Georgia State University
ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

English Theses | Department of English

8-3-2006

Aspects of King MacLain in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples

James Hammond Shimkus

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses

Recommended Citation
Shimkus, James Hammond, "Aspects of King MacLain in Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2006.
http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses/13

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

ASPECTS OF KING MACLAIN IN

EUDORA WELTY'S *THE GOLDEN APPLES*

by

James Shimkus

Under the Direction of Pearl A. McHaney

ABSTRACT

Much of the scholarship on Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* focuses on Welty's use of folklore and myth, particularly as presented in several of W. B. Yeats's poems. The character King MacLain is most often associated with Zeus, Perseus, and Aengus. A close examination of King MacLain's development during Welty's composition and revision of *The Golden Apples* reveals associations between King and other figures from myth and folklore, including Odin, Loki, Finn MacCool, Brer Rabbit, the King of the Wood from James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and several types of Irish fairies. The many layers of allusion revealed by studying King MacLain suggest that close studies of other characters in *The Golden Apples* will illustrate the complexity and scope of Welty's story-cycle.

INDEX WORDS: Eudora Welty, *The Golden Apples*, King MacLain, Celtic myth, Finn MacCool, Brer Rabbit, *The Golden Bough*

ASPECTS OF KING MACLAIN IN

EUDORA WELTY'S *THE GOLDEN APPLES*

by

JAMES SHIMKUS

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006

Copyright by
James Hammond Shimkus
2006

ASPECTS OF KING MACLAIN IN

EUDORA WELTY'S *THE GOLDEN APPLES*

by

JAMES HAMMOND SHIMKUS

Major Professor: Pearl A. McHaney
Committee: Thomas L. McHaney
Margaret Mills Harper

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
August 2006

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: The Stories 7

"The Whole World Knows" 8

"June Recital" 12

"Music from Spain" 16

"Moon Lake" 20

"Shower of Gold" 25

"Sir Rabbit" 29

"The Wanderers" 31

Chapter 2: Gods, Heroes, and Others 38

Part 1: Traditional Readings 38

Part 2: Norse and Irish Contexts 42

Part 3: Tricksters 54

Chapter 3: A Further Analysis of "Sir Rabbit" 58

Part 1: Rabbits 58

Part 2: Kings 63

Conclusion: One Thing Leads to Another 67

Works Cited 74

Introduction

Though nothing will keep us together
We could steal time just for one day
We can be Heroes for ever and ever
What d'you say

—David Bowie, "Heroes" (1977)

The Golden Apples, a cycle of seven stories first collected in 1949, has been called "the most complex and encompassing of Eudora Welty's works" (Vande Kieft 87). Some readers of Welty's work have asserted that the interrelated stories form a novel, but Welty claimed in a 1972 interview that *The Golden Apples* was not a novel (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 43). In his essay "Falling into Cycles: *The Golden Apples,*" Thomas L. McHaney argues that the book is a cycle, not only in the simple sense of a series of stories, but also in the sense of a mythic story-cycle (176).

By the time Welty began writing the stories that would form *The Golden Apples*, her published books included two short story collections and two novels. In 1946, Welty had just finished *Delta Wedding* and was working on two stories: "Golden Apples," which would later become "June Recital," and "The Whole World Knows." It is not surprising that Welty began writing short stories just after the publication of *Delta Wedding*. Welty told Alice Walker in 1973, "I think I'm more of a natural short story writer. In fact, the novels I've written usually began as short stories" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 132); this is very nearly what happened to two of the stories that would eventually be part of *The Golden Apples*. In a September 1947 letter to her agent and friend Diarmuid Russell (son of the Irish poet George Russell, who was also known as

Æ) Welty wrote, ". . . one thing I don't know about is my long story Golden Apples [later "June Recital"]. I've had ideas about that—maybe fruitless ones—that it might be really a novel…it's one reason why I don't want to do anything definite just at the moment about a collection. In the same way it seemed to me perhaps the short story I've been working on just lately ["Moon Lake"] may be part of a novel too. . ." (qtd. in Kreyling, *Author* 134). However, a month later, in a letter to Russell dated October 6, 1947, Welty expressed some reluctance with regard to turning the stories she was working on into another novel:

> I think now that a novel isn't necessary---that would be, at this point anyway, an artificial way for me to go ahead with the material. So why not just go my own way, writing the stories as short stories, the way they occur to me, but letting them go on and be inter-related, but not inter-dependent, just as they actually are in my head…Not have plots and strings tied to them except for the short stories' sakes. But hope that some over-all thing would emerge from the group that might have a significance greater than that of the stories taken one by one---by virtue of accumulation and familiarity and so on…I *don't* have the pressure to write a novel, just the pressure to go on with some people that stay in my head. (qtd. in Kreyling, *Author* 136-7)

One of the "inter-related" aspects of the stories in *The Golden Apples* is mythology. In a 1978 interview with Jan Gretlund, Welty said: "I've lived with mythology all my life…It *naturally* occurs to me when I am writing fiction…I have grown up with legends and fairy tales and I've always loved them" (Prenshaw 224). *The*

Golden Apples is "modeled after traditional stories in the realms of myth and legend that are organized around a central hero or theme" (McHaney 176). A story-cycle in the mythic mode requires characters who are larger than life and an extraordinary world for them to inhabit; in *The Golden Apples*, Welty creates a pantheon of gods and heroes and places them in a mythic yet modern setting: the community of Morgana, "a little town where everybody was living in a sort of dream world" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 332). Though she ha d used Sabina and Battle Hill as the town's name in early story versions, for her book Welty chose the name Morgana for a number of possible reasons, among them its allusion to the "Fata Morgana—the illusory shape, the mirage that comes in over the sea" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 88). Like Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow, Morgana is a place over which "a drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang…and to pervade the very atmosphere" (Irving 6).

The chief male figure in Welty's Morgana pantheon is the aptly named King MacLain whose presence is felt throughout *The Golden Apples*, even in the stories in which he does not appear. Not merely a comical, "flat" character, as Ruth Vande Kieft suggests (92), King MacLain epitomizes Welty's "juxtaposition of the dreamlike setting of Morgana with the cultural truths of myth in order to shift the nature of myth" (Johnston 74). Like a ghost or a god, King influences the characters and events in *The Golden Apples*:

> A call to growth, a summons to fulfillment moves through the related stories in the person and spirit of King MacLain and the sharers of his vitality. Each of the stories deals with an answer that affirms or fails to affirm King's unavoidable challenge. (Kreyling, *Achievement* 79)

Regardless of the positive or negative regard in which scholars or his contemporaries in Morgana might hold him, King MacLain's mysterious, multi-layered, and mythical presence informs much of *The Golden Apples*; a closer study of King's mythological and historical origins illuminates his role in the cycle and therefore expands our understanding of these interrelated stories. In Chapter 1, I will provide summaries of the stories in the order in which they were written, with some additional biographical and scholarly commentary for each one. I will also examine King MacLain's relationship to the story and structure of *The Golden Apples*---who he is, what he does, and how other characters interact with him.

King MacLain is often compared to Zeus, chief god of the Greek pantheon; in her seminal reading of Welty's work, Ruth Vande Kieft asserts that "King's mythical counterpart is the Zeus of the roving eye, who involved himself in a series of amours with mortal women" (90). Vande Kieft also acknowledges the influence of Celtic mythology in *The Golden Apples*, asserting that "the thematic unity of *The Golden Apples* may be approached through a poem by William Butler Yeats" (88) titled "The Song of Wandering Aengus," which concerns the Celtic hero-deity Aengus and his quest for "The silver apples of the moon, /The golden apples of the sun" (23-4). The connections between Yeats's poem and *The Golden Apples* have been well explored by many scholars, but I will provide some minor additional observations of my own in Chapter 2.

Also in Chapter 2, I will use the observations of Vande Kieft, Daun Kendig, Thomas McHaney, and other scholars' observations to discuss King MacLain's connections to not only Zeus, Aengus, and Perseus, but also to other gods, heroes, and supernatural beings from Greek, Celtic, and Germanic myth, including Odin, Loki, and

Finn MacCool. In her essay "Realities in 'Sir Rabbit': A Frame Analysis," Daun Kendig points out the "abundance of Celtic ritual motifs" (127) in the story "Sir Rabbit," as well as the possibility that King MacLain may have some connection to Celtic fairy mythology. In his oft-quoted essay "Eudora Welty and the Multitudinous Golden Apples," Thomas L. McHaney points out references to "the whole mythological cycle in Ireland; allusion to the historical Irish background that is an apparent heritage for many of the citizens of Morgana"(McHaney 592) in *The Golden Apples*. I will also compare passages in "Shower of Gold" and "Sir Rabbit" with lore from Yeats's *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* to suggest that King MacLain displays powers and attributes found among several types of Sidhe, or Celtic fairy folk. I will conclude Chapter 2 with a discussion of King MacLain as a classic trickster figure.

The Golden Apples takes place in a mythic world, but Welty further complicates matters by adding historical folklore, history, and real locations and names to that world. Part of the historical folklore Welty employs in *The Golden Apples* is influenced by James George Frazer's study *The Golden Bough*. Frazer studied religious beliefs and traditions from around the world and collected them in his influential book. We know that Welty was familiar with Frazer's work. When asked about *The Golden Bough* in an interview, Welty answered, "I have read the one-volume edition of *The Golden Bough*, but I didn't read that till I was out of college" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 224). In her book *The Dragon's Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty's* The Golden Apples, Rebecca Mark explores the parallels between "Moon Lake" and the "King of the Wood" section of *The Golden Bough*; in Chapter 3 I will provide my own analysis of "Sir Rabbit," beginning with an examination of parallels of those same sections of *The Golden*

Bough and "Sir Rabbit" and concluding with a discussion of similarities between "Sir Rabbit" and traditional Brer Rabbit stories.

My aim is not to provide a new reading of *The Golden Apples* but rather to reinforce and add to the work of other scholars, and in doing so, I hope to point to some prospects for future study. There is more to King MacLain than I had originally thought, and I suspect this holds true for other characters in *The Golden Apples*. By examining King MacLain's historical and mythological antecedents and alter-egos, I will show Welty's "wonderful word *confluence*" (OWB 102) at work in the example of a single character. King MacLain is a character composed of many levels of reference and possible meaning, "a sometimes noisy parliament of avatars and archetypes, ids, egos, and superegos" (Kreyling, *Understanding* 112). My goal is to expose and illuminate both the obvious and obscure components Welty used in constructing King MacLain to show the depth of her skill, or (to paraphrase Morpheus from the 1999 film *The Matrix*) to show just how deep the rabbit-hole goes.

Chapter 1: The Stories

King MacLain does not appear in every story in *The Golden Apples*, but his influence pervades the cycle. Focusing on King MacLain and his role in each story, even as he may seem absent from the action, as well as the attendant history and criticism, provides an invaluable context for in-depth analysis of the character.

During the period in which she was writing the stories that would eventually form the cycle of *The Golden Apples*, Welty was involved with John Robinson, "whom she had known since their days at Jackson High School. . . . [B]y the time Robinson was serving in World War II, Eudora's letters show that she was deeply in love with him, and she may well have been in love as early as 1937" (Marrs 56). After World War II was over, Welty was ready to share her life with John Robinson (Marrs, *Welty* 139). However, John Robinson did not appear to be ready to settle down with Welty; from 1945 to 1951, "their romance would ebb and flow. During 1946 and 1947 Eudora would twice journey to San Francisco and spend several months living there near John…But there were long periods of separation between these meetings, and by the end of 1951 their relationship seemed doomed" (Marrs, *Welty* 138). In 1951, Robinson met a young Italian named Enzo Rocchigiani, and when Welty saw them together, she "sensed that the two men were a couple" (Marrs, *Welty* 202). Although Welty hoped "that John would resolve his sexual ambivalence in favor of heterosexuality" (Marrs, *Welty* 207), Robinson and Rocchigiani moved to Italy in 1952 (Marrs, *Welty* 218).

Understanding Welty's relationship with Robinson helps us identify the source of some of the tension between wanderers and non-wanderers in *The Golden Apples*. As with most of Welty's work, things are not as simple as they first seem. I do not claim

that King MacLain is based on John Robinson, although some aspects of Robinson seem evident in the character. However, Welty may also have seen herself as a wanderer in the years between 1945 and 1951, so her own quest for the "golden apples" may have inspired some of the wandering characters in the book. As Virgie Rainey realizes at the end of *The Golden Apples*, we all are Perseus at some times, Medusa at others (*GA* 275-6).

"The Whole World Knows"

"The Whole World Knows" appeared in the March 1947 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*. Before *Harper's Bazaar* bought it, Diarmuid Russell sent the story to *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and the *New Yorker* (Polk 372). Welty wrote the story in Mississippi in September 1946, while her relationship with John Robinson continued to trouble her; she "longed for commitment and Robinson felt unable to give it" (Marrs, *Welty* 142-3). The story and Welty's personal life at the time share some parallels:

> The story describes a marriage on the rocks and a husband's longing for reunion with his wife even as he feels suffocated in a southern small-town environment. Eudora's sense of the constricted nature of Mississippi life and her fear that an alternatingly warm and distant relationship with Robinson might never break from that cycle are implicit in the narrative. (Marrs, *Welty* 146)

"The Whole World Knows" concerns Ran MacLain and the former Jinny Love Stark and their troubled marriage. Prior to the crisis, Ran has been somewhat successful, having married and gotten a job at the bank as a teller. Ran then leaves his wife and

returns to his old home, which is now a boarding house run by Francine Murphy. We learn from Miss Perdita Mayo that Jinny has had an affair with Woodrow Spights, who also works as a teller at the bank.

However, all is not as black and white as it might seem at first. Jinny's mother, Lizzie Stark, tells Ran, "Of course I see what Jinny's doing, the fool, but you ailed first. You just got her answer to it, Ran" (*GA* 171). What is ailing Ran is "Jinny's joyousness and contentment…she is a person who remains untouched by frustration and whose gaiety and immunity to suffering may finally seem reproachful, thus become unbearable, even enraging" (Appel 222). Ran's rage at his wife's detachment prompts him to fantasize about shooting Jinny to death with his father's pistol.

The crisis reaches a breaking point when Ran seduces a young country girl named Maideen Sumrall, who bears a resemblance to Jinny Love. Their affair is anything but pleasant: "During the night he attempts suicide unsuccessfully with an old pistol of his father's and then takes Maideen in a quick, loveless conjunction" (Vande Kieft 106). We later learn in "The Wanderers" that Maideen commits suicide shortly after her tryst with Ran (*GA* 238).

