

The Critical Response to Eudora Welty's Fiction

Edited by
Laurie Champion

Critical Responses in Arts and Letters, Number 12
Cameron Northouse, Series Adviser



Greenwood Press
Westport, Connecticut • London

**Recent Titles in
Critical Responses in Arts and Letters**

The Critical Response to Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*
Laurie Champion, editor

The Critical Response to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*
Gary Scharnhorst, editor

The Critical Response to Tom Wolfe
Doug Shomette, editor

The Critical Response to Ann Beattie
Jaye Berman Montresor, editor

The Critical Response to Eugene O'Neill
John H. Houchin, editor

The Critical Response to Bram Stoker
Carol A. Senf, editor

The Critical Response to John Cheever
Francis J. Bosha, editor

The Critical Response to Ann Radcliffe
Deborah D. Rogers, editor

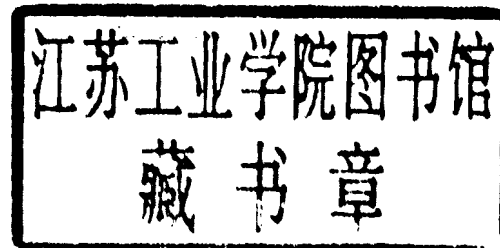
The Critical Response to Joan Didion
Sharon Felton, editor

The Critical Response to Tillie Olsen
Kay Hoyle Nelson and Nancy Huse, editors

The Critical Response to George Eliot
Karen L. Pangallo, editor

The Critical Response to Eudora Welty's Fiction

Edited by
Laurie Champion



Critical Responses in Arts and Letters, Number 12
Cameron Northouse, Series Adviser



Greenwood Press
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Critical response to Eudora Welty's fiction / edited by Laurie Champion.

p. cm.—(Critical responses in arts and letters, ISSN 1057-0993; no. 12)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-313-28596-9 (alk. paper)

1. Welty, Eudora, 1909— —Criticism and interpretation.

I. Champion, Laurie. II. Series.

PS3545.E6Z635 1994

813'.52—dc20 93-43709

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 1994 by Laurie Champion

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 93-43709

ISBN: 0-313-28596-9

ISSN: 1057-0993

First published in 1994

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this book complies with the
Permanent Paper Standard Issued by the National
Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Copyright Acknowledgments

The editor and publisher gratefully acknowledge permission for use of the following material:

Louise Bogan, "The Gothic South," *The Nation* magazine, The Nation Co., Inc., 1941.

Neil D. Isaacs, "Life for Phoenix," first published in Vol. 71, No. 1, *Sewanee Review*, 1963. Reprinted by permission of the editor.

Charles E. May, "Why Sister Lives at the P.O." Copyright © 1978. Reprinted by permission of Charles E. May.

Lionel Trilling, "American Fairy Tale," *The Nation* magazine, The Nation Co., Inc., 1942.

Merrill Maguire Skaggs, "The Uses of Enchantment in Frontier Humor and *The Robber Bridegroom*." Reprinted from *Studies in American Humor* 3 (October 1976): 96-102.

Barbara Harrell Carson, "Eudora Welty's Dance with Darkness: *The Robber Bridegroom*," first appeared in *The Southern Literary Journal* 20 (Spring 1988): 51-68. Reprinted by permission of *The Southern Literary Journal*.

Diana Trilling, "Fiction in Review," *The Nation* magazine, The Nation Co., Inc., 1943.

Peggy W. Prenshaw, "Persephone in Eudora Welty's 'Livvie,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 17.2 (Spring 1980): 149-55. Reprinted by permission of *Studies in Short Fiction* and Newberry College.

Mary Alice Bookhart, "Eudora Welty." Review of *Delta Wedding*, by Eudora Welty. *The Clarion-Ledger*, 28 April 1946: 8. Reprinted by permission of *The Clarion-Ledger*, Jackson, Mississippi.

Diana Trilling, "Fiction in Review." Review of *Delta Wedding*, by Eudora Welty. *The Nation* magazine, The Nation Co., Inc., 1946.

Hamilton Basso, "Look Away, Look Away, Look Away." Reprinted by permission; © 1946, 1974 *The New Yorker Magazine*, Inc.

Douglas Messerli, "The Problem of Time in Welty's *Delta Wedding*," *Studies in American Fiction* 5 (1977): 227-40. Reprinted by permission of *Studies in American Fiction*.

Lee E. Cannon, "Main Street in Dixie." Review of *The Golden Apples*, by Eudora Welty. Copyright 1949 Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the September 7, 1949 issue of *The Christian Century*.

Margaret Marshall, "Notes by the Way." Review of *The Golden Apples*, by Eudora Welty. *The Nation* magazine, The Nation Co., Inc., 1949.

Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Five Southerners." Review of *The Golden Apples*, by Eudora Welty. *Hopkins Review* 3 (Spring 1950): 44-45. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Wendell V. Harris, "The Thematic Unity of Welty's *The Golden Apples*," in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (Spring 1964), pp. 92-95. By permission of the author and the University of Texas Press. Copyright © 1964 by the University of Texas Press.

Excerpts from "The Song of Wandering Aengus" in *Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1956). By permission of Macmillan Publishing Company.

V.S. Pritchett, "Bossy Edna Earle Had a Word for Everything." Copyright © 1954 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

John Chapman, "Witless on the Delta," *The Dallas Morning News* 10 January 1954, Sec. 6: p. 15. Reprinted by permission of *The Dallas Morning News*.

John L. Idol, Jr., "Edna Earle Ponder's Good Country People," *Southern Quarterly* 20.3 (Spring 1982): 66-75. Reprinted by permission of *Southern Quarterly*.

Frank Hains, "Ponder Heart Now out in Dramatic Version," *The Clarion-Ledger* 27 May 1956: sec. IV, p. 6. Reprinted by permission of *The Clarion-Ledger*, 1956.

Bette E. Barber, "Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart* Gets Rave Reviews at Broadway Opening," *The Clarion-Ledger* 19 February 1956: sec. I, p. 6. Reprinted by permission of *The Clarion-Ledger*, 1956.

Fred Bornhauser, "The Bride of the Innisfallen," *Shenandoah* 7 (Autumn 1955): 71, 77-81. Copyright 1955 by Washington & Lee University, reprinted from *Shenandoah*: The Washington & Lee University Review, with the permission of the Editor.

Frank Hains, "Miss Welty Magnificent in Newest Short Pieces," *The Clarion-Ledger* 10 April 1955: sec. IV, p. 6. Reprinted by permission of *The Clarion-Ledger*, 1956.

William M. Jones, "Name and Symbol in the Prose of Eudora Welty," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 22 (December 1958): 173-85. Reprinted by permission of *Southern Folklore Quarterly*.

