CHAPTER 2

THE ROBBER BRIDEGROOM: REDEFINING FEMALE ARCHETYPES

Eudora Welty's The Robber Bridegroom is one of her richest and most intricately designed pieces of work where she explores a variety of themes and experiments with an amalgamation of history, fairy tale, folklore, myth and legend. Harriet Pollack, in her article "On Welty's Use of Allusion: Expectations and Their Revisions in 'The Wide Net', The Robber Bridegroom and 'At The Landing' " (1990), remarked that Welty possesses a distinctive habit of telling "twice-told tales", building her fiction on allusions to well-known stories and story patterns (5). The author herself asserts in Fairy Tale of the Natchez Trace (1975): "I think it's become clear that it was by no accident that I made our local history and the legend and the fairy tale into working equivalents in the story. [. . .] It was my firm intention to bind them together" (13).

The list of allusions compiled by Welty's critics in their study of The Robber Bridegroom is long indeed. In his monograph, Eudora Welty (1968), J.A. Bryant Jr. compiled a brief list of Welty's allusions in The Robber Bridegroom:

> In addition to the general shape of Grimm's Story, suggestions and reminiscences of [. . .] other tales are discoverable here, among them "The Little Goose Girl," "Rumpelstiltskin," "Little Snow White," "The Fisherman and His Wife," "Beauty and the Beast," Charles Perrault's "Cinderella," and the Hellenic myth of Cupid and Psyche. Moreover, a great deal of American folklore and near-folklore gets worked into the narrative, the stories of Davy Crockett and Mike Fink, the atrocities of Big Harpe and Little Harpe, and tall tales about Indians frontiersmen and bandits of the Natchez Trace. (17)

According to Turner and Harding in Critical Essays on Eudora Welty (1989), early reviewers such as Marriane Hauser, Alfred Kazin and Lionel Trilling have focused on the novella's connection to fairy tale motifs and its allusions to Grimm's "Robber Bridegroom" (7). Hauser, in "Miss Welty's Fairy Tale" (1942), calls her novella "an American fairy tale" (3) in which Welty "has transplanted many elements from those stories into her book. [. . .] She has done this with her tongue in her cheek, as if to say: Just watch and see what happens to those fairytales if I let them run wild in the big woods of the old Natchez country, with Indians lurking behind the bushes" (Hauser 3-4).

Marilyn Arnold in "Eudora Welty's Parody" (1978) however differs from these early reviewers and calls The Robber Bridegroom a parody of the traditional fairy tale motif (Turner and Harding 37). According to Champion's The Critical Response to Eudora Welty's Fiction (1994), later critical responses such as Charles C. Clarke's "The Robber Bridegroom: Realism and Fantasy on the Natchez Trace" (1973), Bev Brynne's "A Return to the Source: The Robber Bridegroom and The Optimist's Daughter" (1986), Michael Kreyling's "Clement and the Indians: Pastoral and History in The Robber Bridegroom" (1979) explore the literary and historical sources and consider some themes in detail (4-5).

Although notes and observations have been made on the various female characters of The Robber Bridegroom in several of these critical works, they are scattered and little has been done to provide a comprehensive study of Welty's subversive strategies in the novella. This chapter will attempt a deeper reexamination of how Welty's reworking of the Grimm story and her allusions to other fairy tales modify the female characters of these patriarchally borne texts. The Robber Bridegroom, though rich with these figures, does not wholly subscribe to their male-defined stereotypes. Welty's variations in the description of

archetypal women, particularly her heroine, subtly deconstruct, reconstruct, and transform these stereotypical depictions. This not only renews her reader's perception of the female character but also provides a platform to subtly assert and discuss pertinent female issues.

In The Robber Bridegroom, Rosamond is introduced as the daughter of a wealthy planter, Clement Musgrove. Welty employs conventional fairy-tale language depicting Rosamond as a kind of Mississippi Cinderella and Snow White in one. Her name, meaning "Rose of the World", according to Carson's "Eudora Welty's Dance with Darkness: The Robber Bridegroom" (1988), is close to the generic naming of fairy-tale heroines such as "Briar Rose" of "Sleeping Beauty" and "Rose Red" of "Snow White and Rose Red" (59). The passage where Rosamond wears a silk gown given by her father reanimates the vision of a fairy princess; she is as "beautiful as the day", golden-haired, lovely and graceful, swaying up and down with her gown like a swan on the puncheon floor (27). Her "hairpins" and the "petticoat stitched all around with golden thread" (27) are examples of what Gilbert and Gubar refer to as "tight laces", the patriarchal structures that bind Rosamond to the traditional image of beauty and sweetness, the male's ideal of the "eternal feminine". However, while Rosamond possesses some of the attributes of Cinderella and Snow White, she does not subscribe entirely to their model of femininity. Unlike them, she is far from being the one-sided, chaste, virtuous, long-suffering, passive maiden of patriarchal construction and breaks free from the "tight laces" that have imprisoned generations of fairy tale protagonists.

