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# Katherine Anne Porter's Adaptation of Joycean Paralysis in the Pale Horse, Pale Rider Collection

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KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S ADAPTATION OF JOYCEAN PARALYSIS  
IN THE PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER COLLECTION

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
English

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by  
Jamie Rose Colwell  
December 2007

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Alma Bennett, Committee Chair  
Dr. Wayne Chapman  
Dr. Bill Koon

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of Katherine Anne Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection in relationship to James Joyce's Dubliners. The main focus of this study is Porter's use of Joycean paralysis in the three stories "Old Mortality," "Noon Wine," and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." There is evidence in interviews and letters of Porter's admiration of Joyce, and her characters' states of hopelessness reflect a similar paralysis to those found in the following selections of Dubliners: "The Dead," "Grace," and "Eveline." Porter's collection of stories is not an imitation of Joyce's work; her voice and story setting remain distinct. However, a thread can be found between the two writers' selected works through the oppressiveness of the societies in which the characters in the Pale Horse, Pale Rider series and Dubliners live.

The object of this thesis is to analyze the sense of hopelessness found in Porter's characters, while surveying the connections that exist between her and Joyce's stories. While the United States and Ireland's political and socio-economic situations differed, the result of their problems similarly affected the individuals in the respective countries. First discussed is the political and social atmosphere of the United States in the twentieth century. The second chapter will continue with the effect of the Texas South's codes of conduct on the family in "Old Mortality." A discussion of these Southern codes will continue with "Noon Wine" in the third chapter. This thesis concludes with a study of Porter's Miranda character, a woman hindered by her heritage and the present World War I, which create a state of isolation that is inescapable. In all three of these Porter stories

the protagonists, left hopeless at the end of the works, mirror the paralysis found in James Joyce's Dubliners.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Joey and Donna Colwell, who always encourage me to chase my dreams and do my best – no excuses.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TITLE ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Title
OM .....	“Old Mortality”
NW .....	“Noon Wine”
PH .....	“Pale Horse, Pale Rider”
D .....	“The Dead”
G .....	“Grace”
E .....	“Eveline”



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER COLLECTION:

##### AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOURCES

“I read *Dubliners* in 1917, and it was a revelation to me of what short stories might be. I might never have begun, if it had not been for that book.” – Katherine Anne Porter, letter (1941)

In both her interviews and letters, Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980) credits the Irish author James Joyce (1882-1941) for her deep interest in short stories and writing. Though their writings are based on and exist in distinctly different cultures, the thread of paralysis, or a state of hopelessness, is a hallmark of both authors' works. Specifically, Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) suggests an important model for Porter's stagnant characters in her short story collection *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939). In these works, both authors reveal forces outside of their characters' control that prohibit or limit progression in their respective settings. While Joyce uses *Dubliners* to focus on the paralysis found in Ireland due to socio-economic and political turmoil, Porter borrows this preoccupation in her stories to track both the outside world and her characters' families; it is the latter focus that separates her stories from exact models of Joyce. Though Joyce can be seen as a definite influence and his use of paralysis clearly exists in Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* collection, Porter never fails to show clear ownership and original technique in her writing. This, of course, is most obvious in the placement of her characters' state of hopelessness within the current socio-economic and political problems of America at the beginning of the twentieth century. For clarification of the writers' different contexts, it is

most useful to discuss first the influence of society in the United States and its politics on Porter's literature and then turn to Ireland's social and political situation as portrayed in Joyce's Dubliners.

Having been raised in a Southern family and having ventured out from Texas in 1919 into an America at war with other countries (and itself, as far as human rights were concerned), Katherine Anne Porter was fully aware of the limits of certain individuals – Southerners and women, for example – within society. She admits, “I am a Southerner by tradition and inheritance, and I have a deeply profound feeling for the South” (Conversations 83). Though her work cannot accurately be described as autobiographical, Porter's Southern roots and her experiences with post-World War I America are definitely reflected in her characters. Then as an expatriate in Mexico during the 1920s, Porter was able to look at her birth country as an outsider. As a result, her stories display a sense of entrapment within the characters who hope to escape but cannot. Joyce's Irish characters are bound by encroaching British political rule, a dominating Irish religion (Catholicism), and low economic conditions due to the potato famine; the source of Porter's American characters' paralysis is equally complicated. Porter, through her early-life experiences as a Texan, binds her Pale Horse, Pale Rider characters within a strict moral and Southern code of conduct. In an attempt to define these unwritten codes, she describes the traditions of the South:

It was not really a democratic society; if everybody had his place, sometimes very narrowly defined, at least he knew where it was, and so did everybody else. So too, the higher laws of morality and religion were defined; if a man offended against the one, or sinned against the other, he

knew it, and so did his neighbors, and they called everything by its right name. This firm view applied also to social standing. A man who had humble ancestors had a hard time getting away from them and rising in the world... Yet there was nothing against anyone hinting at a better lineage and a family past more dignified than the present, no matter how humble his present circumstance, nor how little proof he could offer for his claim. Aspiration to higher and better things was natural to all men, and a sign of proper respect for true blood and birth. Pride and hope may be denied to no one. ("Sources" 472)

This hope for a better heritage hinders Porter's characters in the present and creates a hopeless future. The Gay family in "Old Mortality," the first selection of the Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection which will be discussed in Chapter Two, is affected directly by a need for a respectable past, and their stories of the past serve as the method for obtaining this socially upright legacy. Because of Southern society's demands for moral behavior, Porter is able to create a family that will forever be held captive by their tales of a romantic past as they attempt to justify their beloved Amy's rebellious actions. The family's stories, as previously stated, are the reason for their lack of progress, but it is Amy's behavior that causes them to romanticize the reality of her past in order to save the family's good name, which is a necessity according to Porter's description of Southern tradition. Adding to these traditions already defined by Porter, historian Anne Firor Scott points out,

If talking could make it so, antebellum southern women of the upper class would have been the most perfect examples of womankind seen on

earth... This marvelous creation was described as a submissive wife whose reason for being was to love, honor, obey, and occasionally amuse her husband, to bring up his children and manage his household. Physically weak, and 'formed for the less laborious occupations,' she depended upon male protection... She was timid and modest, beautiful and graceful... (4)

Porter creates a woman who fits the mold physically but who actively defies the set standards of Southern womanhood, forcing the family to create a false, but beautiful past, which, in turn, affects younger generations who are enchanted by an unrealistic view of their family's heritage.

This younger generation is almost exclusively portrayed by Miranda Gay, Amy's niece. Though Miranda is aware that the stories of her Aunt Amy's past are romanticized, she still loves to listen to the tales, especially when told by her father, Harry. Though obviously aware of the reality of his sister's past, he allows and encourages the family to recreate the stories of the past to fit a more suitable standard of morality and chivalry. Harry, like Amy, has defied a Southern code when he shoots at a man without challenging him to a duel, which is yet another tradition which affected Porter in her Texan past. She recalls:

...the men of that [upper] class fought duels, and abided, in theory at least, on the outcome; and country life, ranch life, was rough in Texas, at least. I remember tall bearded booted men striding about with clanking spurs, and carrying loaded pistols inside their shirts next to their ribs, even to church. ("Sources" 73)

Porter critics have argued that her works are autobiographical, but, with all of the contradictions found in her interviews, it is more relevant to look at the effects of her background on her writing rather than the specific details of her past that may reflect details in her works. By using her Southern past as a motivator for the emotions and source of paralysis in her Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection, a clearer connection can be made between Porter's past and her fiction. As scholar Robert H. Brinkmeyer suggests, "[Porter's] exploration of the world of her upbringing largely derived from her growing interest in the significance of memory in the creation of self and art" (117). The family's memories in "Old Mortality" are necessary to the creation of Miranda who will appear again later in the Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection.

As Chapter Three will explain, Porter, in the second story of the collection, "Noon Wine," uses these same Southern codes of conduct with an added element of Protestant religion to paralyze her protagonist, Mr. Royal Earle Thompson, and his wife, Ellie Thompson. Mr. Thompson's decision to kill Homer T. Hatch, a bounty hunter, in order to protect his worker, Olaf Helton, is a wrong in the eyes of his religion and community because Helton is a foreigner and alleged murderer. The killing of a man, as Porter explained, is not the unforgivable sin that the community cannot move beyond. It is the way in which the killing occurred ("Sources" 479). Hatch was defenseless, and Thompson's actions were too closely associated with murder to adhere to Southern morality that held firm to Protestant Christian beliefs. Thompson, therefore, must be shunned by society and becomes stuck in an endless circle of repentance for a crime that is legally dismissed. His guilt, however, and his understanding of Southern society leave him unable to forgive himself. Mrs. Thompson, the very definition of a Southern lady,

cannot forgive him either or give him comfort and becomes another factor in his decision to commit suicide at the end of the story. The family's inability to progress beyond the codes of the South and religious beliefs becomes a deadly force in this selection of the Pale Horse, Pale Rider series.

Porter moves beyond Southern society in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," the title story in the collection, and focuses on the effects of World War I and the 1918 influenza epidemic on the American woman. The idealistic expression that this was the war to end all wars carries with it the prevalent attitude of the time period. World War II soldier and author Paul Fussell observes, "Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected" (7). The war was meant as an end, so the realities of trench warfare were understood and accepted. The trenches were "wet, cold, smelly, and thoroughly squalid (Fussell 43). Quarters were tight and men spent hours in cramped positions in the trenches that served, in some ways, more as targets than defenses. Escape was difficult, and the cumbersome dead bodies could be just as dangerous as the bullets flying overhead. Fussell goes on to explain:

The stench of rotten flesh was over everything, hardly repressed by the chloride of lime sprinkled on particularly offensive sites. Dead horses and dead men – and parts of both – were sometimes not buried for months and often simply became an element of parapets and trench walls. You could smell the front line miles before you could see it. (49)

It is clear, through Adam's conversations with Miranda that these realities have been explained to the soldiers, but duty for one's country comes before personal comfort and survival. These men were in a position to end all wars, and that message resounded

constantly in their ideas about battle. The Southern codes that were so heavily relied on in “Old Mortality” and “Noon Wine” have now been replaced with patriotic, American codes of heroism that existed in this war that was to be the last one. Porter understood that these codes of patriotism and the war itself were ironic when she published “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” in 1939, at a time when America was aware that there would be another war.

She also understood that there was opposition to America’s involvement in World War I, even though the general feeling was one of patriotism with the war effort. Woodrow Wilson, the U.S. president during World War I, campaigned on the platform to remain neutral and out of the war. He was the first Democrat to hold office in twenty years, and his views on neutrality in war helped him to gain re-election in 1916 ([Encyclopedia Americana](#) 8). Yet, in 1912, roughly four years before the United States entered the First World War, “Americans disagreed about the causes and issues of war, but virtually all of them wanted to remain outside its vortex” ([Encyclopedia Americana](#) 8). This opinion changed drastically when America decided to enter the war in 1917, and Porter makes use of the idea that not everyone had changed their views from only a few years earlier through Miranda. Once again, Porter finds irony in the push to get into the war that few had supported before. The realities of the war were tragic, and by November 11, 1918, at the signing of the Armistice, over 323,000 total casualties of U.S. men had been reported, including the dead, prisoners, and the wounded ([Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#)).

Not only does Porter explore the concept of unrealistic patriotism, but she also portrays the effects of the war on the average United States citizen through America’s

economic situation. Granted, the war brought financial gain through labor and demand for supplies that other countries could not provide. It did, however, take a toll on the individual American, since people had to buy war bonds or Liberty loans in order to fund the war even if they barely had enough money to support themselves ([Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#)). The United States loaned seven billion dollars to the Allies to help fund the war ([Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#)). This, in turn, directly affected the American people. Porter's Miranda barely has enough money for food but is terrified that not buying a war bond will result in the loss of her job. As seen through Porter's writing, forced patriotism is not genuinely patriotic.

In addition to the struggles found at home and abroad during World War I, America was suffering from the influenza epidemic of 1918, which lasted approximately one year. Researcher Youri Ghendon reports, "In the United States of America the 1918 influenza pandemic killed 550,000 people – 0.5% of the population, about ten times more than the number of Americans who died in the war" (451). Porter, herself, became infected with the virus in 1918 while working in Denver, Colorado. This episode marked her life and would, as Janis P. Stout recognizes, become an "issue later in her life, most dramatically in the sick world of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" ([Sense](#) 27).

During America's involvement in World War I Porter established her opinion of the war. Stout continues:

During World War I...it appears that she did indeed dissent from the war fever that swept the country as virulently as the flu itself. She would claim many years later that in 1914 she had 'wondered why the USA interfered in the European war – only another war such as they had been having for



two thousand years.’ Dangerous as it is to accept at face value Porter’s retrospective comments on her own opinions, her report here is plausible, since “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” itself, expresses, more powerfully than any direct statement she could make, dissent from the war effort. The work catches in a definitive way the atmosphere of the late war as perceived by a brooding, dissenting mind, alienated from the crassness and moral shabbiness of the surrounding world. (Sense 27)

The “moral shabbiness” in “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” resonates with the codes of morality found in “Old Mortality.” Therefore, Southern codes must still be considered in this work since the protagonist is the same, albeit older, Miranda from “Old Mortality.” Just as Porter’s past affected her writing on some level, Miranda’s past affects her views of love, romance, and rebellion. By placing Miranda, whose views of war are negative, in a relationship with Adam, a soldier eager to fight for his country, Porter gives a rounder portrayal of America and the time surrounding the end of the Great War.