Frank Hains, "Eudora Welty Talks about Her New Book, *Losing Battles*," *The Clarion-Ledger* 5 April 1970: 6F. Reprinted by permission of *The Clarion-Ledger*, 1970.

Louis Dollarhide, "Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles* Is Magnificent Feast." Review of *Losing Battles*, by Eudora Welty. *Mississippi Library News* (June 1970): 96-98. Reprinted with permission, *Mississippi Library News* (now *Mississippi Libraries*).

Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Everything Brought out in the Open: Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles*." Reprinted from *The Hollins Critic* (June 1970), by permission.

Robert Drake, "Miss Welty's Wide World." Review of *Losing Battles*, by Eudora Welty. Copyright 1970 Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the June 17, 1970 issue of *The Christian Century*.

James Boatwright, "Speech and Silence in *Losing Battles*," *Shenandoah* 25.3 (Spring 1974): 3-14. Copyright 1974 by Washington & Lee University, reprinted from *Shenandoah*: The Washington & Lee University Review, with the permission of the Editor.

James Boatwright, "The Continuity of Love." Review of *The Optimist's Daughter*, by Eudora Welty. *New Republic* 10 June 1972. Reprinted by permission of *The New Republic*, © 1972, The New Republic, Inc.

Cleanth Brooks, "The Past Reexamined: *The Optimist's Daughter*," first printed in *The Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, (Fall, 1973).

Elmo Howell, "Eudora Welty and the Use of Place in Southern Fiction," *Arizona Quarterly* 28 (Autumn 1972): 248-56. Reprinted by permission of *Arizona Quarterly*.

John A. Allen, "Eudora Welty: The Three Moments," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 51.4 (Autumn 1975): 605-27. Reprinted by permission of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Anne Tyler, "The Fine, Full World of Welty." Review of *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*, by Eudora Welty. *Washington Evening Star*, 26 October 1980: D1+. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Walter Clemons, "Songs of the South," from *Newsweek* 3 November 1980: 85-86. © 1980, Newsweek, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.

Jennifer Uglow, "Journeys out of Separateness." Review of *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*, by Eudora Welty. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8 Jan. 1982. © Times Newspapers Ltd (London) 1982: 26. Reproduced from *The Times Literary Supplement* by kind permission.

Anne Tyler, "A Visit with Eudora Welty," *The New York Times Book Review*, 2 November 1980: 33-34. Copyright 1980 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission. Reprinted by permission of Anne Tyler.

Robert Drake, "The Loving Vision." Review of *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*, by Eudora Welty. *Modern Age* 27.1 (Winter 1983): 96-97. Reprinted by permission of *Modern Age*.

Sara McAlpin BVM, "Family in Eudora Welty's Fiction," *The Southern Review*. Used with permission of Sara McAlpin BVM; essay first published in *The Southern Review* 18.3 (July 1982): 480-94.

Harriet Pollack, "On Welty's Use of Allusion: Expectations and Their Revision in 'The Wide Net,' *The Robber Bridegroom*, and 'At The Landing,'" *The Southern Quarterly* 29.1 (Fall 1990): 5-31. Reprinted with permission from *The Southern Quarterly*.

Alice Walker, "At First," in *Good Night Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning*. Excerpt reprinted by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam, Doubleday, Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

Excerpts from Robert Graves's "To Juan at the Winter Solstice" and "Ulysses" reprinted by permission of A.P. Watt Ltd on behalf of The Trustees of the Robert Graves Copyright Trust. Graves, Robert. "To Juan at the Winter Solstice." *Collected Poems 1975*. New York: Oxford UP, 1975. 137. Graves Robert. "Ulysses." *Collected Poems 1975*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975. 56. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

Excerpts from "A Worn Path" in *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*, copyright © 1941 by Eudora Welty, © renewed 1969 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Excerpts from "At The Landing," in *The Wide Net and Other Stories*, copyright © 1943 by Eudora Welty, © renewed 1971 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Excerpts from *Delta Wedding*, copyright © 1946, 1945, © renewed 1974, 1973 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Excerpts from *Losing Battles* by Eudora Welty. Copyright © 1970 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc. and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Excerpts from *The Optimist's Daughter* by Eudora Welty. Copyright © 1969, 1972 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc. and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Excerpts from *The Ponder Heart* by Eudora Welty, copyright © 1954, 1953 and © renewed 1982, 1981 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Excerpts from *The Robber Bridegroom* by Eudora Welty, copyright © 1942, © renewed 1970 by Eudora Welty, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company and by permission of Russell & Volkening as agents for the author.

Every reasonable effort has been made to trace the owners of copyright materials in this book, but in some cases this has proven impossible. The author and publisher will be glad to receive information leading to more complete acknowledgments in subsequent printings of the book and in the meantime extend their apologies for any omissions.

Contents

Series Foreword by Cameron Northouse	xv
Introduction	1
<i>A Curtain of Green and Other Stories</i> 1941	
Full-Length Portrait Kay Boyle	33
The Gothic South Louise Bogan	35
Life for Phoenix Neil D. Isaacs	37
Why Sister Lives at the P.O. Charles E. May	43
<i>The Robber Bridegroom</i> 1942	
The Violent Country John Peale Bishop	53
American Fairy Tale Lionel Trilling	55

The Uses of Enchantment in Frontier Humor and <i>The Robber Bridegroom</i> Merrill Maguire Skaggs	57
Eudora Welty's Dance with Darkness: <i>The Robber Bridegroom</i> Barbara Harrell Carson	64
<i>The Wide Net and Other Stories</i> 1943	
Fiction in Review Diana Trilling	85
Consolations of Poetry Issac Rosenfield	89
Persephone in Eudora Welty's "Livvie" Peggy W. Prenshaw	91
<i>Delta Wedding</i> 1946	
Eudora Welty Mary Alice Bookhart	101
Fiction in Review Diana Trilling	103
Look Away, Look Away, Look Away Hamilton Basso	106
The Problem of Time in Welty's <i>Delta Wedding</i> Douglas Messerli	108
<i>The Golden Apples</i> 1949	
Main Street in Dixie Lee E. Cannon	125
Notes by the Way Margaret Marshall	127

Five Southerners Louis D. Rubin, Jr.	129
The Thematic Unity of Welty's <i>The Golden Apples</i> Wendell V. Harris	131
<i>The Ponder Heart</i> 1954	
Bossy Edna Earle Had a Word for Everything V.S. Pritchett	137
Witless on the Delta John Chapman	139
Edna Earle Ponder's Good Country People John L. Idol, Jr.	141
<i>Ponder Heart</i> Now out in Dramatic Version Frank Hains	149
Eudora Welty's <i>The Ponder Heart</i> Gets Rave Notices at Broadway Bette E. Barber	151
<i>The Bride of the Innisfallen and Other Stories</i> 1955	
<i>The Bride of the Innisfallen</i> Fred Bornhauser	157
Miss Welty Magnificent in Newest Short Pieces Frank Hains	161
"The Sharp Edge of Experiment": The Poetics of "No Place for You, My Love" Albert J. Devlin	163
General Criticism 1955-1969	
Name and Symbol in the Prose of Eudora Welty William M. Jones	173

***Losing Battles* 1970**

Eudora Welty Talks about Her New Book,
Losing Battles
Frank Hains

189

Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles* Is
Magnificent Feast
Louis Dollarhide

193

Everything Brought out in the Open:
Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles*
Louis D. Rubin, Jr.

