

EUDORA WELTY'S OTHER SHORT-STORY CYCLE: A READING OF *A CURTAIN OF GREEN**King Adkins*

A reference to Eudora Welty's "short-story cycle" usually means to *The Golden Apples*. Critics have never really seen her first collection of stories, *A Curtain of Green*, as anything more than that—a collection of stories, albeit a collection that astonishes us with the skill of its young author. Robert Van Gelder described the work in a 1946 article—"Each story is distinct, purely individual" (289)—and for the most part this view of the book has tended to predominate. Yet, though the connections among the stories in *Golden Apples* may be more overt than in this earlier work, there are a number of reasons why we might usefully examine *A Curtain of Green* as a short-story cycle, as well. Several significant relationships exist between these stories, beginning with their common location and involving many significant motifs. When these interconnections are taken into account, *A Curtain of Green* comes to behave very much like a short-story cycle, one that focuses attention on a very specific setting: Mississippi during the Depression era. Such a reading can change the way we see the book and the stories in it, but it can also change the way we see Welty, at least in her early career. Among other things reading the stories in this way has the important effect of emphasizing Welty's early social and political themes, themes not always given the attention they deserve in Welty criticism.

Like the novel, the short-story cycle is a form diverse in application. Only a handful of critics have offered a definition of it as a genre, but in each case the emphasis falls less on delimiting a distinct category than on demonstrating just how many different ways it has been used. As James Nagel explains in *The Contemporary Short-Story Cycle*, "the short-story cycle [...] has a long and complex history and a diversity of implementation so broad as to escape limited definition" (7). On the one hand, Nagel points to Erskine Caldwell's *Georgia Boy*, which employs "a continuing narrator, a regional setting, and the unifying nucleus of a southern family" (7), all very explicit connective elements. On the other, he mentions Flannery O'Connor's *Everything That Rises Must Converge* as a collection held together, in very subtle ways, by theme alone (17). Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris, in *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition*, reach similar conclusions about what qualifies as a "cycle." Though they use slightly different terminology from Nagel, preferring the phrase "composite novels," their definition is roughly the same as Nagel's: "The composite novel is a literary work composed of shorter texts that—though individually complete and autonomous—are interrelated in a coherent whole according to *one or more organizing principles*" [emphasis added] (xiii). The possibilities for what we might term "cycle" or "composite" thus appear almost limitless.

Under such broad definitions, *A Curtain of Green* would certainly seem to qualify as an example of a short-story cycle if for no other reason than the stories' common element of place. Joyce's *Dubliners*, for instance, is identified in both Nagel and Dunn and Morris as an important example of the form, though the stories themselves rarely relate to one another beyond their common setting. Likewise, Welty's collection focuses on a single

place and time, 1930s Mississippi. Further, though the stories take place in a number of different towns, the rural nature of these towns predominates. The single story that takes place outside the state, “Flowers for Marjorie,” is actually as much (or perhaps more) concerned with Mississippi as the others. Although it may be that *A Curtain of Green* is only a short-story cycle in the most relaxed sense of the term, certainly it employs important aspects of the form. The stories that make up the collection can each stand alone, and yet in the ways they cross-reference one another, or in the way they all exist against a single historical backdrop, they might just as easily be seen as a single entity. More importantly, there are central thematic issues that unite the stories.

It would not be accurate to say that critics have entirely failed to notice any of the connections in the collection. In fact, the individual pieces have frequently been grouped into a variety of different sub-categories. Michael Kreyling, for example, sees “Lily Daw and the Three Ladies,” “Old Mr. Marblehall,” “Why I Live at the P.O.,” “Clytie,” “Keela the Outcast Indian Maiden,” and “A Visit of Charity” as examples of the “grotesque” where “a main character with some defect, physical, psychological, or moral, is universalized, and a point about the nature of individual human existence is made” (6-7). Ruth Vande Kieft categorizes the volume’s stories based on what sort of “mystery” they deal with, applying such terms as “dark mysteries,” “mysteries of relationship,” and “mysteries of joy” (5). Barbara Carson sees “A Curtain of Green” and “Death of a Traveling Salesman” as examples of “Stories of Initiation” (29). Nevertheless, while critics have placed the stories into interesting groupings, few have noticed the connections to be found among all seventeen stories, or focused on the common setting of Mississippi that all seventeen possess.

