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IMAGES OF THE SOUTHERN WHITE WOMAN IN THE ELEVENTH-GRADE
AMERICAN LITERATURE CURRICULUM

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Education

Degree

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Penny B. Ferguson

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to analyze the content of selected twentieth-century fiction by Southern white female writers in terms of the treatment of the role of women to determine if that fiction reflects the transition from a stereotyped view of the role of women in society to a more contemporary androgynous view; (2) to determine through the use of a survey and a current psychological test of androgyny the attitude of selected East Tennessee eleventh-grade English teachers toward the role of women in the South today.

This study is based on three assumptions: (1) the discovery of and adjustment to culturally accepted sex roles is a necessary step in the adolescent's maturation process; (2) twentieth-century fiction which portrays the role of women realistically can serve as useful models for adolescent readers; (3) a study of selected twentieth-century Southern women writers would help teachers and researchers in this field by providing them with specific insight into the status of women in Southern society and how this status has changed since the Civil War.

As background preparation for this analysis, the author researched and presented a broad overview of the following areas: (1) sex-role development of adolescents; (2) sex stereotyping at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels; (3) a history of the changing role of the Southern woman from the antebellum South to the present.

Selected short works by Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty--the twentieth-century Southern women writers most

consistently included (over 90 percent of the time) in the American literature curriculum at the schools surveyed--were analyzed in terms of their treatment of the role of women. Little attention up to this time has been directed to the role of women in the literature being taught at the secondary level, and women writers, especially Southern women, have been instrumental in raising the consciousness of society about the role of women.

In the teacher survey the ratings were analyzed in order to note the presence or absence of stereotyping by teachers. The results were also used to describe the attributes of Southern women today as perceived by selected eleventh-grade English teachers in the study. The researcher felt it important to look at those individuals who have the most input into the development of the curriculum in the areas of textbook selection and choice of works to be included on reading lists, research projects, and in-class novel studies.

Seventy-four percent of those surveyed found the twentieth-century Southern white woman to be androgynous in nature and much more independent and willing to stand up for her beliefs than her predecessors. Similarly, an analysis of the women characters of Porter, O'Connor, and Welty revealed many women unfulfilled and rebellious in stereotypic roles and others assuming more androgynous roles in the family, the community, and the world of work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The South has been geographically, historically, and socially traditional in its view of the role of women. The fact that Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind, one of the most widely read books and widely viewed films of all time, paints such a memorable picture of the genteel womanhood of the antebellum South has encouraged Americans to cling to that romantic view of women in society even though the latter half of the novel depicts Scarlett as she has to cope with the fact that those days are "gone with the wind."

Because of efforts by individuals such as Susan B. Anthony, a great deal of emphasis has been placed in recent years on equality of opportunity for women in both the educational arena and the world of work. Title IX has provided coeducational physical education classes and athletic teams, textbooks have been examined for sexual bias, women's studies have been initiated at the university level, and more and more doors have been opened for women in the world of work. As early as preschool age, both boys and girls are encouraged by children's writers to "fly a jet" or "be a vet."¹ However, little attention has been directed to the role of women in the literature being taught at the secondary level. Because literature has been shown to be a vital medium

¹Theo LeSieg, Maybe You Should Fly a Jet! Maybe You Should Be a Vet! (New York: Random House, Inc., 1980), p. 15.

for shaping attitudes, beliefs, and values and because discovery and adjustment to culturally acceptable sex roles is one of the eight steps in the maturation process of adolescents, English educators should look more closely at the literature being taught, examine their own attitudes, and look for opportunities to promote healthy sex-role identification in high school students.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is twofold:

- (1) to analyze the content of selected twentieth-century fiction by Southern white female writers in terms of the treatment of the role of women to determine if that fiction reflects the transition from a stereotyped view of the role of women in society to a more contemporary androgynous view;
- (2) to determine through the use of a survey and a psychological test of androgyny the attitude of selected East Tennessee eleventh-grade English teachers toward the role of women in the South today.

Assumptions

This study is based on three assumptions:

- (1) the discovery of and adjustment to culturally accepted sex roles is a necessary step in the adolescent's maturation process;

- (2) twentieth-century fiction which portrays the role of women realistically can serve as useful models for adolescent readers;
- (3) a study of selected twentieth-century Southern women writers would help teachers and researchers in this field by providing them with specific insight into the status of women in Southern society and how this status has changed since the Civil War.

Importance of the Study

A study conducted by Mary H. Beaven of Indiana University in 1972 reveals some noteworthy results, especially for English educators and curriculum developers. She illustrates in her study the degree of influence exerted on high school students by the reading programs in their English classes with regard to the kind of female characters that are being presented. Beaven conducted her study to determine what kinds of feminine characters are read about and discussed in high school English classes and to discover which female characters adolescents admire and can form strong identification ties with.²

Beaven's research shows that reading can have at least five different effects on students. It can

- (1) increase knowledge;
- (2) increase or maintain status;

²Mary H. Beaven, "Responses of Adolescents to Feminine Characters in Literature," Research in the Teaching of English, 6 (Spring, 1972), 49.

- (3) reinforce opinions, values, and attitudes;
- (4) help readers become more aware of self, relations with others, and environment;
- (5) provide relief from tension.³

Effects three and four are most significant in the present study. In Beaven's survey 35 percent of the female respondents and 29 percent of the male respondents indicated that they had been strongly influenced to change their thinking by a book read in English class. Forty-six percent of the girls and 34 percent of the boys had been so influenced by a book read on their own. The influential books listed by the girls tended to be biographies and human interest stories with which they could identify, while the boys listed books dealing with adventure or danger.⁴

When Beaven examined the literature read in high school, she found that women played very minor, insignificant roles and were usually "passive and insipid or vicious."⁵ In response to the question concerning how many females read about in English classes that they would most like to resemble, 46 percent of the girls answered "none," and when asked which characters they would like to have as a mother, 47 percent answered "none."⁶ Many students added comments such as the following: "Most of the stories we have read had no women characters." "If there were any, they were only mentioned and never did anything." "None of them were impressive enough for me to remember."⁷

³Beaven, p. 52.

⁴Beaven, p. 54.

⁵Beaven, p. 55.

⁶Beaven, p. 55.

⁷Beaven, p. 56.

This study illustrates that English teachers need to establish more realistic goals for their literature programs and need to include more reading material with women in major roles because adolescent boys and girls are encountering few women whom they admire or with whom they can identify. According to Beaven, the few feminine characters presented could have an unhealthy psychological effect and could promote negative conditioning toward a woman's sex role.⁸

Modeling can play just as significant a part as conditioning in sex role development, Beaven points out in her study. In discussing the primarily unappealing women in the literature program, teachers are drawing attention to models which may have negative or unwholesome traits, thus influencing the adolescent's psychological set toward sex roles. Because the female characters play secondary or insignificant roles, adolescent girls are led to believe that they have less importance than boys.⁹

Psychologists point out that the personality is healthier when people can integrate androgynous elements and become self-actualizing.¹⁰ Therefore, in order to help adolescents become more aware of traits in this process, contends Beaven, it is important for them to have psychologically healthy female characters in their reading programs. This reading may also help adolescents fill cognitive gaps as they go

⁸Beaven, p. 61.

⁹Beaven, p. 62.

¹⁰Joseph H. Pleck, "The Psychology of Sex Roles: Traditional and New Views," in Women and Men: Changing Roles, Relationships, and Perceptions, ed. Libby A. Cater, Anne Firor Scott, and Wendy Martyna (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), p. 192.

through the "identity crisis" and construct stereotypes of sex roles.¹¹ In addition, because our society has become more mobile, adolescents have fewer female role models other than mothers that they actually know well. Relatives tend to be more scattered, neighbors are often total strangers, and classes at school tend to be too large to allow for a close personal relationship with the teacher. The mothers are often dissatisfied with their sex roles as well, as seen in the increase in the divorce rate. Reading becomes increasingly important because the women on television, in the movies, and in magazines are often unrealistic models. Adolescent girls need to be exposed to more choices than those which appear in the mass media. More appropriate literature must be included in the high school curriculum if that goal is to be reached.¹²

Delimitations

Little attention up to this time has been directed to the role of women in the literature being taught at the secondary level, and women writers, especially Southern women, have been instrumental in raising the consciousness of society about the role of women. The list of works to be analyzed in this study was delimited to short fictional works by Southern white women in the twentieth century. Only major, white female characters were analyzed for the purpose of this study.

¹¹Beaven, p. 63.

¹²Beaven, pp. 64-65.

Selected eleventh-grade American literature teachers in representative East Tennessee school systems were surveyed to determine which twentieth-century Southern white female writers were included most often in the curriculum. Selected short works by Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty--the Southern women writers included most consistently (over 90 percent of the time) in the eleventh-grade American literature curriculum at the schools surveyed--were analyzed in terms of their treatment of the role of women.

Definitions

Androgynous. Possession of both masculine and feminine characteristics.¹³

Gender. Various dimensions of maleness and femaleness.¹⁴

Matriarch. An active type of woman who is not necessarily ambitious or competitive with men, but who will direct her extraordinary willpower and certainty of purpose toward nurturing many children or some substitute for them.¹⁵

¹³Diane N. Ruble, "Sex-Role Development," in Developmental Psychology: An Advanced Textbook, ed. Marc H. Bornstein and Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1984), p. 330.

¹⁴Ruble, p. 326.

¹⁵Jane Krause DeMouy, Katherine Anne Porter's Women: The Eye of Her Fiction (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), pp. 10-11.

Sex role. The cultural expectation of the behaviors, characteristics, and social status of males versus females. The "public" face of gender.¹⁶

Sexual orientation or identity. The individual's perception of his or her own consistency within these cultural expectations.¹⁷

Stereotype. Anything that repeats or duplicates something else without variation and lacks individualizing characteristics. The term is applied to commonly held and oversimplified mental pictures or judgments of a person, a race, an issue, or anything.¹⁸

Procedures

The study involved four phases: the review of related literature, the development of the survey, the analysis of the data collected, and the analysis of the content of the short stories.

Content Analysis--Each work was studied to get a general overview, to determine specific characteristics for analysis, and to look at female characters in relation to their role in society.

¹⁶Ruble, p. 326.

¹⁷Ruble, p. 326.

¹⁸C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1972), p. 508.

Survey--The sample surveyed was composed of selected eleventh-grade American literature teachers in representative public high schools in East Tennessee. Twenty-five eleventh-grade English teachers were selected at random by the department chairs at high schools in the following systems: Alcoa City, Anderson County, Blount County, Jefferson County, Knox Consolidated, Lenoir City, Loudon County, McMinn County, Maryville City, Oak Ridge, and Sevier County.

Organization of the Study

The research plan for the study is as follows: Chapter I introduces the topic and explains the rationale of the study; Chapter II contains an overview of related literature; Chapter III discusses the procedure for the survey and the treatment of the data collected; Chapter IV discusses the findings of the survey; Chapter V contains an analysis of the Southern white women characters in selected short works by Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty in terms of their roles in society; and Chapter VI contains a summary of the study and its conclusions as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As background for this study, a broad overview of the following areas will be presented: sex-role development for adolescents; sex stereotyping at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels; and a history of the changing role of the Southern white woman from the antebellum South to the present. This Chapter will then review current research on the female characters in the works of Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty.

Sex-Role Development in Adolescents

Research in educational psychology reveals that sex-role orientation is an important aspect of adolescent development. Concerns about the role of women have been expressed historically, in contemporary society, and for the future.¹⁹ Distinctions between males and females that served a socially acceptable function in earlier time periods may not successfully meet the demands of our complex, technologically advanced society today.

Many changes in U.S. women's sex-role attitudes have occurred during the last twenty-five years. Two studies conducted at the

¹⁹Leanne K. Lamke, "The Impact of Sex-Role Orientation on Self-Esteem in Early Adolescence," Child Development, 53 (December, 1982), 1530.

University of Michigan show that women who are better educated, have better educated husbands, and are employed are more likely to adopt an attitude of equality toward sex roles.²⁰ Women's attitudes about rights in the job market are strongly related to attitudes about roles in the home.

In spite of the fact that there has been greater interest in equality between the sexes from the 1960s to the 1980s, the stereotypes have remained the same. Research has been conducted to evaluate why women's roles and achievements tend to be of lower status than men's.²¹ These stereotypes can have damaging effects because they influence career roles, self-esteem, identity status, and sex-role orientations, as well as personality traits, attitudes, and behavior. Biological differences should not be the delimiting factors with regard to vocational and social roles. The situation by default leaves females with low aspirations and a second-class economic status. Newspaper headlines as recent as June 22, 1987, show that "Top [Female] Students Often Put Family Over Career" and that "Most Jobs at Major Research Universities Still Go to Men."²² Studies show that girls may be limiting

²⁰Karen Oppenheim Mason and John L. Czajka, "Change in U.S. Women's Sex-Role Attitudes, 1964-1974," American Sociological Review, 41 (August, 1976), 573; Arland Thornton and Deborah Freedman, "Changes in the Sex-Role Attitudes of Women, 1962-1977: Evidence from a Panel Study," American Sociological Review, 44 (October, 1979), 831.

²¹Ruble, p. 328.

²²"Top Students Often Put Family Over Career," The Maryville-Alcoa Daily Times, 22 June 1987, p. 8, cols. 2-5; "Most Jobs at Major Research Universities Still Go to Men," The Maryville-Alcoa Daily Times, 22 June 1987, p. 8, cols. 2-4.

their own occupational and educational opportunities by adhering to more traditional attitudes and thereby maintaining a less positive self-image. When adolescent girls take a less traditional attitude, they acquire a more positive self-image and consequently greatly expand their available opportunities. While opportunities may vary according to degree of adherence to traditional stereotypes, females may ultimately encounter turmoil because boys continue to hold expectations according to traditional sex roles.²³

It is vital that attention be given to the role of women in the secondary school curriculum, especially in the area of literature. According to the study by Galambos, Petersen, Richards, and Gitelson, sexist attitudes are more prevalent among adolescents than other age group except those more than thirty years their senior.²⁴ Women may need to move away from traditional sex-role orientation to resolve identity crises in today's complex society. A study conducted by Gwyneth E. Britton at Oregon State University shows that reading series and choices of reading material influence students' current and future roles in society. This influence begins as early as first grade and continues throughout a student's academic career.²⁵

²³Nancy L. Galambos, Anne C. Petersen, Maryse Richards, and Idy B. Gitelson, "The Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA): A Study of Reliability and Validity," Sex Roles, 13 (September, 1985), 354-55.

²⁴Galambos, Petersen, Richards, and Gitelson, p. 343.

²⁵Gwyneth E. Britton, "Sex Stereotyping and Career Roles," Journal of Reading, 17 (November, 1973), 147.

Two main ways in which sex-role development occurs are through reinforcement, mainly that of parents and teachers, and through modeling.²⁶ Much observational learning can take place through modeling, and literature is a prime vehicle. Children tend to recall gender-inconsistent information from stories more easily than gender-consistent information.²⁷

A study by J. Wesley Schneyer of the University of Pennsylvania illustrates that reading stories containing material designed to influence attitudes, followed by discussion and reaction, can produce changes in children's attitudes. The discussions help students to clear up misconceptions and share their feelings on this topic. Schneyer also maintains that it is vital to keep teacher biases from surfacing because students may gear their responses to please the teacher if the teacher's feelings are discernible or presented in a forceful manner.²⁸

Adolescence is a time of change which includes the internalization of stereotyped sex roles, and these newly entrenched roles dictate attitude development and shifts in information processing.²⁹ Through literature students can view the sex-role development of high-interest characters in an objective way with a minimum of embarrassment on the personal level. To avoid damaging effects, students need a change in the literature which socializes them so that their views and patterns can be

²⁶Ruble, p. 346.

²⁷Ruble, p. 360.

²⁸J. Wesley Schneyer, "Effects of Reading on Children's Attitudes," The Reading Teacher, 23 (October, 1969), 51.

²⁹Ruble, p. 361.

changed. Students should be presented with alternative choices for women in American culture.

Sex Stereotyping in the Elementary School

Women on Words and Images, a twenty-five member task force of the Central New Jersey NOW organization, conducted a study entitled "Dick and Jane as Victims: Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers."³⁰ Studies about sex stereotyping in elementary readers abound. Because of the interest generated by this type of study, both educational publishers and teachers have become more concerned about including children's books and stories in the elementary school curriculum which show girls in nontraditional roles. Elementary school language arts teachers and curriculum developers have begun to use materials which show girls in nonstereotyped roles, thus helping to reshape and redefine female roles.

Women's Studies at the University Level

Likewise, women's studies are now more frequently included at the college level. According to Elaine Showalter, in "Women and the Literary Curriculum," over one hundred courses, including one-fourth of the

³⁰Women on Words and Images Task Force, "Dick and Jane as Victims: Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers," in And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education, ed. Judith Stacey, Susan Bereaud, and Joan Daniels (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974), p. 159.

literature courses, at the college level deal with the concerns of women.³¹ These courses are offered by various departments including philosophy, psychology, health, sociology, educational and counseling psychology, and English. A greater consciousness of women is being stimulated, and various cultural views of women's roles are included for analysis.

Even though more attention to women exists at the college level, Jean S. Mullen points out that many deficiencies still exist involving women writers in freshman literature textbooks. She observed the following data concerning freshman English anthologies:

- (1) The ratio of women to men writers was 7 percent to 93 percent;
- (2) Male writers were used as writers to imitate, while women writers were merely used to illustrate techniques;
- (3) Over 90 percent of the study material available was written and prepared by men.³²

Elaine Showalter points out similar results after conducting a study of male and female writers in courses offered by the English department at a women's college. Included were 313 male writers, but only seventeen women writers.³³ She also contends that such an inequality, coupled with the fact that more college English professors

³¹ Elaine Showalter, "Women and the Literary Curriculum," in And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education, ed. Judith Stacey, Susan Bereaud, and Joan Daniels (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974), p. 320.

³² Jean S. Mullen, "Part I: Women Writers in Freshman Textbooks," College English, 34 (October, 1972), 79-80.

³³ Showalter, p. 318.

are men, teaches women that the masculine viewpoint is the norm and that women are insignificant--a lesson that can be very damaging to the self-image and self-confidence of women students.³⁴ She goes on to cite the vast curricular possibilities through women's studies in literature to correct this deficiency. Florence Howe comments that her college major was English and that she did not read a single woman writer during her four years at Hunter, at that time a woman's college, and thus her heroes were male.³⁵

Marcia Lieberman points out that sexism can affect literature at three levels: authorial, critical, and conventional. Male writers may impose sexist views of female psychology upon the characters they create; critics may make judgments based on sexist preconceptions; and the heroine's treatment and fate may be shaped by a literary convention reflecting the values of the culture.³⁶ The sexual double standard is also prevalent. Young women must understand what they are being told about themselves and their relation to society in the novels they read; the plays, movies, and television programs they see; and the fashion

³⁴ Showalter, p. 319.

³⁵ Florence Howe, "Feminism and Literature," in Images of Women in Literature: Feminist Perspectives, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), p. 256.

³⁶ Marcia R. Lieberman, "Sexism and the Double Standard in Literature," in Images of Women in Literature: Feminist Perspectives, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), p. 326.

magazines they flip through, asserts Diana Trilling.³⁷ These influences constitute the other education they are being exposed to along with their schooling.

Sex Stereotyping at the Secondary Level

Although more attention has been paid to sex stereotyping and sexism at the elementary and postsecondary levels, some attention is now being directed to inequalities at the high school level. Marsha Federbush analyzes school math books and concludes that they are not "pure, objective, and scientific."³⁸ Girls are placed in stereotyped activities and careers, such as sewing, house cleaning, or grocery shopping; and feminine leaders in the history of math, such as the great algebraist Emmy Noether, are never mentioned.³⁹ Although many textbook companies are trying to rectify these inequalities, problems still exist.

Studies have also been done of high school history textbooks. Janice Law Trecker, who examined twelve of the most popular United States history texts with copyrights during the 1960s, feels that the treatment of women in high school history texts reflects the attitudes

³⁷Diana Trilling, "The Image of Women in Contemporary Literature," in The Women in America, ed. Robert Jay Lifton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 55.

³⁸Marsha Federbush, "The Sex Problems of School Math Books," in And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education, ed. Judith Stacey, Susan Bereaud, and Joan Daniels (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974), p. 178.

