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Forays into the Surreal: Eudora Welty's "The Winds" and "A Sketching Trip" and Joseph Cornell

Pearl McHaney

As an aspiring artist—painter, dramatist, poet, fictionist, and photographer—en-route to being an accomplished writer, Eudora Welty was familiar with surrealistic art and literature and imbibed a surrealistic point of view for translating that which she observed and then imagined. She frequented Chicago's great art museum during her years at the University of Wisconsin (1927-29), spent a year in New York City at the Columbia University Business School (1930-31), and for the rest of her life frequently returned to the city¹ to market her photographs and stories, visit friends, and partake of the cultural milieu—films, plays, clubs, concerts, museums. Welty's work is acknowledged as significant far beyond early twentieth-century local color fiction and mid-twentieth century regional writing, and she is welcomed into the canon of modernism—in particular with her masterful cycle of stories *The Golden Apples*. The tendency remains, however, despite the turn-of-the-century evaluations of her work as a visual artist,² to consider Welty in somewhat constrictive and prescriptive terms that prevent us from fully realizing that she, like other perspicacious, successful writers, was never parochial. To the contrary, she was always observing the rich culture in which she lived vigorously. Reading Welty within the rich context of the art, literary, and cosmopolitan culture of the 1940s, we experience a wholly new and exciting world that teaches us to read simultaneously with microscope and telescope, to move beyond the ubiquitous realism of biographical and regional detail to the surreal planes and swirls of imagination. As a case study, investigating Welty's stories "The Winds" and "A Sketching Trip" written in the 1940s together with Charles Henri Ford's avant-garde magazine *View*, artist Joseph Cornell, and Surrealist art as Welty would have experienced it, reveals juxtapositions that may seem "fantastic" but that show us a new, "multifaceted" perspective of Welty's world view and, consequently, of other writers of similar ken (Yaeger 12).³

While we have no record of Welty meeting or even commenting on the most audacious of the Surrealists, Salvador Dali, she knew his work well-enough from his Schiaparelli ads that appeared in *Harper's Bazaar*, for example, alongside her fiction and in comparison with her writing in Diana Trilling's ranting review of *The Wide Net*⁴ and by visiting the Chicago and New York art museums and galleries. She describes British writer William Sansom's character Fireman Flower as finding "the story of his life in the fire and its spell of past and future in the rooms, the long corridors with vistas like streets in Chirico's paintings" ; the "energy" of Sansom's collection of stories, she writes, "produces an abundance of surrealist effects, wonderful and explicit and authentically 'sur-real'" (1945, 67).⁵

Surrealism in New York

In 1936, Welty must have been aware of the new Museum of Modern Art's two important exhibitions: *Cubism and Abstract Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism*.⁶ Next door to the site of Welty's 31 March to 15 April 1936, photograph exhibit at the Photographic Galleries of Eugene Inc., Opticians store at 600 Madison Avenue was the most influential gallery of the Surrealism period, the Julien Levy Gallery (1931-49) at 602 Madison where Levy showed photographs, etchings, paintings, and constructions such as Joseph Cornell's boxes. During her 1933 to 1936 visits to New York, at the Levy Gallery, Welty might have seen paintings by Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Henri Rousseau, Yves Tanguy, Pavel Tchelitchev and photographs by Henri Cartier Bresson, George Platt Lynes, and Walker Evans (Schaffner and Jacobs 175-9). In 1931, Welty might have seen the Retrospective Exhibition of work by Matthew Brady, Charles Sheeler, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Clarence White, and others. The next year, she could have seen photographs by Eugène Atget arranged by Berenice Abbott who was at one time Levy's business partner and later had her own photographs exhibited in the Gallery. The Levy Gallery exhibit *Surréalisme* (1932) showed work by Jean Cocteau, Cornell, Dali, Ernst, and Picasso (Schaffner and Jacobs 171-4). In the *New York Times*, Welty's "favorite newspaper" (Marrs 96), art critic Edward Alden Jewell wrote of the exhibit that from the "many isolated examples of so-called 'surréalisme' ..., Mr. Levy has here neatly and opulently drawn all the curious threads together, or at any rate enough of them to make the movement vividly live for us and to provide an hour of the most captivating diversion" (27). He added: "The artists are trying to objectify the subconscious," and

[c]ertainly the experimentation has a serious side, linking up ... with Proust, Lewis Carroll, and even Shakespeare, whose low comedy scenes, it now develops, are quite understandable if one be au courant with surréaliste idiom in which they are expressed. (27)

Other Levy Gallery exhibits in the 1930s included work by André Kertész, Man Ray, Margaret Bourke-White, Julia Cameron, and Lee Miller. Levy also showed Alexander Calder's stabiles and mobiles, Tchelitchev's drawings, Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* and Cornell's first solo exhibition (Schaffner and Jacobs 173-5). No wonder Welty went every chance she had to New York. And this is just in the gallery abutting Eugene's where she obviously visited and learned of the series of exhibitions that was being modestly mounted there. One wishes she had boldly shopped her photos to Julien Levy next door.

Welty was in New York during the time of Alfred Barr's Museum of Modern Art's exhibition *Cubism and Modern Art*, and, although I find no evidence of her visiting MoMA at that time, she habitually read the *New York Times* where she would have seen reproductions of Duchamp's "Nude Descending the Staircase," Brancusi's "Bird," Picasso's "Three Musicians," and Dali's "The Persistence of Memory" (Poore 14, 23). In a ten-column, nine-illustration *New York Times Sunday Magazine* exhibition review-essay titled "Furiously They Ask Once More: But Is It Art? Cubism and Its Allied Isms Have Rekindled Flames of Dispute," Charles Poore takes modern art to task. Months later MoMA's *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* exhibition was formally announced in the *New York Times* with the headline "Dada and Disney to Be in Art Show," subtitled "Di Paola, da Vinci, Thurber, and Rube Goldberg Included in Historical Survey," the artists named perhaps to encourage attendance. Barr's catalogue of *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism*, a copy of which is still in Welty's library attesting to her interest, illustrates the historic perspective of the fantastic with work by Dürer, Bosch, Hogarth, Blake, Delacroix, Goya, Rousseau, and Edward Lear, one of Welty's favorite rhymers. The "Brief Chronology: The Dada and Surrealist movements with certain pioneers and antecedents" by Elodie Courter and Barr for the catalogue lists the artists shown in the world's major cities, primarily the Stieglitz, Levy, and Pierre Matisse galleries and MoMA in New York (53-64). We learn from this that in 1930, when Welty began her study at Columbia, MoMA mounted Klee and *Painting in Paris* exhibitions; the latter "include[d] Fantastic-Surrealist group: Picasso, Miro, de Chirico, Lurçat, Chagall, Surville" (62). The chronology is followed by "A list of devices, techniques, media" with some brief explanations and plate numbers, all for self-instruction in viewing the exhibition and the catalogue:

4. *Fantastic perspective* (flattened or reversed) ... 9. *Miracles and anomalies* ... 11. *Fantastic machinery* ... 13. *Creation of evocative chaos* ... 17. *Collage* ("the cutting up of various flat reproductions of objects or parts of objects and pasting them together to form a picture of something new and strange" —Max Ernst) ... 19. *Found objects of Surrealist character* ('Ready-mades,' i.e. manufactured commercial objects; mathematical and other scientific models; natural object, etc.) ... 20. *Found objects "assisted"* ... 21. *Dada and Surrealist objects* (65-66)

That Welty owned the *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* catalogue of 294 pages with more than 200 plates of 700 pieces in the exhibition⁷ signifies her awareness and curiosity about the work whether or not she attended. Knowing this world of opportunities for Welty to encounter Surrealism in particular, I find it no surprise to discover the primary tenets of the movement throughout Welty's work: the resolution of "dream and reality," "psychic automatism" in the "absence of any control exercised by reason," the "omnipotence of dream," the "disinterested play of thought" (Breton 14, 26), an exploration of the "unconscious, the marvelous, the dream, madness, hallucinatory state" that is the fantastic (Nadeau 80).⁸ Surrealism seems to have been as *au courant* in Welty's circle as Freud had been since the 1920s. Readers and critics have often noted the dreams, the somnambulism, the synesthesia, the polyvalence of Welty's language. What has been read in Welty as obscure, as wit, as modernist, as playful, as dense, as grotesque, may be, perhaps should be, read as surreal.

"The Winds"

Elements from the opening passages of "The Winds," published in 1942 in *Harper's Bazaar* and collected in *The Wide Net and Other Stories* of the same year, exhibit the interplay between dream and reality for the young prepubescent girl Josie during the night's equinoctial storm.⁹ Welty's story begins, "When Josie first woke up in the night she thought the big girls of the town were having a hay-ride" ("The Winds" 252). Josie is confident of the reality of this: "she did not question" that the sounds she hears are joyful cries from the big girls—even though the sounds are "cries ... that came stealing through the air" (252). Whereas she "thought" and "did not question," she sees, not the real world but "in her mind," the place from which the sounds emanate: the legendary place, the "Old Natchez Trace," at the "edge of town" (252). Beyond the threshold of her known reality, it is an "old dark place," a double place where the "Old Natchez Trace" (she repeats the name as if chanting a talisman) of bandits, thieves, Indians, traders, and preachers (all adult) is juxtaposed with the Lover's Lane of young people (252).

A corporeal "excitement touched" Josie and she could "see" (as an observer, an audience) "in her imagination" (as a screen, for example) the "leaning wagon coming, the long white-stockinged legs of the big girls hung down in a fringe ... the boys' black stockings stuck out on the other side" (252). Dali or Cocteau or Magritte or Cornell might have made surreal art of the scene. Welty's medium is narrative, and she moves the story from this dream reality to the present-time reality of the equinoctial storm,¹⁰ perhaps an appropriately surreal moment of surprising, although scientifically real, juxtaposition, the day equal to the night suggested in Josie's dream by the white (day) stockinged legs of the big (though still innocent?) girls and the black (night) stockinged legs of the boys, legs that did not hang down shyly in a Victorian fringe, but rather "stuck out" (252).

Outside of Josie's dream, her father is disembodied: "hands reached under her," his "voice," not her father himself, enters her ear "as if he told her a secret"; she lay against his "thin nightshirt," not against his chest (252). Josie *senses* her mother's voice rather than *knowing* her mother—this voice, too, is strange. They all move in the "stirring darkness ... as if they were being led by something invisible," leading one another in the dark as if to "keep the halls and turnings secret within" (252). She locates herself by the "scent of her mother's verbena sachet" and by the unnatural light reflected in the "waist shape of the mirror" (252). Everything becomes animated: windows close, the bed rolls "squeaking on its wheels, ... spools and rods" of a Tinker-Toy tower scatter down, Josie's brother Will "whirls" and cries "'The house is falling down!' ... the stairway g[ives] like a chain, a pendulum shiver[s] in the clock" (253). All is surreal, fantastic, psychic, marvelous, uncontrolled.

More animation: the "eyes of the double-house," Cornella's house, observed by Josie across the street, "seemed to open and shut" with the "strange fluid lightning" (254). Cornella and the house become one: "I see Cornella," we hear four times, assuming Josie says this although Welty provides no tag lines (254). "The pattern of her father's dressing gown" is "stamped" "on the room," the lightning "pulse[s]" making the "wide front window ... oftener light than dark," and "a turning wheel of light" shows the "wicker arabesques" (255). "All their gazes confronted one another. Then in a single flicker, Will's face was lost in sleep. The house moved softly like a boat that has been

stepped into" (255). Into the fantastic falls Josie, first as Alice in Wonderland before the "Queen" of Hearts, then as the Dancing "Princess," then as an acrobat or an Alexander Calder mobile, or a Míro, or an Ernst (256). She "woke only to hunt for signs of the fairies, and counted nothing but a footprint smaller than a bird-claw" plus a "sand pile" that "went into a castle" (255-56). Her "first wish" is "to understand the tongue of birds" ; a June-bug threatens to "turn into a being" (256). When she rides her "golden" bicycle, it is "so as to touch nothing, to make no print on the earliness of the day ... with no hands, no feet, touching nowhere but the one place" (256). Various meanings of Josie's dream visions have been analyzed by Welty scholars (Schmidt 145; Fuller, "Persistence" 126-32), but the Surrealists' art is not to create meaning, but rather to express "the actual functioning of thought" to demonstrate the "omnipotence of dream" (Breton 26). André Breton's aims to resolve "dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into an absolute reality, a *surreality*" (14) seem well-met in "The Winds" that "foreground[s] and fix[es] points of intersection between ostensibly antithetical categories of experience" (Fuller "Persistence" 132).