Welty’s biography may serve as the most important link among these stories. All were written during a single period of her life. All grew out of her travels around the state of Mississippi while working first for the WPA, and later for the Mississippi Advertising Commission. Over the years she spoke of the specific inspirations for a number of them. “Keela the Outcast Indian Maiden” resulted from overhearing a conversation: “Once some people on the midway—I used to go out and drink coffee with them and so on—they were talking about a sideshow act of something like Keela” (*Conversations*, 179). About “Why I Live at the P.O.,” she told one interviewer, “I once did see a little post office with an ironing board in the back through the window [...]. And I suppose that’s what made me think of it” (*Conversations*, 161). In a real sense, one key unifying force between the stories is that all seem to rely on her travels in this single geographic area. As if she means to reinforce this motif, she focuses on travel frequently in the collection, in the mention of trains, for instance, or the recurrence of traveling salesmen, apparent stand-ins for Welty herself during this time. In other moments, she chooses to write herself into the collection in other senses, as in the apparently autobiographical moment of “A Memory,” which focuses on a young girl’s process of creating art from experience. The self-reflexive nature of the story, the recounting of a child’s first artistic “vision”—similar in many ways to Stephen Dedalus’s in Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist*—suggests a young Welty and invites the reader to view her as a character in her own collection, even if Welty the writer exists, for the most part, just beyond the edge of the page. She herself becomes one of the unifying elements of the collection.

Welty seems to have taken some care about which stories she included in *A Curtain of*

Green and was considering these stories in combination very early in her writing process. Many of them, for instance, she combined in a single work, coupled with her photographs of the period, and submitted to publishers in New York as early as 1935. While the book, which she entitled *Black Saturday*, never found a publisher, and the stories themselves came to be first published separately, Welty apparently saw their potential as an integrated whole. In fact, photography offers a useful analogy to what takes place in *A Curtain of Green*. A number of critics have commented on the importance of photography to Welty's work, usually focusing on the ways her stories use visual representations as a technique for conveying meaning.¹ In addition, however, photography also involves a significant degree of organizational skill, both in terms of the spatial composition of the picture itself, and in terms of the way photos are typically displayed, placed next to one another to create a total overall effect from their relationships. Welty the photographer would have understood both aspects of her art and it doesn't seem a particular stretch to imagine that she might have seen *A Curtain of Green* in similar terms, as creating a particular effect or developing a particular theme based on the ways in which the stories are organized and interrelated.

In the end, however, the strongest proof of interconnection is to be found within the stories themselves. Over and over again, images and motifs reappear throughout the collection, both between juxtaposed stories and scattered through the entire book. The publication history of the stories is especially instructive in this regard, in that it suggests Welty may have deliberately used such repetition to shape these stories into a single cohesive unit. All of the stories in *A Curtain of Green* were originally published in magazines and journals and were subsequently revised prior to inclusion in the complete volume. A comparison of the first versions to those included in the finished volume indicates a number of changes, which, though in most cases minor, do suggest an emphasis on certain patterns.

Many of these changes are so small as to have been overlooked by studies of textual variation in Welty's work. In writing of "Petrified Man," for example, Michael Benzel focuses on changes that "more accurately suggest the informal flow of speech ('being' < 'bein', 'liking')" (2). His analysis neglects to mention a lengthy phrase added near the end of the revised version: "Leota, recklessly flinging down the comb, which scattered a whole ash tray full of bobby pins and knocked down a row of Coca-Cola bottles" (18). Virtually the same alteration is made in "The Hitch-Hikers." There is an addition: "Let's all go over to the Greenville and get a Coke." There is also a change: from Tom Harris asking Carol to go get a "coffee," to his asking her to go get "a Coca-Cola" (Chengges 9-10). While such changes might be seen as little more than revision of two stories either to reflect the times more accurately or to provide added realism through detail, the coincidence is curious. In fact, the changes do identify a particular place and time, but between the stories they also create a *commonality* in time and place.

Other changes, though in some cases even smaller, add further weight to the notion that Welty was consciously working to create a web between her stories. The word "postoffice" in "Clytie" is changed to the two word "post office" (McDonald 1-2). The revision draws particular attention to "Why I live at the P.O.," where not only does the abbreviation imply that two words should be used, but Sister refers to it as "post office" near the end of the story (*A Curtain of Green* 72). Still another example is the addition of the phrase "Before you could say Jack Robinson" to "Petrified Man" and its subsequent addition to "Why I Live at the P.O." Once again, the changes increase the continuity over

the whole fabric of the stories in the collection. Here even the slang patterns between characters are connected.

