

## The Short Stories of Eudora Welty Mother Daughter Relationship

**\*Manoj Kumar Sortha**

### **Abstract**

Eudora Welty The South American people who were not heavily touched by modernity are described in short stories and novels by American author Alice Welty. She has portrayed the actual world, which is rife with many emotions, in her short tales. Her characters may be found in one's neighbourhood. She asserts that the cultures of the north and south are distinct from one another, and she subtly contrasts this via some of her characters. Her characters conform their lives to the prehistoric rules of birth and death. Sometimes they bravely follow a personal vision. She is certain that women are more dedicated and responsible than males. For the same, they were willing to make any sacrifice. Her topics and personalities are essentially timeless. The mother-daughter relationship in her tales is the topic of the current study. In her novel Delta Wedding, she portrays the matriarchal system.

Her mother figures, who are traditional and sensible, are crucial in forming the family dynamic. She compares loving, obedient, and caring children with rebellious, defiant girls who were smothered by overly protective moms and whose lives were damaged. Despite the fact that she described them honestly, they are very realistic. Overall, Eudora Welty seems to adhere to tradition.

**Keywords:** Realistic, Contemporary, Conventional, Mother-Daughter Relationships

### **Introduction**

Eudora Welty portrays a universe full of life in her short tales that is sensuous and sensitive, rationalism-based, and ethical. Her characters conform their lives to the prehistoric rules of birth and death. Sometimes they bravely follow a personal vision. We are used to conceiving of these two human futures as distinctly sexual, as Simone de Beauvoir remarks in reference to the male and female. Women traditionally have a position in the house. She is the mother who bestows upon us both life and morals. As a result, the matriarchal system is mostly depicted in Welty's novels and short tales. She portrays an agricultural culture, or plantation life, in her short books Delta Wedding (1946), Losing Battles (1970), and The Optimist's Daughter (1972). The moms are crucial in establishing the family's values, while the male members spend the majority of their time outdoors. Particularly in Delta Wedding, Welty's mother embodies the traditional role of a strong mother. Her novel shows how the matriarchal order manifests itself in both the activities of the plantation and in human and natural reproduction. One comes across the labour and rituals of women in an

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agricultural community everywhere. They spend the most of their time cooking and feeding. Welty aims to impart lessons about the human connection via her motherly characters, focusing on the responsibility males have to care for women and children. Human fatherhood is discussed by Margaret Mead as a social fabrication in her book *Male and Female*. According to her, "the fundamental biological unit is the mother and child, whereas the basic social unit is the family, which is based on men's ingrained loving behaviours. Such conduct is flimsy and brittle and is readily lost in the absence of appropriate social instruction.

In her short novels "Delta Wedding" and "The Optimist's Daughter" as well as her short tales "Why I Live At The P.O." and "The Winds," Welty successfully and vividly shows the matriarchal system. Most of Welty's mother characters are conventional and typical in thought. In *Delta Wedding*, Welty depicts the context of the wedding of Dabney, a seventeen-year-old daughter of Ellen (the mother), an adolescent, in order to subtly and indirectly represent the matriarchal system that has been constructed. As "the mother of them all" (Fairchilds, 10), Ellen is constantly overburdened with obligations, responsibilities, and duties. To keep her garden from turning into a wilderness, she scrambles to find time to work on it. She "never actually had time to sit down and fill her eyes with people and hear what they said, in any civilised way," despite the fact that. In the woods, Ellen encounters a strange girl (DW, 221). The girl is extraordinarily attractive, and Ellen is immediately drawn to her charms. Ellen becomes horrified when she learns that George, the male Fairchild, has met the girl and made love to her because she instantly imagines her own daughter Dabney, who is about the same age. Her maternal emotions erupt inside her and eventually spread over the whole family. "She had feared for the whole family, somehow, at a time like this," their mother said. "Being their mother, and the atmosphere heavy with the wedding and the festivities hanging over their heads," she added. "When she touched at their life, ran through the woods, this girl that was at first so ambiguous, and so lovely even to her all dull and tired." (DW, 80) She is astonished by her brother-in-law George's actions since she loves and respects him. Even by a guy as good as George, she feels that a beautiful and lonely girl is vulnerable to a man's approach because of her feminine nature. Ellen's feminine intuition was once again piqued when she learned of the girl's unintentional death on the railway rails. She calls it a glimpse of destiny.

