Eudora Welty's short story "Where is the Voice Coming From?," based on the 1963 assassination of Medgar Evers, the field secretary for the N.A.A.C.P. in Mississippi, is one of the least known of her works. Having appeared in print only a few times, it has received virtually no critical attention, although Welty herself has commented on it in at least nine published pieces. (1) That the story has been largely ignored seems to me both undeserved and curious, for "Where is the Voice Coming From?," narrated by the killer himself, is a particularly penetrating and psychologically complex portrayal of the mind of an assassin. Indeed, while Welty's sensitivity to and knowledge of human nature have long been acknowledged, her insight into her main character here, her ability to imagine and present such a person, is uncannily accurate: he corresponds in many ways to the actual assassin even though the story was written, revised, and put in the mail before his arrest and was published long before most of the details of his life and personality were revealed.

In order fully to appreciate Welty's story and her perceptive creation of the main character, it is helpful to know the facts both of the historical event and of the author's composition of the work. At approximately 12:30 a.m. on June 12, 1963, Medgar Evers returned to his Jackson, Mississippi, home from an N.A.A.C.P. rally; as he stepped out of his car, he was shot in the back and killed by an unknown assailant hidden in a stand of sweetgum trees. An Enfield rifle, apparently the murder weapon, was found in a nearby honeysuckle thicket, and an intensive search for the murderer was launched.

Upon learning of the assassination which had taken place in her own city, Welty was so shocked and angered that on that same night she wrote this story, originally entitled "From the Unknown," (2) in an attempt to portray the interior of the killer. As she herself has said, (3)

Even though she was completely immersed at the time in her novel Losing Battles, the short story "just pushed right through it." (4) Writing "from deep feeling and horror," (5) she completed the story in a day, revised it quickly but extensively, (6) and mailed it to The New Yorker before the arrest, just eleven days after the murder, of Byron de la Beckwith, a fertilizer salesman and outspoken segregationist from Greenwood, Mississippi. Because the arrest "happened after I mailed the story and before publication," (7) various details had to be altered so that it would not be prejudicial: "[My] editor ... called me up and we made the changes over the telephone." (8) For example, the name Medgar Evers was changed to Roland Summers, Jackson became Thermopylae, and the time of the assassination was shifted from about 12:30 a.m. to about 4:30 a.m. The altered version appeared in the July 6, 1963, issue of The New Yorker, (9) just thirteen days after Beckwith's arrest.

During Beckwith's incarceration and his trial, which took place in late January and February of 1964, information about him was revealed which had uncanny similarities with Welty's character, attesting to her extraordinary insight into human nature. Beckwith had been born in California, thus allowing the Jackson Clarion-Ledger to disclaim him as a Southerner in its headline announcing his arrest: "Californian is Charged with Murder of Evers." (10) However, he was of Southern descent, and his mother, who came from a family of dispossessed Delta planters, had brought him back to live in Greenwood, Mississippi, when he was five. His father had died of alcoholism and pneumonia, and his mother, who had been hospitalized on several occasions for mental problems, died when he was eleven, leaving him to grow up with an eccentric uncle in a decaying old house amid letters from Jefferson Davis and stories of his grandfather's exploits as a colonel in the Civil War. (11) His aristocratic heritage was also reflected in his elegant, somewhat pretentious name, "Byron" evoking associations of brooding, rebellious, and alienated Romantic figures and "de la" suggesting French ancestry; however, ironically its elegance and formality were deflated in that he was called by the nickname "de la," pronounced "dee lay."