Joseph Cornell and Americana Fantastica

It was after the publication of "The Winds" that Welty corresponded with fellow-Mississippian Charles Henri Ford, at the time an expatriate. Welty read at least one issue of Ford's Surrealism magazine *View*, the January 1943 *Americana Fantastica* number with Joseph Cornell's cover and "The Crystal Cage (Portrait of Berenice)" (10-16). Welty wrote to Ford thanking him for "sending the Fantastica issue—which it so was! ... Would you please send me the second issue of the second series of *View*, May, 1942, Tanguy-Tchelitchew Number" (16 Jan. 1943). Over her signature Welty folded a paper-cutout of a surrealistically giant grasshopper.

Cornell, Joseph. Covers. *View: Americana Fantastica*. 2nd Ser. No. 4 Jan. 1943.

Cornell's cover, a front and back spread, for *View: Americana Fantastica* is a collage of trapeze and high wire artists in front of Niagara Falls, a huddled group atop the Falls (perhaps a family bathing, a woman doing laundry?), the silhouette of three New York

City landmarks with King Kong atop the Empire State Building, and the young girl Berenice "montaged onto an old map, ... firmly planted in the New World, but also ... the link between fantastic America and Europe and the Middle East" (Hauptman 170). The spine of the double cover is traversed by the base of the Empire State Building and, on top of one another, two images of a Native American, perhaps Sitting Bull, who a decade after defeating Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn toured Europe with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, facing forward with a peace pipe in his lap and also in profile wearing a war headdress. Cornell's fantastic collage of Americana bleeds to the edges of the covers with a drummer, an acrobat, a thespian, a ship, a map and compass, an anchor, and additional children. The juxtapositions of Americana reinterpret the dreams of America: natural wonders, cities rich with opportunities, the land of freedom and pleasure. With one arm, King Kong holds Ann Farrow as he waves off attacking airplanes with the other. (Could it be movie star Fay Wray who looks up from the far left edge of the back cover toward this screen image?)

Cornell's surrealistic pictorial history of America, I venture, would have delighted Welty and perhaps even recalled her childhood parody of the melodramatic silent movies that she titled "The Glorious Apology: A Tragedy," a thirteen-page, thirteen-chapter collage book. She used the front and back covers for both self-promotion and criticism accomplished with cut-and-paste comments in various typefaces. On the front cover, bold headlines above a "free 5-days" examination offer asks **What Spell Does This Strange Book cast over its readers?** (45). On the back cover **HEAR WHAT THE CRITICS SAY ABOUT IT!** looms above thirteen pasted names and comments: LUNATIC AT LARGE is pasted before "—remarkably good!" H. L. Menken finds the book "**Greater Than the Mona Lisa,**" while others brashly admit "Never heard of it," "I haven't read it," and "I know nothing about it" (46). "The Glorious Apology" is filled with puns, drama, dialogue, mystery, and visual and verbal wit. On page one, for example, "tittered" is crossed out and the line continues "parried Lalli coyly. **'Hell.'**" The curse word is pasted on, quotation marks and period added (47). Captioned pictures in a variety of shapes, cut from movie and fashion magazines and perhaps *Popular Mechanics*, and, in one case, augmented with an inked beard as Duchamp would later do for *Mona Lisa*, illustrate the tragedy of "The Glorious Apology" (54). Welty was just twelve when she wrote, designed, and hand lettered this unique piece of Americana.

Welty's "zest and exuberance kept life" for herself and friends both lively and bearable well into the 1930s (Black, "Comic" 39). Cartoons, caricatures, and photographs, many reprinted in *Early Escapades* ([2], 11, 27, 102-3, 141-50), illustrate Welty's sense of parody through curious juxtapositions and what Cornell called "*objet[s] donné[s]*" or given objects"—for Breton, "*objets trouvés*," found objects (Hartigan 18). One photograph in particular that captures a kind of Americana fantastica is a mock-fashion shot of Welty, head wrapped in a scarf, applying face powder to her cheek with a toothbrush. Before her are various "cosmetics": Irradol-Malt tonic, Campbell's Pea Soup, Sunbrite Cleanser, Flit insecticide, and Nu-Shine Black, and fore-grounded in front of these are a dentist's mirror and Scrabble tiles spelling out **HELENA ARDEN** (Welty, *Photographs* xxi). The Surrealists saw "finding as a creative act"; so, too, did Welty create entertainment and art from what was given to her. It is no wonder she delighted in Ford's (and Cornell's) *Americana Fantastica*. "[U]sing the found [or given] object or image endows it with fresh purpose or context, but the found object also gives something new to the artist and the viewer" (Hartigan 18). In "The Winds," found or given objects are plenty. The "double-house" where lives Cornella, an older girl with long golden hair

