

Perspective

A Pattern of Quantum Leaps in the Literary Epiphanies of Eudora Welty with Implications for the Understanding and Treatment of Bipolar Syndrome

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The goal of the research presented here was twofold: (1) to establish the nature of a recurrent pattern in the literary epiphanies (moments intense, mysterious, and rich in implication) in the shorter works of the celebrated fictionist Eudora Welty [12] (1909-2001) and (2) to indicate the apparent implications of these moments for a theoretical and practical understanding of what I call *manic agitation*, one of the “mixed states” (Jamison 1993) that often occur in manic-depressive or bipolar syndrome [1]. The methodology in pursuing the first goal was defined in such a way as to make it independent of the second one: the pattern shaping the visual content of the intense literary moments was determined first and the psychological implications were explored later. But these implications were not hard to find. Indeed, Welty’s epiphanic pattern proved to be an ideal metaphor to clarify a troubling jump that blended the attraction and peril of the “mixed state” Jamison depicts. The Welty pattern was one of *quantum leaps*, each a sudden accession of a new level of awareness joyful and menacing, exhilarating and potentially fatal.

The method used to gain the findings to attain the first goal – adequate description of Welty’s epiphany pattern – may be clearly set forth. The method is phenomenological: it attempts a description of the literarily presented intense moment as experienced by the reader. There are three (inter)subjective components at work here, and three objective ones. Subjectively, the epiphanic moment is felt as intense, mysterious (rationally unaccountable), and expansive in meaning (with a scope of implication disproportionate to the brevity of the moment). These three traits make up the way the reader experiences the epiphany: the experience is a subjective one, but since each of the moments appears largely as quoted or closely paraphrased material in this essay, what may be called an intersubjectivity will occur to the extent that the reactions of the essay’s author and its reader agree. There are also three objective components: we seek to identify the use of one or more of the four elements anciently defined (earth, water, air, and fire), a pattern of motion,

and characteristic recurrent shape(s). There is nothing *a priori* about these objective components: the supposition that they may predominate in intense, mysterious, expansive epiphanies is nothing more than a hypothesis to be tested. But it is a hypothesis that the works of pioneering literary phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) richly confirm [3] (see the sampling in Bachelard 1971); and the epiphany-describing method adopted here may be regarded as a systematization of Bachelard’s [4]. An additional, rewardingly useful feature of the method used here is to seek a paradigm of the epiphany pattern observed, an instance in which it appears most intense, most fully elaborated, and richest in implication.

In 33 books about Welty, only one index includes Bachelard: Jan Nordby Gretlund [11], quotes him as saying, in *The Poetics of Space*, that “Memories are motionless” (336; PS 9) [4]. Not one article-length Bachelardian study of Welty can be found, although there is a Bachelardian study of “quantum changes” in epiphanies (Bidney 2004) [10]. *Eudora Welty and the Poetics of the Body* [6] contains some fine contributions to the study of her imagery, notably Jean-Marc Victor’s remarks on screens and nets in her face images [10], Suzan Harrison’s comments on the racial tensions in “A Curtain of Green” [6], and Noel Polk’s essay “The Ponderable Heart” [8] – all of lively relevance to the reader of the present investigation. Both the descriptive findings noted here and the indications of their psychological resonances (examined below) are new.

The most crucial component of a welty epiphany is the pattern of motion, and Welty’s favored revelatory movement is a leap, at once perilous and alluring, a jump or sudden outburst with implications both destructive and life-giving, creating in the reader an exhilarated and at the same time troubled mental state of *manic agitation*. A person may leap, or a heart; or there may be an outpouring of water, blood, sunlight, fire – even the leap of a fiery beard. The elemental components of the epiphanic pattern can thus include fire, water, and earth, though fire is the most vivid and frequent. The leap, surge, up burst, rush may center