The writer departs from convention by portraying Rosamond as "a great liar" (28). This vice is inappropriate for a heroine since patriarchy considers deceit a sign of "inconstancy" in women. Welty, however, describes this quality with a pleasant twist when

Rosamond's lies are said to fall as naturally as jewels, thus blurring the monstrosity of the vice by making it appealing, emphasizing its creative beauty rather than its dishonesty: "when she opened her mouth in answer to a question, the lies would simply fall out like diamonds and pearls" (28). Rosamond's fictional lies manifest a creative mental energy; her witty weaving of extravagant and fantastic escapades shine out as clever constructions of a woman's creativity, charming the reader and rendering the heroine intelligent.

Rosamond lies and fantasizes as a result of an intolerable life with her stepmother. Like Cinderella, Rosamond suffers oppression from a stepmother who subjects her to dangerous tasks in the woods. However, unlike her predecessor who passively submits to her stepmother's oppressive rule, Rosamond finds liberation through her active imagination. Her stories of wild encounters in the woods not only express her desire for freedom and adventure, they enable her to create a different realm of existence to which she temporarily escapes.

Rosamond's duplicity gives her a voice of her own. She weaves her story and insists on telling it her own way, controlling how she presents events to others. Walker and Seaman's article "The Robber Bridegroom as a Capitalist Fable" (1988) shows how Rosamond's lies allow her to narrate the most dangerous and destructive acts as events that aggrandize her self-conception and lead to her own benefit (59). For example, Rosamond translates Salome's wish that she comes to harm into her own wonderful tale of "the little old panther": "The first thing I knew she took me up in her teeth, but very easy, by the sash, and carried me all the way home through the woods before she set me down at the gate. She swung me hard, and I knew she meant it for a lesson, so I came away from her, and here I am, but the whole time I never dropped the leaf of one herb" (27-28). Interestingly, her life

imitates her fiction; we read of her later actually being carried away by a wild man/beast into the forest.

Rosamond's lies also provide a context for her initiation into adult sexuality (Walker and Seaman 60). According to Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment (1976), tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood" involve a maiden's encounter with a beast and contain sexual undertones, providing images that contribute to our subconscious initiation into mature sexuality. They speak of human passions, seduction, pubertal sexual desires and the loss of childish innocence. Rosamond's stories are therefore the expressions of her budding sexuality and are "socially creative" since they eventually make her world a place where her individual desires can be realized (Walker and Seaman 60). Her narrative turns into reality when Salome sends her into the world of danger and sexual experience (where she meets her man/beast lover) which becomes an essential part of her maturation.

Welty labors to reveal how women are more complex than their stereotyped exteriors imply. While Rosamond is a reflection of angelic femininity, her habitual lying renders the image of the "angel" askew since it mirrors more adequately the characteristics of the monstrous woman. Welty's purpose is to deconstruct extreme depictions of female characters as either "angel" or "monster". For generations, male authors dichotomized female characters into these polarities. The angel figure embodies ethereal, submissive qualities that have been labeled feminine and beautiful, while the monster woman is ugly and represents that which is masculine, powerful, destructive, duplicitous, perverse and sensual. She also takes on numerous forms such as the witch, the whore, the shrew, the madwoman and the hysteric. Embracing the former while scorning the latter, patriarchal

texts condemn the hideous and destructive traits of the monster woman since she represents for them the fear of female autonomy, power and creativity.

Clement's efforts to restrain and correct Rosamond's habitual lying, which he feels is a serious moral deficiency, represent this patriarchal attitude governing society's condemnation of the monster figure, thus preserving an ancient denigration of women as deceitful violators of faith and trust. Unaware that the thing he wants to eradicate is the very source of his daughter's creativity, individuality and sexuality, he forces her to conform to the "angelic" mould and thus delays her maturation into complete womanhood. Clement's final resolve to give Rosamond away in marriage to any man who can make her tell the truth implies his belief that deceit and duplicity devalue a woman. In a world where women are regarded as chattel and valued as male's personal property, a woman's honesty and chastity are therefore of utmost importance for a valuable exchange for marriage. Moorti in Color of Rape: Gender and Race in the Television's Public Sphere (2002) mentions that historically, societies have viewed sexual assault as a crime not against women but against men since rape was defined as a theft of male property. Rape therefore destroys a woman's property value in the marriage market (46). It is therefore not surprising that Jamie is not very eager to accept Clement's offer of his daughter's hand in marriage as the "reward of great price" (50) for hunting down the brute who had ravished her since he measures her "true worth" by her chastity, not appreciating the wit of her tongue or the liveliness of her mind. Not recognizing that she was "that true worth which he had sampled" earlier, he concludes that "[t]his young creature [. . .] is only a child with a dirty face, and [that] the cat has her tongue [and] the devil her brains" (52).

