saver for the camp; like Easter, he is a symbol of mystery. Because he keeps himself apart from the girls, they wonder where he is and weep together "whole tentfuls some nights," when he plays taps for them from some distant hiding place (CS 343).

Easter's kinship with King MacLain is evidenced by her regal bearing. Definitely, the queen of the orphans, who make up half of the camp's population, Easter hands her dress wrong-side out to a friend who carries out the servant's duty of turning it and hanging it up for her. Easter is in charge, dominant among the orphans "for what she was in herself--for the way she held still, sometimes" (CS 346). Although Jinny Love Stark is the queen-bee from Morgana, her stature shrinks in the presence of Easter, who is "medium size, but her hair seemed to fly up at the temples, being cropped and wiry, and this crest made her, nearly as tall as Jinny Love Stark." In contrast to the rest of the orphans, who have pale, burnt-out looking hair, Easter's hair is "a withstanding gold" (CS 346). She is clearly the Rabbit's Easter.

The Morgana girls, filled with "a feeling of elation" because of the ring of dirt around Easter's neck, "liked to walk behind her and see her back, which seemed spectacular from crested gold head to hard, tough heel" (CS 347). The girls are also captivated by Easter's unorthodox manner of lying down to drink directly from the spring, impressed by her winning at mumblety-peg, and awed by her eyes, which are "neither brown nor green nor cat" but having "something of metal, flat ancient metal, so that you could not see into them" (CS 347-48). Nina thinks that Easter's eyes "could have come from Greece or Rome, that the color "could have been found somewhere, away--away under lost leaves, strange as the painted color of the ants. Instead of round black holes in the center of her eyes, these might have women's heads, ancient" (CS 348). Easter's exotic, elusive appearance and unorthodox manners elevate her position among the girls to that of some mythological goddess. In a very short time she becomes the main interest in the camp and in a very real sense Easter, the symbol of mystery and freedom, "not answerable to a soul on earth" (CS 352), enhances the lives of all the girls in camp, just as King and Virgie spark the imaginations and enliven the lives of people in Morgana.

Easter is an enigma to all of them, but she affects Nina most. Hiking through the woods, Easter strikes out, off the path across a pasture, under a barbed wire fence. Nina untwines her arm from Jinny Love's and follows Easter into an old, leaky boat after sitting on the sandbar of the lake, writing her name in the sand: "Nina, Nina, Nina. Writing she could dream that her self might get away from her--that here in this faraway place she could tell herself, by name, to go or to stay" (CS 355). Nina's imagination, like Cassie's, enables her to interpret her world, but, unlike Cassie, Nina does not fear the unknown. She is open, looking to the future, not to the past, as Cassie does, and Easter is her anima.

Jinny Love finally gives up and joins Easter and Nina in the boat, and when they return to shore, Nina resumes her name-writing in the sand. Suddenly Easter erases her name, which Nina had written with hers, and spells out in huge letters "Esther," precipitating an argument over the correct spelling:

> "Who's that?" Nina Asked.
> Easter laid her thumb between her breasts, and walked about.
> "Why, I call that 'Esther.'"
> "Call it 'Esther' if you want to, I call it 'Easter.'"
> "Well, sit down . . ."
> "And I named myself."
> "How could you? Who let you?"

Responding in Jehovah-fashion, Easter replies, "'I let myself name myself.'" Nina wants Easter to spell her name correctly so that it will be "real," while Jinny Love proclaims that "'Easter's just not a real name'" (CS 357).

Easter's confusion in the spelling of her name actually adds another level of meaning to it. She is, like Esther, queen of the homeless Jews, queen of the county orphans. In addition, the name "Easter" signifies rebirth, and Easter will no doubt experience many rebirths. Like Virgie Rainey, she symbolizes the virginal new beginnings that are possible for those who are free enough to imagine them. Because of her creative nature, Easter has forged her own identity, in contrast to the conventional Jinny Love, who brags that she is named for her maternal grandmother, that her name "couldn't be anything else, or anything better" (CS 357). Easter responds, "I haven't got no father. I never had, he ran away. I've got a mother. When I could walk, then my mother took me by the hand and turned me in, and I remember it. I'm going to be a singer" (CS 358). In addition to the unheard of naming of herself, Easter's desire to be an artist, a singer, again sets her apart from the conventional life of Morgana and further identifies her with King MacLain's domain.

Easter inspires in Nina a desire to enter the domain of the orphans, which has come to mean freedom for Nina--Easter has her own knife and even smokes. She calmly sits down to smoke, persuading Nina to join her. For Nina to be an orphan, a free wanderer, offers not a deprived life, but an abundant one, full of possibilities. When she awakes in the night, she dreamily thinks to herself:

> The orphan! she thought exultantly. The other way to live. There were secret ways. She thought, Time's really short, I've been only thinking like the others. It's only interesting, only worthy, to try for the fiercest secrets. To slip into them all--to change. To change for a moment into Gertrude, into Mrs. Gruenwald, into Twosie--into a boy. To have been an orphan. (CS 361)

Nina clearly feels the call to be a wanderer, to seek the mystery of "the pondering night," which now stands "rude at the tent door" (CS 361). She can respond to the night because of her ability to know and perceive imaginatively, having already discovered that "You couldn't learn anything through the head" (CS 358). Rather, her imaginative spirit is drawn to something outside of herself: "Nina sat up on a cot and stared passionately before her at the night--the pale dark roaring night with its secret step, the Indian night. She felt the forehead, the beaded stars, looking in thoughtfully at her" (CS 361). The night seduces Nina as he slips in through the fold of the tent opening and rises up in the center of the tent where the pole went up. As she lies in her cot "drawn quietly from him," Nina realizes that "the night knew about Easter. All about her." Easter's hand hangs down "opened outward." And Nina thinks: "Come here, night, Easter might say, tender to a giant, to such a dark thing. And the night, obedient and graceful, would kneel to her" (CS 361-62). Nina, imitating Easter's gesture, stretches her arm forward "opposite Easter's," and her hand opens of its own will as she lies "under the night's gaze, its black cheek, looking immovably at her hand, the only part of her now which was not asleep" (CS 362). She now feels "compassion and a kind of competing that were all one, a single ecstacy, a single longing," as she whispers to the night, "'Instead . . . me instead. . .'" (CS 362). However, Nina knows that the night is not impartial: "No, the night loved some more than others, served some more than others" (CS 362).

