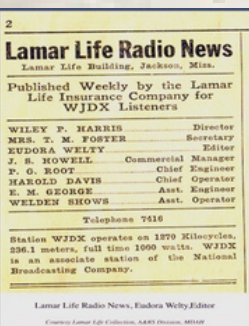


EUDORA WELTY: BACKGROUND

Born in 1909 in Jackson, Mississippi, Eudora Welty is a beloved American author and novelist, whose works closely reflect the regionalism and local color of the South. From her family, especially her mother, Welty developed a passion for reading and writing. Her education includes the Mississippi State College for Women, the University of Wisconsin (where



Mention of Welty as a News Editor

she would complete her bachelor's degree), and the Columbia University School of Business. After the death of her father in 1931, Welty returned home in order to support her mother and two younger brothers. It was then that she began her writing career, taking jobs as the society columnist for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* and as a junior publicity agent for the Works Progress Administration. She took many photographs during these years, photographs which would eventually be published in *One Time, One Place*. In 1936, she also published her first short story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman." Five years later, Welty went on to publish the short story collection *A Curtain of Green*, which includes "A Piece of News," a story which originally appeared in *Southern Review*. For her decades-spanning oeuvre, Welty won many awards, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1973 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1980. Outside of her writing, Welty enjoyed fostering a community of artists.



Eudora Welty

Even after her passing in 2001, Welty's works continue to engage readers in her capacity to describe the human experience with her characteristic wonder and wit.



The Welty Review

ABBY CHOE & BROOKE DERRINGTON
ENGLISH LITERATURE ENGLISH WRITING & RHETORIC



BREAKING NEWS ABOUT "A PIECE OF NEWS!"

THE SOUTHERN REVIEW

- Published in 1937
- Word count: 1,486
- Paragraph count: 39
- Intro: "Coming back from the crossroads with a sack of coffee, Ruby had got caught in the pouring-down rain" (Welty SR 80).



Photographed by Eudora Welty, 1935

- Ruby and her husband Clyde are identified in the first two paragraphs.
- Physical abuse is directly stated: "When Clyde would strike her [...]" (SR 81).
- The narrator is more omniscient and less critical, focuses on characterization, and implies Ruby is mistaken in misreading her name.
- Ruby has less interaction with the newspaper.



Photographed by Eudora Welty, 1941

TEXTUAL VARIANTS ANALYSIS

In the original published version of "A Piece of News," Welty presents her audience with an entirely different narrative. The story's focal point is Ruby's tumultuous and complicated relationship with her husband, Clyde. She seems motivated to secure his love and conjures a Shakespearean fantasy in which he mourns her death. However, in the revised version from *A Curtain of Green*, the focus is shifted to Ruby being less a victim of intimate partner violence and more a person who "had something in her that never stopped" (13). The fantasy remains, but the story Ruby reads in the paper, wherein she sees her name, dramatically shifts her viewpoint. The increase in word count, shifts in narration, and emphasis on Ruby claiming her name elevates the narrative from portraying an abusive marriage to something more profound, something about the acquisition of self knowledge. While Ruby's marital relationship is still a prominent component of the later version, the foreground is Ruby's self-actualization.



Photograph of young Welty released by University Press of Mississippi

A CURTAIN OF GREEN

- Published in 1941
- Word count: 2,199
- Paragraph count: 59
- Intro: "She had been out in the rain" (CS 12).
- Ruby's name is not acknowledged until she speaks her name. Similarly, Clyde is not mentioned until she reads the newspaper.
- Both physical and emotional abuse are implied: "When Clyde would make her blue [...]"(CS 14).
- The narrator is less knowledgeable, learning alongside Ruby. Also, there is more focus on Ruby's psychological state than on Ruby and Clyde's marriage. There is more criticism of Ruby, and the narrator paints Ruby's misreading as a rebirth.
- Ruby's interaction with the newspaper is more playful and slightly eroticized.



Photographed by Eudora Welty, 1940

INTERPRETATION & ANALYSIS

As indicated by the revisions in *A Curtain of Green*, Welty was an avid editor of her own work, and often her revisions profoundly redirected the story's characters, plot, tone, and themes. The act of revision was for Welty a process she described as "a journey rather strange, hardly in a straight line, altogether personal" ("Words into Fiction" 138). So what then is the significance of these textual variants? In the revised version of "A Piece of News," the answer for Ruby is agency through language, specifically in the form of a local newspaper.

Largely uneducated, Ruby spells out her name in a story about a husband who shoots his wife, a woman with the same name. Though the story is not about her, Ruby is filled with a newfound "deference" because the newspaper, a widely circulated document, has her name inked in bold letters. Thus, Welty moves the narrative beyond the abusive marriage delineated in the earlier version to instead foreground not the protagonist's victimhood but her nascent agency.

The joy Ruby gains from seeing her identity solidified in words cannot be undone by the reality of her abusive marriage. For the first time through her eyes, Ruby is seen and recognized as an individual. Empowered by her act of reading, she is validated in her sense of self. Welty leaves her character in an atmosphere of vague potential, creating an opportunity "like a wagon crossing a bridge," a bridge made possible by language.

Works Cited

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