In other instances “images” rather than a mere word or two, draw connections between pieces. For example, in “The Hitch-Hikers,” Welty adds, “The same couple kept dancing behind her. There was something brassy playing, a swing record of ‘Love, Oh Love, Oh Careless love’” (Chengges 3). The inclusion of the sentence seems to point to a later image in “Powerhouse”: “The jitterbugs start up like windmills stationed over the floor, and in their orbits—circle, another, a long stretch and a zigzag” (*A Curtain of Green* 272). Indeed, the use of the phrase “something brassy playing” invites the reader to believe the record being played is, in fact, one by Powerhouse himself. The fact that the music in “Hitch-Hikers” has been changed so dramatically, from a waltz to swing, only reinforces the possibility that this is a purposeful cross-reference.

Finally, one other aspect of the publishing history serve most to indicate Welty’s interest in the collection as a “whole.” In finalizing the collection, she chose to leave two of her early stories out of *A Curtain of Green*, “Magic” and “The Doll,” both published in 1936. There seems no real reason why she would have omitted them other than the fact that she simply did not see them as fitting well with the others. This in itself suggests that she was not merely collecting her work but rather trying to make a holistic statement, whether that statement had to do with her own sense of herself as a writer or with some deeper theme.

While textual alterations suggest Welty’s attempt to shape the book into something coherent and whole, they are minor in comparison to the broad network of motifs that are spread throughout *A Curtain of Green*. Such recurring images take several different forms. In a number of places, one story seems to draw directly on the imagery of the story placed just before it. “A Memory,” for instance, ends with the image of water at the beach, and a simile, in which the changes the family has wrought on the beach are compared to “the ravages of a storm” (157). In the same paragraph, Welty includes the image of a “small white pavilion.” “Clytie,” a story apparently dissimilar in nature from “Memory,” but which immediately follows it, opens with “heavily silver clouds” from which “Big round raindrops fell,” and Clytie stands in the middle of downtown “Farr’s Gin,” where she is surrounded by “the stained *white* false fronts of the rows of stores” [emphasis added] (158).

“Clytie,” as well, contains references echoed in the story that follows it. Clytie is forced to stop the neighbor boy from playing with her sister Octavia’s cat (170). In the story “Old Mr. Marblehall,” the main character’s son is described as staring “out like a kitten, with button nose and pointed ears” (182). Near the end of this story, there is an image of a clock (187, 191). In “Flowers for Marjorie,” the next story, the clock is developed as a pivotal symbol, eventually thrown from the apartment to the ground where “scattered about in every direction were wheels and springs and bits of glass” (207).

There are also images that connect stories across the volume. The fire in “The Whistle,” while essential in a literal sense to Sara and Jason Morton’s survival, also serves as an important symbol of their relationship. The same image of fire is re-figured as a key element in “Death of a Traveling Salesman.” Here, too, it becomes a symbol of the close-knit relationship between Sonny and his wife. The circus, important to “Lily Daw and the Three Ladies,” is likewise central to both “Petrieved Man,” and “Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden,” and is given passing mention in several other stories, such as “Old Mr.

Marblehall,” where the main character’s two sons are both described as having “that look of cunning little jugglers, violently small under some spotlight beam” (188). There are countless other images that appear over and over; some, such as hats, flowers and music, are included in virtually every story in the collection.

Perhaps the incidence of such linguistic and imagistic echoes arises because the stories are all the product of a single mind, a mind working with a finite number of images. Or maybe the repetition is simply a conscious attempt to capture accurately a single place and time using as many fixed images as possible to create a heightened sense of realism. Neither argument, however, is entirely antithetical to the notion of *A Curtain of Green* as a unified work, a short-story cycle that relies for its unity on setting and details, and that involves an overarching consciousness as a guiding force. Furthermore, the specificity of detail in the several cross-references suggests that there is much that might be learned from seeing the stories in this volume as a whole.