Just as Porter uses her Southern past and experience living in America during the First World War and influenza epidemic, James Joyce also creates a familiar atmosphere in Dubliners with Ireland’s struggling political situation and depressed socio-economic conditions. Dublin, especially, suffered greatly under the Act of Union, which was passed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Under this act, Britain and Ireland merged to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in which no Catholics could hold public office nor own land (Encyclopedia Britannica Online). The loss of power in the most predominant religion in Ireland certainly added to the country’s sense of hopelessness, and the years of political struggle for power eventually led to a feeling of

despair in the Irish population. Also, because so many people could not hold land due to their religion, there was a mass influx of people into the cities, such as Dublin. However, the Industrial Revolution bypassed the city, making it one of the poorest and dirtiest cities in Europe ([Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#)). Both the political stagnation of the country and the specific loss of industry in Dublin create the atmosphere of the city as portrayed in Joyce's Dubliners.

In addition, the potato famine of 1845-1849 served as another factor in Dublin's depressed state. Known as one of the worst economic tragedies in world history, the famine "stands out as one of the great disasters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...Excess mortality amounted to roughly one million, or over one-ninth of the population...Irish emigration was greatly increased, leaving its mark on the economies and societies of the New World" (O'Rourke 309). Statistically, one and a half million people emigrated from Ireland during the four years of the potato famine, but Ireland felt the effects of the tragedy for many years thereafter. By 1921, an estimated 4.2 million people had left Ireland because of the poor economy ([Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#)). This is the atmosphere that Joyce grew up in as a writer; thus the effects of politics and economy were almost unavoidable in a work dedicated to this specific region of Ireland.

Though Joyce was born at the end of the nineteenth century and did not experience some of the major misfortunes that affected Ireland's political and economic state, he lived through thwarted movements that were equally paralyzing to the country. Joyce's lifetime experienced the tragic political downfall of Charles Stewart Parnell, with Parnell's failed attempt to achieve Home Rule for Ireland followed by public scandal ([Encyclopedia Britannica Online](#)). Not until 1921, seven years after the publication of

Dubliners, was Home Rule finally granted to the Republic of Ireland (Encyclopedia Britannica Online).

While the political and economic situation of Ireland can be discussed historically at great length, it is more important in this thesis to observe Joyce's opinion and attitude toward the people of Dublin and the political situation which are the subjects of his writing. He notes:

Dubliners, strictly speaking, are my fellow-countrymen, but I don't care to speak of our 'dear, dirty Dublin' as they do. Dubliners are the most hopeless, useless and inconsistent race of charlatans I have ever come across, on the island or the continent... The Dubliner passes his time gabbing and making the rounds in bars or taverns or cathouses, without ever getting 'fed up' with the double doses of whiskey and Home Rule, and at night, when he can hold no more and is swollen up with poison like a toad, he staggers from the side-door and, guided by an instinctive desire for stability along the straight line of the houses, he goes slithering his backside against all walls and corners. He goes 'arsing along' as we say in English. There's the Dubliner for you. (qtd. in Ellmann 217)

Joyce, while noting the social and economic problems of Ireland, places the blame for paralysis directly on the people of Dublin. It is up to the citizens of Ireland to make a change, yet he shows through his paralyzed characters that this is highly unlikely. His feelings toward the Dubliners create a work that, like Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection, encapsulates not only the historical aspects of the period but also the emotions of the individual living in a tumultuous time.

A connection can be made between Porter and Joyce's placing the blame for paralysis both on society and politics in their respective works. However, Porter's frozen or unchanging fictional world becomes distinctive through her use of highly American policies and quirks – war bonds and Southern society, for example – that create a fresh setting with original characters. Even with distinctions, there is no question that political contexts were major factors in both authors' works. Both Ireland and the United States, as already shown, had their share of political and socio-economic issues that are reflected in their respective literature. Porter, like many of her contemporary American writers, chooses to focus on the United States as a country faced with the question of identity and self-worth at the beginning of the twentieth century. She, however, creates distinctive characters who, like Joyce's, reflect these national crises through the paralysis of their personal lives. Certainly, she separates herself from Joyce through unique factors of American society and heritage. Nevertheless, Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection evokes a relationship with stories from Joyce's Dubliners, especially "The Dead," "Grace," and "Eveline."

In her numerous interviews and essays, Porter never fails to mention Joyce when talking about inspiration. Their works can be compared through character similarities, structure, and language. Yet their most common quality is their willingness to speak out truthfully and precisely in difficult times. Porter once remarked on Joyce's courage:

To those of my own generation and after, I can only say, what would we have done without him? He had courage for all of us, and patience beyond belief, and the total intensity of absorption in his gift, and the will to live in it and for it in spite of hell: and more often than not, it was hell: but bad

and worse things have happened to many quite good men who suffered quite as much, who had no gift, no joy, no special mystery of their own, to console them. (Essays 200)

Porter admired Joyce's determination to reveal a truth, and the writers shared that goal. She constantly referred to her writing as her outlet; as she once stated, "I love to write for the sake of writing and saying what is in my mind at the time" (Letters 405). Joyce, in a very similar manner, once wrote in a letter to his brother, Stanislaus, that "my nature is artistic and I cannot be happy so long as I try to stifle it" (Letters 74). While both artists' love of writing itself fueled their craft, both felt an innate desire to expose a truth about real society. Though they lived in overlapping, but slightly different time periods, the feelings that they expressed about the current situations of their homelands are strikingly similar. Joyce's Dubliners creates a model for national paralysis; Porter, in effect, takes this model and makes it her own as she forms a paralysis specific to a certain region of the United States and a time period unique to American history. Porter, in a last description of Joyce after his death, writes, "Joyce had a dryness of heart... Yet more than anybody, he gave fresh breath and new meaning to language, and a new heart, new courage, new hope to all serious writers who came after him. Rest his soul in peace" (Essays 299). Even with a poignancy and individuality focused on Joyce in this statement, it could easily apply to Katherine Anne Porter as a writer and an artist.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE POWER OF MEMORY IN “OLD MORTALITY” AND “THE DEAD”

One of the most subtle reminders of Joyce’s style in Katherine Anne Porter’s Pale Horse, Pale Rider series exists in the powerful narrative voice. Both Porter and Joyce use the narrator to undermine character dialogue and seduce the reader to trust narration in “Old Mortality” and “The Dead,” respectively. In the stories this seduction is made clear with the contrast of what the narrative voice explains and the words of the characters. Joyce’s Gabriel in “The Dead” gives a moving speech at the holiday dinner about pressing forward in life and forgetting the past. Yet the narrator makes the reader aware that Gabriel is immobilized in his perception of his wife, Gretta, and the relationship is likewise regressive; Gabriel does not understand Gretta’s present emotions because he still thinks of her as a beautiful object devoted, body and soul, to him. Similarly, Porter’s “Old Mortality” portrays the Gay family as captivated by the legend of Amy, the cousin of Porter’s intricate and complex Miranda, yet the narrator consistently negates Amy as a character worthy of worship. She is not a heroine, as the family suggests, but the family creates her legend out of necessity. Interviewer Henry Allen explains, “In true Southern style, Miss Porter has managed to carry on unreconciled to what she has called ‘grotesque dislocations in a whole society when the world was heaving in the sickness of millennial change’” (Conversations 163). Porter’s “Southern style” surfaces in “Old Mortality” as the Gay family refuses to change and adapt to the twentieth century. They refuse the veracity of the past and, instead, accept and promote a fallacy in order to keep the family’s good name.

The Gays serve as the main unit paralyzed throughout the work. Their name suggests a family at least content, if not happy, with their existence. Superficially, this assessment is accurate; it is not, however, wholly true. The Gays exist only through their past or the legend they have created through their stories. They are shells who encompass a fictive history. They are not merely bodies reacting to plot situations; the plot is completely reliant on and crucial to these characters' existences. One of Porter's greatest writing strengths lies in her strong, meticulously-developed characters, and "Old Mortality" exemplifies this strength through a Texas family that is Southern to a fault. Jane Krause DeMouy claims, "What Porter says but does not stress is that this family is Southern. Not only do they revere their past, they aggrandize it..." (146). Through this glorification of their past the narrator is able to contradict their stories and perceptions of the past to show the most probable source of their paralysis: the infallible codes of Southern conduct as explained by Porter in Chapter One. Amy blatantly breaks and exploits these codes with her wild, unladylike behavior, thus forcing the family to romanticize the past in order to relieve the shame she brings to the family name.

Porter, with her past rooted in the Texas South, understood the rules of Southern conduct and chivalry. Though she never claimed to be a regional writer, she believed that "you ought to write about what you know" (Conversations 34). As Porter writes what she knows, she builds a family legend focused on the infamous Amy. Though "Old Mortality" begins in 1885 and ends in 1912, the family never changes because of their need to return to events from Amy's past. They focus on and obsess over the same memories and ideas in 1885 as they do in 1912. Their memories are cemented in the

idealization of Amy, and this idealization is a key element in the paralysis of their minds which never stray far from memories of her.

Stories play a necessary role in “Old Mortality”; in fact, the majority of the work is a compilation of stories told by the family members as they reminisce about their beloved Amy. Porter’s opening Pale Horse, Pale Rider selection is, as DeMouy describes, a “pastiche of memories, details, and emotions (146). No real present action takes place in this work. The majority of the action occurs in the past. Robert Penn Warren, writer and close friend to Porter, observes: “So much for the action of the story. We see immediately that it is a story about legend, and it is an easy extension to the symbol for tradition, the meaning of the past for the present” (105). Stories, however, do not serve as simple reminders of the past. They are consistently rehashed in a cathartic manner as though the family is forced to retell them in order to cope with their role in Amy’s downfall and alleged suicide. Disillusionment plays a central role in this storytelling as the narrator explains, “they loved to tell stories, romantic and poetic, or comic with romantic humor; they did not gild the outward circumstance, it was the feeling that mattered” (OM 175). In this statement the narrator’s words reveal the importance of the family’s memories as the story in “Old Mortality” becomes a vessel in which reality is skimmed over and sentiments take precedence over truth. Much like Gretta’s story of Michael Furey in “The Dead,” the factual events of the past that lead to Amy’s early death are not as important as the way that the family reacts to those events and the narrative that is created out of those reactions. Just as Joyce’s Gabriel is immured and captivated by Gretta on the staircase, he is also stunned by her story of a past love that he never knew existed. There is an inherent beauty in the retelling of the dead, and a



comparison can be made with Porter's story of the deceased Amy and Joyce's striking story, told by Gretta, of the innocent Michael Furey. Joyce writes:

As often as human fear and cruelty, that wicked monster begotten by luxury, are in league to make life ignoble and sullen and to speak evil of death the time is come wherein a man of timid courage seizes the keys of hell and death, and flings them far out into the abyss, proclaiming the praise of life, which the abiding splendor of truth may sanctify, and of death, the most beautiful form of life. In those vast courses, which enfold us and in that great memory which is greater and more generous than our memory, no life, no moment of exaltation is ever lost. (qtd. in Ellmann 95)

The Gay family's stories, though warped, are beautiful, but their reasons for telling these stories in a skewed manner are weak, rather than lovely. Whereas Gretta shares a "great memory" of Michael Furey that is very much real to her, the Gay family's memory of Amy is false and self-serving. Both stories of the dead serve the purpose of portraying characters in a paralytic state. However, Porter's story serves to mask reality while Joyce's strips that mask away.

Because of the Gays' determination to uphold the family name and its honor, they have to revive the stories into legends of love and chivalry; "their stories were almost always love stories against a bright blank heavenly blue sky," thus romanticizing a time where honor was upheld by chivalric duels and young women could be as defiant as they pleased as long as they were beautiful (OM 175). In this critique of the family's perception of the past, the narrator provokes the reader to look past the surface of the tales in "Old Mortality" and determine the real reason for their need to retell events of

history. This retelling of stories clearly portrays the family's awareness of who Amy really is – a rebellious and self-centered young woman. She is not the stereotypical Southern belle the family expects, and they must compensate for the disgrace she brings to them. With Amy, a battle is lost. She is forced to settle down with a man she does not love, and the family is disgraced first by her lack of motivation to marry, and then her forced marriage and wild lifestyle drive them to displace reality in favor of honor. Porter comments, "Defeat in this world is no disgrace and that is what [Southerners] cannot understand" (Conversations 60). When Amy must marry Gabriel (most likely because she is pregnant with a stranger's child), the family is unable, due to acceptable standards of Southern society, to remember her marriage as a blessed event. Instead, they romanticize her departure in their stories. When Miranda and her sister, Maria, ask about "how Aunt Amy went away," Cousin Cora recounts, "she ran into the gray cold and stepped into the carriage and turned and smiled with her face as pale as death and called out 'Good-by, good-by.' And refused her cloak, and said, 'Give me a glass of wine'" (OM 176). When the children ask why she refused her cloak, the simple and romantic answer is always, "Because she was not in love, my dear" (OM 176). However, the family's refusal to retell Amy's actions in a truthful manner serves to hinder them, as well as the younger generations, from moving on after her death.