Beckwith did not do well in school and, following a year at Mississippi State University, served in the Marines in World War II, married a WAVE, and then returned to Greenwood to work as a tobacco salesman. After the 1954 Brown Decision, he became obsessed with the racial question, publishing and distributing his own segregationist pamphlets, guarding the "Whites Only" doors at the bus station, and clashing with the Episcopal bishop of Mississippi over the church's position on integration. Having taken a new job selling fertilizer and having twice divorced, twice remarried, and separated yet again from his wife, he was living in the delapidated family home at the time of the murder. (12) As a reporter in the New York Times suggested, "Byron de la Beckwith could have stepped from a William Faulkner novel about the decaying traditions of Southern
In the Mississippi of 1963, Beckwith saw himself, and was seen by many Southerners, as a hero who had committed a laudable, even honorable, act in defense of the Southern way of life. In his Rankin County jail cell, he was thus allowed to have a television and his gun collection; in addition, housewives brought him hot meals, and supporters sent him letters and money. During his trial, at which he clearly thought he would be exonerated, he was flamboyant, confident, and proud. Wearing red socks and a red tie, he posed arrogantly at the defense table, offered cigars to one of the prosecuting attorneys, and even patted him on the back. As one reporter noted, "Byron De La Beckwith first appeared with the ceremony and air of a monarch approaching his own coronation." (14) Indeed, he seemed to glory in his role. On the witness stand, he admitted that he was "an ultraconservative segregationist" and that in letters he had made such statements as, "I believe in segregation just like I believe in God" and "[I would make] every effort to rid the U.S.A. of the integrationists." (15) He also admitted his love of guns, even sighting the murder weapon over the heads of the jury. He insisted that he was "guilty of no crime" and expected to be "freed by an impartial jury." (16) In his plea for Beckwith's conviction, one of the prosecuting attorneys succinctly summed up Beckwith's attitude: "He sat upon that throne of glory and reveled in it, and his attitude was almost beyond comprehension to me.... He is a fanatic, pure and simple." (17)

Although the case for the prosecution was strong and that for the defense relatively weak, Beckwith and many Southerners still assumed that he would be freed; indeed, while the jury was out, former Mississippi governor Ross Barnett shook Beckwith's hand and expressed his support. However, after eleven hours of deliberation, the jury was hopelessly deadlocked, and a mistrial was declared. Although today it seems unbelievable that Beckwith was not convicted, it must be remembered that, in the context of the time and place, his not being found innocent was a victory for justice and a defeat for Beckwith, who was visibly stunned. A second trial had the same outcome; he was not found guilty, but neither was he declared innocent. Although Beckwith's trial has been almost forgotten today, Dennis Mitchell, a professor of History at Mississippi's Jackson State University, suggests that, because Beckwith's trial has been a turning point in the state's history in regard to race relations. (18)

These then are the facts about Beckwith's life and personality. That Welty wrote her story before they came to light attests to the depth and perception of her insight into humanity. She herself has clearly indicated exactly what she was trying to do in "Where is the Voice Coming From?:"

I thought to myself, "I've lived here all my life. I know the kind of mind that did this"--this was before anyone was caught. So I wrote a story in the first person as the murderer, because I thought, "I am in a position where I know. I know what this man must feel like. I have lived with this kind of thing." (19)

Thus, in the story she tried to capture and present the nature of the assassin: "I was definitely hoping to say, 'This is what I think these characters are like on the inside. This is what is going through the mind of that murderer.' " (21) and "my whole point ... was to convey an obsessed person and to write the story from the inside--something I didn't think anybody away from the South would have known." (21) She has also acknowledged just how close to Beckwith she came in her portrayal:

I was like a real-life detective trying to discover who did it. I don't mean the name of the murderer, but his nature.... Anyway, as events went to prove, I think I came close to pinpointing the mind, but I went a bit wide of the mark in placing the social background of the person arrested for it. As a friend of mine said, "You thought it was a Snopes and it was a Compson." However, in some ways, that isn't a very lasting distinction any more. (22)

In an interview with William F. Buckley, Jr., her response to his question, "Did you sound like Beckwith when you were through?" was, "I think so.... I think I had it on the inside...." (23)

Welty's ability to get inside of her characters has been recognized and admired for some time; for example, in her introduction to A Curtain of Green in 1941, Katherine Anne Porter points out that "[Welty] knows each character she writes about as only the artist knows the thing he has made, by first experiencing it in imagination." (24) And Welty herself has spoken often of how a writer uses his or her imagination to create the inner world of a character, including a character whose actions or beliefs are vastly different from those of the writer. In her essay "Must the Novelist Crusade?," published in 1965, she says, "Characters in fiction are conceived from within, and they have, accordingly, their own interior life; they are individuals every time. The character we care about ... we may not approve of or agree with--that's beside the point. But he has got to seem alive." (25) Acknowledging that "some of us [Southerners] have shown bad hearts [in the present situation]," she goes on in the same essay to state eloquently what she sees as the special ability, and the obligation, of the writer, particularly in difficult times such as those of the early 1960s:

