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A Certain Threatening Picture: Images of Rape in Eudora Welty's "The Golden Apples"

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A CERTAIN THREATENING PICTURE:
IMAGES OF RAPE IN EUDORA WELTY'S THE GOLDEN APPLES

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

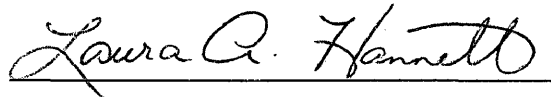
Laura A. Hannett

1997

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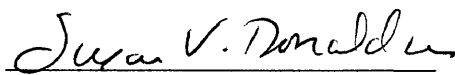
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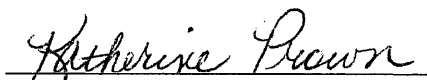
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ABSTRACT

Depicting rape or using rape imagery presents certain challenges to a woman writer. Among them is the fact that rape forces the victim to accept the phallus as the chief referent, to acknowledge its power to the exclusion of the authority of her own voice, experience, and desires. When broaching a subject that so concretely represents the suppression of women's voices and the contraction of their words to a response to phallic dominance, a woman writer must find a way to preserve her voice and vision from the fate of the rape victim.

Welty's approach to depicting rape in The Golden Apples is to diffuse the primacy of the phallic will, not by making a polemical attack against phallic dominance but by enlarging the scope of women's self-expression even in the context of rape. To this end, she offers rape images that range from threatening to humorous or even erotic and thus demonstrates that a female author's response to a striking example of phallic power need not be limited to an attitude either of submission or protest. Either response may represent a distraction from her own artistic ends and betray a sense of being forced to acknowledge and respond to phallic dominance over women's voices.

Instead, Welty refuses to grant rape status as an element of the story that requires a special, condemnatory response. She takes traditional stories of rape (drawing from Graeco-Roman myths) and transforms them, turning them into tales of the pitfalls and ecstasies of the imagination, especially (although not exclusively) women's imagination. She shows numerous and subtle evocations of and responses to rape, ~~her multifaceted approach opening up~~ possibilities for feminine expression even in the situation which most limits women's ability to speak as subjects.

A Certain Threatening Picture:

Images of Rape in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples

When asked about the place of political concerns in fiction, Eudora Welty insists that the two belong to separate realms. Welty treats the question at length in her essay "Must the Novelist Crusade?" but provides a concise statement of her position in an interview with folklorist Bill Ferris. To him, she says,

I don't believe that a work of art in itself has any cause to be political unless it would have been otherwise.... I think a work of art, a poem or a story, is properly something that reflects what life is exactly at that time. That is, to try to reveal it. Not to be a mirror image, but to be something that goes beneath the surface of the outside and tries to reveal the way it really is, good and bad. Which in itself is moral.¹

Welty argues that attempting to express truth in art is more revolutionary, more effective and more enduring than creating purposefully propagandist work. And although questions about the place of politics in fiction have generally been posed to Welty in the context of racial strife in the South, the question – and Welty's response – can be appropriately considered in the context of feminist inquiry, especially in light of artistic representations of

¹ Bill Ferris, "A Visit with Eudora Welty: Summer 1975 and 1976," Conversations with Eudora Welty, ed. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw (New York: Washington Square Press-Pocket Books, 1984) 184.

rape.

In fact, Welty's treatment of gender issues, in spite of her stated apolitical stance, have led scholars to ask very political questions about the relationship between women and art as it appears in her work. Patricia S. Yaeger poses several such questions in her essay "The Case of the Dangling Signifier: Phallic Imagery in Eudora Welty's 'Moon Lake':

How should we read phallic imagery when it is incorporated within women's texts? If the phallus is, as Lacan suggests, the central signifier of patriarchal culture, is the woman writer who gives phallic imagery a prominent place in her fictions reinstating our culture's patriarchal orientations?²

Yaeger's questions become more urgent when the imagery the woman author uses does not simply suggest the marginalization of women in patriarchal culture but shows it enacted through rape. By merely representing rape is the woman author fixing it more firmly into the culture? And what if the rape imagery the woman author offers is a mixed bag of the tragic and the comic, as it is in Welty's The Golden Apples?

Feminist scholars such as Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda

² Patricia S. Yaeger, "The Case of the Dangling Signifier: Phallic Imagery in Eudora Welty's 'Moon Lake,'" Twentieth Century Literature 28 (1982): 431.

R. Silver, coeditors of Rape and Representation, suggest that the woman reader, scholar, and author have a moral obligation to discover the experience of the victim of rape in art and literature. They write:

The ...recognition that the term representation cuts across boundaries of juridical, diplomatic, political, and literary discourses sustains the assumption underlying this book [Rape and Representation]: that the politics and aesthetics of rape are one.

The urgency of this project derives from the fact that rape and the threat of rape are a major force in the subjugation of women....Feminist modes of "reading" rape and its cultural inscriptions help identify and demystify the multiple manifestations, displacements, and transformations of what amounts to an insidious cultural myth. In the process, they show how feminist critique can challenge the representations that continue to hurt women both in the courts and on the streets.³

Their call to "challenge the representations" that lead to violence in the real world extends to the woman writer: in her essay "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours," Patricia Klindienst Joplin writes, "If women have served as a scapegoat for male violence, if the silenced woman artist

³ Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, eds., introduction, Rape and Representation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 1-2.

serves as a sacrificial offering to the male artistic imagination..., the woman writer and the feminist critic seek to remember the embodied, resisting woman."⁴

Depicting rape or using rape imagery presents certain challenges to a woman writer. Among them is the fact that rape forces the victim to accept the phallus as the chief referent, to acknowledge its power to the exclusion of the authority of her own voice, experience, and desires. As Laura E. Tanner writes in her book Intimate Violence, "the rape victim's body becomes a text on which [the violator's] will is inscribed, a form that bears the mark of his subjectivity even as she cannot divorce it from her own."⁵ Rape contradicts and for all practical purposes nullifies the woman's experience of her own body, draining her perspective of any meaning unconnected with phallic power. When broaching a subject that so concretely represents the suppression of women's voices and the contraction of their words to a response to phallic dominance, a woman writer must find a way to preserve her own voice and vision from the fate of the rape victim.

Welty's approach to depicting rape in The Golden

⁴ Patricia Klindienst Joplin, "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours," Rape and Representation, 55.

⁵ Laura E. Tanner, Intimate Violence: Reading Rape and Torture in Twentieth-Century Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 115, author's emphasis.

Apples is to diffuse the primacy of the phallic will, not by making a polemical attack against phallic dominance but by finding ways to enlarge the scope of women's self-expression even in the context of rape. To this end, she offers images of rape that range from threatening to humorous or even erotic and thus demonstrates that a female author's response to a striking example of phallic power need not be limited by that power to an attitude either of submission or protest. Either response may represent a distraction from her own artistic ends and betray a sense of being forced to acknowledge and respond to phallic dominance over women's voices.⁶ Instead, Welty refuses to grant rape status as an element of the story that requires a special, condemnatory response from the author. She shows numerous and subtle evocations of and responses to rape, her multifaceted approach opening up possibilities for female expression even in the situation that most limits women's ability to speak as subjects.

In her multiple approach and refusal to grant special status to rape images or phallic images, Welty's affinity with feminist theorist Hélène Cixous appears. In her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous posits that feminine creativity is expansive by nature since it does not take

⁶ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; New York: Harvest/HBJ-Harcourt, 1989). Woolf argues that succumbing to this kind of distraction is a seriously damaging flaw in women's art (73-74).

the phallus as its principal signifier.⁷ Cixous writes,

[woman's] writing can only keep going...daring to make these vertiginous crossings of the other(s) ephemeral and passionate sojourns in him, her, them, whom she inhabits long enough to look at from the point closest to their unconscious from the moment they waken, to love them at the point closest to their drives; and then further, impregnated through and through with these brief, identificatory embraces, she goes and passes into infinity.⁸

Even when treating the subject of rape, Welty takes this kind of approach, using an inclusive language that spirals outward rather than narrowing to a single referent or linear plot trajectory. For example, in "Sir Rabbit," when Mattie Will is raped by King MacLain's twin sons, instead of focusing on their violation of her and their phallic power, the third-person narrator launches into a stream of Mattie Will's sensations and recollections, which are prompted and perhaps heightened by but not exclusively

⁷ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, The Signs Reader: Women Gender & Scholarship, ed. Elisabeth Abel and Emily K. Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). "It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system" (287, Cixous's emphasis).

⁸Cixous 293.

connected to the rape.⁹ Welty's true subject in the scene is not the ravishment of her heroine or the demonstration of male power but the flurry of thought and feeling that an extraordinary situation precipitates. In this scene, the author moves beyond the obvious phallic referent in the rape scene to record the victim's unexpected, individual experience. Welty offers a mélange of sensation and association that does not trap Mattie Will and force her to grant center stage to the phallic invasion pressed on her by the twins but elucidates her character, emphasizing her uniqueness.

However, Welty does not ignore the fact that rape is a powerful deterrent to women's free use of their voices; there is often a discrepancy between Welty's own artistic treatment of rape and the experience of her characters within the stories, most of whom do suffer from the narrowing frame of reference and the silence that rape imposes. More often than not, the characters in The Golden Apples do not experience rape directly. Instead, Welty allows rape to seep into the stories in the form of gossip or mythological, poetic allusion. She demonstrates how awareness of sexual violence informs the society of

⁹ Eudora Welty, The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty (New York: Harvest/HBJ-Harcourt, 1980) 332. The page numbers listed throughout the text refer to this collection.

Morgana, Mississippi, the fictional small town in which most of the stories are set; the characters and social relationships are shaped by the mere fact that rape is possible and that it is represented in the culture of the town in a number of ways. One effect of the tacit awareness of sexual violence is an atmosphere of antagonism and mutual resentment between the sexes.¹⁰ Another is the suppression of the imaginations and voices of the girls as they face a form of womanhood that is characterized by vulnerability.

Much of the tension in the stories of The Golden Apples comes from the discrepancy between the author's view – Welty's understanding that women's voices need not be curtailed by phallic power or limited to an acknowledgment of it – and the characters' perspectives; the poignance springs from the sense of alternatives just missed, realizations not quite grasped. The reader can see, along with Welty, the possibilities that the characters only dimly apprehend: Katie Rainey and Mattie Will Sojourner confine their lively, humorous imaginations to speculation about King MacLain; Cassie Morrison and Nina Carmichael

¹⁰ Price Caldwell, "Sexual Politics in Welty's 'Moon Lake' and 'Petrified Man,'" Studies in American Fiction 18 (1990). Caldwell argues that "Moon Lake" chronicles the initiation of the girls not into weak, dispossessed womanhood, as Yaeger claims, but into an antagonistic relationship with men in which women are guilty of exploiting the opposite sex (172-173).

fail to move into the world of power and creative imagination that they glimpse; and the MacLain twins, Randall and Eugene, cannot take the risk of relinquishing masculine dominance and thereby cut themselves off from life-giving connections with other people.

Such characters tend to suffer from what Welty terms "a horror in life, that was at once the horror in love...the separateness" (460). The separateness comes down to a failure to articulate in words or action the most secret and urgent longings of the heart. Eugene MacLain, for example, is "lost" because of his "lifelong trouble, he had never been able to express himself at all when it came to the very moment" (421). This kind of genuine communication is prevented by many factors, but the greatest of them is fear – fear of being vulnerable, fear of being outcast for saying what has always been unspeakable. In The Golden Apples, Welty shows that rape is a catalyst for these fears, intensifying the threat of vulnerability, ostracism, and silence.

Most of the characters in The Golden Apples are limited or even paralyzed by the representations of rape that permeate their society, in which the phallus symbolizes culture, action, and authority. The allusions to rape that Welty provides throughout The Golden Apples are drawn mostly from classical mythology and poetry,

particularly Yeats's "Leda and the Swan," itself a variation on classical themes. Her allusions to classical treatments of rape fall into two basic categories, which I will call the "auspicious" and the "disastrous," literally "ill-starred." These are the categories that Welty's characters find themselves faced with in their cultural representations. Welty's own representations of rape in the experiences of her characters defy these categories, sometimes combining them, reversing them or abandoning them entirely.