Although King MacLain is not physically present in "The Whole World Knows," his legacy haunts the story. Ran does not address his father in the *Harper's Bazaar* version of "The Whole World Knows" but only his mother. Welty created King MacLain later in order to tie together "The Whole World Knows," "June Recital," and "Music from Spain" (Marrs, *Writer's* 128). Throughout the revised narrative, Ran directs his anguished and unanswered questions at the absent King MacLain through internal apostrophe. Perhaps the best example is Ran's plea, "Father! Dear God wipe it clean.

Wipe it clean, Wipe it out. Don't let it be" (*GA* 172). This curious plea to King MacLain appears to be important for two reasons.

First, it reinforces King MacLain's mythic role as father-god of Morgana. Ran's plea is addressed to King as if he were a god with the power to "wipe it clean." Also, the prayer-like form of Ran's address seems to conflate "Father" and "Dear God," suggesting the Christian God, the Father, and further bolstering King's perceived god-like status.

Second, what exactly is the "it?" that Ran wants his father King MacLain to wipe clean? One possibility may lie in Maideen Sumrall's ancestry. When Ran learns that Maideen's mother's maiden name is Sojourner, he is disturbed: "God help me, the name Sojourner was laid on my head like the top teetering crown of a pile of things to remember. Not to forget, never to forget the name of Sojourner" (*GA* 173). Sojourner is also the maiden name of Mattie Will Holifield, with whom King MacLain has a sexual encounter in "Sir Rabbit." In his book *A Season of Dreams*, Alfred Appel, Jr. advances the idea that Maideen may be another of King MacLain's

> "unknown" children—and Ran's half sister. . . King seduces and most likely impregnates Mattie Will Sojourner in 'Sir Rabbit,' coming upon her after his two young sons have dallied with her. . .'Sir Rabbit' implies that the MacLain twins may have seen their father with Mattie Will, and Ran would now seem to have a buried memory of that day. . . .(224)

Appel's scenario is interesting, but there is one major problem with it. Assuming we take the events in "Sir Rabbit" to be "real" and not a fantasy of Mattie Will's, as some scholars have suggested (see Fritz-Piggot; Skaggs; Yaeger), the MacLain twins encounter Mattie Will some *years* before she encounters King MacLain, when Ran, Eugene, and

Mattie Will were adolescents. One other problem is Mattie Will's name. Her maiden name is indeed Sojourner, but by the time "Sir Rabbit" takes place, her last name is Holifield. If we want to accept Appel's reading, one of these two problems can be resolved if we imagine that Mattie Will's encounter with King MacLain was "real" and has passed into local legend (and thus the whole world knows about it), and that she became pregnant with Maideen, left Junior Holifield sometime after the events of "Sir Rabbit," and reassumed her maiden name. In this scenario, the thing Ran wants his father to wipe away would be his incest with Maideen.

King MacLain's legacy, which is mythic in other stories in *The Golden Apples*, takes a dark turn in "The Whole World Knows." King's wanderings and dalliances have produced depression, probable incest, and suicide---in a word, chaos. Ran, having no contact or meaningful relationship with his father King other than legends, acts as if he wishes to live up to his father's reputation out of some sort of obligation to his mythic heritage, but unlike King, Ran would rather settle down and be faithful to his wife. However, Ran feels strangled by small-town life and his solution to his wife's infidelity is to compound that infidelity with his own, either consciously or unconsciously emulating his father. The physical symbol of King MacLain's abdication of a king's responsibilities is his old pistol that causes Jinny Love's death in Ran's fantasies, fails Ran in his suicide attempt, and ultimately causes Maideen's death. Ran addresses his absent father five times during the version of "The Whole World Knows" in *The Golden Apples*, but King does not restore order, and it appears that Ran does not have the will to take up the king's mantle of leadership abandoned by his father. However, we see in "The Wanderers" that Ran eventually becomes mayor of Morgana. Marrs argues that the

addition of King to "The Whole World Knows" for *The Golden Apples* "undercuts the intensity of Welty's attack upon the small town. . . . Welty suggests that escape is not necessarily an answer to the oppressiveness of the small town. She suggests that intellectual or emotional isolation may be more a function of character or of the human situation than it is of place" (Marrs, *Writer's* 129). King's flight from the oppressiveness of small-town life may bring him some temporary fulfillment (he later returns to live out his remaining days in Morgana, as we learn in "The Wanderers"), but he leaves behind people in need of a "king," or in Ran's case, a father.

"June Recital"

"June Recital," which appears as the second story in *The Golden Apples*, is also the longest story in the collection. Welty had begun the story as early as September 1946, around the same time she was writing "The Whole World Knows" (Polk 372). That Welty was working on the two stories at the same time may explain the surface differences between them. "The Whole World Knows" depicts the young adults of Sabina (later to become Morgana, as would Battle Hill in "June Recital") struggling with marriage, infidelity, and other adult concerns, whereas "June Recital" deals with adolescence and its attendant issues. The story was originally titled "The Golden Apples of the Sun," but was shortened to "Golden Apples" (Kreyling, *Author* 119-120) and as such, Russell submitted the story to *Good Housekeeping*, *Atlantic*, and *Harper's Bazaar* (Polk 372). *Harper's Bazaar* bought the story and it was published in the September 1947 issue. Welty made extensive revisions to the story for inclusion in *The Golden*

Apples, including changing the name to "June Recital" (Pingatore 266) when the collection's title was selected.

In both versions, "June Recital" begins with Loch Morrison, a "restless youngster with 'a fire in his head,' supposedly confined to his bed with malaria" (Vande Kieft 92). The Morrisons live next to the abandoned MacLain house. The strange events that unfold at the house narrated through Loch Morrison's perspective are contextualized by Loch's sister Cassie's perspective. Through Loch's eyes we see sixteen-year-old Virgie Rainey having an amorous tryst with a young sailor in a bedroom on the second floor. On the first floor is Miss Eckhart, the town's piano teacher, whom Loch misidentifies as the sailor's mother. Miss Eckhart strews shredded paper about the room, and then places a magnolia and a metronome on the piano. She then plays the opening of "*Für Elise*," which sparks Cassie Morrison's memories of Miss Eckhart and her piano lessons. Through Cassie's memories, we learn of Miss Eckhart and what has precipitated her preparations to burn down the house.

Miss Eckhart is a German immigrant who takes a room with Snowdie MacLain and offers piano lessons to Morgana's reluctant talented and untalented children. She is mostly dissatisfied with her pupils, with the exception of Virgie Rainey, who has natural talent. Miss Eckhart seems mostly dissatisfied with her personal life as well. Her love interest Mr. Sissum has drowned in the Big Black, caring for her aging mother has prevented her from living the life she may have wanted, and the citizens of Morgana have never accepted her as one of their own. Virgie Rainey has disappointed Miss Eckhart, eschewing serious music in favor of playing piano during movies at the Bijou. Even Miss Eckhart's suicide attempt fails. Her efforts are interrupted when King MacLain

shows up with Fatty Bowles and Old Man Moody. King MacLain claims not to know her and departs. When Miss Eckhart tries a second time to set the house on fire, she instead sets her own hair ablaze. Old Man Moody extinguishes the fire, and Miss Eckhart is taken away, bound for the mental hospital. Meanwhile, Virgie Rainey and her sailor paramour run out of the house. The sailor heads off in the direction of the Big Black, while Virgie calmly and purposefully passes Miss Eckhart, with no sign of recognition.

King MacLain's role in "June Recital," while tangential, is significant. As in some of the other stories in *The Golden Apples*, King is mysterious and difficult to identify at first glance. For example, Loch (his perceptions perhaps tainted by malaria) misidentifies King MacLain as Mr. Voight, another of Snowdie MacLain's boarders. In "Golden Apples," the original version of "June Recital," the man in the "golden Panama hat" ("Golden Apples" 313) is a Mr. Demarest, so Welty may not have known that the man who had "promised Loch a talking bird" ("Golden Apples" 313) would eventually be King MacLain.

Virgie Rainey's actions in the story link her to King MacLain and foreshadow "The Wanderers," in which she will follow in his footsteps, leaving Morgana to pursue her own quest. It is significant that she picks the abandoned MacLain house as the site for her rebellious romp with the sailor because King MacLain has already been established as highly sexual by this point in the cycle, and Virgie is consciously or unconsciously emulating King's flouting of propriety. Both Virgie and King give no sign that they recognize Miss Eckhart, although all three characters are linked by the imagery of Perseus/Medusa and Aengus from Yeats's "The Song of Wandering Aengus." King

presumably leaves town, and Virgie, we learn later, left home for the first, but not the last time, soon afterward.

Virgie's sexuality and her rebellious, wandering nature link her with King MacLain, but she may also share more than a spiritual kinship with him. Neil Isaacs points out that, while Virgie does not share King's signature "golden crest" (48) of hair, Katie Rainey's remarks in "Shower of Gold" hint that Katie may have had an affair with King. For example, Katie shows unusual enthusiasm for King's infrequent visits: "I told my husband I was going to quit keeping count of King's comings and goings…I wish I'd seen him…I can't tell you why, but I wish I'd seen him" (*GA* 6-7). Katie also "knows the very place where King would have met Snowdie in the woods" (Isaacs 49). Near the end of "Shower of Gold" Katie makes two curious statements concerning progeny. First, "I think she kind of holds it against me, because I was there that day when he come; and she don't like my baby any more" (*GA* 18). And then, "But I bet my little Jersey calf King tarried long enough to get him a child somewhere. What makes me say a thing like that? I wouldn't say it to my husband, you mind you forget it" (*GA* 19). Based on Katie's enigmatic statements and extensive knowledge of King MacLain, it is probable that Virgie is one of King's unacknowledged children.

However, Virgie may not be the only "unknown" child of King MacLain in "June Recital." Welty provides hints that Loch Morrison may be King's son. Loch feels a kinship with King MacLain and the MacLain house, and he imagines that he lives there (*GA* 22-3). Years earlier, King promised to bring Loch "a talking bird, one that could say 'Rabbits!' He had left and never returned" (*GA* 81). Loch is often associated with Zeus' son Perseus (see Appel, Isaacs, McHaney, Schmidt, Vande Kieft), and King MacLain is

often associated with Zeus (see Appel, Isaacs, McHaney, Schmidt, Vande Kieft). Loch's sister Cassie "associates Loch's birth with King's departure" (Isaacs 48) when she reminds Loch, "he's been gone since you were born" (*GA* 91). Mrs. Morrison also seems to have an inappropriate interest in King MacLain, evidenced by her comment to her husband after King has left: "They could see her finger tracing a little pattern on the screen door as she stood there in her party dress. 'Cassie says King MacLain was here and gone. That's as interesting as twenty fires'" (*GA* 92-3). Like Katie Rainey, Mrs. Morrison reveals subtle clues indicating that she may have had an affair with King MacLain, and that Loch may be the result.

"Music from Spain"

Welty began writing "Music from Spain" as early as January 1947, while she was living in San Francisco (Polk 62). The story, whose protagonist was originally named Francis Dowdie, had several different titles, including "Dowdie's Guilt," "Guilt," and "The Flower and the Rock," the latter being the title under which Russell submitted the story to the *New Yorker*, *Mademoiselle*, *Town and Country*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Tomorrow*, and *Partisan* (Polk 62). "The Flower and the Rock" was rejected from all of the aforementioned magazines, but Welty expressed her faith in the story in a letter to Russell dated September 17, 1947: "Nobody has yet bought the S.F. story ["Music from Spain"], have they? That really makes me think less of editors (said the author)---I do think that a good story" (qtd. in Kreyling, *Author* 134-5). Despite Russell's "prejudice against limited editions" (Kreyling, *Author* 139), Welty and Russell eventually agreed to let the Levee Press of Greenville, Mississippi, publish the story.

Retitled *Music From Spain*, the story was published in a limited, monograph edition in June 1948 as the Levee Press' second book, the first being *Notes on a Horsethief* by William Faulkner. While retyping the story for the Levee Press version, Welty realized that it was connected to her other Battle Hill stories, and this realization prompted her to make extensive changes to "Music from Spain." She communicated her discovery to Russell in a letter dated February 18, 1948: "I'd already typed solidly all day getting Music from S. ready for Levee (wrote the whole damn thing just about over---but really I think *this* time I got it right---and the key is, you'd never guess, the little man in it is from Battle Hill and who he is is one of the MacLain twins---don't faint. Cleared everything up.)" (qtd. in Kreyling, *Author* 141).

Michael Kreyling has called "Music from Spain" an "oblique diary" (*Author* 125) of her stay in San Francisco, perhaps because the story may express Welty's disappointment over her unrealized hopes for more contact with John Robinson. In an analysis of the original version of the story (in which the protagonist is named Francis Dowdie), Suzanne Marrs proposes that the "ambivalent sexuality of her protagonist Dowdie may have suggested what Eudora had begun to fear was troubling Robinson…[for] at day's end Dowdie abandons the Spaniard, and Eudora may have sensed a similar abandonment in her future" (Marrs, *Welty* 155).

"The Whole World Knows" shows us Ran MacLain's life in Morgana; "Music from Spain" shows us Eugene MacLain's life in San Francisco. Near the end of "The Whole World Knows," Ran asks, "Father, Eugene! What you went and found, was it better than this?" (*GA* 181). This question (at least as far as Eugene is concerned) is answered in the negative in "Music from Spain."

Eugene has been living in San Francisco. He is married to a woman named Emma, and he has a job repairing watches. Eugene and his wife had a daughter named Fan, but she dies a year before the events of "Music From Spain" take place. Emma has been grieving ever since and has become withdrawn as a result. The story begins with Eugene and Emma having breakfast. Without warning, Eugene reaches out and slaps her. He then leaves home, headed for his job. He decides to skip work and begins wandering around San Francisco. While he is wandering, Eugene sees a man who is about to be hit by a car. He grabs the man's coat and pulls him out of the way. The man turns out to be the Spanish guitar player whose concert Eugene and Emma had attended the previous evening. Eugene and the Spaniard continue on together, but the Spaniard does not speak English, so Eugene carries on an extensive internal monologue.