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on, or arise from, a shape that is usually rounded (fruit, flower, face, heart, crater, circular water-ripples) but sometimes felt to be vaguely formless, monumental, mountain-like, massive; on occasion a rounded form turns suddenly inchoate or mountain-like. In many cases, too, the rounded shape, if it is flattened rather than spheric, may be seen as a wheel with spokes, a flower with veins, a foam-creased rock surface; and, in analogous fashion, the leap may morph into a whirl, a rapid spin. Often the spoke-vein-crease theme will transform into a net. But always central is that the motion linked to a rounded or inchoate form – whether unitary or with a structure of branchings, rays, radii – will always be the *perilous and alluring leap*, ambiguous in its vital and mortal implications, allied to the “sublime” in attraction and fear. It is precisely analogous to the “quantum leap” in subatomic physics because through it the perceiver attains a discernibly new “level” of awareness, a new level of intensity (for good and ill).

A lyrical artist, Eudora Welty fittingly presents her paradigm of the quantum leap epiphany in the climactic episode of her story “June Recital” [12]. It occurs during a performance by a piano teacher – a dedicated but solitary figure, not born in the community but of unknown origin, treated like a stranger and kept at a distance – from whom the sudden eruptive keyboard brilliance in the rather Beethoven-like piece comes as an arousing and frightening shock. (The musical selection, we later learn, was written by Hugo Wolf, who went mad).

The piece was so hard that she made mistakes and repeated to correct them, so long and stirring that it soon seemed longer than the day itself had been, and in playing it, Miss Eckhart assumed an entirely different face. Her skin *flattened* and drew across her cheeks, her lips changed. The face could have belonged to someone else--not even to a woman, necessarily. It was the face a *mountain* could have, or what might be seen behind the veil of a waterfall. There in the rainy light it was a *sightless* face, one for music only. (CS 300-1; emphases added).

Note how the epiphanic shape behaves: the round face is flattened, made massive and shapeless and sightless, attuned only to the audible world. We are prepared for a violent, even fiery outburst to leap up, jump forth from that world:

The music came with greater volume – with fewer halts – and Jinny Love tiptoed forward and began turning the music. Miss Eckhart did not even see her – her arm *struck* the child, making a run. Coming from Miss Eckhart, the music made all the pupils uneasy almost *alarmed*; something had burst out, unwanted, exciting, from the wrong person’s life. This was some brilliant thing too splendid for Miss Eckhart, *piercing and striking* the air around her the way a Christmas *firework* might almost *jump* out of the hand that was, each year, inexperienced anew. (CS 301; emphases added).

The quantum leap betokens a vision (or clair audience) not only of fire but blood:

It was when Miss Eckhart was young that she had learned this piece, Cassie divined. Then she had almost forgotten it. But it took only a summer rain to start it again; she had been pricked and the music *came like the red blood* under the scab of a forgotten fall. The little girls, all stationed about the studio with the rushing rain outside, looked at one another, the three

quite suddenly on some equal footing. They were all wondering – thinking – perhaps about escape. A mosquito circled Cassie’s head, singing, and fastened on her arm, but she dared not move. (CS 301; emphases added)

The music and the blood of a forgotten wound (plus a likely new mosquito bite) start up again; one must ponder uneasy thoughts about escape. Excitement brings fear. Not surprisingly,

The music was too much for Cassie Morrison. It lay in the very *heart of the stormy* morning – there was something almost *too violent* about a storm in the morning. She stood back from the room with her whole body averted as if to ward off *blows* from Miss Eckhart’s strong left hand, her eyes on the faintly winking *circle of the safe* in the wall. (CS 301; emphases added)

Blended with the transformed face is the new rounded image of the heart, also tying in with the frightening blood, and linked in form to the circular wall-safe.

But the quantum change in awareness is not yet over; it must now arouse in Cassie thoughts about an earlier leap from a hedge and a rising of planets, plus a turning of constellations – adding the epiphanic wheel motif to the varied circles. Then the violence of the playing will climax and conclude with the motifs of a foamy rock, another leap – taking the shape of a “startled recoil” – and finally a revisiting of Miss Eckhart’s audible body as visually concealed, inchoate, massive, a “great lump” now that the outburst, the leap-experience, is done.