Easter's mystery increases the day she nearly drowns. Wearing her dress (Easter couldn't swim), watching the others at their swimming lessons from her vantage point on the diving board, she involuntarily plunges into the lake when the little black boy Exum tickles her feet. When she fails to come up, Loch Morrison, ever watchful, dives in to save her even before anyone has to call for him. Mrs. Lizzie Stark arrives for her daily visit just in time to see Loch astride Easter on top of a picnic table. Horrified, she demands, "'But what's *he* doing to her? Stop that.'" She calls out, "'Loch Morrison, get off that table and shame on you!'" Beside herself, even after everyone explains to her that Loch is doing what Boy Scouts and lifesavers do, she rants, "'He ought to be put out of business,'" continuing to demand that they get Loch "'off her'" (CS 367). Loch ignores Mrs. Stark, and as they watch him bring Easter back to life, Nina notices that Easter's hand had "held there the same way as it had held when the night came in and stood in the tent, when it had come to Easter and not to Nina" (CS 369). The mystery and the knowledge seem always reserved for Easter. Just as Easter sits up, she is transfigured in the yellow and violet colors made by the dust of Ran MacLain's flivver, and a triumvirate of King MacLain's offspring completes a resurrection scene for the awed onlookers.

The story ends with Nina and Jinny Love spying on Loch "undressing in his tent for the whole world to see." In the light given off by his flickering candle, Loch, standing naked before his mirror, examines his sunburn, then goes to the tent opening, and "leaning on one raised arm, with his weight on one foot," looks out into the night. Looking much like a young god,

> Hadn't he surely, just before they caught him, been pounding his chest with his fists? Bragging on himself? It seemed to them they could still hear in the beating air of night the wild tatoo of pride he must have struck off. . . . Minnowy thing that matched his candle flame, naked as he was with that, he thought he shone forth, too. Didn't he? (CS 373-74)

In "The Whole World Knows" and "Music from Spain," King MacLain's legitimate offspring, Randall and Eugene, confront their pasts in search of love, meaning, and comfort in their present lives. Their father, who they think has never seen them, and whom they do not even know, becomes the icon for their own quests into the mysteries of life. Both Randall and Eugene, now adults, recognize their kinship with their wandering father and know that somehow he possesses a creative power that enhances and celebrates the freedom and joy of life--something both have missed partly because they have married self-centered, conventional women who want safe lives. Yet, Randall and Eugene share the same artistic temperament that marks Virgie, Loch, and Easter: the spirit of the wandering aengus--their father, King MacLain.

Randall's creative nature reveals itself in his ability to express himself in words. His story "The Whole World Knows," addressed to his father, takes the form of a confession or prayer. He opens the story with "Father, I wish I could talk to you, wherever you are right now" (CS 375). Randall senses that his father would understand what has happened to him, for he, too, has broken the laws of society by precipitating his mistress's suicide. Seemingly, Randall attempts to go as far back as he can to the source of his beginnings in order to find himself. Rather than go to a church for solace, he goes to his birthplace--the MacLain house--and rents a room from

Miss Francine Murphy. The old house, like King, has been the touchstone of life for many Morganians. Now Randall prays to his father. As Randall tells his story, the telling itself is an act of the imagination. He orders the chaos of his life into some semblance of a pattern and meaning. In his confession he tells his father everything--his despair, his remorse, his frustration. He frequently interrupts his storyline to speak directly to his father: "Father, I wish I could go back" (CS 378). As Randall recreates his past, the emotion intensifies and his anguish pours forth in a prayer that obviously puts his father in the place of a deity: "Father! Dear God wipe it clean. Wipe it clean, wipe it out. Don't let it be" (CS 386). The confession reaches it climax when he describes his attempt to kill himself in the motel room with Maideen, his mistress, watching him: "I drew back the pistol and turned it. I put the pistol's mouth to my own. My instinct is always quick and ardent and hungry and doesn't lose any time. . . . I made it--made the awful sound" (CS 392).

However, death seems to be powerless over the MacLains. Virgie's frequent death wish is never consummated, as we learn in "The Wanderers," and in addition she experiences a purging of the dead past and a rebirth of her old spirit. Loch, too, returns unhurt from the war that claimed the life of Virgie's brother Victor, and further escapes the confinements of Morgana by going to New York. Easter is revived from her near drowning by none other than Loch, the lifeguard, and Eugene escapes a possible death on the cliff above the beach because he yields his volition to the artist and finds new life open to him with the freeing of his imagination. Clearly, the MacLains are representative of the life principle, the immortality of art. Although their wandering, daring, creative natures lead them to the very edge of destruction, they manage to survive and even to gain from their openness to the strangeness and mystery of life.

However, Maideen does not possess the creative resources that provide the strength and courage to survive. After she takes the pistol from Randall, they make love. He continues his story:

> I lay there and after a while I heard her again. She lay there by the side of me, weeping for herself. The kind of soft, patient, meditative sobs a child will venture long after punishment. So I slept. How was I to know she would go and hurt herself? She cheated, she cheated too. (CS 392)

His last plea is for an answer to his despair. He asks, "Father, Eugene! What you went and found, was it better than this? And where's Jinny?" (CS 392).

Although Eugene attempts to be free of Morgana and to venture out into the world--even going as far as San Francisco, he, like Randall, finds himself trapped in a dead, confined life; however, "Music from Spain" is primarily a story of escape and rebirth. His wife, once his landlady, is domineering and conventional. Yet once, before the death of their golden-haired daughter Fan, she responded to Eugene's love. After Fan's death (which Eugene secretly blames Emma for because she talked too much with Mrs. Herring and neglected the sick child), Emma withdraws from Eugene and refuses to go out with him until the full year of mourning is completed. Ironically, their first evening out to hear the Spanish guitar player precipitates a metamorphosis in Eugene and the death of Eugene as she knows him. Wrapped and confined in the cocoon spun for him by Emma, Eugene, though confined, is only resting, dormant until the ripe moment. As his name suggests, Eugene loves beauty; however, he has stifled his creativity by fixing broken watches in "his cage in the repair department of Bertsinger's," a vocation that symbolizes the regularity and marked control of his hours, the pattern and measure of his life.

Now, after a year of confined mourning, Eugene suddenly stirs in his cocoon after being moved by the guitar player the evening before. At breakfast when Emma remarks that he has a crumb on his face, he responds by reaching across the table and slapping her face. Yet he continues the morning routine of kissing her good-bye. The unreality of what he does hits him after he is in the street, but the experience is a cleansing one, the beginning movement toward a complete metamorphosis:

> A tremor ran through his arm as it struggled with the front door, and he stepped through to the

> outside and the perfectly still, foggy morning. He let his breath out, and there it was: he could see it. The air, the street, a sea gull, all the same soft gray, were in the same degree visible and seemed to him suddenly as pure as his own breath was. (CS 394)

What has happened to Eugene demonstrates Stevens' philosophy of the primacy of the mind to order our lives. Riddel says that Stevens is closest to Santayana and Bergson in his belief that the creative imagination is a vital, generative energy which in its activity transforms the whole being (38). Eugene is free, born anew, and into a oneness with "the air, the street, the gull," symbols of freedom, travel, and flight.

When Eugene's thoughts turn to the drabness, the predictability of his life with Emma, he imagines her pinning a "precautionary cap" on, as she methodically places hair pins in her hair, and his "walking down the habitual hills to Bertsinger's, Jewelers" (CS 394). Yet in the middle of his euphoria the question keeps arising, prodding him: "Why slap her today?" (CS 395).