As a loving, kind, and protective mother who is also skilled in homemaking, Ellen is presented as the perfect mother.

Sometimes having a safe and secure childhood has a bad effect. The personality of Dabney, Ellen's daughter, makes this clear. Troy, who is 34 years old, and Dabney, who is 17 years old, are not of the same social standing. Everyone in the family is not happy with their marriage, but no one expresses this. Although Dabney is fully aware of this reality, she doesn't like it. Instead, she takes pride in her disagreement. For Dabney, getting married seems to be a means to break free from the status quo and establish herself in her own "solid house" (DW, 90). She doesn't get married just because she wants to be safe. She has a rebellious streak, which is perhaps what led her to choose Troy as her husband. She enjoys the thought of her father disapproving of her husband-electing decision. According to the narrator, "It would kill her father" (DW, 33).

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Dabney is elated after learning this. It might be seen as a little act of retaliation against her father and a challenge to established patriarchal power. Dabney doesn't want to be connected to the past in any way. She destroys the nightlight her relatives gave her as a wedding present while taking it home. It serves a symbolic purpose. It implies suffering, even death. She inherited the nightlight from her aunt Mashula, who waited for her husband to come home from the Civil War "until the lightning one early morning stamped her picture on the window-pane." (DW, 45) Additionally, it links the past and present, which Dabney wants to sever. Her marriage to Troy won't ever be illuminated by the shattered nightlight. Later on, though, Dabney understands that she has irreparably lost something. She is unsure about the future, despite her desire to escape from the past into something breakable. According to John Edward Hardy, the "themes of protection and disaster are inextricably bound up together from the first." Characterised as the one who longs to break free from the constrained regular existence is Dabney. She doesn't seem to comprehend the value of love and caring in life. She is unable to comprehend her mother's fear as she constantly tries to protect her.

In *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972), Welty describes the mother-daughter bond via the memories of Laurel Me Kelva, the dead mother Becky's daughter. Although Welty doesn't describe their direct encounters, the character of the mother is created via the recollections of the adult daughter. Laurel remembers her mother's younger years and her bond with her father, Judge Me Kelva. Mother of Laurel had an eye condition. She progressively lost her ability to see, and soon she was entirely blind. Laurel said that her father "apparently needed guidance in order to see the tragic" since he could not accept his wife's condition. (OD, 145) The true state of Becky's physical and emotional health is juxtaposed with the solace and optimism he gave his wife.

The narrator doesn't hold back while discussing the miscommunications between the pair. According to her, "It was betrayal on betrayal" (OD, 150) since Me Kelva contributed to Becky's desperation by refusing to acknowledge it. Without saying a word and "keeping everything to herself, in exile and humiliation," Becky passed away alone. (OD, 151)

This narrative explores Laurel's need for her mother's love. Laurel has a stronger bond with her conventional mother. She is compelled to urgently inform her deceased mother about Fay's (Me Kelva's second wife's) unsuccessful effort to shake her husband the night before his death. The use of the word "mother" repeatedly highlights Laurel's desire to inform her mother. Despite the fact that she quickly understands it, (OD,132) it illustrates how deeply she feels soothed in her mother's arms like a little girl. She enters her mother's sewing room and feels "fire light and warmth - that was what her memory gave." (OD, 133) The narrator's recollections of her early years indicate that she had a loving mother. She recalls how supportive her parents were. She describes how her mother's solitude was "keyless," but her father's was a desk with a key.(OD, 134) She also recalls how her mother read all of her letters with worry and attention.