Cassie thought as she listened, had to listen, to the music that perhaps more than anything it was the terrible fate that came on her that people could not forgive Miss Eckhart for. Yet things divined and endured, *spectacular* moments, *hideous* things like the [...] stranger *jumping* out of the hedge at nine o’clock, all seemed to be by their own nature rising--and so alike--and crossing the sky and setting, the way the planets did. Or they were more like whole constellations, *turning at their very centers* maybe [...].

Performing, Miss Eckhart was unrelenting. Even when the worst of the piece was over, her fingers like foam on rocks pulled at the spent-out part with unstilled persistence, insolence, *violence*.

Then she dropped her hands.

“Play it again, Miss Eckhart!” they all cried in *startled recoil*, begging for the last thing they wanted, looking at her *great lump* of body.

“No.” (CS 302; emphases added)

The mood of fevered exhilaration, of something threatening persistence, insolence, violence”) in the spontaneous overflow of not wholly aesthetic feeling, conveys precisely the manic agitation that distinguishes the epiphanies of Welty.

“The Wide Net” offers a quantum leap revelation so richly complete and effectively intense that it competes with “June Recital” in paradigmatic wholeness and power. The tone of the tale is more relaxed, recalling the high jocularity of Faulkner’s *The Reivers*, but the epiphanic set-piece conveys again an unmistakably Weltyan ambivalent and nervous joy. After William

Wallace Jamieson went on a drunken binge with a friend, his wife left him a note explaining that she planned to drown herself in Pearl River. William Wallace has just come up from a rather dangerous underwater exploration after he and his friends have “dragged” Pearl River with a net and found nothing. In “an agony from submersion,” he suggests to the rescue troop that they dine on the fish they’ve caught; meanwhile a buzzard “turn[s] a few slow wheels in the sky” (CS 181), a circular epiphanic theme-sign. After dinner he falls asleep –

But it seemed almost at once that he was *leaping up*, and one by one up sat the others in their *ring* and looked at him. (CS 181; emphases added)

Polite questions are posed by kindly comrades,

But William Wallace answered none of them anything, for he was *leaping all over the place* and all, over them and the feast and the bones of the feast, trampling the sand, up and down, and *doing a dance so crazy that he would die next*. He took a big catfish and hooked it in his belt buckle and went up and down so that they all hollered, and the *tears of laughter streaming down his cheeks* made him put his hand up, and the two days’ growth of *beard began to jump out, bright red*. (CS 181; emphases added)

The Dionysian phallic dance, boasting valor and manliness but with more than the remnants of underwater terror not yet shaken off, has in it intimations of death and brings on laughter inseparable from tears. The beard turns to Bacchic fire. The dancing of William Wallace, like the piano music of Miss Eckhart, explodes with accumulated built-up tensions; indeed, we learn at story’s end that his wife has played unfunny tricks on him before and will do so again. Manic agitation is again central to the epiphanic arts of music, wild dancing, and Weltyan vision.

The epiphany unfolds in two further stages. The “King of the Snakes” appears on the river, his raised loops and humps making “a dozen rings of ripples” on the water while one of the netting helpers, linking this apparition to our bearded epiphanist, cries out, “It has whiskers!” (CS 181). Then come revelatory complements in the sky: the sun shines

With such violence that in an illumination like a long-prolonged glare of lightning the heavens looked black and white; all color left the world, the goldenness of everything was like a memory, and only heat, a kind of glamor and oppression, lay on

Their heads. [When the storm began...] a big tree on the hill seemed to turn into fire before their eyes, every branch, twig, and leaf, and a purple cloud hung over it (CS 181).

The beard-theme climaxes in a triumph of glory and alarm as “glamor and oppression,” wondrous light and overwrought nerves, overcome us while tensions erupt in the tree’s leaping, frenzied fire.