The fog infusing the city, changing its appearance, emphasizes Eugene's changed perspective of the world and his entrance into an imaginative, free world. In a sense, the fog also protects him and encourages his escape. Suddenly it is clear to him that it is "out of the question" for him to go to work that day. He stands literally looking down a steep incline in the street and remembers that slapping Emma's blank face was "like kissing the cheek of the dead" (CS 396).

When the fog lifts, he sees the artificiality of life around him--"trusses, pads, braces, false bosoms, false teeth, and glass eyes" (CS 397). Identifying his job and his wife with the artificial products, he mourns for his lost vision of life, his stopping of it in San Francisco. The artist, the lover of beauty in Eugene, cries out, "Oh, to have been one step further on, and grown flowers!" (CS 397). Also stirring in him again is the old wanderlust, stimulated by the fog's lifting, "that daily act of revelation," and he remembers the old desire he felt as a child in Mississippi to see the world. Eugene now identifies himself with the kneeling "Man in the Wilderness," an engraving in his father's old geography book that he had always associated with his wandering father. The engraving depicts a man who has hacked down a tree and kneels to drink the juice flowing from it, obviously symbolic of the man's freedom and oneness with the natural world.

But soon Eugene's attention is drawn to people and objects that are bursting with joy, color, and life. These are the lower class shopkeepers and customers who know each other, the common folks who share their lives with one another, childlike almost in their sheer love of the pleasure of life. Overwhelmed by the delicious strangeness of foreigners, he decides to seek a stranger, after being tantalized by one who is "tattooed with a butterfly on the inner side of his wrist" (CS 400). This image convinced him "to go on, go in this new direction," to go toward the freedom and fecundity of life represented by the butterfly. Later he sees a birthmarked woman who looks like a butterfly. She is beautiful and exotic to Eugene, and he feels the need to protect her from the harshness of those who might find her a freak. She is a work of art and inspires in Eugene a desire to pursue the strange, the wonderful in life.

The crisis moment for Eugene occurs when he sees the Spaniard walking ahead of him. He decides that the guitarist would be "the perfect being to catch up with" (CS 401), for he had already decided that he should spend the day with a stranger. Suddenly the Spaniard steps in front of an automobile and Eugene reacts emotionally, instinctively, to pull him back to safety. As Eugene holds him, he breathes in the artist's "travel-smell" (CS 401-02).

The Spaniard clearly symbolizes the spirit of the creative imagination; his description is comprised of images Welty has also used in "June Recital," and "Moon Lake." He wears black, his thick black hair, hanging to his shoulders, "like an Indian," reminiscent of Nina's description of the night as an Indian, with all of an Indian's mystery and elusiveness. Eugene remembers that the artist's face, at the end of his performance the evening before, "had the enchanted presence of a smile on the face of a beast" and that it "showed that like the audience, after all, he loved the extraordinary thing" (CS 403). Cassie sees Virgie and Miss Eckhart, those lovers of the extraordinary thing, as "human beings terribly at large, roaming on the face of the earth. And there were others of them--human beings, roaming like lost beasts" (CS 330). Eugene had experienced "a still moment" the evening before when the Spaniard's music had transported him into a world of "a vast present-time," oblivious to Emma and to the future. This dark face now walks beside him, leading him into a deeper knowledge of himself. He thinks, "Was it so strange, the way things are flung out at us, like the apples of Atalanta perhaps, once we have begun a certain onrush?" (CS 403). Eugene's awakened artistic nature parallels a spiritual rebirth, and with it he breathes in the spirit of a new world and a new way of seeing and feeling. The ripe moment has come for Eugene to encounter the face looking in on Cassie, on Nina, on Easter.

However, before Eugene and the Spaniard reach the beach and the cliffs, Eugene again sees the city as artificial and confining as they walk through areas of "uniform, unseparated houses repeated over and over again. . . ." They look like bee-hives to him--the very "making and doing of life mazed a man about, eyes, legs, ladders, feet, fingers, like a vine. It turned a man in, the very doing and dying and daring of the world, the citified world" (CS 413). He thinks again of his confined rage, which had so surprisingly erupted that morning with Emma. Juxtaposed death/life images run throughout the story. The death images include Fan's death, Emma's dead cheek, the woman killed by the street car, the Spaniard's brush with death, the dead city, and Eugene's near fall to his death from the cliff. However, these are always counterbalanced by subsequent brilliant, bursting images of life. As Eugene and the Spaniard near the beach and Eugene's final stage of metamorphosis, rain begins to fall on Eugene, as it does on Virgie at the end of "The Wanderers." In both cases, the rain symbolizes baptism into life: "In the air, a fine caressing 'precipitation' was shining" (CS 415). In the rain the images are now of life and resurrection--a baby extends his hand and grabs at the rain, making a fist; a cable car arrives, looking like a swing "gay with girls and boys"; kites dance cheerfully above the old Spanish tombs, and an old Chinese gentleman runs "with the abandon of a school child for the car" (CS 415).

The wind increases as Eugene and the artist near the top of the cliff, and the artist now leads the way. The artist, in one sense, reminds Eugene of his father: "Eugene watched his great fatherly barrel of chest move, and had a momentary glimpse of his suspenders, which were pink trimmed in silver with little bearded animal faces on the buckles" (CS 415). The flamboyant nature of the Spaniard blends perfectly with that of King MacLain, both of whom represent the Wanderer, the artist. They eventually reach a place where Eugene and Emma had once picnicked when things were young between them. Now Eugene sees the artist lifting his arms to retain his hat and is reminded of "the lumpy pose of a woman, a 'nude reclining'" (CS 419).

The artist, obviously in control, choosing the paths, walks surefootedly, while Eugene stumbles and slides. The artist is now on his own ground, leading Eugene into an imaginative experience that simulates a eucharist. Eugene grabs the artist and thinks of pushing him over the cliff; instead, he decides to embrace the artist. In much the same way that the eucharist represents the marriage of Christ to his church, a marriage occurs between the artist and Eugene:

> Eugene clung to the Spaniard now, almost as if he had waited for him a long time with longing, almost as if he loved him, and had found a lasting refuge. He could have caressed the side of the massive face with the great pores in the loose, hanging cheek. The Spaniard closed his eyes. (CS 421)

At this point Eugene loses his balance and must hold onto the artist to keep from falling to his death, just as he must hold on to the freedom he has found today in the reaffirming of his own creative spirit. Eugene's commitment to his new life is further emphasized when the wind blows the artist's hat away and he loses his own hat (and his identity) in the pursuit. He returns, wearing the Spaniard's hat, his new identity:

"It stayed on, and at the same time it shadowed him. The band inside was warm and fragrant still. Elation ran all through his body, like the first runner that ever knew the way to it" (CS 422). Now the Spaniard consummates their ceremony of giving and taking of life by literally freeing Eugene from the old bondage of the earth and allowing him to experience the euphoria of flying free into another world. As the artist lifts Eugene out over the cliff, he holds him by the feet, turning him around and around. Completely submissive in the Spaniard's hands, Eugene feels that he is "without a burden in the world" and his experience gives him "the greatest comfort" (CS 423).