³⁹Federbush, p. 180.

and prejudices of society and reinforces familiar stereotypes.⁴⁰ She states that the texts "treat men's activities and goals as history, women's as supplementary material."⁴¹ Controversial women are omitted; women's rights, problems, and position are avoided; and the linguistic habit of using male pronouns to refer to both males and females leads students to assume that all activities were carried on by men. In attempting to refute the argument offered by textbook authors that space is limited, Trecker questions whether the aerialist who walked a tightrope across Niagara Falls is more important than some key female figures in American history.⁴²

The secondary English curriculum is not exempt from this scrutiny. Susan L. Wiik contends that "current textbook literature perpetuates the female stereotypes which cruelly limit and define an adolescent female in terms of second class status."⁴³ An English teacher does not hesitate to make a class study of a novel or play in which the central character is a male, "to expect girls to read story after story about boys with interest and admiration," yet many would hesitate to use a work in which the central figure is a girl.⁴⁴ In the 450 selections from the fifteen

⁴⁰ Janice Law Trecker, "Women in U.S. History High-School Textbooks," in And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education, ed. Judith Stacey, Susan Bereaud, and Joan Daniels (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1974), p. 265.

⁴¹ Trecker, p. 267.

⁴² Trecker, pp. 266-67.

⁴³ Susan L. Wiik, "The Sexual Bias of Textbook Literature," English Journal, 62 (February, 1973), 224.

⁴⁴ Wiik, p. 224.

literature anthologies that Wiik examined, all of which had been published since 1963, few, if any women were pictured as working outside the home, an unrealistic picture of what today's adolescent girl can expect as an adult. In spite of the fact that only 1 percent of today's occupations is better suited to one sex, women are often confined to low-skilled, repetitive jobs or to jobs which assist men. The 450 selections studied included 411 male characters and 87 female characters. Only 28 female characters were depicted in nonstereotyped roles.⁴⁵

A study by Kay Shurden, entitled "An Analysis of Adolescent Responses to Feminine Characters in Literature Widely Read by Students in Secondary School," analyzes the perceptions of adolescents about female characters in selected popular adolescent novels. She concludes that books specifically written with a teenage audience in mind and books read most widely by girls present more stereotypic characters than the books written with a wider audience in mind.⁴⁶

Another study dealing with sex stereotyping in the secondary English curriculum was done by Gwyneth E. Britton. She discovered a type of caste system in regard to major character role assignments and career roles in existence at the junior high/ senior high level that was more "gross" than that at the elementary level. Sixty-two percent of the 334

⁴⁵Wiik, pp. 228-29.

⁴⁶Kay Shurden, "An Analysis of Adolescent Responses to Feminine Characters in Literature Widely Read by Students in Secondary School," Ed.D. dissertation, The University of Tennessee, 1975, p. iv.

stories were male dominant, with only 12 percent female dominant.⁴⁷ In addition, the career role assignments delegated to women were not only more limited in number but also in variety and quality. For example, females were most often depicted as mother, teacher, or nurse.⁴⁸ According to Britton, "These girls do not initiate any action, solve problems, build, create, or persevere. They appear vacuous, nonachieving, unthinking observers, always subordinate to males."⁴⁹

Sex role behavior, attitudes, and values are now being determined to a large extent by textbook publishers. According to attorney Karen DeCrow,

In case the image of women has not been totally instilled in a little girl before she is five years old, by television and by her parents and friends, school finishes the job. Teachers are individuals, and school curricula vary from locale to locale, so it can be argued that there is no uniform content. However, one crucial item in the educative process is standard: the textbook. . . . There are about 15 major textbook companies which control about 90 percent of the textbook market. They watch each other closely and produce very similar products. And they have the image of woman as helpmate, as mother, as observer of male activities, included in every book. School attendance is compulsory in this country. This means that every young girl must read about herself as passive citizen for 12 years--by law.⁵⁰

Some changes, however, have already begun to appear in the literature curriculum. In response to the report of the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities, "A Matter of Simple Justice," in 1970, Nancy Wells reports a revision in the American

⁴⁷ Britton, p. 146.

⁴⁸ Britton, p. 141.

⁴⁹ Britton, p. 145.

⁵⁰ Britton, p. 146.

literature curriculum at her high school in San Pedro, California.⁵¹ An elective, ten-week course, "Women in American Literature," explores some alternative choices for women in American culture in regard to life style, career choices, and experiences. In her article "Sirens and Seeresses: Women in Literature and the High School Curriculum," Lois Josephs Fowler makes suggestions about how to explore the role of women in literature in the secondary English curriculum. Teachers must "deliberately raise issues related to women's roles in all literature, film, or language study," she contends, so students will be better equipped to challenge the myths and stereotypes that have been handed down to them from the past.⁵²

History of the Changing Role of the Southern Woman

In the antebellum South the aristocratic woman was reared to believe that her main purpose for existence was to love, honor, and obey her husband, to bring up his children, and to manage his household. Her education was confined to training at home or in a boarding school, where she learned more about correct ladylike behavior rather than receiving any sort of mental stimulation. Her subservient position was

⁵¹Nancy Wells, "Women in American Literature," English Journal, 62 (November, 1973), 1159.

⁵²Lois Josephs Fowler, "Sirens and Seeresses: Women in Literature and the High School Curriculum," English Journal, 62 (November, 1973), 1124.

reinforced by a strong emphasis on religion, which demanded obedience to God and husband.⁵³

An active social life was encouraged at a young age, fourteen or fifteen, so that young girls could meet young men with whom they were encouraged to flirt and hopefully enter into matrimony. Marriages were often arranged, and love was not a primary consideration as girls often had to accept any male prospect who proposed.⁵⁴

The carefree young girl then had to make a shocking adjustment, often as the mistress of a plantation with many slaves for whom she was responsible. She also had to endure endless pregnancies: "For thirty years of their lives many women had an infant in their arms."⁵⁵ Many died in childbirth while others grew old very quickly. The plantation mistress also had to worry about miscegenation and the double standard of morals.

Southern women at this time were primarily confined to a domestic role in a narrow, provincial society. Without education and legal support, they saw no escape route. The husband had custody of his wife and their children, control and sole ownership of her estate, and the right to her wages, if any. Women were treated as second-class citizens since they could not make a will, sue, or inherit property. However, the fate of a spinster was worse. For respectability she had to live

⁵³Barbro Ekman, The End of a Legend: Ellen Glasgow's History of Southern Women (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1979), p. 17.

⁵⁴Ekman, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁵Ekman, p. 18.

with her relatives, work without pay, and hold a position scarcely above that of a servant in the household. She was indeed an object of pity.⁵⁶

During the Civil War the Southern belle's life began to change drastically. With their husbands engaged in the war, women assumed control of the running of the plantations, and many served as nurses or did volunteer work at the hospitals as well. Because many fathers, sons, husbands, and brothers were casualties of the war and because Northern armies invaded deeper and deeper into the South, causing many families to evacuate, Southern women were forced to be independent. According to Barbro Ekman, Southern women "had been taught that they were inferior beings and helpless without men; now they discovered that they could manage very well."⁵⁷ One Southern gentleman, John Andrew Rice, observed, "The men went away from home to other battlefields, leaving the women free to manage farm and plantation . . . ; when they returned . . . they found their surrogates in complete and competent charge and liking it."⁵⁸

By the Reconstruction Period, a new type of Southern woman was beginning to emerge. She had learned how to be self-sufficient and was now very aware of the need for better education. Many of these women became teachers, and in 1884 the first state-supported college for women in the United States was established in the South--the State Industrial

⁵⁶ Ekman, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁷ Ekman, p. 20.

⁵⁸ Ekman, p. 20.

Institute and College in Mississippi.⁵⁹ This college provided the first systematic training to prepare women for work. As family size began to decrease, keeping house became easier, and general health improvements were made, women became dissatisfied with their inferior positions and entered the world of work. Several women, among them Mary Wollstonecraft, Sarah Hale, Sarah Grimke, and Margaret Fuller, had been working for the emancipation of women for years; and their efforts culminated in the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, during which women's grievances were made public. By the turn of the century, women had acquired many of their demands except the ballot.⁶⁰

As far as the image of women was concerned, the South had always been several decades behind the more emancipated Northern, Eastern, and Western states. Even in 1900 women in many Southern states were not allowed to vote, were barred from many schools and colleges, and could not hold office or practice law.⁶¹

World War I helped to tear down barriers and complete the transition from Southern lady to "new woman." With men involved in the war, it was considered patriotic for women to join the world of work. Short hair and short skirts were exchanged for the impractical trailing gowns and the long hair that was so difficult to keep tidy.⁶² The use of makeup and cigarettes was another sign that women were changing.

⁵⁹ Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 113.

⁶⁰ Ekman, pp. 21-22.

⁶¹ Ekman, p. 23.

⁶² Ekman, p. 24.

Although woman's suffrage was brought about in 1920, women still had several obstacles to true equality: the demands of home and family, widespread male opposition, and woman's unwillingness to assume large, typically male responsibilities. However, women did have the independence to avoid rushing into marriage, not to marry at all, or to divorce in the case of unsuitable matches. With the use of contraceptives and advances in medicine, family sizes were limited, and women lived longer, giving them more time for careers or other activities as their children grew up.⁶³

Obviously, many changes had been brought about by the Civil War, Reconstruction, Industrialism, World War I, and the Feminist Movement. According to Ernest R. Groves, there were four clearly marked trends affecting woman's position in the twentieth century. First of all, with the influence of science, inventions, and discoveries, managing a home and family became easier, causing changes in the domestic and social habits of women. Then, as barriers were torn down, women became independent wage earners as they invaded industries and professions, often out of necessity because of widowhood or the increased divorce rate. A third trend centered around the progress in women's organizations and societies which worked to further the women's rights movement and to bring about social reform. A fourth trend concerned women's outlook on life. They began to become aware of personal rights,

⁶³Ekman, p. 25.

realizing that before all else they were human beings with a right to their own lives and a right to be happy.⁶⁴

In spite of these great strides, according to a report of the Southern Regional Council, women are still receiving rough treatment in the marketplace. Women continued throughout the 1970s to hold jobs with low status and low pay. In the sixteen cities surveyed, only 1 percent of all skilled workers were women, and most of their salaries were under \$13,000.⁶⁵

In 1974, Hymowitz and Weissman reported that women comprised 43 percent of all workers, but one half of the women were confined to these ten occupations: secretary, salesworker, domestic, elementary school teacher, bookkeeper, waitress, typist, cashier, seamstress, and nurse. They also reported that women were the last hired and the first fired.⁶⁶ Women have come a long way, making tremendous strides in basically a masculine civilization, but they have not yet achieved total equality with men either in society or in the classroom.

Thus, historians record that Southern women began moving out of that romantic tradition with its old ideals and code of chivalry as the code clashed with the new age. The liberated, new women arose to take her place. However, some remnants still exist, or existed as late as

⁶⁴Ernest R. Groves, The American Woman: The Feminine Side of a Masculine Civilization (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1944), p. 325.

⁶⁵Shirley Abbott, Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South (New Haven, Connecticut: Tichnor and Fields, 1983), p. 166.

⁶⁶Carol Hymowitz and Michaela Weissman, A History of Women in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1978), pp. 372-73.

1959, according to Frances Gray Patton: the Southern woman "has become a tradition, a folk symbol, as indigenous to her region as Br'er Rabbit, the beaten biscuit or the julep."⁶⁷ However, underneath the facade an independent, often strong-willed woman may be lurking. As Reynolds Price once said, "Southern women are Mack trucks disguised as powder puffs."⁶⁸

Ekman contends that there are four main differences between the Victorian woman and the new woman:

- (1) their attitudes toward tradition;
- (2) their views on love and marriage;
- (3) their needs for self-expression and development of character;
- (4) their changing positions brought about by economic and social transitions of the New South.⁶⁹

The South has traditionally been more conservative and stereotyped in its view of the role of women. According to Sharon McKern, in her book Redneck Mothers, Good Ol' Girls and Other Southern Belles, "The myth and mystique have been perpetuated in so many novels, screenplays, and songs that most Americans believe that Southern women are special."⁷⁰ Even Southern women think they are different in the way that "a wide technicolor screen differs from a narrow black and white one."⁷¹ In fact, this image is what Shirley Abbott, author of Womenfolks:

⁶⁷ Frances Gray Patton, "Anatomy of the Southern Belle," Holiday, 26 (November, 1959), 76.

⁶⁸ Sharon McKern, Redneck Mothers, Good Ol' Girls and Other Southern Belle: A Celebration of the Women of Dixie (New York: The Viking Press, 1979), p. 3.

⁶⁹ Ekman, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁰ McKern, p. xi.

⁷¹ McKern, p. xi.

Growing Up Down South feels causes Southern women to leave home: "They run away . . . from the ramshackle mythology of ladies and belles, virtuous Christian motherhood, and all the rest of it."⁷² Southern society presented its women with at least five different images of what they should be and asked them to be good at all of them.

The Southern Woman Writer on the Role of Southern Women

As women gained more equality in the twentieth century, women began appearing as writers as well. It is important to look at women as writers, especially Southern women, because they have been so instrumental in raising the consciousness of society about the role of women. Jean Mullen comments that the woman writer is in a strategic position to promote awareness of the prevalent sexual stereotyping and discrimination.⁷³ In addition, the Southern woman writer really cares about the problem. She writes not only about the South, but from the heart of the South, the people and their culture.

Katherine Anne Porter

It was not until the mid to late 1970s that critics began to take an interest in Katherine Anne Porter's treatment of the role of women, and only two studies dealing with women prior to that time are worthy of

⁷²Abbott, p. 192.

⁷³Mullen, p. 79.

notice. Both Shirley E. Johnson, in "Love Attitudes in the Fiction of Katherine Anne Porter," and Malcolm M. Marsden, in "Love as Threat in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction," deal with Porter's assertion that romantic love is a fallacy and does not exist. According to Johnson, Porter's heroines become disillusioned when they discover that the romantic tales about love are not true, and they must "replace fictions concerning love and marriage with facts."⁷⁴ Their lives are then made bearable only through resignation, and if they choose to remain spinsters, the resignation is tainted by bitterness over lost illusions, and if they become widows, they end up assuming the responsibilities of men without any of the privileges.⁷⁵

Marsden expands on the theme to imply that love includes both hate and violence in the world of Katherine Anne Porter's fiction. In conflict with a human's desire to live in peace with another person is the fear that his own individuality will be diminished. Some who love are able to reconcile their problems and achieve this delicate balance. Others isolate themselves from human involvement to avoid this problem, while a third group deeply resents the demands made on their existence, and they become hostile.⁷⁶ Porter illustrates through her work that the balance in love can be rewarding although difficult to achieve.

⁷⁴Shirley E. Johnson, "Love Attitudes in the Fiction of Katherine Anne Porter," West Virginia University Philological Papers, 13 (1961), 83.

⁷⁵Johnson, p. 92.

⁷⁶Malcolm M. Marsden, "Love as Threat in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction," Twentieth Century Literature, 13 (April, 1967), 29.

Perceiving the Miranda stories as a type of female bildungsroman or stories of growing up female in the South, Flanders, Fetterley, and Hennessy were three of the first to take a feminist approach to Porter's work. Jane Flanders, in "Katherine Anne Porter and the Ordeal of Southern Womanhood," contends that Porter was objecting to woman's "emotional frustration" and "sexual repressions" in a world governed by man's law.⁷⁷ Flanders comments, "Porter takes as her subject the rigidly circumscribed experience and sexual repression of the white Southern woman--kept like the blacks in submission and fear by the doctrines, taboos, and social realities of a paternalistic culture."⁷⁸ While on the one hand family, marriage, and love are threats to a woman's freedom, to attempt to escape these ties to attain independence may be done so only at great cost: by rejecting men and the attitudes of a male society.

Judith Fetterley, in the "The Struggle for Authenticity: Growing Up Female in The Old Order,"⁷⁹ and Rosemary Hennessy, in "Katherine Anne Porter's Models for Heroines,"⁸⁰ focus on the same concerns and take a similar approach. They contend that part of growing up for Miranda is to find authenticity in her own experience and to achieve self-knowledge,

⁷⁷ Jane Flanders, "Katherine Anne Porter and the Ordeal of Southern Womanhood," The Southern Literary Journal, 9 (Fall, 1976), 49.

⁷⁸ Flanders, p. 49.

⁷⁹ Judith Fetterley, "The Struggle for Authenticity: Growing Up Female in The Old Order," The Kate Chopin Newsletter, 2 (1976), 11-19.

⁸⁰ Rosemary Hennessy, "Katherine Anne Porter's Model for Heroines," Colorado Quarterly, 25 (1977), 301-15.

but these ends can only be achieved at the expense of romantic love. Porter challenges the Cinderella myth and offers an alternative.

Barbara Harrell Carson, in "Winning: Katherine Anne Porter's Women," takes her analysis of this theme a step further. She interprets Porter to be saying that it is practically impossible for a woman to find her true self because her opponents are long-standing and formidable: family, society, tradition, romantic myths.⁸¹ These forces have shaped women's attitudes, goals, and actions, and to achieve true selfhood, one must achieve psychological freedom from family. Women can survive alone; their needs and desires are valid.

Both Margaret Bolsterli, in "'Bound' Characters in Porter, Welty, McCullers: The Prerevolutionary Status of Women in American Fiction,"⁸² and Jane DeMouy, in her dissertation "The Seeds of the Pomegranate: A Study of Katherine Anne Porter's Women," point out that Porter was writing about the repressed role of women in Southern society long before the contemporary consciousness was raised in the 1960s and 1970s. DeMouy's new slant is that she looks at both the interior and exterior experiences of women, focusing on the basic psychological conflict as well as the sources of conflict.⁸³

⁸¹Barbara Harrell Carson, "Winning: Katherine Anne Porter's Women," in The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism, ed. Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), p. 245.

⁸²Margaret Bolsterli, "'Bound' Characters in Porter, Welty, McCullers: The Prerevolutionary Status of Women in American Fiction," Bucknell Review, 24 (Spring, 1978), 95-105.

⁸³Jane Krause DeMouy, "The Seeds of the Pomegranate: A Study of Katherine Anne Porter's Women," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1978, p. 11.

Katherine Anne Porter's women are torn between the desire for freedom and independence and the desire for love and security. Thus, love and work often conflict. According to DeMouy, Porter

illustrates that in a traditional society, women are valued more for their beauty than their wit; that activity outside home and the family circle is shameful and unfeminine; that female children will be naturally drawn to the roles of the adult women around them; that for the active, "masculinized" women who reject their preordained role, the wages of sin is either physical or psychic death.⁸⁴

A type of unity exists in an otherwise diverse group of stories if one looks at Porter's stories from the viewpoint of feminine psychology and as a documentation of the ways girls learn, what they learn, and the resulting conflicts.

One of the most recent studies of Katherine Anne Porter's women was done by Suzanne Lillian Bunkers in 1980 for her doctoral dissertation "Katherine Anne Porter: A Re-Assessment." Bunkers takes a different stance than previous critics. She agrees that Porter is taking issue with the society that established and perpetuated such stereotyped roles as the Southern belle and the embittered spinster, roles which often placed women in adversary positions. However, she contends that in the quest for self-identification, women have a need for supportive relationships and for bonding, especially with other women, but also with other generations, classes, and races. Therefore, Porter's women

⁸⁴DeMouy, "The Seeds of the Pomegranate," p. 12.

must often reevaluate the past, with its family myths and legends, in order to create a view of the present which is personally acceptable.⁸⁵

In her 1981 article "More American Adams: Women Heroes in American Fiction," Phyllis W. Barrett sees Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda as fitting into the "American Adam" myth because she is androgynous rather than stereotyped male or female.⁸⁶ According to Barrett, "she is characterized by the same innocence, self-centeredness, vitality, irresponsibility--in short, the unique 'Americanness'--which critics have ascribed to the male protagonists in American fiction."⁸⁷ Women like Miranda "stride, rather than mince, through our fiction . . . ; they, too, long for the open road and the freedom of the forest."⁸⁸ Thus, Barrett concludes, Katherine Anne Porter's stories are not just about growing up female in the South, but about growing up.⁸⁹

Flannery O'Connor

Although some critics have pointed out the villain-like characteristics of Flannery O'Connor's women or have alluded to their similar situations, only two studies deal specifically with O'Connor's women. One of the first systematic studies of Flannery O'Connor's women

⁸⁵Suzanne Lillian Bunker, "Katherine Anne Porter: A Re-Assessment," Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980, p. 143.

⁸⁶Phyllis W. Barrett, "More American Adams: Women Heroes in American Fiction," The Markham Review, 10 (Spring, 1981), 39.

⁸⁷Barrett, p. 40.