To be able, to be ready, to enter into the minds and hearts of our own people, all of them, to comprehend them (us) and then to make characters and plots in stories that in honesty and with honesty reveal them (ourselves) to us, in whatever situation we live through in our own times: this is the continuing job, and it's no harder now than it ever was, I suppose. Every writer, like everybody else, thinks he's living through the crisis of the ages. To write honestly and with all our powers is the least we can do, and the most. (26)

Not only does "Where is the Voice Coming From?" reveal Welty's skill in creating believable characters who reflect "the minds and hearts of our own people," but it also serves as an admirable example of how she uses a contemporary historical event to create a work of fiction which both preserves in living form the essence of the moment and conveys the universal human qualities of the incidents and characters involved. Welty clearly captures not only the specific occurrence but also the general turbulence of the early 1960s in Mississippi. In "Must the Novelist Crusade?" she notes, without referring specifically to the Medgar Evers case, that "There have already been giant events, some of them wrenchingly painful and humiliating," and "To convey what we see around us, whatever it is, so as to let it speak for itself according to our lights is the same challenge it ever was, not a different one, not a greater one, only perhaps made harder by the times." (27) In the story, while Welty is concerned more to make characters and plots in stories that in honesty and with honesty reveal them (ourselves) to us, in whatever situation we live through in our own times: this is the continuing job, and it's no harder now than it ever was, I suppose. Every writer, like everybody else, thinks he's living through the crisis of the ages. To write honestly and with all our powers is the least we can do, and the most. (26)
Yet while the story accurately reflects the times, it is also universal in its characters and themes, for it moves beyond a portrayal of a particular white Southerner who killed a particular black civil rights leader to suggest, among other things, how destructive hatred and prejudice in general can be. Welty's own comments on the subject of universality are again revealing:

[The subject of Southern writers] is humankind, and we are all part of it. When we write about people, black or white, in the South or anywhere, we are writing about everybody.... And while the Southern writer goes on portraying his South, which I think nobody else can do and which I believe he must do, then if his work is done well enough, it will reflect a larger mankind.... (28)

Speaking more specifically about the larger context of this particular story, Welty remarks that "What I was writing about really was that world of hate that I felt I had grown up with...." (29) And in 1978, in response to an interviewer's question, "The readers should recognize that they had inside themselves something like the murderer in "Where is the Voice Coming From?" had inside himself?" she answers,

Well, not literally—but I felt able to suggest they might have in those bad times in particular. The different members of the human race are not very different potentially, you know—I mean we're all able to recognize the elements of good and evil in human behavior—we comprehend good and evil, we're familiar with violence in our world. And that particular element of evil was running all through the South at that time. And I feel that anybody who read that story would recognize things they had seen or heard or might even have said, in some version, or imagined or feared themselves. (30)

Although few of her stories have a first-person narrator, (31) Welty chose this point of view here in order to portray the mind and heart of the murderer: ". I wrote about the murderer intimately—in the first person, which was a daring thing for me to do....[But] I felt that desperate about it." (32) He recounts in the form of an internal dramatic monologue on the hot summer day that follows the early morning deed his thoughts, feelings, and actions immediately before, during, and after the assassination as well as during the later morning hours; the monologue seems to take place in the afternoon after his return home from his morning trip downtown. It slips almost imperceptibly between the present and past tense, giving a sense of immediacy to his account of the past event:

The Branch Bank sign tells you in lights, all night long even, what time it/s and how hot. When it was quarter to four, and 92, that was me going by in my brother-in-law's truck.... So you leave Four Corners and head west on Nathan B. Forrest Road.... And there was his light on, waiting for me. In his garage, if you please. His car's gone (italics mine). (33)