Symbolically, the artist lifts Eugene from his old bondage to the earth, the confinement imposed by man, and sets him free to soar into the limitless but dangerous world of the imagination--a fecund world. As he circles in the air, he is caught up in a daydream in which he sees a new relationship with Emma. He imagines that she will greet him at the door and enfold him in her large "aroused sleeves"; and ravish him with love; "it was out of this relentlessness, not out of the gush of tears, that there would be a child again" (CS 423). In this eucharist of the imagination. love is clearly the lifegiving power, that force which gives life its continuity, its meaning. The infusion of love Eugene receives from the artist/priest creates in him a desire to live and to procreate:

> He was brought over and held by the knees in the posture of a bird, his body almost upright and his forearms gently spread. In his nostrils and relaxing eyes and around his naked head he could feel the reach of fine spray or the breath of fog. He was upborne, open-armed. He was only thinking, My dear love comes. (CS 423)

Unfortunately, for Eugene, his life of love exists only in his imagination, for at the end of the day, he returns home to the same Emma, serving up the same old "fish chowder," with the same old Mrs. Herring as dinner guest. Eugene tries to tell them about his day with the Spaniard, only to be usurped by Mrs. Herring's announcement that she saw the Spaniard "that needed a haircut" at church that morning. She complains that

> "He was next to a woman and he was laughing with her out loud--bad taste, we thought. It was before service began, it's true. He laughed first and then slapped her leg, there in Peter and Paul directly in front of me home from my trip." (CS 426)

Possibly this high-toned old Christian woman would wince even more if Eugene were to tell her that his recent "masque/Beyond the planets" is "palm for palm" superior to "Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk" as may be whipped from the "disaffected flagellants" of her lifeless, unimaginative religion (CP 59).

The whole MacLain story culminates in "The Wanderers," the story of a family reunion of sorts, but certainly not a conventional one. All of King's children, except for Easter, who is not really from Morgana, are either characters in the story, or are mentioned, as are the mothers of his "special" offspring. At any rate, King's kin are the wanderers--Virgie, Loch, Randall, and Eugene. And now another generation of "magnetic MacLains" is running wild and free in Morgana--little Jinny Love and little King, the children of Randall, and Jinny Love Stark. As always, the dominant "wild" genes of the MacLains take precedence over the confined "proper" genes of the Starks. The beginning of this story announces the death of Katie Rainey and completes her life cycle. We have come full circle from Katie Rainey's "Shower of Gold," only to have the offspring of King's shower of gold reaffirm the quest of the wandering aengus. The end of the story finds Virgie just now, at age forty, setting out on her own journey of life. Until now, Virgie has stifled her creative nature, her spirit of adventure, to care for her mother. So, once more, Welty's image of life arising from death affirms the endurance of man, of imaginative, creative man. Katie Rainey, like King MacLain, bequeaths a questing, free spirit to Virgie--and the cycle of the wanderers continues.

Almost all of The Golden Apples characters congregate for Miss Katie's funeral. Snowdie MacLain comes to "lay her out" and take charge, instead of Mrs. Stark, who is still running things in Morgana. Jinny Love Stark, reunited with Randall, who is now a successful politician, arrives with little Jinny Love and little King. Cassie Morrison, an old maid piano teacher, comes without her reclusive father, whom she has cared for since her mother's suicide. From her, we learn that Loch left Morgana long ago for New York. Appropriately, we are left dangling, learning nothing else about the life of the mysterious Loch. Eugene is now buried in the MacLain graveyard after having returned to live out his last years in Morgana, revealing nothing of his life with Emma, who had been notified of his death but had not come to his funeral. They never knew "whether he had children somewhere now or had been childless" (CS 458). Eugene apparently buried his dead life with Emma and returned to Morgana, strangely reclusive and embittered, sometimes overheard saying something "spiteful or ambiguous." He never reconciled himself to King, surely an ambiguous part of himself, loving only "Miss Snowdie and flowers" (CS 458).

As at any funeral, especially a small-town one, we are brought up to date on the whereabouts of almost everyone we know in Morgana, especially "the wanderers." However, this last Golden Apples story is primarily Virgie's, as is "June Recital." Virgie's first story describes her in the promise of her springtime youth, and this last one reveals her to us in the autumn harvest of late adulthood. The in-between years have been the summer growing years and now, in Virgie's maturity, she at last is ready to become herself "more truly and more strange." Until now she has allowed Morgana society to control, at least in some ways, the movements of her life. She is still unconventional and whispered about because of her relationship with her boss, Mr. Mabry; however, this relationship is one of convenience, not of passion, such as was the one she had with Wild Bucky Moffit, her sailor. Virgie leaves Morgana and returns by the time she is seventeen. We are not told where she goes or why, but some change, some partial death of the old Virgie has occurred, but again we are not told why:

> Virgie had often felt herself at some moment callous over, go opaque; she had known it to happen to others; not only when her mother changed on the bed while she was fanning her. Virgie had felt a moment in life after which nobody could see through her, into her--felt it young. (CS 452)

Now, with her mother's death, something of the old (or young) Virgie begins to awaken, to stir inside her, even as she submits (but for the last time) to Morgana's assault upon her, its invasion into her privacy, its insistence that she observe the proper funeral protocol. However, Virgie does rebel in some degree by telling the women not to touch her when they attempt to pull her into the room where her mother is laid out. In contrast, she welcomes the Negroes who come bringing pans of butterbeans and she invites them to come back for the funeral the next day. After everyone is seated in the parlor ready for the service to begin, Virgie asserts her autonomy by getting up and removing her mother's cane, which some usurper had put in a vase on the mantle. She puts it in its proper place in the hall.

Her affinity for Old King MacLain begins to grow as he tells her stories about her mother (among all the others that Virgie thought were not true). His stories reveal the special relationship he and Katie shared. He tells Virgie that her mother was once known as Katie Blazes because she was the only girl who would dare to set fire to her stockings. And Virgie finds out that it was none other than the King himself who had given Kate Rainey her swivel chair. He had told Katie to ask for anything she wanted, and then he brought it the very next day:

> "Oh, Katie Rainey was a sight, I saw her swing her chair round many's the time, to hear me coming down the road or starting out, waving her hand to me. And sold more eggs than you'd dream. Oh, then, she could see where Fate Rainey had fallen down, and a lovely man, too; never got her the thing she wanted. I set her on a throne!" (CS 444)

Obviously, Katie Rainey holds a special position in King's domain, and this story, joined with Katie Rainey's own remarks in "Shower of Gold" about King, provides fairly strong evidence that Virgie is King's child.