Welty's description of Rosamond's outward appearance after her rape contrasts the earlier image of angelic beauty. Dirty, ugly, unkempt and like a madwoman reacting to the effects of male subjugation, "Rosamond was in a sad state to be seen, with ashes [. . .] in her hair [,] soot on her cheek [,] her poor tongue [. . .] hanging out, and her dress burned to a fringe all around from the coals, [. . .] altogether looking like a poor bewitched creature that could only go in circles" (48). It is this vision of Rosamond that Jamie is unable to accept. He wishes for the traditional vision of virginal beauty and sweetness, "nothing less than a dream of true love - something of gossamer and roses" without realizing that it was he who had brought Rosamond to this point (52). Like Clement, he projects patriarchy's inability to accept and integrate the polarities of "angel" and "monster" as parts of a woman's total construct. Hence, we find Jamie being unable to recognize the dirty creature as the same "little piece of sugar cane" who had attracted him earlier in the woods (52).

The writer continues to revise the image of the fairy-tale heroine by portraying her as a sexually curious being. Beside singing love ballads and daydreaming about romantic encounters, Rosamond fantasizes about abduction: "Rosamond [. . .] had sometimes imagined such a thing happening, and knew what to say" (36). She is coolly self-possessed when accosted by the smooth talking bandit, Jamie Lockhart, and is an increasingly willing victim. In fact, it seems to be Rosamond who entices Jamie in their first encounter: "Well, then I suppose I must give you the dress [. . .] but not a thing further" (34). When Jamie takes even her petticoats, she spends no time worrying about the precarious state of her virtue, but wonders "how ever she might look without a stitch on her" (36). By refusing to feel dishonored after being robbed of her clothing, Rosamond is no sentimental heroine. Where Grimm's protagonist endeavors to guard her virginity and escape rape at all cost,

Rosamond is unconcerned with the pieties of ladyhood and shows no typical fairy tale preference for honor over life. Upon being offered the choice of death or the shame of nakedness, she decides without hesitation, "Why, sir, life is sweet [. . .] and before I would die on the point of your sword, I would go home naked any day" (36). Hence Welty, according to Weston in Gothic Traditions and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Eudora Welty (1994), deconstructs the conventional role of the dishonored heroine and rejects the white, male Southern code of "ladyhood" and its privileging of virginity and chastity (178). Skaggs in "The Uses of Enchantment in Frontier Humor and The Robber Bridegroom" (1994) adds that this heroine's concern is not about losing her virginity but finding someone to give it up to by mentioning that "[h]er robber 'gets' her because she goes out to find him" (61). We are also told that "if Jamie was a thief after Rosamond's love, she was his first assistant in the deed, and rejoiced equally in his good success" (60). Rosamond's embrace of physical love celebrates female sexuality and challenges the common notion that women have no sexual desires or that they simply defend their virtue against male sexual advances.

Welty's "flippant" attitude towards rape in The Robber Bridegroom obscures its harsh reality. Presented lyrically, unlike the brutal depiction of assault on the Indian girl by Little Harp, Jamie's rape of Rosamond is introduced by a magical and extraordinarily beautiful ride on her captor's steed. Their ride in this "fastest kidnapping that had ever been in that part of the country" is smooth, long, and beautiful during which the "sun mounted the morning cloud, and lighted the bluff and then the valley, which opened and showed the river, shining beneath another river of mist, winding and all the colors of flowers" (46). Jamie then carries an unprotesting Rosamond through a bower of trees dropping ripe plums

onto the riverside: "The wild plum trees were rolling smoke between him and the river, but he broke the branches and the plums rained down as he carried her under. He stopped and laid her on the ground, where, straight below, the river flowed as slow as sand, and robbed her of that which he had left her the day before" (46).

According to several critics, such descriptive beauty of landscape cannot fail to suggest the passionate appeal of physical connection between Jamie and Rosamond (Walker and Seaman 62). This has led them to view Rosamond's defloration under the plum trees as a "consummation" of her and Jamie's "love": a "natural fulfillment" of their desire in the Edenic New World woods, asserting the freedom of the young man and woman to enjoy one another.