toward whom Josie's love goes and who is the "forbidden playmate," "looks" to Josie "like a face, with its wide-apart upper windows, the nose-like partition between points at either side, and the roof across which the birds sat" ; Cornella "watched" Josie and "was inscrutable" (257). A Dali dreamscape, Magritte's "The Dominion of Light," or Poe's "Haunted Palace" ? When she sees Cornella stamp angrily, Josie pledges "never [to] take a poison wild strawberry into her mouth again in hope of finding out the secret and the punishment of the world" (258). What can this mean? "June-bugs," "lightning-bugs," "butterflies," and "bees" "surround" Josie in a "great tempest of droning and flying" (258). Wonders are like "falling stars" that lead to a "hope to see snow twice" that gives the dream, first, of a "muff that came from Marshall Field's" and, then, of her father's kiss that opens the memory to another kiss that materializes into a dreamscape-memory of a past summer at "the Chautauqua": a trio of women play a "piano, a cornet, and a violin"; "morning-glories" come out of the horn; Josie is "pierced with pleasure, the cornetist is "like a Queen," like a "figurehead on a Viking ship," her eyes "like the wings of a humming-bird" (259, 260). In the morning after the storm when the surreal of the night seems a dream, other *objets donnés* appear: first, a scrap of paper, "wet and pale and thin, trembling in the air and clinging to the pedestal of the column, as though this were the residue of some great wave that had rolled upon the rock and then receded for another time" (267). Josie reads the indelible pencil marks signed by Cornella as a call to her: "'O my darling I have waited so long when are you coming for me? ... When? When? When?'" and slips it into a second *objet donné*, "her most secret place, the little drawstring bag that held her dancing shoes" (267). Cornella's note, "the little drawstring bag," and the dancing shoes seem to me among the most fantastic of the *objets donnés* of the story.

I believe Ford read Welty's story "The Winds" in *Harper's Bazaar* (August 1942), liked it, and, in the magazine, seeing also "The Robber Bridegroom—American fairy tale by Eudora Welty" in the Gotham Book Mart advertisement and Welty named again for having published in *Accent: A Quarterly of Literature in the Forties* [University of Illinois, Urbana] (1, 6), sent Welty his latest issue of *View, Americana Fantastica*, and invited her to send him a story. She answered Ford, "I'm sorry but I haven't anything at all in the cupboard and can't send anything, and don't know when I will have, though I appreciate your asking" (16 Jan. 1943). Ford sent Welty's reply and the *Harper's Bazaar* that included "The Winds" to Joseph Cornell, his friend and contributor to *View*; whether because the six-inch grasshopper cut out and affixed over her signature belongs in one of Cornell's assemblages or because the characters Josie and Cornella suggest the name Joseph Cornell or because of the story's surrealistic and fantastic style, is not certain.

Two years later Cornell read the story and sometime thereafter wrote Welty a fan letter. Perhaps he was reminded of Ford's gift by three photographs and descriptions by Welty published as "Literature and the Lens" in the August 1944 *Vogue*, an issue Cornell might have had at hand to see the work of his acquaintance, Surrealism groupie and photographer Lee Miller (96-7). Welty's bio line reads, "Few know that Eudora Welty, one of the finest of the young American writers, was once a professional photographer. These pictures of hers have the same dark, curiously psychopathic quality as the stories in *The Wide Net*" ("Literature" 102). ¹¹ In his letter—that Welty so admired that she later framed it to hang in her breakfast area—Cornell refers to the "two years since" Ford gave him Welty's "letter with the folded grasshopper," and explains, [I've] "been meaning to write and tell you how I liked your story called "The Winds" with its illustration in HARPER'S BAZAAR. Anyone who can write so

authentically about little girls like Josie and Cornella I consider a special kind of person. I wondered if my own little girl in *The Crystal Cage* of the Americana Fantastica issue of VIEW appealed at all to you.

More recently," Cornell continues, "I've caught up with the issue of VOUGE [sic] that had your photographs and an agreeable surprise it was, especially the house at twilight."¹² Welty's photograph of "the house at twilight" ("Literature" 103) that she later titled "Home abandoned/old Natchez Trace/near Clinton" (*One Time* 45) is of one of John Robinson's ancestral homes. Cornell read that Welty and a friend, perhaps Helen Lotterhos with whom she made excursions to paint watercolors (Marrs 91-2), had "seen the chimneys just at first-dark, after following a cedar avenue that curved up out of a dark ravine where the Natchez Trace once went by.

"Welty, Eudora. Home abandoned / old Natchez Trace, near Clinton"

"LITERATURE AND THE LENS" *VOGUE* 104 [1 AUGUST 1944]: 103; *ONE TIME, ONE PLACE* 45.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF EUDORA WELTY, LLC

It was an evening in November or December, with a wind smelling of night-rain It seemed haunted and beautiful at the same time—indeed much had happened in it The bricks, baked of the red clay of the place, were of a glowing rose.¹³ ... Spring would come and a fruit orchard would suddenly come to life down an overgrown slope and thick irises would show where a garden was, with roses gone to the wild blooming ... always the dark cedars, ... unchanging and tragically shaped by storm and years. (Rpt. *Occasions* 72)

The photo and "accompanying text," writes Cornell, "has greatly stimulated me. Do you remember the splendid passage in "Le Grand Meaulnes" when the boy first sights the pigeons and the turrets of the castle at dusk?"¹⁴ Cornell's letter is on his customary blue paper, with a cutout and toppling brick chimney. A chimney sweep, his cap flying off, climbs out, soot-faced with a butterfly-shaped yellow broadsheet on which the

words Dear Eudora Welty are typed, speared on his staff. On the back of the page, Cornell recounts a dream, a "spell" that Welty's photograph of the house "had worked" on him.

I dozed—of a sudden I was present at the moment of its demolition. At the split-second "coup de grace" that toppled its magnificent old chimney an old ship's figurehead—in the shape of a Moorish pirate that had once proudly scanned the waves on an East Indiaman arose from his crypt and shot out of the chimney with all the fury of an avenging angel. He kept on going like a Fourth of July rocket while a rain of fine soot slowly fell and covered the landscape like a light, teasing fall of snow. The figurehead, I believe, has become a constellation, like the well known Mermaid Tavern sign.¹⁵

The play of language, dream, automatic writing, confluence of fantastic and real, the surprising juxtapositions of Cornell's letter must have immediately invited Welty into the funhouse of Cornell's assemblages. Indeed, the admired house in the photograph was the basis for the setting, plot, dream, memory, tragedy, haunting, and art of Welty's story "A Sketching Trip," composed the previous spring when she had sent the photographs and then the descriptive texts to *Vogue*; the story had been sold to *Atlantic Monthly* a year before Cornell's letter arrived and was waiting there to be published in the summer of 1945 (Polk 371, 378).

