

# LUBBOCK **NOW** TIMES

The Newsletter of the  
National Organization for Women

In Lubbock  
July-August 1980

## Welty Transforms "Woman's World"

In a purely political sense, Eudora Welty would not be considered a feminist writer. Her novels and short stories rarely deal with the possibilities of significant change in woman's role or with the poignancy and outrage of victimization. Her tone is almost consistently mellow and ironic, and when she deals with the endemic sexual and racial hierarchies of this society, which she often does, she does not lament them so much as she observes them with sadness. However, I think she is one of the most important fictional commentators on women today and for one particular reason: Welty is a great artist, an image-maker of the first degree, and her most powerful symbols come from the habitual world of Everywoman. She

gives a universal significance to what we, whether men or women, usually consider the boring and mundane world of domesticity. She has the rare talent of lifting "Woman's world" out of the realm of anecdote and low comedy and into  
(continued on page 2)



## Annual Elections

The nominating committee of Lubbock NOW has submitted the following slate of officers for 1980-81, to be voted on at the August program meeting. The committee will accept nominations from the floor, as well as write-in votes.

President	Marge Blackburn
Vice-President, Action	Lynn Clark
Vice-President, Operations	Jane Seaver
Secretary	Karen Hodges
Treasurer	Lou Huyge

The annual elections will be held August 5, 2709 55th Street, 7:30 PM. Please be there to help NOW plan for the coming year.

## AUGUST CALENDAR

5	Tues.	ELECTION OF OFFICERS 2709 55th St., 7:30 PM
21	Thurs.	NOW Dinner. O'Malley's, 1211 University, 6:30 PM
24	Sun.	WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY
29	Fri.	Happy Hour. Santa Fe Station, 401 Ave. Q, 5:00-7:00 PM.

## Welty Transforms "Woman's World"

(continued from page 1)  
the real of the archetypal.

Welty was born in 1909 in Jackson Mississippi, and for all practical purposes, she has lived there ever since. Although she has written novels, she began her career as a short story writer, and perhaps her most famous story is a first-person narration entitled "Why I live at the P.O." It is a humorous tale of trapped, impoverished lives, and it illustrates the characteristic low comic nature of woman's stereotypical preoccupations at the same time that it transforms these anecdotal, habitual qualities into significant pattern.

A woman named Sister tells this story, and to her family she is little more than Stella-Rhondo's older sister. Stella Rhondo has the great distinction of being married. She even has a child, although she insists Shirley-T is

adopted because the child's age does not quite coincide with the marriage vows.

Sister gets no attention after Stella-Rhondo returns home separated from Mr. Whitaker. In an attempt to assert her position in this family, Sister openly announces that the child is "the spit-image" of her grandfather. This statement leads to an alienating confrontation with each member of the family, and Sister moves out. Since she has the position of postmistress of China Grove, she moves to her post office, and takes with her as many bits and pieces of her home life as she can claim.

(continued on page 3)

### LUBBOCK NOW TIMES

is published monthly by the Lubbock chapter of the National Organization for Women.

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Articles, poetry, etc., should be submitted to the editor, 2405 27th, Lubbock 79411, typed, double-spaced on a 35 character line. Articles are subject to rewrite.

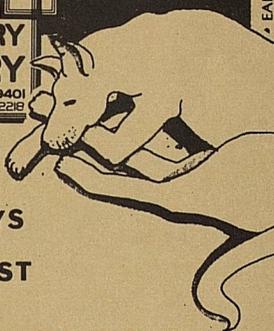
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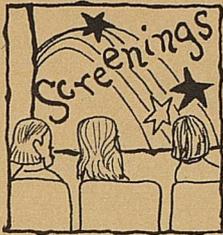
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**LUBBOCK NOW TIMES**

**August 6**

# Screenings



The University Daily recently carried a glowing review of what I assume is a soft-core porno flick, "Submission" is, we are told, the story of a woman seduced and dominated by a man

who works for her. "She willingly complies, eventhough /sic/ he progressively pushes her to new limits of degradation. She is his slave or rather the slave of her own desire."