Manic agitation in Weltyan epiphanies is a sufficiently complex mental state to permit of many emotional tonings and shadings and yet to maintain its recognizably integral character. The wildly frightening hilarity of the revelatory moment in “The Wide Net” turns to a tragically frenzied hallucination in the brief tale “Flowers for Marjorie.” And here, once again, we see Welty craftily building the entire story around the crazed

epiphany. There’s a prelude setting forth, at a park bench near the unemployment office, the motifs and mood. It contains two omen-leaps in a progression of growing menace:

But he snapped the toothpick finally with his teeth and puffed it out of his mouth [...], and that little thing started up all the pigeons. His eyes ached when they whirled all at once, as though a big spoon stirred them in the sunshine. He closed his eyes upon their flying opal-changing wings.

And then, with his eyes shut, he had to think about Marjorie. Always now like something he had put off, the thought of her was like a wave that hit him when he was tired, rising impossibly out of stagnancy and deprecation while he sat in the park, towering over his head, pounding, falling, going back and leaving nothing behind it (CS 98; emphases added).

The pigeons’ sudden epiphanic whirl upward aches the eyes; the wave that impossibly leaps up to tower over the man nearly pounds the life out of him. Recurrent rounded forms include the birds, spoon, opal. Howard is tormented by the prospect of meeting Marjorie after another day without finding the job that might enable him to support the baby they’re expecting; daily he feels shamed by the “excess of life in her rounding body” (CS 99).

She has brought home a yellow pansy in the buttonhole of her coat, now draped over a chair; this final rounded form, that she appears so proud of, triggers the quantum leap epiphany:

Howard lowered his eyes and once again he saw the pansy. There it shone, a wide-open *yellow flower* with dark *red veins and edges*. Against the sky-blue of Marjorie’s old coat it began in Howard’s anxious sight to lose its identity of flower-size and assume the gradual and large curves of a *mountain* on the horizon of a desert, the veins becoming crevasses, the delicate edges the *giant worn lips of a sleeping crater*. His *heart jumped* to his mouth...

He snatched the pansy from Marjorie’s coat and tore its petals off and scattered them on the floor and *jumped* on them!

Marjorie watched him in silence, and slowly he realized that he had not acted at all, that he had only had a *terrible vision*. The pansy still *blazed* on the coat, just as the *pigeons* had still flown in the park when he was hungry. (CS 99; emphases added).

Here again we see the tendency of epiphanic rounded forms to turn suddenly mountain-like, as happened in the piano epiphany to Miss Eckhart’s face: now the pansy becomes a desert mountain, then taking on the radiating vein-structure of a wheel-like crater, which is also a rounded open mouth. Red and yellow, it blazes like the fires in the storm-revelation of William Wallace. Here again is a double quantum leap: Howard’s heart jumps to his mouth, and he leaps upon the flowers, beginning his trampledance. In further exasperation, a little later, he throws his leather purse to the floor, “where it struck softly like the body of a bird” (CS 101), like those pigeons whose abundant rounded life he so resented, as he did that of Marjorie. Then he picks up a butcher knife with fiery speed: “Like a flash of lightning he changed his hold on the knife and thrust it under her breast” (CS 102).

Three horrid parodies of the murderous hallucination vary the epiphany in Welty’s carefully orchestrated presentation. Howard

goes to a bar, where he puts a nickel into the slot machine: “The many *nickels* that *poured spurting* and clanging out of the hole sickened him, they fell all over his legs, and he backed up against the dusty *red curtain*” (CS 103). The round coins become leaping blood-drops. Then, when he absent-mindedly enters an arcade, becoming the ten millionth person to enter Radio City, he is given an armful of roses; when he stops a policeman in a childlike way to tell him about Marjorie, “the roses slid from Howard’s fingers and fell *on their heads* all along the sidewalk” (CS 106) – more spurting blood-drops. Right before this final episode, Howard notices that the watch he had thrown out the window of his home in despair now “lay on its *face*, and scattered about it in every direction were *wheels and springs* and bits of glass” (CS 105; emphases added throughout this paragraph). Nickels and roses (with their “heads”), and wheels and springs and watch (with its “face”) vary the roundness motif; pourings and scatterings of bursting springs elaborate the quantum leap theme. The liberating upburst of manic agitation was never more alarming.