This shifting of tenses also suggests that he is reliving the event as he tells it. Finally, although the monologue is internal, it is in effect addressed to the reader, who is thus directly involved in much the same manner as is the reader of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

As in all well-done dramatic monologues, the narrator reveals a great deal about his character and personality, often without realizing it. We know nothing at all about his physical traits, we never learn his name or his occupation, and we must deduce his uneducated, lower-class status from his ungrammatical, colloquial English; however, we do receive abundant insights into several facets of his personality. He seems first and foremost to be a man without honor, either in a public or a private sense. He says twice that he committed the murder for "my own pure-D satisfaction," implying with the words "my own" a totally personal, totally selfish interest, and with the words "pure-D satisfaction" perhaps even a kind of pleasure. There is in him no sense of personal honor, manifested as courage, integrity, or moral uprightness; indeed, he displays the very opposite of courage, for he hides behind a tree in ambush and shoots Roland Summers in the back. That he did not do it for his family, for his particular Southern community, or for the South in general (that is, that he was not upholding a public code of honor, however misguided or misunderstood) he makes extremely clear in an exchange with his wife upon revealing to her his "great" accomplishment. When she deflates his ego by telling him that a local newspaper columnist has already suggested such an act ("He says it for Thermopylae,' she says''), he replies, "Thermopylae never done nothing for me. And I don't owe nothing to Thermopylae. Didn't do it for you. Hell, any more'n I'd do something or other for them Kennedys." Clearly, he sets himself apart from any larger concern, from any concern beyond himself. In this regard, the town's name, Thermopylae, functions as an ironic reversal, or at least distortion, of its traditional symbolism; in 480 B.C. a small Greek force defended this mountain pass against a large Persian army for three days before being defeated, and subsequently in literature and history the name has been a symbol of "heroic resistance against great odds." (34)

Furthermore, the narrator does not reveal even an inkling of honor after the deed in the form of either remorse or guilt; he has no sense of having committed any crime or of deserving any punishment. Indeed, his comment that the authorities might catch him one day and "try to railroad me into the electric chair" implies by means of the word "railroad" (35) that such a fate would be unjust. In this regard he is distinctly similar to Beckwith in that the latter said both before and during his trial that he was "guilty of no crime" and expected to "be freed by an impartial jury." (36) However, in contrast to the narrator's lack of any code of honor, Beckwith seemed to possess a code of public and personal honor, however distorted, based on his belief in the rightness of segregation. In a letter written from jail to some supporters in Louisiana, he said, "We will win with honor." (37)

Welty's narrator also reveals that he has a very poor self-image, having always perceived himself as a loser; committing the murder is a way in which, to his distorted view, he can be a winner. Yet even that possibility is undercut by his constant awareness that his past as a loser cannot be erased. Immediately following the murder, he says, "I was on top of the world myself. For once." The abrupt "For once" sets this present achievement against the vast background of his past failure. Other references indicating his low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority stud the story. When his wife robs him of any claim to originality by telling him that the columnist has already suggested such an act ("He says do it for Thermopylae,' she says''), he replies, "Thermopylae never done nothing for me. And I don't owe nothing to Thermopylae. Didn't do it for you. Hell, any more'n I'd do something or other for them Kennedys." Clearly, he sets himself apart from any larger concern, from any concern beyond himself. In this regard, the town's name, Thermopylae, functions as an ironic reversal, or at least distortion, of its traditional symbolism; in 480 B.C. a small Greek force defended this mountain pass against a large Persian army for three days before being defeated, and subsequently in literature and history the name has been a symbol of "heroic resistance against great odds." (34)