This analogy, however, obscures the more serious results of rape in Welty. Dianne Roberts's "The Rapist Bridegroom: Sexual Violence in the Fiction of Eudora Welty" (1991) shows that the Edenic imagery, coupled with the passage of romanticized violence against Rosamond, contributes to the reluctance of readers to see the rape for what it is (190). Welty clearly mentions that Rosamond was "robbed" of her virginity by a man whose motto was "[t]ake first and ask afterward" (49). Although the overall impression may be that the tale's fabric is colorful, comical and celebratory, it nevertheless holds in its background the darker hues of a lament for lost innocence (Pollack 12-13). This is observed in Little Harp's rape of the Indian maiden which becomes a nightmare of sex and death enacted over a robber's meal:

> "And now I will teach her the end of her life [. . .]" said the little Harp, and he threw the girl across the long table [. . .] where the remains of all the meals lay [. . .] with the knives and forks sticking in them, and flung himself upon her before

their eyes. "You have killed her now," they said and it was true: she was dead. (132)

Little Harp's rape of the Indian girl becomes an extreme depiction of the rape scenes in the novella. The violent outlaw is actually the shadow self of Jamie Lockhart and what Jamie would be if he were reduced to such evil extremes (Carson 57). Jamie's rape of Rosamond is an expression of his dominating, masculinist view of the world, reflecting men's deep-seated proclivities for control. Within his bandit society, sexual relationship is as much circumscribed by patriarchal attitudes as relations between the sexes had been patriarchally ordered in Clement's world, only perhaps more violent by nature.

Rosamond's unkempt and disheveled condition after her kidnapping and rape does in fact suggest trauma, and is a reaction common among rape victims. After Jamie finishes with her, she wanders home in a confused state and will not wash herself or comb her hair. Welty's allusion to the Cinderella story in Rosamond's appearance can be seen here in Rosamond's debasement and her sense of degradation which lead to temporary madness after being raped. Her sexual initiation reduces her to a matted and dirty object of pity, indicating that such sexual initiation for a woman is as traumatic as rape. This disheveled girl is now a "monster" to Jamie yet ironically, it was he who "made" her.

Despite the negative effects of rape, there exists a dark side to Rosamond which attracts her to the bandit. Rosamond's compliance and non-retaliatory behavior before and after the rape suggests that underneath the innocent exterior lies a perverse creature. After "Jamie had truly dishonored her" (55) Rosamond actively sets out to search for him because of " [her] great growing pity for him" (56). Even while she acts as the submissive angel in Jamie's hideout, Welty reminds us of her hidden perversity that delights in Jamie's

violent lovemaking: "But when she tried to lead him to his bed with a candle, he would knock her down and out of her senses, and drag her there. However, if Jamie was a thief after Rosamond's love, she was his first assistant in the deed, and rejoiced in his good success" (60).

Pollack's study provides some illumination to the heroine's dark inclinations. Referring to Welty's allusion to a ballad known as "Young Andrew", she explains the heroine's eagerness for love even though she knows the possibility of betrayal (16-18). Rosamond sings the first stanza of the ballad[1] as she sits dreaming in her room and later on, significantly, as she goes into the woods to meet Jamie. The unsung portion of the ballad tells of how Andrew persuades the girl who loves him to rob her father. After marrying her, Andrew steals the girl's clothing and money and gives her the choice of going home naked or dying on the spot. Abandoned by her lover, the jilted girl returns home to her father only to die at his doorstep (Pollack 17).

Welty's heroine uses the old ballad of betrayal to imagine and conjure up a lover. Even though Jamie is not an entirely accurate parallel to Andrew since he is not guilty of domestic treachery, he proves to be guilty of greed and of giving the same options to Rosamond after he robs her of her clothes. Therefore when Rosamond sings the ballad, she is actually rehearsing the notion of a romantic encounter with such a dark lover. We are told that Rosamond sings the ballad sweetly, "as if she had been practising" for her encounter with the notorious bandit of the woods (33). Although treacherous possibilities are evoked and anticipated in such an engagement, Rosamond is smarter than the heroine of "Young Andrew" because she "educates" herself in preparation for the potentially dangerous meeting with the bandit. By preparing herself, she refuses to let the man see her

fear. Her perversity is clear in that while she cannot help fearing this longed-for lover, she is still filled with eagerness for experience with him and is determined to turn whatever comes her way toward love (Pollack 17-18).

Rosamond's perversity further illustrates Welty's efforts in integrating the angelic and perverse parts of her heroine, celebrating the idea of female sexuality and her capacity for sexual passion. Rosamond realizes she has to fuse "angel" and "monster" in order to win the gender game and refuses to accept the dichotomy as truth. Hence, she lies. Not only that, she is determined to "enjoy" sex. Why should the man have all the fun? The residing monster in Rosamond enables her to rewrite the patriarchal ballad of "Young Andrew" and free herself from the fate of the original heroine. Meeting Jamie, Rosamond writes the story of her life along the initial lines of the ballad and then transforms its outcome to something more pleasing to her. The pessimistic expectations of "Young Andrew" are changed when Rosamond successfully redirects its melancholy course to a more blissful union of love. Her preoccupation with the ballad therefore becomes her strategy for self-creation (Pollack 18).