"A Sketching Trip"

"A Sketching Trip" is an "uncalled-up" memory of Delia Farrar's experience of the adult world from a child's point of view twenty summers earlier at Fergusson's Wells told in juxtaposition with Delia's return to the Wells on a sketching trip (263). Delia notes that this is "a day you could touch. It was texture she had always wanted", and she wonders if she can now, as an adult, capture the "texture she had felt as a child at Fergusson's Wells—then she had first put out her hand and touched what was around her—an outer world. *At the time* she knew it. That was the remarkable thing. She knew this was discovery; she had reached with her full reach, put out adoring hands and touched the world" (264). Delia's task this day is to recover the past sufficiently to allow her to transform herself back into the wondering, accepting child who sees, smells, touches all and thereby knows the outer world and, holding onto that psychic reality, transfer it back into the present in her painting. "Were you ever able [to show this joy]", she asks herself,—"a joy that had no premonition or thinking back, that had neither pity nor calculation or other thought of herself—only a touching of the outward pulse, the awareness of a tender surface underneath which flowed and trembled and pressed life itself" (264). Delia's definition of joy recalls the definition of the fantastic offered by Parker Tyler in the editor's note to the *Americana Fantastica* issue of *View*.

The fantastic ... [h]aving no home but its own ... cannot be transplanted without transplanting the soil in which it grows. Its cosmic myth is the magic carpet The fantastic is the inalienable property of the untutored, the oppressed, the insane, the anarchic, and the amateur, at the moment when these feel the apocalyptic hug of contraries. The fantastic is the child of unmeasured love and unmeasured hate It is illusionist, not in the sense of representation, but in the magical sense. (5)

As in Welty's earlier story "The Winds," acute sensibility creates an ekphrastic recreation of multiple layers of reality, memory, and sur-reality. There are two houses in "A Sketching Trip", the main house for meals and entertainments and an abandoned house that belonged to the proprietress's ancestors. In the near distance and then right

in front of Delia is the present-time reality of the falling-down abandoned house plus her memory of the story, listened to in her childhood, of love and murder in the house. The fictional house, created from Welty's memory and from her friend's abandoned family home captured in the photograph, is multiplied and refracted further in Welty's story by a "bad little oil" painting of what Miss Mews had said was the "haunted house [that] is Mrs. Fergusson's ancestors' home" that Delia discovers (re-discovers) on this sketching trip. The other house, the "dilapidation, that old affair" —the fictionalized main house of Ferguson's Wells, "faded like an old photograph, and elaborate as a ship ... all details ... clear but the whole faded" is modeled on the house at Hubbard's Wells where Welty and her mother sojourned for summer respites ("Sketching" 276, 265, 273). Assembled as in a Cornell collage or construction are visualizations of the Robinson ancestral home, Welty's commentary and photograph of that neglected house, the Hubbard's Wells house, and Welty's fictionalized renderings: the oil painting of a parallel abandoned house, the childhood and present visits to the haunted house, the story of what occurred in the house as told to the young Delia and recollected during the sketching trip, the memories of the events in the main house, and Delia's watercolor sketches of the ruin. The surfeit of fantastic detail, as in "The Winds", is made surreal by a storm and by memory: wild strawberries, remembered "sighs the odor of almonds," a "rose-red brick in hand", a snake in the well, "mockingbirds drunk on cherries", wasps, dirty playing cards with red parrots, and "fern fronds" that "reached for legs walking up" the "flaky steps" (264, 266, 276, 271). Welty observes Delia observing her memory of observing people and events of the past, the past that "That one summer's buggy ride had made ... remote" (264). Charles Henri Ford commented in an interview in 2000 that the best observation is in a dream, where the dreamer is both actor and observer/audience for that which is observed. He explains, "When you're curious you discover [as Delia does on her sketching trip]. When you dream you're a spectator [like Delia the child at Fergusson's Wells]. Like a movie, it doesn't mean that it's that personal. It's something that is not you but you as an audience. With curiosity [as a child] you become involved, and when you wake up from a dream [as an adult] you're no longer involved" (Ford "Charles").

Within Delia's dream-memory of "[t]hat one summer" ("Sketching" 264), Welty paints a surreal picture of Mrs. Fergusson's admirer Mr. Torrance who will be shot by Mr. Fergusson. When Mr. Torrance enters the dining room, the condiments become animated; he is "immediately and ruddily reflected in the hundred flushed faces of the cut-glass vinegar cruets and compotes of strawberry preserves which watched him with the compound eye of an insect" (270). Welty's Delia continues her child's memory-observations impelled by her youthful curiosity:

Mr. Torrance was silky-looking with a mouth of silk. He seemed full of the well waters, brimming He was weighty as a seal. When he sat alone at his table the room seemed pinned, anchored down; it was his chair that fastened it for keeps to the round world. Food steamed toward him on its little winds. He groaned in joy all to himself, as he drew the napkin over his rolly lap, like a mother covering her good child and wishing it sweet dreams. He was as perfect as wax fruit in his pink-shaded hands and face, and a pin tried in his cheek, she had imagined, would be likely to make only a powdery hole—from which the wind of his laughter, though, would suddenly strike you, and his near, choppy teeth would shoot crumbs of his laughter like dragon fire at little girls. (270-1)

We could be looking at a Chagall or a Picasso, a Dali, Ernst, or Magritte. Delia continues, Mr. Torrance "eating, entered his world and dream" (271). At the end of the

remembered scenes, Delia emerges from her dream and makes three sketches of the abandoned manor storied with tragedy, but

none pleased her. ... She stood up and gazed awhile at the color of the bricks intensified with the deepening light. The badness of her work went out of her. The chimney itself, in its beauty, in its presence, as long as it stood there was enough. Enough, she thought, for all the error applied to that place, all misconceptions, for all that went astray in sight of it, better than a dream. (286)

Several years earlier, in particular in reference to "The Winds," Welty had shown a frustration with editors' calls to straighten out her stories, to make them realistic when all that she observed in the world was not so. She wrote to her agent Diarmuid Russell, "It seems that nothing is to be left clean or abstract or safe in the old places of the mind or heart or the wild impossible dream" (26 June 1941, qtd in Kreyling, *Author* 76).