Late in the evening, after everyone leaves Virgie's house, except for Snowdie, who was "sitting up" with Katie, she goes to the river and symbolically sheds the stifling restraints of the past--of Morgana. Taking off all her clothes, she immerses herself in the Big Black River, becoming one with the freedom of the physical world: "All was one warmth, air, water, and her own body. All seemed one weight, one matter . . . she felt this matter a translucent one, the river, herself, the sky all vessels which the sun filled." She is filled with new life as the river gently caresses her body and she feels "the many dark ribbons of grass and mud touch her and leave her, like suggestions and withdrawals of some bondage that might have been dear, now dismembering and losing itself." Reaching the middle of the river, she lies on her outstretched arm, floating, not breathing, "suspended in felicity" (CS 440) in a semblance of death; however, this death represents the passing of the old confinement Virgie has experienced in Morgana and the beginning of a new life.

The next day as guests arrive for the funeral, Virgie begins to acknowledge her true identity, as she begins to recognize her affinity for those with whom she shares a kindred spirit.

Another MacLain, Randall, holds a claim on Virgie's emotions that is never explained, only hinted at when Jinny Love advises Virgie on the day of the funeral to marry soon. She casts her eyes over the room as if to pick out a husband for Virgie: "her eyes rested over Virgie's head on--Virgie knew it--Ran MacLain. Virgie smiled faintly; now she felt without warning, that two passionate people stood in this roomful, with their indifferent backs to each other" (CS 445). Later as Ran drives Virgie to the graveside service, they pass the grave of Ran's mistress, Maideen, the little country girl: "I hate her, Virgie thought, calmly, not turning her head. Hate her grave" (450).

During the funeral in Virgie's parlor, old King MacLain tiptoes back and forth to the kitchen, sucking on a bone marrow while Mamie C. Loomis sings "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go," which makes even the little girls on the back row cry:

> but Mr. King pushed out his stained lip. Then he made a hideous face at Virgie, like a silent yell. It was a yell at everything--including death, not leaving it out--and he did not mind taking his present animosity out on Virgie Rainey; indeed, he chose her. Then he cracked the little bone in his teeth. She felt refreshed all of a sudden at that tiny sharp sound. (CS 446)

Old King MacLain again takes precedence over the traditional forms, and his ritual--his eucharistic affirmation of life--stirs Virgie's imagination and her spirit. She experiences a sudden epiphany, a revelation of her true identity:

> She sat up straight and touched her hair, which sprang to her fingers, as always. Turning her head, looking out of the one bright window through which came the cries of the little MacLains playing in the yard, she knew another moment of alliance. Was it Ran or King himself with whom she really felt it? Perhaps that confusion among all of them was the great wound in Ran's heart, she was thinking at the same time. But she knew the kinship for what it was, whomever it settled upon, an indelible thing which may come without friendship or even too early an identity, may come even despisingly, in rudeness, intruding in the middle of sorrow. Except in a form too rarefied for her, it lacked future as well as past; but she knew when even a rarefied thing had become a matter of loyalty and alliance. (CS 446-47)

Virgie also senses a kinship with Randall's daughter, little Jinny Love, who arrives at the funeral and promptly becomes, with little King, the shapers of the "playing" the children engage in out in the yard. At the end of the service, everyone leaves the parlor except Virgie, who is interrupted by none other than the irrepressible little Jinny, who has pried the screen off the window and climbed inside to get a last look at Miss Katie. Like her grandfather, little Jinny is unafraid of death, of the unknown. Wearing her live lizard earrings clamped into her ears by their teeth, Jinny stands "shoes and socks in hand, quietly bent over the coffin, looking boldly in." She looks up at Virgie and disappointedly remarks, "'This doesn't look like a coffin. Did you have to use a bureau drawer?'" (CS 447).

While riding in Ran's car to the grave, Virgie responds to Miss Nell's question of whether or not she will stay in Morgana, by saying "'Going away in the morning'" (CS 450). Virgie's decision is made at the moment when "she heard herself say so--decided by ear" (CS 450), another indication that the old, free, spontaneous Virgie is again alive.

After the graveside service, on the way back home, Virgie suddenly feels that she has lived this moment before, back when she returned home at seventeen. Then, as now, "it was a moment that found Virgie too tender. She had needed a little time, she needed it now." She ignores Juba's urgings to come and "eat with her company," straining "against the feeling of the double coming-back" (CS 452). Both of these coming-backs represent for Virgie the strictures of Morgana society. Yet even at seventeen Virgie's emotions about her hometown are mixed: "But in that interim between train and home she walked and ran looking about her in a kind of glory, by the back way" (CS 452). Virgie no doubt goes by the back way to avoid going through Morgana. However,

> Virgie never saw it differently, never doubted that all the opposites on earth were close together, love close to hate, living to dying; but of them all, hope and despair were the closest blood--unrecognizable from the other sometimes, making moments double upon themselves, and in the doubling double again, amending but never taking back. (CS 452-53)

This time, out of despair, hope rises in Virgie. Reminiscent of her river experience the night her mother dies, Virgie now quickly dispenses with the last physical ties to Morgana--her mother's "things." She gives Katie's bed to Katie's people, and the rest she leaves to Juba and Mrs. Stark.

As Virgie drives through Morgana on her way out of town, she is joined by Cassie Morrison, driving next to her. Calling to Virgie from her car, Cassie prevails upon Virgie to drive by the Morrison's yard to see her mother's name planted in narcissus bulbs. Then they circle through the cemetery and return to Cassie's house. Cassie recognizes the kindred spirit shared by Virgie and Loch; she calls to Virgie: "'You'll go away like Loch. A life of your own, away--I'm so glad for people like you and Loch, I am really'" (CS 457).

Significantly, Virgie heads for MacLain (her real home?), the little town she so often ran away to when her life in Morgana became too stifling. MacLain's openness pleases Virgie:

> the uncrowded water tank, catching the first and last light; the old iron bell in the churchyard. . . . The courthouse pleased her--space itself, with the columns standing away from its four faces . . . and the stile rising in pepper grass over the iron fence to it--and a quail just now running across the yeard; and the live oaks . . . and the whole rainlighted spread roof of green leaves that moved like children's lips in speech, high up. (CS 457-58)

Even the town of MacLain is free, open, like its namesake. Virgie runs through the rain and sits on the stile in "the open shelter of the trees," looking across at what used to be Mr. Virgil MacLain's park where he kept deer. Now as she thinks of the MacLain dead buried there, she experiences the final stages of the birthing process that began in the river the night her mother died. Mr. Mabry passes by, not seeing her, and Virgie in a very real sense can no longer be seen by Mr. Mabry. Her blending into the elements, into the rain, signifies her union with the world, and a revelation comes to Virgie that the full horror of love is separateness. Her choice of MacLain as the last place she visits before her journey brings her ties with Katie Rainey (who had a deer statue in her yard) and King MacLain together, and for the second time these two free spirits send Virgie Rainey out into the world.