196

Miss Welty's Wide World
Robert Drake

205

Speech and Silence in *Losing Battles*
James Boatwright

208

***The Optimist's Daughter* 1972**

The Continuity of Love
James Boatwright

221

The Past Reexamined: *The Optimist's Daughter*
Cleanth Brooks

226

"The Freed Hands": The Power of Images
in Eudora Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter*
Kim Martin Long

235

General Criticism 1972-1979

Eudora Welty and the Use of Place
in Southern Fiction
Elmo Howell

247

Eudora Welty: The Three Moments
John A. Allen

254

***The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty* 1980**

The Fine, Full World of Welty
Anne Tyler

275

Songs of the South
Walter Clemons

280

Journeys out of Separateness
Jennifer Uglow

283

A Visit with Eudora Welty
Anne Tyler

288

The Loving Vision
Robert Drake

293

General Criticism 1980-1993

Family in Eudora Welty's Fiction
Sara McAlpin BVM

299

On Welty's Use of Allusion: Expectations and
Their Revision in "The Wide Net," *The Robber*
Bridegroom and "At The Landing"
Harriet Pollack

312

Diverting Swine: The Magical Relevancies
of Eudora Welty's Ruby Fisher and Circe
Dawn Trouard

335

Selected Other Readings

357

Index

363

Series Foreword

Critical Responses in Arts and Letters is designed to present a documentary history of highlights in the critical reception to the body of work of writers and artists and to individual works that are generally considered to be of major importance. The focus of each volume in this series is basically historical. The introductions to each volume are themselves brief histories of the critical response an author, artist, or individual work has received. This response is then further illustrated by reprinting a strong representation of the major critical reviews and articles that have collectively produced the author's, artist's, or work's critical reputation.

The scope of *Critical Responses in Arts and Letters* knows no chronological or geographical boundaries. Volumes under preparation include studies of individuals from around the world and in both contemporary and historical periods.

Each volume is the work of an individual editor, who surveys the entire body of criticism on a single author, artist, or work. The editor then selects the best material to depict the critical response received by an author or artist over his/her entire career. Documents produced by the author or artist may also be included when the editor finds that they are necessary to a full understanding of the materials at hand. In circumstances where previous, isolated volumes of criticism on a particular individual or work exist, the editor carefully selects material that better reflects the nature and directions of the critical response over time.

In addition to the introduction and the documentary section, the editor of each volume is free to solicit new essays on areas that may not have been adequately dealt with in previous criticism. Also, for volumes on living writers and artists, new interviews may be included, again at the discretion

of the volume's editor. The volumes also provide a supplementary bibliography and are fully indexed.

While each volume in *Critical Responses to Arts and Letters* is unique, it is also hoped that in combination they form a useful, documentary history of the critical response to the arts, and one that can be easily and profitably employed by students and scholars.

Cameron Northouse

The Critical Response to Eudora Welty's Fiction

Introduction

Eudora Welty holds a prominent position among Southern writers, receiving critical attention in publications that scan a wide range of interests. Journals that specialize in American literature, journals that publish general essays, and journals that focus on Southern literature frequently include articles about Welty's works.

Although Welty has not written a biography, in *One Writer's Beginnings*, she describes her childhood. *One Writer's Beginnings* is taken from a series of lectures Welty gave at Harvard University, consisting of three essays: "Listening," "Learning to See," and "Finding a Voice." Welty has also written scholarly essays and published her photography. Welty's major works of fiction include four collections of short stories, three short novels, and two full-length novels.

Welty's collections of short stories are reprinted in *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*, which contains all the stories in *A Curtain of Green*, *The Wide Net*, *The Golden Apples*, *The Bride of the Innisfallen*, and two previously uncollected stories. Many of Welty's stories are included in short story, American literature, and Southern literature anthologies. Welty's works have also been adapted for the stage and for television. Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov's 1956 stage adaptation of *The Ponder Heart* was a Broadway success. The WPA Theatre produced "The Hitch-Hikers" for the stage, and "Why I Live at the P.O." and "The Wide Net" have been filmed as part of the American Short Stories film series.

A Curtain of Green and Other Stories 1941

In 1941, Doubleday published *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*. In her introduction to this collection, Katherine Anne Porter begins with a brief

biographical summary of Welty. She relates Welty's life to her writing career:

But there is an ancient system of ethics, an unanswerable, indispensable moral law, on which she is grounded firmly, and this, it would seem to me is ample domain enough; these laws have never been the peculiar property of any party or creed or nation, they relate to that true and human world of which the artist is a living part; and when he dissociates himself from it in favor of a set of political, which is to say, inhuman, rules, he cuts himself away from his proper society—living men.¹

More specifically, she describes the stories in *A Curtain of Green*: "In all of these stories, varying as they do in excellence, I find nothing false or labored, no diffusion of interest, no wavering of mood—the approach is direct and simple in method, though the themes and moods are anything but simple, and there is even in the smallest story a sense of power in reserve which makes me believe firmly that, splendid beginning that this is, it is only the beginning."