Welty continues to emphasize the monster's ability to transform her circumstances by illustrating how Rosamond survives the effects of rape and a confining marriage. According to Roberts, the effect of rape is always a loss of female independence to male dominance (188). Rape is seen as an assertion of male power over female, with the man inscribing on the woman's body her subordination and awakening her to her submissive role in the symbolic order. Rosamond becomes a captive and self-sacrificing lover to Jamie Lockhart, confined, passive, sexually submissive, cooking and sewing for her husband's band of robbers. She is therefore reduced to the figure of the "angel in the house", which

appears, according to masculine perspective to be the "natural" initiation of a woman into her traditional role but to many feminist readers, the extension of life-long bondage (Roberts 188-191).

While this appears to be so, Welty does not leave her "angel" in a helpless condition. Her feminist adaptations of the fairy tale propagate the concept of the female protagonist as the active and responsible agent in accepting responsibility for her own development. Rosamond does not remain trapped in bondage but makes the most of what seems to be the limits and discomforts of her condition. The robbers' initial plans to exterminate her are immediately thwarted when she treats them to some cake she baked. They abandon altogether the thought of killing her after considering her useful domesticity: she would be able to cook and keep the fire up for them. Interestingly and comically, it is the robber who receives the smallest piece of cake that insists on killing her, dissatisfied because he did not get to "taste" enough. Rosamond also turns the disorderly house around into a place of "grandeur" (58). She weaves a mat of cane and rushes and makes the robbers wipe their feet at the door: a sign of domestic control and authority. So grateful are they for the presence and contribution of a woman that the robbers present Rosamond with a spinning wheel obtained "at great inconvenience" (60). Eventually, the "fierce" robbers find themselves domesticated by the domestic slave: a subversive act that gets the better of male domination. Rosamond's life in the robbers' hideout is therefore far from being a prison. Instead it is "like fairyland" (59). Hence, what initially seemed to be domestic subjugation has been subverted into a declaration of women's power and authority. hooks in Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre (2000) contends that the notion that women in bondage need to obtain power before they can effectively resist and overcome oppression is

"rooted in the false assumption that women have no power" (91). "Women", according to hooks, "even the most oppressed [. . .], do exercise some power" (91). Gilbert and Gubar add that "[t]he fact that the angel woman manipulates her domestic/mystical sphere in order to ensure the well-being of those entrusted to her care reveals that she can manipulate[,] scheme [and] plot – stories as well as strategies" (26).

Rosamond is not the only figure who manifests a dual identity. Jamie also possesses a dual identity: he is bandit and prince charming, robber and bridegroom, romantic and conventional hero and businessman rolled into one. Welty points out that just as there are two sides to a woman, there are also two sides to a man. The ability to accept and integrate the polarities is essential for the individual's development and the nurturing of a healthy relationship. Rosamond matures steadily as she comes to understand this and acknowledges her own complexity. However, the question of Jamie's identity plagues Rosamond with doubt and fear as she is unable to name her lover: "she would wake up out of her first sleep and study his sleeping face, but she did not know the language it was written in" (61). Welty makes clear that the mere physical presence of the loved one is not enough for sustained solace. Even though Rosamond lies by Jamie's side, "she would look out the window and see a cloud put up a mask over the secret face of the moon" and "hear the pitiful cries of the night creatures" (61). This "was enough to make her afraid, as if the whole world were circled by a band of Indian savages" (61). For fear to be alleviated in relationships, there must be "love of a whole self by a whole self" (Carson 65). Successful relationships must be founded on equality and the transforming powers of recognizing the reciprocal claims of the other.

The secret identity of the robber therefore deprives Rosamond of a healthy and secure relationship with him. Jamie's refusal to reveal his true identity to Rosamond suggests that even in reciprocal relationships, the male acts as a robber by depriving the female complete knowledge of himself. This deprivation makes Rosamond's and Jamie's "marriage" suspect: "My husband was a robber and not a bridegroom. [. . .][He] kept all the truth hidden from me, and never called anything by its true name, even his name or mine, and what I would have given him he liked better to steal. And if I had no faith, he little honor to deprive a woman of giving her love freely" (105-106).

According to Carson, Jamie is an exemplar of the impulse to simplify one's sense of self and one's response to others as well as the need to move toward acceptance of the self's polar reality. From the start, he has tried to neatly partition his life, seeing himself as alternately bandit or gentleman, never admitting that his reality simultaneously includes both (54). However, when Clement offers Rosamond as a reward for the capture of the bandit who had ravished her, Carson points out that Jamie unknowingly "incarnates human *concordia discors*, combining within self the contradictory qualities of the romantic and materialist" (55). Although he is a "man of enterprise" (55), he is at the same time repulsed by the dirty creature before him and reluctant to receive her in exchange for his services, for "in his heart" Jamie "carried nothing less than a dream of true love - something of gossamer and roses, though on this topic he never held conversation with himself, or let the information pass to a soul [. . .]" (52).