As mentioned above, Miranda is known as Porter's recurring and most complex female character, yet her cousin Amy in "Old Mortality" can be seen as one of the most devastating characters in Porter's fiction. She deliberately places Amy in a society that will ruin her. Ultimately, though, Amy cannot be blamed for the family's paralysis. While she is certainly their fixed point of interest, she is not the culprit of her family's

inability to progress. If anything, Amy can only be faulted for a more worldly view of women's independence. She is beautiful, strong-willed, and charismatic – an enviable woman by today's standards. Her dilemma lies in the Texas South that depended on strict codes of behavior and roles for women. Superficially, she fits the family's standard of female perfection, making it easy to place her memory on a pedestal (DeMouy 147). Stout criticizes the role DeMouy gives Southern women as she states, "Porter makes it clear that such demanding models of feminine perfection exert a destructive pressure on those female children and young woman who cannot attain them" (Sense 193). This standard, indeed, is the cause of Amy's demise, since her version of female perfection is much different from that of the family.

"Old Mortality" begins with a portrait of Amy in all of her youthful glory. She is enviable, but she is also dead when the work opens. Directly, the narrator warns that Amy "had been beautiful, much loved, unhappy, and she had died young" (OM 173). This is no place for an active story of a real heroine. The only version of Amy that is offered is the memory, but the family's recollection is set in contrast to the narrator's words. She is made the family's romantic heroine in order to save their reputation. Stout criticizes, "But in the family legend her bold gestures are remembered as evidence of her flamboyant nature, not as a substantive protest. Only the attentive reader sees that she has enacted a parody of the feminine ideal" (Sense 194); the family, in turn, creates its own parody to compensate for the shame that Amy brings to the family through her wild nature. The narrator simply describes: "The woman in the picture had been Aunt Amy, but she was only a ghost in a frame, and a sad, pretty story from old times" (OM 173). Her picture on the mantle both freezes and isolates her character from the beginning. She has not

changed; she is a fixed object as “she sat thus, forever, in the pose of being photographed, a motionless image in her dark walnut frame with silver oak leaves in the corners, her smiling gray eyes following one about the room” (OM 173).

Amy, who is literally paralyzed in her position in the picture, serves as a constant reminder to the family. They are in awe of her, but their stories about the departed Amy are a distraction from reality. In this repeated retelling of Amy’s past the reader understands the family’s dormant existence. They exist only through their stories of Amy and the past, but their tales are skewed. Amy’s brother, Harry, remarks that Amy was actually thinner than her picture seems, and he boldly asserts that all of the women in the family are, in fact, thin. However, even the young Miranda catches his lie as she questions, “How did their father account for great-aunt Eliza, who squeezed herself through doors, and who, when seated, was one solid pyramidal monument from floor to neck?” (OM 174). Stout recognizes this model set for female perfection and remarks, “Clearly, everyone in the family values slenderness, gracefulness, and charm” (Sense 193). These values are a part of the Southern tradition set for females, and, even for the younger generations, these traditions are captivating.

While Porter gives two versions of Amy – the family’s perspective and the narrator’s – Joyce only gives one vantage point of the dead Michael Furey – Gretta’s. The reader gains Gabriel’s interpretation of Michael as he “thought of how [Gretta] who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover’s eyes when [Michael] had told her that he did not wish to live” (D 241). Gabriel, in his self-consciousness, forms memories concerning Gretta and Michael that may or may not have actually existed. Porter, on the other hand, is clear as to who Amy is and gives a rounded

picture of her through differing family members and the narrator; Joyce leaves his dead up to the imagination of his main character, Gabriel, and the words of his grieving wife with whom he is not truly in love. In “The Dead,” Joyce creates his own technique involving memory in a manner that Porter further develops in “Old Mortality.”

Miranda and Maria are constantly engrossed by these memories and stories of Amy and their family’s past, but Miranda is aware of their tendency to elaborate and lie. Conscious of these fabrications, she and Maria turn a keener eye on the picture of Aunt Amy and question “why every older person who looked at the picture said, ‘How lovely’; and why everyone who had known her thought her so beautiful and charming” (OM 173). Even with their more accurate perception of the truth, Miranda and Maria are still enamored with the stories and listen to them time and time again. Thus, it is clear from the opening of the story that the family is arrested in their past and unable to move beyond Amy’s memory, though slanted, and the events surrounding her death.

In forgetting his role as a Southern gentleman, Harry places the family in the middle of scandal and becomes another factor in the family’s need to glorify their heritage. In order to protect the honor of his beloved Amy, who first shows her ankles at the Mardi Gras ball and then kisses a former beau, Raymond, while being courted by Gabriel, Harry acts on impulse instead of following behavior expected of a Southern man. He fails to remember the code of chivalry and shoots at Raymond without first challenging him to a duel. As a result, Harry is then forced to leave the country and his betrothed in order to escape ignominy. The narrator cleverly remarks that “Harry set out for the border, feeling rather gay and adventurous” (OM 189). Porter’s use of irony in this statement sheds a subtle light on the reality of the situation. Harry is obviously in the

wrong as he breaks Southern rules of chivalry and is forced to retreat to a foreign country. This is not a romantic trip; it is a necessity in accordance to an unwritten law of Southern chivalry: if one must shoot at a man, one must first declare a duel. Therefore, the family must retell the event as an adventure to repress any shame that may still exist from that episode.

In this scandal, Amy secures her role as the family's romantic heroine by sneaking out of the house and riding her horse to the border to kiss Harry goodbye. The family once again skims over the impropriety of the entire scandal with Amy's words to her mother, "Mammy, it was splendid, the most delightful trip I ever had. And if I am to be the heroine of this novel, why shouldn't I make the most of it?" (OM 189). The narrator reveals in the next paragraph, though, that "The scandal gathered Maria and Miranda had been pretty terrible" (OM 189). It is clear that the family's feelings about this event are deeper than they will verbally admit; even young Maria and Miranda are aware that the affair was "terrible." Through this beautification of the past the family is destroying the future. As Robert H. Brinkmeyer, a recent Porter scholar, warns, "Equally disturbing is Miranda's and Maria's growing awareness that while the family stories might enlarge their everyday world with an added dimension of romance and intrigue, they can also, in their overriding emphasis on the past, in effect destroy the present and the future" (168). By trying to soften the past, the family only traps the younger generations in the present with false ideas about love and honor.

This dramatic episode of Amy's rebellion, in reality, is the beginning of her struggle with tuberculosis, which the family will only romanticize as well in future stories. Stout examines Amy's attitude through the confinement of the society she lives

in. Not only does the family romanticize the stories about her, but they also create the perfect environment for her rebellion:

In large measure the story of Cousin Amy, dramatized as it is by a heavily paternalistic society, shows the conflict and frustration that result when an energetic, imaginative young woman has no acceptable options in life. There is nothing Amy can do with herself. If she rebels against the narrowly stereotyped course set out for her, she falls into another stereotype, the high-spirited belle or the wild woman. With no freedom to order her life, Amy can only resort to style...and finally, whether directly or not, elect to end it. Even then she is subjected to stereotyping, as family members romanticize her story out of reality. (Stout, Strategies 144)

The suicide, which is alluded to often in the story, is never confirmed. The surrounding stories about Amy, though, leave the reader with little else to believe about her death. Her mother keeps the letter regarding her death, and she cries each time she reads it. Her life is thus recreated by the people directly associated with her. Nevertheless, even in their idealistic view of Amy, concrete evidence, such as the letter, cannot be rationalized. In her mother's tears, the reader can determine that there is more to their stories than they wish to tell, and the family is partly to blame for Amy's behavior.

Like Harry, Gabriel, Amy's suitor and future husband, further enables Amy's rebellious behavior even though he is constantly rejected and thrown into the middle of scandal. Ironically, Gabriel becomes the real hero as he rescues Amy from the reality of her "sickness" (or pregnancy). The narrator identifies him as a "handsome and romantic young man" who "waited five years to marry Aunt Amy" (OM 181). The "waiting"

begins Gabriel's paralysis: he lives his life to serve Amy even though she is cruel to him. Her brief flirtations and his relationship to the family, as Amy's second cousin, cause him to remain a victim. However, Amy still cannot be fully blamed for Gabriel's paralysis. She lives her life the way that pleases her, and Gabriel is partly to blame for holding on to false hopes that she will love him and settle down even though she was already "engaged twice to other young men and broke her engagements for no reason" (OM 181).

Joyce's Gabriel lacks genuine love as well in his marriage to Gretta, and, similar to Porter's Gabriel, he too is to blame for marrying a woman who does not really love him. Joyce's Gabriel is concerned mainly with appearances, to which Porter's Gabriel also falls victim to also as he ridiculously dresses up as a shepherd in "pale blue satin knee breeches and a blond curled wig with a hair ribbon" in order to be seen with Amy at the Mardi Gras ball (OM 185). The narrator shows the futility in Gabriel's actions, while Amy's mother tries to tell her daughter "that marriage and children would cure her of everything" (OM 182). Amy's mother knows that Amy is unlike the rest of her daughters who all settled down and wore "white with white veils" to their weddings, but she still pushes marriage and children on her daughter as the only acceptable station for a beautiful Southern woman in the late nineteenth century (OM 182). The underlying message found in Amy's refusing to wear white is in accordance with the author's style as "Porter participated in her generation's evaluation of women's roles, but for the most part she made her testimony indirectly, through a spare symbolism" (Stout, Sense 193). Joyce, though more obvious in his theme of paralysis in Dubliners, uses a symbolic style in "The Dead" when he describes Gabriel's epiphany at the end of the story. After he is made aware of Gretta's true feelings he looks out the window at the snow that blankets



Ireland, covering and freezing the country just as Gabriel is now held captive by his newfound knowledge of Gretta's past.

Porter, in her nuanced manner, indicates that Amy has harmed more than one man in the family with her irresponsible lifestyle. The Gay family, even in their contrived stories of Amy's wildness as a result of her romantic spirit, cannot deny that "her coldness was said to have driven Gabriel to a wild life and even to drinking" (OM 181). This wild life costs him his inheritance, since his grandfather disapproved of his actions and incessant gambling on racehorses – a sport that Amy loves. Before Amy agrees to be his wife, she, in essence, destroys his life by keeping him forever in the endless cycle of gambling at the racetrack. Stout gives added meaning to Porter's use of Amy's reckless nature in regards to her relationship with Gabriel when she comments,

Certainly Porter, raised in the South at a time when Southern ideas of womanhood formed a mystique even more restrictive than those of American society, generally, brings to her work a complex and very powerful sense of what is or is not acceptable behavior for a woman... That she felt the presence of constraints which were not brought to bear on men and chafed against them is clear. (Strategies 114)

Yet after Amy and Gabriel's brief marriage is cut short by her death, he still continues his devotion to Amy by sending money each year for a wreath to put on her grave. Even in his second marriage, his loyalty to and memory of Amy never fade.

As Gabriel helps to mold Amy as a romantic heroine, her cousin, Eva, adds another layer to Amy's idealized identity by serving as her antithesis and the only family member who can see the reality of Amy's disgraceful life. Porter portrays Eva as "a

blot...she belonged to [the] everyday world of dull lessons to be learned, stiff shoes to be limbered up, scratchy flannels to be endured in cold weather, measles and disappointed expectations...Amy belonged to the world of poetry” (OM 178). Everything that Eva is, Amy is not. Eva is ugly, chinless, and teaches Latin, while Amy is, as previously noted, incredibly striking and only concerned with love and adventure. While Amy wanted “a good dancing partner to guide [her] through life,” Eva is almost invisible at all social events and grows up to be a women’s rights activist (OM 183). Like the characters Helton and Thompson, who will be discussed in Chapter Three, Eva and Amy are incomplete characters who, if combined, could create a well-rounded individual who is able to survive in Porter’s fictional world. However, as separate characters, neither Eva nor Amy is able to fit successfully into the world in which they live.

Eva has no place in a family that idealizes beauty and love. She is a radical who “believed in votes for women, and had traveled about, making speeches” (OM 178). Her progressive twentieth-century beliefs about women’s rights and independence are considerably close to Amy’s actions of independence. However, Eva, as stated before, is ugly. No one wants to marry her; therefore, her actions are of little consequence to the family. Anne Firor Scott reinforces these familial beliefs, “Spinsters, widows, wives with disabled husbands – such women had to earn a living, and the obviousness of their need protected them from criticism” (135). Unlike Amy, Eva can be remembered accurately, since, according to the family, she is only a spinster. She serves as a foil for Amy, the belle of every ball, and exemplifies her flaws as a woman in a traditional Southern society who should be focused on marriage. Amy physically possesses the qualities of a desirable woman; however, she is a free-spirit and acts in a sexually promiscuous

manner. Eva, by contrast, is scholarly and political, but the characteristic that hinders these women in Porter's "Old Mortality" is the same – their independence. Though Eva is alive and well at the end of the novel, she still yearns to be a part of the family. Her independence takes her away from them, but she actually longs for them and happily returns for Gabriel's funeral, even though no one in the family notifies her of his death. Amy's independence inevitably takes her away from her family forever through her necessary marriage to Gabriel and her tuberculosis. The two cousins are different physically, but their independence makes each equally an outcast and unable to move forward in a world dominated by family tradition.