In his 1941 essay, Dale Mullen sums up the initial response to *A Curtain of Green*. He observes that "Welty's *A Curtain of Green* has received a critical attention such as has been accorded to no other first book by a Mississippian in the last decade."² Many of the early reviewers comment on the grotesque elements reflected in the stories. Both the *Time* reviewer and John Lane, writing for *Times Literary Supplement*, praise Welty's talents as a short story writer but view the grotesque elements as flaws in the stories. The *Times* reviewer says, "she has a strong taste for melodrama, and is preoccupied with the demented, the deformed, the queer, the highly spiced. Of the 17 pieces, only two report states of experience which could be called normal, only one uses the abnormal to illuminate any human mystery deeper than its own."³ John Lane says Welty has "a leaning towards the bizarre, a fondness for the afflicted in mind or body and for strange violences of behavior, that needs to be held in check."⁴ *New York Times* critic Marianne Hauser and *Accent* critic Arthur J. Carr see the grotesque elements as strengths in these stories. Hauser observes the stories as "dark, weird and often unspeakably sad in mood, yet there is no trace of personal in them, neither harshness nor sentimental resignation; but an alert, constant awareness of life as a whole, and that profound, intuitive understanding of life which enables the artist to accept it."⁵ Carr sees the grotesque as one element in Welty's multidimensional theme of moral paradox. He says that because the characters do not understand fully the action Welty portrays, they act "unconsciously, even deterministically," and with this portrayed attitude, Welty fashions both comic and tragic interpretations.⁶

In their reviews, Kay Boyle and Louise Bogan compare Welty with other writers. Boyle's "Full-Length Portrait" begins with a discussion of Porter's introduction, then compares Welty with Emily Dickinson. She adds that Welty is "one of the most gifted and interesting short-story writers of our time."⁷ Bogan's "The Gothic South" compares Welty's ability to describe details with Gogol's penchant for detail. She commends Welty's method of writing, complimenting her as "mistress of her material."⁸

Critical approaches to *The Curtain of Green* include Fredrick Brantley's "A Curtain of Green: Themes and Attitudes," Robert Griffin's "Eudora Welty's *A Curtain of Green*," and Michael Kreyling's "Modernism in Welty's *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*." Brantley examines themes such as the characters' isolation and the secrets that control the protagonists.⁹ Griffin explicates the stories in terms of Welty's use of poetic language,¹⁰ and Kreyling traces the relationship between the stories and "the modern period that envelops [Welty's] Southern material."¹¹

Many of the stories in *A Curtain of Green* have appeared in anthologies and have received extensive critical attention as individual short stories. Neil D. Isaacs focuses his discussion on "A Worn Path," and Charles E. May concentrates on "Why I Live at the P.O." Isaacs, in "Life for Phoenix," examines the meaning of "A Worn Path" that is strengthened by Welty's technique. Among other things, he discusses the plot, setting, and various symbols and metaphors in terms of Christian themes. More broadly, his analysis reveals themes that concern the meaning of life.¹² In "Why Sister Lives at the P.O.," May looks at the characterization of Sister in terms of R.D. Laing's "unembodied self." He comments on the characters' lack of effective communication, and he illustrates ironies in the story.¹³

The Robber Bridegroom 1942

In 1942, Doubleday published Welty's first novel, *The Robber Bridegroom*. Most early reviewers remark on the fairy-tale motifs of the story, noting its allusions to Grimm's Fairy Tales, particularly Grimm's *Robber Bridegroom*. Marianne Hauser, writing for *New York Times Book Review*, calls it

an American fairy tale, and if we think of America in the old terms of gigantic forests, savage Indians, heavy-fisted pioneers and roving highwaymen, it seems no surprise that "The Robber Bridegroom" outdoes in its fantastic exuberance any of the fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm from the folklore of old Germany's elfin woods.

And yet Miss Welty has transplanted many elements from those stories into her book, has taken themes from the Brothers Grimm's "Robber Bridegroom," from their "Goosegirl," and even from "Snow White." She has done this with her tongue in her cheek, as if to say: Just watch and see what happens to those fairytales if I let them run

wild in the big woods of the old Natchez country, with Indians lurking behind the bushes.¹⁴

According to Charles Shattuck, "Miss Welty has toned down the jaded bloodthirstiness of the story as the Grimm brothers recorded it, and vastly heightened the decorative and the marvelous. It is a playful book, thematically delicate and elusive, on pleasure bent. The main pleasure perhaps, lies in the skillful weaving-in of dozens of fragments and motifs from dozens of other folk-tales that hover distantly on the edge of memory. . . . This rich synthesis I take to be the main pleasure, at least for anyone who, like the author, loves old legends."¹⁵

Alfred Kazin, writing for *New York Herald Tribune Books*, says Welty

is writing out of a joy in the world she has restored, and with an eye toward the comedy and poetry embedded in it.

That joy is the great thing in "The Robber Bridegroom," and explains why it is cast as a fairy tale. We have moved here into a world where the image we all carry of the past has been restored to a pure frame of myth. . . .

Every myth we tell each other today, or try to restore, is only the symbol of our own longing, and turns upon itself. Not the smallest part of Miss Welty's rather exquisite achievement is the skill with which she reminds us that the enchanted forest is for us to recapture—and is forever dead.¹⁶

Although many reviewers favor Welty's allusion to fairy tales in *The Robber Bridegroom*, Lionel Trilling's "American Fairy Tale" implies that Welty's allusions may not be quite so successful. He disapproves of the prose style Welty uses, calling it "conscious simplicity."¹⁷

John Peale Bishop, in "The Violent Country," comments on Welty's allusions to the Grimm fairy tale, but suggests the Cupid and Psyche myth as a stronger derivative for *The Robber Bridegroom*. He points out the identity question as one of the strongest themes in the book.¹⁸

Later critical response to *The Robber Bridegroom* includes two 1973 essays by Charles C. Clark and Gordon E. Slethaug. In "The Robber Bridegroom: Realism and Fantasy on the Natchez Trace," Clark says the novella uses irony to portray a fictional combination of history, frontier humor, folklore, and fairy tale to express "the predicament of man, a creature both blessed and cursed with a dual nature."¹⁹ In "Initiation in Eudora Welty's *The Robber Bridegroom*," Slethaug argues that external events lead to Clement and Rosamond's internal questions that involve the nature of evil and good. Both Clement and Rosamond are initiated into life's complexity, as manifested in their having "a deeper awareness of themselves" and a more intense "understanding and acceptance of life, including an acceptance of the inextricability of good and evil."²⁰

More recent critical views of *The Robber Bridegroom* include Merrill Maguire Skaggs's 1976 essay "The Uses of Enchantment in Frontier Humor and *The Robber Bridegroom*," Warren French's 1979 essay "'All Things are Double': Eudora Welty as a Civilized Writer," Michael Kreyling's 1979 essay "Clement and the Indians: Pastoral and History in *The Robber Bridegroom*," and Barbara Harrell Carson's 1988 essay "Eudora Welty's Dance With Darkness: *The Robber Bridegroom*." As the title suggests, Skaggs's essay examines *The Robber Bridegroom* in terms of elements of enchantment found in frontier humor. Skaggs also relates Bruno Bettelheim's discussion of fairy tales to elements found in southwestern humor.²¹ French relates *The Robber Bridegroom* to the European fairy tale, the American folk tale, and numerous modern works.²² Kreyling looks at history and pastoral and their rivalry as reflected in elements of theme and style.²³ Carson's essay also appears in her book *Eudora Welty: Two Pictures at Once in Her Frame*. In her essay, she builds on earlier criticism that examines "the relationship between fairy tale and reality in . . . *The Robber Bridegroom*." She examines the book from a "larger metaphysical scheme—one which suggests that the moral weight of the tale comes down on the side of recognizing and accepting the unity of contraries in life" She sees fairy tale and history as merging to create a conflict between "the human impulse to simplify life" and the complexity of life.²⁴