They eventually make their way to the beach, where they walk along the cliffs above the sea. Eugene grabs the Spaniard, either assaulting him or embracing him. The Spaniard, who is much larger than Eugene, lifts him off his feet; Eugene then experiences a sort of vision of happiness and reconciliation with Emma. He returns home, where, as Carol Ann Johnston asserts, "Emma greets him cordially, lovingly, as if a new era has dawned in the household. We are left to assume that Eugene's vision becomes reality" (86). However, Alfred J. Appel considers the ending of "Music From Spain" to be much less hopeful: "…Emma remains unchanged…one senses the depths of Eugene's misery as he quietly watches Emma pop some grapes in her mouth. In that one ecstatic moment on the cliff, Eugene had had a fleeting vision of happiness and fulfillment---of the golden apples---but Emma makes it impossible for him to ever pluck them" (230).

King MacLain's presence is felt slightly less in "Music from Spain" than it is in the other stories. Perhaps this is because Welty herself wasn't certain that "Music from Spain" fit with the other stories in *The Golden Apples*: "…I wasn't sure. I thought it was all right as a story; I just wasn't sure if its proportion was correct or its placing was correct in *The Golden Apples*" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 285-6). However, King MacLain's presence is still important to the story, and some scholars see the Spaniard as having some thematic links to King. Appel sees Eugene's "day-long odyssey…as his search for a father" (228) with the Spaniard as a symbolic stand-in for the exotic, elusive, and absent King MacLain. The imagery Welty uses to describe the Spaniard and King suggests a kinship between them. Just after thinking of his father as "an old goat" (GA 202), Eugene imagines the Spaniard with "horns on his head" (GA 203). While eating dinner with the Spaniard, Eugene thinks of his father, remembering

> the kneeling Man in the Wilderness in the engraving in his father's remnant geography book, who hacked once at the Traveler's Tree, opened his mouth, and the water came pouring in…That engraving itself, he had once believed, represented his father, King MacLain, in the flesh, the one who had never seen him or wanted to see him. (GA 204)

This father/goat imagery comes together in the Spaniard when Eugene watches "his great fatherly barrel of chest move" (GA 213) and catches a "momentary glimpse of his suspenders, which were pink trimmed in silver with little bearded animal faces on the buckles" (213).

Although King MacLain is probably a continent away, his absence affects Eugene, just as it does Ran in "The Whole World Knows." Peter Schmidt argues,

> Both "The Whole World Knows" and "Music From Spain" reveal that underneath Ran's and Eugene's idealization of their father is a volatile mixture of repressed emotions toward him---guilt for not measuring up to his standards of masculinity and deep anger toward him for abandoning them and making their relations with women so troubled. Together, the stories give us a twinned portrait of a boy's Oedipus complex and its causes. (66)

In "The Whole World Knows" and "Music from Spain," King MacLain's legacy has its dark side for his twin sons. King's wandering nature, which might be seen as heroic from some perspectives, has serious consequences for his sons, both of whom are wounded in some sense by his absence.

"Moon Lake"

Welty began writing "Moon Lake" on the way back to Mississippi from San Francisco in the spring of 1947 (Kreyling, *Author* 125). She completed and sent the story to Russell in September of 1947, while she was on her second extended stay in San Francisco (Polk 374). Over the following nine months, Russell sent the story to *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Mademoiselle*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic*, *Town & Country*, *Tomorrow*, and the *Sewanee Review* (Polk 374). The *Sewanee Review* accepted the story and published "Moon Lake" in its Summer 1949 issue.

"Moon Lake" was inspired by Welty's stay at Camp McLaurin when she was nine years old, which she recalled as the first time in her life she had been away from her family (*Morgana* Afterword 149). Girls from a Jackson orphanage also attended the

camp, and Welty included them in her story. Welty imagined all the characters in "Moon Lake," except for Loch Morrison, who is based on her brother Edward. Welty said she "brought him, along with his bugle, to 'Moon Lake,' where I needed Loch" (*Morgana* Afterword 151). Although "Moon Lake" is based on Welty's memories of Camp McLaurin, the dramatic events of the story are fictional. Welty stated that nothing at the camp that summer "ever really happened in real life" (*Morgana* Afterword, 150).

"Moon Lake" takes place at a summer camp for girls at Morgana's Moon Lake. The action of the story centers on Jinny Love Stark (daughter of Lizzie and Comus Stark), Nina Carmichael, and an orphan girl named Easter. The campers are supervised by Mrs. Gruenwald (who takes them for swims in the lake) and Miss Parnell Moody (who refuses to take them for swims in the lake). Loch Morrison, who figures prominently in "June Recital," serves as "Boy Scout and Life Saver" (*GA* 112).

Jinny Love initially looks down on the orphans, but Nina befriends Easter. Thereafter, the three girls spend their free time together, playing mumbledy-peg, hiking around the lake, and taking an impromptu ride in an abandoned boat. Later, Easter is standing on the diving board above the lake when a young black boy named Exum McLane brushes her heel with a willow switch. Easter drops "like one hit in the head by a stone from a sling" (*GA* 141). Loch dives in and retrieves Easter, who has apparently drowned. The campers gather to watch as Loch attempts to resuscitate Easter in what appears to be a violent parody of sexual intercourse. During Loch's attempt to revive Easter, twenty-three year old Ran MacLain, who will eventually marry Jinny Love, emerges from the woods where he has been out hunting. Easter eventually revives, and the campers glimpse what Welty later characterized as "the secrets of the world, of life

and death, in spite of a ring of chaperones. Childhood, ready or not, is jolted forward into adolescence" (*Morgana* Afterword 150).

King MacLain does not appear physically in "Moon Lake." However, his influence pervades the story through the characters who are or may be his children. In "Shower of Gold," Katie Rainey claims that King MacLain has "children…growing up in the County Orphan's, so say several, and children known and unknown, scattered-like" (*GA* 4). As Ruth Vande Kieft notes, the orphan Easter may be one of King MacLain's illegitimate children (100). Based on Katie Rainey's assessment, some of the other orphans may also be King MacLain's "unknown" offspring. King is also present in the figure of his known son Ran MacLain when he shows up near the end of the story; he has been out hunting, as his father is in "Sir Rabbit."

One rarely mentioned reference to King MacLain in "Moon Lake" may be Exum McLane. Exum shares a thematic resemblance with King MacLain through Aengus. He also bears some resemblance to King MacLain in name and attire. He may also be one of King's "unknown" children. The obvious similarity between Exum's and King's surnames may simply be because Exum's ancestors were slaves of the MacLains and took a variation on their master's name when they were freed. However, Exum mirrors King MacLain in other ways. For example, Exum wears a "stiff straw hat brilliant as a snowflake" (*GA* 140) that is reminiscent of King's "luminous Panama" (*GA* 110). The hat is too big for Exum, so he fills it out with "peanut shells inside the band to correct the size" (*GA* 123). This may be a hat King MacLain left in the woods (he is prone to doing that), or it may be a gift from father to son; I will discuss this possibility further below. Exum also has a connection to Yeats's version of Aengus, a connection that also links

him to King. Exum and his mother Elberta and aunt Twosie are twice encountered fishing in "Moon Lake" (*GA* 121, 136). In Yeats's poem "The Song of Wandering Aengus," Aengus is a fisherman:

> I went out to the hazel wood,
> Because a fire was in my head,
> And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
> And hooked a berry to a thread;
>
> And when white moths were on the wing,
> And moth-like stars were flickering out,
> I dropped the berry in a stream
> And caught a little silver trout. (1-8)

Welty directly alludes to Yeats's "white moths on the wing" in her description of the night the girls tell stories and sing songs around the campfire. When they put the fire out, they see "moths—the beautiful ones like ladies, with long legs that were wings—and the little ones, mere bits of bark" (*GA* 136). Welty even includes a reference to Yeats's flickering stars: "The stars barely showed their places in the pale sky—small and far from this bright world" (*GA* 136). The scene is remarkably similar to the beginning of "The Song of Wandering Aengus," but the only people out fishing are "the niggers. . . their boat must be full of silver fish" (*GA* 136). The silver fish here echo the silver trout in Yeats's poem. If, as Thomas McHaney asserts, the boats in the story symbolize "the awakening of desire, the discovery of a beckoning lure, the beginning of the wanderer's

quest" (608), then Exum, who has been out in the boat and caught silver fish, is caught up in Aengus' quest as well.

Later, we see Exum fishing just before he causes Easter to fall; he appears in a sort of dreamlike manner, much as his possible progenitor King MacLain does in "Sir Rabbit:" "They would see Exum in the hat bobbing along the rim of the swamp like a fisherman's cork, elevated just a bit by the miasma and illusion of the landscape he moved in" (*GA* 140). Both Exum's fishing pole and the willow branch with which he brushes Easter echo the "hazel wand" from "The Song of Wandering Aengus." When Exum touches Easter with the willow branch, the unexpected result is similar to the effect King MacLain has on Junior Holifield in "Sir Rabbit." In both instances, the victim inexplicably falls unconscious and limp. Exum's willow branch also brings to mind King MacLain's "unseen shillelagh" (*GA* 108) from "Sir Rabbit."

We never see Exum's father, and his aunt, Elberta's sister Twosie, warns Nina, Jinny Love, and Easter to beware "mans wid great big gun" (*GA* 121) out in the woods. In arranging her stories for *The Golden Apples*, Welty places "Moon Lake" directly after "Sir Rabbit," in which appear three men with guns, but only one, King MacLain, inspires legends that may be awe-inspiring or frightening. Jinny Love immediately assumes that Twosie is talking about the MacLain boys, but the boys, as in "Sir Rabbit," function as lesser, symbolic versions of their father. It would not be out of the question for King MacLain to have encountered Elberta in the woods (as he does with Mattie Will) and impregnated her.

King MacLain's presence in "Moon Lake" shows itself through Morgana's children, some King's progeny and some not. However, that presence is not the dark,

chaotic legacy we see in "The Whole World Knows" and "Music from Spain." Although the children confront death, the events of "Moon Lake" ultimately offer Easter, Nina, Jinny Love, Loch, and Exum the hope of heroism, exploration, discovery, and regeneration.

"Shower of Gold"

Welty wrote "Shower of Gold" in October 1947 during the same extended stay in San Francisco in which she worked on "Moon Lake" (Marrs, *Welty* 158). She wrote the story in one day, and while working on it, she saw how "Shower of Gold" connected to "The Whole World Knows," "Golden Apples," "Music from Spain," and "Moon Lake" (Kreyling, *Author* 136).

Welty had intended to spend time with John Robinson during her time in San Francisco, but he was not available for much of her sojourn, having planned a vacation elsewhere (Marrs, *Welty* 158). In October 1947, Russell sent the story to *Harper's Bazaar*, from which it was returned, and then to the *Atlantic*, which bought the story and published it in its May 1948 issue (Polk 373). Although it was the fifth story she composed in the cycle, Welty designed "Shower of Gold" to be the opening story in *The Golden Apples*.

"Shower of Gold" introduces the town and denizens of Morgana, Mississippi, through Katie Rainey, who both begins and ends *The Golden Apples*; her monologue begins the cycle, and the last story, "The Wanderers," is centered around her funeral. She is married to Fate Rainey, a man who "ain't got a surprise in him, and proud of it" (*GA* 6), and she is the mother of Victor and Virgie Rainey. Katie Rainey's

monologue, delivered while she is churning butter, recounts the marriage between Snowdie Hudson, an albino woman whose family runs a store, and King MacLain, a non-practicing lawyer who becomes a traveling tea and spice salesman. As a salesman, King MacLain is a wanderer in the style of R. J. Bowman, the protagonist of "Death of a Traveling Salesman," Welty's first published story (Pingatore 148). Katie recounts how King MacLain married Snowdie, and then promptly left; he returns to Snowdie and Morgana periodically and has become a local legend in part because of his mysterious appearances and disappearances. One encounter between King and Snowdie results in twin boys, Lucius Randall MacLain and Eugene Hudson MacLain. When Snowdie tells Katie of her pregnancy, it appears as if "a shower of something had struck her, like she'd been caught out in something bright" (*GA* 7). The twins are probably not King's only offspring. Katie Rainey suggests that King MacLain may have many more illegitimate children scattered throughout the county.

News of sightings of King MacLain hold particular interest for the inhabitants of Morgana; Katie Rainey relates a catalogue of them:

> Somebody's cousin saw King MacLain. Mr. Comus Stark…claimed three or four times he saw his back, and once saw him getting a haircut in Texas. . . the most outrageous was the time my husband went up to Jackson. He saw a man who was the spitting image of King in the parade, my husband told me in his good time, the inauguration of Governor Vardaman. . .through the years, we'd hear of him here or there—maybe two places at once, New Orleans and Mobile. (*GA* 9-11)

Katie's narrative reaches its climax with an account of one of King MacLain's recent returns to Morgana—a return that takes place on Halloween. While Katie helps Snowdie cut out patterns for clothes, the twins are "dressing up and playing ghosts and boogers" (*GA* 11). Eugene has a Chinese mask on, and Randall is in costume as a lady. At this point, Katie relies on the testimony of Plez, an older black man who tends the gardens of some of the white people in Morgana. Plez sees a man walking up to Snowdie's house; he recognizes the man as King MacLain. King is carrying a present in a box; Welty never shows us the present, but Katie Rainey comments, ". . . he constitutionally brought home the kind of presents that break your heart" (*GA* 14). As he reaches the porch, the twins charge out of the house in costumes and on roller skates. They circle around King, trying to scare him. Their tactic works, and King flees toward the Big Black River.

In "Place in Fiction," Welty writes, "Fantasy itself must touch ground with at least one toe" (*Eye* 126), and she applied this principle to *The Golden Apples*. Despite Morgana's dreamlike qualities, Welty grounds King MacLain (and Morgana) in history by associating him with references from the real world. For example, Katie claims King MacLain was seen at Governor Vardaman's inaugural parade. James Kimble Vardaman was the governor of Mississippi from 1904 to 1908. This places "Shower of Gold" sometime after 1904. Vardaman, an ardent racist, was known as the "Great White Chief" (Loewen 192), and he advocated the lynching of blacks as "the only 'cure' for the black man's supposed desire for white women" (Loewen 192). He was also very flamboyant: "in a white suit and black hat, with long black hair flowing down to his shoulders, Vardaman thrilled his audiences" (Loewen 192). Michael Kreyling sees King MacLain

as a sort of double for Vardaman: "If King's associations intersect with those of Zeus on the putatively positive range of cultural acceptability, they also delve into the repugnant as they cross Vardaman's" (*Understanding* 117). While I don't believe that Welty means for us to take King MacLain as entirely heroic, I disagree with Kreyling's negative assessment, and I will discuss the Vardaman/King MacLain issue further in Chapter 2.