The surreal

Welty's photograph of the "plain Georgian, very hospitably designed house that would always hold a quality of vitality and of vivid happenings" (Welty, "Literature" 72); her story "A Sketching Trip", inspired by the discovery, photography, and description of the house; Cornell's seeing and reading Welty's story "The Winds" and "Literature and the Lens" prose and photographs; and Cornell's sudden waking from the Welty-inspired dream that "topple[s] [the house's] magnificent old chimney" that then initiates his fantastic letter to the author all suggest a world open and responsive to Surrealism as defined by Breton, edited by Ford, and constructed by Cornell, a dreamer if ever there was one. Dan Monroe, Executive Director of Peabody Essex Museum where *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination* was exhibited in 2007, described Cornell as "an extraordinary American artist whose work captures the interest and imagination of all who see it because of the richness of the ideas he explored His fusion of art, culture, and history ... transform[s] connections and juxtapositions across time, cultures, and concepts." Cornell's work in the 1943 *Americana Fantastica*, if not elsewhere, captured Welty's imagination.

Welty answered Cornell's letter:

Your letter jumping all soot covered out of its own chimney did reach me and amaze me, and I owe you very much of an apology for not answering it before now —thanking you for it, that is— It was wonderful of you to make such a thing for my astonishment Yes, I do remember (I cut it out) the Crystal Cage¹⁶ and your little girl—and had wondered when in the world (or moon) you had found them—they did give a special feeling. It pleases me that you like "The Winds"—am glad to hear it. But the photographs I took I feel are not really good, the subjects themselves were wonderful, but I am an inept photographer, or was—I do know the feeling of finding things in the familiar streets or just off them that make you think they never can be expressed. (3 April 1945)

Welty sent the artist contact prints of two photographs, one, a decorated circus wagon, the other a garden statue at Rosedown plantation in St. Francisville, Louisiana,¹⁷ that Welty obliquely referred to in "Literature and the Lens" (71). These "snapshots of figures", Welty writes to Cornell are "simply a token of thanks and because you seem so to like such things." There is no evidence that Cornell used the two photos in his subsequent constructions and collages, nor are they among the 38,502 digitized images in the Joseph Cornell Papers in the American Art Archive at the Smithsonian suggesting that Welty did not become one of the women about whom Cornell amassed a portfolio

of images, clippings, and notes. Welty, on the other hand, does provide further evidence of her fascination with Cornell and Surrealism.

From the time of correspondence between Cornell and Welty until the summer of 1948, Welty was writing the novel *Delta Wedding* and the short stories that would be published as *The Golden Apples*. Then she spent the summer of 1948 in New York City and Westchester County with fellow author Hildegard Dolson writing skits and songs for a revue eventually titled *What Year Is This?* Only "Bye-Bye Brevoort", a one-act farce, was produced, but typescripts of the revue in the Eudora Welty Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History include "Fifty-Seventh Street Rag", a "Ballet" set at an opening of a 57th Street gallery with a large Henry Moore-style sculpture center stage (Gordon). The set includes paintings representative of "Picasso, Dali, Mondrian, Miro, Paul Klee, and Grandma Moses. They would range in subject matter of course from non-objective to primitive, and probably include a Harlequin, a cubist still-life, a surrealist piece, an abstract, a nude or so, a portrait in late-Picasso style, a childlike stick-man composition" (Welty "Fifty-Seventh"). A young man put into a dream-frenzy from all the stimulus of the art plays the roles of a variety of gallery-goers, dancing all the while and on occasion repeating "a kind of chorus ... as if in imitation of steam engine in saying the name 'Tchelichew'":

Modern Art's coming down the track!

Tchelichew, Tchelichew, Tchelichew, Tchelichew!

Retrospective

Introspective

Non-objective

True prospective

Arp! Arp!

(ARP! ARP! like train whistle) (Welty "Fifty-Seventh")

"Fifty-Seventh Street Rag" and other skits of the 1948 revue convincingly illustrate how Modern and Surreal art permeated Welty's imagination. She imagined Danny Kaye, for whom she had tremendous enthusiasm, playing the role of the young man chugging out Tchelitchew, Tchelitchew (Gordon 56). The surrealistic dream of "Fifty-Seventh Street Rag", suggests in part that Charles Henri Ford accepted Welty's dollar for the requested copies of the "May, 1942, Tanguy-Tchelitchew Number" of *View* (Welty, Ford).

Thirty years later, William Maxwell, novelist and editor at the *New Yorker* and Welty's friend, sent Diane Waldman's book *Joseph Cornell* to Welty as a Christmas present. In a letter to Maxwell dated 15 February 1978, Welty expressed her enthusiasm for the gift:

Joseph Cornell is beautiful to have all together I am so glad you sent me this book, which I did not know existed. He is part of my early years in New York, as I suspect he was of yours too—and there is something of magic-not-lost about his work that touches the heart as well as the imagination, don't you feel too? If we were all cooks, we would be often using the same ingredients. The most hypnotic ones to me are those with constellations, and the globes, the mysteriousness of space present in a box. For myself, I always loved boxes and never found anything claustrophobic about them, only the sense of something that will hold treasure, not in a miser's sense of holding it but a believer's. I love the Soap Bubble Set one of the Lunar Space Object as well as anything in the book. And the Forgotten Game (the birds) and the Medici Slot Machine.¹⁸

After relating others' comments about Cornell, Welty recalls for Maxwell the magic of having been written to by Cornell:

One of the strangest things: a long time ago, I suppose it was in the late thirties,¹⁹ I had a letter in the form of a collage to me from Joseph Cornell—this seems hard to believe, but when I find it I will send it to you to join in my astonishment (which no one else ever did). It had some written words but I have forgotten them all—what I can see now is the pasted-on figure of a man in a romantic costume coming out of a brick chimney, along with a LOT of sparks and smoke, such as comes out of a steam locomotive—and walking out into the sky. I can think of only one connection between Joseph Cornell and a beginning writer [i.e. herself] in Mississippi—Charles Henri Ford. At about this time Charles Henri was editing a little magazine in Columbus (the Depression) and I believe I sent him a contribution—forget now. Or maybe it was when *View* was being published. I remember feeling awfully shy over this visitation and I wonder how a recluse like Cornell ever got it mailed? I was probably so far away and remote to him that it was all safely surreal? ... In the book Cornell is quoted as saying "Everything can be used—but of course one doesn't know it at the time. How does one know what a certain object will tell another?" You see your present has been acting and acting on my inner life. Thank you for it.