The auspicious rape is typified in the experience of such figures as Danaë, Io, Europa, and Leda, all of whom are sexually overwhelmed by Zeus/Jove, the king of the Olympian gods and the arbiter of justice and order. Rapes of the auspicious type can be interpreted as metaphors for the influence of a divine will on earth, as the god of justice and order fulfills his desire, coded as sexual desire, and thus shapes the course of human events. It is no coincidence that a mortal woman's sexual encounter with Zeus usually results in the birth of a child who has a heroic destiny to fulfill, and who furthers the cause of civilization in some way: Perseus, Heracles, and Helen are examples of such children.¹¹

¹¹ Herodotus, The Histories, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt, rev. A. R. Burn (1954; Middlesex: Penguin, 1985). The ancient historian Herodotus opens The Histories with the rapes of Io and Europa (41-43). He does not attribute the rapes to Zeus but to various

The second kind of rape in classical myth is the "disastrous" rape, which is not sanctioned or executed by the king of the gods, and which breeds chaos rather than civilization, heroism, and order. Such rapes may jeopardize political alliances and transgress incest taboos, as the rape of Philomela does.¹² Another disastrous rape is that of Medusa, who is of great symbolic importance in The Golden Apples.

Most people, including Welty's characters, are familiar with the image of a triumphant Perseus brandishing the severed head of the slain Gorgon Medusa: in this image, the monster who turns men to stone has been conquered, and the hero can use her power to help him claim his birthright. What does not appear in the image of the vaunting Perseus, but is nevertheless the necessary

Phoenicians and Greeks. These rapes are the impetus for the events Herodotus chronicles, suggesting that later poets mythologized actual rapes that had had political impact. The story of Danaë, which seems to be much older, retains the supernatural aspect of an encounter with Zeus (406).

¹² "We can recover what...fifth-century Athens feared by viewing barbarian invasion/rape as an unwilling recognition that fictions of difference are arbitrary, yet absolutely necessary. The effects of invasion we can see symbolized in Philomela's suffering once she is raped. The transgression of all bonds, oaths, and unstated but firmly believed rules initiates a radical loss of identity, a terrible confusion of roles.... Philomela experiences rape as a form of contagious pollution because it is both adultery and incest, the two cardinal transgressions of the rule of exogamy. Should the rule collapse altogether, chaos would ensue" (Joplin 46).

condition for it, is the story of how Medusa became a monster in the first place. In Ovid's Metamorphoses, Perseus narrates the tale:

Medusa was once renowned for her loveliness, and roused jealous hopes in the hearts of many suitors. Of all the beauties she possessed, none was more striking than her lovely hair.... But, so they say, the lord of the sea robbed her of her virginity in the temple of Minerva. Jove's daughter turned her back, hiding her modest face behind her aegis: and to punish the Gorgon for her deed, she changed her hair into revolting snakes.¹³

Medusa, the rape victim, is punished for her victimization by Minerva or Athene, who, as Joplin has pointed out, is an entirely masculine creation, intellectual rather than organic, born from Jove's forehead.¹⁴ Medusa has the power to turn men to stone merely by looking at them, suggesting that when the rape victim becomes a subject capable of turning a critical eye on patriarchal culture, she has the

¹³ Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans. Mary M. Innes (Middlesex: Penguin, 1955) 115.

¹⁴ "But who is Athene? She is no real female but sprang, motherless, from her father's head, an enfleshed fantasy. She is the virgin daughter whose aegis is the head of that other woman victim, Medusa. Athene is like the murderous angel in Virginia Woolf's house, a male fantasy of what a woman ought to be, who strangles the real woman writer's voice" (Joplin 51).

power to disrupt that culture. Joplin writes:

once raped, Philomela stands radically outside all boundaries.... There she may see just how arbitrary cultural boundaries truly are; she may see what fictions prepared the way for her suffering.... This is precisely the paradoxical nature of domination: authority founded upon the suppression of knowledge and free speech relegates both the silenced people and the unsayable things to the interstices of culture. It is only a matter of time before all that has been driven from the center to the margins takes on a force of its own. Then the center is threatened with collapse.¹⁵

Medusa, the raped virgin who is rendered monstrous by the invulnerable virgin Athene, gains the power to destroy men and their culture. Ironically, Medusa's status as a victim who has been driven out and demonized is the source of that power, and Athena must help Perseus kill Medusa to enforce completely the victim's silence and powerlessness.

Curiously, the language Joplin uses to describe the threat of the outcast to patriarchal structure suggests Medusa's paralyzing power: "the possibility of antistructure is never destroyed by structure; it is only contained or controlled until structure becomes deadened or extreme in

¹⁵ Joplin 47.

its hierarchical rigidity.... Then antistructure ... may erupt."¹⁶

One means through which the inflexible structure attempts to deny the antistructure is by villifying it. In analyzing the end of Philomela's story,¹⁷ Joplin writes, Patriarchal culture feels, as Tereus does, that it is asked to incorporate something monstrous when the woman returns from exile to tell her own story.

But the myth seeks to blame the women for the inability of the culture to allow the raped, mutilated, but newly resisting woman to return: the sisters must become force-feeders; they must turn out to be bloodthirsty.¹⁸

In a similar manner, the danger Medusa poses is cast as a worse transgression than rape – she is remembered in popular culture not for being a cruelly persecuted rape victim but for her ugliness and deadliness. For the crime of having her disruptive power thrust upon her in the aftermath of her sexual violation, she is punished with death and dismemberment: her head, the locus of memory and speech, is severed from her body and its experience.

¹⁶ Joplin 49, my emphasis.

¹⁷ Ovid recounts a hideous scene in which Philomela and her sister Procne kill Itys, Procne's son by Tereus, and feed him to his father. When Tereus learns what the women have done, he pursues them, and all three are transformed into birds (Ovid 151-152).

¹⁸ Joplin 49.

Perseus, the mortal son of the patriarchal god, and Athene, the god's virginal brainchild, combine forces to silence the rape victim for good. Thus, the values of the auspicious rape are reasserted, and order, including the hierarchical arrangement of god over man and man over woman, is reestablished. The slaying of Medusa by the representatives of Zeus stands in for an auspicious rape, an act of sexual violence that will set everything "right." In this manner, the rape victim becomes a victim twice: first, there is the rape itself, which threatens the integrity of her voice; then the refusal on the part of society to acknowledge whatever she may salvage of her voice to speak of her experience, and this second silencing, in the example of Medusa, is tantamount to death.

Although Welty provides her readers with images of rape that sometimes make use of but ultimately transcend these two categories, she is not so generous to her characters. They are more or less confined to these two classes of rape, the auspicious and the disastrous, in the cultural representations available to them. As a result, the characters find themselves at odds with one another and with themselves. On the one hand, images of auspicious rape suggest to women that their deference to phallic power is desirable and even necessary to preserve social order, and

that it carries with it the erotic reward of being the temporary consort of a sky-god figure (King MacLain, in Morgana's own pantheon). But their instincts tell them that such deference will cost them their voices and individual desires, and that if they are raped, they will be outcasts and vulnerable to further violation, whether physical or psychological. From this dilemma, frustration arises with the limitations imposed on them as women, and Welty illustrates it in Miss Lizzie Stark's antagonism toward men; Katie Rainey's grudging fascination with King MacLain; Mrs. Morrison's bitter dismissal of her musical ability and her eventual suicide. We also see such girls as Cassie and Nina withdraw from the confusion of their own desires and the dangers that their desires seem to pose. On the other hand, the men, particularly the MacLain twins, are incapacitated by an image of awesome male power that they are supposed to possess but sense they do not. Their perception of being insufficient, or even effeminate, makes them blame women for having somehow castrated them, as Ran and Eugene blame their wives.¹⁹ It may also make them behave violently toward women in an effort to assert the phallic dominance they feel they lack, as Ran does when he

¹⁹ Peter Schmidt, The Heart of the Story: Eudora Welty's Short Fiction (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991). Schmidt offers a Freudian reading of Ran and Eugene's characters, investigating the barely repressed anger the twins feel toward women in general and maternal figures specifically (64-66).

rapes Maideen Sumrall. Welty supplies an alternative in Virgie Rainey, who moves outward into a world of imaginative free-play in which the phallus figures but does not have Lacanian status as the alpha and omega of signifiers, and in which the victim's voice is as powerful as the violator's.

The incentive the characters have not to follow their iconoclastic creative impulses is provided by Morgana, Mississippi. Welty depicts the town humorously, even lovingly, but shows the power it has to constrain the imagination. Morgana wields the threat of ostracism to deter those who would look for ways of relating to others outside of its divisive, hierarchical structure. Susan V. Donaldson has pointed out in her article "Recovering Otherness in The Golden Apples," that the stories that get told in Morgana are "tales told to establish central authority and the perimeters of community."²⁰ The stories of auspicious rape that preserve social and gender hierarchies are part of high culture in the form of literature and art, and also of Morgana's gossip culture, in which the exploits of King MacLain, the local version of Zeus, loom large. Stories of disastrous rape also get told, as cautionary tales that scapegoat the victim – it is in

²⁰ Susan V. Donaldson, "Recovering Otherness in The Golden Apples," American Literature 63 (1991): 490.

this manner that Cassie hears about Miss Eckhart's rape (301-302).

The stories that do not get told in Morgana are the stories of the victims. To allow the victim to speak is to risk unleashing the power of Medusa. For the women of Morgana, to listen to the victim is to risk seeing that nothing truly separates them from the victim and that their deference to phallic power has not empowered or protected them but only silenced them. To listen is also to risk expulsion from the community themselves; Virgie Rainey's connection with Miss Eckhart endangers her position in Morgana and materially damages her prospects (306). And as Miss Eckhart's maddening loneliness shows, being shut out from the community is a harsh prospect in the isolated, tight-knit Morgana, which makes the security of belonging powerfully persuasive in The Golden Apples. Not only can the community destroy outsiders, but it can also provide the illusion that feminine complicity in patriarchal culture is productive and rewarded. Many of Welty's characters are willing to sacrifice their imaginative visions and the scapegoated victim for the comforts of belonging to Morgana's congenial, reassuring society.

The first story in The Golden Apples, "Shower of Gold," is the only story of the seven that has an entirely public face since it is ostensibly spoken aloud to a

listener, and as such it confirms the values at work in Morgana, including those dictating which stories are acceptable and which are not. Stories of King's MacLain's wandering are allowed; an admission that a woman might want to wander as freely is not. Stories of King MacLain's sexual misbehavior, the closest the town can come to tales of auspicious rape, are allowed; the stories of his victims, which might challenge the auspiciousness of the event, are not. Welty provides glimpses of the imagination and curiosity that the narrator, Katie Rainey, suppresses or channels into an acceptable outlet, namely the adventures of King MacLain, a man from Morgana who spends most of his time far from the town.

The story takes the form of a monologue delivered to a passerby, and because the story is entirely spoken aloud, there is, paradoxically, a great deal that gets left unsaid — that which has been rendered unspeakable in Morgana's culture: women's desire to act freely in the world. Katie cuts herself short when she broaches this topic, as we see in the following passage: "I believe...[King's] been to California. Don't ask me why. But I picture him there. I see King in the West, out where it's gold and all that. Everybody to their own visioning" (268). Katie does two uncharacteristic things in this short quotation. The garrulous narrator, who loves including details and

digressions in her tale, first refuses to attempt to explain her conviction that King has been to California, saying "Don't ask me why." She begins to explain anyway, revealing a glimpse of her own vision of the possibilities California represents – "out where it's gold" – but she cuts herself off dismissively, with the curt "and all that." Her remark "Everybody to their own visioning" sounds both defensive and belittling; it deflects the listener/reader from making any further inquiry into Katie's dreams of the West and simultaneously undercuts the importance of such dreams, dismissing them as insignificant. Katie's fantasies of freedom, of a world beyond the confines of Morgana, are not an acceptable topic of conversation in Morgana; and although she wants to articulate them she does not.

Instead, she tells a story about King and Snowdie MacLain's marriage. But her principal story is peppered with other stories that are briefly alluded to but do not get told. And here a second forbidden story emerges briefly: the story of the rape victim. In Morgana, the rape victim is situated well outside the community, and the story that gets told in "Shower of Gold" works to keep her there. Katie Rainey hints at King MacLain's sexual misbehavior without using the word "rape." (In fact, the word appears nowhere in The Golden Apples.) "Willful and

outrageous, to some several" (263), she says, and she also refers to his children, "growing up in the County Orphans', so say several, and children known and unknown, scattered-like" (264). Katie doesn't pause to consider either the women or the children she has obliquely brought up, and she invokes King's victims not just offhandedly but even callously. Her reference to the unexpected and unwanted pregnancies that result whenever King breezes into town is delivered in sly innuendo: "But I bet my little Jersey calf King tarried long enough to get him a child somewhere" (274). Not only does Katie insensitively offer to make a wager on the likelihood of someone being raped, but she completely erases the victim from her sentence; King doesn't even "get him a child" on someone, willing or unwilling, but rather "somewhere," a word that leaves out entirely the idea of an individual woman's involvement. By having Katie phrase the idea in this particular way, with the word "somewhere" standing inappropriately where a woman should be, Welty reminds the reader how one-sided Katie's account has been and how King's nameless, voiceless victims have been left out.

