

Eudora Welty Society

CFPs for the American Literature Association Conference
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Material Welty Roundtable

Chair, Rebecca L. Harrison, University of West Georgia

Eudora Welty writes that “[m]aking reality real is art's responsibility,” something achieved “by a cultivated sensitivity for observing life, a capacity for receiving impressions, a lonely, unremitting, unaided, unaidable vision, and transferring this vision without distortion to it onto the [page]” (from “Place in Fiction”). A daring writer, accomplished photographer, and avid consumer of varying forms of “high” and “low” culture, Welty’s opus keenly incorporates material artifacts as she examines the relationship between individuals and communities and their material world. Her writer’s eye is both clear sighted and critical in its exploration of the tangible—irrespective of time and place—and social construction of identity (regional and national) and the (re)production and polemic uses of culture.

For this roundtable, the Eudora Welty Society seeks panelists across disciplines working to frame new conversations concerning Welty’s engagement with the material world. Panelists would select a *specific artifact* in Welty’s imaginative vision—watermelon (*LB*), ruby ring (“PH”), ancestral portraits (*DW*), the Hotel Brevoort (*BBB*), etc.—and then present their findings in a five-to-seven-minute talk, depending on the number of presenters.

Send abstracts of no more than 250 words and brief bios by December 1st to Rebecca Harrison (rharriso@westga.edu). Early statements of interest are encouraged.

Key words: material culture, object theory, consumer culture.

Gender, Objects, and Welty

Chair, Katie Frye, Pepperdine University

Welty delighted in the quotidian, including the things and consumer goods that shaped it. Her fiction often includes veritable shopping lists of objects—consider Sister’s roster of ragtag items packed for the P.O. or the motley assortment in *The Ponder Heart* of Uncle Daniel’s “things [...] that he’s given away.” Welty’s attention to the material world also often encompassed her awareness of gender, of the ways in which things afford opportunities for identity formation and self-creation. In considering gender through this lens, readers are left with such questions as, what sociocultural value did these objects have? What do they tell us about gender in Welty’s work, and conversely, what does gender tell us about the representation of things in Welty?

For this panel, the Eudora Welty Society seeks submissions that consider this intersection between objects and gender in Welty’s oeuvre, including her fiction, essays, and photographs. Topics might include but are not limited to such objects as clothing, cosmetics, detritus, found

objects, furniture, monuments, musical instruments, textiles, toys, and works of art. Papers might also explore conspicuous consumption, consumer culture, the objective correlative, gender and performance, thing theory, and trash culture. Papers from interdisciplinary perspectives—history, art, multimedia, philosophy, etc.—are especially encouraged.

Send abstracts of approximately 250 words and brief bios by December 1st to Katie Frye (katie.frye@pepperdine.edu). Early statements of interest are encouraged.

Key words: gender, the object word, thing theory, speculative realism, consumer culture.

The Sensual, Sexual, and Erotic Welty
Chair, Rebecca Mark, Rutgers University

Katie Rainey knew the place that King MacLain meant when he told Snowdie to meet him in the woods: “I could have streaked like an arrow to the very oak tree . . . Can't you just see King MacLain leaning his length against that tree by the light of the moon.” From Lilly Daw to Virgie Rainey and the sailor moving like a big grasshopper lighting, there is hardly a moment in Eudora Welty’s canon that does not come alive with sensual and erotic possibilities. Under the cloak of the false lady-like persona Welty presents blatant sexual references, gender fluidity, hot erotic moments, and powerful homo and heterosexual desire without being caught by the censors. When we reread Welty’s stories with attention to the erotic force in her writing, Welty emerges as the complex writer she has always been, and we experience more of the full force of her prose.

For this discussion, the Eudora Welty Society seeks panelists who will explore the sensual, erotic, and sexual in Welty from multiple perspectives. We are looking for work that addresses the queer, gender fluid, sexual, pleasurable, sensual, homo and hetero erotic and daring Welty in her prose, biography, and photography. Send abstracts of no more than 250 words and brief bios by December 1st to Rebecca Mark (rebecca.mark@rutgers.edu).

Key words: sensuality, pleasure, sexuality, erotic, desire, passion, homoerotic, queer