Jamie's inability to accept his duality as romantic hero and hard-headed businessman leads to his inability to accept Rosamond's duality. During their first meeting, Jamie fails to recognize Rosamond as the same beautiful girl in the woods, not only

because she is now ragged and dirty, but also because "it was either love or business that traveled on his mind, never both at once, and [that] night it was business" (49). Jamie's male tendency to compartmentalize and categorize every aspect of life sheds light on the patriarchal tendency to dichotomize women into stereotypes. This not only traps women but also men in their own stereotypes as it inhibits them from embracing their own complexity. The failure to view the "angel" and "monster" as two parts of a whole woman merely reflects Jamie's deeper problem in dealing with his own identity. Jamie's inability to reconcile his and Rosamond's complexity causes him to hide from her, depriving not only Rosamond but also himself of the joys of full-orbed relationships.

Welty's theme of duality illustrates the need to acknowledge the polarities in a person and view them as qualities that characterize the whole person rather than as separate figures. In other words, there is the need to see the different "sides" of personalities simultaneously and not sequentially. Jamie's challenge is to bring into conversation the two sides of himself, and accept his complex reality. Clement's careful meditation gives insight to this:

> "If being a bandit were his breadth and scope, I should find him and kill him for sure," said he. "But since in addition he loves my daughter, he must be not the one man but two, and I should be afraid of killing the second. For all things are double, and this should keep us from taking liberties with the outside world, and acting too quickly to finish things off. [. . .] And perhaps after the riding [,] robbing [,] burning and assault is over with this man [. . .] he will step out of it all like a beastly skin, and surprise you with his gentleness". (90-91)

Clement's observation clearly indicates that it is not the elimination of the darker nature that solves the problem. Even though Jamie becomes a rich merchant at the story's end, Welty ensures that he does not discard his bandit side for the solution is not in the death of his robber identity; his becoming a rich merchant merely illustrates "the perfect way to be both a gentleman and highwayman" (Carson 58). As Welty tells us:

> [. . .] the outward transfer from bandit to merchant had been almost too easy to count it change at all, and he was enjoying the same success he had ever had. But now, in his heart Jamie knew that he was a hero and had always been one, only with the power to look both ways and to see a thing from all sides. (134)

It is only when Jamie embraces his duality that he can fully accept and understand Rosamond's nature and experience a true and satisfying marriage with her.

Alluding to the myth of Cupid and Psyche, Welty further discusses this issue of deprivation. The daring act of waking the sleeping god and the acceptance of crucial initiatory tasks are significant elements in the myth that corresponds to the story. Rosamond is so curious about Jamie's identity that like Psyche, she risks losing him to learn who he is. Jamie, like Cupid, values his secret identity so much that he deserts Rosamond once it is revealed. Heilbrun in Reinventing Womanhood (1979) explains that the male does not want a mature Psyche and will oppose female growth toward full consciousness for Psyche is desirable to him only when she lives entirely for him. The female must therefore risk losing her lover if she is to discover her destiny (144). Emulating Psyche's subjection to terrible labors before being reunited with Cupid, Rosamond undergoes painful trials that act as initiation rites which lead to her maturity. Her relentless efforts to find her husband lead to her captivity by the Indians and her

experience at their camp parallels Psyche's decent to Hades, with descriptive echoes of the river Styx, Cerebus, the Fates and the realm of the dead:

> Now this was a small camp, in a worn-away hollow stirred out by the river, the shell whirlpool, called the Devil's Punch Bowl. The rays of the sun had to beat down slantwise, and the Indians' dogs ran always in circles. [. . .] [T]he old Indians sat about folded up like women, with their withered knees by their ears. [. . .] The yellow fires burned up at regular places, and out of the cloud of smoke which hung in the shape of a flapping crow over the hut of the Chief, the odor of the dead blew round [. . .]. (107)

According to Weinstein in Persephone's Underworld Journey: Reclaiming A Resurrection Narrative for Women (1996), the momentary descent to the Underworld symbolizes an experience that enables the heroine to confront the realities of sexism, domestic violence and rape, and express her rage and revulsion toward cultures that trivialize women's innate power, deny her freedom and authority while belittling female solidarity. Rosamond's escape from the Indian Camp, a kind of resurrection from Hades, represents the birth of a special wisdom she now possesses which brings forth new life (3). Such ordeals represent the heroine's initiation into successful adulthood and the release from imprisonment to full human wisdom and potential.