In "The Robber Bridegroom as a Capitalist Fable," Ellen L. Walker and Gerda Seaman demonstrate Welty's use of legend, fairy tale, and history to create her "comic retelling" of American culture's central experience: "the transformation of the forest to the market place."²⁵

The Wide Net and Other Stories 1943

In 1943, Harcourt Brace published Welty's second collection of stories, *The Wide Net and Other Stories*. Among initial reviews are Eugene Armfield's and Katherine Woods's highly favorable reviews. Armfield, writing for *New York Times Book Review*, notes that "Not the least of Miss Welty's qualities is the fineness of her descriptive writing, her evocations of a gleaming fish, a bird, a battered house, a sunlit field filled with butterflies. The people are disarmingly 'ordinary' and the events have an air of casualness. . . . Most of the people you have met before, in real life or in other books. It is the touch of a very real talent which gives them life and variety and meaning."²⁶ Katherine Woods compares Welty's talent to Isak Dinesen's "in the sweep of its imagination, its communication of the dreamlike and the anachronistic, its ability to transport the reader alike into fantasy or realism, its complete fitness of form and substance which makes perfection of style." She adds

that Welty's work has more gusto and that "there is a sound folk quality; the mind's reach may be distant, and subtle, but it is never nebulous, or strained. The book's quality is native, to the country and to the artist. And here we touch the limit of any comparison: beauty and fantasy are the artist's own approach to reality, the quest, that is forever individual, for fundamental truth."²⁷

Some initial reviewers did not review *The Wide Net* so favorably. The *Time* reviewer says, "At her best, 34-year-old Miss Welty runs a photo-finish with the finest prose artists of her time and displays a delicateness of sensibility which borders at once on genius and indecency. Yet her finest writing is nearly always marred by such Celtic locutions as 'a sure man, very sure and tender'; and the sensibility is seldom grounded in anything remotely sensible."²⁸ Jean Stafford, writing for *Partisan Review*, remarks that Welty, "warily picking her way through meanings and the amorphous produce of the soul, or rocketing out of sight in a burst of fantasy, loses her humor, eaves fissures in her masonry, forgets her breeding, and writes eight stories in a language so vague that not only actual words but syntax itself have the improbable inexactitude of a verbal dream. Nor is the landscape any more precise, nor have the characters more than the most general physiognomy, the most uniform speech and attitudes and meditations."²⁹ In her review for *Nation*, Diana Trilling calls *The Wide Net* "a book of ballets, not of stories. . . ." She compares Welty's stories to Dali's paintings, referring to both artists as creators of "a myth of modern femininity."³⁰ Isaac Rosenfield, in his review for *New Republic*, says that "A Still Moment" is "perfectly successful" yet suggests an implied anxiety causes Welty to force "a compensatory poetry upon her prose."³¹

More recent analyses of *The Wide Net* include essays by critics such as Garven Davenport, Jr., Albert J. Devlin, and Victor Thompson, who use various historical approaches in their assessments of the stories. Davenport, in "Renewal and Historical Consciousness in *The Wide Net*," illustrates that at least one character in each of the stories in *The Wide Net* faces a dark, mysterious, or dreamlike situation, which leads to renewed potentials for emotional enrichment. He says, "characters experience isolation and renewal and in doing so embody a concept of historical consciousness. . . . [Welty's] approach is through individual and very private characters who move often within rather limited horizons between isolation and inclusion in a universal network of human needs and desires."³² In "Eudora Welty's Historicism: Method and Vision," Devlin concentrates primarily on "A Still Moment" and "First Love" to demonstrate Welty as historian. He shows how Welty "assimilates, selects, and transforms historical matter into satisfying aesthetic forms."³³ Thompson also discusses historical elements in "A Still Moment"

and "First Love." In "The Natchez Trace in Eudora Welty's 'A Still Moment,'" Thompson concludes that Welty incorporates history and legend in "A Still Moment," modifying "them to conform to the theme of her story."³⁴ In "Aaron Burr in Eudora Welty's 'First Love,'" he compares Welty's Aaron Burr to the historical Aaron Burr.³⁵

St. George Tucker Arnold, Jr. and Suzanne Marrs also consider history in their interpretations of "First Love." Arnold explicates "First Love" in terms of Welty's portrayal of regional history. He says Welty leads readers to identify with someone who participated in an historical event, thus confronting both "the region's collective experience and the very private, personal progress of the individual character in his attempt to deal with the happening." Thus, Welty transforms "historical abstraction to dramatic actuality."³⁶ Marrs demonstrates that the concluding paragraphs of "First Love" are based on historical fact.³⁷

Pearl Amelia McHaney, in "Historical Perspectives in 'A Still Moment,'" offers historical background information that enhances readers' understanding of "A Still Moment." She gives details that demonstrate that Welty models "A Still Moment" after "three historical characters: Lorenzo Dow, Methodist minister; James Murrell, bandit of the southwest; and John James Audubon, ornithologist and painter."³⁸

Peggy Whitman Prenshaw's "Persephone in Eudora Welty's 'Livvie'" presents an evaluation that concentrates on a specific story in the collection *The Wide Net*. As her title suggests, Prenshaw demonstrates the parallels between characters in "Livvie," especially Livvie, and the Persephone myth.

General Criticism 1943-1945

In 1944, Robert Penn Warren wrote "The Love and Separateness in Miss Welty." In this seminal essay, Warren responds to Diana Trilling's review of *The Wide Net*. He discusses "the special tone and mood, the special perspective, the special sensibility" of the stories in *The Wide Net*. He says almost all characters in the stories are isolated, and it is this condition of isolation that yields the situation of the stories. These characters either try to escape their isolation, or the characters or the reader come to recognize the characters' isolated states. He says the fundamental theme is "Innocence and Experience" and that contradictions "are understood not in mechanical but vital terms: the contrasts provide the terms of human effort, for the dream must be carried to, submitted to, the world, innocence to experience, love to knowledge, knowledge to the fact, individuality to communion."³⁹

Warren's influential essay introduced new critical approaches to Welty's work and is essential for Welty scholars. It is not included in this volume

because it is reprinted in his collection of essays and in two Welty anthologies and is therefore easily available to scholars.⁴⁰