Why does Katie exclude King's victims? Her gossip shows that instead of inspiring sympathy in the women of Morgana, the rape victim is rejected and left out of their stories – all of Katie's sympathy goes to King's long-

suffering wife, Snowdie. Joplin provides a reason for the women's rejection of the victim: "If marriage uses the woman's body as good money and unequivocal speech [in the patriarchal economy of the exchange of women], rape transforms her into a counterfeit coin, a contradictory word that threatens the whole system."²¹ If Katie spares sympathy for King's nameless victims, she puts them on a par with King's wife, and the distinction between the woman in the privileged, ostensibly protected position of legitimacy and the woman in the position of victim/outlaw begins to fall apart. If that happens, Katie has no choice but to acknowledge that nothing separates her from the rape victim - that she herself, because she is a woman, is just as vulnerable to rape, and consequently her secure, valued place in the social structure is an illusion. Katie keeps the rape victim in the shadows of her story to establish her own validity, placing as much distance between herself and the victims as she can. Joplin states that only by remembering the "embodied, resisting woman" can women "resist our status as privileged victim...[and] interrupt the structure of reciprocal violence," but Katie is afraid to take this step.²² In the social structure as it is, Katie can at least "churn and talk" (263); she fears that if she unmakes the distinction between King's victims and

²¹ Joplin 46-47.

²² Joplin 55.

herself, she will become just as speechless as they. Rather than allow that to happen, she embraces what little power she has in Morgana, which, ironically, is mostly the power to re-entrench continually, through her speech, the patriarchal values that have so limited her power in the first place.

Welty's treatment of rape in "June Recital" is similar to her approach in "Shower of Gold" in that she provides the information in the voice of the town gossips. The difference is that, rather than having the gossips speak it aloud themselves, their words come to the reader through the filter of Cassie Morrison's thoughts, and her moral ambivalence and artistic longing color her perception of what she's been told about rape.

In "June Recital," the third-person perspective allows Welty to show the workings of her characters' minds more explicitly than Katie's first-person narrative, in which the town's values determine what Katie will say as much as Katie herself. A third-person narrator can reveal even those thoughts and feelings that the characters themselves might not be fully aware of or willing to admit to. Here, Welty provides an intuitive external voice that not only can switch back and forth between two very different points of view (Loch's and Cassie's), but can also make clear what Cassie would not want to be public knowledge: that she is

caught painfully by her empathy for the victim, Miss Eckhart, her desire to follow the courageous artistic example of the victim, and the impulse to keep herself safely within Morgana's community by distancing herself from the victim. Cassie's conflicting desires surface during a scene in which Miss Eckhart, Morgana's piano teacher, performs for three of her students. In this scene, Welty juxtaposes the power of Miss Eckhart's art, her apparent indifference to having been raped, and her defeat at the hands of the townspeople, showing what the stakes are for the young woman who is tempted to follow in Miss Eckhart's footsteps.

Welty describes Cassie's recollection of Miss Eckhart's rape in a way that suggests that Cassie deliberately calls the rape to mind to counter the effect that Miss Eckhart's music has on her. The scene takes place during a morning thunderstorm, when Miss Eckhart sits down to play for the students who are trapped with her by the rain. The music is "long and stirring" (300), and as she plays it, Miss Eckhart is transformed: "The face could have belonged to someone else - not even to a woman necessarily. It was the face a mountain could have, or what might be seen behind the veil of a waterfall....it was a sightless face, one for music only" (300-301). Miss Eckhart's performance proves to Cassie that the other is wild and singular. "[S]omething

had burst out," Cassie thinks, "unwanted, exciting, from the wrong person's life. This was some brilliant thing too splendid for Miss Eckhart" (301). Miss Eckhart's music sets the girls to "wondering - thinking - perhaps about escape" (301). The escape the girls contemplate is not from Miss Eckhart's studio but from the constrictive gender roles of Morgana that are closing in on them as they approach womanhood. These gender roles will transform them from energetic girls who go barefoot in the summer (311) and learn about music and the risks taken by artists. Instead, the girls will be expected to become women whose creativity will be spent on elaborate pastries (328) and who may, like Cassie's mother - who claims that she "could have sung" (293, Welty's emphasis) - regret leaving the world of art.

Cassie tries to reject the insight Miss Eckhart offers through her music - that the world contains "more than the ear could bear to hear or the eye to see" (301). Denying Miss Eckhart's revelation, Cassie "stood back...with her whole body averted as if to ward off blows from Miss Eckhart's strong left hand.... She began to think of an incident that had happened to Miss Eckhart instead of about the music she was playing; that was one way" (301). One way to do what? One way to dilute, and then to resist, the revolutionary message of Miss Eckhart, the challenge to herself. The incident Cassie conjures up is the rape Miss

Eckhart survived some years before. By recalling that Miss Eckhart was raped, Cassie changes the woman's value to that of the "counterfeit coin," the "contradictory word," and undercuts the power of her influence.

The language Welty uses to describe Miss Eckhart's rape is the language of Morgana, which ousts Cassie's voice even within the girl's own head. Since it's unlikely that anyone would speak frankly to a young girl from a good family about rape at this particular time and place in history, we can assume that Cassie has pieced the story together from bits of gossip she has overheard, much as Welty herself garnered information from talking women when she was a child.²³ The resulting account of the rape is all the more ominous for being vague. Welty writes, "One time, at nine o'clock at night, a crazy Negro had jumped out of the school hedge and got Miss Eckhart, had pulled her down and threatened to kill her" (301). We have such details as when and where, but rape is merely implied in the phrases "got Miss Eckhart" and "pulled her down." But the reactions of the townspeople are very clear. There are the usual phrases to indicate mass opinion: "people were surprised" and "people said" (301). Welty supplies the

²³ Eudora Welty, One Writer's Beginnings, The William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization, 1983 (New York: Warner Books, 1984). 15.

town's final pronouncement about Miss Eckhart's experience of rape in words she attributes to Miss Perdita Mayo, making it clear that the thought is completely alien to Cassie, entirely external: "Miss Eckhart's differences were why shame alone had not killed her and killed her mother too; that differences were reasons" (302, Welty's emphasis). From this statement, Cassie learns an important lesson about conformity in Morgana: fitting in will provide one with protection, not only from such occurrences as rape (since nobody has included Miss Eckhart in the circuit of local information, "nobody had told her" [301] not to walk alone at night) but from the censure of public opinion should such an accident befall one. "Differences," such as Miss Eckhart's commitment to her artistic talent and her independence, should be avoided, Cassie learns, if one wishes to escape the town's disapproval.

In addition, the gossip of the town reveals a belief in phallic dominance as the final word. The people are shocked that Miss Eckhart, as a rape victim, does not entirely reorder her life to reflect the fact that she was raped; they expect her at least to uproot herself and move away (301), as an act of deference to the power of the phallus. However, Miss Eckhart refuses to acknowledge her having been raped as the central, defining event of her life, one that would require her to transform herself in

response. Instead, the teacher continues "as though she considered one thing not so much more terrifying than another" (301) – an ambiguous expression of courage, perhaps, but one that refuses to grant special power and status to rape. And the music Miss Eckhart plays proves that the rape is not the last word; in spite of the attack and its consequences, including her increased alienation from the town, the musician can sit down and play until she becomes part of the world of art and nature.

Cassie has tried to undermine Miss Eckhart's validity by recalling the rape that makes her a "counterfeit coin," but she has failed to take into account the ability of the woman who has lost her trading value in the patriarchy to speak critically from outside of that culture. As Joplin writes,

This paradox, the raped virgin as redundant or equivocal sign, is the dark side of Philomela's later, positive discovery about language: once she can no longer function as sign, she wrests free her own power to speak....For once raped, Philomela stands radically outside all boundaries.²⁴

Learning from Miss Eckhart's example that sexual vulnerability, deference to phallic power, and fear of Morganan opinion do not have to be the cornerstones of her life, Cassie has a vision of the world as having an order

²⁴ Joplin 47.

of its own, not one imposed by society, in which terrible things as well as beautiful ones come and go in their own time:

Yet things divined and endured, spectacular moments, hideous things like the black stranger jumping out of the hedge at nine o'clock, all seemed to Cassie to be by their own nature rising – and so alike – and crossing the sky and setting, the way the planets did....

All kinds of things would rise and set in your own life, you could begin now to watch for them, roll back your head and feel their rays come down and reach your open eyes. (302)

Cassie originally recalled the rape to defuse the message of Miss Eckhart and her music, but the teacher's transcendence of the rape has only proved the music's point. The girl sees both the chaos and the order in the night sky, the arbitrary assignment of names and stories to certain stars, the predictable motion of random objects. She brings this celestial vision to earth and sees nature's chaotic order as applicable to herself – she does not have to adhere to Morgana's strictures, nor does she have to organize her life to reflect female vulnerability to rape.

The stories that make recognizable patterns out of human events are as arbitrary as the linking together of

particular stars in a constellation – a different story might produce a different arrangement or a different interpretation of a given arrangement. Miss Eckhart's independence, her talent, and her survival of rape might make her a heroine rather than an outcast if the conventions surrounding her story were different. Welty reveals the possibility of alternative stories to the reader along with Cassie, making it a direct exhortation to both by couching it in the second person: "All kinds of thing would rise and set in your own life, you could begin now to watch for them, roll back your head and feel their rays come down and reach your open eyes" (302). Even in the case of rape, in which a single discourse and single phallic reference point dominate, the victim and her witnesses can seek alternative patterns in understanding rape that do not exile the victim or deprive the witness of the lessons of her experience.

Cassie, for example, learns to be ready to see patterns and connections and recognize that they can be infinitely rearranged and reinterpreted. She sees that not everything has to come back to a phallic signifier that indicates her own silence and invalidates her perceptions. Miss Eckhart's no-nonsense reaction to her rape, a sharp contrast to that of the town has shown her that. Rather than limiting herself to the one central signifier of patriarchal

culture, the phallus, Cassie expands her vision into a realm of possibilities as countless as the stars, in which a woman can be the things Miss Eckhart and Virgie are – passionate wanderers, unapologetic rebels, gifted artists who can command attention and respect through their conspicuous talent – without suffering for their differences.

Unfortunately, Cassie gets caught between two ways of seeing the world. She glimpses the possibilities set forth by Miss Eckhart and her music, experiences the pull of a world of imagination in which the varied and inward experiences of others are open to her and the phallus is only one symbolic element among many, but she also sees the effects of an unjust and unforgiving society and fears its reprisals. She witnesses the humiliation and ostracism of Miss Eckhart and the woman's final descent into self-destructive madness (307-308). She painfully recognizes her collusion in Miss Eckhart's defeat, thinking:

she thought that somewhere, even up to the last, there could have been for Miss Eckhart a little opening wedge – a crack in the door....

But if I had been the one to see it open, she thought slowly, I might have slammed it tight for ever. I might. (308)

She also understands that Virgie's connection to Miss

Eckhart and her wildness leave her vulnerable to the disapproval of the town, which can affect individual fates with its opinions: "And when she stopped, Virgie's hand lost its touch - that was what they said. Perhaps nobody wanted Virgie Rainey to be anything in Morgana any more than they had wanted Miss Eckhart to be" (306). Cassie is vaguely aware of her own hypocrisy where Virgie is concerned: "It made Cassie feel 'natural'; winning the scholarship over Virgie did not surprise her too much.... she did not, basically, understand a slight" (306). The town passes over Virgie in awarding the music scholarship, despite her poverty and her conspicuous talent; rather than award it to a deserving girl who is on the borderline of the community, they give it to one of their own.

Cassie resolves the dilemma that her awareness of Morgana's injustice places her in by withdrawing from both Morgana's values and her own new vision of alternatives:

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, seeing the knowledge and torment beyond her reach. (316)

Even in "The Wanderers," the final story of The Golden Apples, Cassie is still shut in her room, actually and figuratively. She lives in her childhood home, where she gives piano lessons, cares for her invalid father, and tends a morbid floral memorial to her mother (456-457). Caught in the past and still mired in the fears of her adolescence, Cassie's self-protective stance has frozen into isolation. Michael Kreyling observes that the adult Cassie, "wrapped in black stockings and 'gloved'...is living out her young satisfaction in letting 'nobody touch even her hand.'"²⁵ Nevertheless, from her limited vantage point, Cassie admires the paths chosen by Virgie and Loch, wistfully and generously saying, "A life of your own, away - I'm so glad for people like you [Virgie] and Loch, I am really" (457).