At this moment Virgie comes to a full understanding of and appreciation for Miss Eckhart, who is cast here in the priestly role of the artist who suffers the separateness that her love of art imposes upon her. She is both the hero and the victim in the picture of Medusa and Perseus that hung on the wall over her piano. Virgie now realizes the sacrifice Miss Eckhart had made and that "she had taken Miss Eckhart's hate, and then her love, extracted them, the thorn and the overflow . . . had absorbed the hero and the victim and then, stoutly, could sit down to the piano with all Beethoven ahead of her" (CS 460). The eucharist of art had been Miss Eckhart's life:

> She offered, offered, offered--and when Virgie was young, in the strange wisdom of youth that is accepting of more than is given, she had accepted the Beethoven, as with the dragon's blood. That was the gift she had touched with her fingers that had drifted and left her. (CS 460)

However, Virgie's recognition of her one-time communion, her touching of the mystery of an unseen world of the spirit through her fingers, through her art, reawakens a desire in her to venture again out into the mystery of the world. As she sits in the rain, inhaling "its magnitude," she thinks of it as "the air's and the earth's fuming breath." Virgie identifies herself with the rain, which can "come and go," taking different forms as it travels over the whole world. Appropriately, we leave Virgie smiling, as she sees before her "screenlike, the hideous and delectable face Mr. King MacLain had made at the funeral, and when they all knew he was next--even he" (CS 461).

Although King MacLain is at last come home to stay, and although his legitimate children are less successful in really breaking free from Morgana (possibly Snowdie's genetic influence diminished the creative spark in Randall and Eugene), he is nevertheless the progenitor of a sturdier stock of offspring--Virgie, Loch, Easter. These illegitimate children are symbolic of his union with other free spirits--his queen, Katie "Blazes" Rainey, Catherine Morrison, and some other "meeting in the Morgana Woods." Virgie, Loch, and Easter are the true King royalty--the pure breeds of imaginative wanderers. They alone out of all the other characters in The Golden Apples follow "The Song of Wandering Aengus." They alone leave Morgana, carrying with them the procreative powers of a free and imaginative vision of life. These new priests of the creative imagination will now continue the eucharist so long shared by King with all who were willing to partake of the life of the wanderer, the artist, and who would allow their imaginations to transform their worlds into places of order, joy, hope, and love.

Like Welty herself, who could not find a home in organized religion, Loch, Virgie, Easter do not find themselves at home in the confinement of the organized security of Morgana, as Cassie does. These characters are "at large in the world," revelling in "the knowledge and the terror" of the mystery of life that Cassie recognizes but shrinks from. However, Welty does not totally disapprove of Cassie. Perhaps she also represents a touchstone for those who must venture out. The tension remains in Welty's works between the importance of connection and the need for separateness. Virgie, Loch, and Easter, and even Eugene, demonstrate the importance of the creative imagination as the primary force in the continuing of man's existence. Without it, life would stagnate, if not altogether cease. With it, man can create ever new and changing life forms. In fact, without the adaptability that the imagination imparts to man, he may indeed be overwhelmed in a wave of the past, as Cassie is as she symbolically sits in Cassiopia's chair, immobile and static. Virgie, the virgin, represents the fresh new beginnings life can continue to offer; Loch, with his "special vision" symbolizes the limitless possibilities of life, the variety and fecundity; Easter, the symbol of resurrection, represents the continuity of man's existence--life arising out of death.

Loch, the young god, brings Easter back to life in a ritual that appears "obscene" to Mrs. Stark. The symbolic mating of the fertile mind of Loch with Easter's fearless courage to push through the face of darkness brings forth a new life. She represents the hope that we, too, can push through the blackness into a new life if we but rely on our creative imaginations. The ability of these imaginative characters to survive emphasizes Welty's affirmation of the creative imagination's power to help us live our lives with some victory and with some understanding of its meaning. To the Mrs. Stark's of the world and other high-toned old Christian women, perhaps this approach to the verities of life is obscene and blasphemous. Welty, however, with Stevens, clearly champions the Virgie's, the Loch's, and the Easter's. They in a sense are spiritual icons, Kings, or emperors of ice cream, to whom we can look as symbols of the questing, creative spirit that all we humans can trust in to extend and enhance our lives, to provide order in the chaos, to give us courage, to free us to wander the earth and, with them, to celebrate the eucharist of fiction.

CHAPTER V

THE QUOTIDIAN REMOVED

Both Welty and Stevens show a progression in their works, from earlier ones grounded in our quotidian world to later ones that are more abstract and philosophical. Roy Harvey Pearce in his essay "Wallace Stevens: The Life of the Imagination" states that "Stevens began by directly looking at our experience of the reality in which we are bound, continued by examining our predicament in being so bound, and has most recently been exploring the general implications of the predicament." Pearce further explains Stevens' struggle with man's predicament in terms of belief: "He began by looking directly at the world which limits belief, continued by examining the possibility of belief and commitment in the face of that possibility, and has most recently been exploring the nature of possible belief." Typical of Stevens' critics, Pearce sees a movement in Stevens' poems "away from the descriptive and dramatic toward the discursive and dialectical" (112). However, to document this change in Stevens' poetry is beyond the scope of this thesis. That a similar change does occur in Welty's short stories can be demonstrated.

Welty's earlier stories in _A Curtain of Green_ and _The Wide Net_ do not have the same kind of overall unifying theme that those in The Golden Apples and The Bride of Innisfallen do. The earlier stories are separate items; however, in them we find the incipient beginnings of what becomes a dominant theme in Welty's later work--the individual quest into the mystery of life, especially as the mystery lures the individual into making a connection to his world and establishing human relationships. In A Curtain of Green and The Wide Net many of the stories portray characters who, by their creative imaginations, perceive and interpret their worlds. While these stories certainly contain some elements of the eucharistic function of the creative imagination, they are primarily epistemological. Although not all of these imaginative characters physically escape their stale, confined lives (Ruby, Albert, Mr. Marblehall), they do alleviate their situations and enhance their lives by imagining better ones. Some of these characters (Jenny, Hazel, Livvie) actually succeed in being born into the world. Their imaginations are the force calling them out of their innocence into a knowledge of life, into the physical world. However, we leave these initiates almost at the starting points of their journeys. They, like Eugene, are only resting dormant until the ripe moment, when their cocoons burst open and they fly free. However, we can feel confident that these characters will continue imaginatively to perceive their worlds and to live in the realities created for them by their creative imaginations. From living primarily in an inner world, they join the quest, the journey into the outer world.