All of Becky's letters were retained. Laurel discovers that her mother has organised her belongings by their period and location.

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One cannot always assume that the mother-daughter connection is harmonious. Although Laurel, a widowed and helpless woman, was unable to cure her mother's sickness, she was deeply saddened when her dying mother told her, "You could have saved your mother's life." I feel hopeless for you since you did nothing and refused to act.

(OD, 15) In this case, the mother is seen to be callous and physically curses her daughter on her deathbed since she fell short of her expectations by failing to do the impossible.

Looking at some of the old photos of her parents shot at Becky's name causes Laurel to recall her mother in West Virginia. She stops at the photographs that her mother "created" since remembering and seeing go hand in hand. Coincidentally, we are reminded of Eudora Welty's own photo collection, *One Time, One Place*, where she discusses similar connections in a broader perspective. "If exposure is important, the reflection is far more so. It is rare for insight to arrive in the form of a fortuitous photograph taken by a young kid; instead, it usually arrives slowly, through time, and from inside. Laurel's perspective on her history is relevant to the kind of thoughts Welty emphasises. Laurel is able to make more sense of the situation by remembering both her own and her mother's background. She gets her mother's confidence in her. It is the mother "who might have done that dare to stand up against a mob." (OD, 80) Being the courageous mother's daughter, Laurel rediscovers her power by thinking back on the challenging periods in her life. Even though Laurel's mother has been gone for about 12 years, she has continued to live only because to the unusual mother-daughter bond. Becky is the mother of Laurel the protagonist who has the biggest influence, despite the fact that she is not an active protagonist.

We may divide the daughters in Welty's short tales into two groups based on their views. First, the mother-daughter connection as it was in the past, when the daughter was submissive, respectful of her elders, and yielded to her interests out of need. Second, girls who are exposed to the changing culture often make poor choices for themselves and go against the wishes of their moms in their quest for self-identity. We may anticipate that the mother-daughter relationship will be a major theme in women's works and will express the conflicted feelings the daughter has as she must both accept and reject her mother, according to Alicia Ostriker.

The narrator of the 1941 film "Why I Live at the P.O." is a sensitive and unconventional little girl who is shown in an intriguing familial setting. Mama, Papa-Daddy, Sister Stella-Rondo, and Uncle Rondo make up her family. The mother is shown in this tale as being strong yet biased. Her partiality causes the protagonist-narrator great concern. Stella-Rondo, the narrator's sister, is presented in this tale as the family drama queen. She may sway her parents and meddle needlessly in other people's affairs.

The narrator becomes suspicious about Stella-Rondo's adoption when she returns after leaving her husband with a two-year-old adopted kid. However, her mother (Mama) accepts Stella's story without question. The narrator often faces attacks from Stella-Rondo. She reveals to her father that she doesn't know why he grows a beard. He misinterprets her and quips, "So the post mistress doesn't see why I don't shave off my beard. "Bird's nest, is that what you call it? Which job I got you

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through my connections with the government." (CS, 47)

Despite the fact that she is ready to persuade her father by asserting, "I didn't say any such thing. While speaking in a firm tone, "Stop right there", says Mama, "looking at me" (CS, 47), causes her to stop talking. Infuriated, she leaves. When Mama says, "Call her back or she will starve to death," you may detect her maternal instinct at play.(CS, 47) The mother constantly attempts to brush the narrator off when she expresses uncertainty about the kid on another time. She said, "So I thought we were going to have a nice Fourth of July and you start right out not believing a word your own baby sister tells you," which makes it clear that she didn't mean what she said. When the narrator expresses her uncertainty about the child's normality and it is shown that it is normal, the mother gets enraged and demands that the narrator apologise to her younger sister for no fault of her own (CS, 50). "You should feel utterly humiliated! Run upstairs right now and apologise to Shirley T, the adoptive kid, and Stella-Rondo. (CS, 51) The mother demands that the narrator apologise to Stella for disparaging her. According to this discourse, the mother and all other family members, including the narrator, attempt to make the narrator seem bad. The daughter ultimately leaves the home in quest of a free and happy life after becoming tired of the taunts and humiliation she receives from the family members. Even the mother just stands there without objecting. In this tale, a distinct perspective is taken on the mother-daughter bond. It is clear that the mother is biased and domineering. The protagonist evolved into a rebel as a consequence of the ongoing tyranny. Another tale with a similar premise is "The Winds" (1943). The main character, Josie, often daydreams about the lives of the young children who come to Lover's Lane to have fun. The girl, Josie, lives in a loving, caring household. Her thoughts, however, vacillate between adolescence and adulthood, between the adventures of childhood and youth. In this tale, the mother is shown as being very watchful over her teenage daughter, Josie. She pays close attention to how she moves.

