

1. Moveable Feasts: Biblical Allusions and Uses of the Spiritual in Welty's Work

Though not a churchgoer herself, Eudora Welty was christened in the Methodist church and grew up in a Mississippi landscape steeped in spirituality, certainly through organized religion but also culturally through biblical stories, folklore, and gospel music that permeated the region across gendered and racial lines. She notes in *One Writer's Beginnings* that beyond her mother's example, she came to view "[h]oliness" most clearly through her travels, experiences that gave her "a love of sitting and reading the Bible for [herself] and looking up things in it" (33). "Its cadence," she writes, "entered into our ears and our memories . . . [and] the ghost of it, lingers in all our books" (34). Welty, a voracious reader, was also intimately familiar with a plethora of classical works, art, and authors across disciplines that were inspired by the biblical and the spiritual—artists with whom her work engaged.

In centering biblical allusions and spiritual referents broadly, this panel asks what "ghost[s] of it" dwell in Welty's work? What exactly do such traces contribute to our critical understanding of her opus? Papers might consider but are not limited to:

- Uses of biblical names/figures, stories, places, parables, or types (good Samaritan, prodigal son, etc.).
- Presence and import of gospel, hymns, and other forms of spiritual performance or art.
- Secular transformations and applications of doctrine (predestination, the Trinity, etc.) and tenets of Social Gospel (see Peggy W. Prenshaw's "Eudora Welty's Language of the Spirit").
- Political uses of the spiritual that speak to historical issues and/or those in Welty's own lifetime.
- Engagement with other writers' uses of the biblical and spiritual.

Please send 250-word abstracts and 100-word bios to Rebecca Harrison at rharriso@westga.edu by **December 4th**. Earlier statements of interest are strongly encouraged.

2. Towards Theories of Character and Quirk in Eudora Welty's Fiction

In 2026, two of our Welty panels profitably focused on a number of weird and seemingly minor characters scattered across her work. These incidents and understudied figures were repeatedly revealed to be major in the roles they played, significantly altering their fictions. Together, the panelists' papers began to suggest some curious questions. Are Welty's "minor" characters always major? Are there patterns to be found in her uses of the weird? Does Welty innovate by colliding uncanny oddity with character development? Does she vaunt and flaunt a technique of the bizarre? Is this a technique that she uses in developing her major as well as her minor characters? Do her patterns suggest techniques we can identify, name, and examine? This panel will reenter and recenter our discussion of character and quirk.

In addition to any of the above questions, topics may include, but are not limited to:

- specific character's weirdness, uncanniness, or quirkiness
- quirky characters who speak to/for/with/against dominant social or narrative structures
- close reading of a fleeting moment or revelatory passage in which odd/weird/bizarre/uncanny/eerie framing and/or language brings understanding of a character and/or a fiction
- readings of weird detail or plot turns
- uses of the uncanny, fantasy, or dream in developing characters
- also welcome—papers that approach understudied characters such as the MacLain brothers or underdiscussed characters relationships such as the MacLain boys as brothers

Statements of interest are requested asap. Please send ~250 word abstracts and ~100 word bios by **December 4th** to Harriet Pollack pollackh@cofc.edu.