Welty seems to progress from stories that demonstrate the epistemological function of the creative imagination to those that demonstrate the eucharistic one--knowledge must precede celebration. In The Golden Apples Welty, in a sense, introduces the priesthood of the creative imagination--the MacLains, the wanderers. These stories, unlike any of the others, are made into one fabric by the interwoven threads of characters and setting, especially the MacLains, who dominate and control the entire collection. The MacLains are symbols, or icons, of the creative imagination, unlike Jenny and Livvie, who are also wanderers but differ in that they do not lead but follow the symbolic leaders, Floyd and Cash. In fact, Hazel, Floyd, and Cash are precursors of the fully developed priesthood of artists Welty presents in The Golden Apples. But these earlier leaders of others are not the main characters in the stories, and the stories are not primarily concerned with how they perform any eucharistic service but with how they serve to demonstrate merely the results of knowing, of having gone through the epistemological function. The later artists/priests, the MacLains, differ from these earlier characters who use their imaginations primarily as epistemology in that the MacLains do not need to make a connection to the physical world and to the knowledge gained by an acceptance of its inevitability. King MacLain and his illegitimate children seem much more evidently to have been born with knowledge--not born into the world, but born of the world. These characters have strong ties to the physical world, an affinity for the earth. King apparently lives outdoors much of the time, wandering and napping in the woods; indeed, he insists that his wife Snowdie meet him in Morgana Woods for their amours. Even Loch is more at home hanging bird-like from a tree limb and playing a horn out in the woods. As a youngster, Virgie has naturally dirty hair; she romps through the yard, making flower garlands, freely breaking one of the Carmichael's magnolia blooms and carelessly throwing it into the basket of her bicycle, and walking in for piano lessons "peeling a ripe fig with her teeth" (CS 290). Easter, with her ring of dirt around her neck, seems to be one with nature, unafraid of the woods as she leads Nina and Jinny Love off the regular path. Although this attachment to nature appears in earlier characters, it is not emphasized as it is in these later ones. Nor do the earlier characters seem to have been so directly born to knowledge; they do not seem to be portrayed as the annointed priests that King MacLain and his offspring are. It is not clear whether characters such as Floyd or Cash have come intuitively to their knowledge of man's need to live in this world imaginatively or have come to such knowledge through experience. Cash and Floyd are able to demonstrate to others how to live imaginatively, but they seem to do it as a matter of course, as part of their living daily rather than as priests designated to convey more secret knowledge and possibly deeper understandings.

However, in The Golden Apples the mystery still remains. Just what that dark, shining face is that beckons to Nina, Virgie, and Eugene remains what it is supposed to be--the mystery of life. Nevertheless, as Welty leads these characters into the dimensions of a spiritual world--into transcendent moments--they do come to a fuller knowledge of themselves and their worlds. The eucharistic moment affirms and celebrates life and its ongoing mystery.

The MacLain stories end with Virgie Rainey sitting in the rain, on a stile, breathing in "the earth's fuming breath." An old Negro woman who has stolen a red hen joins her. Again Virgie is associated with the outcast, the one who is separate, alone in the world. They were "alone and together in the shelter of the big public tree." Blended into her natural home and drawing her breath from the earth's breath, Virgie smiles into the face of the Wanderer--her father King MacLain--as she listens to "the magical percussion, the world beating in their ears" (CS 460-61). The two women, one black and one white, represent the fact of human separateness, yet they affirm the importance of the "togetherness" of human connection. And both have as their home "the big public tree"--nothing less than the whole world.

Welty's last collection of stories, The Bride of the Innisfallen, has been criticized by several critics for its obscurity. These stories are, in fact, much less detailed, much less concerned with plot and character, or even place, than her other works. These stories are definitely more poetic. In The Golden Apples the characters are symbolic; in the final collection, the stories themselves are extended symbols. Alfred Appel points out the difference between Welty's earlier stories that opened with sentences that were "direct and lucid and served to subtly foreshadow the impending action" and the "elaborately indirect" opening sentences of The Bride of the Innisfallen. He states, "The lyric impulse which informs Miss Welty's best work now asserts itself obliquely. . . . The Bride of the Innisfallen is thus characterized by an acute impressionistic rendering of the visible world" (243). Perhaps the external action is not what interests Welty in these stories, but rather the inner action or life of the characters. Moreover, she removes herself as explainer of the motives of these characters and places the burden firmly on the reader to interpret the meaning of the story--the mystery, for these stories do lead further into the mystery of life. Rather than "shying away" from explaining the motives of these characters as Vande Kieft claims (184), Welty, perhaps deliberately, calls upon her reader to have reverence for the mystery of life in others, just as the author herself does.

The Bride of the Innisfallen stories seem to pick up where the stories of The Golden Apples end, with that clear call to Virgie to venture out into the world, to begin her journey into the unknown. The later stories are journeys, and in every story the characters are on journeys. In fact, these stories may epitomize Welty's subject: she states in One Writer's Beginnings: "Virgie . . . might have always been my subject." Welty says of Virgie, "She knows to the last that there is a world that remains out there, a world living and mysterious, and that she is part of it" (102). Certainly, Welty's concern in writing fiction has always been to portray and to impart life. Human life is her subject, and Virgie symbolizes all of the mystery of life and the individual's relationship to it.

While the artists/priests perform the function of imparting the reality of the eucharist of fiction, the stories themselves in The Bride of the Innisfallen are eucharistic "still moments," captured in the form of a story. The story itself is a symbol of the marriage between the concrete and the abstract, the physical and the spiritual. And in that necessary marriage lies the mystery; in that marriage an epiphany occurs, a change. Appel describes this experience as a "still moment" that transports the characters "beyond their worlds" (246), very much like Stevens' Noeud Vital--the metaphysical linking of the concrete world with the imagined.

The title story of this final collection of Welty stories informs the whole book. Its vagueness--no names of characters are given except for the little boy Victor--emphasizes its symbolic nature. The Innisfallen, a ship, symbolizes the journey into mystery, and the characters in this collection are called to be brides--to wed themselves to the journey as such. The bride, a young girl we see briefly at the end of the story as she gets off the ship, symbolizes the ongoing force of life and procreation. However, the real bride of the Innisfallen is the young American woman who is married to an English photographer, whom she is leaving. His profession symbolizes the problem in their relationship. He wants to capture her, fix her in a static pose. But her imaginative nature cannot survive in this climate, so she is escaping from a life that has become stifling and dead. (This young woman could very well be another incarnation of Virgie Rainey.) To be married to the wonderment and mystery of life is the important marriage that exists throughout the collection. Such a marriage seems to take experience another step beyond the faith expressed in mystery through a eucharistic ceremony. Welty almost seems to be saying that having faith in the mystery is not enough, that we must be wedded to its existence. Perhaps her stories ask more of mere mortals than we are able to give--or need to, for that matter.