Delta Wedding 1946

In 1946, Harcourt Brace published Welty's first full-length novel, *Delta Wedding*. Initially, the novel received mixed reviews. Some reviewers, such as Sterling North, Issac Rosenfield and Diana Trilling do not review the novel favorably. North, writing for *Atlanta Constitution*, says the novel is obscure and describes Welty's style as that of an amateur.⁴¹ In his *New Republic* review, Rosenfield objects to the dullness of the novel, saying Welty deals with the sensations of a society, not truly a society.⁴² Diana Trilling's review for *Nation* discusses Welty's novel in terms of her continued interest in regional literature. Others, such as the *Christian Century* reviewer, comment on the weak plot.⁴³

Other reviewers praise Welty's accomplishments. The *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* reviewer, Hamilton Basso, Paul Engle, and Mary Alice Bookhart defend the plot. The *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* reviewer comments on Welty's use of a Jamesian technique to create a mosaic-like portrait of people. He says, "Nothing of big moment happens, but in this kind of story nothing needs to."⁴⁴ Basso says that even though "nothing 'happens' in *Delta Wedding*, . . . everything happens." He calls her portrayal of the Southern family "nothing short of wonderful" and her use of dialogue "a minor triumph."⁴⁵ Engle says that the merit of the novel is that it cannot be summarized. He says Welty's style presents characters psychologically and adds that the novel is "as solid writing as you will read this year."⁴⁶ Bookhart says Welty seems more concerned with creating the mood than with the plot. She commends Welty's clearly presented observations and her attention to detail.⁴⁷ John Crowe Ransom considers *Delta Wedding* a "full-length formal novel, with a content which is really capable of sustained presentation. [Welty] writes here according to some of the solidest canons of fiction." He compares her with Virginia Woolf, then addresses the critics who "will not be able to give credence to her exhibit of so exotic a minority culture in action down in the South." He sees the plot as moving between "drama of dialogue and external action, on the one hand, and interior monologue on the other," creating complexity and richness.⁴⁸ Charles Poore, writing for *New York Times Book Review*, observes that Welty presents her distinctive perception of the South. He says *Delta Wedding* shares "the excellencies of her short stories with all the advantages of a wider pattern. It gives her a chance to tell us more about her people and their ways of life; it gives us the pleasure of seeing a full drama rather than a one-act play.

And, beyond that, it is true to human life as you will find it at a considerable distance from the Mississippi Delta."⁴⁹

Later critical response to *Delta Wedding* includes critiques by John Edward Hardy and Elmo Howell. In "Delta Wedding as Region and Symbol," Hardy analyzes the novel in terms of its formal structure—"a version of pastoral," but with "fully conscious exploring of the implications of the mode . . . for the mores of the society which produced it." He demonstrates the complex theme and structure and notes the "poetic order—of recurrent themes, symbols, and motives of symbolic metaphor."⁵⁰ Howell, in "Eudora Welty's Comedy of Manners," calls *Delta Wedding* Welty's "most impressive accomplishment." He views character and incident as subordinate to the mood the novel evokes. He provides a genealogy of the Fairchild family, saying, "the purpose of the novel is to show the importance of family ties and the way one generation impinges on another."⁵¹

More recent criticism of *Delta Wedding* includes Peggy Prenshaw's "Cultural Patterns in Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding* and 'The Demonstrators,'" M.E. Bradford's "Fairchild as Composite Protagonist in *Delta Wedding*," and Douglas Messerli's "The Problem of Time in Welty's *Delta Wedding*." Prenshaw argues that Welty often draws material for her fiction from her own Mississippi environment, thus her fictional work "is remarkable not only for structural and thematic features, but for its portrayal and interpretation of the South." She says the Fairchilds "serve as a microcosm of the agrarian life—the dependence on the seasons as a regulatory force on one's life, the isolation from the world at large, the family unity, and the strong ties to the land and to a sense of history."⁵² Bradford argues that the "composite protagonist" of the novel is the Fairchild family. The central action is the struggle for the Fairchilds to maintain the social bonds that connect individuals to the family and the inward feelings of the individuals that comprise the family.⁵³ Messerli argues that *Delta Wedding* reflects Welty's "preoccupation with time" more than any of her other novels. Among other things, he discusses the ways the characters perceive time in terms of the past, the present, and the future.⁵⁴

Even more recent analyses include interpretations by Barbara Ladd, Albert J. Devlin, and Sharlee Mullins Glenn. In "'Coming Through': The Black Initiate in *Delta Wedding*," Ladd examines the changes the black characters in the novel experience. She concludes that Welty desires for these characters to have "the same impulse to love and separateness as well as the same power to change the community that she claims for her white characters."⁵⁵ In "Meeting the World in *Delta Wedding*," Devlin examines *Delta Wedding* as it reflects Welty's "artistic maturity" and the "internal dynamics of [her] distinguished literary career."⁵⁶ Glenn's "In and Out the

Circle: The Individual and the Clan in Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding* portrays the "conflict between the need for individual autonomy and the equally powerful need for community and family" as one of the main themes in the novel. The circle is a metaphor to explore the relationship between the individual and the clan; those inside the circle represent members of the Fairchild clan, those outside the circle represent individuals outside the clan, and those in intersecting circles represent those who are both part of the clan and an individual outside the clan.⁵⁷

General Criticism 1946-1948

In "Fantasy in the Fiction of Eudora Welty," Eunice Glenn argues that it seems that the significance of Miss Welty's method would be "in the inter-relationship of the external and internal—reality and imagination." Glenn compares Welty's stories to Hawthorne, while discussing the way magnified reality becomes fantasy in Welty's stories. In Welty's stories, the dream, which reflects the irrational world, fuses with logic and produces a reconciliation. Fantasy enhances and contributes to the interpretation of ordinary experiences.⁵⁸

The Golden Apples 1949

In 1949, Harcourt Brace published *The Golden Apples*. Initially, many reviewers such as Francis Steegmuller, John Farrelly, and Lee E. Cannon comment on *The Golden Apples* as a unified collection of stories. Steegmuller, writing for *New York Times Book Review* says, "The whole thing is a 'good story' made up of countless 'good stories' . . . Thanks to the unity of its parts, this book passes beyond any need of being evaluated on the crowded, dreary judging stand of the contemporary short story. It is a work of art at once eloquent and entertaining, whose very form is in a lovely, nonspectacular way the original creation of an invaluable artist."⁵⁹ Farrelly says *The Golden Apples* should be read as a novel. He sees time as "the really important character."⁶⁰ Cannon says *Delta Wedding* is a novel in a Pickwickian sense. Cannon comments on Welty's skill in characterization and phrasing, adding that she creates "a philosophical significance."⁶¹