Katie Rainey claims that King MacLain has been seen in "two places at once, New Orleans and Mobile" (*GA* 11). New Orleans and Mobile have a particular resonance with Mardi Gras: New Orleans is famous for its Mardi Gras celebration, and Mobile is where the North American celebration of Mardi Gras began in 1703 ("Mardi Gras in Mobile"). Perhaps King MacLain participated in Mardi Gras. By associating King with Mardi Gras, Welty further complicates his legendary status. Mardi Gras is based on a very old Roman festival called *Lupercalia*, a spring fertility festival "infused with debauchery and a circus-like atmosphere" (Schindler 10). *Lupercalia* eventually evolved into Carnival, better known in North America as Mardi Gras.

The celebratory ritual in both modern and older forms has a particular relevance to King MacLain. The modern Mardi Gras involves krewes, clubs "formed for the purpose of masking and parading on Mardi Gras" (Schindler 32). The first krewe to be formed in New Orleans was Comus (shades of Welty's Morgana patriarch Comus Stark), but the actual King of Mardi Gras is chosen by the Krewe of Rex. Given King MacLain's legendary status, flair for the dramatic, and penchant for disguise, it is not improbable to assume that, at some point, he was King of Mardi Gras, perhaps even in "two places at once" (*GA* 11).

King's connections to *Lupercalia* and its pagan traditions center mainly on the fertility aspect of the celebration and the goat imagery surrounding it. The shepherds started the celebration, and goats figured prominently in the rituals associated with it (Schindler 10). King MacLain, who exemplifies fertility, behaves like a goat: "But Mr. King MacLain, an old man, had butted like a goat against the wall he wouldn't agree to himself or recognize. What fortress indeed would ever come down, except before hard little horns, a rush and a stampede of the pure wish to live?" (*GA* 264).

As befits the legend Katie Rainey and others have built around him, King MacLain may or may not be the person the twins scare away from Snowdie's porch. Katie's story introduces King MacLain as a legendary, larger-than-life figure, and this initial presentation cloaks him in mystery (which will later be dispelled to some degree in the subsequent stories). At the end of "Shower of Gold" we know King McLain only as a womanizing wanderer who may or may not be dead.

"Sir Rabbit"

Welty wrote "Sir Rabbit" in February of 1948. She wrote the story in one sitting after retyping "Music from Spain" for Levee Press, realizing that her San Francisco story was connected to "The Whole World Knows" (Kreyling, *Author* 141-2). She made only minor revisions (changing Battle Hill to Morgana, for example) to "Sir Rabbit" for its inclusion in *The Golden Apples* (Pingatore 284). Welty was back in Mississippi at the time, after her second sojourn in San Francisco. She retained some hope that she and John Robinson would eventually marry, and she was encouraged when he moved to De Lisle, Mississippi, on the Gulf Coast; however, Robinson remained emotionally distant

(Marrs 163). Echoes of Robinson's need for independence appear in the character of King MacLain as a wanderer who has a love waiting for him, but who (as in "Shower of Gold") seems to appear to her only at holidays, much as Robinson did with Welty (Marrs, *Welty* 150-1).

Russell sent "Sir Rabbit" to *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Sewanee Review*, *New Yorker*, *Mademoiselle*, *Harper's*, *Town and Country*, and *Tomorrow* (Polk 373). *Hudson Review* finally accepted the story, and "Sir Rabbit" appeared in the Spring 1949 issue. "Sir Rabbit" is important to the evolution of *The Golden Apples* because it is the first time Welty shows us the legendary King MacLain in action, as it were. Because Welty writes "Sir Rabbit" primarily from Mattie Will's point of view, which is influenced by the legends about King MacLain with which she has grown up, we see King directly through her perceptions, and he appears therefore as a more powerful, mythical figure than he does in some of the other stories.

"Sir Rabbit" begins with Mattie Will Holifield (née Sojourner or "wanderer") remembering a curious sexual encounter with the twins Ran and Eugene MacLain when she was perhaps fifteen years old. The story then shifts to the adult, married Mattie Will out hunting in the Morgana Woods with her husband Junior Holifield and a black man named Blackstone. When the group encounters white-clad King MacLain, Junior, assuming (rightly, as it turns out) that King will try to seduce Mattie Will, becomes antagonistic. Junior and King trade quips and shots until King puts a load of buckshot through Junior's hat. This appears to frighten Junior into a coma-like state. Mattie Will instructs Blackstone to pick plums, and then she has sex with King MacLain, who falls

asleep shortly after the act. Mattie Will, filled with a new awareness, studies the sleeping King until he wakes, alarmed, and tells her to "Go on! Go on off!" (*GA* 111).

In "Sir Rabbit" we see King at the height of his legendary status, feared by Junior Holifield and sought after by Mattie Will. King seems to confirm some of the larger-than-life stories told about him; he appears and disappears in the woods at will, just as he "might at any time appear and then, over night, disappear" (*GA* 105) in Morgana. Mattie Will reacts in keeping with the legends surrounding King; at first, she is staggered by King's grandeur. However, just as in "Shower of Gold," in which he is comically afraid of his twin sons, King is revealed to be essentially human. Up close, Mattie Will sees that King MacLain is just a man; he goes straight to sleep after sex and he snores. Despite his all-too-human characteristics, King does transmit an elusive knowledge to Mattie: "She had to put on what he knew with what he did" (*GA* 108). Carol Ann Johnston sees this knowledge as "primarily of a sexual nature" (77), but it may be a broader revelation, what Michael Kreyling calls a "call to growth, a summons to fulfillment" (Kreyling, *Achievement* 79). I discuss "Sir Rabbit" in more depth in Chapter 3.

"The Wanderers"

Welty began writing the story "The Hummingbirds" in July 1948 and sent it to Diarmuid Russell in September of that year (Polk 373). "The Hummingbirds" was the last of the stories that would make up *The Golden Apples*. Welty wrote the story knowing that it would somehow be inter-related to the other stories she had recently written and connected (Kreyling, *Author* 143). Russell sent the story to *Harper's Bazaar*,

which bought it and published "The Hummingbirds" in its March 1949 issue (Polk 373). Welty substantially revised the story and retitled it "The Wanderers" for the concluding story of *The Golden Apples* (Pingatore 321).

"The Wanderers" and its treatment of the Perseus/Medusa dynamic (found in the earlier story "June Recital") spring imaginatively from Welty's relationship with John Robinson, filtered through the cosmology of Morgana. In a letter to Robinson dated September 2, 1948, Welty used the imagery of Perseus and Medusa to describe their relationship:

> In the letter, Eudora depicted herself as the Medusa in Robinson's eyes, as one whose love and assistance had at times, or so it seemed to him, threatened to set his course in stone and deny his need for independence and solitude. But in the same letter Eudora also recognized the Medusa as a victim of Perseus, as a living being who had been mortally wounded by the legendary hero. She suggested that the hero and the monster, the murderer and the victim, were part of "us all." That is the very realization that comes to Virgie Rainey as "The Wanderers" comes to a close. (Marrs, *Welty* 165)

Robinson was living in California at this time, still sending Welty "mixed messages" (Marrs, *Welty* 166). Welty was back in Mississippi after having spent the summer in New York City (Marrs, *Welty* 164). Like King MacLain, Robinson adopted "alternating roles as a suitor and as a man fleeing commitment" (Marrs, *Welty* 156). Like Virgie Rainey, Welty was trying to understand and strike a balance between the small town and the world beyond, responsibility and artistic freedom, love and separateness.

Katie Rainey's funeral in "The Wanderers" reunites many of the main characters in *The Golden Apples* including King MacLain and Virgie Rainey, who are seen together for the first time. Katie Rainey's death signals a change for the community. The road is filled with cars and trucks, and the wilderness is beginning to give way to progress: "…day and night the loggers went by, to and from Morgan's Woods" (*GA* 232). In a flashback we learn that Katie's daughter Virgie, after having run away briefly with Kewpie Moffitt, the sailor from "June Recital," has spent the last two decades torn between her loyalty to her mother and her desire to escape the confines of Morgana; Fate Rainey has been dead for years. Virgie, who has lost neither "her beauty nor her desire or capacity for love…has confined her rebellion against small-town moral codes to an affair or two discreetly conducted with some inferior man" (Vande Kieft 113).

The citizens of Morgana arrive at the Rainey house to pay their respects before attending Katie Rainey's funeral the following day. In an inversion of their former roles (Katie often helped Snowdie run her house), Snowdie MacLain, now in the Rainey house, prepares Katie Rainey's corpse for the funeral. Virgie seems uncomfortable with the attention of the mourners. When everyone has left, Virgie walks to the river, removes her clothes, and takes a swim. She experiences a feeling of oneness with the landscape:

> She saw her waist disappear into reflectionless water; it was like walking into sky, some impurity of skies. All was one warmth, air, water, and her own body. All seemed one weight, one matter—until as she put down her head and closed her eyes and the light slipped under her lids, she felt this matter a translucent one, the river, herself, the sky all vessels which the sun filled. (*GA* 248).

This transcendent experience is "an emotional ablution, an emptying" (Vande Kieft 114) which is necessary for Virgie's rebirth. She undergoes a personal baptism and transformation similar to Robert M. Price's description of rites of passage in his introduction to *The Innsmouth Cycle*, a collection of stories and poems loosely connected by H. P. Lovecraft's fictional Massachusetts town Innsmouth and its unusual inhabitants:

> What is implicit in all rites of passage is explicit in puberty rites, namely that each transition is a death to the old and a rebirth to the new. This may be symbolized in puberty rites of immersion in water, burial in leaves or sand, isolation in a sweat lodge or smoke hut, etc. One enters the tomb and then exits the womb, reborn and resurrected, like the caterpillar that goes into the cocoon and comes out a butterfly. (x)

The river is Morgana's border. King MacLain has already marked and crossed it, and now it is Virgie's turn to cross it by merging with it. She "becomes the line, then crosses the line" (Price xi).

Katie Rainey's funeral takes place the next day. Before the service, Virgie has a conversation with King MacLain about Katie. Then, during a conversation with Jinny Love MacLain, Virgie senses a moment of kinship with Ran MacLain but not one that suggests Ran and Virgie have been lovers. At a particularly solemn moment that follows, when the assembled crowd is crying and listening to a poignant hymn, Virgie spies King MacLain sneaking back and forth to steal ham. King then makes

> . . . a hideous face at Virgie, like a silent yell. It was a yell at everything—including death, not leaving it out—and he did not mind taking his present animosity out on Virgie Rainey; indeed, he chose her. Then he cracked

> the little bone in his teeth. She felt refreshed all of a sudden at that tiny but sharp sound. (*GA* 257)

Virgie feels a sense of kinship again at this moment, but she cannot tell whether it is with Ran or King. After the service, everyone proceeds to the cemetery, where Virgie sees the graves of several Morgana people, including those of Comus Stark and of Mrs. Morrison (who committed suicide). Virgie is pleased to learn from Cassie Morrison that her brother Loch is living in New York City. On the way back, Virgie remembers having escaped Morgana at age seventeen, then returning to Morgana on the train and the "kind of glory" (*GA* 265) she sensed between the train and home.

Virgie leaves Morgana the next day, after selling, giving away, or packing up all of her family's belongings. She drives her old car the seven miles to MacLain, where she stops to reflect. She leaves her car and wanders around MacLain, seeing the land that was once owned by Virgil MacLain, King's father. She also notes the cemetery where the Hudsons and MacLains are buried. We learn that Eugene is buried there; he had died of tuberculosis after returning to Morgana. Miss Eckhart is buried there as well. The memory of Miss Eckhart prompts Virgie to recall the painting of Perseus and Medusa on Miss Eckhart's wall. At this moment that Virgie realizes, as Vande Kieft writes,

> In time, in our present human life, the tragic pain and the triumph, the horror and the beauty, the despair and the joy, the frustration and the fulfillment, the separateness and the love, exist in an endless counterpoint…(Vande Kieft 117)

King MacLain's role in "The Wanderers" is perhaps the most important of all the roles he plays in *The Golden Apples*. At first, Virgie senses "something terrifying about

that old man—he was too old" (*GA* 246). Later, King tells Virgie a story about her mother that suggests he and Katie may have had an affair. King remembers asking Katie what she wanted, "what would you rather have than anything" (*GA* 253). Katie asks for a swivel-chair, and King has one delivered the next day, but he was "no telling where by that time. . . So bent, so bent I was on all I had to do, on what was ahead of me" (*GA* 254). King was already in search of the next woman, the next adventure. Virgie appears to appreciate King's story, and later, when he acts inappropriately impish and makes faces at the funeral, Virgie feels a kinship with him. At the Morgana cemetery, Virgie watches King's "mysterious, vulnerable" (*GA* 260) back as he walks away, still eating. King MacLain remains ambiguous; he is old, yet he remains almost childishly irreverent. He is mysterious yet vulnerable, feeble yet still able to appear out of nowhere, "treading so lightly they didn't hear him" (*GA* 245).

Although he is aged and his mythic stature has deflated somewhat, King MacLain plays a crucial role in Virgie's transformation in "The Wanderers." He is "the father of Virgie's rebirth…giving life to the sleeping self secreted behind layers of callous 'fortress'" (Kreyling, *Achievement* 103). Virgie acknowledges her spiritual kinship with

> her people, her kind. They are all rebels—King, his son, his impious, curious grandchildren, and Virgie herself—all have the 'pure wish to live,' to be individual; they refuse to be crushed by life or by death, or by the stultifying effects of sentimental conformity or piety. (Vande Kieft 114)

Virgie continues and fulfills the quest begun by King at the beginning of *The Golden Apples*: "She alone is left to win, through her transcendence of walls, rooms, barriers,

even her own flesh, the full moment of time. . . .This has always been King's gift, a blank check on possibility" (Kreyling, *Achievement* 103).

King MacLain plays at least two interconnected roles in *The Golden Apples*. First, he is a mythic wanderer, a character who is always in search of what is ahead. He gives the citizens of Morgana something to talk about, react against, envy, and sometimes fear. His second role is that of a unifying device for both Morgana and the stories themselves. In making King the head of a mythic pantheon and the father, spiritual or otherwise, of many of Morgana's inhabitants, Welty uses him to link the stories and to form a coherent cycle out of "what might have been a diverse collection of very good short stories about separate, unrelated moments" (Marrs, *Writer's* 136).