In “A Curtain of Green,” even briefer than “Flowers for Marjorie,” we are again taken aback by the epiphanic wealth and concision, the contrasts, interchanging and combining, of good and ill. Mrs. Larkin buries herself daily in garden work, partly to escape the memory of the freak accident that has killed her husband, crushed in a car by a chinaberry tree. At first we wonder if this will be another tale of crazed resentment, like that of Howard and Marjorie, when we see the woman holding the hoe and standing above the boy she has hired to help:

The head of Jamey, bent there below her, seemed witless, terrifying, wonderful, almost inaccessible to her, and yet in its explicit nearness meant surely for destruction, with its clustered hot woolly hair, its *intricate, glistening ears*, intricate, its small brown *branching streams of sweat*, the *bowed head* holding so obviously and so fatally it’s ridiculous dream. (CS 110; emphases added)

The roundness motif of the head is complicated by the ramified structures of intricate ear and branching sweat-streams, recalling the veined pansy in the earlier tale. Varied intimations of fire introduce the elemental component and build up to a sense of shock: the “green of the zinnia shoots” is “very pure, almost burning”; when rain reached them, “the plants shone out”; Jamey, in the “shock of realizing the rain had come,” turns his “full face” up to Mrs. Larkin.

Then, as if it had *swelled and broken* over a daily levee, *tenderness tore and spun* through her *sagging* body. It has come, she thought senselessly, her head lifting and her eyes looking without understanding at the sky which had begun to move, to fold nearer in softening, dissolving clouds [...]. Then Mrs. Larkin sank in one motion down into the flowers and lay there, fainting and streaked with rain. Her face was fully upturned [...]. Jamey ran jumping and crouching about her, drawing in his breath alternately at the flowers breaking under his feet and at the shapeless, passive figure on the ground [...]. He bent down and in a horrified, piteous, beseeching voice he began to call her name until she stirred.

“Miss Lark! Miss Lark!”

Then he *jumped* nimbly to his feet and ran out of the garden.

(CS 112; emphases added)

The story ends with the boy’s many leaps and final jump mirroring the epiphanic surge and lift of tenderness – for him, finally tinged with fear – that had *swelled and broken*, torn and spun through Mrs. Larkin. Her rain-streaked face mirrors his earlier sweat-streamed one. Welty loves to center a story upon an epiphany and to craft echoing effects as leitmotifs or recurrent chords in the harmony. Every paragraph of “A Green Curtain” contributes to the lyrical dramatization of manic agitation, which can turn in a minute from murderous hostile melancholy into a quasi-mystic euphoria, then at last melting quickly down to a stoic resignation, where an undercurrent of sadness and discomfort will remain (“Within, she would lie in her bed and hear the rain [...]. She would lie in bed, her arms tired at her sides and in motionless peace: against that which was inexhaustible, there was no defense” [CS 111]). No one betters Welty at representing the ambivalence of mixed conditions of the spirit, here shown dramatically in Mrs. Larkin and echoed mutedly in the still-terrified Jamey, who feels each vibration of her ominous-and-tender feeling.

“Death of a Traveling Salesman,” despite an ostensibly more sober title, offers a comparable mixed-state epiphany, this time of mortal fear strangely blended with love. R. J. Bowman, who has gotten wrong directions to the town of Beulah, finds his car unable to stop at a dead-end rut-road, so it careens downward into a ravine, only to be trapped in a jungle of wild grapevines. Bowman, who has barely recovered from a month-long sickness, feels the Weltyan epiphanic quantum leap as he catches sight of the woman in the passageway of the nearest house:

He stopped still. Then all of a sudden his *heart* began to behave strangely. Like a *rocket set off*, it began to *leap and expand* into uneven patterns of beats which *showered* into his brain, and he could not think. But in *scattering and falling* it made no noise. It *shot up with great power, almost elation*, and fell gently, like acrobats into *nets* [...]. But he could not hear his heart--it was as quiet as ashes falling. This was rather comforting; still, it was shocking to Bowman to feel his heart beating at all. (CS 121; emphases added)

The epiphanic round heart and recurrent motif of nets, the elemental fiery rocket and ashes (recalling the crater in “Flowers for Marjorie”), and most crucially the expanding leap of great power introduce the revelatory moment with fear of sudden death modified only slightly by reassuring hope. As Bowman looks again at the woman, he sees her “formless garment of some gray coarse material, rough-dried from a washing, from which her arms appeared pink and unexpectedly round” (CS 121, another appearance of the recurrent Weltyan linking of roundness to something inchoate or formless. Epiphanic indicators accumulate in leap and fire and circle: Bowman feels a fiery “flare of touchiness and anxiety,” then the “pulse in his palm leapt like a trout in a brook” (CS 123). When the woman’s husband Sonny, with a “hot red face that yet was full of silence” (CS 124), confidently agrees to haul the car up from the ravine, the lyrical climax of the epiphany begins. Bowman said nothing, and this time when he did not reply he felt a curious and strong emotion, not fear, rise up in him.

This time, when his *heart leapt*, something--his soul--seemed to *leap* too, like a little colt invited out of a pen. He stared at the woman while the frantic nimbleness of his feeling made his head sway. He could not move; there was nothing he could do, unless perhaps he might embrace this woman who sat there growing old and *shapeless* before him.

My heart puts up a struggle inside me, and you may have heard it, protesting against emptiness.... It should be full, he would rush on to tell her, thinking of his heart now as a *deep lake*, it should be holding love like other hearts. It should be *flooded* with love. There would be a warm spring day.... Come and stand in my heart, whoever you are, and a whole *river would cover* your feet and *rise higher* and take your knees in *whirlpools*, and draw you down to itself, your whole body, your heart too. (CS 125; emphases added)

The woman now turns epiphanically “shapeless,” as Miss Eckhart had done, while the theme of the heart-leap is sounded ever louder, but now with sudden warmth, tenderness, frustrated love. Bowman begs Sonny to be allowed to stay the night, feeling “as if he might burst into tears” (CS 127). When he agrees and gets fire for the heart, the “whole room turned golden-yellow like some sort of flower” (CS 127), indeed like the pansy in the tale of Howard and Marjorie. The woman looks younger: her “teeth were shining and her eyes glowed” (CS 128), for this is an epiphany at once of flooding waters and fiery life. Told she is going to have a baby, Bowman is “shocked” at this revelatory emblem of the “fruitful marriage” (CS 129) he could never have.

The final quantum leaps occur: first, the “cold of the air seemed to lift him bodily”; then he begins to run to the rescued car, while his heart gives off “tremendous explosions like a rifle”; finally he sinks onto the road, covering his “heart with both hands to keep anyone from hearing the noise it made”--“But nobody heard it” (CS 130). He is running to the life he had envisioned in the epiphany when his heated, beating heart had swelled into a sudden flooding, having attained new life at the moment when, suddenly, he faced death. The perilous, alluring leap in the heart had elevated him and killed him. There is no more stirring up burst of manic agitation, no more perilous and alluring leap, in all the works of Welty.

The five epiphanies we have examined are the clearest and most fully elaborated in Welty’s *Collected Stories* [13]. In a full-length analysis of her epiphanic achievement I would include, in a second category, six more visions – less developed, more fragmentary: “The Key,” “A Visit of Charity,” “Powerhouse,” “A Worn Path,” “Livia,” and “The Burning.” But we must proceed to the psychological implications of Weltyan quantum leaps as *de facto* metaphors for what Jamison calls “mixed states” in bipolar syndrome, and then suggest practical consequences in treatment.