Eva, however, is the only character in the family who comes close to breaking free because of her feminist viewpoints and choice of a profession over marriage. Still, Amy remains her focus of thought until the end of the story, but it is not Amy's memory that Eva cannot move beyond. It is the family's inaccurate memory of Amy that Eva is determined to clarify. Eva's role in the family is, as Warren concludes, that of a rationalist. He notes, "Cousin Eva, who has given her life to learning and a progressive use, defines all the legend in terms of economics and biology" (105). Once again, the South's standards for socially acceptable behavior force the family to retell Amy's stories in order to avoid scandal and are the root of the problem that Eva has with Amy's memory, thus causing her retelling of Amy's life. In the third part of the story, "1912," Eva dissolves many of the romantic notions of Amy when she truthfully reveals the reality of the stories to an eighteen-year-old Miranda: "[Amy] went through life like a spoiled darling, doing as she pleased and letting other people suffer for it, and pick up the pieces after her" (OM 211). Although Eva portrays a harsher, more realistic view of

Amy, she is never truly bitter towards her, and her stories make the most sense in the context of “Old Mortality.” Eva most clearly understands Amy; she is the one who does the dirty work and casts off the blinders that have thus far shrouded Amy’s memory. Here, in Part III, Stout observes, “The real Amy, hidden behind the family’s idealization, is revealed by Porter in a few deft strokes...Self-willed, defiant of convention, she plays out the expected role of belle and bride in her own style” (Sense 194). Eva’s revelations are driven by a need to accurately portray the past and expose the truth, previously hinted at by the narrator, that has been carefully tucked away behind the family’s grand stories.

DeMouy’s feminist criticism, while noteworthy in analysis, relies too heavily on Amy’s virginity as a reason for her sexual allure. She credits Amy’s behavior as rebellious because of the pedestal that the family places her on, yet it is actually Amy’s behavior that causes her to be romanticized by the family. Eva’s version of Amy contradicts DeMouy because Amy did seem to have an urgent reason to suddenly marry Gabriel: pregnancy. Almost everything Eva says about Amy is negative, but she adds, more than once, that she loves her. Eva is more willing to tell the truth than the rest of the family, but she still misses Amy. Like the others in the family, Eva cannot cast aside the memory of Amy and her past. Certainly, Amy creates the adventure that kills her, but the entire family lives vicariously through these adventures. Eva stands up for women’s rights and goes to jail three times. These, however, are not the stories she shares. Her interest and her stories lie in the memory of Amy:

‘I took to the soap box and the platform when I was called upon,’ she said proudly, ‘and I went to jail when it was necessary, and my condition didn’t make any difference. I was booed and jeered and shoved around

just as if I had been in perfect health. But it was part of our philosophy to not let our physical handicaps make any difference to our work... Well, Amy carried herself with more spirit than the others, and she didn't seem to be making any sort of fight, but she was simply sex-ridden, like the rest. She behaved as if she didn't have a rival on earth, and she pretended not to know what marriage was, but I know better.' (OM 216)

In this excerpt Eva compares her passion for women's rights and politics to Amy's passion for sex without marriage. Amy, in this manner, becomes a heroine for Eva as well. Like Eva, she stands up for what she believes in, and Eva is proud of her in that manner. Eva, like the rest of the family, is paralyzed because of Amy's actions, but Eva's memories and pride are founded in the reality of Amy's life, not in the romance.

Still, Eva's version of Amy is the most difficult to read. At some points in "Old Mortality," Eva is warm, compassionate, and proud, and at others her words are harsh and cold as she remembers her cousin. In these harsh words she speaks of Amy's relationship with Gabriel. The family tells of how Gabriel "waited" for Amy for five years. Eva makes the argument that "there were plenty to believe [that Amy was an impure woman]. There were plenty to pity poor Gabriel for being so completely blinded by her. Gabriel was perfectly miserable all the time, on their honeymoon, in New Orleans" (OM 211). It is Miranda who supports and represents the family's memories when Eva explains that Amy must have committed suicide. Miranda can only respond with the statement, "She was very beautiful. Everybody said she was very beautiful" (OM 214).

Although Miranda has always been aware to an extent that the family stretches and distorts the truth, she still chooses to cling, though she is somewhat distressed by this reality, to their version of Amy. Nevertheless, she is appalled by her Uncle Gabriel's appearance in Part II with his "red face and immense tan ragged mustache fading into gray" (OM 197). She witnesses first hand this hero who has become nothing more than "a shabby fat man with blood-shot blue eyes, sad beaten eyes, and a big melancholy laugh, like a groan" (OM 197). Henry Lopez, Porter's trusted confidant, offers the following accurate analysis: "All these scenes of romance, beauty, and honor – so often repeated to the children as reality – are seen as sham or exaggeration in Parts II and III" (221). Miranda understands, through her Cousin Eva and her own memory, what her Uncle Gabriel has become and that Amy and Gabriel's relationship was not romantic, but she will, like the family, hold fast to this version of the past.

In Amy and Gabriel's relationship Porter's use of Joyce as a model can be seen most clearly. Both Porter's Gabriel in "Old Mortality" and Joyce's Gabriel in "The Dead" are weaker than their female counterparts, and their ideas about the women they love stand in direct contrast to the reality of these women's nature. Gabriel in "Old Mortality" withstands Amy's childish behavior and marries her knowing he is a last resort. He idolizes her physical beauty saying, "I love your hair, Amy, the most beautiful hair in the world" (OM 183). Joyce's Gabriel is so absorbed in his own thoughts of self-doubt that he is unable to understand his wife, and he is so struck by Gretta's beauty that he never seeks to know her on a more personal and intimate level. In "The Dead" the reader first becomes aware of Gabriel's obsession with Gretta's appearance as she speaks to his aunts, Julia and Kate Morkan. Gabriel's "admiring and happy eyes had been wandering

from her dress to her face to her hair” (D 196). Because he is engrossed with his wife’s appearance, he is less aware that she publicly criticizes the way he manages his family. Dubliners critic, Eugene O’Brien, observes, “Gretta’s amused reaction to Gabriel’s patriarchal proprietorial attitude signifies a sense that she does not feel a need to be submissive to him” (221). Gretta, like Amy, is portrayed as an independent woman who says and does what she pleases, with little regard to her husband’s feelings or reputation. Amy shows this same type of defiance when she deliberately cuts off all of her hair after Gabriel compliments it. Both men are more enamored with the idea of the women in their lives than with the actual women, just as both ignore what the women say that deliberately reveal the truth about their feelings.

Porter strengthens and further isolates her heroine as Amy unashamedly rebuffs and acts out against Gabriel, which emasculates his character. His devotion to her for the rest of his life creates a more personal paralysis that prohibits Gabriel from moving on with his life. Joyce’s Gabriel, on the other hand, is unaware of his wife’s true feelings while he watches her on the staircase as she listens to the music from the party. That night he feels “proud and happy...happy that she was his, proud of her grace and wifely carriage” (D 233). He is proud of her as a physical object of beauty. It is in this pride that he desires to sleep with her. Only after she speaks and tells him her thoughts of her dead lover, Michael Furey, does Gabriel realize how foolish he has been. He understands, “while he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another” (D 238). This stands in complete contrast to the speech he makes earlier in the evening about moving forward and forgetting the past, as now he is hurled back into his wife’s past with another

man. There is a clear connection here between Porter's and Joyce's fiction in the use of strong, independent women and the men who remain devoted to them by blind physical attraction, which ultimately serves to disrupt any hope of successful future relationships. Joyce's Gabriel, like Porter's, is frozen at the end of "The Dead" after he learns of Gretta's past lover. Suzette Henke speculates, "Imitating the Christ-like role of Michael Furey, Gabriel may well be trapped in a self-indulgent replication of romantic asceticism" (47). The two Gabriels are immobilized by their wives because of their inability to understand who these women really are.

Both Amy and Gretta have pasts that involve lovers other than their husbands. Amy's past is more promiscuous than Gretta's, but they both have their own ideas about love. Moreover, they are both romanticized by the men in their lives. When Gabriel sees Gretta on the staircase she becomes "a model of feminine tranquility, a romantic image of blue and bronze, blurred in a setting of vague nostalgia" (Henke 44). Like Amy, Gretta is shaped into a statuesque object based on Gabriel's past memories of her. He does not know his wife's inner feelings so he creates a version of her that is solely his. Gretta's reason for marrying Gabriel is not as explored as Amy's, but considering society of the time, one can assume it was at least in part due to necessity. Neither female character marries the man she loves. Their marriages are products of the worlds in which they live. Ironically, both women are romanticized by the men in their lives, while neither relationship, in reality, contains the romance that the people around them believe exists.

Porter, in "Old Mortality," shows a family steeped in tradition which forces them to create a beautiful yet unreliable legend in order to save the ideal Southern sense of romance that they hold dear. They recreate the past as a timeless entity where conflicts



make for a more exciting narrative, albeit a false one. Darlene Harbor Unrue notes, “The tales told about Amy and other ancestors are like bits of poetry, music, or theatre, and through the tales a love or art is being passed on...” (62). Their past is art, but it is not passed on to tell a magical tale of love and adventure; it is a necessity that the family must endure in order to keep secrets of the family safe from public scrutiny. Its purpose is to delicately renew a flawed time they cannot permanently fix or alter. The Gays must remain paralyzed in their stories so that future generations will uphold the family name. While the family’s stagnation and endless cycle of storytelling cannot be credited to one single source for each member of the family, it is most probable that the society in which they live, that Porter herself was so familiar with, creates the need to sacrifice truth in order to save face. Thus their family tale, with all of its glory, lies, and disgrace, will exist forever as they have created it – irresistible, unchanging, and devastating.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PLIGHT OF THE OUTSIDER IN “NOON WINE” AND “GRACE”

The family, as seen in Chapter Two, suffers from a paralysis created by the environment in which they live in Porter's fictional series, Pale Horse, Pale Rider. Like “Old Mortality,” the second story in the series, “Noon Wine,” portrays the South as a dominant factor that figures in the stagnation of the characters in the work. “Noon Wine,” however, adds an additional layer to the South's social system as it deals with the effects of an outsider in South Texas. Traits of Joyce's writing can be seen again in Porter's work by comparing his short story “Grace” with her story “Noon Wine.” Most notably, this Porter selection is the only Pale Horse, Pale Rider story that heavily relies on a historical setting of the author's past.

Scholars have attempted to connect Porter's life with those of her characters. Though there are some interesting similarities, Porter's interviews and letters are too contradictory to draw accurate conclusions concerning the certainty of these similarities. Nevertheless, “Noon Wine” provides an interesting exception as it can be considered historically accurate in setting as proved through Porter's critically acclaimed essay “Noon Wine: The Sources.” This essay is a staple in any “Noon Wine” criticism, and Porter is detailed and precise when describing the background of this work in numerous interviews and letters. She begins “Noon Wine: The Sources” with the statement, “The story is fiction, but it is made up of thousands of things that did happen to living human beings in a certain part of the country, at certain times in my life” (469). Just as Joyce's Dubliners reacts to the paralytic state of Ireland, Porter's “Noon Wine” takes a familiar

place in the South – Texas – and creates a work that reflects the values and emotions of the people of that time. Porter, like Joyce in “Grace,” uses a specific time and place to portray the effects of society on the individual who is out of sync with the rest of the community.

Both works simultaneously use an outsider as a catalyst for exposing a society’s shortcomings. Along with this outsider, an underlying current of religious isolation is also depicted. Hank Lopez observes that, in creating this outcast in a firmly structured environment, “[Porter] was able to delve deeper and deeper into one of the central themes of her fiction: the efforts of man to cope with evil, within himself as well as in others” (220). Joyce and Porter, in turn, portray a main character stunted in his ability to be successful in business and in his duties as the head of a household. Mr. Royal Earle Thompson, the main character in “Noon Wine,” is hindered in his patriarchal role because of his inability to succeed in his agricultural vocation and his growing lack of affection for his weak, vapid wife; Joyce’s Tom Kernan, in “Grace,” is paralyzed by his recent misfortune in his own business and by his religious beliefs, which differ from those of his wife and friends.

While Mr. Thompson has a wife and two sons, his family is a parody of the strong, agricultural family that is the model of success in the rural South. In “Old Mortality” Porter is careful to create a world where Texas is the background for the story, and its customs and traditions must be carefully analyzed through subtleties within the context of the story. In “Noon Wine,” Porter makes it absolutely clear that this is a story about the South at the beginning of the twentieth century as the time period and location of the story are noted before the story begins. Unlike the Gay family’s world of Southern

charm and luxury, the Thompson family exists in rural South Texas where being successful means surviving off of the land, providing for one's family, and holding true to religion, Protestantism being the most dominant form. Porter explains, "the elders [of the South] all talked and behaved as if the final word had gone out long ago on manners, morality, religion, even politics: nothing ever changed...they showed plainly in acts, words, and even looks the presence of good society, very well based on Christian beliefs. These beliefs were mainly Protestant..." ("Sources" 471). Based on a continuing tradition passed down from older generations, characters in this story are defined by their beliefs as well as their social rank and morality. As discussed in Chapter One, Porter defined the South as "not really a democratic society" in which everyone had their place and knew where they, as well as the rest of society, stood in social rank ("Sources" 472). The same order existed for morality and religion, and if anyone committed an act of sin or great offense, the community was less than willing to offer forgiveness because of their strict moral law ("Sources" 472). These moral laws automatically show a person's worth, and once a threshold has been crossed into sin or offense, a person can almost never escape. It is in these Southern traditions and unspoken laws that Porter sets up her main characters, Earl Thompson and Olaf Helton.