Chapter 2: Gods, Heroes, and Others

> ". . . the golden apples are in many myths, not just one. I used them in several different senses."
>
> —Eudora Welty, 1981 interview with Scot Haller (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 313).

As I have noted, most scholarship focuses on Zeus, Perseus, and Aengus as the primary possible sources of inspiration for King MacLain in *The Golden Apples*. In this chapter, after reviewing the scholarship regarding the importance of these three figures in characterizing King MacLain (and *The Golden Apples* as a whole), I will focus on several other sources of inspiration for King MacLain that Welty may have had in mind when writing and connecting the stories in *The Golden Apples*.

Part 1: Traditional Readings

Ruth Vande Kieft and other Welty scholars have pointed out that references to the Greek god Zeus, chief god of the Greek pantheon, abound in *The Golden Apples*. For Vande Kieft, "King's mythical counterpart is the Zeus of the roving eye, who involved himself in a series of amours with mortal women" (90). Zeus' name derives from the Indo-European root *dei*, meaning, "to shine" (Lurker "Zeus"). King MacLain's distinctive white suit and fair hair recall "shining" Zeus. When Mattie Will Sojourner first glimpses King, she sees him as a "white glimmer" (*GA* 102). Zeus, king of the Greek gods, is echoed in King MacLain's first name; both are kings. The kinship

between Zeus and King is most apparent, however, when we examine their relationships with women.

The title of the story "Shower of Gold" pointedly evokes "the myth of Danaë and her rape by the god Zeus" (Johnston 75). In the myth, Danaë's father, fearing a prophecy that he would be killed by his daughter's child, imprisons her in a cell to prevent any pregnancy. Zeus appears as a shower of golden light and impregnates her. Perseus, the offspring of this union, eventually kills Danaë's father. In "Shower of Gold," King MacLain's wife Snowdie announces to Katie Rainey that she has become pregnant. Katie Rainey describes Snowdie as looking "like more than the news had come over her. It was like a shower of something had struck her, like she'd been caught out in something bright" (*GA* 7).

In "Sir Rabbit," Mattie Will Sojourner's encounter with King MacLain echoes Zeus' rape of Leda, during which he took the form of a swan. Leda later gave birth to the twins Castor and Pollux, and Helen and Clytemnestra. Vande Kieft observes that Welty chooses to reference this event through William Butler Yeats's sonnet "Leda and the Swan" (91). Yeats begins with the phrase "A sudden blow" (1), which is echoed in Welty's description of Mattie Will's rape/encounter with King: "she staggered, he had such grandeur, and then she was caught by the hair and brought down as suddenly to earth as if whacked by an unseen shillelagh" (*GA* 108). Welty's description further echoes Yeats's language in the aftermath of the encounter. In his sonnet, Yeats asks, "So mastered by the brute blood of the air,/Did she put on his knowledge with his power/before the indifferent beak could let her drop?" (13-15). Welty's description of

the sexual encounter between King MacLain and Mattie Will in "Sir Rabbit" builds on Yeats's question:

> But he put on her, with the affront of his body, the affront of his sense too. No pleasure in that! She had to put on what he knew with what he did---maybe because he was so grand it was a thorn to him. Like submitting to another way to talk, she could answer his burden now, his whole blithe, smiling, superior, frantic existence. And no matter what happened to her, she had to remember, disappointments are not to be borne by Mr. MacLain, or he'll go away again (*GA* 108).

In her book *Eudora Welty: A Study of the Short Fiction*, Carol Ann Johnston argues that Welty adds to or completes Yeats's poem:

> By transferring King's knowledge to Mattie Will through his sexual assault, Welty attempts a revision of Yeats's poem, and by extension a revision of the interaction between the raping god Zeus and his powerless, passive female victims. Instead of being merely a victim of King's sexual whim, Mattie Will also takes something in exchange: his knowledge (77).

The similarity Welty presents is clear, but as with many of the mythic and legendary associations we can apply to King MacLain, there is not a perfect parallel between Zeus and King. For example, if Mattie Will were Leda, one might expect her to give birth to versions of the twins Castor and Pollux, as well as Helen and Clytemnestra. However, Snowdie (the Danaë figure) gives birth to the twins Randall and Eugene rather than the single Perseus-like figure we might expect in a straightforward retelling of the

story. Rather than attempting to retell stories from Greek myth, Welty "uses myth in the service of her own stories" (Johnston 62).

Welty uses Irish Celtic folklore (also by way of William Butler Yeats) in much the same way. Welty scholars have observed that Yeats's poem "The Song of Wandering Aengus" informs much of *The Golden Apples*. "The Song of Wandering Aengus" concerns a man who goes out fishing and catches a trout. The trout magically transforms into a beautiful "glimmering girl" (13) who then disappears. The speaker quests forever for the beautiful girl. Vande Kieft, noting that lines from "The Song of Wandering Aengus" appear throughout *The Golden Apples*, sees the poem as a mechanism for introducing an overarching theme for the book, asserting that

> the search of the passionate, tireless, wandering Aengus is the search of all the wanderers in *The Golden Apples*: for the glimmering vision which is love, adventure, art, through the achievement of which the golden apples may be plucked, change experienced, or individual fulfillment realized (89).

Aengus (or Angus) was an Irish hero-deity traditionally associated with youth, beauty, and possibly love ("Angus Óg"). In addition to being associated with Aengus simply by virtue of being one of the wanderers in *The Golden Apples*, King MacLain may echo Aengus on other levels. One story about Aengus concerns his year-long search for a beautiful woman named Caér, whom he has seen only in a dream. When he finally finds her, they fly away in the form of a pair of swans ("Angus Óg"). Perhaps the feathery imagery in "Sir Rabbit" normally associated with Zeus's rape of Leda can also suggest the story of Aengus and Caér.

Along with Zeus and Aengus, the other male figure scholars point to as a mythic counterpart of King MacLain (and other male characters in *The Golden Apples*) is Perseus. As I have mentioned above, Perseus was the son produced by the union of Danaë and Zeus (who appeared to her as a shower of gold). Perseus performed many heroic deeds, one of which was the slaying of Medusa, one of the gorgons; this scene, complete with Perseus' vaunting pose, is depicted in the painting on Miss Eckhart's wall in "June Recital." The vaunting pose is replicated by King MacLain in "Shower of Gold:" "He stands there with one leg out pretty, to surprise them" (*GA* 14). As McHaney notes, Loch Morrison later strikes a similar pose while looking in a mirror "like Perseus viewing the decapitated Gorgon's head" ("Multitudinous" 607).

Part 2: Norse and Irish Contexts

If, as Michael Kreyling asserts in *Understanding Eudora Welty*, Welty understands the "fundamentals of narrative fiction (character and plot) as representing more than one meaning and performing more than one function" (113), then Welty may be suggesting not one myth or poem with her title *The Golden Apples*, but several things, since golden apples appear in multiple contexts in " in many myths, not just one" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 313). It may be tempting to view King MacLain only in the context of his similarities (but not perfect parallels) to Zeus or Perseus or Aengus, since the allusions seem obvious, but we would miss both his similarities (but not perfect parallels) to other mythological figures such as Odin of the Norse myths and the meanings generated by Welty's allusions to Scandinavian gods and *their* golden apples.

Odin was the chief of the gods, the "All-Father." The Aesir, as the Norse gods were called, differed from the Greek gods in one important respect. The Greek gods were "immortal and invincible" (Hamilton 322); the Aesir were not. The Aesir ate magic golden apples grown by the goddess Idun in order to stave off old age and rejuvenate themselves. The Norse gods were fated to die at the battle of Ragnarok at the hands of the giants and their allies. Odin's chief duty was to postpone Ragnarok for as long as possible.

Odin was fond of using disguises and shape-changing magic, and one of his epithets was "Grimnir," "the masked one" (Lurker "Odin"). He often roamed the world in the guise of "a wanderer in a blue mantle with a floppy hat" (Lurker "Odin"). He wore this "wide-brimmed hat" in order "to escape instant recognition" (Crossley-Holland xxvi).

King MacLain is, in some sense, the Norse All-Father of Morgana: "don't nobody know how many chirren he has" (*GA* 406). Like Odin, King is a hat-wearing wanderer who eludes instant recognition. In "Shower of Gold" King's identity seems somewhat veiled, yet Plez recognizes him mainly by the way he walks (*GA* 13). When Mattie Will and Junior Holifield first encounter King in "Sir Rabbit," they debate his identity (*GA* 101-2). In "June Recital" Loch Morrison identifies a man wearing a "golden Panama hat" (81) as Mr. Voight, but Miss Eckhart identifies the same man as King MacLain (*GA* 85).

Both Odin and King MacLain have a need or desire for golden apples, the means to stave off old age and mortality. In the context of Norse myth, the golden apples become a defense against death rather than a prize or treasure; they are life itself. When

Idun's golden apples are stolen, the Aesir begin to grow old and feeble, much like Welty's depiction of the aging King MacLain in "The Wanderers." Odin's attempt to ward off the inevitable death of the Aesir is mirrored in King MacLain's "pure wish to live" (*GA* 264) as well as King's "silent yell. . . a yell at everything—including death, not leaving it out—" (*GA* 257). Although these are notable similarities between King MacLain and Odin, a closer look at the Norse myths reveals another figure who may have as much in common as Odin with King MacLain: Loki. He was

> the son of two giants and yet the foster-brother of Odin…He is dynamic and unpredictable and because of that he is both the catalyst in many of the myths and the most fascinating character in the entire mythology. Without the exciting, unstable, flawed figure of Loki, there could be no change in the fixed order of things. . . ." (Crossley-Holland xxix)

This chaotic, dynamic aspect of Loki is similar to King MacLain's "call to growth, a summons to fulfillment" (Kreyling, *Achievement* 79). It is because of Loki that the golden apples of the Aesir are lost to the giants, but it is also with Loki's help that the apples are returned (Crossley-Holland xxix). Because Loki seems to be offering immortality to the underprivileged (the giants) in the form of golden apples, this episode in the Norse myths is particularly relevant to King MacLain: "When Loki orchestrates the coincidence of giantland and godland, the wall between the temporal and the eternal leaks at the point of contact, which is to say the transients get a taste of immortality apples, while the eternals get a taste of time" (Hyde 100). This mingling of noble gods and base giants, as well as the notion of wanderers getting a taste of immortality, stepping outside of time, is remarkably similar to Virgie Rainey's assimilation of both Perseus and

Medusa and her ability to see "things in their time. . . the stroke of the sword in three moments, not one" (GA 275), as well as Jim Owen's idea that King MacLain can somehow drop "out of real time" (41) into "mythic time" (40). Loki's close association with time and golden apples, as well as the fact that he can change shape (Lurker "Loki") links him to Odin and thus King MacLain. Like King MacLain, Loki has two sons by his wife (Crossley-Holland 171), and a number of progeny by women other than his wife (Crossley-Holland xxix).

I mentioned earlier that Michael Kreyling sees King MacLain's associations with Governor Vardaman as implying a more sinister, racist side to King. Because "hanging formed an important part of Odin worship" (Cotterell and Storm "Odin"), Vardaman, a proponent of lynching, may have associations with Odin. Loki is in some ways a reflection of Odin, and often accompanies him. However, Loki betrays the Norse gods as often as he helps them. One way to view the Vardaman/King MacLain dynamic is to see King MacLain as the Loki to Vardaman's Odin. Katie Rainey's account suggests that King MacLain may be ridiculing Vardaman, rather than helping him: ". . . King MacLain could steal anyone's glory. . . if I'd been Governor Vardaman and spied King MacLain from Morgana marching in my parade as big as I was and no call for it, I'd have had the whole thing brought to a halt and called him to accounts" (*GA* 10).

In addition to the Greek, Norse, and Irish gods and heroes often associated with him, King MacLain also follows in the mythic footsteps of the Irish hero Finn MacCool. According to Irish mythology, Finn MacCool (Fionn mac Cumhaill in Irish) was a tall, fair-haired hunter, warrior, and lover. His exploits were chronicled in the Fenian Cycle, which first appeared in eighth-century Irish texts (MacKillop "Fenian Cycle"). In his

Dictionary of Celtic Mythology, Peter Beresford Ellis describes Finn's life as "a series of adventures involving hunting, fighting, sorcery, love and passion" ("Fionn"). A very popular figure, Finn was the subject of "innumerable portrayals in thousands of narratives from both learned manuscript and later oral traditions" (MacKillop "Fionn mac Cumhaill"). While the written tales usually portrayed Finn as noble and brave, the folk-tales from oral tradition often portrayed him as "a crude, buffoonish bumbler" (MacKillop "Fionn mac Cumhaill"). A similar range of characterization is evoked in *The Golden Apples* by Welty's use of rumors and folk-tales within her own written narrative to show King MacLain from many perspectives. For example, Katie Rainey's oral account in "Shower of Gold," the first episode of the cycle in *The Golden Apples*, depicts King as a mysterious, almost magical, rogue, but in "The Wanderers," the seventh and last episode, King is a feeble, rude old man. In "Sir Rabbit," episode three, King first appears as a menacing trickster, but by the end of the story, we see King vulnerable, asleep, and snoring "as if all the frogs of spring were inside him" (*GA* 110). Despite his legendary patriarchal status (at least in Morgana), King sometimes appears comically skittish and jumpy; when Mattie Will wakes King from his nap, he flaps his arms up and down to chase her away (*GA* 111). In "Shower of Gold," his twin children frighten him into fleeing "up over the bannister and the ferns, and down the yard and over the ditch and gone" (*GA* 16).

In addition to the variety and volume of the similar tales told about both King MacLain and Finn MacCool, the two share some specific attributes, the most basic being a similar physical appearance. James MacKillop explains that Finn's name derives from the Irish word *fionn*, which means "fair, bright, white, lustrous, light-hued" (MacKillop

"Fionn mac Cumhaill"), and King MacLain usually appears dressed in a light-colored Panama hat and a starched "white linen suit with the sleeves as ridgy as two washboards" (*GA* 107), even when he is out hunting. Finn was usually depicted as "tall, fair-haired, and conventionally handsome, with broad shoulders and a broad brow" (MacKillop "Fionn mac Cumhaill"). In "Shower of Gold," Katie Rainey describes King as "a man of six foot height" who "weighs like a horse" (*GA* 16), and we later learn that he has fair, "biscuit-colored hair" (*GA* 107).