Finally, he is constantly embittered by his lack of public recognition. He feels cheated because his picture is not in the morning paper, suggesting his sense of personal worthlessness and his desperate, even pathetic, desire for recognition as the assassin. Even the innocent remark by the old man selling peanuts that "They'll never find him" he perceives as a kind of insult, a willful refusal on the part of the old man somehow to realize that the man to whom he is speaking is the killer, suggested subtly by the narrator's comment that the old man says this "to my face." He also comments that he would accept a pat on the back, an indication of praise and of comradelship, from the governor. Ironically, this too is couched in
terms of defensiveness (he denies that he wants or needs such recognition), revealing a man always prepared to be ignored: "I ain't ask no Governor Barnett for one thing. Unless he wants to give me a pat on the back for the trouble I took this morning. But he don't have to if he don't want to." At last, having received neither recognition nor praise from anyone, he praises himself: "Anyways, I seen him fall. I was evermore the one." This remark echoes a comment made by Evers' brother the day after the shooting that "It was some crank or idiot who thought he'd do something big" and anticipates a point made by the District Attorney in his summation at Beckwith's first trial when he called the killing "one man's shortlived hold on destiny, in which he can be a 'big, big man.'" (38)

Another important element of his character is his attitude toward blacks. He is an arch-segregationist, as was the actual accused murderer. Maintaining segregation is essential to him, for it is one, indeed perhaps the only, means by which he can feel superior; he fears equality for blacks, for that threatens his own meager sense of self-worth. At the beginning of the story, for example, he describes Summers as a "nigger ... that's asking for equal time" and implies that he feels in danger of losing power when he says, "He's out planning still some other ways to do what we tell 'em they can't." After he has shot Summers, he addresses the fallen body: "Roland? There was one way left, for me to be ahead of you and stay ahead of you, by Dad, and I just taken it.... We ain't never now, never going to be equals.... Well, you seen to it, didn't you?" In this last question, he shifts the blame to Roland himself, implying that the black man forced him to do the murder. Again, as with his wife, he presents himself as the passive victim of external forces. Welty also suggests by means of a small detail that the narrator not only fears but also resents any signs of equality for blacks. As he drives to Roland's house, he notes that "his street's been paved," and, after the shooting, he describes Roland's body lying "There on his paved driveway." Part of Welty's brilliance here and throughout the story is in her objectivity. She simply records the narrator's thoughts and feelings, letting them speak for themselves. His concern with the paving implies on its own that he resents Roland's having the same amenities he does. Further, the narrator reveals an inability to see the object of his prejudice as an individual human being when he says of Roland, "Never seen him before, never seen him since, never seen anything of his black face but his picture, never seen his face alive, any time at all, or anywheres, and didn't want to, need to, never hope to see that face and never will," the hammering repetition of "never" increasing the effect of denial. A final characteristic of the segregationist attitude manifested by the narrator is his attribution of negative traits to blacks. Since he has just murdered a black himself, the irony of his contemplation of the violence of blacks towards whites is only too evident: "I won't be sorry to see them brickbats hail down on us for a change. Pop bottles too, they can leave flying whenever they want to. Hundreds, all to smash, like Birmingham.... Because it's in 'em." It is as if he has no recognition of his own capacity for violence.

Two final traits of the narrator are his jealousy and resentment of many other people, not just blacks, and his concept of the world as unpleasant and meaningless. Like other embittered and frustrated characters in American literature such as Jason Compson in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and Pap in Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the narrator resents numerous people who have more than he, be it power, wealth, or love: the white policemen ("a thousand cops crowding ever'where you go, half of 'em too young to start shaving."), teenagers who have their own cars ("'At least some dern teen-ager from North Thermoplyae getting there and doing it first,' I says. 'Driving his own car'), and, with a deft and subtle ironic touch characteristic of Welty, even Roland himself in that his wife, in contrast to the narrator's wife, seems to care greatly for her husband and her home. She left a light on and waited up for Roland, while, as the narrator says to his wife, "You didn't even leave a light burning when you went to bed." His concept of the world he lives in as negative and painful is revealed as he defensively explains why he left the murder weapon at the scene of the crime: "And I told her, 'Because I'm so tired of ever'thing in the world being just that hot to the touch!' ... There just ain't much going that's worth holding on to it no more,' I says, 'when it's a hundred and two in the shade by day and by night too not much difference.'"