From his first introduction, Thompson is a man paralyzed in his role in Southern society. He is "a tough weather-beaten man with stiff black hair and a week's growth of black whiskers" (NW 222). His farm is in dire need of maintenance as seen in the narrator's first description of the farm's broken gate, yet Thompson is still described as a "noisy proud man," which must be read as Thompson's pride in himself. His dialect is base and uneducated, and this stands in direct contrast to his wife's more eloquent

speech. Porter analyzes this aspect of their relationship by stating, “If [a man] managed to marry into one of the good old families, he had simply ‘outmarried’ himself” (“Sources” 472). Mr. Thompson is uncultured and socially lower than Mrs. Thompson, but blame, according to Porter, cannot be cast on him for marrying above his social class. His arrogance, however, is excessive and almost begs to be taken down a notch. This sense of pride he feels also keeps him from completing his farming tasks before taking off for himself, thus slowly ruining his business. However, his business is not one that he wholeheartedly claims as he expresses to Mr. Helton: “This is more of a dairy farm...My wife, she was set on a dairy, she seemed to like working around cows and calves, so I humored her. But it was a mistake” (NW 224). It is important to note that Thompson does not buy the farm to please his wife; he buys it so that she can help with the work. Darlene Harbor Unrue boldly states, “The truth is that [Mr. Thompson] is lazy” (Understanding 79). His wife, even before any real action begins, becomes a burden. By concentrating on this aspect of Mrs. Thompson’s character, Porter makes it more believable that Mr. Thompson married her for social reasons. As Porter continues to explain in “Noon Wine: The Sources”:

Let me give you a glimpse of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, not as they were in their real lives, for I never knew them, but as they have become in my story. Mr. Thompson is a member of the plain people who has, by a hair’s breadth, outmarried himself. Mrs. Thompson’s superiority is shown in her better speech, her care for the properties, her social sense; even her physical fragility has some quality of the ‘genteel’ in it. (478)

While Mrs. Ellie Thompson is every bit a proper Southern lady with her frailty and meek mannerisms, Mr. Thompson is unable to meet the standards set for Southern males. He cannot provide for her and seeks escape as he leaves Mrs. Thompson directly after hiring Helton and goes to the hotel to have a few drinks. Through this action, it becomes clear that Mr. Thompson is a failure at farming and being a decent husband because he neglects his duties. However, Mrs. Thompson enables his actions and refuses to stand up for herself because she is too bound by Southern tradition. Her weakness is acceptable to society, but it allows Thompson to disregard her wishes as he goes to the hotel to have a “coupla little toddies,” while she remains pure and has “never took a dram in [her] life” (NW 226). Similar to Mrs. Thompson, Joyce’s Mrs. Kernan remains devoted to her husband, children, and wifely duties. Nevertheless, each woman is lacking in maternal instincts and motherly wisdom. The purpose of these two characters is not to examine their ability as mothers; the authors use these women to display their husbands’ shortcomings. Mrs. Thompson, as the narrator notes, “had a way of speaking about her children as if they were rather troublesome nephews on a prolonged visit” (NW 228). Mrs. Kernan, on the other hand, only had her children because “After three weeks [of marriage] she had found a wife’s life irksome and, later on, when she was beginning to find it unbearable, she had become a mother” (G 170). Both Mr. Thompson and Mr. Kernan are decent fathers although both are mentioned only in passing regarding their sons. They are neither outstanding nor poor as far as rearing children is concerned. Just as in their religion or morality, these men are simply consumed by the world around them and become subject to society’s approval.

Also standing in direct contrast to Mr. Thompson is Helton, but his differences work to Thompson's advantage. From the beginning of the story Helton is cast as an outsider. When he passes through the front gate of the Thompson farm he does "not even glance at the small boys [Thompson's sons], much less give them good day" (NW 222). Mr. Thompson politely says, "Howdy do, sir," but Helton only replies, "I need work," with a foreign accent (223). As the scene progresses neither man gains insight into the other, mainly due to Helton's refusal to carry on a conversation, but Thompson seems instinctively at ease with Helton, as he immediately gives him the task of churning butter and goes into town, leaving his wife alone with the new "forriner" (NW 225). Just as Thompson is immured in his failing role as the patriarch of the family, Helton is frozen as an outsider to this small Southern town.

From the moment Helton enters the story, he is cast as a foreigner who does not bother with polite introductions. No one knows much about him, and the only really public aspect of his life is the music from his harmonica. In fact, the first view of Helton that Mrs. Thompson has is his music. Before even meeting him she hears that "Somebody was playing a tune on a harmonica, not merely shrilling up and down making a sickening noise, but really playing a pretty tune, merry and sad" (NW 226). This instrument and the same, sad song Helton plays throughout the story begin to define his character. The people who come in contact with him are strangely drawn to him, but he is distant and sad. Helton refuses to go to church or to speak to anyone unless he is answering a work-related question, which isolates him even more from society. He only cares for his harmonicas that inevitably become his downfall. Helton is fixed in his position as an outsider through his endless cycle of farm work and harmonica music. Moreover, he is a

murderer who is trapped by his personal, unstable history. Unrue confirms that, “Figuratively, Helton is a dead man, simply waiting for law and order to catch up with him, just as he brings death indirectly to other characters” (Understanding 79).

Although he has committed an unforgivable act, in the present action of the story Helton is, in some sense, a victim. He never harms anyone on the Thompson farm or in the town. However, as Porter both agrees and criticizes in “Noon Wine: The Sources,” “Helton too, the Victim in my story, is also a murderer, with the dubious innocence of the madman; but no less a shedder of blood” (478). The narrator in the work is very careful to make the characters aware of their weaknesses so that no one can truly claim the role of the victim. Mrs. Thompson knows she should be harder on her boys. Mr. Thompson is aware that he cannot succeed as a dairy farmer, and Helton purposefully seeks seclusion because he murdered his brother and does not want to draw attention to himself. His seclusion, though, is a blessing for Mr. Thompson because he can pay Helton low wages and repair his farm, making himself look triumphant.

Together, like Amy and Eva in “Old Mortality,” Thompson and Helton create a successful character. Mr. Thompson is not simply a poor dairy farmer; he has a deep aversion to dairy farming. The narrator informs us, “In spite of his situation in life, Mr. Thompson had never been able to outgrow his deep conviction that running a dairy and chasing after chickens was woman’s work” (NW 233). It is from this view of farming that the reader gains the understanding of how Mr. Thompson runs his life, both business and personal. His decisions are not made by reason. Instead, “all his carefully limited fields of activity were related somehow to Mr. Thompson’s feeling for the appearance of things, his own appearance in the sight of God and man. ‘It don’t look right,’ was his



final reason for not doing anything he did not wish to do” (NW 233). Therefore Helton becomes the perfect counterpart for Thompson. Whatever Thompson did not wish to do, Helton did without any complaints. He only sees work as work and makes his living by making the farm a better place.

As Thompson sits and grows worried about the declining state of his farm, Helton takes action. The narrator ensures that “As the seasons passed, and Mr. Helton took hold more and more, Mr. Thompson began to relax in his mind a little. There seemed to be nothing the fellow couldn’t do, all in the day’s work and as a matter of course. Mr. Helton had never heard of the difference between man’s and woman’s work on a farm” (NW 234-35). Helton, not being a product of Southern society, is unaware of the socially acceptable jobs for men and women. Because of his work ethic, he is able to progress briefly and improve the Thompson farm. However, Helton’s past can only remain a secret for so long, and once it catches up to him, with the help of Mr. Hatch, Helton’s own paralysis begins. The introduction of Hatch jeopardizes Thompson and Hatch’s relationship, and Thompson is forced to take real action for the first time in the story, which ironically throws him into an endless cycle of circular repentance. Unrue analyzes the three men as follows:

The relationships among the three men must be defined in order to discern the story’s meaning. Because Thompson is the center of interest, the most important relationships are his to Helton and his to Hatch. Thompson shares with Helton insanity or its latency (his Aunt Ida was in the state asylum), but beyond that they are bound together by Thompson’s dependence on Helton for economic survival. Thompson’s relationship to

Hatch is different. They share many personality traits, as the narrator points out: both are noisy men who shout and guffaw at their own jokes, and both are law-abiding. But to Thompson, Hatch represents his own worst self. (Understanding 81)

Thompson, at this point, is on the brink of being an outsider: he does not fulfill his spousal role, and his farm is run by another man. Hatch pushes him over the edge when he faces the reality of who he is with his confrontation with Mr. Hatch.

Homer T. Hatch may well be one of Porter's most complex characters: his roots are unknown, and he cannot be classified as being from any distinct region, thus casting off the rules and traditions of the South. He, too, is an outsider or foreigner. His beliefs are his own and do not abide by the standards of Southern society. Porter further explains:

But Hatch was the doomed man, evil by nature, a lover and doer of evil, who did no good thing for anyone, not even, in the long run, for himself. He was evil in the most dangerous irremediable way: one who works safely within the law, and has reasoned himself into believing his motives, if not good, are at least no worse than anyone else's; for he believes quite simply and naturally that the motives of others are no better than his own; and putting aside all nonsense about good, he will always be found on the side of custom and common sense and the letter of the law. ("Sources" 480)

Hatch is concerned only with self-advancement, but stumbles into a business operation that Thompson is unwilling to forfeit, regardless of Helton's past crimes. It is not that

Thompson cares deeply for Helton; they rarely speak to one another. Porter best describes Helton's existence with the metaphor of the harmonica's music. The narrator describes, "At first the Thompsons liked [the song] very much, and always stopped to listen. Later there came a time when they were fairly sick of it, and began to wish to each other that he would learn a new one. At last they did not hear it any more, it was as natural as the sound of the wind rising in the evenings, or the cows lowing, or their own voices" (NW 236). Helton is the song that the Thompsons have grown accustomed to hearing. There is no deep affection, just a void that is filled when he is around doing work on the farm that Mr. Thompson is too lazy to do and Mrs. Thompson too weak to finish. When this now natural presence on the farm is threatened, Thompson is forced to take action and kill Hatch. Hatch, however, is never a physical threat to Thompson, and only Mrs. Thompson's lies keep her husband from being accused of manslaughter. Hatch, in actuality, never places Thompson in any real danger, but his murderous reaction gives depth to "Noon Wine." As Robert Penn Warren explains, "the story is about the difficult definition of guilt and innocence. Mr. Thompson, not able to trust his own innocence, or understand the nature of whatever guilt is his, has taken refuge in the lie, and the lie, in the end, kills him" (102).

Helton, however, is most certainly guilty of murdering his brother, but Mr. Thompson is willing to overlook this murder and protect his worker because Thompson is selfish. Because of this selfishness, Thompson is forever marked as a sinner in the eyes of his wife and his community. He knows moments before he murders Hatch that Helton should go to jail, and "It was a fact Mr. Helton might go loony again any minute, and now this fellow talking around the country would put Mr. Thompson in a fix. It was a

terrible position. He couldn't think of any way out" (NW 255). His desire to have his farm run by another man without knowing anything about his background places Thompson in this "terrible position" that results in murder. This disastrous murder serves to prove that Porter's South has strict rules of conformity, and those who do not conform will not survive. Janis P. Stout notes, "Helton is a stranger in the land; Mr. Thompson, for all his family roots and his familiarity, becomes a stranger after his act of murder" (Strategies 122).

After Hatch's death and Helton's arrest, Thompson falls into a circular pattern of unprogressive movement in an attempt to compensate for his feelings of inadequacy and his new role as an outcast. Warren questions,

Is Mr. Thompson innocent or guilty? He doesn't really know. Caught in the mysteriousness of himself, caught in all the impulses which he had never been able to face, caught in all the little lies which had really meant no harm, he can't know the truth about anything. He can't stand the moral uncertainty of this situation, but he does not know what it is that most deeply he can't stand. He can't stand not knowing what he himself really is. His pride can't stand that kind of nothingness. (101)

The society in which he lives demands a clear definition of a person's morality, and Thompson is unable to decide his guilt or innocence because he cast himself out of acceptable society when he welcomed Helton onto the farm to do his job.

Like the end of "Grace," where Kernan "follow[s] the general example" of the congregation at church, Thompson follows the rules of Southern society seeking repentance from his neighbors so that the burden of his murder may be relieved (G 188).

Not only does the town reject him because he killed Mr. Hatch, but his wife does so as well. Only because Mrs. Thompson is a dutiful Southern wife does she lie in court and claim Mr. Thompson killed Mr. Hatch in self-defense. Porter examines the Southern woman in “Noon Wine: The Sources”:

Mrs. Thompson is a woman of the sort produced in numbers in that time, that class, that place, that code: so trained to the practice of her prescribed womanly vocation of virtue as such – manifest, unrelenting, sacrificial, stupefying – she has almost lost her human qualities, and her spiritual courage and insight, to boot. She commits the, to her, dreadful unforgivable sin of lying; moreover, lying to shield a criminal, even if that criminal is her own husband. Having done this, to the infinite damage, as she sees it, of her own soul...she lacks the courage and the love to see her sin through to its final good purpose...to say to her husband the words that might have saved them both, soul and body – might have, I say only. (480-81)

Mrs. Thompson is so hampered by the Southern role of the proper lady that she cannot even bring herself to give a few comforting words to her husband that might have kept him from committing suicide. Mr. Thompson, feeling no sympathy or inkling of understanding from his neighbors on his many trips of repentance or from his family at home, finally has to kill himself. Warren concludes, “In the end, looking back, we can see that the story is a story of a noisy, proud, stiff-necked man whose pride has constantly suffered under failure, who salves his hurt pride by harmless bluster with his wife and children, and who, in the end, stumbled into a situation which takes the last prop of

certainty from his life” (100). Everything in Thompson’s life has been a failure. Even though the court declares him innocent of manslaughter, his community only sees him as a murderer, and they hold fast to the religious belief that murder is a sin. The Southern code of morality and adherence to religion remains the driving force of paralysis in “Noon Wine.” Mr. and Mrs. Thompson and their two sons are unable to move beyond Mr. Thompson’s act of murder, and it slowly eats away at each of them years after the crime. Suicide is the only answer. Porter supports her decision to have Thompson kill himself as she recalls, “The threads are all drawn up. I have had people object to Mr. Thompson’s suicide at the end of “Noon Wine,” and I’d say, ‘All right, where was he going? Given what he was, his own situation, what else could he do?’ (Conversations 89).