⁸⁸Barrett, p. 40.

⁸⁹Barrett, p. 40.

was done by Louise Westling in 1978. The feminine viewpoint is often ignored, Westling contends, because

the problems of women are not of central importance in Flannery O'Connor's view of her stories. She was not a feminist, and except in her fiction there is no indication that the position of women was of interest to her. Her concerns seem to have been focused on intellectual, spiritual, and artistic problems unrelated to sex. The ultimate purpose behind all the cruel tricks and violent twists in her stories is the humbling of pride, shocking her characters into a horrified sense of their helplessness before God.⁹⁰

In her study "Flannery O'Connor's Mothers and Daughters," Westling asserts that O'Connor used a repeated mother-daughter pattern that was clearly autobiographical. In at least six of thirty-one stories, the mother is a self-righteous, hardworking widow who supports and cares for her daughter by running a farm.⁹¹ Although devoted to her daughter, the mother is often baffled and exasperated by her behavior. The daughter is typically large and deformed in some way and is overly intellectual and disagreeable in temperament. Outsiders view her as odd or perverse. Likewise, the intellectual, individualistic Flannery O'Connor spent the majority of her adult years as a semi-invalid being cared for by her mother on a small farm in Georgia. The problems of women such as these run as a "turbulent undercurrent" in O'Connor's work.⁹² Comments Westling, "their distortions express a passionate but inadvertent

⁹⁰ Louise Westling, "Flannery O'Connor's Mothers and Daughters," Twentieth Century Literature, 24 (Winter, 1978), 517.

⁹¹ Westling, p. 510.

⁹² Westling, p. 522.

protest against the lot of womankind. Flannery O'Connor can make these women live because she is one of them."⁹³

The most recent study of O'Connor's women is Mary Lambert Morton's dissertation entitled "With Ground Teeth: A Study of Flannery O'Connor's Women," completed in 1980. In her study Morton looks at twenty-five females who are protagonists or antagonists in O'Connor's short stories as well as her novel Wise Blood. Overall, she contends that the women, who are independent, singleminded, devoid of moral sense, rigid, and often shallow and unimaginative, completely disregard traditional roles. They lose the struggles in which they engage and generate both the horror and the comedy in her works. However, Morton takes her analysis a step further by dividing O'Connor's women into four archetypal groups. The first group consists of the farm manager, who is characterized by her optimism, cleanliness, work ethic, and belief in the social order of the South. The second group includes her chthonic double, the prophet of disaster, who looks on the dark side of life and retains a sense of mystery. The third type, the surrogate-mother, is often preoccupied with her offspring and displays a smug self-satisfaction because of her faith in the work ethic and her own energies. The last type, the seductress, can be intellectual or nonintellectual, and she pursues not only the bodies but also the souls of men. These women are often frustrated and vindictive.⁹⁴

⁹³Westling, p. 511.

⁹⁴Mary Lambert Morton, "With Ground Teeth: A Study of Flannery O'Connor's Women," Ph.D. dissertation, The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1980, pp. xvi-xvii.

Eudora Welty

Studies of the role of women in the works of Eudora Welty have been appearing for the last twenty-five years. The studies have focused on the types of female characters she has created, their choices and roles, especially with regard to love, marriage, and the family, and the world in which they live.

Buswell, Tapley, and Kelly consider the types of characters presented in Welty's work and the impediments to their achievement of life-fulfillment or true happiness. Mary Catherine Buswell, in her article "The Love Relationships of Women in the Fiction of Eudora Welty," divides Welty's female characters into three groups: the old maid, the young unmarried girl, and the married woman.⁹⁵ She contends that it is difficult for these females to achieve meaningful relationships--even though love is possible--because of lack of communication and consideration by males, because of barriers caused by pregnancies, and because of the male's refusal to accept sexual responsibility.⁹⁶

Similarly, Philip Allen Tapley, in his dissertation entitled "The Portrayal of Women in Selected Short Stories by Eudora Welty," divides Welty's female characters into three groups: initiates, isolated

⁹⁵Mary Catherine Buswell, "The Love Relationships of Women in the Fiction of Eudora Welty," West Virginia University Philological Papers, 13 (1961), 95.

⁹⁶Buswell, p. 101.

spinsters, and mother-women. The initiates are in the process of becoming more aware of themselves in relation to others and their environment; the spinsters are isolated spiritually, psychologically, and economically; and the mother-women are totally devoted to home and family. However, although commonalities exist, Tapley feels that Welty successfully individualizes her characters to avoid stereotypes.⁹⁷

Edward E. Kelly, in his article "Eudora Welty's Hollow Women," focuses on two women in an Old Ladies' Home in "A Visit of Charity" to illustrate the hopelessness and emptiness of those who are unable to love. They are "empty-headed and empty-handed nonpersons" similar to T. S. Eliot's characters in his poem "The Hollow Men."⁹⁸

Other studies deal with the choices and roles of Welty's female characters. One of seven American women writers discussed in Marjorie Ann Romines' study entitled "House, Procession, River: Domestic Ritual in the Fiction of Seven American Women, 1877-1972," Welty utilizes domestic ritual as a prominent topic in her fiction. The women are at the center of the domestic shelter, symbolized by the house, and the ritual is symbolized by the procession leading in and out. Welty departs from the norm in two of her novels by having a man remain in the

⁹⁷ Philip Allen Tapley, "The Portrayal of Women in Selected Short Stories by Eudora Welty," Ph.D. dissertation, The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1974, pp. 15-16.

⁹⁸ Edward E. Kelly, "Eudora Welty's Hollow Women," Notes on Modern American Literature, 6 (Autumn, 1982), 15.

domestic shelter in Losing Battles and by having a woman depart from it in The Optimist's Daughter.⁹⁹

In a second dissertation, "Women's Choices: A Study of the Feminine Characters in the Novels of Eudora Welty" by Frances Beck Foreman, the choices made by the women in Welty's five novels are analyzed. Foreman contends that the women in Welty's first four novels follow traditional female roles: they either strive to marry and have children, to find contentment in nurturing roles in the family or community, and if unmarried to select nurturing occupations, such as teaching or nursing, which are merely extensions of the family. However, Foreman points out that there is a distinct break with this pattern in her fifth novel, The Optimist's Daughter, set in the 1960s. Laurel selects a career in a typically male field--fabric designing.¹⁰⁰

Two critics to focus on the polarities regarding women in the work of Eudora Welty are Robert Penn Warren and Susan Jane Hoerchner. Warren, in his article "Love and Separateness in Eudora Welty," feels that the theme of innocence versus experience is prominent in Welty's work. In developing that theme she indicates that love and knowledge are at two poles not easily reconciled because true knowledge often dispels dreams

⁹⁹ Marjorie Ann Romines, "House, Procession, River: Domestic Ritual in the Fiction of Seven American Women, 1877-1972," Ph.D. dissertation, The George Washington University, Dissertation Abstracts International, 38, (1978), 5467A.

¹⁰⁰ Frances Beck Foreman, "Women's Choices: A Study of the Feminine Characters in the Novels of Eudora Welty," Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Florida, 1981, p. 196.

of romantic or idealized love.¹⁰¹ Likewise, Hoerchner examines this theme in her dissertation "'I Have to Keep the Two Things Separate': Polarity in Women in the Contemporary American Novel." She analyzes how women in American fiction are portrayed in terms of a sexual versus a social polarity. According to Hoerchner, a few authors such as Welty show, however, that it is possible to transcend this polarity: women can simultaneously think and love.¹⁰²

Several studies revolve around the topic of love as it relates to Eudora Welty's women. Noel Polk, in "Water, Wanderers, and Weddings: Love in Eudora Welty," contends that Welty looks at what love does to and for individuals in their everyday lives. It is "the source at once of the joy as well as the sorrow, of the clarity as well as of the confusion, of the despair as well as of the hope."¹⁰³ Love is possible, Welty tells the reader through her fiction, but it is also one of the most difficult emotions humans deal with and the source of many of their problems because "love entails relationship, and relationship entails responsibility, and responsibility entails a loss of freedom. And that loss of freedom, however willingly we accept it and bear it, is all too

¹⁰¹Robert Penn Warren, "Love and Separateness in Eudora Welty," in Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1958), pp. 162-63.

¹⁰²Susan Jane Hoerchner, "'I Have to Keep the Two Things Separate': Polarity in Women in the Contemporary American Novel," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, Dissertation Abstracts International, 34 (1974), 7233A.

¹⁰³Noel Polk, "Water, Wanderers, and Weddings: Love in Eudora Welty," in Eudora Welty: A Form of Thinks, ed. Louis Dollarhide and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), p. 98.

frequently a heavy burden. It is the high price we pay for family and friends and love."¹⁰⁴

Alun R. Jones also comments on the theme of love in the works of Eudora Welty. Her works, according to Jones, revolve around the theme of man's loneliness and search for love. She illustrates that love is more important than possessions and that love is a virtuous and worthy human activity: "The tragedy of man is to be separate and lonely, his glory is to be capable of dissolving his loneliness with love."¹⁰⁵

William J. Stuckey, in his article "The Use of Marriage in Welty's The Optimist's Daughter," focuses on family relationships, particularly marriages, in the works of Eudora Welty. Love may or may not result in a happy marriage in a Welty novel, but through the marriages which take place, the author illustrates her belief that marriage is more than self-gratification.¹⁰⁶ A good marriage involves responsibility as well as love. Jane L. Hinton goes on to say, in "The Role of Family in Delta Wedding, Losing Battles, and The Optimist's Daughter," that family gatherings--such as weddings, reunions, and funerals--are traditional rituals which draw families together in this matriarchal society: "These gatherings embody the value of the family as the most important

¹⁰⁴Polk, p. 122.

¹⁰⁵Alun R. Jones, "The World of Love: The Fiction of Eudora Welty," in The Creative Present: Notes on Contemporary American Fiction, ed. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 182.

¹⁰⁶William J. Stuckey, "The Use of Marriage in Welty's The Optimist's Daughter," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 17 (December, 1975), 37.

institution which shapes and guides the lives of the characters, for good or ill."¹⁰⁷

Elizabeth M. Kerr, Margaret J. Bolsterli, and Peggy W. Prenshaw focus specifically on the world of women in the works of Eudora Welty. In the article "The World of Eudora Welty's Women," Kerr discusses the initiation theme and illustrates Welty's belief that there are obstacles standing in the way of woman's quest for love and self-fulfillment: "family tyranny," "community indifference," as well as social and economic standards determining the acceptable choices of girls as they reached maturity.¹⁰⁸ Welty exposes those unwritten laws of Southern society:

Women are created solely for the purposes of serving man as wife or mistress and producing children. If, in this world, a woman plays other roles, by choice or necessity, she is relegated to an inferior status. A single woman is cursed: single blessedness is the prerogative of bachelors or widowers.¹⁰⁹

Margaret Jones Bolsterli takes a different stance on this issue in her article "Woman's Vision: The Worlds of Women in Delta Wedding, Losing Battles, and The Optimist's Daughter." She interprets Welty's fictional world to be a woman's culture where women are the shapers and

¹⁰⁷Jane L. Hinton, "The Role of Family in Delta Wedding, Losing Battles, and The Optimist's Daughter," in Eudora Welty: Critical Essays, ed. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), p. 120.

¹⁰⁸Elizabeth M. Kerr, "The World of Eudora Welty's Women," in Eudora Welty: Critical Essays, ed. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), pp. 133-34.

¹⁰⁹Kerr, p. 147.

movers of the community. According to Bolsterli, "It is the interactions of these women, their relationships with each other, and their visions of life which form the fabric of the novels."¹¹⁰ Although the women still hold traditional nurturing roles, Welty illustrates that their activities and ambitions must be taken seriously and that the world of women should be recognized and valued.

Peggy W. Prenshaw, who has done extensive research on Eudora Welty, states a similar theme in her article "Woman's World, Man's Place: The Fiction of Eudora Welty." In this matriarchal society Welty depicts women as having dominance or prestige because they own the land, give birth to the children, and are involved in domestic ritual--cooking, feeding, sewing, gardening, and other nurturing activities. Men's roles are merely defined by their relationships with women.¹¹¹ The women are self-sufficient and family centered but do not seek a separate life because their work is valued. Thus, Prenshaw concludes that there are three realms of human existence in Welty's work: biological (matriarchal); individual (masculine); and feminine. The dominance of women in Welty's world is clear; men merely share a place there.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Margaret Bolsterli, "Woman's Vision: The Worlds of Women in Delta Wedding, Losing Battles, and The Optimist's Daughter," in Eudora Welty: Critical Essays, ed. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), p. 149.

¹¹¹ Peggy W. Prenshaw, "Woman's World, Man's Place: The Fiction of Eudora Welty," in Eudora Welty: A Form of Thanks, ed. Louis Dollarhide and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), p. 54.

¹¹² Prenshaw, p. 75.

This Chapter provides necessary background on the sex-role development of adolescents and sex stereotyping at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels as well as a brief history of the changing role of the Southern woman from the antebellum South to the present. Studies on the white female characters in the works of Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty have also been reviewed. The next Chapter will deal with the survey utilized to determine the extent to which twentieth-century, Southern white women writers are included in the eleventh-grade American literature curriculum and with the psychological test of androgyny used to assess the attitudes of selected East Tennessee eleventh-grade English teachers toward the role of women in the South today.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE FOR TEACHER SURVEY

A preliminary survey was utilized to determine the extent to which Southern white female fiction writers are included in the secondary English curriculum at the eleventh-grade level and to assess the attitudes of teachers at this grade level toward the role of the Southern white woman in society today.

These ratings were analyzed in order to note the presence or absence of stereotyping by teachers. The results were also used to describe the attributes of white Southern women today as perceived by the selected eleventh-grade English teachers in this study.

The Population

The population for the study consisted of twenty-five eleventh-grade English teachers, one each from twenty-five representative high schools from eleven different public school systems in East Tennessee: Alcoa City (Alcoa High), Anderson County (Anderson County High, Clinton High), Blount County (Heritage High, William Blount High), Jefferson County (Jefferson County High), Knox Consolidated (Bearden High, Carter High, Central High, Doyle High, Farragut High, Fulton High, Karns High, Powell High, West High), Lenoir City (Lenoir City High), Loudon County (Greenback High, Loudon High), Maryville City (Maryville High), McMinn

County (McMinn Central High, McMinn County High), Oak Ridge City (Oak Ridge High), and Sevier County (Gatlinburg-Pittman High, Sevier County High, Seymour High). Eleventh-grade teachers were selected for the study because American literature is typically taught at this grade level. Twenty-three (92 percent) of the twenty-five selected teachers responded.

The Method

To obtain the teachers' perceptions of the Southern white woman in society today, a psychological test called the "Bem Sex-Role Inventory"¹¹³ was utilized. Respondents were also asked to fill out a personal information survey (see Appendix A) regarding age (25 and under, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41+), gender, years of teaching experience (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 15+), and recency of formal academic training (within the last three years, within the last five years, within the last seven years, within the last ten years, none since graduation). Two additional questions were included to determine which twentieth-century Southern white female fiction writers were represented in the eleventh-grade American literature curriculum and the extent to which these writers were being included (in the text, on reading lists, on research projects, as in-class novels). The writers included most

¹¹³Sandra L. Bem, Bem Inventory (Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1978).

frequently--Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty--were selected for analysis.

The surveys were sent by mail, with a cover letter (see Appendix B) explaining the project, to the selected schools in care of the English department chair. If more than one teacher in each school taught eleventh-grade English, then the choice of a respondent was made by the department chair. The teachers were instructed to fill out the survey, which took approximately ten minutes, and to return the survey in the stamped, addressed envelope provided within five working days. Teachers were informed by the cover letter that responses would be anonymous and that only cumulative statistics would be used in the study. The statement was also included that the return of the instrument implied the respondent's consent to have the results published in this dissertation. No one had access to the names of the respondents, and only the researcher had access to the data.

The Instrument

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory, developed by Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1974, 1977), separately assesses psychological femininity and masculinity so that androgynous individuals, those who possess both masculine and feminine traits, can be identified. This inventory (BSRI) remains the most utilized of all androgyny scales.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴James V. Mitchell, Jr., ed., The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook (Lincoln, Nebraska: The Buros Institute of Mental Measurements, 1985), I, 176.

The BSRI short form, the one used in this study, contains ten stereotypically feminine traits ("affectionate," "sympathetic," "sensitive to the needs of others," "understanding," "compassionate," "eager to soothe hurt feelings," "warm," "tender," "loves children," and "gentle"), ten stereotypically masculine traits ("defends own beliefs," "independent," "assertive," "strong personality," "forceful," "has leadership abilities," "willing to take risks," "dominant," "willing to take a stand," and "aggressive"), and ten filler items. These thirty items represent half of the sixty items included on the original inventory. The short form was selected for two reasons: (1) the time element in filling out the inventory and (2) the fact that the short form is considered psychometrically superior in consistency, validity, and reliability.¹¹⁵ The scale reflects the degree to which respondents use "cultural definitions as idealized standards of femininity and masculinity."¹¹⁶

The selected teachers were asked to respond to the thirty items based on their perception of the white Southern woman in society today by using a scale of one to seven, with one being "never or almost never true," two "usually not true," three "sometimes but infrequently true," four "occasionally true," five "often true," six "usually true," and seven "always or almost always true."

¹¹⁵Mitchell, p. 179.

¹¹⁶Mitchell, p. 178.

Treatment of the Data

The ratings by the twenty-three secondary English teachers were treated in two ways. The responses by all twenty-three teachers were added together, and an average rating was found for each of the twenty items (ten feminine and ten masculine) on the inventory. After each average rating was determined, these ratings were entered on a separate Bem Inventory to get a composite view as if placed there by a single participant rather than the twenty-three respondents represented by the figures. The new data on the Bem Inventory was then scored according to the delineated system. The ten items identified as masculine were averaged separately as were those ten items identified as feminine. A corresponding T-score was found for the masculine and feminine averages from a chart provided in the test manual.¹¹⁷ The masculine T-score was then subtracted from the feminine T-score to yield either a positive or a negative number. If the resulting figure is a positive number and is greater than ten, then the finding is considered feminine. A masculine result is determined by obtaining a negative number that is greater than negative ten. A designation of androgynous is reached when the subtraction of the masculine T-score from the feminine T-score falls between a negative ten and a positive ten.

The ratings of the twenty-three participants were then evaluated separately. The value of one through seven marked by each teacher

¹¹⁷ Sandra L. Bem, Bem Sex-Role Inventory: Professional Manual (Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., 1981), p. 6.

for the ten masculine items was totaled and averaged. An average for the ratings of the ten feminine adjectives was then found. Next, a corresponding T-score was determined for the masculine and feminine averages. A subtraction of the masculine T-score from the feminine T-score yielded a number which could then be labeled masculine, feminine, or androgynous in the same manner as the composite label for all twenty-three respondents considered at once was done.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

In the previous Chapter the population, the procedure, the instrument, and the method of treating the data were discussed. This Chapter will present the findings: the demographics of the sample group; the individual views based on age, years of teaching experience, and recency of formal academic training; and the composite view of the Southern white woman.

Demographics of Sample Group

The personal information questions answered by the selected teachers were tabulated for further analysis. All twenty-three respondents were female. (See Figure 1.) When classified according to age, none of the teachers fell into the twenty-five years of age or less group; two (9 percent) fell into the twenty-six to thirty age group; four (17 percent) fell into the thirty-one to thirty-five age group; six (26 percent) fell into the thirty-six to forty age group; and eleven (48 percent) fell into the forty-one or older age group. (See Figure 2.) With regard to years of teaching experience, only one teacher (4 percent) had five years or less experience; five (22 percent) had six to ten years of experience; five (22 percent) had eleven to fifteen years of experience; and twelve (52 percent) had more than fifteen years

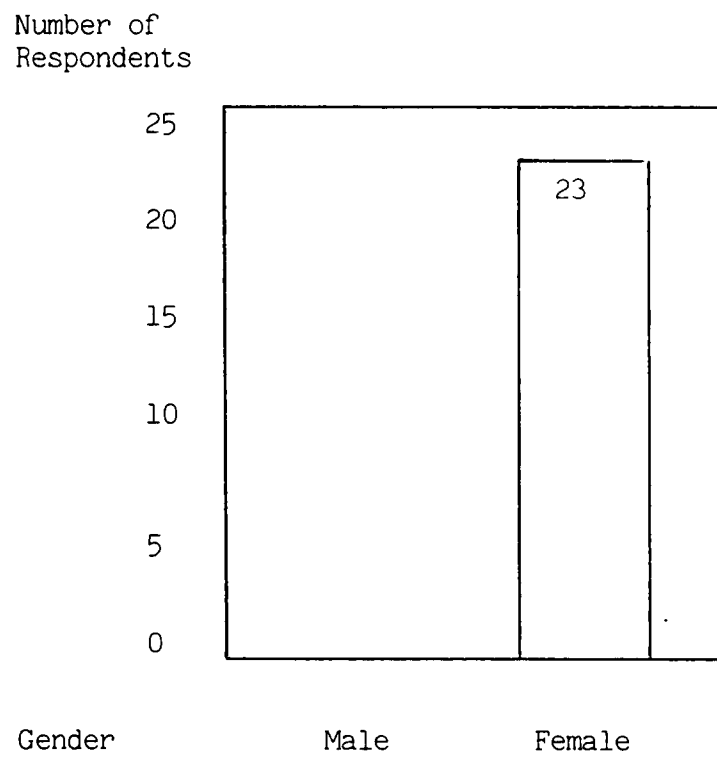


Figure 1. Number of respondents as grouped by gender.