Initial reviewers Hershell Brickell and Hamilton Basso remark on the mythical allusions in *The Golden Apples*. Brickell notes that readers must read the entire book to understand the "full impact" of the stories. . . . He observes, "Miss Welty is writing at two levels, of things as they are, and of their relationship to classical and medieval mythology. . . ." ⁶² Basso remarks that Welty's *Morgana* is "just as real" as Faulkner's

Yoknapatawpha County. "Her book is best described as the chronicle of a small Southern town" that represents "the whole Deep South. . . ." *The Golden Apples* "is in no sense a 'regional' novel." The characters are Southern just as the characters in Gogol's 'Dead Souls' are Russian, but "their problems and preoccupations, their joys and sorrows are basic everywhere." He praises the way Welty handles the children and her "eye for significant detail, a nice sense of the comic and the bizarre, and, above everything else, a gift for language."⁶³

Margaret Marshall criticizes Welty's use of an "our town" device, a device she says has the fatal disadvantage of neglecting to portray characters other than "as 'characters' in 'our town'" ⁶⁴ However, Louis D. Rubin, Jr. sees the characters in *The Golden Apples* as "superb creatures of fiction." He says the characters "seem almost to take on a mythlike aura."⁶⁵

Critics of *The Golden Apples* continue to analyze the structural unity of the stories and Welty's allusions to myth in the stories. Wendell V. Harris, in "The Thematic Unity of Welty's *The Golden Apples*," concentrates on the complex technical devices in the collection of stories. He examines distinct techniques that produce various themes.⁶⁶ William M. Jones, in "The Plot as Search," argues that both author and reader search for plot. He says Welty takes readers "with her on the plot search, [but] she also seems to regard the entire collection of stories as a psychotherapeutic exercise." Readers are never really sure whether their own imaginations form meanings of the book as a whole or whether Welty consciously shapes their interpretations, combining the mythic and the real and making them seem a unified whole.⁶⁷ In "Technique as Myth: The Structure of *The Golden Apples*," Danièle Pitavy-Souques demonstrates the depth of *The Golden Apples*, relating the Perseus myth to Welty's artistic technique.⁶⁸ Thomas L. McHaney, in "Eudora Welty and the Multitudinous Golden Apples," provides a comprehensive study of mythical allusions in *The Golden Apples*. He shows the "almost symphonic orchestration of closely related parallels between old myth and modern reality" as the form of the book, a form that "structures, and thus properly reveals several meanings of the golden apples."⁶⁹

Critics also discuss perception, duality, disruption of unity, mistaken identity, and Welty's artistic patterns as elements in *The Golden Apples*. In "Seeing Double in *The Golden Apples*," J.A. Bryant, Jr. discusses the perception of the characters that somewhat necessitates the "total vision." He observes that when these characters continue in this perception, it sometimes motivates them "to go on strange quests or otherwise wander from the patterns of normal behavior."⁷⁰ "The Duality of Morgana: The Making of Virgie's Vision, the Vision of *The Golden Apples*," reflects Elaine Upton Pugh's examination of Cassie and Virgie in light of conflicting

phases of the sun and moon. She relates these conflicts to aspects of *The Golden Apples*.⁷¹ Susan V. Donaldson, in "Recovering Otherness in *The Golden Apples*," says Welty draws "our attention to the art of storytelling in . . . Morgana—and by implication in the South as well. . . ." Welty offers a two-fold revelation—Morgana appropriates storytelling to establish "communal unity" and recovering the otherness within Morgana's stories possibly to disrupt that unity.⁷² Lowry Pei's "Dreaming the Other in *The Golden Apples*" demonstrates the narrative techniques of *The Golden Apples* as an expression of elusive realities that forces readers to develop thoughts and images. Similes move the reader toward "the linguistic equivalent of the 'mistaken' identities. . . ." Welty uses these arbitrary comparisons, challenging readers to imagine their own meaningful explanations.⁷³ Merrill Maguire Skaggs's, "Eudora Welty's 'I' of Memory" integrates "The Eye of Memory" television program with Welty's role as an artist. In "The Eye of Memory," Welty and other writers discuss Katherine Anne Porter. Welty offers "shrewd literary and psychological insights" about Porter and her work. Skaggs focuses on how Welty's comments reveal insights about "herself and her own work." She examines *The Golden Apples* in terms of "Welty's strengths and the practice of her own artistic ideals."⁷⁴

General Criticism 1949-1953

Granville Hicks's 1952 essay "Eudora Welty" states that Welty is not merely a regional writer—her art is part of the Western literary tradition, an art that transcends mere Southern geographical borders. He says events in her stories do not matter so much as the effect these events have on people—she is concerned with "states of mind," and she emphasizes "emotional states."⁷⁵

In his 1953 essay "The World of Eudora Welty," Robert Daniel discusses wilderness, farm, small town, and metropolitan scenes of various works by Welty. He says parallels between Welty and Faulkner's scenes and historical periods result from their shared Mississippi heritage as much as from any direct influence. Eudora Welty's best work allows readers to feel "the form and pressure of a coherently organized view of the world," a view Welty possibly inherited from Faulkner. But her unique achievement is her portrayal of her characters' "deep, inward response" to conditions of their existence, an artistic gift that does not resemble any other writer's fiction.⁷⁶

The Ponder Heart 1954

Harcourt Brace published *The Ponder Heart* in 1954. It won the William Dean Howells Medal of the Academy of Arts and Letters. Initially, *The*

Ponder Heart was one of Welty's most widely received books. Reviewers often remark that *The Ponder Heart* is a work that everyone can understand and read, and they comment on Welty's use of monologue and humor. The *Atlantic* reviewer says, "This is Edna Earle's story and she tells it in a rhythmical Southern monologue, confiding, defending, condemning, the honeysuckle flavoring of her words so beautifully at odds with her native shrewdness."⁷⁷ V.S. Pritchett praises Welty for creating Edna Earle's speech that reflects "headlong garrulity." He commends Welty's dialogue, saying her "first person singular has been caught, word by awful word, in all its affectionate self-importance, by a writer with a wonderful ear."⁷⁸ The *Jackson Daily News* reviewer says, "To some 'The Ponder Heart' will be no more than an amusing tale of extravagantly peculiar characters in a small Southern town. To others it will show the wistful remnants of a past era, rich inhumanity and lost emotions, whose sense of values is a fantasia of the inconsequential."⁷⁹ Granville Hicks says Welty avoids sentimentality, praising her great wisdom, humanity, and literary skill, which enable her to portray Uncle Daniel as a comic character who has below average intelligence without suggesting condescension or bad taste.⁸⁰ Although Shirley Barker says the climax marring *The Ponder Heart*, she admires the humor, calling it "pure fun."⁸¹ John Chapman does not review *The Ponder Heart* so favorably. He says the introduction is too long and that the "real reason for the whole story is the remarkable and truly comic courtroom scene."⁸²