Despite the fact that both parents care for their children, Mama says, "You take him, and I will take the girl" (CS, 210) and pushed the children apart. Her mother is becoming drawn to and is aware of what Josie thinks. Josie is miserable and oppressed by her parents' affection. She really finds herself captivated to Cornelia, a young girl she refers to as a "big girl." Josie wants to alter her life, but her parents—particularly her mother—are always an obstacle.

"She was looking for the big girl who lived in the double - house across the street..." "Josie come back." "I see Cornelia. I see Cornelia in the equinox there in her high heeled shoes." "How many times have I told you that you need not concern yourself with Cornelia!" The way her mother said her name was not diminished now. "I see Cornelia. She's on the outside, Mama, outside in the storm and she is in the equinox." But her mother would not answer. (CS, 211)

This suggests that the girl considers a potential means to meet Cornelia more often the more her parents restrict her from doing so, demonstrating the human propensity to indulge in the forbidden fruit. As a result, the mother in "The Winds" is always worried about how to keep her kid safe.

In stark contrast to this family, Cornelia, a different little girl in the same novel, is portrayed as the

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parent's most unappreciated child. She could have been forced to confront the equinoctial storm by this absence of affection.

Cornelia, a little girl who is abandoned by her parents, is lonely and longs for Josie's affection. Josie's parents, however, forbid her from being drawn to anything that is not socially acceptable. The mother in "Why I Live At The P.O." does not stop her daughter from choosing ultimate independence, yet in "The Winds," the girl's freedom is restricted, despite the fact that it is obvious that moms are dominating in the two tales.

In her literature, Welty's contemporary Flannery O' Connor also addresses this issue. The mother is portrayed as the major character in O'Connor's novels. Mother is often portrayed as either a divorcee or a widow in her tales. As in the novel "Good Country People," when O'Connor describes a household of two people—a mother and daughter—her domineering behaviour inevitably leaves the daughter lonely.

The two short tales "Good Country People" and "A Circle In The Fire" by O'Connor show the suffocating daughters and the controlling moms. In the first tale, Joy Hulga's divorced mother Mrs. Hopewell forces her to act in "normal ways," such as dating men and behaving like a "social butterfly," against her will. In the later tale, the mother, Mrs. Cope, is a lonely farm woman who controls her 12-year-old daughter, Sally Virginia, and causes loneliness in her.

In contrast to Flannery O' Connor, some of Welty's moms are nurturing and comforting, as Ellen Fairchild in Delta Wedding and Josie's mother in "The Winds." In Welty's literature, the majority of the daughters connect with their moms and are obedient—at least until their parents pass away. We witness responsible daughters in Miss Eckhart and Virgie Rainey in "June Recital" and "The Wanderers." Miss Eckhart is a piano instructor who is presented in "June Recital" as coming from a foreign country and settling in Morgana with her mother. Although the mother's involvement is not made clear, Miss Eckhart takes care of her like a responsible daughter would. She moves in with Snowdie Mac Lain, sets up a studio, and begins teaching piano to the town's young children. As a result of her trainees' carelessness, lack of discipline, and lack of skill, her existence becomes monotonous and stressful. There is no other means to support her elderly mother, so she is compelled to continue working. The only extraordinary student she has is Virgie Rainey. Her voice is endowed with sweetness. She often quips, "Virgie Rainey danke schoen" (CS, 290), that Miss Eckhart is having financial difficulties as a result of her declining popularity. Various individuals have various opinions regarding how Miss Eckhart treated Morgana's mother. People said that after years of suffering, no one had ever informed the elderly mother.