Number of
Respondents

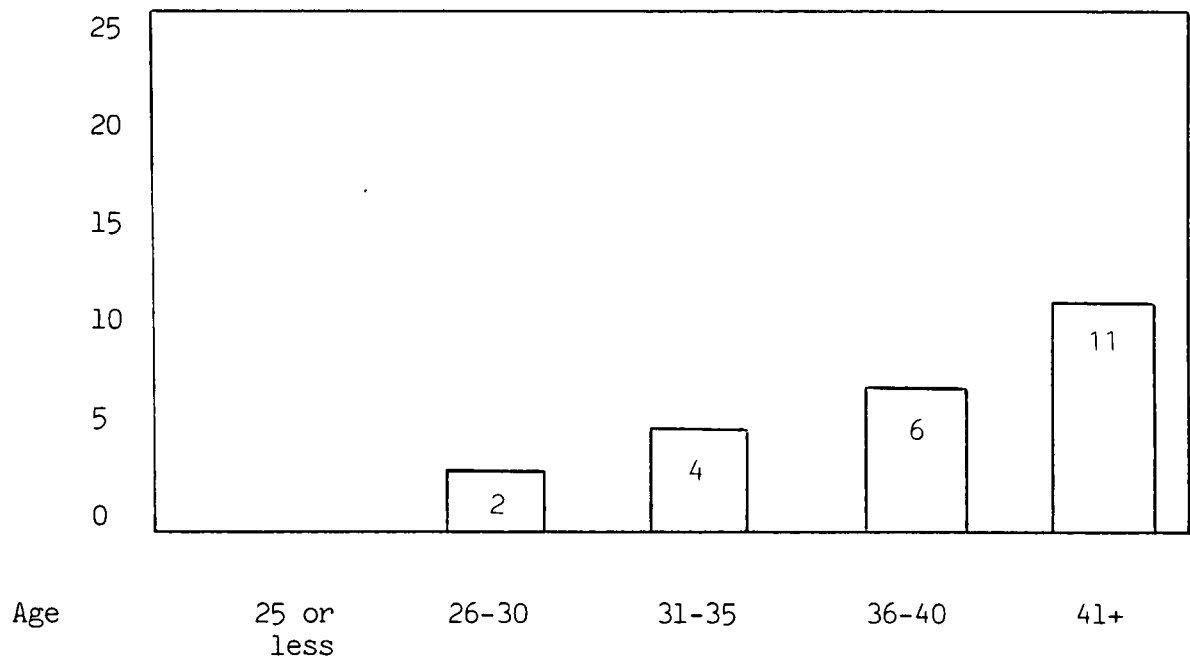


Figure 2. Number of respondents as grouped by age.

of experience. (See Figure 3.) The last set of information for categorization involved recency of formal academic training. Only two (9 percent) had no training since graduation; three (13 percent) had received additional training within the last ten years; three (13 percent) had received training within the last seven years; two (9 percent) had received training within the last five years; and thirteen (56 percent) had received additional training within the last three years. (See Figure 4.)

Further examination of the demographic information obtained from the survey reveals some concentrated figures. Of the responding twenty-three individuals, seventeen or 74 percent are thirty-six years of age or older. While the preponderance of fully mature personnel may create a problem twenty years in the future when a large number of these teachers retire at approximately the same time, at present it is indicated that those helping to formulate and carry out educational philosophy (through curriculum development, textbook selection, choice of authors on reading lists, research projects, and in-class novel studies) are of a relatively homogeneous age group. Likewise, the fact that all twenty-three respondents are female would indicate the potential to act in a cohesive manner toward a matter concerning femininity in the English curriculum. The part of the instrument that dealt with teaching experience showed clearly that the teachers responding did so from a position of classroom experience. With twelve individuals or 52 percent having at least fifteen years of experience and a full 96 percent having no less than six years on the job, the

Number of
Respondents

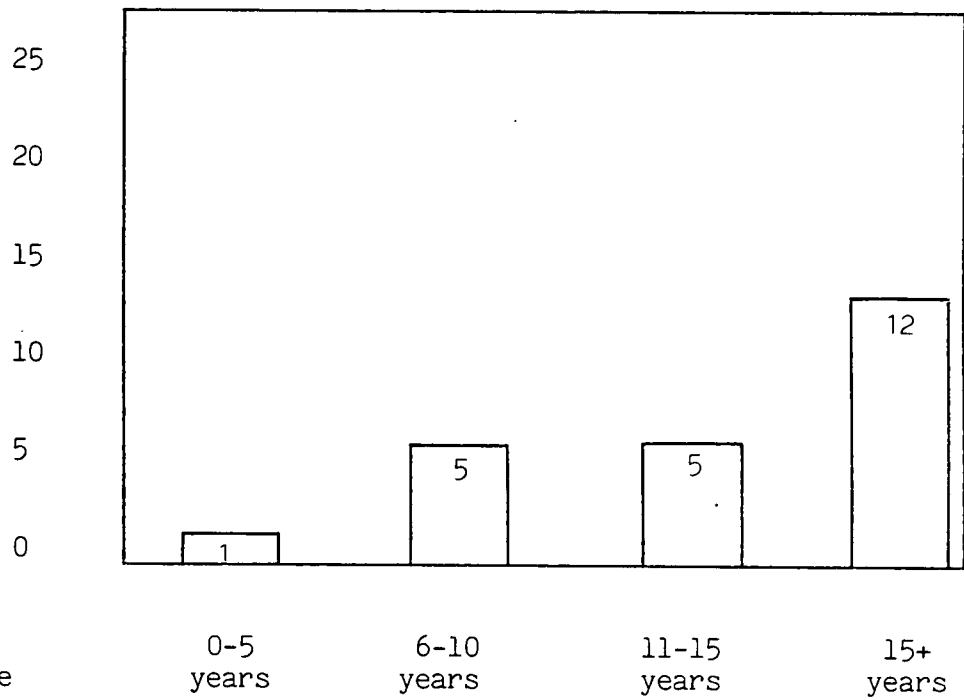


Figure 3. Number of respondents as grouped by years of teaching experience.

Number of
Respondents

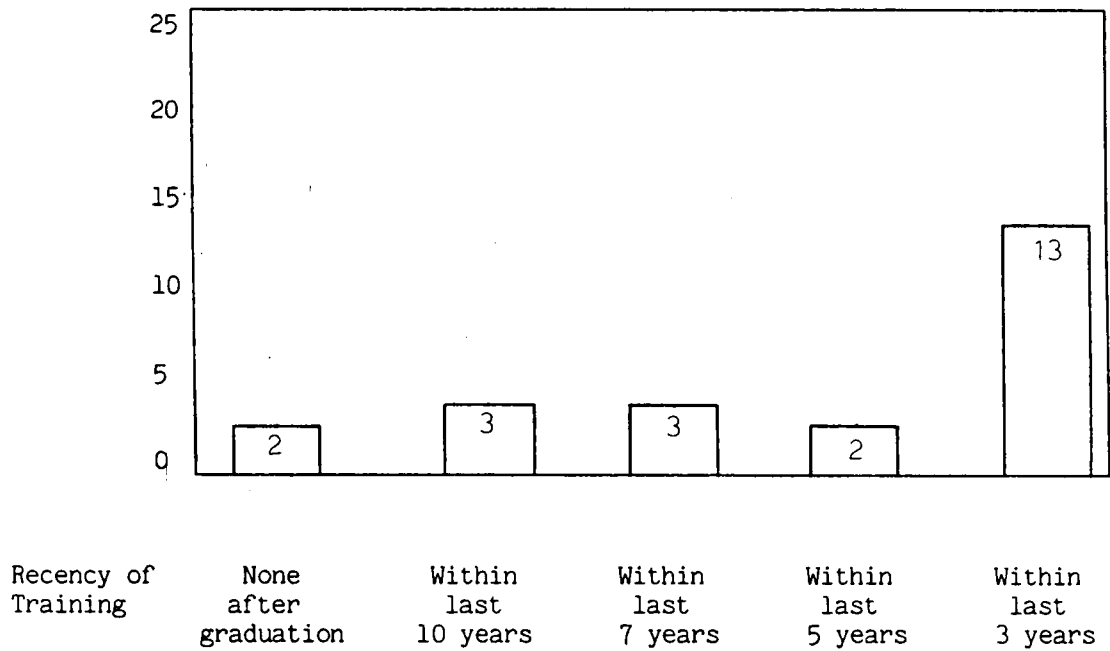


Figure 4. Number of respondents as grouped by recency of formal academic training.

ratings of these respondents have the considerable weight of extended personal observation. Realizing that there are a number of forces involved in a teacher's decision to continue taking educational courses after being firmly established in the work place, it is appropriate to point out that only two teachers or 9 percent of those questioned had not had further formal academic training since their graduation. A combined number of fifteen teachers or 65 percent of them had been back to school within the last five years.

Individual Views Based on Age, Years of Teaching Experience, and Recency of Formal Academic Training

An analysis of the individual ratings on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory reveals that seventeen of the twenty-three respondents found the Southern white woman to be androgynous, five found her to be feminine, and one found her to be masculine. The individual teachers' perceptions were then tabulated according to age, years of teaching experience, and recency of formal academic training. When breaking down the individual teachers' ratings according to age, no respondents fell in the age group of twenty-five or less. The rating of the two teachers (9 percent) in the twenty-six to thirty age group were androgynous. Of the four teachers in the thirty-one to thirty-five age group, three (13 percent) had ratings of androgynous, and one (4 percent) had a rating of feminine. Six teachers fell in the thirty-six to forty age group. Of this group four (17 percent) had ratings of androgynous, and

two (9 percent) had ratings of feminine. The largest number of teachers (48 percent) fell into the forty-one or older age group. Of this group eight (35 percent) had ratings of androgynous, two (9 percent) had ratings of feminine, and one (4 percent) had a rating of masculine. The most concentrated androgynous response (35 percent) came from the forty-one or older age group. (See Figure 5.)

When breaking down the teachers' ratings according to teaching experience, only one teacher (4 percent) had five years or less of experience, and her rating was feminine. Of the five teachers who had six to ten years of experience, four (17 percent) had ratings of androgynous, and one (4 percent) had a rating of feminine. Of the five teachers who had eleven to fifteen years of experience, three (13 percent) had ratings of androgynous, and two (9 percent) had ratings of feminine. The largest number of teachers surveyed (51 percent) had more than fifteen years of experience. Of this group ten (43 percent) had ratings of androgynous, one (4 percent) of feminine, and one (4 percent) of masculine. The most concentrated androgynous rating came from the teachers with more than fifteen years of experience. (See Figure 6.)

Two of the teachers (9 percent) with no additional formal academic training since graduation had a rating of androgynous. Of those teachers whose training had occurred in the last eight to ten years, three (13 percent) had ratings of androgynous. Of the teachers whose training had occurred in the last six to seven years, two respondents (9 percent) had ratings of androgynous, and one (4 percent) had a rating of

Gender Classifications						
Masculine						1
Feminine			1	2		2
Androgynous		2	3	4		8
Age		25 or less	26-30	31-35	36-40	41+

Figure 5. Ages of eleventh-grade English teachers as distributed by three classifications of BEM inventory.

Gender Classifications					
Gender Classifications	Masculine				1
	Feminine	1	1	2	1
	Androgynous		4	3	10
	Years of Experience	0-5 yrs.	6-10	11-15	15+

Figure 6. Years of teaching experience of eleventh-grade English teachers as distributed by three classifications of BEM inventory.

feminine. The two teachers (9 percent) whose training occurred during the last four to five years had ratings of androgynous. The largest number of teachers had training within the last three years, with eight (35 percent) having ratings of androgynous, four (17 percent) of feminine, and one (4 percent) of masculine. The most concentrated ratings of androgynous came from the teachers whose training occurred in the last three years. (See Figure 7.)

The Composite View of the Southern White Woman

The era of the easily identified, easily characterized white Southern female is fast disappearing. The image being painted by the responses of the participants of this survey is one of a "muscularized" female. This androgynous creature seems to be primarily feminine in nature but distorted from the stereotype by masculine "muscle" in the form of "independence," "strong personality," "defense of beliefs," and "willingness to take a stand." (See Table I.) As the ratings given by the teachers to the ten feminine and ten masculine characteristics are evaluated, it is clear that the traditional feminine qualities are perceived to be very prevalent. The characteristics of "affection," "love of children," "sympathy," and "compassion" are respectively the highest rated of the ten feminine characteristics. Tight uniformity of the ratings indicates, however, that the other six characteristics are observed with nearly the same frequency. Even the least highest ranked feminine trait, which was "eagerness to soothe hurt feelings," was given

Gender Classifications					
Masculine					1
Feminine			1		4
Androgynous	2	3	2	2	8
Recency of training	None after graduation	Within last 10 years	Within last 7 years	Within last 5 years	Within last 3 years

Figure 7. Recency of formal academic training of eleventh-grade English teachers as distributed by three classifications of BEM inventory.

TABLE I
 TABULATION OF RESPONSE FREQUENCY TO MASCULINE TRAIT ITEMS
 ON BEM INVENTORY

Degree of agreement	Average									
	4.74	4.87	4.49	4.87	4.13	4.52	4.17	4.13	4.61	4.26
7	1					2				
6	4	5	3	2	2	4	1	2	5	4
5	10	12	9	5	6	8	9	4	7	4
4	6	4	7	7	11	7	7	14	8	11
3		2	2	6	1	2	5	3	3	2
2	2		2	3	3		1			2
1										
Masculine Traits	Defends own beliefs	Independent	Assertive	Strong personality	Forceful	Has leadership abilities	Willing to take risks	Dominant	Willing to take a stand	Aggressive

an average rating, which placed it between "often true" and "usually true" on the seven-point rating scale used by the participants. Only four responses were given on any of the ten feminine characteristics that fell below the "occasionally true" mark on the rating scale, and 84 percent rated "often true" or better while 50 percent of the responses came at "usually true" or "always or almost always true." (See Table II.)

The new additions to the white Southern woman's repertoire of characteristics are not as clearly delineated as her traditional ones, but the statistics show that modifications are beginning to evolve. Of the ten masculine traits on the inventory, "dominance" and "forcefulness" received the lowest ratings. In the composite view, however, nine of the ten traits were given a rating of at least "sometimes but infrequently true" at the low end of the scale and "usually true" at the top end of the scale, with 82 percent of the ratings falling in the "occasionally true," "often true," and "usually true" range.

TABLE II
TABULATION OF RESPONSE FREQUENCY TO FEMALE TRAIT ITEMS
ON BEM INVENTORY

Degree of Agreement	Average									
	5.74	5.61	5.30	5.43	5.57	5.22	5.43	5.48	5.65	5.26
7	5	5	3	2	2	2	4	2	7	2
6	9	8	7	11	12	7	6	10	4	7
5	7	7	9	5	6	9	9	8	9	10
4	2	2	3	5	3	4	4	3	3	3
3		1				1				1
2			1							
1										
Feminine Traits	Affectionate	Sympathetic	Sensitive to needs of others	Understanding	Compassionate	Eager to soothe hurt feelings	Warm	Tender	Loves children	Gentle

CHAPTER V

IMAGES OF THE SOUTHERN WHITE WOMAN IN THE WORKS
OF PORTER, O'CONNOR, AND WELTY

The twentieth-century Southern white women writers included in this study were selected from the results of the teacher survey discussed in Chapter III. All twenty-three of the respondents indicated that Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty are included in the American literature curriculum at their schools, while twenty-one respondents (91 percent) designated the inclusion of Flannery O'Connor. Other Southern white female writers included to a lesser degree were Carson McCullers, Margaret Mitchell, Harper Lee, Wilma Dykeman, Catherine Marshall, Anne Tyler, and Lillian Hellman. All twenty-three respondents indicated that white Southern women writers are included in their textbooks; twenty-one respondents (91 percent) indicated that these authors are included on their reading lists; seventeen respondents (74 percent) utilize white Southern women writers on class research projects; and twelve respondents (52 percent) use works by these authors for in-class novel studies.

The ways in which Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty made use of the history of the Southern white woman as they created their female characters will now be considered. A comparison of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Southern women with the three selected authors' accounts of them will be made to determine if

the selected authors realistically portray the historical accounts and if they go beyond the stereotype of the Southern belle to include the more androgynous individual prevalent in society today.

Katherine Anne Porter's Women

Katherine Anne Porter is the first author to be discussed. She is the earliest writer chronologically, and her Miranda stories ("The Old Order" series, "Old Mortality," and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider"),¹¹⁸ the selections to be discussed in this study, present views of women from the antebellum South to the end of World War I. Porter was writing at a time when there was much social, economic, and racial upheaval in the New South and a new awareness of Southern history. However, she presents this upheaval and history from the standpoint of the woman's experience. She takes issue with the "myth" that the only way women can achieve personal fulfillment is through the reproductive and nurturing functions of wife and mother. In her stories she takes a look at conventional female roles and criticizes the society that established and perpetuated these stereotypes.

¹¹⁸Katherine Anne Porter, The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972). Hereafter, all references to Porter stories will be from this collection and will be indicated in the text by page number only.

The Matriarch

One of the strongest female influences from the past is Grandmother, Sophia Jane Rhea, a strong-willed Southern aristocrat or matriarch who is revealed most fully in "The Source" and "The Journey." Her influence on the children was felt even more strongly because of their mother's early death: "They loved their Grandmother; she was the only reality to them in a world that seemed otherwise without fixed authority or refuge, since their mother had died so early that only the eldest girl remembered her vaguely" (324).

Grandmother was considered a "tyrant," an authoritarian figure in this family, one whose major role was to bring order out of chaos--a neverending cycle--and to keep order in the lives of her children and grandchildren. Yet, her emancipation was only partial even though the death of her husband had set her free from many of the bonds of this paternalistic society. At this point in her life, "she found herself with a houseful of children, making a new life for them in another place, with all the responsibilities of a man but with none of the privileges" (336). She knew that her role was one of authority: "it was her duty to portion out activities, to urge or restrain where necessary, to teach morals, manners, and religion, to punish and reward her own household according to a fixed code" (328).

Throughout Sophia Jane's life, the expectations for feminine roles and behavior had been clear: "they had questioned the burdensome rule they lived by every day of their lives, but without rebellion and

without expecting an answer" (327). The young female was expected to get married (her only possibility for sexual outlet) and have children--clearly a nurturing role, and Sophia Jane often had nightmares about losing her virginity--"her sole claim to regard, consideration, even to existence" (335). The double standard most clearly existed. Her cousin Stephen, by whom she was to be courted "at arm's length" (334) and to whom she would then be "married off"(333), had a reputation for being "wild"(335) and leading "a dashing life full of manly indulgences, the sweet dark life of the knowledge of evil which caused her hair to crinkle on her scalp when she thought of it. Ah, the delicious, the free, the wonderful, the mysterious and terrible life of men" (335).

Once the woman was married, a matter in which she had little choice but which defined her existence, the "terrible race of procreation" began with "a child every sixteen months or so" (334). Sophia Jane was quite proud of the fact that she had given birth to eleven children. Sensual pleasure was often denied to women, both in the marriage bed and in nursing one's children. When the Negro servant, Nanny, who nursed both her own and Sophia's children, became severely ill, Sophia took over the job, feeding both "justly turn about, not favoring the white over the black, as Nanny felt obliged to do" (334). Stephen was shocked at her unseemly behavior and tried unsuccessfully to forbid it. Sophia Jane had decided that "she was badly cheated in giving her children to another woman to feed; she resolved never again to be cheated" of the

sensual warm pleasure she had not dreamed of, translating her natural physical relief into something holy, God-sent, amends from heaven for what she had suffered in childbed. Yes, and

for what she missed in the marriage bed, for there also something had failed. (334)

She had been taught from an early age that "children were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity" (329) and that the largest part of adult life consisted of bringing up children.