The anonymous reviewer says that the film "explores several human emotions, including the dignity (or loss of it) and the humiliation experienced in an all-encompassing relationship." I refuse to see this film.

More to the point, I am appalled that the UD would allow such dangerous contentions to be anonymously printed by a member of its own staff--one whose ignorance of film is made manifest by the implicit assumption that this is the first time anyone has made a movie about women's desires to be dominated.

## Coal Miner's Daughter

"Coal Miner's Daughter" is a better movie than we had a right to expect, though it's less good than it should have been. Loretta Lynn's life has been more interesting than that of most celebrities, and what

(continued on page 7)

# Welty Transforms

(continued from page 2)

...I very politely took the sewing-machine motor I helped pry the most on to give Mama for Christmas back in 1929, and a good big calendar, with the first-aid remedies on it. The thermometer and the Hawaiian ukelele certainly were rightfully mine, and I stood on the step-ladder and got all my watermelon-rind preserves and every fruit and vegetable I'd put up, every jar.

This passage is a perfect example of the uses of domestic detail for comic effect. Sister even fights with Mama over a clump of four-o'clocks. Nevertheless, it is finally through this kitch that Welty suggests the possibility of freedom for Sister's limited and lonely existence.

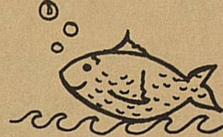
After she has settled at the P.O., she ends her testimonial with these observations:

But oh, I like it here. It's ideal, as I've been saying. You see, I've got everything cater-cornered, the way I like it....

(continued on page 4)

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# Welty Transforms "Woman's World"

(continued from page 3)

Radio, sewing machine, book ends, ironing board and that great big piano lamp -- peace, that's what I like. Butter-bean vines planted all along the front where the strings are.

Of course, there's not much mail. My family are naturally the main people in China Grove....

But here I am, and here I'll stay. I want the world to know I'm happy.

There is nothing simple about Welty's vision. The breaking of ties has its repercussions. Sister is isolated and essentially unemployed, but at least she has managed to shape a self, and significantly, her Emancipation Proclamation comes from the events of a family row on the Fourth of July.

Although "Why I Live at the P.O." shows Welty's ability to transform the stuff of "woman's world" into a playful Independence March, it does

not illustrate the deepest symbolic powers of her domestic vision. But "Livvie", the second story she ever published, most certainly does.

Livvie is a black woman who is 25 when the story opens and has been married to a very old man for nine years. He keeps her isolated from the rest of society and Livvie never questions nor rebels. What does rebel, however, is nature itself. The rhythm of life is on Livvie's side, and finally, she is rescued from her prison.

The shape and even the tone of the story is fairy-tale-like, but once again, Welty grounds her vision in the realm of the everyday. This is a tale about confinement, especially if we think of the term as it applies to gestation. But Welty rejects classic symbols of incubation like the sepulchre, the cocoon, or the buried treasure chest. The stifled potential that is Livvie is represented through a motif of jars.

(continued on page 5)

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# Female Isolation, Female Inequality

Anthropologists note the frequency of female isolation -- seclusion and concealment -- in traditional, agrarian societies. The chador, worn by Moslem women, hides their faces, hair and upper bodies, and thus bars and protects them from worldly concerns. The degree of their isolation is usually a good index of women's access to jobs, income, political power, education, etc. We American women rightly consider ourselves much in advance of our agrarian, Third World sisters in the struggle for equality with men. Yet, we may underestimate the isolation, and thus the inequality, that we endure.