But through Cassie's abortive vision, Welty has introduced the reader to the possibility of an expanded worldview - encompassing empathy for and connection with the outsider and the rape victim and rejecting the phallus as the primary signifier - a worldview that Katie Rainey has tried to deny. The values of patriarchal society, in which women's voices and creativity, no matter how strong, are stifled and even vilified, are still intact at the end of the story. They have, however, been undermined by

²⁵ Michael Kreyling, Eudora Welty's Achievement of Order (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980) 88.

Cassie's sympathy for Miss Eckhart and her admiration for Virgie. An insider has admitted, however timidly and ineffectually, that she feels a connection with the the women who have been ostracized for their inability or refusal to conform to the rules of the town, which would have pressed them to diminish their talents and desires.

Having supplied the town's shaping, public myth in Katie's monologue and shown how women's creativity is sacrificed to that myth in the tragedy of Miss Eckhart, Welty adds a comic story to the sequence. "Sir Rabbit" is perhaps the most difficult story for the feminist reader of The Golden Apples, for whom the idea of a comic or erotic rape is a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, in this undeniably humorous story, Welty presents a view of rape that is marked by the main character's lusty curiosity about a sexual scenario she has heard gossip about – King MacLain coming across a woman in the woods and engaging in sex with her. (Mattie Will's husband cautions her, saying, "you done heard what [King McLain] was, all your life, or you ain't a girl" [336].) Some scholars, notably Patricia Yaeger, have interpreted the story as an extended erotic fantasy.²⁶ I prefer the more radical suggestion that Mattie Will is raped but finds an unprecedented way of using her imaginative powers and the perceptions of her own

²⁶ Patricia S. Yaeger, "'Because a Fire Was in My Head': Eudora Welty and the Dialogic Imagination," PMLA 99: 960-961.

body to prevent rape from destroying her, not merely in fantasy but in fact.

"Sir Rabbit" tells how Mattie Will is raped by King MacLain's young sons, then raped again a few years later by King MacLain himself while she's tagging along with her husband on an informal hunt. In this story, the reader must, as Higgins and Silver point out, ask who is speaking. Welty uses a third-person narrative voice, but it is closely aligned with the perspective of Mattie Will, an interesting heroine for a tale of a woman undaunted by rape. Unlike the characters who provide the perspectives of the other stories, Mattie Will does not appear in the list of "Main Families" that opens The Golden Apples except in the catch-all catalog of "Loomises, Carlyles, Holifields, Nesbitts, Bowleses, Sissums and Sojourners" (261). This suggests that she is already on the periphery of Morgana, not included in its inner social circle and relatively untainted by the pressures to be "Morganan" that trouble such characters as Cassie, Nina, and even Virgie. Lower-class, barely educated, and married young, Mattie Will is both aware of Morgana's expectations and untouched by them. Her tenuous placement within the town's culture gives her a strange advantage when it comes to dealing with the experience of being raped. Because she's out on the edge of Morgana's society, Mattie Will has a freer interpretation

of the town's legends and rules. She has heard about King's sexual transgressions, but she does not see herself in the part of the disapproving female onlooker who focuses on King and dismisses the women he rapes (as Katie does). Instead, Mattie Will identifies with the women King conquers, not realizing that to do so is to crush one of the cornerstones of Western civilization by collapsing the distinction between the legal wife and the rape victim. She not only sees the connection between herself and the victim (for even Cassie does that) but also acts on it and interprets the role erotically. She has no inclination to judge herself for what happens: Miss Perdita Mayo's suggestion that the victim of rape would do well to die of shame is an alien thought to Mattie Will.

As Welty describes it, Mattie Will's experience of being raped by King MacLain is a dubious mix of pleasures and discomforts. Most of the description that Welty offers is of Mattie Will's psychological experience, not her physical one, and Mattie Will's mental response is one of heightened observation and an intense awareness of King's difference and separateness. Looking at his eyes, she notes that they are "as keenly bright and unwavering and apart from her life as the flowers on a tree" (338). If, as Tanner claims, the rape victim's body becomes "a form that bears the mark of [the violator's] subjectivity,"²⁷ Mattie

Will's whimsical perception of King as a flowering tree, which has no human subjectivity, calls into question his ability to impress her with his will. However, Welty brings King's subjectivity into play in the next sentence: "But he put on her, with the affront of his body, the affront of his sense too" (338). Here, Welty paraphrases the question Yeats poses in "Leda and the Swan" — "Being so caught up, / So mastered by the brute blood of the air, / Did she put on his knowledge with his power"²⁸ — and answers it with a "yes." Mattie Will wrestles with King's subjectivity as she contends with his body. But rather than simply putting the rapist's knowledge on, as Yeats suggests, Mattie Will responds to it with her own. Welty writes, "Like submitting to another way to talk, she could answer to his burden now, his whole blithe, smiling, superior, frantic existence" (338). Just as it was her task "to keep twins straight" (332) when the MacLain twins attacked her in the woods, she is again in the position of sorting out and mediating, this time separating King's "burden" from her own and responding to it.

The one physical sensation that Welty describes during Mattie Will's rape is taste. Welty writes, "Now he clasped

²⁷ Tanner 115.

²⁸ William Butler Yeats, Selected Poems and Three Plays of William Butler Yeats, ed. M.L. Rosenthal, 3rd ed. (New York: Collier-MacMillan, 1986) 121.

her to his shoulder, and her tongue tasted sweet starch for the last time" (338). Mattie Will's tongue, an organ of speech and the word itself a synonym for language, senses a pleasant sweetness in this encounter with King. The experience has been like "submitting to another way to talk," but sharing in that foreign language, after an initial protest in which Mattie Will thinks "No pleasure in that!" (338), has had a sweet savor.

However, Welty implies that Mattie Will is in danger of losing her voice and identity. She writes, "Her arms dropped back to the mossiness, and she was Mr. MacLain's Doom, or Mr. MacLain's Weakness, like the rest, and neither Mrs. Junior Holifield nor Mattie Will Sojourner; now she was something she had always heard of. She did not stir" (338). The loss of her name comes with a loss of movement, a sort of temporary death. Mattie Will becomes part of Morgana's legend, and it suddenly becomes clear to her that she has acted a role in which a woman's individual identity is irrelevant.

Mattie Will has within herself, though, an energy that overcomes her inertia and lack of volition. When a feather falls from the sky, "She caught it with a dart of the hand, and brushed her chin; she was never displeased to catch anything" (339). Yaeger has identified the feather with King MacLain's appearance as a swan to Mattie Will's Leda

and suggests that Mattie Will's catching the feather is her assumption of authorial power; she seizes the quill.²⁹ But Mattie Will does not use the phallic quill/pen to rewrite her experience; it disappears from the story, becoming merely something Mattie Will was capable of making her own. Her rewriting comes not from the feather but from her own internal resources – her observation and imagination. She inspects King MacLain as he sleeps and is not overawed by him although she respects his mystery:

She gazed at the sounding-off, sleeping head, and the neck like a little porch column in town, at the one hand, the other hand, the bent leg and the straight, all those parts looking no more driven than her man's now, or of any more use than a heap of cane thrown up by the mill and left in the pit to dry. But they were, and would be. (340)

The power of King to identify her only as a "young girl-[wife] not tied down yet" (335) and the town to identify her only as "Mr. MacLain's Weakness" has passed, and Mattie Will is still able to see things for herself. She sees Morgana from a distance, "all in rays, like a giant sunflower in the dust of Saturday" (340), an image

²⁹ "Mattie Will could almost be said to resemble a baby swan as King's letters (his quills, his white and authorial feathers) fall from him and begin to describe Mattie Will's...imagination" (Yaeger, "'Because a Fire Was in My Head,'" 961).

that spreads outward in all directions rather than pointing to one possibility only. Rebecca Mark, in her book The Dragon's Blood, has identified images such as the sunflower as clitoral rather than phallic and claims that "When the word is freed from the violent heroic demand that it represent sword and phallus, it becomes instead the source of a sexual and suggestive renewal."³⁰ With the image of the sunflower Welty suggests both femininity, through the conventional association of women with flowers, and manifold possibilities, by choosing a flower whose broad, blossoming face is filled with seeds, symbols of possibility and new life. Significantly, the rays of the flower that Mattie Will imagines point outward from Morgana and beyond Morgana, suggesting that the proper path for Mattie Will at this juncture in her inner life is one that leads away from the town and its stories. Having endured the mythic rape and seen that it cannot subsume her identity or perceptions, Mattie Will should be able to leave Morgana behind. However, there is, literally and actually, nowhere else for Mattie Will to go, only the vague "big West" (340), the realm of golden possibility of which Katie Rainey also fruitlessly dreams.

In "Sir Rabbit," Welty begins to reveal the

³⁰ Rebecca Mark, The Dragon's Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994) 12.

contradictions in the town's idea of auspicious rape by representing a parody of the traditional sexual encounter between a god and a mortal woman. By keeping the story's perspective aligned with Mattie Will's, thus filling in a blank that Katie Rainey leaves in "Shower of Gold," Welty reveals the disjunctures between mythic experience and actual experience, even in a situation in which the victim is primed to accept the auspicious rape and consider it an erotic event. In "Moon Lake," Welty further scrambles the town's concept of the auspicious rape by presenting an act that resembles a disturbing instance of sexual violence and yet is truly auspicious - it saves the life of a drowning victim - and is not a rape at all.

The image of rape that Welty provides in "Moon Lake" demands that the story be read with at least two interpretations in mind. On a metaphoric level, Easter's resuscitation, which resembles rape, can be seen as an image of a woman being drawn forcibly away from her own unconscious territory. In the space between life and death, Easter appears to have discovered a realm of chthonic power and fecundity, suggested by the images of fertility and vegetation that Welty uses; Loch's violent efforts drag Easter back into the world of hierarchies and divisive structures in which she has no power. On the other hand, a more literal reading indicates simply that Easter is dying

and Loch saves her life. Yaeger expresses the difficulty the feminist reader has in reconciling these interpretations, writing,

Welty has created the cruelest possible entry into the world of sexuality for her characters; she has created a situation requiring protest that admits no protestation, for to rebel against Loch's ministrations would be to rebel against life itself.³¹

Of course, it is not appropriate to rebel against life-saving; but it is appropriate to rebel against a social structure that can make a young girl perceive a life-saving procedure as rape and find a sexual element where none exists beyond the simple fact that the drowning victim happens to be female, the lifesaver male. That the conflict between Loch and Easter -- or, more properly, between Loch and Easter's waterlogged lungs -- is seen as a conflict between male and female is a measure of how violently, if secretly, the sexes are opposed to one another in Morgana. Nina Carmichael, whose perspective is most closely paralleled by the narrative voice, is aware of unease between the sexes from the beginning of the story but not yet of the way sexual conflict will curtail her imagination. Welty shows how Nina becomes aware that such

³¹ Yaeger, "The Case of the Dangling Signifier," 441.

conflict will put its mark on her and dictate the paths that her imagination, which hitherto has been a source of pleasure to her, will take — and those new paths are fraught with fear and anxiety.

Welty shows from the beginning of the story that the relationship between the sexes is not friendly. The first paragraph describes Loch Morrison's contempt for the girls and their distressed awareness of it:

From the beginning his martyred presence seriously affected them. They had a disquieting familiarity with it, hearing the spit of his despising that went into his bugle. At times they could hardly recognize what he thought he was playing. Loch Morrison, Boy Scout and Life Saver, was under the ordeal of a week's camp on Moon Lake with girls. (342)

The girls are "seriously affected" by a sense of "disquieting familiarity" in Loch's rejection of them. Their reaction suggests that they have already seen something similar to his contempt in the adult relations of Morgana. As they reach adolescence and begin to lose the androgyny of childhood — Easter has already "started her breasts" (347) — the girls find themselves subject to a scorn that is inspired by their sex alone and that cannot be overcome by any personal quality or achievement. After all, Loch's only objection to them is that they are girls,

but that is reason enough for him to despise them.