20

Confluence again illustrates the mysterious, surreal ways that the imaginations of these two artists, Joseph Cornell and Eudora Welty, acted upon one another. Although Cornell and Welty seem separate stars in a large galaxy, perhaps we should consider that they are part of one constellation. More readings of "The Winds" and "A Sketching Trip", of her story "Powerhouse" that jazz essayist Whitney Baillett calls an "extraordinary mixture of surrealism and truth" (751) and new studies of Welty's essay "Some Notes on River Country", her review of Virginia Woolf's *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories* (and perhaps the other twenty-four reviews Welty wrote between 1942 and 1945), and her novel *Delta Wedding* that she was writing during the time period discussed here may provide additional points of light to reveal the story of the constellation, a trope common to both artists. New, open-minded readings should also eschew the conservative and constraining analyses that relegate Welty's fiction and life to the arenas of Southern Gothicism and spinsterhood. Reading and viewing the works of Cornell and Welty concomitantly, we can achieve a realistic sense of the marvelous, the fantastic, and the surreal with which Welty imbues her writing and, in consequence, have a much enlarged understanding of the rich artistic culture that permeated literary artists of the 1940s in particular.

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NOTES

1. As documented in the authorized biography, Welty was in New York City once or twice a year from 1933 through 1944 save 1937 and 1939, staying variously for a weekend or months at a time. She was a copy editor and reviewer at the *New York Times Book Review* from June to early October 1944. (Marrs [passim] 39-118).
2. See Barilleaux, *Passionate Observer: Eudora Welty among Artists of the Thirties* with essays by Marrs, Black, O'Connor; Corcoran's exhibit *Eudora Welty in New York: Photographs of the Early 1930s*; McHaney, *Eudora Welty as Photographer* with essays by McHaney, Phillips, and Willis; and Chouard, *Eudora Welty et la photographie. Naisance d'une vision*.
3. In her essay about Welty and the neobaroque, Yaeger addresses twentieth-century reviewers who charged Welty's writing with "estheticism", "precious[ness]", obscurantism, and "pretentious[ness]" (Rosenfeld 43, "In the Deep" 47, Peden 120, Towers 301). Yaeger and the scholars listed below offer encouragement for new readings (and audiences) of Welty. Pitavy-Souques finds Welty's early New York City story "Flowers for Marjorie" in which the desperate out-of-work husband puts a knife through his pregnant wife's chest an expressionist and surrealist story (72, 80-1). Kreyling has spoken of trying to discern whether the "wildness" that Welty confessed in a letter to her agent was a panicky or a surreal moment. Eichelberger has cited numerous Welty letters that are replete with the surreal dreams of spring bulbs, roots, shoots, and flowers that remind one of Pavel Tchelitchev's art. In "The Persistence of Memory: Eudora Welty, Salvador Dali, and the Making of an American Surrealist", Fuller provides an analysis of how Welty's language "subvert[s] rational categories of thought, [and] reveal[s] desire's de-centering of the subject" as well as other characteristics of the surreal (2). See also Fuller's essay on "No Place for You, My Love" and the surreal.
4. "Both Dali and Miss Welty are mythologists and creators of legend, both take their metaphor from dreams, and yet both are devoted naturalists; and each has a mother-country—Dali—Spain; Miss Welty, the Natchez country.... Even at the risk of satirizing Miss Welty's stories, I suggest a study of this Schiaparelli-Dali advertisement [Shocking Radiance] to see the *reductio ad absurdum* of the elements in Miss Welty's latest work which have no place in such a serious and greatly endowed writer" (Trilling 42).
5. In *View*, the Surrealism journal edited by Charles Henri Ford, Marius Bewley found Sansom's "allegory so complex and fantastically worked out that its erudition and solemnity would be justified only by pointing towards some new, original insight" (19).
6. *Cubism and Abstract Art* was on exhibit 2 Mar.–19 Apr. 1936; *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism*, 6 Dec. 1936–27 Jan. 1937. Welty was in New York in "early 1936" (Marrs 50) and in all likelihood again sometime during her photography exhibit at Eugene's (31 Mar.–15 Apr. 1936) as illustrated by her manuscript notes on the back of the exhibit program.
7. The catalogue also includes a listing of the entire exhibition, a brief bibliography, three essays, an index, and a list of the sixteen films in MoMA's Art Film Library that includes Georges Méliès' *Le voyage à la Lune* (1900) and Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919). Welty describes her childhood viewing of the latter film in *One Writer's Beginnings* (36).
8. See Fuller's "Persistence", whose study of Dali and Welty led me to Breton and Nadeau and Fuller's *Eudora Welty and Surrealism*, due to be published in late 2012 or early 2013.
9. Fuller points out in his reading of "The Winds" that Welty's frequent use of a child's point of view accounts for the disassociation of reality and often deflects our attention away from realizing the surreal qualities of the scene ("Persistence" 126-33).
10. Welty first wrote the storm as a tornado, drawing on an experience in her youth (Marrs 72)., so we see here her brilliant fictional choice to make the disturbance the autumnal equinox.
11. Welty had been profiled in *Vogue* the year before in "Before Band Wagons: A vanguard—seven men and one woman—a sculptor, painter, architect, composer, three writers and a poet" by Leo

Lerman [erroneously credited to Leo Lerner], submitted July 1, 1943, according to Lerman's journals (80, 14). Lerman who at the time was writing for *Vogue*, *Glamour*, and *Harper's Bazaar* where five of the seven stories in *The Wide Net and Other Stories* (1943) were published, wrote, Welty "does not borrow from any of her predecessors—European or American. She is a great stylist writing American English ... intuitively, economically, poetically, simply, and with a TNT impact" (141). Writer Henry Miller, sculptor Ossip Zadkine, critic and E.M. Forster biographer Lionel Trilling, architect Frederick Kiesler, composer Samuel Barber, abstract expressionist Morris Graves, and poet Karl Shapiro are the other vanguards. I suspect that Lerman or his essay that included an excerpt from Welty's story "Asphodel" published in *Yale Review* (1942) was instrumental in Welty's "Literature and the Lens" feature. Lerman reviewed *The Wide Net* for the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* (McHaney, *Eudora Welty: The Contemporary* 37-8).