On the other hand, men, no matter how inept they might be, ruled the lives of women. Sophia Jane, unlike many women of her generation, felt that her opinions and feelings were important, had confidence in her own abilities, and had contempt for the men who ruled her life: "She could not help it, she despised men. She despised them and was ruled by them" (337). Stephen, who had a "profound conviction that everyone around him should be happy to wait upon him hand and foot" (335), had dissipated her dowry and property by "wild investments in strange territories" and "without protest she watched him play away her substance like a gambler" (337). Her inward protest tempered with resignation came from many years of training about the role of women: "her natural activities lay elsewhere, it was the business of a man to make all decisions and dispose of all financial matters" (337). Even when she achieved some degree of independence after the death of Stephen and years of hard work, "her sons could persuade her to this and that enterprise or investment; against her will and judgment she accepted their advice, and among them they managed to break up once more the stronghold she had built for the future of her family" (337). The crops had all failed the year Sophia got married, and she recalls that "they failed ever afterward, it seems to me" (336).

Although Sophia Jane had been brought up as a Southern woman in the Romantic tradition, many of these traditions were beginning to crumble. She chafed at the role prescribed for her by society and inwardly protested until the death of her husband Stephen when she became a liberated woman who could attempt to create a worthwhile life for herself. She tried to take over and run a sugar refinery which her husband had purchased with her money in Louisiana. When she saw that the refinery was going to be a failure, she moved on with her nine children to some land which her husband had purchased in Texas. It was here that an event occurred which forced her back to her nurturing role. Two of her younger sons, ages nine and eleven, suddenly ran away during their second "terrible" year in Texas. Their excuse, when caught, was that they were going back to Louisiana to eat sugar cane. She "felt her heart break in her breast" (339) as she realized they were hungry:

She had built a house large enough to shelter them all, of hand-sawed lumber dragged by ox-cart for forty miles, she had got the fields fenced in and the crops planted, she had, she believed, fed and clothed her children; and now she realized they were hungry. These two had worked like men; she felt their growing bones through their thin flesh, and remembered how mercilessly she had driven them, as she had driven herself, as she had driven the Negroes and the horses, because there was no choice in the matter. (339)

Feeling that she has failed in her nurturing role, Sophia Jane was changed from this day forward: "This day was the beginning of her spoiling her children and being afraid of them" (339).

Although the Grandmother had grown up questioning her role in society and despised the rule of men, to whom she felt superior, she never blatantly broke from the nurturing role deemed suitable for her by

society. Therefore, rather ironically, she did not approve of the women her sons chose to marry. Her youngest son, for example, married a woman "altogether too Western, too modern, something like the 'new' woman who was beginning to run wild, asking for the vote, leaving her home and going out in the world to earn her own living" (333). Her son resented her interference, and she, the strong-willed Southern aristocrat, "shuddered to the bone at the thought of women so unsexing themselves" (333).

As Sophia Jane grew older, she found that one of her chief functions in the family was to restore order. She made an annual two-week trip to the farm for just that purpose. She took her straw shepherdess hat (from her Southern belle days) and imagined leisurely strolls in the orchard. As usual, however, everything was out of order, and she put on her "stiffly starched white chambray bonnet" (322) and set to work starting with the Negro huts. "The frenzy would begin" (323), as those in her employ, armed with whitewash, kerosene oil, carbolic acid, insect powder, and lye soap, were directed to clean every corner and crevice and to air all linens. Others made new clothes for the servants, and the "uproar had all the special character of any annual occasion" (323). The main house was next overhauled and then the barns, smokehouses, potato cellars, gardens, and vineyards with Grandmother as the "tireless, just, and efficient slave driver of every creature on the place" (324). The trip always ended with her annual ride on Fiddler and her leisurely stroll in the orchards when it would "come over her powerfully that she was staying on idling when there was so

much to be done at home . . . which no doubt had gone somewhat astray in her absence" (325).

Sophia Jane represents the earliest generation depicted in this grouping of stories. Reminiscences about the past reveal that she is a Southern belle turned matriarch. Even though she questioned her place in society and the qualifications of men to rule, she still clings to the past, finds meaning in her nurturing role with regard to her children, grandchildren, and Negro servants, and attempts to keep her world stable as an authoritarian figure. To acquire her character and independence, she has to reject men and the attitudes of male society. However, she is a positive model for womanhood through her courage, hard work, and acts of nurturing.

The Southern Belle as Victim

The next female role model, Aunt Amy, is one whose failure to follow the established code leads to lack of fulfillment and ultimately her death. Amy felt herself to be a victim of the romantic chivalric code which required that a woman be beautiful, charming, and graceful and develop into a capable wife and devoted mother who upholds the standards of the household and the community while remaining submissive to her husband.

The restraints on Amy were nearly as formidable as they had been in Sophia Jane's day, for the male's attempts to protect the female did not allow her to effectively participate in life. Although she attempted to

resist many of the conventions set forth for young females, her health was not good (tuberculosis), and she often hemorrhaged and physically collapsed when she would overdo, such as when she attended three balls in one week, took a horseback ride to the Mexican border, and participated in numerous Mardi Gras activities. She found that she was not free at all, except in matters of little or no consequence.

Amy's beauty was a source of legend, and Miranda believed that one day she would be like Amy, as Amy was remembered by those around her, not as she appeared in her photograph, and "suddenly receive beauty, as by inheritance, riches laid suddenly in her hands through no deserts of her own" (177). The expectations were clear:

First, a beauty must be tall; whatever color the eyes, the hair must be dark, the darker the better; the skin must be pale and smooth. Lightness and swiftness of movement were important points. A beauty must be a good dancer, superb on horseback, with a serene manner, an amiable gaiety tempered with dignity at all hours. Beautiful teeth and hands, of course, and over and above all this, some mysterious crown of enchantment that attracted and held the heart. (176)

In their memories at least, Amy fit all of the above qualifications, and they all agreed that "[t]heir Aunt Amy belonged to the world of poetry" (178). The stories surrounding her short youth were romantic--she did not return the devotion of her handsome, romantic second cousin Gabriel and only married him five years later after he was disinherited; she was engaged two other times and broke the engagements for no apparent reason: "Her coldness was said to have driven Gabriel to a wild life and even to drinking" (181).

Grandmother assured Amy that her delicate health was merely "greensickness" and that "marriage and children would cure her of

everything" (182). Grandmother felt that Amy was merely being fickle; according to Grandmother, "young girls found a hundred ways to deny they wished to be married, and a thousand more to test their power over men" (183). Her capriciousness had been displayed numerous times before. When Gabriel complimented a dress she was wearing, she would change. When he professed to love her long, black hair, she cropped it and curled it close to her head. This type of behavior eventually led to her self-destruction. Any freedom that she had as a female existed in her role as coquette or object of male desire. To get married would mean giving up that freedom and coming under the rule of men. She had come to the conclusion that "Gabriel is dull" and that his sulking "spoils things" (188).

Amy's actions eventually caused a scandal at a fancy dress ball during the Mardi Gras holidays. When she appeared in her costume, which was copied from a small Dresden-china shepherdess on the mantel in the parlor, her father was outraged to see "her white ankles shining, bosom deeply exposed, two round spots of paint on her cheeks" (185). He described her costume as "disgraceful" and "bawdy" (185) and ordered alterations, which were accomplished by the females in the household in about ten minutes. However, the rebellious nature of Amy was again revealed at the ball when she returned from the dressing room for the first dance with Gabriel: "the lace was gone from her bodice, her skirts were tacked up more daringly than before, and the spots on her cheeks were like pomegranates" (185). She was "entirely too popular," and the young men were making "beelines across the floor" (186)--only because

she was "too free" and "sex-ridden," (216) Cousin Eva contends. However, the real scandal occurred after Jean Lafitte, a young Creole gentleman to whom Amy had previously been engaged, appeared "with the manner of a happy lover" (186), danced with her four times, and then disappeared with her outside. What actually happened outside--whether a stolen kiss or merely a compliment on her hair--was never revealed. However, both Amy's costume and her behavior did not fit in with the accepted female decorum, and Gabriel challenged Lafitte to a duel. Amy's brother Harry shot at the unarmed Lafitte and to avoid further scandal had to flee to Mexico and stay nearly a year.

Only when Gabriel's grandfather died and unexpectedly cut him off with only a dollar did Amy finally agree to marry him if he would go to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. In the six weeks before her death from an overdose of medicine, Amy attended horse races daily, watched the parades in the streets, and attended balls during Mardi Gras, certainly not activities that fit the expected role of wife and mother.

The Spinster

The homely spinster who fails to meet the expected roles of wife and mother is best exemplified by Cousin Eva Parrington, the old maid school teacher and suffragette in this family. Eva was fond of saying that "beauty goes, character stays" (215). However, Miranda, her niece, wondered why strong character had to be "so deforming" (215) as she viewed Eva with her "two immense front teeth" and "receding chin" (206).

In contrast to the romantic Amy, "Eva was a blot . . . that belonged to their everyday world of dull lessons to be learned, stiff shoes to be limbered up, scratchy flannels to be endured in cold weather, measles and disappointed expectations" (178).

Eva remembers with disdain some of the prescribed rituals accompanying the initiation into womanhood. The dances and parties were the mainstay of the marriage marketplace. Eva comments,

Those parties and dances were their market, a girl couldn't afford to miss out, there were always rivals waiting to cut the ground from under her. The rivalry--you can't imagine what the rivalry was like. The way those girls treated each other--nothing was too mean, nothing too false It was just sex; their minds dwelt on nothing else. They didn't call it that, it was all smothered under pretty names, but that's all it was, sex. (216)

Eva realistically admits, "They didn't do me much good, those parties. Or at least, they didn't serve their purpose, for I never got married; but I enjoyed them, just the same. I had a good time at those parties, even if I wasn't a belle" (208).

In an age where beauty was one of the keys to desirability and marriageability, Eva failed to fit the established stereotype even though she possessed intelligence, strong character, and independence. Eva bitterly complains,

All my life the whole family bedeviled me about my chin. My entire girlhood was spoiled by it. Can you imagine people who call themselves civilized spoiling life for a young girl because she had one unlucky feature? . . . Ah, the family, the whole hideous institution should be wiped from the face of the earth. It is the root of all human wrongs. (217)

In order to overcome her physical disabilities, Eva cultivated her mind and entered one of the few professions open to women at this

time--teaching; she teaches Latin in a Female Seminary. She believes in cultivating the mind because "your mind outwears all sorts of things you may set your heart upon; you can enjoy it when all other things are taken away" (210). She assures Miranda that "knowledge can't hurt you. You mustn't live in a romantic haze about life" (212). However, her situation has only brought her pity or scorn. As Eva comments, "In our part of the country, in my time, we were so provincial--a woman didn't dare to think or act for herself. The whole world was a little that way, but we [people in the South] were the worst, I believe" (210). She was ostracized even more completely when she began to fight for women's rights. She was not only turned out of her chair at the Seminary, but she was the subject of frequent demeaning jokes. Amy once instructed her not to talk about votes for women when asked to dance by eligible young men, and Uncle Bill had remarked that "[w]hen women haven't anything else, they'll take a vote for consolation. A pretty thin bed-fellow" (183).

Eva also exemplifies strength of convictions. She was even willing to go to jail three times when fighting for the vote for women. Unlike the men who failed to recognize her worth, Miranda finds Eva's actions heroic and courageous, "but discouraging, too, to those who came after: Cousin Eva so plainly had swept the field clear of opportunity" (210). Eva's independence developed out of necessity and long years of training on the "battlefield." She considers her small salary her "Rock of Ages" (213) because without it she would be dependent upon the grudging generosity and charity of her relatives for support. Harry comments when

Eva comes home for Gabriel's funeral, "If you're so independent now, God help us when you get that vote" (218).

In spite of her accomplishments and displays of heroism, Eva is bitter about the lot cast to her by society because of her inability to fit the stereotyped roles of wife and mother. Her jealousy surfaces as she reveals "the truth" to Miranda about Cousin Amy. Her version is so viperous that Miranda wonders, "But why did she hate Aunt Amy so, when Aunt Amy was dead and she alive? Wasn't being alive enough?" (215). Apparently a mere existence does not satisfy Eva, the typical spinster of this era, because she concludes by saying, "You've not the faintest idea what some of us went through" (217).

The "New Woman"

The final character to be discussed, Miranda, as seen by the reader from ages eight to twenty-four, is closest to the new or modern women who concludes, after seeing no acceptable or fulfilled role models, that she has a right to her own life and a right to be happy. In her elders Miranda sees no happy, normal young women and no satisfying marital relationships. Grandmother had only achieved some degree of happiness or fulfillment after the death of her husband Stephen; Amy's short life ended with a drug overdose, possibly a suicide; and Eva's inability to fit into the pattern has made her a pariah, often bitter and cynical about life.

From the earliest age, the expectations were made clear because their father "held his daughters on his knee if they were prettily dressed and well behaved, and pushed them away if they had not freshly combed hair and nicely scrubbed fingernails" (184). If stocking seams were not straight or if teeth were unbrushed, he might remark, "Go away, you're disgusting" (184). The importance of a woman's appearance was also stressed in "The Fig Tree." When a trip to Cedar Grove (or Halifax as Miranda's father always called it) was planned, Miranda was cautioned to wear her bonnet so she would not get freckled or sunburned. On another occasion, chronicled in "The Grave," nine-year-old Miranda went hunting with her twelve-year-old brother Paul. Only Paul ever actually shot at an animal, and when he started skinning a rabbit he had killed, he discovered that "it was going to have young ones" (366). As Miranda was made aware of the birth process, she was cautioned to secrecy by Paul: "Don't you ever tell a living soul that you saw this. Don't tell a soul. Don't tell Dad because I'll get in trouble. He'll say I'm leading you into things you ought not to do" (367).

Miranda decided, while boarding at the Convent to receive an education, that since she would never be a beauty like Aunt Amy, she would be a jockey when she grew up:

Her hope of being a beauty died hard, until the notion of being a jockey came suddenly and filled all her thoughts. Quietly, blissfully, at night before she slept, and too often in the daytime when she should have been studying she planned her career as a jockey. It was dim in detail, but brilliant at the right distance. It seemed too silly to be worried about arithmetic at all, when what she needed for her future was to ride better--much better. (196)

However, when she later rejected this choice of an occupation, her father gently mocked her to put her in her place: "Well, well, so you aren't going to be a jockey! That's very sensible of you. I think she ought to be a lion-tamer, don't you, Maria? That's a nice, womanly profession" (205). Later choices included a violin-playing tightrope walker and an air pilot. Her aspirations go beyond the earlier stereotypes, and she eventually ends up as a journalist. Even here, though, she runs into those who have preconceived notions about the capabilities of women, and she is given the job of drama critic for a newspaper during World War I. She would much rather have been a front-page news reporter, but that job was reserved for men.

Miranda also proves to be a "new woman" in the South in the areas of love and marriage. Instead of having a husband selected for her or going through the parties and dances involved in the courting process, she eloped from school at age seventeen. When Cousin Eva remarks that she would have brought Miranda right back home and spanked her, Miranda comments, "And you must know I should have just gone straight out again, through the nearest window" (213). However, marriage does not bring Miranda the love or fulfillment she is seeking, and she again plans to break with convention by seeking a divorce. For her "unacceptable" actions, her father cannot forgive her. When she returns home for Gabriel's funeral, "his hands on her arms held her off, the tone was forced. There was no welcome for her, and there had not been since she had run away" (218). However, Miranda does not regret her actions. She speculates, "Surely old people cannot hold their grudges forever because

the young want to live, too, she thought, in her arrogance, her pride. I will make my own mistakes, not yours; . . . this was a first step to take, and she took it" (219). She wants to be free to be herself and to pursue her own goals, and she resents those who attempt to make her conform to old standards:

She resented, slowly and deeply and in profound silence, the presence of these aliens who lectured and admonished her, who loved her with bitterness and denied her the right to look at the world with her own eyes, who demanded that she accept their version of life and yet could not tell her the truth, not in the smallest thing. (219)

She decides that she "can't live in their world any longer" (221); she must build her own world.

Thus, Katherine Anne Porter presents alternative lifestyles for today's young reader. She shows three women--the matriarch, the coquette, and the spinster--the remnants of a previous era, who have difficulty finding happiness and fulfillment within the defined feminine roles of their day. Miranda represents the new generation of women who will break free from the past and make decisions about love and marriage, economic and social positions, and opportunities for self-development. Porter very accurately depicts the history of the Southern woman during her lifetime and offers insight for women of today.

Flannery O'Connor's Women

Although Flannery O'Connor seemed to be more interested in the intellectual, spiritual, and artistic problems of mankind than in the

concerns associated with the feminist movement, she does illuminate in her short stories several issues related to woman's role in society. None of her white women characters fit any traditional female roles. As a Southern Gothic novelist, she presents with horror and violence many sexual and religious issues. As critic Preston Browning comments, "Freaks, fanatics, and psychopaths stalk the unfriendly streets and desolate clay roads of her fictional world, which often appears designed to simulate as nearly as possible a chamber of horrors."¹¹⁹

The majority of Miss O'Connor's stories take place on small farms in Georgia, and a surprising number of the characters are women. Although the fictional characters are diverse and some defy classification, certain commonalities are present. Taken together, these women reflect O'Connor's discontent with traditional female roles and her contempt for a society which condemns those who diverge from the stereotyped patterns. These women are victims trapped by circumstances beyond their control, and none of them appear to be happy or fulfilled in life. Unlike Katherine Anne Porter, who in her fiction historically depicts the disillusionment with stereotyped roles and the development of the "new woman" in the South, Flannery O'Connor creates caricatures of women who are victimized because of their failure or inability to accept the traditionally submissive roles prescribed for them by society. The stories to be analyzed in this study, selected because of their insight into and comment upon the plight of women, are "Good

¹¹⁹ Preston M. Browning, Jr., Flannery O'Connor, Crosscurrents/Modern Critiques Series, ed. Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), p. 11.

Country People," "A Circle in the Fire," "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," "Revelation," "A Stroke of Good Fortune," and "The Crop."¹²⁰

Unmarried Females

The first group of females to be analyzed will be those unmarried females, still living at home and cared for by their mothers, who range in age from twelve to thirty-two years old. The two twelve-year olds to be analyzed in depth are Sally Virginia Cope, in "A Circle in the Fire," and "the child" in "A Temple of the Holy Ghost." Both girls are described as being physically unappealing. The child in "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" has "fat cheeks" and braces that "glared like tin" (237), while Sally Virginia Cope, of "A Circle in the Fire," is described as a "pale fat girl of twelve with a frowning squint and a large mouth full of silver bands" (181). Both girls are also more intelligent than other young ladies of the day. Sally's chief pastime is reading, and she becomes irritable if her mother interrupts by asking her questions or carrying on with meaningless drivel, and she often grunts or mutters in response. Although the child's silly, boy-crazy cousins, in "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," are two years older than she is, she considers them to be "practically morons" (236) and one night defies them by saying "I'm

¹²⁰ Flannery O'Connor, The Complete Stories (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1962). Hereafter, all references to O'Connor stories will be from this collection and will be indicated in the text by page number only.

not as old as you all, but I'm about a million times smarter" (245). She likewise thinks the boys who come to accompany her cousins to the fair are limited in intelligence, and she calls one of them a "big dumb Church of God ox" (241). Both girls feel superior because of their intelligence, but neither fits in socially or is appreciated for this quality.

Another characteristic which the two twelve-year-olds share is that they tend to stand by and watch others participate in life while they merely fantasize about male adventures. Sally Virginia Cope, in "A Circle in the Fire," feels that her mother is not being aggressive enough with the three young male intruders who are destroying their property. Therefore, she dons male attire--a pair of overalls, an old felt man's hat, and a holster with two pistols. She then proceeds to order about her imaginary captives: "I'm going to get you one by one and beat you black and blue. Line up. LINE UP!" (191). However, when she actually has an opportunity to take action, she hides behind a tree.