## Hampered Mobility

For instance, popular American clothing and shoe styles frequently seclude women by hampering their mobility. The binding of Chinese women's feet once achieved the same effect. We cannot enter areas of the community by night, or sometimes by day, for fear of rape; one feels then like the Moslem or Hindu woman, isolated in her home or courtyard, shielded from experience. Psychiatrists now tell us that some American women choose not to evade the isolation of their homes. They suffer from "agoraphobia," fear of (continued on page 7)

## "Woman's World"

(continued from page 4)

Her husband preserves everything in his world and she is like the "... many shallow dishes of pickled peaches, fig preserves, watermelon pickles and blackberry jam..." he keeps in his kitchen. She is sealed up, untasted and untried, finally only managing to escape her confinement by meeting a young man. His name is Cash, and he will take her to the city. Of course, the name of her rescuer indicates the dangers involved in her rebirth. As we all know, Cash vanishes very quickly. Still, we must find some way to possess it for at least a fleeting moment, if we are to be more than just pretty, preserved fruit.

A jar of jelly is the primary symbol of awakening in this story and a pun acts as the ambiguous promise of adult life. In The Optimist's Daughter, a novel for which Welty won the Pulitzer Prize, a breadboard acts as a final symbol of freedom and continuity, and even in discussions of her own artistic techniques, Welty has explained her habits through domestic simile. When she visited Texas Tech, Spring 1977, (continued on page 11)



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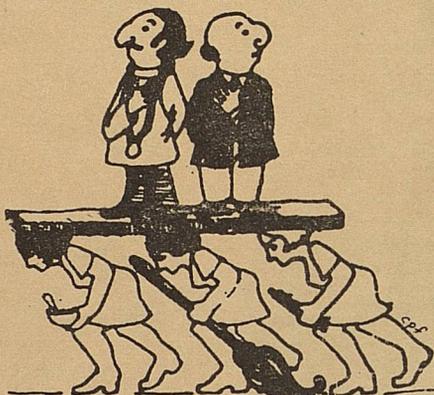
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## SCREENINGS

(continued from page 3)  
we learn of that life makes fascinating viewing. Yet there is too much we don't learn.

We don't, for instance, learn much about her feelings. We don't learn why she married at thirteen, only that she did and what happened next. We don't learn why she had her breakdown, only that she did and that she recovered. These are serious omissions in a film more autobiography than biography. The problem is not with the uniformly excellent acting, but with a script and with direction which refuse to transcend cliché.

The film's first half, life around the coal mines, has been widely praised for its gritty realism. Yes, the life of the mine workers is shown to be hard, and dirty and dangerous. Yes, the poverty of the workers is clearly presented. Yet development of these points is quickly abandoned.

Instead we get to see a family which, in the depth of its loving and giving and wholesomeness makes the Waltons look like the Ewings. It's possible, I suppose, that Loretta Lynn really did have a family that noble, but I have a  
(continued on page 11)



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## Female Isolation

(continued from page 5)  
loss of control. Perhaps agoraphobics understand an essential truth about the relationship of female to male in America, that only in the home is woman granted mastery, or control. One is reminded of the nineteenth century American or European woman, whose "nervous" disease legitimized society's demand for complete domesticity.

Who, then, defines the standards of the American woman's much-touted liberation? Our clothing styles are offered by corporations run by male designers and businessmen; public places may be stalked by rapists, or protected by largely male police forces; the cures for emotional disorder are devised by a psychiatric profession that admits few women. We may be less free, or equal than we think.

Marietta Morrissey

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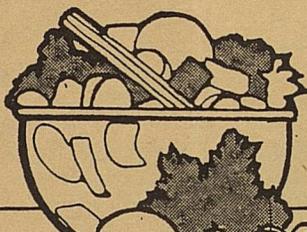
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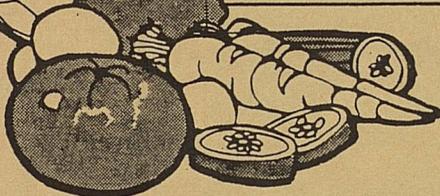