Specifically, a number of images that recur seem more than merely representative of a unified setting; rather, they point to important underlying thematic connections between the stories. In “Lily Daw and the Three Ladies,” for example, there is Lily’s hope chest, which is eventually revealed to be the real reason she wants to get married. She has invested it with all of her dreams, and when it is forgotten in the mad rush to get her off the train at the story’s end, it serves as a reminder that even now the “ladies” do not have her best interests at heart; what Lily most wants is headed out of the station even as she is being led to meet her fiancé. She is not saved at the last moment from being shipped off to the Ellisville Institute for the Feeble-Minded. Instead, in the little xylophone player, her friends have simply found a substitute means of foisting their responsibility for Lily onto someone else. Interestingly, the word “hopechest” is another of the alterations Welty made from the original published text of the story, separating it into two words. The change puts emphasis on the word “chest,” which connects to a story that appears later in the volume, “A Visit of Charity.” In the latter story, Addie tells her roommate, “Your head is empty, your heart and hands and your old black purse are all empty, even that little old box that you brought with you you brought empty—you showed it to me” (179). The old woman’s box, like Lily’s, can finally offer her no comfort. Analyses of this story often tend to focus on Marion, the young girl who has come to visit these women. Yet, as the reference to the box subtly suggests, the two old women are important, as well, particularly in relation to Welty’s overall theme in the book.

In order to understand this theme, it is essential to look closely at the similar texture of these stories, both the time and place that serve as background to them. There were important shifts taking place in American society during the 1930s, when both were written. The Depression and Roosevelt’s New Deal, together, ushered in new institutions that fundamentally changed the way Americans saw the world. Robert Hudson, in *North American Elders*, summarizes one of the most important of these changes: “The major breakthrough in social policy came with the Social Security Act of 1935. Through this legislation, the federal government took on [...] responsibilities associated with the modern welfare state” (56). Welty would have been in a position to observe such changes first-hand through her work for the government during this period. It is not surprising, then, that they form a backdrop for the stories in *A Curtain of Green*.

In both “Lily Daw and the Three Ladies” and “A Visit of Charity,” there is special

stress on the “institution” as a dumping ground for society’s undesirables. The works are a mirror of their times. The Ellisville Institute was and is, in fact, a real place. Peggy Preshaw has argued that the Old Ladies’ Home in “A Visit of Charity” is likewise based on an actual “Home” in Jackson (*A Study of Setting* 21). The advent of the New Deal would have seen an upsurge in the number of entrants into these facilities and others like them as, increasingly, the government was offering to pay for the costs of institutionalization. Welty’s stories make a clear point about this shift towards government as opposed to community responsibility in such cases. In “Lily Daw,” for example, the “ladies” are all notably characterized as integral members of Victory’s community. Aimee Slocum is apparently the town’s postmistress. Mrs. Carson is the Baptist preacher’s wife. In other words, as representatives of the community they should hold the primary responsibility for taking care of Lily. Further, it seems plain that they have carried out this responsibility up to now. When told of Lily’s intentions to get married, Mrs. Carson confidently points out, “the boys of Victory are on their honor,” suggesting that she herself has played a roll in eliciting such promises. It is all the more surprising, then, that these women have made the decision to send Lily away. Welty is making an understated, but significant point here. These women have shirked their responsibility, and in their rush to find some means of getting Lily off their hands, they fail to recognize what is most important to Lily herself. The potential for government “relief” has blinded them to what should be their community responsibilities.

In “A Visit of Charity,” Welty describes the institution itself, drawing particular attention to the bleak environment of the Home, the “loose, bulging linoleum,” and the “smell in the hall like the interior of a clock” (221). More noteworthy is Addie’s characterization of her experience: “Do they seriously suppose that I’ll be able to keep it up, day in, day out, night in, night out, living in the same room with a terrible woman—forever?” (227) “They” in whatever sense she means it, either as a reference to her own family or to the outside forces—the nurses, the Home administrators, the government—that now regulate her life, suggests that the “community” has abrogated its responsibility. The inclusion of a “Campfire Girl”—an emissary from a *national* charitable organization—as their only visitor (and one who does her “duty” because she understands she will receive a specific reward), speaks even further to Welty’s point; these women have been abandoned by their community and thrust instead into the arms of an inherently unfeeling and uncaring government.