They didn't specify the kind of discomfort. However, they said that this occurred during the war, when Miss Eckhart lost students and they had nothing to eat. She would give her mother a tranquillizer so that she would sleep through the night and not disturb the neighbourhood with noise or complaints out of concern that yet more students would be expelled. Some people said Miss Eckhart used opium to murder her mother. (CS, 307) Her mother passes away, leaving her without a human companion to

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share her suffering. Eckhart feels completely alone and defeated. What she formerly considered valuable and significant is now gone and useless. Despite the criticism from the people around Morgana, she fulfils her obligation as a daughter by caring for mom till she passes away.

The quest for the golden apples is described in "The Wanderers" (1949). With a return to Katie Rainey, who relates the tale of the real wanderer, King Mac Lain, in "Shower of Gold," "The Wanderers" unites the body of work known as The Golden Apples. Virgie is referred to be a baby in that narrative, although she is the major character in "The Wanderers." She seems more mature among the wanderers, like a lady in her forties. She is referenced once again as a piano student and talented student of Miss Eckhart in the second narrative, "June Recital." When she was a little girl, her autonomous and individualistic viewpoint was evident.

The mother of Virgie Rainey, Katie Rainey, is said to be a strong lady. The character of Katie Rainey and her opinions are expressed in "Shower of Gold." (1949) Katie is shown by Welty from the conventional viewpoint. She understands her female characters from a female perspective. However, Katie and her daughter have a different relationship. Because of her independence from her upbringing, Virgie doesn't behave the way she would want. She leaves Morgana and weds a seaman. She returns to Morgana after a twenty-year absence as a lonely and broken woman. Katie's affection and care for Virgie have been pushed away by her wayward character. As a result, she never allows Virgie the opportunity to share her tragic tale of grief, anguish, disappointment, and humiliation. Virgie is never given the opportunity by Katie to confide in her or to lean on her for solace. The mother doesn't feel sorry for her rebellious and independent daughter. According to the "The Wanderers" narrator, Katie weeps for her deceased son and husband rather than her daughter. No one was permitted to cry over sorrows in Mrs. Rainey's home, according to the narrator, "unless it was Mrs. Rainey herself, first for son and husband both her men were gone." (CS, 452)

Virgie, a responsible daughter, takes care of her mother despite her negative emotions. She had to live a different life with her mother after years of living like a free bird. Like her piano instructor, she must work to support her elderly mother. The mother goes over responsibilities when Virgie gets home from work. She complies properly. When Peridita Mayo's mother passes away, she speaks at the funeral in her honour, saying, "Your Mama was too good for you. Virgie is too good.(CS, 435) She appears to express the opinions of the neighbourhood.

In Welty's books, the girls who want for independence from parental affection often get it after their parents' passing. After her mother passes away, Virgie is released. When someone asks, "You staying on in Morgana?" after her death, she replies, "Going away in the morning." The narrator continues, "Virgie said nothing more, she had already made up her mind to leave when she heard herself say, so decided by ear." (CS, 450) Snowdie gives birth to twins when King Mac Lain tricks her. Snowdie, with her conventional upbringing, seeks to create an ideal household with her kids and waits for King's homecoming, unlike some of Welty's other mother characters.

The mothers in Welty's stories are conservative and guard their daughters from male abuse.

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They show their girls a lot of affection and attention. She also portrays the daughters' personalities, showing how they reject their mother's rules and advice, seek out their own identities, and stay lost and unsuccessful wanderers.

**\*Lecturer**  
**S.K. Govt. Acharya Sanskrit College**  
**Sikar (Raj.)**

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