While characters such as Rosamond and Jamie illustrate the synthesis of duality, Salome and Amalie illustrate the self-destruction that accompanies inviolate one-sidedness. Amalie, Clement's first wife, "a beautiful woman of Virginia" (14), is the embodiment of the submissive wife, the Good Mother and the eternal feminine. We are told very little about her since she dies at the beginning of the novella. Heartbroken over the cruel murder

of her son, she falls dead in the arms of the Indians and is scorned by them for "they thought she should have lived on where she stood" (16). The only remaining memory of her is in her locket which Rosamond wears. Being the archetypal embodiment of feminine passivity and fragility, Amalie is unable to cope with the harsh realities of existence. She therefore dies and remains trapped as a piece of art in fiction.

Salome, on the other hand, is the hideous woman who survives their initial encounter with the Indians. Being "the ugly woman they were all afraid of" (16), she was left alone in the wilderness bound to Clement and his baby daughter. Refusing to be passive and weak, she is stronger and more able to withstand the struggles in the wilderness. In fact, we are told that Salome "flourished by the struggle" (17) and could have broken their bonds with her hands.

Salome refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative and rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her. Like the original Salome, the villainous seductress whose wiles won her the head of John the Baptist, Welty's Salome is a driven, ambitious woman who makes countless efforts to usurp male power. Clement mentions that when she looked at him, she had "the most impoverished gaze in the world" (16) and as he grew weaker, "she grew stronger" (17). Her qualities are "masculine"; it is she, not her husband, who is the empire builder, dictating to her husband and lashing out at him because of her obsession with material wealth. Clement says that from the very beginning, Salome had turned her eyes upon him with "less question than demand" (16) and that "[t]here was no longer anything but ambition left in her destroyed heart" (16).

In an attempt to wield power over the patriarchal structures that have determined her life, Salome declares her power to the Indians who capture her by choosing to be the

victim in Rosamond's stead, demanding in her sexual vanity that it is she, and not Rosamond, who is the fairest of them all. She defies the authority of the Indians' masculine god, the sun, by refusing to remain still in submission to and worship of it. She persists in talking despite the Indians' commands to be silent and attempts to assert feminine power by claiming that she can punish their masculine god by causing it to be eaten by the shadow of the feminine moon. Commanding the sun to stand still, she cries, "No one is to have power over me! No man, and none of the elements! I am by myself in the world" (115).

However, Salome's defiance is futile. She is denied the heroism of a substitutionary sacrificial death, for she replaces Rosamond as the Indians' victim only because Rosamond has already escaped. Although she threatened the Indians' source of power and authority, "the sun went on as well as ever" (117). Unwilling to remain still and daring to defy the patriarchal authority of the sun, she is put under a spell by the Indians to dance for it: "So Salome began to dance, whether she wanted to or whether she didn't, and the Indian Chief said, 'If you stand still before the sun obeys you and stands still likewise, it is death for you' " (117). Marie Von France's Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales (1915) explains that dances of primitive tribes have a deeper, transcendent meaning and are conducted for the purpose of helping the sun rise (65). Therefore, while Salome dances and shouts for the sun to retire, she is ironically assisting in erecting its power.

Hence, her defiance actually enslaves her to the masculine god. Although Salome purposes to break free from patriarchal rule, she unknowingly subjects herself to it since her extreme retaliatory nature subscribes to the patriarchal definition of "monstrosity". We are told that Salome once had "her days of gentleness" which were abandoned after her first encounter with the Indians (17). By denying the gentle, loving side of herself, Salome

conforms entirely to the image of the "monster". While the transition to hideousness enabled her to escape initially from the Indians' attack, she swings now to an extreme that moulds her into a patriarchal stereotype which leads to her own destruction. Thus like Amalie, she eventually dies. Salome's frenzied version of the Dance of the Seven Veils leaves her naked, dead and powerless for she dances herself to death. The true immovable gender order is then revealed when Clement declares, "I own her body" upon the enquiry of the Indian Chief (117). Dead, Salome cannot protest at the humiliation of being referred to merely as another of man's possessions.

Rosamond falls victim to the envy of Salome because she preserves the beauty and memory of Amalie: "Rosamond is so beautiful that she keeps the memory of my first wife alive and evergreen in my heart" (20). Hideous in appearance, Salome is not only envious of her stepdaughter's claim on her husband's affections but also her budding sexuality and beauty. Beholding Rosamond in her maturing beauty, "Salome's heart felt like lead, and she had no more peace day or night" (27). Like the energetic wicked stepmother of fairy tales, Salome engages in an endless pursuit to destroy Rosamond's life.

Despite her evil intent, Salome unconsciously plays an important and positive role in contributing to Rosamond's psychic development. Like Aphrodite she plays the dualistic role of being the Great and Terrible Mother simultaneously. She consigns Rosamond to the sexual domination of men but also aids her by demanding of her tasks that develop her powers. She enables Rosamond to escape the imprisonment of unequal relationships, by bringing what Neuman, in "Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine" (1962), calls "love into the light" and transforming it into a union of equality (174). Salome's subjection of Rosamond to hard and dangerous labor allows Rosamond to

achieve separation from her and to assume power for herself. Rosamond would not have reached maturity had she not accomplished the tasks set for her by Salome, thereby showing that she was competent to face the real world on its own terms.