Just as Thompson struggles for repentance at the end of “Noon Wine” and searches for a place of belonging in his marriage and in his community, Joyce’s Kernan in “Grace” is forced to observe a religion he does not wholeheartedly accept because of his marriage to a Catholic woman. Both works examine the theme of religion and obedience to moral laws. In “Noon Wine” the South, as described in Chapter One, is responsible for the codes of conduct and religion, whereas the characters in “Grace” follow the predominant religion in Ireland: Catholicism. Kernan, like Thompson and Helton, is an outsider who, at the opening of his story, is injured from a drunken fall down a flight of stairs at a Dublin pub. Literally, Kernan is a man fallen from grace as the story begins. Mrs. Kernan is unlike Mrs. Thompson in demeanor but very similar to her in her lack of control over her husband and her feeling of isolation in her marriage. Suzette Henke explains that, “For the Irish housewife, religion is a mixture of domestic

faith and fairy superstition. She has automatically been excluded from the male coterie that wields ecclesiastical power and from an institution that celebrates the strategies of mercantile success” (39). Ironically, Mrs. Kernan’s husband is unsuccessful in business. When Kernan is brought back to his house after his fall, his wife remarks, “He’s been drinking since Friday,” showing that she has very little to do with her husband’s actions (G 168). Kernan’s drinking stems from recent business failures, but he, like Thompson, only worries about his failures and does little to help himself. Mr. Thompson worries by sitting on his side porch chewing tobacco, while Kernan drowns his sorrows in alcohol.

While there are definite character comparisons, it is interesting to note the structural similarities between the two authors in these stories. Joyce splits his work into three distinct sections: Kernan’s fall, his conversion, and his pseudo-redemption. Though Porter does not split “Noon Wine” with page breaks, she does break down her story into three clear segments as well: Helton’s arrival, nine years of Helton’s progress on the farm ending in Hatch’s death and Helton’s arrest, and Thompson’s search for repentance followed by his suicide. Both stories begin with a fall (Thompson’s hiring of an outsider sparks his ultimate downfall), progress with a conversion that ultimately changes nothing, and end with an attempt at redemption in which neither Kernan or Thompson are saved from their sins. Both “Noon Wine” and “Grace” are clearly regional works, but Porter uses Joyce as a model to guide her storytelling and explain her characters’ paralysis through the distinct stages that, on the surface, seem to show evolution but with closer inspection reveal stagnation and frozen ideals that hinder character development.

With Kernan’s fall at the beginning of “Grace” the reader sees a character who is in need of help, just as Mr. Thompson needs help with his farm. Mr. Powers, Kernan’s

friend who brings him home from the pub, promises Mrs. Kernan that he and his friends will “make a new man of him” as they are going to renew his faith in Catholicism and purge him of his drinking habits. Yet, when the men gather in Kernan’s room in the second section of “Grace” to discuss his faith, they all drink “bottles of stout” and enjoy “general merriment” as they discuss different respectable Catholic traditions that Kernan should admire (G 176). The men who come to talk about Catholicism and the upcoming retreat to renew their faith are, at best, liars and hold unsympathetic attitudes toward the poor. They speak of the infallibility of the Jesuits, and M’Coy proudly states, “The Jesuits cater for the upper classes” (G 178). Kernan receives help from his Catholic friends when he is in need of some type of assistance to get his life back on track, just as Helton comes to Thompson when his farm is crumbling from lack of good management. However, neither man gets the type of aid that will remain with him in the long run.

The Catholic men in “Grace,” temporarily try to help a friend because, for the most part, they feel sorry for him. Kernan is only willing to listen to them because he is recovering from his fall and is unable to leave his bedroom. He is, in fact, constantly referred to as the “invalid” because he is helpless in both his religion and his ability to escape the presence of these men. He is a Protestant and “though he had been converted to the Catholic faith at the time of his marriage, he had not been in the pale of the church for twenty years. He was fond, moreover, of giving side-thrusts at Catholicism” (G 171). Kernan is not interested in real advice or help; he is simply unable to escape. Likewise, Helton resuscitates the farm back into working order for Thompson, but Thompson only assumes that Helton will always be there and never thinks to learn how to manage the



farm on his own in case Helton ever leaves. Neither man is truly concerned with changing; both are frozen in their beliefs and ways of life.

When the men are faced with the opportunity to change and redeem themselves – Kernan to accept Catholicism and Thompson to quit seeking acceptance and forgiveness from the community – neither man chooses to do so. Problems arise in these scenes because the opportunities are not sincere. Kernan would only be redeeming himself for a priest who uses accounting terminology to explain sins, transgressions, and salvation as weighing “their accounts tallied in every point” (G 190). If Thompson were to cease his weekly visits to neighboring farms to tell his side of the story, it would mean that he has forgiven himself, which he cannot do because of the community he lives in and the codes of morality and religion that he lives by. Stout concurs that “Thompson has recognized both the futility and the indignity of continuing with lengthy pleas that would throw into public view more and more of his private life and feelings” (Strategies 123).

In essence, all of Porter’s main characters are paralyzed in “Noon Wine.” Mr. and Mrs. Thompson continue their farce of a marriage, while Helton merely exists on the farm waiting for the law to catch up with him. Thompson, as an individual, complacently lets another man carry out his duties in his business and is forced into a downward spiral after this lifestyle is threatened. Hatch, according to Unrue, “represents a different kind of man. He is cunning and an indefatigable pursuer of human bounty under the guise of law and order” (Understanding 79). Hatch, though physically moving from place to place in search of reward, is stagnate as well in his cycle and will not be allowed to escape a society such as the one depicted in “Noon Wine,” due to the greed and immorality behind his motives for capturing convicts. The rural Texas South in this selection of Pale Horse,

Pale Rider is a powerful source of paralysis that can be directly tied to Joyce's Ireland in Dubliners. Both Joyce and Porter take a place with which they are deeply familiar and create works that portray the harsh, inescapable qualities of these lands. Thompson's laziness and his ability to commit murder and Kernan's Protestant roots isolate the two characters in their societies and hinder them from successfully and sincerely changing.

CHAPTER FOUR  
HERITAGE AND MODERN SOCIETY: A STUDY OF PORTER'S MIRANDA  
AND JOYCE'S EVELINE

With the creation of her Miranda character, Katherine Anne Porter captures not only an original viewpoint of a young woman living in a distinct time period in the United States, that of the brief period of America's participation in World War I, but also she produces a most useful portrait of this character who, while bound by family history, keeps struggling toward freedom. Porter's character development is precise; this attention to minute detail is essential in creating a multifaceted character who evolves through different works. As Porter scholar Mary Titus observes, "Born in 1890 and living until 1980, Katherine Anne Porter witnessed almost a century of dramatic changes in the lives of American women. An acute observer immersed in the cultural and social currents of her historic moment, Porter responded to these changes in her published and unpublished writing" (2). In turn, "Old Mortality," which was discussed in Chapter Two, delineates Miranda's character in three specific stages, at ages eight, twelve, and eighteen; "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" presents Miranda at age twenty-four and chronicles her life in a highly patriotic and deadly era in the United States, that of the First World War and the influenza epidemic of 1918. These two stories portray Miranda in very different stages of her life – adolescence and adulthood – which coincide well with the conflicting adolescent and mature emotions of James Joyce's title character in his Dubliners story, "Eveline." Both Eveline and Miranda are young women torn between duty to their country and family and love for the men in their lives, Frank and Adam, respectively. The

model that Joyce creates with Eveline's tragic paralytic state is intensified with Miranda's family experiences in "Old Mortality" and her near-death experience with influenza that creates an emotional and physical paralysis in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." Moreover, one can see that these two female characters are literary examples of two stages of artist Edvard Munch's "The Three Stages of Women": the saint and the unhappy lover. Though Miranda and Eveline only fit into two phases, it is interesting and important to document that art of this time also depicted women as complex and versatile beings, while simultaneously examining their roles. There are similarities, as well, between Porter, Joyce, and Munch's attitudes toward the art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Munch wrote in 1889, "the characters in [my] future painting should be living people who breathe, feel, suffer and love. People shall understand the holy quality about them and bare their heads before them as if in church" (Hughes 276). Art critic Robert Hughes adds to this Munch comment, "The ambition to produce a drama of high, exemplary emotion, whose actors were more icons than individuals, never left him, and helps account for the consistency of his pessimism" (276). Porter and Joyce held similar attitudes toward their characters as they define a time period and react to it in strikingly realistic manners. Miranda and Eveline can stand as icons since they represent a general feeling of a specific gender in an exact setting.

Both women are immured in their assigned gender roles. Their connection to the Munch's stage of sainthood lies in their devotion to their families. For Miranda, this is portrayed in "Old Mortality": she is aware of the lies her family tells but remains attached to these false stories up until the end of the work. It is not until Porter creates the older, independent Miranda, who is physically free of her family, that the reader is aware that

Miranda's past has formed a woman unable to fit into World War I society. Through her doomed relationship with Adam, the shining example of American patriotism, Miranda evolves into Munch's "unhappy lover" and begins her downward spiral into a nonconformist female unable to cope with the present United States, just as Eveline's devotion to her family and Ireland ruins her desire to run away with her lover, Frank. Though Eveline is a character in only one Dubliners story, she, like Miranda, represents both the young, dutiful daughter and older, adult lover because of her ties to the past and her romantic plans to escape with Frank. Porter uses this model of the torn female in her separate Miranda stories in the Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection to build a much more complex character who expresses the frustrations and concerns of the American female in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Janice P. Stout says that, "If 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider' provides our most intensive view of her as an adult, 'Old Mortality' offers the most extensive tracing of how and why she becomes the person she is" (Strategies 131). Therefore, the family and Southern codes of conduct must be reconsidered as effective in paralyzing Miranda not only as a child but also as an adult.

Throughout her childhood, Miranda's perceptions of reality are distorted by her family's stories of Aunt Amy, as discussed in Chapter Two. The Gay family creates these romantic tales in order to preserve their family's good name and camouflage the harsh reality of Amy's behavior. Had this story stood alone without a recurring character in a series concerning the effects of the South on its characters, the Gay family's disillusionment with their past would seem overly sentimental and sad. Yet, when Porter portrays Miranda in two of the three stories in the Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection, she, in effect, gives the family's stories in "Old Mortality" different consequences. The stories

help to shape Miranda into the character she will be when she reappears in the final work in the collection, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." It is in this retrospective effect, that "Old Mortality" becomes much more tragic. Miranda can see, even at an early age, that the family's stories are flawed, but the Gays are obsessed with their past. Miranda, in turn, is consumed by her family's past and the romance of her Aunt Amy and Uncle Gabriel. The narrator in "Old Mortality" accurately describes the source of this warped past:

Miranda and [her sister] Maria...knew they were young, though they felt they had lived a long time. They had lived not only their own years; but their memories, it seemed to them, began years before they were born, in the lives of the grownups around them, old people above forty, most of them, who had a way of insisting that they too had been young once. (OM 174)

Porter makes it abundantly clear that Miranda is a product of the world she grew up in. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the narrator serves as a more accurate judge of the reality of the Gay family's tales. Miranda, in the earlier story, is also able to see the reality of their legends, but the family's stories are what she and her sister know and the tales are not questioned because the family is their world. The girls are not particularly drawn to the stories themselves but to the way in which the family tells them. Porter adds her own insight into this view of the family's legends:

I was given the kind of education and the kind of up-bringing that in no way whatever prepared me for the world I was to face. When I was ready to step out in the world supposedly grown up, I was as ignorant of the world as it is possible to be. (qtd. in Jones 281)

Like Porter, Miranda and Maria know that there are flaws in the familial stories, but at the same time they listen to them and will be ignorant of the world when they are one day “step out in the world.” For example, when discussing the pictures of family members who had died, the girls “found it impossible to sympathize with those young persons, sitting rather stiffly before the camera, hopelessly out of fashion; but they were drawn and held by the mysterious love of the living, who remembered and cherished these dead” (OM 176). It is in this need to feel “cherished” and loved that Miranda’s idealization of her family begins. She, though well-aware that the family stories are tainted with fabrications and alterations to the real events in history, craves the acceptance that the dead receive, especially from her father. Stout points out, “In ‘Old Mortality,’ as well as in other works, both fiction and nonfiction, Porter demonstrates that she perceived...the pitfalls prepared for women by a patriarchal society” (Sense 195). Through Porter’s writing we see that Miranda’s future is determined by the world she grows up in, which revolves around the legends of the past. She, therefore, strives to please her family and respects the stories that they tell in order to feel this sense of belonging.