King and Finn both have sexual liaisons with women they encounter during their respective adventures. Finn is rumored to have "father[ed] innumerable progeny" (MacKillop "Fionn mac Cumhaill"). In "Sir Rabbit," Junior Holifield, arguing with Mattie Will, says of King, "And don't nobody know how many chirren he has" (*GA* 105). Katie Rainey holds the same opinion: "In the meantime children of his growing up in the County Orphan's, so say several, and children known and unknown, scattered-like" (*GA* 4).

Many of Finn MacCool's adventures occur in the woods, involving hunting and deer. During one notable hunt, Finn met the goddess Sadb, who had been compelled by a sorcerer to take the form of a deer. Sadb was chased by hounds to the Hill of Allen. Finn gave her protection and found that she had turned into a beautiful woman the following morning. They married, and Sadb bore Finn's son Oisín, whose name means "little fawn" (Sjoestedt 104). Hunting is a recurring motif in *the Golden Apples*, also involving both King MacLain and his twin sons. In "Shower of Gold," Katie Rainey claims that King fathers the twins when he tells Snowdie to meet him "in the woods" (*GA* 4), and King is out hunting in the woods when he encounters and rapes Mattie Will Sojourner,

dazzling her husband Junior Holifield, and Blackstone, the little boy who is named for a popular stage magician and illusionist of Welty's day. Welty even includes fawn imagery in "Sir Rabbit" when Wilbur the dog "fawned' on Mr. MacLain "before they got him back" (*GA* 104) and Mattie Will in retrospect compares the MacLain twins to "young deer" during their sexual encounter (*GA* 111).

The legendary Finn had a supernatural affinity with animals as well as with mortal women. In some tales, he could take the form of a "dog, man or deer, according to the way he wore his magic hood" (Sjoestedt 104). King is rarely seen without his distinctive Panama hat, and it seems to possess some of the same magic as Finn's hood and empower King with some sort of shape-shifting ability or uncanny skill at disguising himself. For example, in "June Recital," Loch Morrison identifies the man with the "golden Panama hat" (*GA* 81) as Mr. Voight, but Miss Eckhart identifies the same man as King MacLain (*GA* 85). As I have mentioned previously, Katie Rainey expresses the idea that King MacLain may not be who or even where he seems: "Well, through the years, we'd hear of him here or there—maybe two places at once, New Orleans and Mobile" (*GA* 11). And when King MacLain "disappears" from Morgana, he leaves the hat on the bank of the Big Black River.

A related Celtic tradition, involving a "King Mongan" who is said to be the re-incarnation of Finn MacCool, also bears some resemblance to Welty's depiction of King MacLain's shifting identities since King Mongan closely guarded the secret that he was actually Finn MacCool (Sjoestedt 104). The names are also similar, and "Mongan" bears a semiotic resemblance to the name of the setting of *The Golden Apples*, Morgana.

If, as it seems, King MacLain evokes Finn MacCool (among other heroes and gods who go into his making), the allusion helps to expand our understanding of *The Golden Apples* in two ways. First, the idea that modern characters may repeat the adventures of mythical heroes and gods from several different traditions deepens the sense of "interrelated cycles" (McHaney, "Falling" 176) that Welty evokes in *The Golden Apples*. Welty claimed that *The Golden Apples* was not a novel (Prenshaw 43) and McHaney argues that the book is a cycle, not only in the simple sense of a series of stories, but more akin to the tradition of Celtic and Greek story-cycles ("Falling" 176). If the characters in *The Golden Apples* are "conducting the search that is symbolically described in Yeats's poem ["The Song of Wandering Aengus"]" then "like Aengus, they too are wanderers engaged in an endless quest" (Appel 206), re-enacting the past and participating in recurring cycles of myth. Viewed from the perspective of a myth-cycle, *The Golden Apples* presents a pre-Christian paradigm similar to Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence: "the perpetual repetition of world cycles, with world occurrences seen as manifestations of eternal archetypes" (Hatab 14).

Second, as a modern-day Finn MacCool, we may see King MacLain as something other than a wandering womanizer. If we look at Finn's role in Celtic society with such a comparison in mind, an alternate view of King MacLain emerges. Finn was the leader of a group of men called the *fiana* who were heroes who operated outside of civilization, living off the land: "Finn with his bands of warriors (*fiana)* is by definition outside the tribal institutions: he is the living negation of the spirit which dominates them" (Sjoestedt 100). Finn is not a tribal hero, but a hero outside the tribe, a nomadic hunter not yet acculturated into the settled life of those who practice agriculture along with only

seasonal hunting in a specific and historically-oriented place. The tribal hero travels from civilization into the wilderness and back, but a member of the *fiana* "lives on the margin of society, in forest and wilderness where the tribal hero adventures only on brief expeditions, the domain of the…Celtic spirits of the wilderness" (Sjoestedt 103). If King represents Finn, his wandering nature can be seen as part of his role in the community, since

> Every society, and especially a closed society organized in rigid classes, like that of the Celts, includes certain abnormal elements for which allowance must be made. These elements tend naturally to integrate themselves with the *fiana*, whose life was one of regulated irregularity. Thus Celtic society provides its own antidote, and copes with what is asocial by expelling it, while at the same time recognizing its right and assigning to it a particular domain (Sjoestedt 109).

This system employs much the same dynamic of the "duplexity of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*" that Nietzsche expresses in *The Birth of Tragedy* (21). For Nietzsche, Apollo represents "measured limitation, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that philosophical calmness of the sculptor-god" (Nietzsche 25), whereas Dionysus represents freedom from boundaries and a pure affinity with the natural world, especially the realm of animals (Nietzsche 26-7).

Welty presents King MacLain through the Apollonian lens of civilization; we never see events from his point of view. Therefore, he often appears eccentric, mysterious, or threatening. However, Nietzche's Apollonian/Dionysian dynamic and the tribal hero/*fiana* dynamic of Celtic society suggest that the tribal (Apollonian) element

requires the Fenian (Dionysian) element that King represents in order to form a vibrant community. According to Nietzsche, the tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of life produces art, which is "as fundamental as the gods, or as nature itself" (Lenson 39). The Celtic tribal hero/*fiana* dynamic produces heroes, but the myth of the tribal hero is "the exaltation of heroism as a social function" (Sjoestedt 109), not action in isolation. "The myth of the *fiana* is the myth of man outside the tribe, the release of gratuitous heroism" (Sjoestedt 109). Viewed from a Fenian perspective, King MacLain's "willfull and outrageous behavior" (*GA* 3) is an expression of gratuitous heroism, and brings no power, solace, or practical solutions to the community. Finn and King have much in common—similar physical attributes, encounters with many women, a connection with hunting and nature, and a way of life that is connected to civilization but places them outside of it.

In keeping with her technique of layering allusion upon allusion in *The Golden Apples*, the Irish Celtic influences Welty uses to construct King MacLain and his legends are not limited to references to heroes; she hints that King MacLain may have some kinship with supernatural creatures from Irish myth and folklore. In her essay "Realities in 'Sir Rabbit': A Frame Analysis," Daun Kendig points out the "abundance of Celtic ritual motifs" (127) in the story, as well as the possibility that King MacLain may have some connection to Celtic fairy mythology. Exploring Kendig's suggestions further, I find that King appears to display powers and characteristics found among several types of Sidhe, or Celtic fairy folk. As Yeats noted in his survey of Irish folklore, *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, the Sidhe are divided into two main classes: trooping fairies, who travel and live in groups, and solitary fairies (Yeats, *Irish* 1, 85-6). Although King MacLain spends

much of his life traveling, he evokes more strongly the nature of the solitary fairy. In Celtic myth, solitary fairies often lived in forests and dressed in green, but sometimes wore "the palest of whites" (MacKillop "Fairy"), much as King MacLain appears in "Sir Rabbit," "darting around tree trunks in a starched white suit" (*GA* 101). King's uncanny ability to appear and disappear in the woods is reminiscent of the power of some fairies to become invisible "by donning a magical cap" (MacKillop "Fairy"), suggested by King's signature "yellowy Panama hat" (*GA* 107), which doesn't seem to match the rest of his pristine outfit.

King's power to strike Junior Holifield unconscious can be explained also by fairy lore. Some fairies and mortals with magical ability were reputed to wield a paralyzing power called a "'fairy blast' or a 'fairy stroke'" (Yeats, *Irish* 156), with which they could strike down their enemies at a distance. The "fairy stroke" was reputed to manifest itself as a paralytic seizure and is in fact the basis for the use of the word "stroke" to describe a cerebral hemorrhage (MacKillop "Fairy Stroke"). After King fires a shot over Junior's head, Junior goes "limp from the middle out, before their eyes. He was dead to the world; as immune as if asleep in his pew, but bent the opposite way" (*GA* 107). Later, Mattie Will examines Junior, observing that "It could be he was scared more than half to death—but no, not with that sleeping face" (*GA* 109). Clearly, Mattie Will believes that something extraordinary has rendered Junior unconscious.

In addition to the generally fairy-like qualities he seems to exhibit, King also resembles some specific creatures from Celtic myth: the leprechaun, the cluricaun, and a "false" fairy, the ganconer (MacKillop "Ganconer") or gonconer (Yeats, *Irish* 348). For example, Mattie Will's encounter with King ends with her gazing upon him while he is

sleeping. This may be an allusion to the myth of Cupid and Psyche, or it may be an allusion to the Celtic belief that during Samhain (Halloween), "fairies moving from one fairy hill to another accompanied by bells and elf horns were suddenly visible to mere mortals" (Kendig 127). Another possible inspiration for Mattie Will's intent scrutiny of the sleeping King comes from myths of the leprechaun. To obtain the leprechaun's wealth, one had to catch him; then "if the mortal can keep his eyes on the leprechaun without being distracted, the gold will be his" (MacKillop "Leprechaun"). Mattie does acquire some of King's wealth—she becomes part of his myth, for "now she was something she had always heard of" (*GA* 108). The cluricaun, described by Yeats as "the Leprecaun on a spree" (Yeats, *Irish* 85), was a fairy showing "no desire to do work of any kind and is dressed like a weekend gentleman" (MacKillop "Cluricaun"), a fairly good description of the dapper but itinerant King, who has been "educated in the law" (*GA* 6) but doesn't practice, leaves his wife Snowdie to raise his twin sons by herself, and is nearly always seen in his signature white linen suit, even when he is out hunting.

A third fairy King resembles is the ganconer, or "love-talker" (MacKillop "Ganconer"), a fairy who personified "love and idleness" (Yeats, *Irish* 348). The ganconer was always male; he frequented "lonely valleys, speaking his love to milkmaids and shepherdesses, then abandoning them, leaving them to pine for death" (MacKillop "Ganconer"). In "Shower of Gold," Katie Rainey alludes to King's capacity for smooth talk and penchant for abandoning women: "Beware of a man with manners. He never raised his voice to her, but then one day he walked out of the house" (*GA* 4). This randy, wandering fairy seems to be the image of what King wishes to be, but Welty inverts the ganconer myth by making King a would-be demon lover for whom Snowdie refuses to

pine. Snowdie doesn't waste away; instead she "just went on keeping house…and she seemed to settle into her content" (*GA* 8).

The kinship between Finn MacCool and various figures from Irish tales points to the rich role that Celtic myth plays in *The Golden Apples*. This role is repeated in a sense by King's sons, the aptly named Eugene ["well-borne"], who goes all the way to California to learn "that people don't have to be answered just because they want to know (*GA* 273), and King's other son, Randall ["Rand," Celtic for border or margin, evokes the traditional ballad "Lord Randall"—"Oh where have you been, Lord Randall, my son"], who repeats some of his father's infidelities, is exiled from his marriage temporarily and causes the suicide of a young woman, yet stays in Morgana, lives down his errors, and becomes the town mayor. Welty's use of King to evoke Finn and the *fiana* and the roles of King's sons suggest that Morgana is both a small modern Delta town and an image of the Celtic world still on the cusp of change from the mythic to the historical, from the capricious and mystical realm of the perpetually wandering hunter to the increasingly ordered society of the settled tribe where, nonetheless, the old primitive order finds subtle or symbolic expression in the acts of individuals or in the speculative gossip told about them.

Part 3: Tricksters

Rather than the noble, serious warrior-hero or divine head of a pantheon, King MacLain is a trickster; Welty "tricks" us by layering allusion upon allusion. If we simply equate King MacLain with Zeus or Perseus or even Aengus, we miss Loki standing in the shadows behind Odin and we miss shape-changing Finn MacCool.

The trickster, unlike warrior-heroes (such as Thor, Cú Chulainn, Achilles, or even Wonder Woman), primarily uses wits, illusion, and deceit against his or her enemies (and sometimes his or her friends), rather than sheer strength and martial prowess. This is not to say that all warrior-heroes are mindless louts, or that trickster-heroes cannot fight; the distinction lies in the primary way each archetypal figure interacts with the world. For example, although he is a great warrior (he owns a bow no one else can string), Odysseus primarily worships Athena, goddess of strategy and wisdom, rather than Mars, the god of war; his preferred way of dealing with his opponents is to out-think them.

Paul Radin, author of *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, describes the trickster as "a hero who is always wandering, who is always hungry, who is not guided by normal conceptions of good or evil, who is either playing tricks on people or having them played on him and who is highly sexed" (155), a near-perfect description of King MacLain. King is always wandering, in and out of time and space, it seems. He also certainly has a healthy appetite; he is constantly eating during Katie Rainey's funeral: "Every now and then Mr. King. . . tiptoed down the hall to the table to pick at the ham" (*GA* 257). And King MacLain is certainly not guided by accepted definitions of good or evil; as Vande Kieft points out: ". . . in Eudora Welty's vision generally, evil is never pure and unambiguous, nor is heroism a simple matter of the triumph of good over evil" (116). King is also the perpetrator and victim of tricks; the best example occurs in "Shower of Gold," when he shows up at Halloween to trick-or-treat at his house, only to end up being frightened away by his sons. As to the charge of being "highly sexed," there is more than enough evidence in *The Golden Apples* and the scholarship surrounding it to warrant holding King MacLain guilty on that count.