As the Innisfallen docks in Cork, the whole scene is one of connections--reunions, meetings, and, of course, weddings. In addition to the young bride, "dozens of little girls in confirmation dresses . . . raced and danced out of control and into charmed traffic like miniature and more conscious brides." The whole city is bursting with flowers, filled with light. The young American woman's relationship with her husband contrasts greatly with this scene:

> Love with the joy being drawn out of it like anything else that aches--that was lonelinesss; not this. . . . If she could never tell her husband her secret, perhaps she would never tell it at all. You must never betray pure joy--the kind you are born and began with--either by hiding it or by parading it in front of people's eyes; they didn't want to be shown it. And still you must tell it. Is there no way? she thought--for here I am, this far. (CS 517)

Filled with joy, she looks up at a window "standing full-face to the tide" and recognizes that she too contains the same mystery the window holds, a mystery that will never go: "The curtains dyed so many times over are still pulled back and the window looks out open to the evening, the river, and the sea." She, too, is open to the mystery of the evening, as Nina is; she, too, is a wanderer heeding the call of the river, as Jenny does; and life opens out to her as limitless as the sea. Like Virgie, she walks in the rain at the end of day, taking shelter in a pub. Both women join themselves to humanity by taking shelter in public places at the very moments they accept their freedom. Both must end old relationships in order to live in free, loving communion with life. They simply cannot be contained. As the young woman opens the door of the pub, she hears someone say, "'Ah, it's a heresy.'" At the same time a shout of joy goes up at the entrance of the barmaid, "as if she were the heresy herself, and when they all called out something fresh it was like the signal for a song." The woman drops the message she had intended to send her husband, letting it "go into the stream of the street, and opening the door walked without protection into the lovely room full of strangers" (CS 518). Clearly, the young woman has wed the mystery of life. She is the bride of the Innisfallen, and the good ship, the journey, will take her into the world, into the unknown, into a celebration of life with a world full of lovely strangers.

Dicey, the young woman in "Kin," is engaged to be married; yet on her return visit to her southern hometown, she discovers a kinship with her great-grandmother, Evelina MacKail, of Scottish ancestry like King MacLain. Looking at a portrait of the "black-haired, black-eyed" Evelina, Dicey experiences a moment of revelation as she identifies herself with this lady, who she thinks "always looked the right, mysterious age to be my sister." Evelina forged a home in the wilderness, ate bear meat, and had slaves die in her arms.

Dicey thinks that Evelina's eyes

> saw out, as mine did; weren't warned, as mine weren't, and never shut before the end, as mine would not. I, her divided sister, knew who had felt the wildness of the world behind the ladies' view. We were homesick for somewhere that was the same place. (CS 561)

Even as a child Dicey was possessed by the questor's spirit, longing to see the exotic places she viewed as a child through Uncle Felix's stereoptican. She now thinks it strange that she has actually gone to live in one of those beautiful cities. The scent of travel beckoned early to Dicey. The strange and unorthodox still call to her. As she passes the cabin of the old Negro, Uncle Theodore, she sees his privet hedges carved into a set of porch furniture, "god-size, table and chairs, and a snake was hung up in a tree." In contrast, the Mingo church that had "'turned down' Uncle Theodore's "'knick-knack'" could boast only a "faint churchyard" (CS 566), another affirmation of the primacy of the imaginative, creative act over orthodox, prescribed conventions. Dicey's imagination leads her into a marriage with those who venture out, who are wed to the journey into mystery.

Another young girl on a journey is Gabriella in "Going to Naples." Her mother fervently hopes that Gabriella will soon be married to someone--and Aldo Scamp feeds the hopes of both mother and daughter. On board the Pomona, these two young people romp and play, and Gabriella screams from pure joy, reminding the older people of "the weakness and the mystery of the flesh. . . . Only the long memory, the brave and experienced of heart, could bear such a stirring, an awakening--first to have listened to that screaming and in a flash to remember what it was" (CS 574). Gabriella's name suggests a bringer of glad tidings--it was Gabriel who brought the good news to the shepherds of the Christ-child's birth. This Gabriella, too, has a message that affirms life, the young American woman's "pure wish to live." Left alone at the dance on Gala Night, she defiantly continues to dance by herself:

> . . . turning around faster inside than out. For an unmarried girl, it was danger. Some radiant pin through the body had set her spinning like that tonight, and given her the power--not the same thing as permission, but what was like a memory of how to do it--to be happy all by herself. (CS 587)

Her circling dance reaches a dizzying intensity; then she stops suddenly without falling over, with perfect control, eliciting shouts of joy from the onlookers. Gabriella's dance, like that of Cash and Livvie, celebrates life. Her fulfillment does not depend on finding a husband, but on opening her heart, as the young American woman and the little girl from the Innisfallen do, to the unknown, to the strangers of the earth, to the possibilities of a changeful, fruitful life.

Welty invites all of us to wed the Innisfallen, the quest, and to find ourselves "more fully and more strange" as we discover our connections to the world and our ever-varying relationships to it.

Although Stevens and Welty, as has been demonstrated here, hold exceedingly similar views about the necessity of using the fictive imagination to understand, to order, and finally, to cope with our mortal lives in this physical world, an interesting question remains: What are the attitudes expressed in the works about a world beyond this one? About something beyond mortal lives? Put another way, the question may be, do Welty and Stevens show in their works that they believe, or hope, that the mystery will be solved after death, in another life?

Stevens, of course, as Adalaide Kirby Morris says in her book Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith, "was always preoccupied with God, and one of the central problems his poetic theory confronts is the 'some form or other' that God must take if poetry is to become, as religion once was, a supreme fiction" (89). In solving this central problem, Stevens works from one of his basic assumptions: that God is within man and that God and the creative imagination may be one and the same thing. However, this basic contention about man and God, as Morris suggests, "led him through a radical critique of God and through his humanistic relegation of God's power to man's imagination into a final, if hesitant, sense that there is a force and purpose which quickens, informs, and ennobles both man and the universe" (115). Despite this occasional acceptance, or seeming acceptance, of an unseen power as expressed in such lines as these: "a purpose, empty / Perhaps, absurd perhaps, but at least a purpose" (CP 532), Stevens almost never wrote or spoke about a real sense of a world beyond this one. He stopped short of pushing into the mysteries beyond the grave. Immortality does not seem to have been on his mind as often as it is on Welty's.

She never stops pushing into the mystery. She implies, more strongly than Stevens ever does, the immortality of man. Her images reinforce the possibility of man's continuity of life beyond this world. Her works are filled with symbols of fecundity (butterflies, figs, Sir Rabbit) and rebirth (the baptisms of Virgie and Eugene; the resurrection of Easter, who plunges through the darkness and rises to live again, bathed in royal purple and gold created by the mingling of earthly dust and celestial light; kites dancing high above tombs; an old man running like a child). All of these images strongly suggest the endurance of man, not only in this world's time, but in time that resembles "the still moment"--a suspended, immeasurable, unearthly time, like that Livvie experiences when she drops Solomon's watch and like what Eugene feels when he escapes his watch-repairing job.

Welty carries this suggestion throughout the short stories and ends the last one, "Going to Naples," with Gabriella's mother inquiring of Nonna--the old grandmother: "'And the nightingale . . . is the nightingale with us yet?'" (CS 600). This question resurrects Keats' immortal nightingale and certainly implies a different message than Stevens' ambiguous pigeons do sinking "Downward to darkness. . . ." But if Welty gives more evidence of believing, or of wanting to believe, in a life beyond this one than Stevens does, she in no sense approaches the certainty of high-toned old Christian women that the mystery has been solved.

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