Various aspects of Welty's style contribute to her portrayal of the narrator. She uses his diction, pronunciation, grammar, and sentence structure to identify him as a Southerner of the lower class with little education. The Southern colloquialisms in his diction include "ain't," "I reckon," and "He stood right still" while his wife uses the verb "fixing to"; "The N. double A.C.P. is fixing to send somebody to Thermoplyae." "The narrator is also characterized by rural diction, such as "up yonder," and by slang terms like "dern" and "by Dad." Welty suggests Southern, rural, or uneducated qualities in his and his wife's speech by spelling words in the way that they would pronounce them: "sketers" (mosquitoes), "nowheres," "a-loose," "the N. double A.C.P." "Uneducated grammatical usages of every kind are also evident, and the sentence structure is typically short, simple, and awkward or dialectal in form.

Another device which Welty uses with great skill is repetition of key words to reflect the intensity of the narrator on certain points and to create an incantatory or hypnotic effect. "Never" appears many times, suggesting both the narrator's negative personality and his resolve to destroy black attempts to gain equality with whites and to deny them identity as individual human beings of worth. The phrase "I knowed" is used five times in the paragraph in which the narrator describes Roland's arrival at home, indicating his need to be right, to have knowledge. In this same section on the murder itself, the word "back" is repeated because the narrator focuses on it as the part of the body at which he shoots, allowing Welty to emphasize his cowardice and the dishonorable nature of his act. A final example is the repetition with various meanings of the phrase "the one" throughout the story. In the murder scene, the narrator uses it to refer to Roland pejoratively, both as the black who has been causing the trouble and as the victim whom he awaits: "He had to be the one" and "He's the one." However, later in the story it is applied to the narrator himself in three different senses. First, after his wife berates him for not waiting to kill someone more important than Summers, he thinks apologetically and defensively, apparently regretting having told his wife, "I ain't but one. I reckon you have to tell somebody." Second, when he admits to her that he murdered a black himself, the irony of his contemplation of the violence of blacks towards whites is only too evident: "I won't be sorry to see them brickbats hail down on us for a change. Pop bottles too, they can leave flying whenever they want to. Hundreds, all to smash, like Birmingham.... Because it's in 'em." It is as if he has no recognition of his own capacity for violence.

Welty's use of imagery and comparisons, often with symbolic import, is also effective. The main images are heat and light and dark. The oppressive heat and humidity, an actual element of Mississippi summers, function symbolically to suggest the burning of his passionate hatred and perhaps the burning of the fires of hell, as the editors of The Southern Experience in Short Fiction suggest. (39) The narrator tells us at the very beginning that the temperature on the Branch bank sign was 92 even at 3:45 a.m. Objects seem to give off heat and burn those who touch them: the killer's rifle (an extension of his passionate, destructive hatred and the instrument of its expression) is "scorching" after the murder; Main Street, which the narrator compares ironically to the "barrel of my gun," is so hot that it burns his feet through the soles of his shoes; and the flaming red flowers on the trees (specified as crape myrtles and mimosas in an early version) (40) make the town itself appear to be on fire. These descriptions reflect not only the actual heat but also the narrator's inflamed state of mind. Finally, the town's name Thermoplyae literally means "hot gates," and variations on the expression "It's so hot" run like a refrain through the story.
Light and dark imagery also plays a significant role in the story. Welty has noted in response to a question about light and shadow in another story that she indeed uses "the whole physical world to assist me," although she does it instinctively rather than in a "calculated way." (41) The fact that the assassination takes place in the dark with the murderer hidden in shadows evokes the traditional associations of evil, death, and the unknown. Ironically, and pointedly, however, it is the black man who is in the light: "He stood right still and waited against the light" and "I stepped to the edge of his light there, where he's laying flat."

The similes and metaphors, though relatively few, are appropriate to the character and effective in conveying his mentality and background. Most of them are simple, domestic, and/or Southern in origin. For example, in describing Roland's back just before he shoots, the narrator feels that it is looking intensely at him "like a preacher's eyeballs when he's yelling. Are you saved?" Not only does this simile reflect the speaker's Southern fundamentalist religious background, but it also is a wry ironic touch that he sees no connection between the call to salvation for sinners and his imminent act of murder. In describing the dying Summers, he uses first the simile of a predatory bird that has attacked its prey and then that of a load of bricks that has fallen on a victim to suggest how the black man has been crushed and flattened. Both images reflect a rural, working-class background as well as a sense of violence and destruction.