When the child in "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" is asked by her cousins, Susan and Joanne, how she knows so much about Cory and Wendell, the two young men who are scheduled to come to dinner, she begins to fantasize:

I know them all right We fought in the world war together. They were under me and I saved them five times from Japanese suicide divers and Wendell said I am going to marry that kid and the other said oh no you ain't I am and I said neither one of you is because I will court marshall you all before you can bat an eye. (239-240)

She imagines ruling the males but also being desired by them. Even the future occupations that she has in mind are those more frequently filled

by males: doctor, engineer, or maybe even martyr. Here again her imagination comes into play as she envisions her great bravery:

She could stand to be shot but not to be burned in oil. She didn't know if she could stand to be torn to pieces by lions or not. She began to prepare her martyrdom, seeing herself in a pair of tights in a great arena, lit by the early Christians hanging in cages of fire, making a gold dusty light that fell on her and the lions. The first lion charged forward and fell at her feet, converted. A whole series of lions did the same. The lions liked her so much she even slept with them and finally the Romans were obliged to burn her but to their astonishment she would not burn down and finding she was so hard to kill, they finally cut off her head very quickly with a sword and she went immediately to heaven. (243)

In contrast to their fantasies of bravery, authority, and desirability, the girls are physically unappealing, deliberately rude, uncooperative, and arrogant--"eaten up with the sin of Pride" (243).

Flannery O'Connor also depicts more mature daughters who are still living at home. They range in age from eighteen or nineteen-year-old Mary Grace, the college girl in "Revelation," to thirty-year-old Lucynell Crater in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" and thirty-two year old Joy-Hulga of "Good Country People." There are striking similarities between Mary Grace and Joy-Hulga, while Lucynell is almost a total opposite.

Like their younger counterparts, Mary Grace and Joy-Hulga are physically unappealing and socially isolated. Mary Grace, of "Revelation," is described as a fat, ugly girl whose scowling face is "blue with acne" (490). Her Girl Scout shoes and heavy socks also detract from her appearance. Similarly, Joy-Hulga of "Good Country People," still unmarried at age thirty-two, is described as a large, "hulking," (273) atheistic blonde girl, "whose constant outrage had

obliterated every expression from her face" and who "would stare just a little to the side of her, her eyes icy blue, with the look of someone who has achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it" (273). Her mother pities her because her leg had been shot off in a hunting accident at age ten and she is now a "poor stout girl in her thirties who had never danced a step or had any normal good times" (274). She is vividly contrasted with the "normal" daughters of Mrs. Freeman, Glynese and Carramae (called Glycerin and Caramel by Joy): "Glynese, a redhead, was eighteen and had many admirers; Carramae, a blonde, was only fifteen but already married and pregnant" (272). Joy-Hulga's typical clothing, "a six-year-old skirt and a yellow sweat shirt with a faded cowboy on a horse embossed on it," makes her look like a "scarecrow" (276). Although she is "bloated, rude, and squint-eyed," (276) Mrs Hopewell contends that a little effort on Joy-Hulga's part and a pleasant expression on her daughter's face would improve her appearance, for Mrs. Hopewell felt that "people who looked on the bright side of things would be beautiful even if they were not" (275).

Mary Grace and Joy-Hulga are not only similar in physical appearance but also in their intellectual interests and pursuit of education. Mary Grace, who has been attending Wellesley College in Massachusetts, has her face constantly in a book. Her mother disapproves of her singleminded pursuit of knowledge: "Just reads all the time, a real book worm. She's done real well at Wellesley; she's taking English and Math and History and Psychology and Social Studies, and I think it's too much. I think she ought to get out and have fun" (498).

Joy-Hulga, similarly, has an advanced education and would like to be employed at a university "lecturing to people who knew what she was talking about" (276), but she has a weak heart. Her mother is critical of her doctoral degree and thinks Joy-Hulga has no common sense:

Whenever she looked at Joy this way, she could not help but feel that it would have been better if the child had not taken the Ph.D. It had certainly not brought her out any and now that she had it, there was no more excuse for her to go to school again. Mrs. Hopewell thought it was nice for girls to go to school to have a good time but Joy had "gone through". (276)

She is embarrassed to say that her daughter's degree is in philosophy. She would like to be able to say that her daughter is a teacher or a nurse or even a chemical engineer: "You could not say, 'My daughter is a philosopher.' That was something that had ended with the Greeks and Romans" (276). Unlike other young ladies, Joy-Hulga does not like "dogs or cats or birds or flowers or nature or nice young men. She looked at nice young men as if she could smell their stupidity" (276). At one point Joy-Hulga decides to meet a Bible salesman for a joke and fantasizes about seducing him: "She imagined that the two of them walked on the place until they came to the storage barn beyond the two back fields and there, she imagined that things came to such a pass that she very easily seduced him and that then, of course, she had to reckon with his remorse" (284). However, when she actually does meet him, she wears slacks, a dirty white shirt, and Vapex for perfume. Because of her lack of experience with emotional or sensual matters, she becomes his victim because she cannot think clearly.

Both Mary Grace and Joy-Hulga show discontent with society's attitude toward their digression from traditional female roles by facing the world with sour dispositions and hostile actions. Mary Grace, in "Revelation," is provoked by the sanctimonious behavior of Mrs. Turpin in the doctor's waiting room, so she scowls, smirks, glares, and slams her book and, all in all, makes the ugliest face that Mrs. Turpin has seen in her life:

Her [Mary Grace's] lower lip turned downwards and inside out, revealing the pale pink inside of her mouth. After a second it rolled back up. It was the ugliest face Mrs. Turpin had ever seen anyone make and for a moment she was certain that the girl had made it at her. She was looking at her as if she had known and disliked her all her life--all of Mrs. Turpin's life, it seemed too, not just all the girl's life. (495)

With eyes "fixed like two drills" (497) on Mrs. Turpin, Mary Grace hurls her book (ironically entitled Human Development) at the lady's head, hitting her above her left eye, and then tries to strangle her. Mary Grace has to be physically restrained and given an injection to subdue her, but only after she calls Mrs. Turpin an "old wart hog" from hell (500). The mother is also displeased with her daughter:

I think the worst thing in the world is an ungrateful person. To have everything and not appreciate it. I know a girl who has parents who would give her anything, a little brother who loves her dearly, who is getting a good education, who wears the best clothes, but who can never say a kind word to anyone, who never smiles, who just criticizes and complains all day long. (499)

Striking similarities can be seen in the attitude and behavior of Joy-Hulga in "Good Country People." She grudgingly agrees, with gloomy face and ugly remarks, to take walks on the farm with her mother. When her mother becomes irritated and says, "If you can't come pleasantly, I

don't want you at all" (274), Joy-Hulga defensively replies, "If you want me, here I am--LIKE I AM" (274). Given the name Joy at birth by her mother, she changes it to Hulga "purely on the basis of its ugly sound" (275) as soon as she is legally able to do so. She also makes a dreadful sound as she walks on her artificial leg merely "because it was ugly sounding" (275). Many of her other actions also seem aimed at tormenting her mother. One night she stands up unexpectedly in the middle of dinner and yells--with purple face--at her mother: "Woman! do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are not?" (276). Joy-Hulga also refuses to let her mother keep a Bible in the parlor because she is an atheist.

The last unmarried daughter still living at home to be discussed is thirty-year-old Lucynell Crater in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." She is analyzed separately because she presents a stark contrast to Mary Grace and Joy-Hulga. She is more attractive and seemingly content with her lot in life--the fulfillment of traditional female roles--but she is ironically deaf and mentally deficient. She has pink-gold hair, blue eyes, and a rosy face, and she wears a short blue organdy dress. The boy behind the counter at the diner says, "She looks like an angel of Gawd" (154). Her mother describes her to a potential suitor--the one-armed handyman Mr. Shiftlet--as "smart" because she can "sweep the floor, cook, wash, feed the chickens, and hoe" (149) and as desirable because she is innocent and "can't talk" or "sass you back" (151). When Lucynell, who looks like a baby doll in her wedding attire, and Mr. Shiftlet leave on their honeymoon, Mrs. Crater, who has been "ravenous

for a son-in-law" (150), assures him that "[y]ou got a prize!" (153). However, Tom Shiftlet is more interested in the car than the girl and leaves her asleep at the counter in a diner as he heads alone to Mobile.

Married Women

In addition to the intelligent, ambitious, physically unattractive, unmarried young women who live at home with their mothers, Flannery O'Connor illustrates through Ruby Hill in "Strokes of Good Fortune" that not all wives wish to fulfill the nurturing role of mother because the procreation race--usually a baby every year--made women old before their time. Ruby has other aspirations and does not wish to be saddled with children: "She was the only one in her family who had been different, who had had any get" (96). After all, she is only thirty-four years old, and she still looks young, while her mother at the same age had looked like a

puckered-up old yellow apple, sour, she had always looked sour, she had always looked like she wasn't satisfied with anything Her mother's hair had been gray--hers wouldn't be gray now even if she hadn't touched it up. All those children were what did her mother in--eight of them: two born dead, one died the first year, one crushed under a mowing machine. Her mother had got deader with every one of them. And all of it for what? Because she hadn't known any better. Pure ignorance. The purest of downright ignorance! (97)

She had visions of her younger brother Rufus "out nowhere before he was born, just waiting to make his mother that much deader" (103). Her two sisters had also fallen victim to this deadly race for procreation; each one had given birth to four children in the four years they had been

married: "She didn't see how they stood it, always going to the doctor to be jabbed at with instruments" (97). When Ruby's friend Laverne tries to tell her that her "illness" is not heart trouble or cancer but symptoms of pregnancy, Ruby screams disbelievingly, "Not me! Oh no not me! Bill Hill takes care of that. Bill Hill takes care of that! Bill Hill's been taking care of that for five years! That ain't going to happen to me!" (104). However, she had noticed that she was gaining weight--even the loose skirt was tighter--and that Bill Hill looked happier lately. "Noooo," she wails, and she "felt her face drawn puckered" (106). She is a victim without the capability of escaping her fate.

Widows and Divorcees

Although Flannery O'Connor does depict numerous married women in her short stories, many of them are now widows or divorcees. These women have become tough, resourceful, and independent because circumstances have necessitated that they do so. Mrs. Hopewell in "Good Country People," Mrs. Cope in "Circle in the Fire," and Mrs. Crater in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" are three of the characters who fall into this category. These women are taken advantage of by unscrupulous males.

Mrs. Hopewell, of "Good Country People," is an optimistic, santimonious divorcee who is intent on running her farm and handling the tenant farmers to the best of her ability. She is fond of mouthing platitudes to fit each occasion, her favorites being "[n]othing is perfect," "that is life," and "well, other people have their opinions

too" (272-273). Although she has "no bad qualities of her own, . . . she was able to use other people's in such a constructive way that she never felt the lack" (272). Disappointed that her daughter does not fit the traditional stereotype--she approves of Mrs. Freeman's Glynese and Carramae, Mrs. Hopewell is embarrassed by Joy-Hulga's degree and choice of fields and does not understand her daughter or her rude behavior: "she felt she had always to overflow with hospitality to make up for Joy's lack of courtesy" (280). She is so intimidated by her atheistic daughter's insolent behavior that she has retired her Bible to the attic.

Unable to appreciate her daughter's intellectual aspirations, Mrs. Hopewell admires Mrs. Freeman's daughters for their "common sense" (282). She shows herself to be a poor judge of character throughout the story. After she hires the Freemans in spite of their former employer's bad recommendation ("neither me nor my wife could have stood that woman one more minute on this place"), she defensively proclaims to all who will listen that they are "not trash" but "good country people" and that their daughters are "two of the finest girls she knew" (272). She considers people such as these and the Bible salesman, who ends up seducing Joy-Hulga and stealing her glasses and artificial leg, to be the "salt of the earth" (279). She invites the salesman, a total stranger, to dinner and tells him to come back any time and that she will be glad to see him. Her eyes fill with tears as he tells her of his supposed heart condition. Even as he is leaving, after completing his seduction of her daughter, Mrs. Hopewell describes him as "that nice

dull young man that tried to sell me a Bible yesterday" (291). She is compassionate and has nurturing impulses but is taken advantage of as a lone woman trying to run a farm.

Mrs. Cope, of "A Circle in the Fire," is also a hardworking, optimistic widow who supports herself and her daughter by running a farm. She contends that hard work and determination have helped make her successful:

I have the best kept place in the county and do you know why? Because I work. I've had to work to save this place and work to keep it. I don't let anything get ahead of me and I'm not always looking for trouble. I take it as it comes. (178)

Mrs. Cope's character foil is Mrs. Pritchard, the wife of her tenant farmer. Mrs. Pritchard, who "would go thirty miles for the satisfaction of seeing anybody laid away" (175), dwells on the dark side of life and seems to take perverse delight in the misfortunes of others. Her tales of woe range from a baby born to a woman in an iron lung to the fact that she has four abscessed teeth. Mrs. Cope retorts by saying,

Well, be thankful you don't have five. We might all be destroyed by a hurricane. I can always find something to be thankful for Why, think of all those poor Europeans that they put in boxcars like cattle and rode them to Siberia. Lord, we ought to spend half our time on our knees. (177-178)

She repeats this philosophy throughout the story both to the boys who eventually destroy her property and to her daughter Sally Virginia.

In spite of the potential threat posed by the three young boys who stop to visit Mrs. Cope's farm, her nurturing instincts rise above her irritation and fear: "For a second Mrs. Cope looked blank; then she

blushed; then a peculiar look of pain came over her face as she realized that these children were hungry. They were staring because they were hungry!" (180). Even after the boys eat her food and then ride her horses and drink her milk without permission, she declares, "It's not that I wouldn't be glad to have them--it's their attitude" (187). They obviously have no regard for women. When first spying Sally Virginia, the large boy exclaims, "Jesus, another woman" (185). The same boy later says to Hollis Pritchard, "I never seen a place with so many damn women on it, how do you stand it here?" (186). When Sally Virginia tells her mother that she would like to "beat the daylight" out of the boy, her mother reproaches her by saying, "Ladies don't beat the daylight out of people. You keep out of their way" (185). However, Mrs. Cope becomes a victim because as a woman she poses no threat to these boys, and she is powerless to stop their destruction.

The last widow to be discussed is Mrs. Crater in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." She and her thirty-year-old daughter Lucynell live on a farm which she has managed by herself for fifteen years. She is susceptible to exploitation by the one-armed vagrant named Tom Shiftlet, who becomes her handyman, because as a lone women with a deaf, simpleminded daughter to take care of, she is desperately in need of a man's help. Even though she is a hard worker and has managed well by herself, some tasks are difficult to complete alone. However, long years of being independent and self-sufficient have made her possessive of her property. When the tramp admires the sunset, the "old woman watched him with her arms folded across her chest as if she were the owner of the

sun" (146) and the three mountains behind the farm. She offers Tom a job if he will work for food and shelter but no pay, and she makes it clear that "[a]ny man come after her [Lucynell] 'll have to stay around the place" (149). To entice him to marry Lucynell, she offers to pay to have the automobile painted and to send them on a honeymoon trip. Mrs. Crater's attachment to her mentally deficient daughter is reflected when Tom and Lucynell begin to leave on their wedding trip: "Tears began to seep sideways out of her eyes and run along the dirty creases in her [Mrs. Crater's] face. 'I ain't ever been parted with her for two days before,' she said" (154). Because of her feminine traits of compassion and nurturing, Mrs. Crater is easy prey for Tom Shiftlet, who is a seasoned con man only interested in the automobile.

The Spinster

A final type of character to be discussed is the spinster who, because of her own ill treatment by society, has absorbed enough of this prejudice to be antifeminist herself. Miss Willerton, the forty-four year old spinster in "The Crop," would like to be a writer and feels that the mundane aspects of daily life, such as going to the grocery, keep her from being fulfilled. After completing her daily ritual of crumbing the table, which at least gives her time to think, Miss Willerton sits down at her typewriter to compose. As she considers possible topics--bakers, teachers, sharecroppers--she rejects the topic

of teachers because of her own educational experience at Willowpool Female Seminary: "Her teachers at Willowpool Seminary had been all right but they were women She didn't like the phrase, Willowpool Female Seminary--it sounded biological" (34).

Because of her limited experiences in life, she seeks fulfillment through her reading and writing. When Miss Lucia finds a questionable book in Willie's bureau drawer, she decides that "Garner must have put [it] there for a joke. It was awful," (36) so she burns it. Willie, however, had made a special effort to order the book from the publisher because she was embarrassed to ask for it at the library. When writing, Miss Willerton also likes to plan passionate scenes in which she becomes a central figure, but if she actually writes these scenes down, Bertha, Garner, and Lucia make fun of her and ask, "What have you been keeping from us, Willie?" (37). She is especially distressed when her fantasies are interrupted by Miss Lucia, who sends her to the grocery store: "She did not like to do the shopping. There was no reason those clerks should be so condescending" (40). Her disdain for traditional female roles and for women who allow themselves to be reduced to these patterns surfaces as she completes her assigned task:

Silly that a grocery should depress one--nothing in it but trifling domestic doings--women buying beans--riding children in those grocery go-carts--higgling about an eighth of a pound more or less of squash--what did they get out of it? Miss Willerton wondered. Where was there any chance for self-expression, for creation, for art? All around her it was the same--sidewalks full of people scurrying about with their hands full of little packages and their minds full of little packages. (40)

Overall, Flannery O'Connor's white female characters do not fit any traditional stereotyped female roles. They are victims of misogyny, male exploitation, and violence to themselves and their property. Through these characters Miss O'Connor protests against the lot of women in her day, especially women who are unattractive, intelligent, and unwilling to accept the submissive roles designated for them by society. She shows women at various stages in life coping with problems related to the female experience.

Eudora Welty's Women

Of the thirty-nine short stories by Eudora Welty in her collections A Curtain of Green, The Wide Net, The Golden Apples, and The Bride of the Innisfallen, thirty-five deal with female characters in various roles from youth to old age. Because of the breadth and scope of her characterization, certain limitations are necessary for the purpose of this study. More so than Katherine Anne Porter and Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty individualizes her characters to avoid stereotypes and to present a wide range of conditions and attitudes related to woman's role in society. However, the characters that she creates seem to be representative of the typical females found in small Southern towns in her lifetime. The same types of characters--young unmarried women, married women, and spinsters--are looked at for comparison with Porter and O'Connor. Representative stories are taken from each of the collections.

The Spinster

Because Eudora Welty makes each character so unique, it is sometimes difficult to establish commonalities, even within a particular group. However, the composite view of the spinster does give the reader some idea about the role of this category of women in society. These women are often frustrated, isolated, and viewed with contempt. Many hold inferior positions in society, while others have never really lived or been fulfilled in life. Because Welty's characters are so often revealed indirectly, through dialogue, and because she records the details of their existence without making judgments or attempting to espouse any political or social issues, the patterns are not as obvious nor is her message as overtly expressed.

The first spinsters to be discussed are Sister in "Why I Live at the P.O." and Hattie Purcell in "Ladies in Spring." Both women do assume a vocation, that of postmistress, and are basically feminine even though they assume male responsibilities. One of Sister's major character traits is jealousy, and she becomes so paranoid that she ultimately leaves home to live at the post office. She has always been jealous of her spoiled younger sister, Stella-Rondo, who had stolen her only suitor, Mr. Whitaker, and then married him and moved away. Stella-Rondo has now returned home, with her two-year old "adopted" child, and is trying, Sister believes, to regain favor and turn everyone in the family against her. An unbelievable course of events follows. First of all, Stella-Rondo tells Papa-Daddy that "[s]ister says she fails to

understand why you don't cut off your beard."¹²¹ Papa-Daddy is so incensed at this suggestion (he has been growing the beard since he was fifteen years old) that he calls Sister a "hussy" (47) and regrets that he used his influence to get her the job as postmistress of China Grove, Mississippi. Next, Stella-Rondo tells Uncle Rondo that Sister thinks he "look[s] like a fool in that pink kimono" (54) and that she has been "sneering" at him out the window all afternoon. For revenge Uncle Rondo throws a whole package of firecrackers into Sister's room at 6:30 a.m. the next day.

Although Sister's jealousy and opinionated behavior have gotten her into this predicament, she feels that she is being persecuted and decides to move to the post office: "And I'll tell you it didn't take me any longer than a minute to make up my mind what to do. There I was with the whole entire house on Stella-Rondo's side and turned against me. If I have anything at all I have pride" (53). Even though Sister holds a position of authority in the town, she is shown little respect and will now be physically isolated as well. After all, her family members are the main inhabitants of China Grove, and they are boycotting the post office. However, Sister insists that she is happy with her situation: "But here I am, and here I'll stay. I want the world to know I'm happy. And if Stella-Rondo should come to me this minute, on bended knees, and

¹²¹Eudora Welty, The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p. 47. Hereafter, all references to Welty stories will be from this collection and will be indicated in the text by page number only.

attempt to explain the incidents of her life with Mr. Whitaker, I'd simply put my fingers in both my ears and refuse to listen" (56).