The campers are also reaching a stage of life at which they are more obviously vulnerable to sexual violence or at which violence against them is more likely to be perceived as having a sexual motive. They are still naive enough to be unaware of their specific vulnerability as girls, although their elders have begun to hint at it. Nina, Easter, and Jinny Love do not understand Twosie's oblique warning about men in the woods: "Yawl sho ain't got yo' eyes opem good, yawl. Yawl don't know what's out here in woods wid you.... Yawl walk right by mans wid great big gun, could jump out at yawl. Yawl don't eem smellim" (348-349). Jinny Love brushes Twosie's words aside, saying, "Just some big boys, like the MacLain twins or somebody, and who cares about them?" (349), a remark rich in irony, coming as it does on the heels of Mattie Will's encounter with the twins in "Sir Rabbit." Jinny Love goes on to ask, "Why ain't you scared then?" (349, Welty's emphasis), to which Twosie rather chillingly replies, "I is" (CS, 349). Her warning and her admission of fear hang in the air, cryptic and threatening. The girls' response is to seek comfort in the confines of the familiar: "all their passions flew home again and went huddled and soft to roost" (CS, 349).

Nina, however, rather than being apprehensive about

the unnamed threat that men in the woods represent or trying to return Loch's contempt, occupies herself with flexing the newfound muscles of her imagination, testing its limits and seeing where her intuition leads her. Most dramatically, she discovers that her imagination can forge a connection with virtually anyone. In a half-waking state late one night, Nina's thoughts lead her to a theory of the imagination that closely parallels that of Cixous. Cixous writes,

Heterogeneous, yes. For her joyous benefit she is erogenous; she is the erotogeneity of the heterogeneous: airborne swimmer, in flight, she does not cling to herself; she is dispersible, prodigious, stunning, desirous and capable of others, of the other woman that she will be, of the other woman she isn't, of him, of you.³²

As Cixous describes it, the female imagination, with no limiting allegiance to any one symbol, passes through and flows around barriers, finding ecstasy in difference and in exploring the other.

Such barriers, in a child as young as Nina, are mostly imposed from the outside, adult world in the name of security. Nina is typical of the "southern female child," whom Gail Mortimer, in her book Daughter of the Swan,

³² Cixous 293-294.

describes as "surrounded by prohibitions, cautions, and warnings about the Other, imposed by her culture and intended to hold her back, circumscribe her activity, and keep her ignorant of things that would excessively frighten her."³³ But Nina is aware that she has been kept from the Other, and she vows to overcome the protective obstacles that have been raised around her.

As she reflects on her imagination's capacity, Nina experiences some of the ecstasy Cixous describes. Welty even couches Nina's thoughts in similar language:

The orphan! she thought exultantly. The other way to live. There were secret ways. She thought, Time's 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. (361, Welty's emphasis)

The imagination, manifested in such a way, is predicated on the notion of allowing the other's experience to speak to and even through the artist or dreamer. Nina's revelation marks her as a potential artist, with an instinct for discovering and pursuing visions that run counter to or at

³³ Gail L. Mortimer, Daughter of the Swan: Love and Knowledge in Eudora Welty's Fiction (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994) 37.

least entirely separate from familiar discourses.

Nina is most fascinated by Easter, who seems to have preceded her into the realm of intimate and unprecedented connections. When Nina has a fantasy of night personified entering the tent, she imagines that it is Easter, not herself, who can commune with it: "Easter's hand hung down, opened outward. 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" (361-362). Nina longs to experience the exotic connections she imagines Easter enjoying, and she holds her hand out, thinking "Instead...me instead" (362). She experiences her desire to replace Easter as the object of the night's attention as "compassion and a kind of competing that were all one, a single ecstasy, a single longing" (362).

Welty has Nina recall this moment during the lifesaving scene later in the story. She writes,

Nina almost walked into Easter's arm flung out over the edge. The arm was turned at the elbow so that the hand opened upward. It held there the same as it had held when the night came in and stood in the tent, when it had come to Easter and not to Nina. It was the one hand, and it seemed the one moment. (369)

By this point in the scene of Easter's resuscitation, however, Nina's feelings have undergone a complete

reversal, and she regards Easter and the imaginative possibilities Easter has embodied for her with horror. Through the vulnerability of her body, Easter has attracted not the loverlike night but the contemptuous Loch Morrison, and the interplay between them as he tries to revive her looks to Nina like something dreadful.

Welty never uses the word rape, which the nine-year-old Nina is unlikely to be familiar with anyway, given the 1920s setting of the story. But even without the word itself, Nina reads rape into the scene. Her vague awareness of hostility between the sexes shapes what she sees. Loch, the camp's sole representative of the male sex, seems to express fury, directed at all the girls and women present, through his rough efforts, and his infrequent, angry comments as he struggles with Easter are delivered "between cruel, gritted teeth" (371). Easter, who has been a leader among the girls, seems to Nina to answer Loch's harshness with cruelty of her own. Welty writes, "If he was brutal, her self, her body, the withheld life, was brutal too" (366, Welty's emphasis). Nina casts Loch and Easter as enemies in the lifesaving scenario. No contact could be more auspicious than that between the drowning victim and her rescuer, but Nina can imagine only antagonism between them.

However, the reactions of the adults who are present

are what really make Nina see the life-and-death struggle on the picnic table as specifically sexual. When Miss Lizzie Stark arrives, she reacts with outrage to the sight of Loch as he "lifted up, screwed his toes, and with a groan of his own fell upon [Easter] and drove up and down upon her, into her" (366). Whereas the girls had only been horrified by the violence of the scene, thinking "life-saving was much worse than they had dreamed" (366), Lizzie Stark adds the implication that what they're witnessing is indecent. She cries, "But what's he doing to her? Stop that....Loch Morrison, get off that table and shame on you" (367). Likewise, Ran MacLain seems to see an image of sex in the resuscitation: "Under his cap bill, Ran MacLain set his gaze - he was twenty-three, his seasoned gaze - on Loch and Easter on the table" (369). Easter, who fended off an earlier sexual imposition by biting Mr. Nesbitt (347), is helpless in the passivity of unconsciousness; she is not actually raped, but she is raped in the eyes of the people around her.

Nina witnesses the process by which Easter is stripped of her attraction and authority until she becomes a pathetic and even repulsive figure, like the rape victim with whom women are afraid to admit connection. Welty provides a progression of images that diminish Easter throughout the scene. The first image, that of a runaway

horse, carries connotations of power and freedom, suggesting that Easter appears defiant and strong (366). Later, she is not as active as a stampeding horse, but at least she still seems rebellious in remaining unconscious, a state that Nina imagines must be "even harder to be" than dead (368). Welty next connects Easter with the volitionless world of vegetation, which is still an image of thriving life. But even this comparison gradually degenerates, until "the face was set...and ugly with that rainy color of seedling petunias, the kind nobody wants" (370). Finally, Easter is a "berated figure, the mask formed and set on the face, one hand displayed, one jealously clawed under the waist, as if a secret handful had been groveled for, the spread and spotted legs. It was a betrayed figure" (371).

The degradation of Easter is terribly disturbing to Nina, who longed to share in the orphan's inner world. The inner world of the other is no longer, in Nina's eyes, a place to revel in the ecstasy of the imagination, but dangerous, the locus of violence and death. Even the erotic connection between Easter and nature that Nina tried to claim for herself only the night before becomes monstrous: was there danger that Easter, turned in on herself, might call out to them after all, from the other, worse, side of it? Her secret voice, if soundless then

possibly visible, might work out of her terrible mouth like a vine, preening and sprung with flowers. Or a snake would come out. .

The Boy Scout crushed in her body and blood came out of her mouth. For them all, it was like being spoken to. (370)

Here, Welty evokes the anxiety of the nascent female artist who stands on the brink of the unexplored territory of feminine creativity and realizes for the first time that this region is associated with disorder, terror, darkness, and even death. In The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir describes fear of specifically female creativity, saying:

The mother is the root which, sunk in the depths of the cosmos, can draw up its juices.... She also dooms him [mankind] to death. This quivering jelly which is elaborated in the womb...evokes too clearly the soft viscosity of carrion for him not to turn shuddering away. Wherever life is in the making...it arouses disgust because it is made only in being destroyed; the slimy embryo begins the cycle that is completed in the putrefaction of death.³⁴

Cixous draws an analogy between the fear that connects female reproductive capability with death and fear of women's artistic creativity. She claims that "the true

³⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H.M. Parshley (1953; New York: Vintage-Random House, 1974) 164-165.

texts of women – female-sexed texts" are inherently frightening to men,³⁵ and she suggests that male anxiety has affected women as well, making them mistrustful of their own artistic territory. Cixous imagines women being warned: "Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark."³⁶

In the above quotation from "Moon Lake," in which Nina apprehensively views Easter's body, these anxieties about crossing the border into the feminine unknown – the fear instilled by patriarchal values that creativity exercised on the unfamiliar side, in the dark forest, may produce monsters – are at work. Easter has preceded Nina into the apparently dark continent, which suddenly seems to Nina to be not only the "other" side but also the "worse" side (370). Still, Nina hopes that Easter's tidings from that territory will be fantastic – a blooming vine or mysterious if frightening snake. But all Easter "speaks" is blood.

The blood that horrifies Nina emerges from what Welty has described as Easter's "terrible mouth," a phrase that Yaeger reads as a "cruel metonymy for woman's genitals."³⁷

³⁵ Cixous 281.

³⁶ Cixous 281-282.

³⁷ Yaeger, "The Case of the Dangling Signifier," 439.

She goes on to argue that the blood is a "barely veiled reference to menstrual blood."³⁸ However, the cause-and-effect relationship between Loch's "crush[ing]" Easter's body and the appearance of the blood points more to the blood of sexual violence than to the spontaneous flow of blood in menstruation; the blood appears because of something injurious that has been done to the girl. The suggestion of violence that the blood provides indicates that it is not adult femaleness that inspires Nina with horror but its inherent vulnerability: for the first time, Easter, who has seemed to Nina to be untouchable and who has appeared to defy Loch even in unconsciousness, is shown to be vulnerable in a dreadfully intimate and physical way. Nina expects something marvelous to emerge from Easter, a continuation of her defiance and her self-generation (she is, after all, the girl who "let myself name myself" [357]), but all that appears is evidence that she has been hurt.

What Nina might have learned from witnessing Easter's near death and resurrection is that humans are connected, even if unwillingly, as Loch and Easter are connected; and that contact between individuals, even if it is crude and clumsy as Loch's efforts are, can be invigorating and life-giving. Instead, Nina has been primed by the antagonism that springs from Morgana's rigid gender hierarchy to read

³⁸ Yaeger, "The Case of the Dangling Signifier," 440.

the scene before her as one of sexual violence in which women's creativity gains an aspect of horror, and she retreats from the imaginative ground she had just begun to explore.

Standing in contrast to Nina's withdrawal from the multiple and extending imagination, however, is Welty's own treatment of the story. Easter's revival takes place in the midst of a bustling chaos, with each of the characters expressing his or her individual reactions, which vary from Ran MacLain's propositioning Miss Moody (370) to Mrs. Gruenwald's calmly carrying out a chair for herself (367), from Jinny Love's self-important attempt to assist Loch by fanning him with a towel (366) to Geneva's quick bid for Easter's winter coat if she dies (368). The wide variation of reaction and tone within the scene suggests again the possibility of multiple experiences and interpretations. The story moves fluidly from horrifying to humorous, from lyrical to prosaic. There is no single response, Welty seems to be saying through her onlookers' actions and utterances, to death or violation. There is only the individual, face to face with the real perils that being alive entails and with her own fears. Nina's response is only one out of infinite possibilities; the threat of rape does not need to paralyze the woman artist. It can, instead and if necessary, become a springboard for a new

understanding of women's resilience and ability to define and create their own lives in the face or the aftermath of adversity. Welty engages in what Cixous calls "undoing the work of death"³⁹ simply by showing the business of continuous life and the combinations and permutations in the relationships of the witnesses to the scene of Easter's harrowing resuscitation.

From the figurative rape in "Moon Lake," Welty turns an actual rape, committed by the first-person narrator of "The Whole World Knows," Ran MacLain, one of King's twin sons. In the wake of his wife Jinny's infidelity, Ran tries to console himself with Maideen Sumrall, a young woman who reminds him of a more innocent Jinny (379-380). In his attempts to restore his life to order, which to him means asserting his masculinity, he rapes Maideen. Welty's depiction of the rape through Ran's eyes is blunt. Near the close of the story, after Ran has pulled a gun on Maideen then failed to shoot either her or himself, he says simply, "And I had her so quick" (392).