A last element of style that contributes particularly to the sense of reality in the story is Welty's use of concrete details, especially in terms of the setting. The narrator's description of the route to Summers' house accurately re-creates the outskirts of many Southern towns. Nathan B. Forrest Road, which was Delta Drive in the original, is a typical street name in Southern towns, honoring one of the great Confederate generals. It is an appropriately ironic choice in this story because Forrest is so clearly a symbol of Southern white supremacy; not only was he blamed for his soldiers' slaughter of over three hundred black men, women, and children at Fort Pillow, Tennessee in April, 1864, but he was also the first leader of the Ku Klux Klan after the War. (42)

Thus, although Welty herself has indicated dissatisfaction both with the story ("I should have done more with it," (43) and "I'm not sure this story was brought off," (44)) and with the title ("The title isn't very good, I'd like to get a better one" (45)), "Where is the Voice Coming From?" is a powerful and largely successful work, for the portrayal of the murderer is extremely complex and skillfully presented. Using the technique of internal dramatic monologue and various devices such as colloquial diction, repetition, and symbolic imagery, Welty lets her character reveal his own traits. What emerges is a portrait of a man without honor, a man with low self-esteem, a desperate desire for recognition, a hatred and resentment not only of blacks but also of those whom he perceives to have more than he—i.e., short, a portrait of a living human being in all his complexity. Keeping her distance, she simply presents him as he is, not telling us what to think but letting us draw our own conclusions. As she says in "Must the Novelist Crusade?: "The writer works neither to correct nor to condone, not at all to comfort, but to make what's told alive." (46)


(2) Kuehl, pp. 3-4.


(6) There are "forty-five typescript pages, comprising early versions of the whole piece and of individual parts," Kuehl, p. 16. These typescripts are now in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

(7) Welty, as quoted in Kuehl, p. 18.


(9) Walter Clemons reports that, upon publication of the story in The New Yorker, Welty received a phone call from a reporter in New York who asked if she had had any repercussions. Welty recounts: "Had anybody burned a cross on my lawn, he wanted to know. I told him, No, of course not.... The people who burn crosses on lawns don't read me in The New Yorker. Really, don't people know the first thing about the South?" Clemons, "Meeting Miss Welty," in Conversation with Eudora Welty, p. 31.

(10) Jackson Clarion-Ledger, June 24, 1963, 1. For some of the information on Beckwith, I am indebted to an article written for the Mississippi Mindscape project of the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities by Dennis Mitchell, Professor of History at Jackson State University.


(12) "The Trial of 'Delay' Beckwith," The Saturday Evening Post, 237 (March 14, 1964), 79.


(15) Jackson Clarion-Ledger, February 6, 1964, 2A.

(16) Jackson Clarion-Ledger, February 6, 1964, 7B.


(19) Welty, as quoted in Buckley, p. 100.

(20) Welty, as quoted in Royals and Little, p. 259.


(23) Welty, as quoted in Buckley, p. 100.


(28) Welty, "Must the Novelist Crusade?," p. 156.


(30) Welty, as quoted in Royals and Little, p. 259.

(31) See Mclay, p. 283.

(32) Welty, as quoted in Freeman, p. 183.

(33) Welty, "Where is the Voice Coming From?" in The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty, p. 603. Since the story covers only five pages, I have not given page references in subsequent quotes.


(35) According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, "railroad" as a slang term means "To get rid of by sending (to prison) on a fake charge."

(36) Jackson Clarion-Ledger, February 6, 1964, 7B.

(37) Jackson Clarion-Ledger, February 1, 1964, 16.


(39) Stein and Walters, p. 251.

(40) See John Kuehl, p. 12.

(41) Welty, as quoted in Royals and Little, p. 260.


(43) Welty, as quoted in Royals and Little, p. 266.

(44) Welty, One Writes Beginnings, p. 39.

(45) Welty, as quoted in Linda Kuehl, p. 83.

(46) Welty, "Must the Novelist Crusade?," p. 152. A shorter version of this paper was written for the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities for its Mississippi Mindscape Project.

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