In his essay "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide," William J. Hynes asserts that tricksters have six qualities, most of which are covered by Radin's definition. However, Hynes adds the status of "sacred/lewd bricoleur" (34). He explains this quality as the trickster's ability to find "the lewd in the sacred and the sacred in the lewd, and new life from both" (42). King MacLain exercises this ability at Katie Rainey's funeral, a solemn, sacred occasion. At the height of the mourning, King MacLain steals ham and makes hideous faces at Virgie. However, the trickster's profane antics serve a purpose: "the bricoleur aspect of the trickster can cause any or all of such lewd acts or objects to be transformed into occasions of insight, vitality, and new inventive creations" (Hynes 42). Virgie Rainey feels "a moment of alliance" (*GA* 257) when King MacLain makes his irreverent "hideous face" (*GA* 257) at her while his rebellious grandchildren are playing in the yard during Katie Rainey's funeral. At the end of "The Wanderers," when Virgie has reached her apotheosis, she sees "the hideous and delectable face Mr. King MacLain had made at the funeral" (*GA* 277), suggesting strongly that King, in his role as sacred/lewd bricoleur, the "archetypal botherer" (Kreyling, *Achievement* 102), is "the father of Virgie's rebirth" (Kreyling, *Achievement* 103).

Welty's use of many mythic allusions to construct the character and Morgana as a whole makes King MacLain more richly textured, larger than life yet very human. As Thomas McHaney states, Welty constructs in *The Golden Apples* "a palpably human world that supports a complex but typical human life" ("Multitudinous" 623). The complexity McHaney mentions prevents us from reaching simple conclusions about King MacLain. Welty presents him from many angles, and like a hologram, King changes

appearance when we view him from those different angles. Elements of Norse, Greek, and Irish mythology all combine in this single character. However, as I will argue in Chapter 3, Welty adds even more layers of complexity to King MacLain by linking him to traditional African-American tricksters through allusions to Brer Rabbit.

Chapter 3: A Further Analysis of "Sir Rabbit"

Part 1: Rabbits

One of the best-known trickster figures in oral and written American literature and folklore is Brer Rabbit, who was popularized in Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus stories (1881, 1883, 1892, 1905) and Walt Disney's cinematic adaptation *The Song of the South* (1946). Harris collected folk tales from African-American storytellers in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century in order to "preserve the legends in their original simplicity, and to wed them permanently to the quaint dialect—if, indeed, it can be called a dialect—through the medium of which they have become a part of the domestic history of every Southern family" (Harris xxi). However, Harris was not the only person to collect these folk tales. Zora Neale Hurston, author of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, began her writing career by collecting African-American folk tales in her 1935 ethnographic study *Mules and Men* that features a number of Brer Rabbit stories. "Sir Rabbit" has several direct connections to these popular Brer Rabbit tales, particularly as presented by Hurston.

In addition to the similarity between the title "Sir Rabbit" and the name Brer Rabbit, Welty's story alludes to the African-American trickster tale through its simple, archetypal plot. The details of the Brer Rabbit folk tales vary, but many involve Brer Rabbit outwitting some larger animal and winning a prize, even if that prize is only the satisfaction of having successfully tricked the more powerful predator and thus having avoided being eaten. The Brer Rabbit cycle features as hero "the weakest and most harmless of all animals, and brings him out victorious in contests with the bear, the wolf,

and the fox. It is not virtue that triumphs, but helplessness; it is not malice, but mischievousness" (Harris xxv). "Sir Rabbit" effectively mimics a Brer Rabbit story by having the outnumbered, outgunned King MacLain triumph over "slow" (*GA* 102) Junior Holifield in the Morgana Woods. At first it appears that King MacLain simply scares Junior with a load of buckshot, causing him to pass out. I have previously suggested that King MacLain may have used some sort of supernatural means to strike Junior unconscious, but if we consider King to be analogous to Brer Rabbit, who uses his wits to defeat his enemies, another explanation presents itself. When Junior falls, Mattie Will recalls that "he would always think he was shot through the heart if anybody's gun but his went off" (*GA* 107). Perhaps King MacLain, like Brer Rabbit, somehow learned of Junior's "weakness," took advantage of it, and thus outwitted him. Men with guns also feature as a threat in both "Moon Lake" and the Uncle Remus stories. In "Moon Lake," Twosie warns the girls to beware "mans wid great big gun" (*GA* 121). In "Mr. Rabbit, He's a Good Fisherman," Brer Rabbit tries to scare Brer Fox by telling him, "Yer come a man wid a great big gun" (Harris 49). The similarity of the context and phrasing of the warnings suggests that Welty is including the spirit and style of African-American folktales in the composition of Morgana and its folktales and legends.

Welty also provides more imagery than the title of the story to make King MacLain seem rabbit-like. The most apparent clue is King's trademark white suit, which could suggest a rabbit's fur. When King approaches Mattie Will, she sees that he has "square brown teeth" (*GA* 107) such as rabbits have. "The Wanderers" depicts King as rabbit-like as well. When King MacLain appears in the story, he has a "pinkish-white"

(*GA* 245) patch of hair under his lip, and the lapels on his white suit are "alert as ears" (*GA* 253).

The strongest link between "Sir Rabbit" and Brer Rabbit however, is the rhyme that runs through Mattie Will's head as King MacLain attempts to chase her away:

> In the night time,
>
> At the right time,
>
> So I've understood,
>
> 'Tis the habit of Sir Rabbit
>
> To dance in the wood—. (GA 111)

Many of the tales collected by Joel Chandler Harris feature rhymes similar to this, usually recited by one of the animal characters near the end or beginning of the story. For example, in "Mr. Rabbit, He's a Good Fisherman," Brer Rabbit taunts Brer Fox with a rhyme:

> Ti-yi! Tungalee!
>
> I eat um pea, I pick um pea.
>
> Hit grow in de groun', hit grow so free;
>
> Ti-yi! Dem goober pea. (Harris 69)

The rhyme Mattie Will recites in her head, however, is nearly identical to one found in Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*. Chapter 6 recounts the stories or "lies" (Hurston xxi) told by a group of black mill workers as they travel through a swamp in Florida. One story deals with Brer Rabbit and his encounter with Brer Gator:

> Big Sweet says, "Dat's de first time Ah ever heard 'bout de dawg wearin' out de 'gator's tongue, but Ah do know he useter be a pretty

> varmint. He was pure white all over wid red and yeller stripes around his neck. He was pretty like dat till he met up wid Brer Rabbit. Kah, kah, kah! Ah have to laugh everytime Ah think how sharp dat ole rabbit rascal is."
>
> "Yeah," said Sam Hopkins. "At night time, at de right time; Ah've always understood it's de habit of de rabbit to dance in de wood." (Hurston 106)

By including this rhyme, Welty directly links King MacLain with Brer Rabbit, who is usually encountered while out wandering, and usually prevails over larger, stronger antagonists through humorous trickery. King lives not only in the realm of heroic myth, but also in the realm of Southern folktales.

Welty's allusions to oral folktales illustrate a resonance between her fiction and that of Zora Neale Hurston. In an essay noting the similarities between Janie, the protagonist of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Livvie, the protagonist of Welty's story of the same name, Carol Manning points out that "Hurston and Welty exhibit remarkable similarities as writers" (64). One notable example of this similarity occurs in the way Welty uses pears in "Moon Lake" and the way Hurston uses pears in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In "Moon Lake," Nina Carmichael's thoughts of pears lead her to an insight regarding the relationship between time, youth, and desire: "It's not the flowers that are fleeting, Nina thought, it's the fruits—it's the time when things are ready that they don't stay. She even went through the rhyme, 'Pear tree by the garden gate, How much longer must I wait?'—thinking it was the pears that asked it, not the

picker" (*GA* 131). *In Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie's thoughts about the pear tree in her grandmother's back yard inspire a similar insight:

> Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the back-yard. She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. . . It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. . . She had been summoned to behold a revelation. . . Oh to be a pear tree—any tree in bloom! (Hurston, *Eyes* 11)

The "largest and most complex" (Manning 65) similarity between Welty and Hurston is the tendency for both authors to

> . . . draw frequently and generously on the multi-faceted oral culture of the South. In portraying the talking, gossiping, tale-telling, fussing, exaggerating, and evasiveness of small-town and rural southerners, they reveal much about a way of life, its flaws along with its merits. (Manning 65)

Welty's use of Southern oral culture positions King not only in the context of Greek, Irish, and Norse myth-cycles, many of which were developed within a tradition of spoken storytelling before they were written down, but also in the tradition of Southern folk tales, specifically those with origins in Africa (Harris xxv; Hyde note on 355-6). Using the dialect, rhymes, behavior, and imagery found in folktales recorded by Harris and Hurston, Welty constructs a world and a trickster hero who cannot be pinned down to one prototype.

Part 2: Kings

Some of the figures associated with King MacLain may or may not have lived (Finn MacCool, for example) or are purely fantastic (the Sidhe, for example). However, King MacLain bears some resemblance to another figure from the ancient world who probably did exist: The King of the Wood. As Mrs. Gruenwald says in "Moon Lake," "Moon Lakes are all over the world" (*GA* 154). In *The Golden Bough* (1890) James George Frazer concentrates on a particular "Moon Lake." Frazer's comparative study of religion, magic, and myth opens with a description of a ritual practiced by the priesthood of Diana near the lake of Nemi in Italy. This lake was also called "Diana's Mirror" (Frazer 9). Diana was a moon goddess, so the connection to Moon Lake or "Moon Lake" the story that follows "Sir Rabbit" in *The Golden Apples*, is apparent. When Welty was asked about *The Golden Bough* in an interview, she answered: "I have read the one-volume edition of *The Golden Bough*, but I didn't read that till I was out of college" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 224). The action in "Sir Rabbit" parallels the ritual practiced by the priests of Diana as described in *The Golden Bough*:

> . . . the worship of Diana at Nemi was instituted by Orestes, who, after killing Thoas. . . fled. . . to Italy. . . The bloody ritual which legend ascribed to the Tauric Diana is familiar to classical readers; it is said that every stranger who landed on the shore was sacrificed on her altar. But transported to Italy, the rite assumed a milder form. Within the sanctuary at Nemi grew a certain tree of which no branch might be broken. Only a runaway slave was allowed to break off, if he could, one of its boughs.

> Success in the attempt entitled him to fight the priest in single combat, and if he slew him he reigned in his stead with the title of King of the Wood (Frazer 13).

The parallels between the encounter between King and Junior Holifield, Mattie Will, and Blackstone in the woods in "Sir Rabbit" and Frazer's recounting of the ritual of the King of the Wood in *The Golden Bough* are striking. King's first words, "Oh, good afternoon, sir. Don't shoot me" (*GA* 101), evoke Frazer's initial description of the King of the Wood "peering warily about him as if at every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy" (Frazer 11). Upon meeting with King MacLain, Junior Holifield makes a remark that could be taken as a threat: "as long as you don't get no closer to us, we ain't liable to hit you" (*GA* 103). Both King and Junior happen to "get behind gum trees just then" (*GA* 103) as if taking cover in preparation for a shootout. Then Blackstone, the black man accompanying Junior and Mattie Will, "broke a stick and chunked the pieces in the air" (103), evoking the image of the escaped slave breaking a bough at Nemi. The tension escalates, with King darting from tree to tree with seemingly supernatural ability, trading threats and gunshots with Junior Holifield. Junior is mysteriously struck unconscious and King stands holding his gun "with head cocked while the wind swelled and blew across the top of the ridge, turning over the green and gold leaves high up around them all" (*GA* 108). This image of King is remarkably similar to Frazer's conception of the King of the Wood:

> It is a sombre picture. . . the sighing of the wind in the branches, the rustle of the withered leaves underfoot. . . and in the foreground, pacing to and

> fro, now in twilight and now in gloom, a dark figure with a glitter of steel at the shoulder. . . (Frazer 12)

The confrontation does not end with Junior's defeat. King forces Mattie Will to the ground and puts "the affront of his body" (*GA* 108) on her. However, Mattie Will appears to be the real victor, becoming "Mr. MacLain's Doom, or Mr. MacLain's Weakness" (*GA* 108). King's agitation at being seen sleeping parallels the paranoia of the King of the Wood, who "had to keep his lonely watch, and whenever he snatched a troubled slumber, it was at the peril of his life" (Frazer 12).

Mattie Will, becoming a Diana-like figure, defeats King in her own way. Diana was the "lover of woods and the wild chase over the mountains" (Hamilton 31), and after her conquest of King, Mattie Will runs "down through the woods and vines" (*GA* 111). All wild animals were sacred to Diana, "but especially the deer" (Hamilton 32). Furthermore, in her final reflection on King, she compares his "mysterious and sweet" twin sons to "young deer" (*GA* 111).

Frazer points out that every instance of combat at Nemi was a re-enactment: "The flight of the slave represented, it was said, the flight of Orestes; his combat with the priest was a reminiscence of the human sacrifices once offered to the Tauric Diana" (13). As Appel states, "All the major characters in *The Golden Apples* are conducting the search that is symbolically described in Yeats's poem; like Aengus, they too are wanderers engaged in an endless quest" (206). The main characters in *The Golden Apples* are engaging in a cycle of re-enactment. In "The Wanderers," Virgie Rainey expresses her understanding of this sense of mythic re-enactment, her "intuitive grasp of cyclic things" (McHaney, "Falling" 186): "Every time Perseus struck off the Medusa's head, there was

the beat of time, and the melody. Endless the Medusa, and Perseus endless" (*GA* 276). With its echoes of multiple mythologies, King MacLain's assumption of the role of a modern-day King of the Wood, and the spiral dance of dreamlike, stylized combat, "Sir Rabbit" can be viewed as a re-enactment of a re-enactment, deepening the sense of the cyclical nature of life and myth that lies at the heart of *The Golden Apples*.