Hattie Purcell, the town postmistress and rainmaker in "Ladies in Spring," achieves some degree of respect from society for her ability to handle both jobs well:

Miss Hattie never let her powers interfere with mail time, or mail time interfere with her powers. She had everything worked out. She pulled open the door of her automobile, right there. There on the back seat was her mail sack, ready to go The car roared and took a leap out into the rain. At the corner it turned, looking two stories high, swinging wide as Miss Hattie banked her curve, with a lean of her whole self deep to the right. She made it. Then she sped on the diagonal to the bottom of the hill and pulled up at the station just in time for Mr. Frierson to run out in his suspenders and hang the mail as the train rushed through. (527)

She very efficiently puts up the mail and then gives it out again. As town members pick up their mail, they compliment her on the rainfall that she has been responsible for bringing, and she replies, "It's a beginning. I'll go back out there tomorrow, if I have the time, and if I live and don't nothing happen, and do some more of it. But depends on the size of the mail" (528). Because she has failed to fulfill the expected roles of wife or mother, the mail is the center of her existence. She even lives next door to the post office.

However, Hattie, whose appearance and behavior are both described as being a little eccentric, is isolated as well. When Dewey and his father go fishing, they see Miss Purcell on her rainmaking expedition: she has on a black hat and a "roomy" black coat that "hung down in the back to her ankles, when it didn't catch on things. She was carrying, like a rolling pin, a long furled umbrella, and moved straight forward

in some kind of personal zigzag of a walk--it would be hard to pass her" (520). However, the father is reluctant to talk to this unusual female and says to Dewey, "Don't be so apt to holler. We may can keep to the rear of her, if we try good" (520).

The next spinsters to be discussed are the three sisters--Cora, Phoebe, and Irene--in "Astrophel." They are very gentle, feminine women who find their role in the community to be--since they do not fulfill the expected roles--bearers of news and gossip and preservers of community history and legends. When they go on a picnic, clothed in "white dimity" (200) and looking like a "faded garland at the foot of the columns" (202), they recount the story of Miss Sabina and reveal their part in it. When Don McInnis is unfaithful to his wife Sabina, the three old maids feel that it is their responsibility to be bearers of bad news: "We told the news. We went in a body up the hill and into the house, weeping and wailing, hardly daring to name the deed" (203). After telling their tale to Sabina, she curses everyone, including them, and they run away: "We ran down the steps and in and out of the boxwood garden, around the fountain, all clutching one another as though we were pursued, and away through the street, crying. She never shed a tear, whatever happened, but we shed enough for everybody" (203).

The three old maids are also present to witness Miss Sabina's final destruction of the post office before she dies from a stroke. Sabina grabs their letters from their hands, and "[i]n her frenzy she tore all the letters to pieces, and even put bits in her mouth and appeared to eat them" (206). Welty clearly shows that for these old maids, since

they are not really participating in the mainstream of life, the opportunity to be bearers of news and raconteurs helps give them satisfaction and fulfillment in life:

Here in the bright sun where the three old maids sat beside their little feast, Miss Sabina's was an old story, closed and complete. In some intoxication of the time and place, they recited it and came to the end. Now they lay stretched on their sides on the ground, their summer dresses spread out, little smiles forming on their mouths, their eyes half-closed, Phoebe with a juicy green leaf between her teeth. Above them like a dream rested the bright columns of Astrophel, a dream like the other side of their lamentations. (206)

Their indulgence in community history is abruptly interrupted by the appearance of Don McInnis, who is "buck-naked" (207), standing near the ruins. The three feminine, girlish spinsters are then chased--barefoot, running, and later tossing food out the back of their buggy--by a herd of billy goats and nanny-goats.

Some frustrated spinsters of the old plantation class, such as the title character in "Clytie" and Miss Theo and Miss Myra in "The Burning," seek to escape undesirable situations through suicide. Miss Clytie Farr lives in self-imposed isolation in a house full of disease and death with her vindictive, arrogant sister Octavia, her alcoholic brother Gerald, and her apoplectic father. She sometimes takes a walk to escape this suffocating abode in which "every window was closed and every shade was down" (82), where she is expected to wait upon her ungrateful family members: "Clytie cooked three meals on the stove, for they all ate different things, and set the three trays. She had to carry them in proper order up the stairs. She frowned in concentration, for it was hard to keep all the dishes straight, to make them come out right in the end" (84).

Although previously the Farrs had been isolated because they thought they "were too good to associate with other people" (81), now they suffer both economic and social isolation because the father has had two strokes, the younger brother Henry committed suicide by putting a bullet through his head, and the older brother Gerald is an alcoholic who, in his more sober moments, complains, "How can a man live in the house with women? How can he?" (88). The two old maid sisters are left to care for everything, and they threaten to kill anyone who comes to the door or who invades their property in any way, such as the neighbor who plants a rosebush next to the fence dividing their property.

The townspeople begin to suspect that Clytie's "wits were all leaving her" (81). She hurries through town at the same time each afternoon and, without looking, walks in front of horses and trucks, often stopping to stand in the middle of the road as if lost in thought:

If anyone spoke to her, she fled. If she saw she was going to meet someone on the street, she had been known to dart behind a bush and hold a small branch in front of her face until the person had gone by. When anyone called her by name, she turned first red, then white, and looked somehow, as one of the ladies in the store remarked, disappointed. She was becoming more frightened all the time, too. People could tell because she never dressed up any more. For years, every once in a while, she would come out in what was called an "outfit," all in hunter's green, a hat that came down around her face like a bucket, a green silk dress, even green shoes with pointed toes. She would wear the outfit all one day, if it was a pretty day, and then next morning she would be back in the faded jumper with her old hat tied under the chin, as if the outfit had been a dream. It had been a long time now since Clytie had dressed up so that you could see her coming. (86)

Clytie had also begun to indulge in other eccentric behavior, such as going out to the vegetable patch and cursing: "The cursing was new, and she cursed softly, like a singer going over a song for the first time.

But it was something she could not stop. Words which at first horrified Clytie poured in a full, light stream from her throat, which soon, nevertheless, felt strangely relaxed and rested" (87).

Clytie, unable to maintain old standards and no longer young and laughing, is constantly looking into the faces of others as if searching for something she cannot find: "The most profound, the most moving sight in the whole world must be a face. Was it possible to comprehend the eyes and the mouths of other people, which concealed she knew not what, and secretly asked for still another unknown thing?" (83). The lonely, confused Clytie is looking for happiness, love, fulfillment, restored youth perhaps, but what she ultimately sees, as she views her own reflection in the rain barrel, is the truth of her existence, which causes her to take drastic, immediate action and commit suicide:

It was a wavering, inscrutable face. The brows were drawn together as if in pain. The eyes were large, intent, almost avid, the nose ugly and discolored as if from weeping, the mouth old and closed from any speech. On either side of the head dark hair hung down in a disreputable and wild fashion. Everything about the face frightened and shocked her with its signs of waiting, of suffering. . . . Too late, she recognized the face. She stood there completely sick at heart, as though the poor, half-remembered vision had finally betrayed her.
(90)

Life as she now experiences it is not life at all, and because she sees no hope for the future, Clytie submerges her head in the barrel and is later found with "her poor ladylike black-stockinged legs up-ended and hung apart like a pair of tongs" (90).

Miss Theo and Miss Myra, in "The Burning," are two Old Order spinsters who also try to escape their present situation through suicide. When two of Sherman's soldiers arrive to destroy their

property, the two ladies continue the daily ritual of sewing in the parlor and are at home alone because their father is dead and their brother is missing in action. Miss Myra, the younger, more delicate sister, is raped; and then the two spinsters and their Negro servant Delilah are put out of the house before it is looted and burned. The two sisters, having always been protected from the harsher realities of life, cannot understand or deal with their present situation. Miss Theo finally tells Miss Myra that

[h]e sent word. General Pemberton sent word, for us all to get out ahead of what was coming. You were in the summerhouse when it came. It was two days' warning--but I couldn't bring myself to call and tell you, Myra. I suppose I couldn't convince myself--couldn't quite believe that they meant to come and visit that destruction on us. (488)

After witnessing the burning, the three women wander toward Jackson. With the help of Delilah, the two sisters decide to escape their shame, humiliation, and suffering through death. After hanging Miss Myra, to keep her "asleep in the heart" (484), Miss Theo tries to hang herself but only succeeds in breaking her neck and dying a slow, painful death in the grass.

Virgie Rainey, in "The Wanderers," is a spinster whose life is ruled by her mother and interfered with and commented upon by the town busybodies. Life for Virgie, who holds an office job typing for Mr. Nesbitt's company and completes all the farm and household chores for her mother, is now a type of bondage, full of oppression, unlike those carefree days before she ran away at age seventeen when she took piano lessons from Miss Eckhart and played music at the picture show. After the death of Virgie's mother, the woman who brings her the

night-blooming cereus comments, "You used to play the pi-anna in the picture show when you's little and I's young and in town, dear love. Sorry about your mama: didn't suppose anybody make as pretty music as you ever have no trouble--I thought you's the prettiest little thing ever was" (454).

However, Virgie is not happy or fulfilled. There are rumors of indiscretions with various men, and she smokes her cigarettes on the sly, but these are minor attempts at liberation; only the death of her mother can actually set her free to live her own life. To those who never understood her but now attempt to console her, she cries, "Don't touch me" (435). They do not realize that there is no hysteria or grief to deal with in her case: "They were all people who had never touched her before who tried now to struggle with her, their faces hurt. She was hurting them all, shocking them" (435). When all the mourners had gone except Miss Snowdie, who was taking the first watch with the deceased, Virgie goes down to the river for a swim:

She took off her clothes and let herself into the river
 All was one warmth, air, water, and her own body
 She felt the sand, grains intricate as little cogged
 wheels, minute shells of old seas, like suggestions and
 withdrawals of some bondage that might have been dear, now
 dismembering and losing itself. (439-40)

Virgie plans to leave Morgana as soon as possible, and she quickly disposes of the estate which means nothing to her: "What does Virgie care about housekeeping and china plates without no husband, hm?" (436). Another neighbor, Jinny McLain, urges her to tie the knot: "Listen. You should marry now, Virgie. Don't put it off any longer" (444). However, Virgie wants to be free to be herself, to be an individual, and when Old

Man Rainey decides to go with her to see the world, she pleads, "Please, sir, don't you come! Yes--I may go far--" (456). The reader is left with the feeling that Virgie will indeed go far.

Taken as a group, Miss Welty's spinsters suffer from the stigma of their position and often lead empty, unfulfilled lives. They are frustrated, isolated, victimized, given positions of small importance, and subjected to disdain. Those who cannot cope with their situations lose their minds or commit suicide.

Young, Unmarried Girls

The next grouping of characters to be discussed are the young, unmarried girls. These young ladies, who fall primarily in the teenage years, are similar in that they are introduced to the real world through some sort of initiation or rites of passage. Each girl is changed by her shocking experience and makes the transition from innocence to experience. Marian in "A Visit of Charity," the observer on the beach in "A Memory," and Jenny in "At The Landing" fall into this category.

Marian, the fourteen-year-old Campfire Girl in "A Visit of Charity," goes to the Old Ladies' Home on the outskirts of town, with potted plant in hand, to earn the required number of points for her troop. The fact that she is not coming out of charity or a desire to alleviate the loneliness of the inhabitants is indicated by her statement to the nurse upon entering: "I have to pay a visit to some old lady" (113). Instead of finding sweet little old ladies to whom she can

offer comfort and support, the innocent Marian is left to visit a woman who bleats like a sheep and another who has hands like bird claws, first grabbing Marian's hat and then the little potted plant. Marian thought that "[i]t was like being caught in a robbers' cave, just before one was murdered" (114). The two women constantly bicker while Marian is there, and the sicker one calls the plant "stinkweeds" (115) and declares she did not enjoy the visit of the last Campfire girl. Marian is so taken aback by their behavior that she truly cannot remember, when asked, what her name is or what she does at school: "She tried to think but she could not" (115).

Although Marian comes with the intent to do her duty, she is frightened of these two old ladies and thinks that "if she were sick in here they would have to let her go" (115). However, she is not allowed to make a departure before she is awakened to the startling realities of these women's lives: their lives are empty; they are subject to indignities and invasion of privacy; they are miserable beings awaiting death. The sick woman, who is later reduced to tears and whimpers, says of her roommate:

Your head is empty, your heart and hands and your old black purse are all empty. . . . and yet you talk, talk, talk, talk, talk all the time until I think I'm losing my mind! Who are you? You're a stranger--a perfect stranger! Don't you know you're a stranger? Is it possible that they have actually done a thing like this to anyone--sent them in a stranger to talk, and rock, and tell away her whole long rigmarole? Do they seriously suppose that I'll be able to keep it up, day in, day out, living in the same room with a terrible old woman--forever? (116)

Marian has been initiated into the world of the living dead--a place she did not know existed--and her movement from innocence to experience is symbolized by the apple which she retrieves from its hiding spot outside the institution and eats as she rides the bus back to town.

The young female observer on the beach in "A Memory" also makes the transition from innocence to experience because of a shocking experience. She recalls,

I was at an age when I formed a judgment upon every event which came under my eyes, although I was easily frightened. When a person, or a happening, seemed to me not in keeping with my opinion, or even my hope or expectation, I was terrified by a vision of abandonment and wildness which tore my heart with a kind of sorrow. (75)

She feels that she has a "dual life as observer and dreamer" (76) so the event that she witnesses on the beach during the day recounted in this story intrudes upon her daydreams about her first love. She delights in reliving the moment when she touched her loved one's wrist on the stairs at school. However, her first love is truly innocent and never reciprocated. In fact, the two "never exchanged a word or even a nod of recognition," nor did she know "where this boy lived, or who his parents were" (76). Nevertheless, she is so aware of every detail of his life that she faints from shock when he has a nosebleed.

A group of vulgar bathers--a man, two women, and two young boys--intrude upon her dream world and force her to become more aware of reality with all its possibilities of sudden violence, vulgarity, and vulnerability. The "common" bathers inflict "punches, kicks, and idiotic sounds" (77) upon one another. The fragile veneer of naivete surrounding

the girl is broken when the man "lift[s] his hand filled with crumbling sand, shaking it as the woman laughed, and pour[s] it down inside her bathing suit between her bulbous descending breasts" (78). The observer is shocked and offended, but the family members consider the actions to be hilarious. The woman reciprocates by later turning to the man, bending over, and "in a condescending way pull[ing] down the front of her bathing suit, turning it outward, so that the lumps of mashed and folded sand came emptying out" (79). The child experiences a "peak of horror" and later, "feeling victimized" (79), bursts into tears. The transition from innocence to experience has long lasting effects: she can never again envision her precious moment of touching hands with her loved one without having the scene from the beach in the background.

The last young, unmarried female to be discussed is Jenny Lockhart in "At The Landing." She has led a very sheltered life with her overprotective grandfather and is truly an innocent: "the girl was too shy of the world . . . and too good" (241). Her activities are so restricted that she has no knowledge of the outside world:

in the dining room she could walk around the table or sit on one after the other of eight needlepoint pieces, . . . or she could count the plates that stood on their rims in the closet. In the library she could circle an entirely bare floor and make up a dance to a song she made up, all silently, or gaze at the backs of the books without titles. (241)

Although her grandfather does not let her venture out in The Landing, Jenny is aware that one day she will be free: "like distant lightning that silently bathes a whole shimmering sky, one awareness was always trembling about her: one day she would be free to come and go" (242).

Until Jenny's feelings of first love for Billy Floyd arise, she had never thought or acted for herself: "Jenny was obedient to her grandfather and would have been obedient to anybody, to a stranger in the street if there could be one. She never performed any act, even a small act, for herself. . . . It might seem that nothing began in her own heart" (242-43). Her attraction to Billy Floyd grows as she watches and admires his every movement from afar. The wild, free spirit that she has observed in communion with nature, however, seems "handled," "used," and "worldly" (248) within the confines of the store where she goes to tell of her grandfather's death. Her love for him continues to grow until the storm comes and the flood waters rise. Then, on the high hill of the cemetery, where Billy has taken Jenny to save her life, "he violated her and still he was without care or demand and as gay as if he were still clanging the bucket at the well" (251). He commits this act with a "thoughtlessness of motion" (251), but to Jenny this physical union has greater significance. She wishes to tell him that she loves him, but instead she says, "I wish you and I could be far away. I wish for a little house" (251). He ignores her remarks, and after the waters go down, he leaves her never to be seen again.

Jenny learns from this cruel experience the difference between love and sexuality and the male's refusal to accept sexual responsibility. Although Jenny has been initiated rather abruptly into the real world, the necessity of cleaning the remains of the river from her house makes her forget the "shock of love" and eventually be healed of its "daze or pain" (253) as she regains her strength. When forced to leave The

Landing because of the old ladies who gossip about her and ask, "Why don't you run after him?" (225), Jenny begins to wonder "what more love would be like" and goes in search of Billy Floyd. She inquires after him at the river and asks the fishermen if she can wait there for his return. They agree, but "after a certain length of time, the men . . . put her inside a grounded houseboat on the plank of which chickens were standing. . . . One by one the men came in to her" (257).

Welty shows the reader that the search for love does not guarantee happiness and that the methods of communicating love are imperfect and inadequate. Welty's young, unmarried women are introduced to the harsher realities of life through a shocking event, and they leave behind their innocence and enter the world of experience.

Married Women

The last grouping of Welty characters to be discussed are the married women who suffer some type of isolation, separation, or lack of communication. Within this grouping she focuses on expectant mothers, whose barriers are caused by lack of communication as the wife becomes absorbed in the new life within her, and on married women who suffer because of infidelity.

In "The Wide Net" a communication gap occurs between Hazel Jamieson, who is three months pregnant, and her husband, William Wallace: "When he came in the room she would not speak to him, but would look as straight at nothing as she could, with her eyes glowing. If he

only touched her she stuck out her tongue or ran around the table" (169). Because of all the physical and emotional changes that Hazel is going through at this time, she is a little touchy and wants attention and understanding from her husband. Having been married only a year, she must make the transition from a much sought after beauty--"they couldn't have a singing at the church without a fight over her" (171)--to a mother. Virgil comments, "It's a pity for the ones like her to grow old, and get like their mothers" (171). To show his discontent, William Wallace goes out carousing all night with two of the fellows from down the road. When he returns, he finds a letter saying that Hazel "would not put up with him after that and was going to the river to drown herself" (169). William Wallace proceeds, with his friend Virgil and Doc, the owner of the net, to drag the river. Virgil thinks it is a "woman's trick" (171). After all, Hazel is smart, Virgil says, "a lot smarter than her cousins in Beulah. And especially Edna Earle, that never did get to be what you'd call a heavy thinker. Edna Earle could sit and ponder all day on how the little tail of the 'C' got through the 'L' in the Coca-Cola sign" (171).

On one of William Wallace's many dives to the bottom of the river in search of Hazel's body, he finally figures out the reason for her actions:

So far down and all alone, had he found Hazel? Had he suspected down there, like some secret, the real, the true trouble that Hazel had fallen into, . . . how (who knew?) she had been filled to the brim with that elation that they all remembered, like their own secret, the elation that comes of great hopes and changes, sometimes simply of the harvest time, that comes with a little course of its own like a tune to run

in the head, and there was nothing she could do about it--they knew--and so it had turned into this? It could be nothing but the old trouble that William Wallace was finding out, reaching and turning in the gloom of such depths. (180)

After a fishfry, a nap, a wild dance with a catfish hooked on his belt buckle, an encounter with the King of the Snakes, and a storm, William Wallace leads the search party home. No one else actually thought Hazel was in the river. Doc says, "She wasn't in there. Girls don't like water--remember that. Girls don't just haul off and go jumping in the river to get back at their husbands. They got other ways" (186). As William Wallace finally returns to his own house and enters the kitchen, he hears his name called: "After a moment, he smiled, as if no matter what he might have hoped for in his wildest heart, it was better than that to hear his name called out in the house" (187). After finding out that Hazel had been hiding and had never actually left the house, William Wallace, now more appreciative of her and aware of her condition, playfully spansks her and then holds her "smiling in the crook of his arm. It was the same as any other chase in the end" (188). However, she warns him not to take her for granted: "I will do it again if I get ready. Next time will be different, too" (188).