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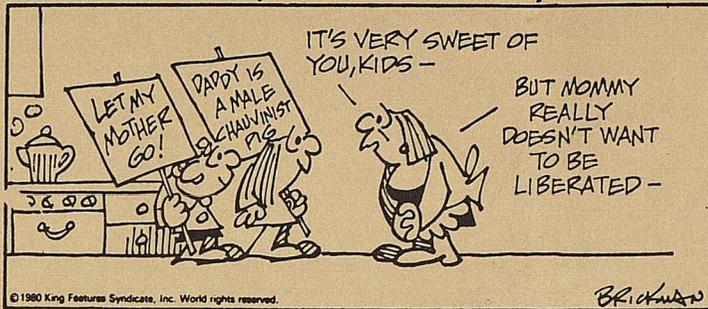
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# HOGWASH

the small society

by Brickman



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Avalanche-Journal, April 29, 1980. Submitted by Melinda Hoffman.



Avalanche-Journal, May 11, 1980, Submitted by Richmond Flowers.

Overheard at the Bob Wills Music Festival in Turkey, Texas, from an "alleged feminist" whose initials are the same as a famous sandwich, to a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley, whose speciality is women's history, "You ignorant cunt."

Submitted by William Faulkner

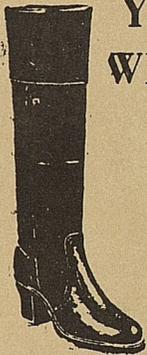
## Twyman Relieved

Briggs Twyman long-time member of the NOW Times' staff and lately Business Manager was relieved of his duties effective immediately as this issue went to press. Editor, Marie Tedesco, stated that she was appalled by reports of Twyman's gross misconduct at a recent music festival and thought it best to suspend Twyman from his duties until a full investigation could be made.

Richmond Flowers has agreed to take over for Twyman temporarily, until, as Flowers said, "This mess is cleaned up. I have a great deal of faith in Briggs, and I'm sure he has been grossly maligned."

Twyman was unavailable for comment.

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## Screenings

hard time believing it--and a harder time understanding why the reasons for it aren't explored, or why it's worthy of film time when Lynn's developing role-reversed relationship with her husband is given only the most superficial of treatment.

### Kramer vs. Kramer

"Kramer vs. Kramer" has been attacked for not being primarily about Meryl Streep's struggles to find herself (struggles so severe that she had to abandon her child to pursue them) and for failing to show fully the far more common problems of single parenthood faced by lower-class women.

The arguments are curious. To complain that "Kramer vs. Kramer" is not some other film is, at best, bizarre. Certainly those other films ought to be made, but that cannot be relevant to a judgment of this one.

But why are there not films which explore the problems of women who must survive? Mainly, I think, because the American filmmaking community is primarily male and simply does not care about the trials of women who are neither crippled in the midst of promising athletic careers nor threatened by Satanic monsters.

It is, in any case, nearly as odd for Hollywood to have a film about a man learning to cope with a traditionally woman's world, learning to love and share and nurture (however superficially that learning is shown) as it would be for films to successfully capture female angst.

Jeffrey M. Ganso



## Woman's World

(continued from page 5)

She explained that after she finishes a story, she pins it together in a long row like she does a dress pattern when she is sewing.

It is Welty's rare ability to give luminosity to the trappings of domestic life, to create myths out of classical kitch, that makes me believe in her deep importance to the feminist movement. I begin to wonder if her talent for celebrating the nurturing aspects of life may not be one of the most important ways to collapse the distinctions between the public and private worlds we must constantly contend with. When feeding, loving, dusting, and ironing can become part of our richest symbolism rather than part of our richest sentimentalism, perhaps then we will have a genuine chance to participate as active, equal adults in a harmonious society.

Pam Brink

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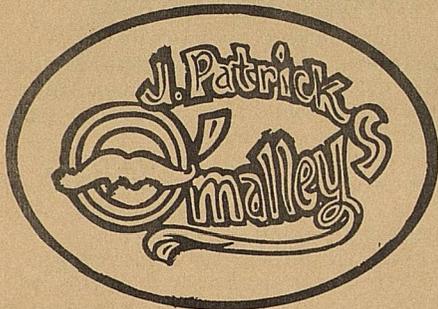


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