While the previous stories in The Golden Apples have focused on the obstacles to self-expression that a rape culture sets up for women, in "The Whole World Knows" Welty shows that such a culture is limiting and damaging to men as well. In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous suggests that

³⁹ Cixous 287.

phallocentrism traps men as well as women:

In a certain way, "woman is bisexual"; man...being poised to keep glorious phallic monosexuality in view. By virtue of affirming the primacy of the phallus and of bringing it into play, phallocratic ideology has claimed more than one victim. As a woman, I've been clouded over by the great shadow of the scepter and been told: idolize it, that which you cannot brandish. But at the same time, man has been handed that grotesque and scarcely enviable destiny (just imagine) of being reduced to a single idol with clay balls.⁴⁰

Through her exploration of Ran's plight, Welty suggests much the same thing. His notions of masculinity keep him in a state of anxiety over his shortcomings, his "clay balls." It is natural for a man to compare himself to his father; unfortunately, for Ran MacLain, this means measuring his experiences against the example of King, Morgana's ideal of masculine power and privilege. Not surprisingly, such a comparison makes Ran feel insufficient. Jinny's sexual interest in another man shakes his faith in his manhood further, especially since both Jinny and Woody are much younger than he is. (Jinny, after all, was a nine-year-old camper at "Moon Lake" when Ran was twenty-three, and Ran looks at Woody and reflects that Woody is "too young for

⁴⁰ Cixous 288.

me....he was coming up in the world". [380].) Ran tries to reconcile his real experience with his ideal of manhood by emulating his father and raping Maideen. His efforts to conform with the cultural ideal of masculinity do not solve his problems, however, but further isolate him and ultimately lead to Maideen's death.

The symbol of vaunting male dominance over women is, as Welty has established from the first, represented in Morgana's gossip by Ran's own father, King. Strangely, the town's women also hold King up as an example of a good husband: "I knew your father," Miss Perdita Mayo tells Ran, "was crazy about your father, glad to see him come every time, sorry to see him go, and love your mother....most happily mated people in the world, long as he was home" (380). King represents the ideal of masculinity against which Ran feels he must measure himself: sexual conqueror of many women, popular figure in society, wanderer at will without concern for his wife, and yet, paradoxically, sharer in domestic bliss.

With the comparison between his father and himself in mind, Ran perceives himself as a man who must compete with other men for his wife's sexual favors. When he comes to visit, his mother-in-law calls to her daughter "like Jinny had a date" (378), placing Jinny back into the arena of sexual competition. Ran sees himself as a man who has

become so powerless in the eyes of society that he can be scolded like a child. ("But you march on back to your wife, Ran MacLain. You hear?" Miss Perdita Mayo says to him [376].) He sees himself as a man who left the house he shared with his wife not because he wanted to (as his father did) but because he felt exiled from it. Goaded by his failure to live up to his father's example, Ran sets out in King's footsteps - practically praying to him for guidance, saying, "Father, I wish I could talk to you, wherever you are right now" (375) - to try to set things right and be reunited with Jinny by establishing his authoritative will through an auspicious rape.

Although Ran chooses to follow his father's example as the story opens, Welty depicts a fierce struggle taking place within him. By chronicling Ran's internal battles, Welty shows that following King's path is antithetical to Ran's nature - in other words, that cultural norms for masculinity may exact as much of a psychic toll from men as femininity may from women and may result in as much distortion of spirit and action. Unlike his father, Ran tends to be empathetic to others, particularly women. Throughout the story, he is surrounded by women - the gossipy Perdita Mayo; his mother, Snowdie; Jinny and her mother, Lizzie Stark; Maideen; Tellie; and his landlady, Francine Murphy. Even the sick dog he treats so gently is

female. The male characters, on the other hand, do not figure as concretely in Ran's thoughts. His father and twin Eugene are absent entirely, existing only as distant abstractions; Woody is nothing more than his rival; and such men as Drewsie Carmichael and Junior Nesbitt appear only on the periphery. But Ran listens closely to the women in his life and grants weight to their words. He is sensitive enough to the women's emotions to note even such details as Tellie's anger, which manifests itself in the subtle protest of holding a tray "about an inch and a half too high" (379).

In addition to his empathy, Ran's perspective, with its keen and sensuous awareness of the world, implies that he is capable of responses other than violence and rape. Welty gives Ran a rich and sensitive inner voice, and what's more, she allows it to be his, in the first person, instead of offering his insights through the medium of a third-person narrator. For example, Nina, in "Moon Lake," can contemplate the meaning of a pear's fleeting moment of ripeness (356), but her reflections, necessarily those of a child, however precocious, are filtered through a sophisticated third-person interpreter. Ran, on the other hand, experiences a similar reflection, but directly, without the editorial assistance of an omniscient narrator:

I carried the rolling basket [of pears] for her and we

went ahead of Maideen.... There in the flower beds walked the same robins. The sprinkler dripped now. Once again we went into the house by the back door. Our hands touched. We had stepped on Tellie's patch of mint. The yellow cat as waiting to go in with us, the door handle was as hot as the hand, and on the step, getting under the feet of two people who went in together, the Mason jars with the busy cuttings in water - "Watch out for Mama's -!" A thousand times we'd gone in like that. As a thousand bees had droned and burrowed in the pears that lay on the ground.

(384)

Ran's perceptions knit the present with the past, and he is able to recognize the moment of perfection the pears imply and suggest that because such a moment can be repeated "a thousand times" the tendency is to waste them, as the fallen pears are wasted - all without the elucidating voice of the third person; Ran conjures and recognizes such symbolic moments on his own.

Welty contrasts Ran's imaginative ability, the kind that "undo[es] the work of death,"⁴¹ to borrow a phrase from Cixous, with the kind that does the work of death. Ran can conjure not only such timeless, transcendent moments as entering the house with Jinny and the basket of pears but

⁴¹ Cixous 287.

murderous fantasies as well. He imagines beating Woody Spights to death with a croquet mallet in such detail that he's surprised when the unharmed Woody speaks. He says, "I didn't know how it could open again, the broken jawbone of Woody Spights, but it could" (382). He also fantasizes about shooting Jinny, noting such vividly imagined particulars as the distance between them: "there was barely room between us for the pistol to come up" (385). Later, having driven to Vicksburg with Maideen, he looks at the girl and imagines that she has become a victim of his violence as well. Welty writes:

Maideen came into the space before my eyes, plain in the lighted night. She held her bare arms. She was disarrayed. There was blood on her, blood and disgrace. Or perhaps there wasn't. For a minute I saw her double. But I pointed the gun at her the best I could. (391)

Ran sees Maideen double as his ability to sense mystery in others and in everyday details wars with the sensibility that calls for a forceful, vengeful reassertion of male dominance in response to his wife's infidelity.

Ironically, Morgana discourages the act of violence through which Ran intends to reassert his dominance over his unfaithful wife. Simone de Beauvoir points out that in a patriarchal society, violent retribution for a wife's

adultery is the norm:

when woman becomes man's property, he wants her to be virgin and he requires complete fidelity under threats of extreme penalties....As long as private property lasts, so long will marital infidelity on the part of the wife be regarded like the crime of high treason.⁴²

Ran's mother certainly regards Jinny's infidelity in the light of treason. She tells her son, "The whole world knows what she did to you. It's different from when it's the man" (390, Welty's emphasis). Snowdie's words intensify Ran's sense of injury and give him a sense of being justified in leaving Jinny to live in Francine Murphy's boarding house. However, in spite of the town's gender hierarchy, which denies women the freedom enjoyed by men, sexually and in general, Snowdie is alone in her opinion.

Other Morganan women, especially Miss Perdita Mayo, who reports her own opinions and those of her "Circle" to Ran, assail him with their views on his marital problems. They, however, don't seem to believe that a wife's infidelity is all that "different from when it's the man." Surprisingly, they counsel a tolerance for Jinny's adultery that is at odds with Morgana's otherwise patriarchal ideology. Miss Perdita Mayo pooh-poohs the significance of

⁴² de Beauvoir 94.

Jinny's infidelity by two methods. First, she casts all three points of the love triangle as children – Woody becomes a little boy with a Buster Brown bob, riding his pony (376); Jinny is just a spoiled girl who needs a spanking (380); and Ran himself, who has felt his age to be a disadvantage, is relegated to a baby buggy (380). By infantilizing the husband, wife, and lover, Miss Perdita belittles their conflicts, suggesting that the trouble Ran finds himself in is just a spat between willful but essentially innocent children. Secondly, Miss Perdita dismisses Jinny's affair as "a thing of the flesh" (376) and counsels Ran to wait till it's over. Her attitude places women's seeking sexual pleasure outside marriage in the realm of the ordinary rather than the subversive – a revolutionary attitude in Morgana. Jinny's sexual interest in Woodrow Spights is, to Miss Perdita, understandable, and her acting on it is not shocking. She tries to discourage Ran from overreacting and implies persistently that he need not take violent revenge on Woody or snub Jinny by consorting with Maideen.⁴³

Miss Perdita Mayo's chatter is strangely double, however. While she suggests that Ran can peaceably handle the crisis in his marriage, she can't seem to help

⁴³ "Since a wife is his [a man's] property [in a patriarchy]...a man can naturally have as many wives as he pleases" (de Beauvoir 93). By taking Maideen as a sexual partner, Ran dilutes Jinny's power over him by partially replacing her.

simultaneously suggesting that violence is also an option. For example, she says to Ran, "Where's little old Woodrow this morning, late to work or you do something to him?" (376). In this single sentence, she suggests two explanations for Woody's absence, one innocent, the other sinister. She follows up with "But you march on back to your wife, Ran MacLain.... And you go back nice" (376, Welty's emphasis). The stress Miss Perdita places on the word nice suggests that she fears the opposite and is trying to head off some outbreak of violence. Later, she says,

no raring up now and doing anything we'll all be sorry to hear about....Sister said you'd kill him, and I said Sister, who are you talking about? If it's Ran MacLain that I knew in his buggy, I said, he's not at all likely to take on to that extent. (380)

By stating her faith in Ran's ability to control his temper, she suggests to Ran that he might kill Woodie, an idea that hadn't yet occurred to him but that he begins to mull over. Miss Perdita also brings up Maideen, saying "Don't you ruin a country girl in the bargain" (381, Welty's emphasis), emphatically implying the course of action Ran will ultimately take even as she forbids it.

By doubling Miss Perdita's advice in this way, Welty creates the impression that Miss Perdita is trapped within

a discourse that endorses masculine violence, whether exercised against a sexual rival, an unfaithful wife, or a scapegoat such as Maideen. Miss Perdita cannot suggest her sexually equitable alternative without evoking the pattern of violent, sexual retribution. And unfortunately, the very negative reinstatement of the plot of violent revenge leaves Ran with the sense that he has no alternative.

The outcome of Ran's situation, as we find in "The Wanderers," is that he is trapped in the role of King's heir. Once he attempts to carry on his father's legend, Ran becomes a figure in Morgana's version of a classical frieze, ossified, in a way, without any hope of breaking out of the role he has assumed by raping Maideen. Years later, Virgie reflects on Ran's story:

And didn't it show on Ran, that once he had taken advantage of a country girl who had died a suicide? It showed at election time as it showed now, and he won the election for mayor over Mr. Carmichael, for all was remembered in his middle-age when he stood on the platform....they had voted for him for that - for his glamour and his story, for being a MacLain and the bad twin, for marrying a Stark and then for ruining a girl and the thing she did.... They voted for the revelation; it had made their hearts faint, and they would assert it again. Ran knew that every minute,

there in the door he stood it. (433)

Ran's anguished attempt to set things right by committing an auspicious rape has had a double-edged effect. He does indeed establish himself as the dominant male in Morgana: he is elected mayor and thus has official power within the town; he can afford to buy Jinny a diamond (436); and he carries with him an aura of the same kind of sexual fascination as his father. However, his glamour and story are something that he must endure - "Ran knew that every minute, there in the door he stood it." Ran knows better than anyone that the auspicious rape that secured his position of power was in fact disastrous.

His series of pained questions at the close of "The Whole World Knows" shows how little his raping Maideen has done to set his world right: "How was I to know she would go and hurt herself? She cheated, she cheated too. Father, Eugene! What you went and found, was it better than this? And where's Jinny?" (392). Maideen's death is a shock to Ran, who never considered that the girl might be seriously affected by his treatment of her; her individual responses and desires had no place in the plot he imagined for himself. Ran also finds himself where he was at the beginning, still begging his father for approval and advice. And the final sentence of the story shows that Jinny is still lost to him. His bid to bring her back by

demonstrating his sexual power has failed, and even in "The Wanderers," Welty suggests that the rift between Ran and Jinny has never healed. Jinny seems trapped and miserable in "the iron mask of the married lady" (445), and for Ran, the "confusion [between his father and him] among all of them was the great wound in Ran's heart" (446).