The memory of Amalie, on the other hand, acts as a force that delays Rosamond's initiation into adulthood. Since Amalie embodies the domestic, she works toward keeping her daughter safe within the confines of home and childish innocence. Her presence is represented by the locket Rosamond wears around her neck which never fails to "speak out of its own accord" and say, "[i]f your mother could see you now, her heart would break" whenever Rosamond is sent out by Salome into the forest of experience (25). Significantly, the locket is stealthily taken away by Salome before Rosamond meets Jamie again in the woods and is robbed of her virginity. This signifies Rosamond's freedom from Amalie's stifling, protective influence, and full entry into sexual experience and independent womanhood. Interestingly, we are also told that Rosamond never missed the locket she lost (44).

Some critics have suggested that Salome and Amalie are two halves of a recognizable whole. As Carson notes, the names "Salome" and "Amalie" are "practically anagrams" (56). Clement suggests the possibility of Amalie and Salome as being the same person: "All things are divided in half [. . .] and sometimes I wonder if even my own wife has not been the one person all the time. [. . .] I loved her beauty so well at the beginning that it is only now that the ugliness has struck through to beset me like madness" (91).

Welty's story echoes the tale of the wicked Queen in "Snow White" who, having become a mother at the beginning of the story, changed into a witch and wicked stepmother (Gilbert and Gubar 37).[2] Similarly in The Robber Bridegroom, after Amalie dies, Clement

takes Salome as his second wife, and who then becomes the stepmother of his child. Bruno Bettelheim's theory of the fairy tale's splitting of personalities to accommodate a child's ability to assimilate "good/bad" qualities in one real mother also leads us to see Salome and Amalie as two facets of the same woman. According to him, a child, unable to assimilate the mother's unwillingness "to meet all his oral demands [. . .] believes that suddenly Mother has become unloving, selfish, rejecting" (159). Welty's description of Salome as an old blackbird reinforces this idea of transformation. Ingersoll in Birds in Legend, Fable and Folklore (1923) describes how old blackbirds such as the raven and the crow were once white but were forced during the hard winter to take refuge in chimneys which produced the sooty plumage (233). Salome was said to have had "days of gentleness" (24) before her encounter with the Indians. Left in the wilderness to suffer the pangs of exhaustion and hunger, it is not surprising that the woman who once possessed a "white" heart changed into a "black-hearted" one. We are therefore confronted with a range of possibilities. Was Salome once the gentle and lovely Amalie? Had Amalie lived, might she have borne a destroyed heart like Salome's? Perhaps Amalie had to die because only Salome had the strength to defy the Indians.

These two depictions of female characters are manifestations of dichotomous stereotypes. What becomes of the women who remain in these extreme portrayals is crucial to our understanding of The Robber Bridegroom. Both Amalie and Salome die in the story since they remain conventional depictions of women. Amalie dies because she is the one-sided embodiment of beauty and fragility while Salome's aggression kills and subjects her to eternal subordination to Clement. Both women are "killed" since they remain caged

in patriarchal definitions. Their deaths imply the deadness in life of those who develop and recognize only one part of themselves (Carson 57).

Only Rosamond, who is neither wholly "angel" nor "monster", lives. Being the daughter of both Amalie and Salome, Rosamond greatly resembles Amalie but also shares points of contact and dynamic exchange with Salome. When Rosamond tells her father and stepmother of her marriage to the bandit, Salome senses her kinship with Rosamond: "at that moment the stepmother gave Rosamond a look of true friendship, as if Rosamond too had gotten her man by unholy means" (88). And when Salome voices the doubts that Rosamond feels about her lover's identity, "Salome drew so close to Rosamond that they could look down the well and see one shadow, and whispered in her ear" (88). Salome is thus Rosamond's shadow self (Carson 60-61).

Unlike most writers who dichotomize women as "angel" or "monster", Welty embraces both, bringing them into a balance in the character and personality of Rosamond. Rosamond epitomizes a feminine duality that is not oppositional and antagonistic but reconciling and synthesizing. Being the embodiment of both, she experiences positive growth toward wholeness and a successful relationship in the end. The fullness of the confluence is finally manifested in her being pregnant with twins.

NOTES

[1] "The moon shone bright, and it cast a fair light:
'Welcome," says she, 'my honey, my sweet!
For I have loved thee this seven long year,
And our chance it was we could never meet.'

Then he took her in his armes-two,
And kissed her both cheek and chin,
And twice or thrice he kissed this may
Before they were parted in twin." (24)

[2] "[W]hen the child was born, the Queen died," and "After a year had passed the King took to himself another wife [. . .]." (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 37)