Eudora Welty: Her Life And Her Works Essay, Research Paper

Eudora Welty: Her Life and Her Works

Eudora Welty’s writing style and us of theme and setting aided her in

becoming one of the greatest writers of all time. Welty credits her family for

her success. “Without the love and belief my family gave me, I could not have

become a writer to begin with” (Welty, IX). Eudora Welty’s writings are light-

hearted and realistic. Her stories explore common everyday life.

Eudora Welty was born in Jackson, Mississippi, on April 13, 1909. She

was an observant child. She was fascinated by sounds and sights, human voices

and the changing of seasons. Welty’s happy childhood and serene life is

reflected in her fiction.

Eudora Welty’s ability to observe created her talent to precisely tell

situations as they would be seen. This talent brings her stories to life. The

in-depth accounts that she writes of jump off of the page and into the readers’

imagination. The descriptive passages in her fiction bring about vibrant images

in the readers’ mind.

The short story “A Memory” opens up with a clear visual image. “The

water shone like steel, motionless except for the feathery curl behind a distant

swimmer. From my position I was looking through a rectangle brightly lit,

actually glaring at me with sun, sand, water, a little pavilion, a few solitary

people in fixed attitudes, and around it all a border of dark rounded oak trees,

like that engraved thunderclouds surrounding illustrations in the

bible”(Welty,75). Welty’s long sentence structure and word usage allows the

reader to feel as though he or she were the one sitting on the beach. This

description helps the reader to be involved in the story. He or she could feel

as though he or she were a part of the story instead of someone only looking in.

As the story progresses, the main character, a young girl incorporates

her crush on a young boy with the sights at the beach. The young boy who barely

knows she exists constantly in her thoughts. “Welty has given, and will

continue to give(For these works are soundly made and will stand) a literature

that reaches great stature in it’s theme of love”(Schlueter, 535). Eudora Welty

captures the feelings of being in love and shows them brilliantly on paper. The

reader immediately empathizes with the young girl who cannot stop thinking of

her young love.

“My love had somehow made me doubly austere in my observation of what

went on about me. Through some intensity I had come almost into a dual life, as

observer and dreamer”(Welty, 76). The young girls ability to see reality is

overtaken by her fantasy of her crush. The child blindly stares about her; she

sees the other bathers partially in a dreamlike state. Welty’s ability to

change from fantasy to reality and past to present is called a confluence. She

uses this technique in this story as well as in many others.

In the short story “Lily Daw and the Three Ladies,” Lily Daw is a

mentally unstable girl. Three women of the town decide to enroll her in the

Ellisville Institute for the feeble minded of Mississippi. The characters in

the story speak as though the story were a stage play. Through this style a

lot is learned about the three women and their personalities.

The character Lilt Daw has had a rough childhood. The three women seem

to act as her guardians.. Lily tells them that she is getting married but they

do not believe her. They convince her that it is best if she goes to the

institute. After Lily has boarded the train to go to Ellisville Institute, one

of the women meet the man who is supposed to marry Lily. The woman who is

shocked that this gentleman exists, runs to the train to get Lily. The other

two women emerge from the train to meet the gentleman. In all of the commotion

one cannot be sure whether or not Lily has gotten off of the train. The story

ends in great uncertainty. The reader cannot be sure whether or not Lily

marries. “Miss Welty revels in working in terms of concious ambiguity, she

leaves the last word unsaid, the ultimate action unconsummated”(Kramer, 327).

Many of Welty’s works end in the same way, she leaves the final thought up to

the reader. The stories do not end in fact but allow the reader to use his or

her imagination.

In the story “The Wide Net,” once again Welty uses the theme love.

William Wallace loves his wife greatly but he decides to go drinking with the

boys and stay out one whole night. To get even with her insensitive husband,

Hazel Wallace writes a suicide note and hides. When William Wallace reads the

note he and his buddies set out to find Hazel’s body in the river. During his

expedition, William fantasizes of his wife and how much he really loves her.

“William Wallace looked down as though he thought of Hazel with the shining eyes,

sitting at home and looking straight before her, like a piece of pure gold, too

precious to touch” (Welty,176). After the long day of dragging the river

looking for his wife, William returns home to find his wife safe. The whole

experience teaches each of them a lesson about love.

“Through dream, as through art, man can express and realize his secret self:

through love, as through art, he can communicate that secret self to others: for

art she believes is the power to convey love”(Kramer, 329). The realistic

qualities of Welty’s work help it to be extremely believable. The feelings and

expressions she catches on paper are profound. Love which is the most difficult

emotion to define is clearly illustrated in Welty’s works. Her great

imagination and ability to look at ordinary human activity in a different light

sets Miss Welty apart from many other writers, “She participates in life around

her with such perception and fidelity that she catches it exact, and then she

colors it and carves it into an entity beyond the realism of daily life, which

is just what the people of her region have done with the often shallow and

monotonous basic material of their lives”(Kramer,329).

Welty’s poetic style and understanding of human life are obviously a

brilliant combination. She uses love, community and communication for the basis

of many of her stories. Another common technique she uses is to employ her home

state of Mississippi as the setting for her stories. By doing this, she can

write in diction that she knows; as well as being able to create both black and

white southern characters for her fiction. Welty’s characters are authentically

southern, their moods, gestures and entirely are sculpted to the finest detail.

Her characters are so true to life that they seem to speak for themselves.

“With their wide range in style, point of view, subject matter and

fictional modes, Miss Welty has thoroughly investigated the possibilities

inherit in the short story form, enriching and extending the potential of this

genre”(Kramer,329). Miss Welty currently lives in her Jackson home and

continues to write. She is an extremely private person and has chosen not to

release most of her personal papers or to authorizea biography. She feels that

her work should stand alone as the expression of her imagination.