12. Cornell writes, "During the past spring, summer, fall [1944] circumstances led me to discover such an endless maze of forgotten trails and bypaths within five miles radius of my house that I haven't recovered yet. I despair of ever getting into words the intensity of experience connected with these simple bicycle spins that resulted in such apocalyptic splendor and endless joy of discovery. I have copious notes to help me remember". I surmise that this was Cornell's exploration of the Garden Center, a nursery in Flushing, New York, the notes from which can be viewed in the digital archive of the Joseph Cornell Papers. I estimate that Cornell wrote to Welty in the winter between Nov. 1944 and Feb. 1945.

13. Diane Waldman writes that "Cornell often spoke fondly of buildings in the process of demolition, finding beauty in the fading colors, in the warmth of human association" (26).

14. Perhaps Cornell refers to the following scene in Alain-Fournier's 1913 novel (*The Wanderer* or *The Lost Domain* in English translations): "Not one rooftop, not one soul to be seen. Not even the cry of a curlew in the reeds of the marshes. And above that perfect solitude shone a bright, cold December sun. / It must have been about three o'clock in the afternoon when at last he saw the spire of a gray turret above a forest of firs. 'Some old abandoned manor,' he thought, 'or some deserted dovecote ...' He continued on his way without quickening his pace" (50). Cornell might have read the novel in French or in a 1928 Houghton translation.

15. John Keats, "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern": "I have heard that on a day / Mine host's sign-board flew away, / Nobody knew whither, till / An astrologer's old quill / To a sheepskin gave the story" (ll. 13-17).

16. Cornell's Crystal Cage, modeled on the 19th century chinoiserie Pagode de Chateloup, is a cutout from a paper filled with typed words and phrases of themes and things of curiosity and mystery for Cornell, in other words, a paper shrine or memorial to the power of language to hold literal, metaphoric, and psychic meaning.

17. See "130. Ticket office, State Fair/Jackson/1939" in *Photographs* for an image from which the contact print was trimmed and Negative no. 360 in the Welty Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

18. Waldman, Color Plates 32, 22, 11 or 26. See pp. 22-4 for descriptions of "The Crystal Cage", the *Medici Slot Machine*, and *Soap Bubble* series; pp. 26-7 for *Forgotten Game*.

19. 1940s; see n. 11.

20. Welty refers to *Blues: A Magazine in New Rhythms* (nine issues, Feb. 1929-Fall 1930) that published work by Paul Bowles, Kay Boyle, Erskine Caldwell, H.D., Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and others, but not Welty. Welty's complete letter is now reprinted in Marrs, *What There Is to Say*, pp.335-7.

ABSTRACTS

This essay demonstrates the ways that American author and photographer Eudora Welty was fully immersed in the 1930s culture of Surrealism as it pervaded New York City and how surrealist effects are clearly evident in her work. Archival research resoundingly establishes that Welty read fellow Mississippian Charles Henri Ford's surrealist magazine *View*, imbibed the art of Dalí, Picasso, Miró, De Chirico, Magritte, and Tchelitchev, and wrote stories that illustrate the surrealists' tenets of the "omnipotence of dream" and the "disinterested play of thought" as stated by André Breton. Following her reading of *View: Americana Fantastica* that featured a text and photomontage by Joseph Cornell, Welty wrote to Ford praising the publication. Ford forwarded her letter to Cornell. The emerging cross correspondence and literary appreciation between the three authors testify to the existence of a specific, original network of relationships. This essay demonstrates that within the cosmos of surrealism, Ford, Cornell, and Welty comprise a constellation of writers and artists who knew and admired one another without a specific literary salon for encouragement. With this new recognition and respect for Welty's surrealist perspective, readers gain an entirely fresh appreciation of "The Winds" and "A Sketching Trip," a story not published in any of Welty's collections.

Cet article présente le très fort intérêt de l'auteur et photographe américaine Eudora Welty pour la culture surréaliste du New York des années 1930 et met en avant les influences surréalistes présentes dans son œuvre. L'exploitation des archives démontre en effet que Welty lisait le magazine *View* publié par Charles Henri Ford, son compatriote du Mississippi; qu'elle s'est également imprégnée de l'art de Dalí, Picasso, Miró, De Chirico, Magritte, et Tchelitchev, et a rédigé des nouvelles illustrant les dogmes surréalistes de la "toute-puissance du rêve" et du "jeu désintéressé de la pensée" tels que formulés par André Breton. Suite à sa lecture de *View: Americana Fantastica*, qui contenait un texte et un photomontage de Joseph Cornell, Welty a fait parvenir à Ford une lettre le félicitant pour cette publication. Ford transmet alors la lettre à Cornell, permettant ainsi l'émergence d'une correspondance croisée entre les trois auteurs, attestant de l'existence d'un réseau relationnel et artistique particulier et original. Cet article démontre qu'au sein de l'univers surréaliste, Ford, Cornell et Welty participent d'une constellation d'artistes et d'écrivains qui se connaissaient et s'appréciaient les uns les autres sans pour autant se retrouver au sein d'un mouvement clairement établi. Cette reconnaissance nouvelle des perspectives surréalistes de Welty permet une appréciation originale de "The Winds" ainsi que de "A Sketching Trip," une nouvelle inédite.

INDEX

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