

Abstract

The present MA thesis discusses Eudora Welty's short fiction and the author's engagement with the plantation memory. The introductory chapter defines the concept of plantation memory as a flux of the normative plantation binaries, the plantation mythology obscuring the ante-bellum Southern reality, the linguistic and phenomenal evidence of the prevailing oppression, and the ability of the text and its creator to subvert the official narratives and to liberate the individuals' silenced voices. Applying an interdisciplinary approach, the thesis examines the processes in which the particular selves are confronted with the plantation order and in which their identities are consolidated, either resisting or crumbling under the social pressure.

The three analytical chapters of the thesis discuss nine of Welty's short stories that were selected from *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty* on the basis of the typology and criteria outlined in the introduction. Without claiming that the nine stories present the sum of Welty's artistic achievement, the texts attempt to demonstrate general tendencies and narrative strategies that the author applies in her short fiction, writing about and within the plantation memory. The selection includes as many different texts as possible and contains three stories and three narratives of their protagonists for each of the chapters whose themes coincide with the three categories featured in the typology.

The first chapter focuses on "Petrified Man," "A Visit of Charity," and "Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden." It characterizes the plantation order, charts the multiple binaries oppressing both the privileged and the marginalized, and argues that the individuals portrayed in the three texts lost their authenticity, replacing it with the rules of social conventionality. The second chapter analyses "A Curtain of Green," "Clytie," and "Circe" and traces their heroines' journey from the inhibited conformity through surge of rebelliousness to the devastating conclusion in which the order prevails. The third chapter interprets "Powerhouse," "The Winds," and "The Wanderers" whose protagonists manage to disentangle themselves from the petrifying social prescriptivism and to create their own, idiosyncratic narratives. The conclusion evaluates the goals stated in the introduction in light of the close readings presented in the three analytical chapters and, establishing a connection between Welty's use of mythology and both the formal and the thematic aspects of her writing, offers a summary of the author's subversive techniques that disrupt the unity of the official discourse.

Key words: identity, New Southern Studies, Eudora Welty, short fiction, plantation memory