Much of the more recent criticism follows the pattern of the early reception of *The Ponder Heart*, discussing the humor and dialogue in the novel. In "Dialogue as a Reflection of Place in *The Ponder Heart*," Robert B. Holland demonstrates that the structure of the characters' dialogue vocalizes their culture.⁸³ Gerda Seaman and Ellen L. Walker, in "'It's All in a Way of Speaking': A Discussion of *The Ponder Heart*," suggest that Edna Earle tells about Uncle Daniel, but in doing so, she reveals her own story. Her narrative account reveals different perspectives, yet she acts as a "self-justifying historian." She tells her tale "to justify the world as she sees it and to hide the world she does not wish to see."⁸⁴ Rachel V. Weiner's "Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart*: The Judgment of Art" sees Edna Earle as a realistic spokesperson for the Ponders, Clay, and the rural South. Edna Earle is "the rare historian of such places who is both personal and detached, indulgent and questioning, always watchful and yet well-spoken when the moment for openness is at hand."⁸⁵ Lynn Snyder, in "Rhetoric in *The Ponder Heart*," analyzes Edna Earle's speech as a rhetorical oral presentation that defends Uncle Daniel. The formal rhetoric of the courtroom fails to defend Uncle Daniel, but Edna Earle, "is a most persuasive advocate for Daniel, drawing her listener into her tale, arguing

through the force of her own character, and intensifying the listener's and reader's emotional response."⁸⁶ In "Edna Earle Ponder's Good Country People," John L. Idol, Jr. discusses the characterization of Edna Earle in terms of her "small-town pugnacity and self-conceit, her image of herself as a member of the landed gentry now absorbed into the life of a small Southern town. . . ."⁸⁷

Other topics for discussion of *The Ponder Heart* include Michael Kreyling's look at *The Ponder Heart* in terms of the Dionysian-Apollonian conflict.⁸⁸ Barbara Harrell Carson's "In the Heart of Clay: Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart*" presents Carson's conclusion that Edna Earle shifts and combines feelings, thoughts, and actions, without "hierarchical ordering"; Edna Earle represents "the whole human self."⁸⁹

Jermone Chodorev and Joseph Field's 1956 adaptation of *The Ponder Heart* was a Broadway success. Frank Hains, writing for Jackson's *Clarion-Ledger*, says that the adaptation is done as well as could be done, given the limitations of the stage; however, he says the novel overshadows the adaptation.⁹⁰ Bette E. Barber's "Eudora Welty's *The Ponder Heart* Gets Rave Notices at Broadway" summarizes New York newspaper reviews of this production. She outlines reviews from *New York Herald Tribune*, *New York Times*, and *New York Daily News*, all favorable reviews.⁹¹

The Bride of the Innisfallen and Other Stories 1955

In 1955, Harcourt Brace published Welty's fourth collection of short stories, *The Bride of the Innisfallen and Other Stories*. Some reviewers such as Frances Gaither, Edward Weeks, and Thomas Arp comment on Welty's use of characters and settings from outside Mississippi. Gaither, writing for *New York Times Book Review* notes that three of the stories "concern journeys in latitudes where unfamiliar manners and idioms prevail. Miss Welty's talents, invested in these foreign ventures, have, however, suffered no adverse sea-change."⁹² Weeks says Welty "is just as deft with Irishmen and Italians as with her own neighbors."⁹³ Arp, in his review for *San Francisco Chronicle*, says Welty departs from her usual Mississippi setting, demonstrating her use of various techniques, points-of-view, and types of characters. Arp also discusses a thematic thread that runs through all the stories, saying they all involve either a stated or an implied search for qualities such as love, happiness, knowledge, understanding, or identity.⁹⁴ Arthur Shay and Warren Beck praise elements of the individual stories and the overall collection. In *Chicago Sun Times*, Shay observes, "Eudora Welty stands about midway between those writers of first rank whose stories have beginnings, middles and ends, and those who offer meaty slices of life. Her

stories are all center slices, all extremely well done."⁹⁵ In *Chicago Tribune*, Beck calls the collection "a fruition of sheer genius. Its vein is poetic, scrupulously conveying essences of experience in a subtle realism but uniquely accented and tinged by imagination."⁹⁶

William Peden, in *Saturday Review*, also praises the collection as a whole, yet he does not review the title story so favorably. He says it seems more a "highly private game" than a story. However, he says the collection as a whole is remarkable, demonstrating that Welty stands in a class almost by herself, for "sheer virtuosity and variety."⁹⁷ In his review for *Shenandoah*, Fred Bornhauser discusses, among other things, Robert Penn Warren's theme of love and separateness in terms of *The Bride of the Innisfallen*.⁹⁸ Frank Hains's review for Jackson's *Clarion-Ledger* comments on the particular mood of each of the stories, saying the stories reflect warmth, tenderness, and humor.⁹⁹ The reviewer for the *Virginia Quarterly Review* also comments on the mood of the collection of stories. This reviewer says that *The Bride of the Innisfallen* may not be Welty's best work, yet he praises her as a "greatly gifted writer."¹⁰⁰

The Bride of the Innisfallen has received less critical attention than some of Welty's works. Among this criticism are essays by Andrea Goudie, Noel Polk, and Alun R. Jones. Goudie, in "Eudora Welty's Circe: A Goddess Who Strove with Men," examines the allusions to myth and the mythic structure.¹⁰¹ Polk, in "Water, Wanderers, and Weddings: Love in Eudora Welty," looks at water, wanderers, and weddings as symbols that reflect "the entire spectrum of things having to do with love relationships."¹⁰² In "A Frail Travelling Coincidence: Three Later Stories of Eudora Welty," Jones concentrates on "The Bride of the Innisfallen," "No Place for You, My Love," and "Going to Naples." He identifies "An Odyssean wandering in search of lost happiness and innocence, a conviction that home is that state of mind, instantly recognized, when we are momentarily flooded with a sense of meaningful peace, of knowing that we are, if only momentarily, at home. When two people find that elusive sense of peaceful belonging together then we can say that they have found love."¹⁰³

In an essay written for this collection, Albert J. Devlin focuses on "No Place for You, My Love." He analyzes the story in terms of its daring aesthetics, demonstrating it as "a special ferment in [Welty's] career."

General Criticism 1954-1969

The years 1954-1969 mark the beginning of extensive Welty scholarship. Essays on Welty's works in general include assessments by William M. Jones, Chester Eisinger, and Alun R. Jones. William M. Jones, in "Name