Nothing could more effectively symbolize these psychological implications than Eudora Welty’s epiphanies of manic agitation, with their positive intimations of liberating exuberance or all-embracing tenderness and love of life enigmatically combined with negative signs of resentful hostility, murderous wishes, ungovernable destructive energy. In a sudden joyful-alarming, perilous and alluring leap, a rounded form of a face, flower, or heart can turn to a constellation, volcanic crater, rocket, or formless, mountainous lump, or a dancing, raging fire. Psychologist Kay

Redfield Jamison, herself a person with bipolar syndrome (*An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness*) [13], who is co-author, with Frederick K. Goodwin, of the monumental standard reference work *Manic-Depressive Illness: Bipolar Disorders and Recurrent Depression*, has emphasized that often the supposed “poles” in “bipolar disorders” are often not separated at all. When the extremes troublingly-and-enliveningly meet in “mixed states,” Weltyan manic agitation seems clearly analogous.

Jamison’s *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* [14], is so packed with illustrative examples that some such emotional condition as bipolarity begins to seem almost a part of the job description for literary artists. Further – and most important for us here – “Mixed states” represent “an important link between manic-depressive illness, artistic temperament, creativity, and the rhythms and temperament of the natural world” (36). In Jamison’s *Exuberance* [16], Robert Louis Stevenson, “a vivacious, immensely charming and mercurial man” but also “described by those who knew him as excitable, high-strung, and inclined to restlessness, moodiness, and fits of rage,” even offers in Jamison’s presentation a pre-Weltyan quantum leap: “The temptation to again take the potion, to ‘spring headlong into the sea of liberty,’ is inevitable as well as deadly. Jekyll’s at first bidden, then unbidden, mutations into Hyde bring him a joy he has not known, but it comes tied to perfidy and death” (278-9, 285). Biographical data may or may not corroborate epiphanic findings; the lives of Welty by Suzanne Marrs [15], and Anne Waldron [9], offer little help here, as does Welty’s own brief, reticent memoir-essay, *One Writer’s Beginnings* [9]. But the phenomenological investigator never cares to “diagnose” anyone, only to explore, when helpful, enlightening analogies between the experiences portrayed by creative writers and those reported in psychological studies. The Jamison-Goodwin encyclopedia [1], offers fascinating descriptions of mixed states by e.g. Berlioz, Byron, Burns. One may cite Robert Burns’ self-portrait in a “mixed state” of manic agitation:

Here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a damn’d mélange of Fretfulness & melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing & fluttering round her tenement, like a wild Finch caught amid the horrors of winter newly thrust into a cage. (qtd. in Goodwin and Jamison 78)

This could be a character in a Welty story. Such exhibits amply confirm what we have learned from her epiphanic art of quantum leaps.

Jamison is not only perhaps the foremost analyst of bipolar syndrome but a student of the treatment of the illness in literary creators. Her monumental study of poet Robert Lowell [9], shows a life of continual outbreaks and rehabilitations in unending, irremediable sequence. And she demonstrates at length the difficulties of helping a creative personality that feels it requires the quantum leap manias, hypomanias, or manic agitations, whatever may be the cost in depressive and almost unbearably guilt-ridden aftermaths. The epiphanies of Welty illuminate the situation with a brilliant light: her manically agitated leaps are a problem and a solution. They suggest that adequate therapeutic management of bipolarity in masters of imaginative craft will be an art of continual balance and compromise, coping in changing

ways with recurrent crisis and partial resolution, all needed in part to maintain the artistic possibility of interblent expression.

The new level of intensity in awareness, however problematically and frequently it may combine joy and sorrow, mania and depression, exhilaration and dismay, is attained by an imaginative quantum leap. The attainment of undreamt-of intensity, even in a thoroughly "mixed" condition of mind and feeling, was at the heart of the entire Romantic Movement in the arts and retains its partly threatening appeal today. Artistic imaginers will be reluctant to abandon a valued though "mixed" intensity if that abandonment is what a quietening prescription will produce. Moderation, an ethical ideal since Aristotle, has to be delicately and subtly treated as at once an enabler and a foe of quantum leaps.

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