Such statements about the interference of the government, though, are merely an outgrowth of Welty’s larger interest: the idea that community should be a close-knit family in which people deal with one another rather than allowing an outside government to dictate how they should behave. To be sure, her attitude towards politics was anything but simplistic. Welty was, for example, a strong supporter of both Roosevelt and Truman, suggesting she saw the value of the New Deal. Yet, as many scholars have begun to recognize, she also harbored a proprietary feeling about her native state and the South in general. Albert Devlin, for example, has suggested that there are similarities to be found between Welty and the Agrarian movement. So, too, Barbara Ladd notes that Welty, “for all her willingness to work for the WPA and her love of traveling the roads of Mississippi, [...] found herself at odds with those who were motivated by a ‘cause,’ who represented those roads as back roads and the people of Mississippi as hapless victims or grateful beneficiaries of a more resourceful elite” (162). Ladd points out that Welty had strong

reservations about other WPA photographers such as Walker Evans and Diane Arbus who tended to use their photos to portray the South as little more than a site of wretched poverty. While such portrayals may have garnered government attention and assistance, they ultimately betrayed the people of the area by insisting they could not care for themselves. For Welty, not only could they care for themselves—they had to. Even in the case of race relations—though she was certainly a strong advocate for civil rights—she tended to argue that interaction within the community was far stronger without intrusion from the government into the lives of Southerners: “I do feel that private relationships between blacks and whites have always been a steadying thing. I believe in private human relations anyway, for understanding. And I’ve always had faith that they would resolve problems” (*More Conversations* 114). To be clear, Welty was an advocate for social change in terms of equality; but she also seems to have believed that such change was most powerful when it was allowed to come from *within* the community, from those individual relationships and personal connections that could never be artificially imposed by any governmental program.

Her feelings in this regard show up again and again throughout *A Curtain of Green*. “Keela, the Outcast Indian Maiden” offers a good illustration. Keela is not rescued through the intervention of authorities, but rather through the kindness of a single white man. Likewise, in “A Piece of News,” Welty shows that without interference from the outside world, life can be stable and satisfying. The story bears a striking resemblance to Chopin’s “The Storm” in both the images of rain and the details of Ruby’s affairs. As though reiterating Chopin’s themes, Welty suggests that such affairs are not necessarily a signal of social collapse; both Ruby and Clyde seem to accept Ruby’s “hitch-hiking.” Only when the outside world interferes, when Ruby encounters a Tennessee newspaper that seems to be written about her, does the relationship between her and Clyde become unstable. Before she discovers the article, Ruby is “quite rosy,” and lies “sprawled close to the fire” (16-17). Afterwards, she is stricken with terror over what she imagines Clyde might do to her. Finally, in the end she realizes that it is the paper that has called up this vision, that an outside force has caused her to imagine her life in such terms. In “Petrified Man,” Mrs. Pike serves as outsider, intruding into the lives of Leota and Mrs. Fletcher and upsetting the balance in the community, here represented by the beauty shop. In “The Whistle,” the whistle itself becomes representative of the outside world: “It is known everywhere as Mr. Perkins’ whistle” and it is Mr. Perkins who now owns the couple’s farm (90). It is the whistle—coming from outside—that calls attention to their plight.

In both “The Hitch-Hiker” and “The Death of the Traveling Salesman,” the role of the outsider is embodied in a salesman. In both cases, his outsider status renders him unable to truly understand the importance of community. Both men are reminded of what they have given up. Tom Harris encounters a girl from his youth, Carol Thames, who recalls how he once played the piano. By leaving his community behind him, a move symbolized by the fact that he has given up his “box,” the piano, he has lost what is most important in life. Another reminder of this appears later, in “Powerhouse,” where the piano becomes so intimately tied up with the main character. In the latter story, community has been restored, through the band-mates who surround the musician, and the “box” serves as a symbol of the benefits that such close social connection brings with it. R. J. Bowman, the salesman of “Death of A Traveling Salesman,” is likewise reminded of his communal

past, specifically in the form of his grandmother.

All afternoon, in the midst of his anger, and for no reason, he had thought of his dead grandmother. She had been a comfortable soul. Once more Bowman wished he could fall asleep in the big feather bed that had been in her room [...]. Then he forgot her again. (183-84)

After driving off the road, Bowman encounters another community, figured this time in the characters of Sonny and his wife. Despite his efforts, he is unable to integrate himself into their society. He tries several different tactics, at one point rehearsing over and over again in his head his salesman's pitch, making clear just how totally incapable of communicating he has become. All he has left is this learned behavior, an artificial language that simply doesn't allow him to connect. Much like the manufactured community of the government institution, his speech is now nothing more than a simulation. In the end, he flees the house only to die in the driveway, unable even to understand the nature of what he has lost.