Although she has a sister, Miranda stands apart from Maria and becomes her own character in “Old Mortality.” Maria, on the other hand, begins to disappear into the shadows of the family. It is, nevertheless, important to keep in mind that Miranda, at age eight, truly wants to be like her Aunt Amy, even though she realizes that Amy’s life was full of rebellion and shame. The narrator claims, “[Miranda] believed for quite a while that she would one day be like Aunt Amy, not as she appeared in the photograph, but as she was remembered by those who had seen her” (OM 177). Miranda is told, by her

father, that the photograph of Aunt Amy does not do her justice. As discussed in Chapter Two, Harry assures Miranda that Aunt Amy was much thinner because all the women in the family are thin. Miranda knows that her father is lying, but she still wants to exist in reality the way that Amy exists in memory, which is a futile goal since Miranda is small and has freckles like her mother, unlike the dark and sensual Amy. Suzanne W. Jones notes that “Porter uses naïve, eight-year-old Miranda, who does not realize that the Amy legend has power to structure her experience, to reveal to readers the power of this myth in Miranda’s life” (282). Miranda is different from her father’s side of the family, but she still idolizes the memories they share. Just as James Joyce’s Eveline is committed and bound to her father, Miranda is held captive by her father’s stories and still desires his affection at the end of “Old Mortality,” even though he shuns her.

Ironically, neither girl’s father is truly worth this idolization. Eveline admittedly feels “in danger of her father’s violence” and knows he is fonder of her two brothers because they are males (E 48). Miranda, though not threatened by Harry, is never a priority for him. Her father visits her only occasionally at the Convent of the Child Jesus boarding school when he makes the time, letting his daughters believe that his absence is caused by their bad behavior or grades. The narrator, the oracle of truth in “Old Mortality,” explains: “When no one appeared [at the school], and Saturday came and went a sickening waste, they were given to understand that it was a punishment for bad marks during the week. They never knew until it was too late to avoid the disappointment. It was very wearing” (OM 195). Miranda’s “wearing” childhood revolved around false stories and “disappointment,” which causes her to resort to her own imagination to compensate for the lack of substance in her life. Her stories of being



“immured in convents” are extensions of her real life where action exists only in the past (OM 193).

Just as Miranda concocts fantastical stories of adventure, she has problems differentiating between fiction and reality. Miranda, as a child, loves and admires the theater, and confuses the events on stage with reality. When she watches a play about Mary, Queen of Scots, she “thought the magnificent lady in black velvet was truly the Queen of Scots, and was pained to learn that the real Queen had died long ago, and not at all on the night she, Miranda, had been present” (OM 179). The ironic paralysis found here is considerable since the twenty-four-year-old Miranda is a theater critic who hates her job. It is in this type of background information that one can see that Miranda is a product of her past. The constant discontent she feels from her family’s stories roll over into her perception of fictional art. Both the stories and the theater are a means of escape, but they leave Miranda lacking in any feelings of value. She must invent her own identity and her own version of truth, and this begins in her childhood in “Old Mortality.”

In this attempt to create a past and have a sense of belonging, Miranda isolates herself from the family. She feels that “There was a life beyond a life in this world, as well as in the next,” and her family helps her to fashion a sense of what her next life should be (OM 179). Cousin Eva tells Miranda and Maria the story of John Wilkes Booth in order to share the moral “that one should always have Latin, or at least a good classical poetry quotation, to depend upon in great or desperate moments” (OM 180). Miranda truly believes that all of life should be this exciting; thus when Eva tells the girls that a good Southerner cannot approve of Booth’s deed, since murder is an abominable sin, Miranda, in contrast, feels that his sin is justified. The narrator clarifies, “Miranda, used

to tragedy in books and in family legends – two great-uncles had committed suicide and a remote ancestress had gone mad for love – decided that, without the murder, there would have been no point to dressing up and leaping to the stage shouting in Latin. So how could she disapprove of the deed” (OM 180). Porter cleverly plants the seed that murder is an unforgivable sin in order to construct the predominant theme found in the second story of the series, “Noon Wine.” The South, with all of its rules and restrictions, becomes a model for a society of paralysis. Any character who acts in rebellion to these laws will not be punished publicly but through his or her own conscience.

Though the family does distinguish between right and wrong, it is difficult for Miranda, as a child, to see that murder is unforgivable, because it is exciting in stories. She is used to the thrill of family legends and feels that her life should include the same. The family, in this way, is responsible for Miranda’s romantic attitude towards death, and their tall tales of love and romance result in Miranda’s elopement and eventual desertion of her husband when she becomes an adult. The family, paralyzed by the rules of the South and forced to compensate for the actions of individual family members, such as Amy, creates an enduring static state for the younger generation as well. The eighteen-year-old Miranda is, for all purposes, an adult. She has rebelled, like her Aunt Amy, and run away with a man to elope. She has obviously experienced reality with this marriage as she is leaving her husband in Part III of “Old Mortality.” Miranda, as Jones suggests,

has unconsciously patterned her life after Amy’s by eloping from her convent, a fact that Porter surprises her readers with in part 3. The romantic Amy legend and the forbidden reading material about the convent have mingled in Miranda’s mind to produce a plot and an ending

very close to the fictional ones she has been brought up with: spirited young woman, immured in convent, is rescued by dashing young man. But she has quickly grown dissatisfied with this ending to her own life. (290)

However, Miranda is not as concerned with her failed marriage, which is odd since the year is 1912, as she is with her father's reaction to her return home. Her marriage is of less value to her than her family's reaction to her marriage. Joyce's Eveline, in this same manner, spends more time contemplating her father's reaction to her pending elopement than she does thinking about Frank, the man whom she presumably loves. The hold that these two young women's families have on them is considerable, and it is noteworthy that both Joyce and Porter use the institution of family as a hindrance rather than a system of support. Both Eveline and Miranda are isolated by their family's beliefs as to how a young woman should act, and both try to rebel against these ideas. However, neither can escape because the lure of the family is too great to resist. It is in Miranda's conversation with Cousin Eva that the reality of the Gay family is confirmed. Eva, another bearer of truth in Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection, calmly states, "the family...the whole hideous institution should be wiped from the face of the earth. It is the root of all human wrongs" (OM 217). Eva, though aware of the damaging effects of the family, still longs to be with them just as Miranda does. Both Eva and Miranda are outsiders – Eva, through her lack of physical beauty, and Miranda, through her rebellion. However, Eva can still return to the family because, unlike Miranda, she has done no real harm to their reputation. While Joyce's Eveline must make the decision that will determine her fate with her family, Porter shows the results of Miranda's decision to run away and then attempt to return.

Miranda is left with the family's stories at the end of "Old Mortality" as she sits in the front of the car, isolated from her father and Eva. She is aware that their stories are sham; as Stout reminds us, "If at the end [Miranda] appears bitter and alienated, while the self-deluded Eva and Harry are secure in their places and free to be 'precisely themselves' with 'perfect naturalness,' there is still no denying that their vision has been false" (Strategies 138). For a brief moment, Miranda's future seems brighter than her family's. Her separateness is packaged into Porter's beautiful summary:

Miranda could not hear the stories above the noisy motor, but she felt she knew them well, she wanted something now of her own. The language was familiar to them, but not to her, not any more. The house, her father had said, was full. It would be full of cousins, many of them strangers. Would there be any young cousins there, to whom she could talk about things they both knew? She felt a vague distaste for seeing cousins. There were too many of them and her blood rebelled against the ties of blood. She was sick to death of cousins. She did not want any more ties with this house, she was going to leave it, and she was not going back to her husband's family either. She would have no more bonds that smothered her in love and hatred. (OM 219)

Miranda is hopeful that she will escape the family and their lies; she yearns for a life free from their world. Like Eveline who stands at the train station contemplating the wonderful life she could have in Buenos Aires with Frank, away from her family and the problems of Ireland, Miranda, too, dreams of the life she will have when she is once and for all free of her family and their past. However, their past is also hers. Their stories

shape Miranda's identity. Robert Brinkmeyer questions, "Miranda's hopefulness is obvious here, but what of her ignorance?" and then answers, "Her ignorance lies primarily in her naïveté: although she claims that she is not romantic about herself, that is exactly what she is" (173). Miranda, in reality, is exactly like her father and Cousin Eva because she is a product of their upbringing. She yearns, in a futile effort, at the end of "Old Mortality" for her own future and dreams:

Ah, but there is my own life to come yet...my own life now and beyond. I don't want any promises, I won't have false hopes, I won't be romantic about myself. I can't live in their world any longer...Let them tell their stories to each other. Let them go on explaining how things happened. I don't care. At least I can know the truth about what happens to me. (OM 221)

Had Porter ended her work with these words, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" may very well have been a completely different story. However, the narrator plucks any hope Miranda may have with the closing line. While Miranda's dreams of the future are optimistic and seemingly possible, Porter's "Old Mortality" closes with a mixture of narrative and stream of consciousness, in true Joycean style, as Miranda thinks to herself,

Let them tell their stories to each other [Miranda thought]. Let them go on explaining how things happened. I don't care. At least I can know the truth about what happens to me, she assured herself silently, making a promise to herself, in her hopefulness, her ignorance. (OM 221)

Miranda wants to be free. She wants her own life, but she cannot escape. She is hopeful, but ignorant. The family's stories lead her to the situation at the end of the work, and they

will remain with her. She may be optimistic, but the narrator foretells her future to be dark and hopeless. Robert Penn Warren discloses,

Miranda will find a truth, as it were, but it, too, will be a myth, for it will not be translatable, or, finally, communicable. But it will be the only truth she can win, and for better or worse she will have to live by it. She must live by her own myth. But she must earn her myth in the process of living. Her myth will be a new myth, different from the mutually competing myths of her father and Cousin Eva, but stemming from that antinomy. (“Irony” 106)

Warren makes clear that there is no truth in Miranda’s past; therefore, her future will consist of varying myths she creates. Porter makes this hopeless future a reality in “Pale Horse, Pale Rider.”

In the title story of the Pale Horse, Pale Rider series, Porter evolves Miranda into a twenty-four-year-old reporter, recently demoted to theater critic, who lives in a society governed by the current First World War and infested with influenza. Stout analyzes, “...the work opens with a dream of death and ends, or nearly ends, with a dreamlike hallucinatory experience of near-death. What follows, Miranda’s reawakening to a life that seems to her scarcely worth living, shows us the end product of all her family background and experiences, the person she is and will be” (Strategies 138). The family is not in this selection, but Miranda’s romantic personality has already been shaped by their stories and, though scarred by divorce, her longing for the romance found in those stories hurls her into a relationship with Adam, a soldier who stands for patriotic ideals with which Miranda does not wholeheartedly agree. It is therefore useful to study

Miranda's new life stage through Edvard Munch's portrayal of the unhappy lover in "The Three Stages of Woman." She is no longer the virginal saint who longs for her father's affection; she is now the unhappy lover who cannot resist the affection of an unobtainable man. In essence, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is a story that is solely Miranda's. Joyce's "Eveline," though much shorter, prepares a structure that Porter follows but expands in her work. Both stories focus on the thoughts of a young woman struggling with the world around her. Like Joyce, Porter exposes all of Miranda's thoughts but adds another layer of depth to her work through Miranda's subconscious where her thoughts are uncontrolled and exposed. Unlike "Old Mortality," "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is told mainly from Miranda's point of view, which parallels "Eveline" where the bulk of the short story is centered on Eveline's thoughts.

From the start, Porter's story focuses on Miranda; it does not introduce immediately the current war situation and influenza pandemic. Instead, Porter opens the work with Miranda's dream involving elements of her past to ensure that this is, in fact, the same Miranda from her previous works, thus forcing the reader to make assumptions about Miranda's character that are not blatantly stated. Within the second paragraph of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," the reader finds Miranda thinking of her family and her still-harsh feelings toward their stories as she dreams, "there are far too many ancestral bones propped up on the mantelpieces, there have been too damned many antimacassars in this house, she said loudly, and oh what accumulation of storied dust never allowed to settle in peace for one moment" (PH 269). The subtle reference to Amy's picture that "Old Mortality" focused on reassures the reader that Miranda has not escaped her past and her family, just as the narrator promised at the end of the "Old Mortality." She still questions

in her dream, “What else besides them did I have in the world? (PH 270). Miranda has no place of belonging in the world besides her family, and her dream consists of her past, family, and death, all of which are inescapable for her.

In this dream, she chooses Graylie to outrun death, but death only rides beside her. She notices, “his pale face smiled in an evil trance, he did not glance at her” (PH 270). The death in this tale within a tale is not her own but one to which she is closely linked. It is only when Miranda wakes up that the reader is made aware of the current war and influenza-ridden America. Her dream is only a means of escape, but it is no escape at all since it focuses on a past that Miranda wishes to be rid of and death, which surrounds her life. Stout concludes, “The things that matter most she keeps inside. She tells no one about her death dream and is very cautious – rightly so, given the political situation – about expressing her disaffection for the war effort and the entire war mentality” (Strategies 140). Immediately after Miranda’s dream, Porter floods the story with the current problems of a single, American woman in the early twentieth century. Miranda has little money, works in a field dominated by men, does not wholeheartedly agree with the war effort, and is falling in love with a man who will soon be shipped off to battle. All of these problems are aside from the political turmoil of the United States at the close of World War I.