The confusion between King and Ran, the tendency on the part of the townspeople to conflate them, has been Ran's downfall. His failure to separate himself from King and establish his own version of manhood, one that draws on his empathy and his ability to find pleasure and meaning in his surroundings, has doomed him to isolation within the community. In Ran's example, Welty shows that the struggle to act in accordance with cultural definitions of masculine behavior – in Ran's case, by raping a woman to prove his sexual dominance – degrades and damages the individual man and simultaneously compromises women's voices, and sometimes their very lives, for no good reason.

Welty provides another angle on the problem of masculine self-definition in the situation faced by Ran's twin. In "Music from Spain," Eugene MacLain slaps his wife one morning for no reason he can define, then he breaks out of his routine to spend the day wandering the streets of San Francisco with a Spanish guitarist whom he saves from being hit by a car. During the day, Eugene remembers his

youth and his dead daughter, Fan, and ponders the implications of striking his wife. Like his brother, Eugene feels that his life bears little resemblance to the ideal masculine experience his father represents, and he blames women for his dissatisfaction. But the example of the enigmatic Spaniard, who seems at ease in the world and unconcerned with sexual ambiguity, suggests to Eugene that the fault lies within himself. He tries to understand his violent reaction to Emma and begins to examine critically his fear of femaleness and his unease with the elements of himself that he sees as feminine. At the end of the day, however, he returns home to his wife to find that nothing between them has changed, in spite of his soul-searching. There is no rape per se in "Music from Spain," but near the close of the story, Welty includes a bizarre image of physical violation that I will analyze in light of her development of Eugene's character in the earlier portions of the story.

Like Ran, Eugene is anxious about his masculinity, his understanding of which has been formed by Morgana's patriarchal culture and the example of his own parents, the self-asserting wanderer King and the nurturing, self-effacing Snowdie. Welty has made King and Snowdie fine, ironic examples of de Beauvoir's distinction between male and female destinies in a patriarchy. De Beauvoir writes:

The male is called upon for action, his vocation is to produce, fight, create, progress, to transcend himself toward the totality of the universe and the infinity of the future; but traditional marriage does not invite woman to transcend herself with him; it confines her in immanence, shuts her up within the circle of herself. She can thus propose to do nothing more than construct a life of stable equilibrium.... within the walls of the home she is to manage, she will enclose her world.⁴⁴

Eugene, however, fails to see the irony in his parents', especially his father's, behavior. Comparing himself with his father, Eugene misses a sense of transcendence in his life. He scorns his father's self-indulgent pursuit of fulfillment but envies it.

His own life, by comparison, seems to be one of what de Beauvoir terms immanence, mindless routine followed for the sake of preserving "stable equilibrium," traditionally the lot of women. Eugene's route to work seems to him to be one of "habitual hills" and he notes the particulars of the day's weather not because they matter to him but because he knows his employer will quiz him, as usual (394). Having been forced by his father's defection to share his mother's day-to-day feminine life during his childhood, Eugene

⁴⁴ de Beauvoir 500.

resents being forced to share a similar life of immanence with his wife. His secret desire in his youth was to follow his father's example; that desire surfaces again when he dines with the Spaniard. Welty writes:

Eugene saw himself for a moment as the kneeling Man in the Wilderness in the engraving in his father's remnant geography book, who hacked once at the Traveler's Tree, opened his mouth, and the water came pouring in....That engraving itself, he had once believed, represented his father, King MacLain, in the flesh, the one who had never seen him or wanted to see him. (409)

Although he has always imagined the Man in the Wilderness to be his father, he wants to fill that role, to see "himself for a moment" in that adventurous, restless figure. His father's rejection of him and his frustrated desire to pursue his father's transcendent path merge in this image; the corollary is an anger against women, his mother and his wife specifically, who would trap him in immanence and keep him from pursuing his manly destiny.

Welty introduces another element in the image of the Man in the Wilderness — that of appetite as the thirsty traveler gulps from the tree. Eugene's envy of his father's freedom is coupled with a contradictory anger at his father for living to gratify his desires. Unlike Ran, Eugene

openly resents King, and when King springs to mind, Eugene thinks angrily, "Old Papa King MacLain was an old goat, a black name he had" (407, Welty's emphasis). Eugene's rejection of his father is bound up in his rejection of his father's sexual appetites: he refers to King as a "goat," or lecher, and rightly connects his father's desertion with his father's unbridled desires.

His disapproval of appetite and desire is not limited to his father, however. Eugene associates femininity with voracious appetite as well, and not only with appetite but with suffocating nurturance: he thinks of the pride that Emma takes in the food she prepares for him and wryly reflects that "If he had wanted to kill her, he would have had to eat everything on her table first, and praise it" (395). Longing for transcendence, Eugene develops scorn for such routine physical concerns as eating, which smack of the monotony he wants to escape. The connection in Eugene's mind between women and eating deepens into a profound fear of femininity as a force that might rob him of mastery over his own appetites (a loss of self-control that he scorns in his father) and simultaneously threatens to consume him and mire him in flesh.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Peter Schmidt writes: "Ran's and Eugene's relations with women are dominated by infantilism....they have an uncontrollable nostalgia for what Welty portrays as a pre-Oedipal state in which their mother's breast and the absolute security and oral satisfaction it

Welty encapsulates the connection between women and eating, and Eugene's attraction/repulsion in an image at the beginning of the story. Having slapped Emma and left the apartment, Eugene imagines her sitting in the kitchen with "all her stiffening and wifely glaze running sweet and finespun as sugar threads over her" (393). Emma seems, to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare, "loathsome in [her] own deliciousness."⁴⁶ Eugene imagines her as a great cocoon- or web-spinning creature that might ensnare him in her sticky threads; at the same time, he sees her as a giant confection, a big sweet ball of cotton candy. She is both dangerous and desirable, and his fear of being consumed by her merges, in this image, with his desire to consume and be consumed by her. Later, Eugene links his wife with a sideshow Fat Lady who is also named Emma. In the sideshow Emma, he sees a gross caricature of his overweight wife. He finds an emotional link as well as a physical one between the women. In the Fat Lady's resentful glare, "that glance that meets all glances and holds, like a mother's: they done me wrong" (405), he sees a reflection of his wife's fiercely private grief for her daughter, the "waterfall of

could give them seemed eternally present.... When fantasy fails, two things happen. First, Ran and Eugene try to destroy the women.... [They] then guiltily imagine the women turning on them and treating them as something to feed upon and destroy" (65, Schmidt's emphasis).

⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking, 1986) II.vi.12.

tears" (395) she withholds but wields over him.

Welty makes the Fat Lady seem to Eugene to be a caricature not only of his wife but of all women. The freak-show advertisement voyeuristically emphasizes the Fat Lady's sex, placing a leering emphasis on her underwear. Welty writes, "The photograph showed Emma as wearing lace panties, and opposite it a real pair of panties — faded red with no lace — was exhibited...vast and sagging" (405). The advertisement implies that the Fat Lady's femaleness is integral to her freakishness and the voracious (and erotic, as the lace and the color red hint) appetite that has bloated her. Such an association is a fallacy, of course, but Eugene is eager to grasp at it and scapegoat women rather than admit that "man, like woman, is flesh," as de Beauvoir points out, "therefore passive, the plaything of his hormones and of the species, the restless prey of his desires."⁴⁷

Instead of recognizing the common human bond of existing in flesh, Eugene recalls a sideshow he saw as a child, in which the optical illusion of a living woman's head, perched bodiless on a stepladder, was featured. The image of this second woman, Thelma, is just as grotesque as that of the Fat Lady in her underwear — even more so, since it implies decapitation — but Eugene finds it a more

⁴⁷ de Beauvoir 810.

appealing vision of femininity. In the monstrous sideshow Emma and her counterpart, the bodiless Thelma, Welty evokes Medusa, first as the demon with the paralyzing gaze of the angry victim ("The sight of a person to whom other people have been cruel can be the most formidable of all," Eugene reflects [405]), then as the severed head, made powerless by its separation from the body.⁴⁸ To Eugene, the Fat Lady who has been victimized is dreadful, while the woman without a body is "golden-haired and young, and had smiled invitingly" (405). One difference between the two women is that the sideshow Emma is real while the bodiless Thelma is an illusion, and therefore just as much a product of the imagination as Athene, the virgin goddess who emerges from her father's forehead. Eugene is far more comfortable with the illusory woman, who has no body, than the real one, whose body and appetites seem to define her.

Eugene's anxiety over women's bodies and desires, and by extension over his own physical appetites, is intensified by his discomfort with conventional masculinity. When Eugene tries to formulate statements that will ring with manly bravado, Welty uses clumsy slang to emphasize how ineffectually they express Eugene's feelings:

⁴⁸ "In killing the Medusa [one of the three Gorgon sisters], Perseus separates the female as triple goddess from her past and future aspects, from the Gorgon of life and the Gorgon of birth, condemning her to death in a single image" (Mark 25).

It was then that Eugene...felt sure in some absolute way that no familiar person could do him any good....Friends: no help there.

In panic - and, it struck him, in exultation - seek a stranger. Hi, mate. Just lammed the little wifey over the puss.-Hooray!-That's what I did.-Sure, not a bad idea once ever so often. Take it easy. They would be perched up at a bar having a beer together.

(400, Welty's emphasis)

Eugene senses that such a scenario is far out of character for him and dismisses his ultramasculine imaginary companion with the thought "something should be done about him" (400, Welty's emphasis). Still, his anxiety over femininity and masculinity and over his status as a creature of flesh and blood who longs for transcendence leaves him in an uncomfortable limbo in which he encounters the perfect "stranger" in the person of the mysterious Spanish guitarist.

Welty gives the Spaniard qualities that Eugene associates with masculinity, including his height and strength, and femininity, such as his physical bulk, his long hair, and his red-painted nails (402-403). Combining masculine and feminine traits and artistic genius, and apparently perfectly comfortable in the world ("This Spaniard everywhere seemed to be too much at home," Eugene

feels [405]), the Spaniard seems a denizen of the territory of the bisexual imagination described by Cixous:

the other bisexuality on which every subject not enclosed in the false theater of phallogentric representationalism has founded his/her erotic universe. Bisexuality: that is, each one's location in self...of the presence...of both sexes, nonexclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this "self-permission," multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire.⁴⁹

The Spanish musician is the perfect guide to initiate Eugene into the realm of the "in-between,"⁵⁰ where he can be reconciled with masculinity and femininity and enjoy the erotic reciprocity with his wife for which he longs. The artist's comfortable and powerful integration of masculinity and femininity points out the path to Eugene for resolving his internal conflict.

Welty shows the Spaniard making Eugene a sort of gift of feminine sexuality in the form of a lily, which her description links to female genitals: "the Spaniard...was peering at some blotched white lilies that grew in the coarse grass there. He touched the tips of his fingers deliberately under the soft pale petals and examined their hairy hearts....He put up his little flower, and regarded

⁴⁹ Cixous 288.

⁵⁰ Cixous 287.

it" (420). From a voracious mouth, women's sex is transformed by the Spaniard into the mariposa lily. Presented with such a harmless, tender symbol of femininity, Eugene is wracked with guilt, not only for striking his wife but for characterizing her as monstrous. His failure to attribute his slapping Emma to any act of hers has forced him to suspect what de Beauvoir points out: "In those combats where [the sexes]...think they confront one another, it is really against the self that each one struggles, projecting into the partner that part of the self which is repudiated."⁵¹ Eugene senses that he has scapegoated Emma, and all women, in his conflict with himself, and he cannot accept the proffered lily until he has made a confession or undergone a purging trial. His expiation comes in the form of his strange fantasy of powerlessness in the body, an experience akin to rape in which Eugene recognizes that he too is defined to a degree by his flesh.

Welty leads up to Eugene's acceptance of the limitations of his own flesh by stages. When the Spaniard offers him the lily, Eugene attempts to put his feelings into words but fails, due to his "lifelong trouble" of not being able to express himself (421). When words let Eugene down, he reacts physically to the Spaniard, half embracing,

⁵¹ de Beauvoir 810.

half wrestling with him on the cliffs of Land's End (421). He is no match for the strength of the big artist, however, and while he is trapped in the man's hold, he experiences his strange, rape-like fantasy/sensation.