In the most famous story from this collection, "A Worn Path," Welty further complicates the nature of outside help. Phoenix Jackson is clearly the outsider here, and though she must travel to town regularly to get medicine for her grandson, and though she clearly needs the doctor, his help comes across as patronizing rather than selfless. As Phoenix herself makes clear, and the title of the story helps to emphasize, she is quite capable of taking care of herself, despite her age and infirmities, and has been doing so for some time. There is likewise the image of the tree that marks her forehead, drawn as it is from nature and contrasting with the urban environment to which she travels. There she is "a charity case," offered assistance but without any real understanding on the part of her benefactors.

Finally, the stories left out of the collection offer a final commentary on what Welty may have had in mind when she put the book together. Both stories contain some of the motifs prominent in *A Curtain of Green*. Both, for example, emphasize clocks, and the final scene of "The Doll" finds Marie and Charles standing before a house fire. One difference might be that both seem set in more urban locations than those of the included stories, "The Doll" in particular apparently set in Memphis. A more striking difference, however, has to do with theme. Both stories involve personal, romantic relationships and the way those relationships develop. Certainly in both cases the women come to feel separated from the men in their lives, a hint towards the prying apart of personal relationships that occurs in *A Curtain of Green*. For the most part, though, the separation they feel grows not from the outside world's interference, but rather from their own experience of life as individuals and their inability to share their experience with these two men. Welty does suggest in places, the possibility that the outside world influences these characters, as in "Magic" where Myrtle has bought a "Magic Love Philtre" from a magazine ad, but she doesn't develop this idea with the same depth as in those stories she chose to include in the collection.

Welty the writer was no "crusader" as she herself noted. Her work makes no obvious political statement. Yet, as Peggy Prenshaw argues in a recent article, Welty does have a social message:

In her writings and interviews, Welty shows unmistakably that what she regards as the politics of substance and courage, politics that is truly public, civil, and communal, is the human connection between freely operating individuals who confront issues that directly affect their lives. The domain where such connection occurs for Welty [...] is typically personal, private, and interior. (46)

Prenshaw's point has to do with the tone of the stories, with how Welty speaks to her readers individually rather than making public pronouncements about a cause. But to some extent, this manner of speaking is her cause. In her famous defense of her work, "Must the Writer Crusade," Welty argues, "On fiction's pages, generalities clank when wielded and hit with equal force with the little and the big" (77). The point she makes throughout *A Curtain of Green* is similar: government agency or ideology must necessarily deal in sweeping generalities, in numbers of people rather than individuals. It is only on the level of personal interaction within the community that positive change can occur. One way of seeing this stance is as an absence of interest in politics. But it might also be said that a rejection of politics is a political move in itself. For what she seems to do in this collection is reject the ideology of centralized government intervention in favor of something more localized, but that does not make her choice any less ideological.

Ultimately, the way these stories interconnect with one another is perhaps the strongest formulation of Welty's principles. For her belief in the value of real community relationships is prefigured in the way the book as a whole evokes a specific time and place. This time and place becomes a community in *A Curtain of Green*, a community that is made up of individual works, but that contains multiple common reference points, that speaks a common language, offers up common images, and participates in common events. The way in which these individual stories come to connect with one another shows us a community full of commonalities, where individuals interact based on the similarities of their condition. Whether or not *A Curtain of Green* is a short-story cycle in the strictest sense of the term, when we understand exactly how these individual stories fit together, a larger picture does seem to emerge.

Notes

1. See Ruth D. Weston, "Images of the Depression in the Fiction of Eudora Welty," *Southern Quarterly* 32 (Fall, 1993).

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DARREN C. DEMAREE

BLACK AND WHITE PICTURE #5

BEGINNING WITH A LINE BY CHARLES SIMIC

To feel the pin that once pierced the hero's chest,
 to be in love with that pin, to make it your pet,
 to stick yourself repeatedly, because nothing else
 in your life is ever allowed to feel pain ever again.
 Ego & ego & ego, I am the egg outside her hips,
 the cracked one that has the lingering smell
 of my father. I am the hero before the super powers,
 I am the geek in the glasses that has no strength yet.
 This is the what we all say will change the where
 of our hearts & right now mine is jumping
 like a bonfire confused by the winter surrounding it.
 Peapod, you will read these words someday,
 you will find my unpublished drawers, filled with
 my dervish leanings & then you will know my sprawl
 & how I beat myself into the sober man
 before you now, concerned now with nothing else,
 but the deflation of old weights on my young shoulders.