Miranda is looked down on in her profession as she notes that “every day she found someone there, sitting upon her desk instead of the chair provided, dangling his legs, eyes roving, full of important affairs, waiting to pounce about something or other” (PH 271). This refusal by the men in her office to show respect for or recognize her as their equal portrays the first of many factors that add to her inability to thrive in this



American society. As she promised, Miranda had moved away from her family and old life, but she is still treated as a young girl, no matter where she goes. This is seen, for example, through the two Liberty Bond salesmen who scold her when she explains that she has no money to buy a bond. By wagging his finger at her, the salesman disregards her position as a professional working woman. Miranda, who does not have enough money, struggles with the idea of buying a Liberty Bond since she does not completely agree with the war. Nevertheless, she must act the part or become subject to accusations that she is not a war supporter. As Miranda makes her dutiful rounds “cheering” the ill soldiers at a hospital, she ponders the other women who do the same charity work as herself. She wonders if they feel the same about the war as she, in the narrator’s description, “moved in among the young women, who scattered out and rushed upon the ward uttering girlish laughter meant to be refreshingly gay, but there was a grim determined clang in it calculated to freeze the blood” (PH 276). Miranda realizes that she is not alone in her feelings about war, but society requires women to act a certain way. Unable to express her true emotions, she remains bound to her duties and frozen in her role as a woman in American society.

Playing the role of the war-supporting woman, Miranda falls into a relationship with Adam, a soldier waiting to go to war. Adam, the epitome of innocence, is Miranda’s opposite, yet the pressures of war they both feel make them compatible (Bloom 52). He represents the trusting, loyal American man who will do anything for his country and who sees only valor in going to war. Porter constructs in Adam a perfect product of American patriotism. Scholar Mary Titus argues, “he represents the pure gold ideal of romantic love,” and the narrator concedes that “He was tall and heavily muscled in the

shoulders, narrow in the waist and flanks, and he was infinitely buttoned, strapped, harnessed into a uniform as tough and unyielding in cut as a straight jacket” (144, PH 279). When Miranda comments on his appearance, he only replies, “It’s the least I can do for my beloved country, not to go around looking like a tramp” (PH 279). Adam is flawless by all measures, which only serves to magnify Miranda’s imperfections. At first read, it is odd that Porter would pair Miranda with such an overly exaggerated character as Adam. Under closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that the twenty-four-year-old Miranda, like the adolescent Miranda, has an innate longing to belong. Just as she wanted to be like her Aunt Amy in order to feel a connection with her father’s side of the family, Miranda wants to love Adam to feel as if she is a part of the world in which she lives in. She loves the stories that her family once told, even though she eventually grows to despise them; she, in turn, will love Adam even though he stands for an ideal that she does not accept. Miranda cannot resist falling for Adam just as she fell for the legends of her family. Jane Krause DeMouy reasons, “In the whole of Porter’s work, then, we discover that being a contemporary woman means being torn by a need for love and conflicting desire for individual identity and assertion of personal ideals (revolution) or talents (art)” (15). “Being torn” creates a woman who is unable to escape the conflicts in her life. Miranda is paralyzed by the family history that is her past and her current feelings about her country.

Moreover, Miranda and Adam’s futures are doomed since neither can ever evolve out of the values they stand for. Miranda will never fully accept the war or the way in which society treats her; Adam will continue to support the war until his death caused by influenza, which he develops from taking care of Miranda while she is ill. As she and

Adam drink coffee at the diner, she explains to him, “There’s something terribly wrong...I feel too rotten. It can’t just be the weather, and the war” (PH 282). Adam, true to his patriotic roots, replies, “The weather is perfect...and the war is simply too good to be true” (PH 282). Still, Adam is not naive about the war. As he explains,

Where I’m going there’s no running to speak of. You mostly crawl about on your stomach here and there among the debris. You know, barbed wire and such stuff. It’s going to be the kind of thing that happens once in a lifetime...I don’t know a darned thing about it, really, but they make it sound awfully messy. I’ve heard so much about it I feel as if I had been there and back. It’s going to be an anticlimax...like seeing the picture of a place so often you can’t see it at all when you actually get there. Seems to me I’ve been in the army all my life. (PH 282).

Miranda, by volunteering at the hospital, has seen the effects of war on the soldiers but does not speak of her experience to Adam. She only thinks to herself, “Six months, he meant. Eternity. He looked so clear and fresh, and he had never had a pain in his life. She had seen them when they had been there and back and they never looked like this again” (PH 282-83). Both characters are locked into their contradictory beliefs, a paralysis that makes their fates all the more devastating. Adam’s view of reality is patriotic and coincides with the general feeling of World War I, while Miranda’s seems negative and more realistic. Historian Paul Fussell defends Adam’s perception of war as normal for the time: “The experiences of a man going up the line to his destiny cannot help seeming to him like those of a hero of medieval romance” (135). For men going to this particular war, this was an accurate picture. However, there is no argument between Porter’s two

characters because they are both lost in their own thoughts. Similarly, Joyce's Eveline and Frank are two characters whose relationship will inevitably fail because of their differing loyalties. Frank's life as a sailor keeps him in constant transit, paying no allegiance to any country. Eveline has never known any home except Ireland, and, though her life is harsh and her father is unloving, she cannot leave because of the promise made to her dying mother. Suzette Henke believes that "The girl, torn between a childhood pledge of filial duty and an exotic fantasy of personal happiness, conducts both sides of a mental debate whose outcome has already been determined" (22). Miranda, like Eveline, cannot forget the past and knows that loving Adam will only bring pain "because he was not for her nor any woman, being beyond experience already, committed without any knowledge or act of his own to death," but she cannot forget the beautiful stories of love heard in her childhood that cause her to remain in a relationship with Adam (PH 284).

While Miranda chooses to remain with Adam, even though she knows he will soon leave her to serve his country, Eveline chooses to abandon Frank because she cannot escape her familial obligations. Henke goes on to state, "As [Eveline] weighs emotion and romantic fantasy against the judgmental voice of conscience, she engages in an exercise of deliberate misprision that sacrifices free will to those Irish gods of hearth and home she has been taught to worship from infancy" (22). Miranda, by remaining with Adam, has isolated herself from her beliefs about the war. In both situations, Miranda and Eveline are left alone. Though compatible, it is difficult to understand why Porter chooses to make Miranda love Adam, a man so different from her. But if examined under circumstances of Miranda's past and also in comparison to Joyce's "Eveline," it seems most plausible that she loves him because he represents a form of escape. He is the hero

of her family's romantic tales. Both Miranda and Eveline desire to escape the world in which they live, but forces outside of their control prohibit them from doing so. Miranda feels happiest when with Adam and wishes to have a comfortable future with him, but she cannot because of his determination to serve his country. Eveline is on the brink of running away with Frank, but she is unable to abandon her family and country. Both the United States and Ireland serve as inescapable entities in these young women's lives.

Though many parallels can be drawn between Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" and Joyce's "Eveline," the most defining characteristic that links the two authors is the endings of these two works. In both of the stories, the main characters, Miranda and Eveline, are left alone and isolated in their thoughts even though the bustle of the world is around them. After Eveline refuses to board the train with Frank, she stands among the crowds of people unable to move. Frank calls to her desperately, but Eveline must remain bound to her family and home. Miranda, in a strikingly similar manner, calls out to the dead Adam to come back to her at the end of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" and is then left alone with the knowledge that "Now there would be time for everything" (PH 317). Like Eveline, Miranda is forced to remain in a society that she still does not feel a part of, and now because of Adam's death she is dreadfully alone. It is tragic when "Miranda at first tries but fails to call into her presence the ghost of Adam. Her conscious fears are put aside as she accepts a world without war, houses without noise, streets without people, and "the dead cold light of tomorrow." She knows as one initiated into both heaven and hell, life and death, "Now there will be time for everything" (Eble 60). She has no family, no lover, and only casual friends who share the same profession. Her time is valueless, and she is left paralyzed in her lack of emotion for the coming of the modern world – a

world she will face utterly alone. Brinkmeyer, though usually consistent in his Miranda criticism, makes the statement that “Miranda, it seems, will in all likelihood awaken from her nightmare of totalitarian society, helped along by friends” (214). As Miranda stands alone at the end of the work listing the feminine beauty items she will need, it is more plausible that she is falling back into a highly restrictive society that requires her to dress for a certain part. Porter does not give the reader a reason to believe that Miranda will quit the job that she abhors, and it is clear that Miranda will move back into the same room that she rented before. Her life, though the war is over and Adam is dead, will be sadly the same as it was before she became ill. Her “time for everything” is a harsh statement that there is nothing left for Miranda to accomplish. When she wakes up from her hallucinations, it is the Armistice, and no time in which to express her independence by condemning the war. Adam is dead, and so are her ideas about romance. He did not go into war valiantly and die for his country; Adam is gone because of influenza that he caught from Miranda. Having stripped him of his epic death, she is left paralyzed and motionless at the end of “Pale Horse, Pale Rider,” with only a memory of a man who once was beautiful, just like the heroes of her family’s false legends.

## CONCLUSION

The Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection and Dubliners exist today in very separate spheres; few literature seminars will contain these two works as the focus of comparative study. However, Porter's and Joyce's common theme of paralysis and their writing styles definitely overlap and are compatible in selected examples. Porter never fails to mention Joyce's name when discussing inspiration for her writing, and she, through this inspiration, creates works of literature that are distinct but at the same time observe many of Joyce's writing techniques. Moreover, though Ireland's political and socio-economic situation is vastly different from that of the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, Porter's depiction of America is comparable to Joyce's portrayal of Ireland through the common denominator found in their works: the alienated individual. Their works are less about the actual history of their respective times than they are about the characters' unsuccessful struggle to overcome the socially driven problems in their lives, which results in a state of hopelessness. Notably, Porter and Joyce, like other modern writers such as Ernest Hemingway and T.S. Eliot, distinguish their literary theme of paralysis through individual settings and unique characters.

Porter's originality, however, takes the sense of paralysis a step further in Pale Horse, Pale Rider and creates an additional source for the stagnation of her characters through the use of family. Joyce's portrayal of the family as a reason for paralysis is linked directly to Ireland, and the inability of the family to change is based mainly on Ireland's political and social situation. His use of family in the Dubliners collection, though, is less stifling than Porter's depiction and is mainly a reinforcement of exposing

Ireland's paralysis. Porter creates families that are products of society in the United States but are strong enough to become social factors in themselves. Her use of the family, a recurring thread in her Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection, can be considered one the greatest factors in her characters' inability to evolve in their lives and in society.

While Joyce uses different characters to reflect Irish society, Porter uses a set of characters and this family recurrently to reflect America's unique problems. Her characters are absorbed in their own past and heritage and are unable to let go of their romanticized background and values, no matter how destructive these are to the present. In "Old Mortality," the family constantly deliberates on Amy, who is deceased, thus preventing its members from moving on with their lives. "Noon Wine" presents a family whose moral judgment and need to be accepted by society drives Mr. Thompson to commit suicide. "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" finalizes the sequence with Miranda's battle with the political and social turmoil created by World War I and the influenza pandemic. Even in the presence of these harsh conditions, her family is in her thoughts, and their disapproval of her choices ends the three-story sequence with the idea that all of Porter's characters have to deal with political or social factors that result in a state of hopelessness. The family thus creates the greatest sense of paralysis and sets these individual characters apart from Joyce's.

Still, a connection can undoubtedly be made between Porter's and Joyce's placing the blame for paralysis both on society and politics in their respective works. Porter's frozen or unchanging fictional world becomes distinctive, nevertheless, through her use of highly American policies and idiosyncrasies – such as war bonds and Southern society – that create a fresh setting with original characters, and she employs these unique traits



in her later works, as well. Even with distinctions, there is no question that political contexts are major factors in both Porter's and Joyce's literary works. Both Ireland and the United States had their share of political and socio-economic issues that are reflected in their literature. Porter, like many of her contemporaries, chooses to focus on the United States as a country faced with questions of identity and self-worth at the beginning of the twentieth century. She creates distinctive characters who, through their paralysis, reflect these national crises in their personal lives. Certainly, she is able to separate herself from Joyce through unique factors of American society and heritage that create a sense of loneliness among her characters. Even so, Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection evokes a relationship with stories from Joyce's Dubliners such as "The Dead," "Grace," and "Eveline."

Through this isolation of characters, the reader is conscious of Porter's feelings toward the South and the effects of family and society in her Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection. While she is not necessarily sympathetic to their plight, she is highly aware and critical of the problems that exist in her America with codes of conduct in the South and the atmosphere of war. Joyce's Dubliners, in turn, serves as a type of example for Porter as his works all define a character abandoned by relationships, beliefs, or society. Gabriel, in "The Dead," is left alone and isolated at the end of the story due to his failure to understand Gretta and his marriage. Joyce's title character at the end of "Eveline" is left in a similar state; Eveline's paralysis, however, prohibits her from experiencing marriage or an adult relationship. In the same manner, Kernan is set apart from his wife and friends at the end of "Grace" because of his Protestant beliefs. Joyce's characters are the products of country stunted by its inability to take action against British control and

depleted in population as a result of the potato famine. Porter uses a Joycean paralysis to portray the smothering rules of society in the Texas South and the devastation of the First World War made acceptable by a mask of patriotism.

Porter's and Joyce's works merge to make an interesting study of the effects of rules and traditions on the individual. Separately, these works bear the trademark of distinctive time periods in Irish and American history. Porter arguably follows the path that Joyce clears in his voyage to explore the paralysis of Irish society; however, she fine tunes his exploration and molds it to fit her specific purpose of exposing the paralysis of the Texas South and of America during the first World War and the influenza epidemic of 1918. Indeed, Porter creates tragic and trapped characters in some of her earlier Mexico-based stories such as "Flowering Judas," but the Pale Horse, Pale Rider collection distinctly and more negatively portrays an early twentieth-century United States in which individuals are paralyzed by the past, codes of morality, and patriotism. In this paralysis, Katherine Anne Porter's characters remain isolated and hopeless in a land of opportunity and freedom.

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