Although a similar lack of understanding between an expectant mother and her husband occurs in "Flowers for Marjorie," the ending is much more tragic. Howard and Marjorie, a poor young couple from Mississippi, have moved to New York during the Depression to find work. Howard's inability to find a job so he can feed his wife, much less the

baby that is due in three months, has driven him to the brink of despair and desperation:

When did I ever work? A year ago . . . six months . . . back in Mississippi . . . I've forgotten! Time isn't as easy to count up as you think! I wouldn't know what to do now if they did give me work. I've forgotten! It's all past now. . . . And I don't believe it any more--they won't give me work now--they never will--. (100-101)

He feels that Marjorie is so engrossed in the thought of new life that she does not understand or sympathize with his position:

There were times when Howard would feel lost in the one little room. Marjorie often seemed remote now, or it might have been the excess of life in her rounding body that made her never notice any more the single and lonely life around her, the very pressing life around her. He could only look at her. (99)

Marjorie, on the other hand, feels that he does not want the baby and weeps. Howard tells her, "Just because you're going to have a baby . . . doesn't mean we aren't starving to death" (101). Realizing at that moment that he hates her for "[i]nquiring out of her safety into his hunger and weakness" (101), he takes the butcher knife and "thrust[s] it under her breast" (102). Ironically then, after he has killed the person dearest to him, his luck changes--he hits the jackpot on a slot machine and is honored as the ten millionth person to enter Radio City. However, none of this good fortune means anything to him because "Marjorie is dead" (105).

The last grouping of married women to be discussed are those who suffer isolation or separateness because of infidelity. In "Shower of Gold" Snowdie MacLain's husband King is repeatedly unfaithful to her,

while in "The Whole World Knows" Jinny Stark MacLain is unfaithful to her husband Ran, who reciprocates by being unfaithful to her.

King MacLain's infidelity was well known throughout the county long before his marriage to Miss Snowdie, and he was reputed to have "children known and unknown, scattered-like" (264) as well as several in the county orphanage. Snowdie had received a good education, and everyone expected her, as a single woman, to fill the role of teacher. However, "before you could shake a stick at it" (265), King MacLain marries her. The bonds of matrimony do not keep him from straying, and "people took it for granted mighty early--him leaving and him being welcomed home, him leaving and him sending word, 'Meet me in the woods,' and him gone again, at last leaving the hat" (265). Members of the community become very protective of Snowdie because of King's ill-treatment of her but are also angry with her for always taking King back on his own terms. Snowdie's face acquires a glow and her life a purpose, however, when "nine months to the day the twins [Lucius Randall and Eugene Hudson] come after he went sallying out through the woods and fields and laid his hat down on the bank of the river with 'King MacLain' on it" (266). While Snowdie never gets a "real good look at life" (266) with King's extended absences, her sons become the center of her existence, and she achieves some degree of fulfillment through the nurturing role of mother.

In "The Whole World Knows" Miss Welty skillfully depicts the double standard--how the community reaction differs if the infidelity is on the part of the woman. Ran MacLain is deeply humiliated when his wife,

Jinny Stark, is openly unfaithful to him with Woodrow Spights, a man eleven years his junior. Therefore, he moves out of the house to show his disdain for her. As his mother Snowdie says, reflecting the attitude of the day, "The whole world knows what she did to you. It's different when it's the man" (390). Randall is surprised when Miss Perdita Mayo comes up to his window at the bank and shouts,

Randall, when are you going back to your precious wife? You forgive her, now you hear? That's no way to do, bear grudges. Your mother never bore your father a single grudge in her life, and he made her life right hard. . . . But you march on back to your wife, Ran MacLain. You hear? It's a thing of the flesh not the spirit, it'll pass. Jinny'll get over this in three four months. (376)

Ran, however, does not follow this advice and blatantly parades Maideen Sumrall--a younger version of Jinny--around in an attempt to wound his wife. Snowdie reminds him that the "Lord never meant us all to separate. To go and be cut off. One from the other, off in some little room" (386). When Jinny seems unaffected by his scorn, his neglect, and his attempts to flaunt Maideen, Ran feels the need to seek revenge by taking the young girl to Vicksburg, getting her drunk, and then sexually violating her "so quick" (392) in a dark motel room. Miss Lizzie seems to have more insight into this unhappy love relationship than anyone: "You men. You got us beat in the end. . . . We'd know you through and through except we never know what ails you. . . . Of course I see what Jinny's doing, the fool, but you ailed first. You just got her answer to it, Ran" (385). Welty clearly shows that reciprocity in love is desirable for life-fulfillment and that infidelity, on the part of

either spouse, can drive a wedge into any relationship, causing isolation, loneliness, and separateness.

This Chapter includes a discussion of the image of the Southern white woman, from youth to old age, as reflected in selected short stories of Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty, three women authors included in the eleventh-grade American literature curriculum. Porter historically portrays the changing role of women from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century. She illustrates discontent and lack of fulfillment in traditional female roles and the rise of the "new," liberated Southern woman. Flannery O'Connor, through her comic and often grotesque caricatures of women, protests against a male-dominated culture in which women are often victims of male exploitation. She also attempts to shatter many traditional ideas of feminine roles and to show the plight of the intellectual woman in society, especially the intellectual woman who is not attractive. Last, but not least, Eudora Welty depicts typical women--which she skillfully individualizes--in small Southern towns and the conventions which govern their lives. Her spinsters suffer various types of isolation; her young, unmarried females are forced from the world of innocence to that of experience through some sort of initiation; and her married women are separated from their spouses, at least temporarily, because of lack of communication and infidelity. Although Porter, O'Connor, and Welty were never active feminists in the modern sense, their fiction holds much insight into the role of women for today's reader.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to analyze the content of selected twentieth-century fiction by Southern white female writers in terms of the treatment of the role of women to determine if that fiction reflects the transition from a stereotyped view of the role of women in society to a more contemporary androgynous view; (2) to determine through the use of a survey and a current psychological test of androgyny the attitude of selected East Tennessee eleventh-grade English teachers toward the role of women in the South today.

This study is based on three assumptions: (1) the discovery of and adjustment to culturally accepted sex roles is a necessary step in the adolescent's maturation process; (2) twentieth-century fiction which portrays the role of women realistically can serve as useful models for adolescent readers; (3) a study of selected twentieth-century Southern women writers would help teachers and researchers in this field by providing them with specific insight into the status of women in Southern society and how this status has changed since the Civil War.

As background preparation for this analysis, the author researched and presented a broad overview of the following areas: (1) sex-role development for adolescents; (2) sex stereotyping at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels; (3) a history of the changing role of the Southern woman from the antebellum South to the present.

Selected short works by Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty--the twentieth-century Southern women writers most consistently included (over 90 percent of the time) in the American literature curriculum at the schools surveyed--were analyzed in terms of their treatment of the role of women. Little attention up to this time has been directed to the role of women in the literature being taught at the secondary level, and women writers, especially Southern women, have been instrumental in raising the consciousness of society about the role of women.

In the teacher survey the ratings were analyzed in order to note the presence or absence of stereotyping by teachers. The results were also used to describe the attributes of Southern women today as perceived by selected eleventh-grade English teachers in the study. The researcher felt it important to look at those individuals who have the most input into the development of the curriculum in the areas of textbook selection and choice of works to be included on reading lists, research projects, and in-class novel studies.

Seventy-four percent of those surveyed found the twentieth-century Southern white woman to be androgynous in nature and much more independent and willing to stand up for her beliefs than her predecessors. Similarly, an analysis of the female characters of Porter, O'Connor, and Welty revealed many women unfulfilled and rebellious in stereotypic roles and others assuming more androgynous roles in the family, the community, and the world of work.

Intelligent female characters are presented who exceed the minimal educational standards set for women and have high educational aspirations and attainments. Katherine Anne Porter's Eva Parrington and Miranda ("Old Mortality") have been well educated, and Eva becomes a Latin teacher at a female seminary. Flannery O'Connor presents two intelligent, well-read twelve-year-olds, Sally Virginia Cope ("A Circle in the Fire") and "the child" ("A Temple of the Holy Ghost"); a well-read college student, Mary Grace ("Revelation"); and two well-educated spinsters, Joy-Hulga, who has a Ph.D. in philosophy, and Miss Willerton, who was educated at a female seminary. Few references to education appear in the selected Welty stories with the exception of Snowdie Hudson MacLain ("Shower of Gold"), who had been educated to teach because everyone thought that she was going to be a spinster.

The occupational choices for women in these selections also go beyond the stereotypical pattern of mother or teacher. Porter's Sophia Jane ("The Journey") runs a sugar refinery, and her sons' wives are career women; Eva Parrington ("Old Mortality") is a teacher and a suffragette, and Miranda, who considered becoming a jockey, a tightrope walker, and an airplane pilot, ends up becoming a journalist. In the Flannery O'Connor stories, "the child" ("A Temple of the Holy Ghost") aspires to be a doctor or an engineer; Joy-Hulga ("Good Country People"), if not for her health problems, would like to lecture at a university; Miss Willerton ("The Crop") desires to become a writer; and Mrs. Hopewell ("Good Country People"), Mrs. Cope ("A Circle in the Fire"), and Mrs. Crater ("The Life You Save May Be Your Own") manage

farms as well as tenant farmers. Eudora Welty portrays two postmistresses, Sister ("Why I Live at the P.O.") and Hattie Purcell ("Ladies in Spring"), with the latter also being the town rainmaker. Virgie Rainey ("The Wanderers") holds an office job and had formerly played the music at the picture show.

Although the expected role of the Southern woman was that of wife and mother, all three writers in this study include women who diverge from the stereotype. A husband is selected for Porter's Sophia Jane ("The Journey"), whose numerous children and grandchildren made nurturing one of her many roles; Amy ("Old Mortality") is encouraged to marry her second cousin Gabriel, Eva remains a spinster because she is physically unattractive, and Miranda elopes and later divorces. Flannery O'Connor presents physically unattractive women who remain single (Mary Grace of "Revelation" and Joy-Hulga of "Good Country People"); independent widows and divorcees who must fulfill many typically male roles out of necessity (Mrs. Hopewell of "Good Country People," Mrs. Cope of "A Circle in the Fire," and Mrs. Crater of "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"); and a married woman who does not wish to be part of the procreation race (Ruby Hill of "A Stroke of Good Fortune"). Spinsters are in abundance in the selected stories by Welty (Sister of "Why I Live at the P.O.," Hattie of "Ladies in Spring," the title character of "Clytie," Virgie of "The Wanderers," Cora, Phoebe, and Irene of "Astrophel," Miss Theo and Miss Myra of "The Burning"); other female characters include two expectant mothers (Hazel of "The Wide Net" and Marjorie of "Flowers for Marjorie"), a mother of twins (Snowdie

MacLain of "Shower of Gold"), and a wife estranged from her husband (Jinny MacLain of "The Whole World Knows").

Many of the female characters of Porter, O'Connor, and Welty cross the cultural gender distinctions by displaying not only stereotypical feminine traits but also some of the stereotypical masculine traits, predominantly "independence," "strong personality," "defense of beliefs," and "willingness to take a stand." In Porter's "The Journey" Sophia Jane's strong personality surfaces when she becomes a widow who is responsible for a sugar refinery and a plantation and who attempts to keep order in the lives of her children, grandchildren, and the Negro servants for whom she is responsible. Eva Parrington ("Old Mortality") also displays the above characteristics. She is a suffragette who is even willing to go to jail three times and lose her seat at the seminary to fight for women's rights. Miranda ("Old Mortality") is likewise independent and willing to take risks as she elopes, later divorces, and then assumes a career as a journalist during World War I.

Flannery O'Connor's intelligent women (Mary Grace of "Revelation" and Joy-Hulga of "Good Country People") choose to show their independence and willingness to stand up for their beliefs through acts of rebellion, such as Mary Grace's glaring and later hurling a book at Mrs. Turpin and Joy-Hulga's deliberate choice of unattractive clothes and her rudeness to her mother and Mrs. Freeman. O'Connor's widows and divorcees--Mrs. Cope ("A Circle in the Fire"), Mrs. Hopewell ("Good Country People"), and Mrs. Crater ("The Life You Save May Be Your

Own")--have become independent out of necessity as they are lone women trying to manage farms and tenant farmers.

These typically masculine traits are likewise found in Welty's characters: in Sister ("Why I Live at the P.O."), who has a strong personality and stands up for her beliefs by moving from the house to the post office when she feels that her family members have turned against her; in Virgie Rainey ("The Wanderers"), who had run off at age seventeen and plans to leave again immediately after her mother's funeral to go to far off places; and in Jinny MacLain ("The Whole World Knows"), who is tired of the double standard and is unfaithful to her husband.

All three writers included in this study protest against the society that established and perpetuated such restrictive roles for women. Some women can transcend the barriers, while others suffer more tragic consequences. Women who rebel against these roles are often isolated or ostracized, such as Sister ("Why I Live at the P.O."), who moves all of her belongings to the post office, and Eva Parrington ("Old Mortality"), to whom no one in the family sent a telegram even in the event of a death. Other women seek outlets by flaunting tradition, such as Amy's daring shepherdess costume ("Old Mortality") and Virgie's cigarettes and indiscretions ("The Wanderers"); by escaping to fantasy worlds, such as "the child" ("A Temple of the Holy Ghost") who envisions herself fighting on the front in World War I, and Miss Willerton ("Crop"), who mentally projects herself into the part of the lead female in the stories she plans to write; and by taking more drastic measures,

such as committing suicide (Amy of "Old Mortality," the title character of "Clytie," Miss Theo of "The Burning").

Porter, O'Connor, and Welty often portray the women in their stories as victims: of infidelity or the double standard (Welty's Snowdie MacLain of "Shower of Gold" and Jinny MacLain of "The Whole World Knows"); of the procreation race (O'Connor's Ruby Hill and her mother of "A Stroke of Good Fortune"); of misogyny (directed toward the women by O'Connor's male intruders of "A Circle in the Fire" and Welty's Gerald in "The Burning"); of male exploitation (by O'Connor's Mr. Shiftlet, who abandons Lucynell and escapes with Mrs. Crater's car in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," and the Bible salesman, who seduces Joy-Hulga and steals her glasses and artificial leg in "Good Country People"); of family tyranny (Jenny's overprotective grandfather in "At The Landing" and Clytie's and Virgie's family members who make unreasonable demands in "Clytie" and "The Wanderers" by Welty); and of violence to themselves and to their property (the destruction by fire of Mrs. Cope's property in "A Circle in the Fire" by O'Connor and the rapes of Miss Myra of "The Burning" and Jenny Lockhart of "At The Landing" by Welty).

The three writers included in this study also show the consequences of accepting traditional roles. Ruby Hill's mother (O'Connor's "A Stroke of Good Fortune") is described as "puckered up," gray-headed, and almost dead at age thirty-four because of the procreation race. The husband and sons of Sophia Jane (Porter's "The Journey") squander her dowry on poor investments even though she feels fully capable of handling her own

financial matters. Unfaithful King MacLain (of Welty's "Shower of Gold") repeatedly leaves his wife Snowdie, sometimes for years at a stretch, because she keeps taking him back after each infidelity.

Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty do much to raise the consciousness of readers about the role of women in society. As Robert Drake comments, "Their sex, their region inevitably define their view of the world, but I don't think they're grinding an ax for anything; they're just, as is any artist of integrity, trying to tell the truth."¹²²

Conclusions

1. Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty, Southern women writers currently being included in the American literature curriculum at representative East Tennessee high schools, portray in their fiction the changing role of women in Southern society.

2. Literature by the selected writers can serve as useful models for adolescent readers because it includes women with educational aspirations and attainment, occupations beyond the stereotyped roles of mother and teacher, and alternative lifestyles.

3. The selections by Porter, O'Connor, and Welty analyzed in this study include characters who rebel against stereotypical roles and those who cross the cultural gender distinctions, especially with regard to

¹²²Robert Drake, "Three Southern Ladies," The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin, 9 (Autumn, 1980), 42.

the following traits: "independence," "strong personality," "defense of beliefs," and "willingness to take a stand."

4. Seventy-four percent of the professionals included in the survey who are teaching this curriculum see the Southern white woman as androgynous in nature, while 22 percent see her as feminine, and 4 percent see her as masculine.

5. The composite view of the Southern white woman compiled from the ratings by selected teachers was androgynous, with a prevalence of stereotypically feminine traits and a strong rating on the following masculine traits: "independence," "strong personality," "defense of beliefs," "willingness to take a stand."

6. The most concentrated androgynous response on the survey came from teachers whose training had been updated within the last three years, who had more than fifteen years of experience, and who were forty-one years of age or older.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study could be broadened to include an analysis of black female characters or characters by other Southern white women writers indicated on the survey, such as Carson McCullers, Margaret Mitchell, Harper Lee, Wilma Dykeman, Catherine Marshall, Anne Tyler, and Lillian Hellman. It might also be interesting to do a regional study and compare the treatment of Southern female characters in American literature with that of western, Eastern, and Northern female characters or to compare

the Southern female writer's perception of white female characters with that of Southern male writers, such as William Faulkner, or with that of Southern black writers.

Another interesting parallel might be to look at the portrayal of Southern women by young adult novelists, such as Mildred Taylor, Sue Ellen Bridgers, Katherine Paterson, Vera Cleaver, Beverly Crook, Paula Fox, Mildred Lee, Brenda Wilkinson, Katie Lyle, and Joyce Rockwood. An analysis of American literature textbooks over the last twenty years (at each five-year adoption period) could be made to determine the number of selections by women writers portraying women as principal characters.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENT

1. Age

- ☐ (a) 25 and under
☐ (b) 26 - 30
☐ (c) 31 - 35
☐ (d) 36 - 40
☐ (e) 41+

2. Sex

- ☐ (a) Female
☐ (b) Male

3. Years of experience

- ☐ (a) 0 - 5
☐ (b) 6 - 10
☐ (c) 11 - 15
☐ (d) 15+

4. Recency of training

- ☐ (a) None since graduation
☐ (b) Within last 10 years
☐ (c) Within last 7 years
☐ (d) Within last 5 years
☐ (e) Within last 3 years

5. 20th-century Southern white women writers included in the American literature curriculum at your school

- ☐ (a) Carson McCullers
☐ (b) Margaret Mitchell
☐ (c) Katherine Anne Porter
☐ (d) Flannery O'Connor
☐ (e) Eudora Welty
☐ (f) Others -- If so, list them.

(1) _____
 (2) _____
 (3) _____

6. Inclusion of 20th-century Southern white women writers in the American literature curriculum at your school

- ☐ (a) in the textbook
☐ (b) on the reading list
☐ (c) on research projects
☐ (d) as in-class novels
☐ (e) none of the above

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER TO ELEVENTH-GRADE ENGLISH TEACHERS

April 22, 1987

Dear Eleventh-Grade English Teacher,

I am an eleventh-grade English teacher at Maryville High School currently working on my doctoral dissertation in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Tennessee under the direction of Dr. Mark Christiansen. As part of my research, I need your help. Would you take ten minutes from your busy schedule this week to complete the enclosed survey? Your responses will be anonymous, and only cumulative statistics will be included in my study. Your return of this instrument implies your willingness to have your responses included in the cumulative statistics.

The purpose of my study is twofold: (1) to analyze the content of selected twentieth-century fiction by Southern white female writers in terms of the treatment of the role of women to determine if that fiction reflects the transition from a stereotyped view of the role of women in society to a more contemporary androgynous view; (2) to determine through the use of a survey and a current psychological test of androgyny the attitude of selected East Tennessee eleventh-grade English teachers toward the role of women in the South today.

Thank you in advance for your help with my research. A reply within five working days would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Penny B. Ferguson
Chairman, English Department

VITA

Penny Blackwood Ferguson, born in Nashville, Tennessee, on October 16, 1947, later moved to Maryville, Tennessee, and attended the public schools there, graduating from Maryville High School in 1966. She then entered Maryville College and received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English in 1969. In the summer of 1970, she enrolled in the Graduate School of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and was awarded a Master of Arts degree with a major in English in 1974 and later a Specialist in Education degree with a major in Curriculum and Instruction in 1981. She returned to the university in 1986 to complete the residency requirement for the Doctor of Education degree. She received this degree in August, 1988, majoring in Curriculum and Instruction with collateral areas in English Education and English.

The author, who resides in Maryville, Tennessee, where she is chair of the English Department at Maryville High School, and her husband Sam, who teaches English at neighboring Heritage High School, have two daughters, Laurie Elaine and Julie Marie Ferguson.