Conclusion: One Thing Leads to Another

The end will contain a beginning. (xxxviii)
---*The Norse Myths*, Kevin Crossley-Holland (1980)

In a 1972 interview, Welty told Charles S. Bunting that *The Golden Apples* was "closest to my heart of all my books" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 42). Bunting asked her if this was because of her use of folklore and myth, and Welty responded, "Well, in a peripheral way, it was that. That was one of the elements that went into it, but I mostly loved working on the connected stories, finding the way things emerged in my mind and the way one thing led to another; the interconnections of the book fascinated me" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 43). These interconnections in *The Golden Apples* stretch across time and space to link Welty's characters to the gods and heroes of past stories. Mythic story-cycles most often deal with periods of upheaval or change in the form of wars, disasters, and even the end of the world, but the stories often end with order restored, peace won, and the hope of rebirth. For example, Odin cannot forestall Ragnarok for long, and "he knows it is the destiny of gods, giants, men, dwarfs, and all creation to fight and destroy one another" (Crossley-Holland xxviii). But Odin also knows that "a new cycle of time and life will begin after Ragnarok" (Crossley-Holland xxxviii). Norse mythology offered a cyclical system of time, in which "a linear progression repeats itself endlessly; each end is followed by a new beginning" (Lindow 39). If "the mythological past and the personal past are linked" (McHaney, "Falling" 189) and both "can be revelations of the passing of time, seen not as chronology but as periodicity" (McHaney, "Falling" 189), then the historical and personal periods in which Welty composed and set the stories of *The Golden Apples* were not so different from the

times of upheaval and rebirth depicted in the myths Welty said she had always loved to read.

Between the years 1941 and 1945, Welty experienced long periods during which she

> . . . found herself unable to do what she loved most—write fiction. War occupied her attention. She read analyses of wartime policies and military strategies, she reviewed books about the war, she speculated about the far-reaching consequences of dropping the atomic bomb. But above all, Eudora experienced the war on a personal level, thinking about John Robinson, her brothers, and her friends in the military, writing them letters, sending them care packages, agonizing about their situations. (Marrs, *Welty* 136)

When the war ended, Welty was ready to begin a new phase of her life, to "chart a new course as a fiction writer, to embrace new places and new people, to share her life with John Robinson, and to move beyond the provincialities of her native state even as she held tight to her Mississippi connections" (Marrs, *Welty* 139). Like Virgie Rainey, Welty was ready for a rebirth, a passage into a new period of her life. Although much scholarship has been devoted to Virgie's transformation and rebirth, none has focused on the upheaval in Morgana that leads to the book's regenerative ending or on King MacLain's role in that upheaval.

King MacLain, as his name suggests, should be the rightful ruler of Morgana. The MacLain family has a long history in Morgana, and they reside at MacLain, the county seat and site of the Courthouse, the literal and symbolic center of law and order

for the community, analogous to Camelot in the Arthurian romances. But King MacLain forsakes his role and his heritage for the life of a trickster, a wanderer. Katie Rainey says of King, "He was educated off, to practice law—well needed here" (*GA* 5). This comment suggests much about King and Morgana. King MacLain was groomed to uphold law and stability, and Morgana needs stability. Katie does not elaborate on the need for law in Morgana, but her comment implies that the community is in some sort of upheaval or in a transitional period, and that King MacLain might have played an important part in restoring order. As the outside world endures Governor Vardaman's vicious politics, World War I, and World War II, Morgana's residents live in a community in which, in Yeats's words, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold" (3). The Apollonian/Dionysian dynamic has been disrupted. While King wanders, death and depression seem to hold sway in Morgana. Victor Rainey dies in World War I, Mr. Sissum drowns in the Big Black, and Eugene returns only to die of tuberculosis. Both Mrs. Morrison and Maideen Sumrall commit suicide, and both Ran and Miss Eckhart attempt suicide and fail. As Mrs. Stark's servant Juba says, "I see more ghosts than live peoples, round here" (*GA* 269). Even art seems to wither; Miss Eckhart's apparent failure to transmit her love of music to her pupils is one of the factors precipitating her attempt to immolate herself in the fashion of a Viking funeral.

While Morgana suffers through its transition from myth to modernity, King MacLain assumes the role of a wandering trickster, his appearances and disappearances acting as a sort of almanac for the citizens of the community. His sporadic visits become their history. King's royal heritage inspires awe in Morgana's citizens, but he never brings order, only presents, and he seems to be disoriented when he crosses the border of

the Big Black River. This disorientation is a side effect of King's choice to abandon his role as leader and wander the world while simultaneously trying to maintain a domestic relationship with his wife and two sons. King attempts to have the best of both worlds, but he cannot maintain the balance forever. Jim Owen argues that King MacLain often returns to Morgana on Halloween because it is "the anniversary of the beginning of the MacLain/Hudson courtship" (39). Thomas McHaney observes that "Halloween is not only the anniversary of when King and Snowdie 'took up,' it is also the traditional beginning of the Celtic year and the time when the souls of the departed return to warm themselves at their old family fires" ("Multitudinous" 594-95), a belief appropriately hinted at by the impending conflagration at the MacLains' old home. Every time King MacLain crosses the boundary of the Big Black, he steps in or out of "mythic time" (Owen 39), which runs at a different pace than Morgana time; it is this transition that causes his confusion. In "Shower of Gold" King confronts his twin sons, but he seems not to know them. This is because he has not been back to Morgana since before they were born, and he expects everything to be the way it was when he left. In "June Recital," King is equally disoriented, forgetting that his family no longer lives in the house next to the Morrisons. His disjointed conversation with Old Man Moody illustrates King's confusion:

> Old Man Moody only said, "*Good* evening. Now I don't speak to you."
>
> "Answer me! Trespassing, are you?"
>
> "Whoa. Your house is afire."
>
> "If my house is afire, then where's my folks gone?"

> "Oh, 'tain't your house no more, I forgot. It's Miss Francine Murphy's house. You're late, Captain."
>
> "What antics are these? Get out of my house. Put that fire out behind you. Tell me where they went. Never mind, I know where they went. All right, burn it down, who's to stop you?" (GA 82)

Like Finn MacCool's son Oisín, King, as his son does, travels west, finding a "land of youth" (MacKillop "Oisín"). Oisín traveled west to the land of Tír na nÓg with a beautiful woman named Niamh and remained with her for 300 years, but from his perspective only a day had passed (MacKillop "Tír na nÓg"). Eventually Oisín returned to Ireland, and when he dismounted from his horse, the years caught up with him and he immediately became old and feeble (MacKillop "Oisín"). When King MacLain comes back to stay with Snowdie, he appears to age rapidly as well. Until he comes back to live with her, King cannot maintain a relationship with Snowdie because she changes and grows, while, off in another world like Oisín in Tír na nÓg, he appears to remain unchanged.

The people of Morgana are "unified in part by their common legends" (Owen 38), and King MacLain is perhaps their most important legend. However, they also need a leader, and King MacLain cannot effectively fill both roles while he is dropping in and out of Morgana's time; he has discarded the past, he does not understand the present, and he lives only for the future, always concerned with "what was ahead" (*GA* 254). King's lack of continuity and contact with Morgana creates confusion and chaos, particularly in his sons, who stand to inherit or reject their father's legacy. Eugene becomes ill and dies before he makes his choice, and Ran nearly commits suicide with his father's old pistol, a

symbol of urban law that King MacLain has left behind, preferring instead the rifle of the wandering hunter. However, that Ran becomes mayor of Morgana suggests that he has chosen order and domesticity and may bring stability to the town. This is the source of the kinship Virgie Rainey feels with Ran. Although she merges with and crosses the border of the Big Black as King does, Virgie first divests herself of her connections to Morgana, leaving her free to choose which direction her life will take. Virgie, who has learned to understand time through Miss Eckhart's lessons, takes up the mantle of the mythic wanderer and thus embodies the world outside Morgana, leaving Ran the responsibility of the domestic world within Morgana. The community and its legends exist in a symbiotic Apollonian/Dionysian dynamic. This is the relationship that Virgie acknowledges in her moment of kinship with Ran. King, in trying to be a husband and father while also trying to have a life of travel and adventure, fails to uphold the balance of that relationship, but his legacy has "settled upon" (GA 257) Ran and Virgie, who have the will and knowledge to succeed where he could not. At the end of *The Golden Apples*, balance is restored, and a new cycle is beginning.

An examination of King MacLain's evolution and role in *The Golden Apples* illustrates not only the skillful way in which Welty weaves myth, legend, and folklore into her story-cycle, but also reveals the mythic yet personal dramatic movement of the stories. As in other mythic cycles, the large themes of love, death, art, and time figure prominently in *The Golden Apples*. Welty explores these concepts through the use of characters with whom we as modern readers can identify, and in the tradition of those earlier cycles, she plants the seed of a new beginning in the end of *The Golden Apples*.

In *One Writer's Beginnings*, Welty describes how the experience of writing *The Golden Apples* affected her:

> Writing these stories, which eventually appeared joined together in the book called *The Golden Apples*, was an experience in a writer's own discovery of affinities. In writing, as in life, the connections of all sorts of relationships and kinds lie in wait of discovery, and give out their signals to the Geiger counter of the charged imagination, once it is drawn into the right field. (99).

The connections and relationships of which Welty speaks are also lying "in wait of discovery" by readers of *The Golden Apples*. Just as a close examination of King MacLain's literary ancestry reveals layers of allusion and therefore more ways to interpret his roles in the stories, a "detailed analysis of allusion, metaphor, and symbol [in *The Golden Apples*] allows different narratives to emerge" (Mark 112). The varied sources and influences that converge in King MacLain suggest that close examinations and re-readings of *The Golden Apples* and its other memorable characters will reveal more gold to be mined from Welty's complex story-cycle.

Works Cited

Appel, Alfred, Jr. *A Season of Dreams*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1965.

Bowie, David. "Heroes." "*Heroes*." Virgin, 1977.

"Cluricaun." MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Cotterell, Arthur, and Rachel Storm. *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*. London: Hermes House, 2004.

Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *The Norse Myths*. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Ellis, Peter Berresford. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1992.

"Fairy." MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

"Fairy Stroke." MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough*. 1890. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Fritz-Piggott, Jill. "The Sword and the Song: Moments of Intensity in *The Golden Apples*." *Southern Literary Journal* 18.2 (Spring 1986): 27-39.

"Ganconer." MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. 1942. New York: Warner Books, 1999.

Harris, Joel Chandler. *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*. (1881, 1883, 1892, 1905). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983.

Hatab, Lawrence J. *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence: The Redemption of Time and Becoming*. Washington: UP of America, 1978.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men*. 1935. New York: HarperPerennial, 1990.

_____. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 1937. New York: HarperPerennial, 1990.

Hyde, Lewis. *Trickster Makes This World*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1998.

Hynes, William J. "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide." *Mythical Trickster Figures*. Eds. William J. Hynes and William G. Doty. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1993.

Irving, Washington. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Ed. Austin McC. Fox. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1962.

Isaacs, Neil D. "Four Notes on Eudora Welty." *Notes on Mississippi Writers* 2 (1969): 42-54.

Johnston, Carol Ann. *Eudora Welty: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997.

Kendig, Daun. "Realities in 'Sir Rabbit': A Frame Analysis." *Eudora Welty: Eye of the Storyteller*. Ed. Dawn Trouard. Kent: Kent State UP, 1989. 119-32.

Kreyling, Michael. *Author and Agent*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1991.

_____. *Eudora Welty's Achievement of Order*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1980.

_____. *Understanding Eudora Welty*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1999.

"Leprechaun." MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Lindow, John. *Norse Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Loewen, James W., and Charles Sallis, eds. *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*. New York: Random House, 1974.

Lurker, Manfred. *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Manning, Carol S. "Hurston and Welty, Janie and Livvie." *Southern Literary Journal* 34.2 (2002): 64-72.

Mark, Rebecca. *The Dragon's Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty's* The Golden Apples. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1994.

Marrs, Suzanne. *Eudora Welty: A Biography*. New York: Harcourt, 2005.

_____. *One Writer's Imagination: The Fiction of Eudora Welty*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002.

The Matrix. Dir. Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski. Warner Bros., Village Roadshow Pictures, 1999.

McHaney, Thomas. "Eudora Welty and the Multitudinous Golden Apples." *Mississippi Quarterly* 26.4 (1973): 589-624.

_____. "Falling into Cycles: *The Golden Apples*." *Eudora Welty: Eye of the Storyteller*. Ed. Dawn Trouard. Kent: Kent State UP, 1989. 173-89.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. William A Hausmann. Ed. Oscar Levy. Vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. 18 vols. New York: Russell & Russell, 1964.

"Oisín." MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Owen, Jim. “Phoenix Jackson, William Wallace, and King MacLain: Welty's Mythic Travelers.” *Southern Literary Journal* 34.1 (Fall 2001): 29-43.

Pingatore, Diana R. *A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Eudora Welty*. New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996.

Polk, Noel. *Eudora Welty: A Bibliography of Her Work*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1994.

Prenshaw, Peggy W., ed. *Conversations with Eudora Welty*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1984.

_____. *More Conversations with Eudora Welty*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1996.

Price, Robert M., ed. *The Innsmouth Cycle*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1998.

Radin, Paul. *The Trickster*. New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1956.

Schindler, Henri. *Mardi Gras New Orleans*. New York: Flammarion, 1997.

Schmidt, Peter. *The Heart of the Story: Eudora Welty's Short Fiction*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1991.

Sjoestedt, Marie-Louise. *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*. Trans. Myles Dillon. Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1982.

Skaggs, Merrill Maguire. “Morgana's Apples and Pears.” *Eudora Welty: Critical Essays*. Ed. Peggy W. Prenshaw. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1979. 220-41.

“Tír na nÓg.” MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Vande Kieft, Ruth M. *Eudora Welty, Revised Edition.* Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1987.

Waldron, Ann. *Eudora*: *A Writer’s Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1998.

Welty, Eudora. *The Collected Stories*. New York: Harcourt, 1980.

_____. *Complete Novels*. New York: Library of America, 1998.

_____. *The Eye of the Story*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

_____. "Golden Apples." *Harper's Bazaar* Sep.1947: 216-17, 286, 288-90, 295-302, 305-07, 311-20.

_____. *The Golden Apples*. 1949. New York: Harvest Books, 1998.

_____. "The Hummingbirds." *Harper's Bazaar* Mar.1949: 195-96, 227, 230-34, 246-47, 250-52.

_____. "Moon Lake." *Sewanee Review* Summer 1949: 464-508.

_____. *Morgana*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1988.

_____. *One Writer's Beginnings*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

_____. "Shower of Gold." *Atlantic* May 1948: 37-42.

_____. "Sir Rabbit." *Hudson Review* Spring 1949: 24-36.

_____. "The Whole World Knows." *Harper's Bazaar* Mar. 1947: 198-99, 332-38.

Yaeger, Patricia. "Because a Fire was in My Head: Eudora Welty and the Dialogic Imagination." *PMLA* 99 (1984): 955–973.

Yeats, William Butler. *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Ed. Richard J. Finneran. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

_____, ed. *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*. New York: The Modern Library, n.d.