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**CONFLUENCE OF DICHOTOMIES:
TOWARDS FEMALE DIFFERENCE AND WHOLENESS
IN SELECTED WORKS OF
EUDORA WELTY**

POON MABEL

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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ABSTRACT

Readers of Welty's fiction are well aware of Welty's discomfort with feminism. While Welty refused to be labeled a "feminist" and did not explicitly refer to the difficulties she may have faced as a woman writer, this does not mean that she held no personal views about the plight of women in her day. Her fiction named and embodied the reality she saw, most of which dealt largely with the experiences of Southern womanhood. Preferring change to be achieved through quieter ways, Welty used a strategy common to women writers of her day: she masked her criticism behind seemingly trivial topics.

The aim of this research is to show how Welty subtly works toward the revision of stereotypical portrayals of women. Using the "Images of Women" critical approach and Gilbert and Gubar's model of the angel and the monster as a key to discussion, this dissertation will explain how Welty dismantles stereotypical depictions of femininity and Southern womanhood and suggests a new interpretation of female identity as opposed to the traditional patriarchal model by converging the oppositional states of the angel and monster. The confluence of this dichotomy not only enables Welty to effectively critique and revise stereotypes to create more realistic depictions of women, but also explain the discrepancies found in the mythical image of the Southern lady, as well as suggest alternative forms of female behavior that can lead women to liberation and the development of a new, independent identity without resorting to extreme measures.

ABSTRAK

Pembaca-pembaca karya Welty ketahui akan kegelisahan Welty terhadap feminisme. Walaupun Welty enggan dilabel sebagai seorang “feminis” dan tidak merujuk secara eksplisit kepada kesulitan yang beliau mungkin alami sebagai seorang penulis wanita, ini tidak bermakna beliau tidak mempunyai pandangan peribadi tentang keadaan hidup para wanita zaman beliau. Karya beliau mencerminkan realiti yang beliau tatap, kebanyakan berkenaan dengan kehidupan wanita Amerika Selatan. Oleh kerana beliau lebih cenderung kepada pertukaran yang diperoleh secara sunyi, Welty menggunakan satu strategi yang biasa digunakan oleh penulis-penulis wanita zaman beliau; beliau menyembunyikan kritikan beliau di sebalik topik-topik yang remeh-temeh.

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menunjukkan bagaimana Welty membuat revisi terhadap penggambaran stereotaip wanita. Dengan menggunakan metod kritikan “Images of Women” dan model malaikat dan raksasa Gilbert dan Gubar sebagai kunci perbincangan, disertasi ini akan menerangkan bagaimana Welty merobekkan penampilan stereotaip kewanitaan dan stereotaip wanita Amerika Selatan serta mencadangkan interpretasi yang baru berkenaan identiti wanita melalui pergabungan imej malaikat dan raksasa yang berada dalam keadaan yang bertentangan. Pergabungan dikotomi ini tidak sahaja membolehkan Welty secara efektif mengkritik dan membuat revisi terhadap stereotaip-stereotaip wanita demi menciptakan penggambaran wanita yang lebih realistik, tetapi juga menerangkan diskrepensi yang ditemui dalam penggambaran imej wanita selatan yang dongeng serta mencadangkan tingkahlaku alternatif bagi wanita yang dapat menuju ke arah liberasi dan pembangunan identiti yang baru serta berdikari tanpa menggunakan cara keganasan.

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