Welty describes Eugene's fantasy as a peculiar waking dream that comes to him "always before when very tired, and always when lying in bed at night, with Emma asleep beside him" (422). The feeling that Eugene recalls and reexperiences in the Spaniard's arms is perhaps the strangest evocation of physical violation that Welty offers in The Golden Apples:

It was as if he were trying to swallow a cherry but found he was only the size of the stem of the cherry. His mouth received and was explored by some immensity. It became more and more immense while he waited. All knowledge of the rest of his body and the feeling in it would leave him; he would not find it possible to describe his position in the bed, where his legs were or his hands; his mouth alone felt and it felt enormity. Only the finest, frailest thread of his own body seemed to exist, in order to provide the mouth. He seemed to have the world on his tongue. And it had no taste - only size. (422)

In this quotation, Eugene's anxiety-ridden association between mouths, physical desire, and femininity, compounded

by his inability to express himself and his distrust of his own desires, coalesces in the sensation of his mouth being invaded stopped up. He can take nothing in, and he cannot speak. The part of his body that he has unconsciously sexed as female becomes both the most important part of his body and the most helpless, subject to overwhelming violation. Meanwhile, the rest of his body becomes the "finest, frailest thread," a phrase that evokes phallic weakness rather than strength. The metaphoric rape Eugene endures reduces him to helpless flesh attached to a consciousness that can do nothing to transcend the experience of his flesh — like the rape victim Laura Tanner describes, whose body is forcibly inscribed with the will of the rapist despite her awareness of her protesting self. The experience has the effect of forcing Eugene to recognize what de Beauvoir concludes, that "In both sexes is played out the same drama of the flesh and the spirit, of finitude and transcendence; both are gnawed away by time and laid in wait for by death."⁵²

The sensation of the overwhelmed mouth is cathartic for Eugene. It makes clear to him that his physicality is part of his humanity, that it does not imply a disgusting femininity or compromise him as a man. Once the sensation has passed, he can recognize his desire for his wife and

⁵² de Beauvoir 810.

his hope that she desires him not as an outbreak of unruly appetite but as an expression of love:

This time the vision...was Emma MacLain turning around and coming part way to meet him on the stairs. Still like a rumble, her light and young-like tread, that could cause his whole body to be shaken with tenderness and mystery, crossed the floor. She lifted both arms in the wide, aroused sleeves and brought them together around him. He had to sink upon the frail hall chair intended for the coats and hats. And she was sinking upon him and on his mouth putting kisses like blows, returning him awesome favors in full vigor, with not the ghost of the salt of tears.

(423)

He imagines himself as passive in Emma's embrace - a reversal of traditional sexual roles - but fully present in the moment and finding pleasure in letting her desire and his overwhelm him. He recognizes desire as the legitimate property of both sexes, not something that is a dishonorable weakness in a man (as he perceived it in his father) and grotesque in a woman (as he perceived it in Emma and the Fat Lady) but the source of new life, a "pulse, far back, far inside, far within now, [that] could shake like the little hard fist of the first spring leaf" (423).

Eugene cannot hold onto this revelatory moment, however. He must return to the real Emma, not the one he has dazzlingly imagined. When he arrives at home, Emma is in the kitchen with Mrs. Herring, getting ready to eat. The slap that seemed to be such a watershed to Eugene has simply been absorbed by her flesh, as if he had been "kissing the cheek of the dead" (396), as Eugene felt earlier. Eugene begins at once to see her flesh and her interest in the mechanics of feeding it as signs of mindless immanence. He feels it would be pointless to tell her about his day (426) and only says that he saw the Spaniard. Then he watches her consume and process this information as she eats:

"Bartolome Montalbano," Emma said and popped a grape onto her extended tongue. She added, "I have the feeling he suffers from indigestion," and drummed her breast while she swallowed....

Eugene tilted back in his chair, and watched Emma pop the grapes in. (426)

Emma's only concerns are the Spaniard's digestive system and her own, and Eugene once again begins to regard her with disgust. Welty echoes the image of the overwhelming cherry in Eugene's mouth in the image of Emma popping grape after grape into her mouth. Eugene looks on in fascination, because the ease with which Emma eats the grapes is in

dramatic contrast to his inability to swallow the phantom cherry. He regards her eating mouth pensively at the close of the story, and is clearly in danger of beginning to regard her appetites as monstrous and unbridled over again, and thus in danger of becoming alienated from his own body again as well.

Eugene may begin to feel a contemptuous horror for women again, but Welty, by confining Emma to her kitchen, suggests a disparity in opportunity that Eugene fails to take into account. Simone de Beauvoir writes, "Many of the faults for which women are reproached...simply express the fact that their horizon is closed."⁵³ She goes on to point out that "if woman is earthy, commonplace, basely utilitarian [as Emma appears to Eugene], it is because she is compelled to devote her existence to cooking and washing....It is her duty to assure the monotonous repetition of life in all its mindless factuality."⁵⁴ Eugene fails to recognize that he has achieved his new understanding about the scope of his flesh and his desires by exercising a masculine privilege of wandering in the world, encountering and learning from such people as the Spaniard; Emma, in her feminine role, has not left the kitchen and has learned nothing. By evoking this disparity of opportunity to exercise the imagination and learn about

⁵³ de Beauvoir 670.

⁵⁴ de Beauvoir 672.

the self and the other, Welty underscores the way in which conventional gender roles cheat both sexes – Eugene is doomed to be alone in his revelation; Emma, to experience no revelation at all.

The image of rape has been purely metaphoric in "Music from Spain," but it has allowed Eugene to understand his connection to aspects of human experience that have been labelled feminine, namely the experience of immanence – existing in the world as a body and an animal, subject to the vicissitudes of time, the incursion of others, and instinctive hunger and desire. Through his sensation of being reduced to a mouth, Eugene learns to accept this so-called "feminine" aspect of experience as part of all human experience, and to look upon women, and his wife especially, without contempt or blame. Although his new understanding is short-lived, Welty's image enlightens the reader, who does not have to share Eugene's failure. In this image of the body intimately invaded, Welty has provided a perspective on humans' common experience of being caught in the body and shown that this experience can lead to the transcendent emotions of compassion and mutual desire.

In the final story of The Golden Apples, "The Wanderers," Welty focuses again on a metaphoric representation of rape rather than on the occurrence of

rape in the plot. She returns to the classical tales of rape and evokes the image of Perseus and Medusa as part of the musings of Virgie Rainey as she prepares to leave Morgana after the death of her mother. Virgie's meditation is tied up in her understanding of Miss Eckhart. Sitting on a stile in the rain, Virgie feels that "she was all to herself" (459), but that half despairing, half triumphant sensation is followed by Welty's questions: "Was she that? Could she ever be, would she be, where she was going?" (459). The answer is no since Virgie carries with her lessons learned from Miss Eckhart about the woman artist who insists on speaking, defying the death of forced silence to which patriarchal society would condemn her.

One expression of the courage Miss Eckhart tried to pass along to her students comes to Virgie in the memory of a "certain threatening" picture (459) on Miss Eckhart's wall, of Perseus hefting Medusa's head. Significantly, Miss Eckhart explains this image of culture's dominance over chaos as "second-best" to the image of Siegfried and the dragon (459): there the heroic figure overcomes a monster, but the monster is not overtly, unignorably sexed as female. The automatic association of femaleness with whatever forces must be reduced for the hero to emerge triumphant is absent from the emblem of Siegfried and the dragon; the subjugation of the female is not integral to

the image.

However, the image of Perseus and Medusa is not second best if Miss Eckhart's hope is to pass her rebellion on to her female pupils in Morgana. It shows, better than Siegfried and the dragon, the risk the girls take by defying Morgana's culture. Because of the patriarchal underpinnings of the town, and the attendant belief that female sexuality must be controlled if the society is to prosper, the woman who would express her passion and experience truthfully must sooner or later face the threat that Perseus poses to Medusa: she runs the risk of being vilified and silenced, perhaps for good. Such a woman must learn Medusa's full history - that Medusa was raped, then punished by Athene, and killed by Perseus - not just that Medusa was a monster killed by a hero. Such a woman must learn that the source of Medusa's monstrosity, personified in the virgin daughter of Zeus, Athene, is a fantasy of femininity fostered by patriarchal culture. Significantly, Athene does not appear in Miss Eckhart's picture. For without the idea of Athene - the perfect, pure woman who is entirely complicit with the patriarch, who owes her existence and integrity to him - Medusa, the real, mortal woman and victim of rape, cannot be vilified.

Virgie remembers the picture of Perseus and Medusa as she prepares herself psychologically to leave Morgana, and

she finds she can understand and grant weight to both figures. Rather than seeing simply the hero defeating the monster, she sees the image from a female perspective as well, one that does not accept Medusa's monstrosity as a given. She understands the connection between the woman who has been silenced and the man who has cut her off from the experience of her body. The confrontation between Perseus and Medusa illustrates the courage and defiance of both and thus exalts them. Yet both are bereft by the act of beheading: the woman is literally cut off from her body and its desires; the man, by striking down the real woman at the behest of the imaginary virgin goddess, condemns himself to being alone in the world. As Virgie sees it, "Cutting off the Medusa's head was the heroic act, perhaps, that made visible a horror in life, that was at once the horror in love, Virgie thought - the separateness" (460).

This separateness in love has demonstrated itself throughout The Golden Apples in the characters' failed attempts to reach one another: Katie's efforts to share in King's freedom; Cassie's ineffectual compassion for Miss Eckhart; Mattie Will's unsatisfied curiosity about King; Nina's horror of connecting with Easter; Ran's failure to reconcile with Jinny and Eugene's to reconcile with Emma. All of these characters feel the pain of separateness, but, because they recoil from Medusa - the woman, the victim,

the outcast – fearing that they may be more deeply connected with her than they would wish, they cannot heal the rift because they cannot see the other whole.

Virgie transcends separateness for herself by finding that "she must believe in the Medusa equally with Perseus" (460). This even valuation of masculine and feminine, victor and victim, in the equation frees Virgie to expand her imagination; rather than remaining trapped in a submissive or defensive posture as a woman who cannot positively say that her perspective is valid, Virgie lays claim to her own voice and her own desires. If, as Virginia Woolf claims, the woman artist hobbles herself by referring, whether deferentially or defiantly, to male opinion of her, Virgie avoids that stumbling block by believing in Medusa as well as, not in spite of or instead of, Perseus. Again, she has learned to balance the archetypal opponents through the example set by Miss Eckhart, who "had absorbed the hero and the victim and then, stoutly, could sit down to the piano with all Beethoven ahead of her" (460). The world of creativity opens to the woman who transcends the need to explain or excuse herself and allows herself to be, as Cixous puts it, "desirous and capable of others, of the woman that she will be, of the other woman she isn't, of him, of you."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Cixous 294.

Throughout The Golden Apples, Welty demonstrates the efficacy and power of such an inclusive vision, in which the hero and the monster are absorbed, and perhaps conflated and teased apart again and continually redefined, by presenting it in light of the scenario that most challenges it: that of rape. The woman artist can encompass even rape – in which the individual voice of a woman is forcibly deprived of significance, in which a worldview that grants validity to one phallic referent only dominates – and make it one thread in her tapestry. The phallus need not be challenged or suppressed: that would betray an undue concern on the part of the woman artist, an anxious sense that the phallus must be treated differently, as more powerful, than other symbols. Instead, it can simply be given its proper status, not as the principal signifier and referent, but as part of an endless array of signifiers, each one filled with resonance and potential.

In The Golden Apples, Welty herself achieves such a balance among symbols, including the phallus, and she concludes the collection with a depiction of one of her characters achieving it as well. Virgie draws together images that spring from nature and art but do not point back to difference in sex as the source of their hold on the imagination. In other words, the images Welty supplies through Virgie at the close of The Golden Apples – "They

heard through the falling rain the running of the horse and bear, the stroke of the leopard, the dragon's crusty slither, and the glimmer and the trumpet of the swan." (461) — fall outside of the Lacanian model in which the phallus is the central referent. They are not images of exclusion or opposition. The prism of sexual difference has been, at least for the moment, sidestepped, and a way of seeing the world that reflects its richness and its endless possibilities emerges.

What Welty's treatment of rape throughout The Golden Apples shows the reader, finally, through all of its permutations — violent, humorous, tragic, erotic, emblematic — is that the woman artist cannot be silenced. She has taken traditional stories of rape and exposed the assumptions behind them, not angrily or mockingly, but with a clear understanding of the influence they have exerted over the human imagination. Then she has transformed the stories, turning them into tales of the pitfalls and ecstasies of the imagination, especially (although not exclusively) women's imagination. In Welty's hands, rape, the situation that seems most dominated by one discourse, one effective speaker, and one phallic reference point, reveals its own possibilities for continuing artistically and imaginatively, for the victim to preserve and exercise her voice and her integrity of self.

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