

Constructed Narratives and Writing Identity in the Fiction of Katherine Anne Porter

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Readers of Katherine Anne Porter's fiction may notice a similarity among "Old Mortality," "He," "Noon Wine," and "Holiday." This study will attempt to establish a paradigmatic frame of reference that reflects Porter's concerns regarding the importance of language and the construction of identity.

Often we become aware that some key characters in these stories have constructed a narrative that supports their own idealized sense of identity, reality, or propriety. In order to write their own narratives, these characters must define or "write" other characters as well. In each of these stories, Porter also presents us with characters who, for whatever reason, cannot or do not speak. Whatever the source of Porter's fascination with silent characters, they allow her a greater opportunity to comment on the construction of identity and to critique the notion of objective truth. Within this narrative space, characters who cannot speak for themselves are destined to be written by others in such a way as to conform to the narrative purpose. Alienated because they have no language, or more accurately because they communicate by means of a sign system that others fail to understand, these characters have no way to articulate their own sense of identity or to make their own realities known.

In "Old Mortality," perhaps the most complex variation of this paradigm, Porter directs the reader to recognize the narrative construct written by the elder members of Miranda's family. Frequent and repeated use of the words *story*, *legend*, *narrative*, and *tale* underscores the fictive nature of the family's reconstruction of the past. In essence, Miranda's family has con-

structed a highly romanticized narrative about the past that depends greatly on the story of Amy. Because Amy, in some external ways, conforms to the ideals of the southern belle of the Old South, she becomes a central and defining element. Although her own personal reality is quite different from the way she is defined by the family, Amy becomes emblematic of the romantic ideal.

As Jane Krause DeMouy notes, "'Old Mortality' is a fiction of memory . . ." (127). It is significant that Porter never writes from the perspective of the past, from the time that Amy actually lives and dies. Rather, Amy is presented to the reader through a continual writing (and rewriting) of history, based on the memories of those who knew her. Because her life is reconstructed by others, Amy never really has a chance to speak for herself, to Miranda or Maria or to the reader; she is, essentially, a silent figure. Aunt Amy is "only a ghost in a frame, and a sad, pretty story from old times" (173). The girls must sort through the pieces of Amy's story they are given, as well as the preserved physical evidence (Amy's photograph, wedding dress, etc.), in order to construct their own narratives, their own interpretations of the story, and to come to some understanding of Amy's identity:

They listened, all ears and eager minds, picking here and there among the floating ends of narrative, patching together as well as they could fragments of tales that were like bits of poetry or music, indeed were associated with the poetry they had heard or read, with music, with the theater. (176)

Furthermore, it is clear that even within this narrative, the carefully constructed illusion of her family's memory, Amy seems to speak a different language, one that her family is incapable of understanding. Operating as she did outside the societal conventions of her time, Amy's sign system differed radically from that of her family and community. Not only does Amy reject a white gown for her wedding, she redefines the word *wedding* as being synonymous with the word *funeral*. For her, marriage does not mean a cure for her illness, as her mother has assured her. Rather, it means death. She tells her mother, "It is *my* funeral, you know" (182). Amy's mother (Miranda's grandmother) makes little, if any, attempt to interpret Amy's language or to recognize her daughter's unsuitability for the life imposed on her. To do so would upset the family's narrative, which relies on Amy as the symbol of ideal womanhood. Amy too seems to realize her role within the narrative, to sense that she is a "written" character. At one point she says, "And if I am to be the heroine of this novel, why shouldn't I make the most of it?" (189).

Since Amy was apparently neither as beautiful as she is remembered to

be, nor as virtuous, just how is it that she represents the southern belle, the southern ideal? As DeMouy has pointed out, the view of Amy as southern belle, despite her failure to live up to the ideal, is largely dependent on the presence of the ardent suitor, Gabriel (132). While the defining character of the narrative is Amy, the so-called romance between Amy and Gabriel becomes the central myth, the legend that sustains Amy's role.

Both Amy and Gabriel have, in effect, been written by others so as to conform to the romantic ideal of the Old South. Gabriel is written as "a handsome and romantic young man" who has everything, including "youth, health, good looks, the prospect of riches, and a devoted family circle" (181). But Gabriel is not exactly the picture-perfect suitor for Amy. Her long-standing refusal to marry him is said to have "driven Gabriel to a wild life and even to drinking" (181). What's more, Gabriel's use of horse racing as a means to make a living, rather than as an idle pastime, is not considered to be gentlemanly and results in his being cut off from the family fortune. It is only Gabriel's worship of Amy that enables Miranda's family to write his identity to suit their narrative. When Miranda and Maria at last have a chance to see their renowned Uncle Gabriel, they are shocked that this huge, shabby, blustering drunkard could possibly be the hero of their parents' stories. The disenchanting sight of Gabriel leads them to further question the already suspect narrative they have heard:

"Can that be our Uncle Gabriel?" their eyes asked. "Is that Aunt Amy's handsome romantic beau? Is that the man who wrote the poem about our Aunt Amy?" Oh, what did grown-up people *mean* when they talked, anyway? (197)

Ironically, after Gabriel's death, Eva Parrington and Miranda's father express sympathy for him, but still miss the tragic reality of his hopeless and desperate adoration of an impossible ideal. Miranda's father says, "Life for Gabriel . . . was just one perpetual picnic" (219).

It is also ironic that, in some ways, Eva is in much the same position as Amy. The primary difference, of course, is that Amy occupies the central position in the myth whereas Eva is marginalized. Porter establishes a relatedness between these two characters when we are told, "Amy insisted that she could not imagine wanting to marry anybody. She would be, she said, a nice old maid like Eva Parrington" (183). In addition, both women operate outside the parameters of social acceptability. Neither Amy's unvirtuous behavior nor her real feelings about the options open to her are acceptable truths that can be included in the family narrative. Eva, with her suffragette activities (which are extreme enough to land her in jail three times) does not fit any acceptable role in the traditionalist and aristocratic society of the

Old South. This anomaly must be defined, categorized, and written in an acceptable manner. Handily, Eva has no suitor, so she is called an "old maid," a term that, although it carries low status, is at least within the established narrative possibility of the family.

One can hardly imagine a more socially harmless character than the old maid, and so this designation effectively undercuts Eva's real and progressive orientation. Eva has been devastated by her family's characterization of her since childhood. Not beautiful like Amy, and too shy (and probably too genuine) to be willing to fully take part in the beau-hunting games the other girls played, she has always been outside the realm where legends are written. We are told: "Eva was a blot, no doubt about it," whereas "Their Aunt Amy belonged to the world of poetry" (178).

Eva is in another interesting position. In section 3 of "Old Mortality," Eva, in her bitterness, provides us with a counternarrative, one that collides with the established narrative and calls it into question. At the same time, Eva is a coconspirator, still a willing participant in that established narrative, since it provides her with a sense of home and history. As Darlene Harbour Unrue notes, "Ironically, Miranda's father, Harry, and Cousin Eva, who represent opposite attitudes toward the past, are compatible . . ." (*Understanding* 66). At the end of the story, Miranda watches her father and Eva walk arm in arm:

[They] were no longer Cousin Eva and Father, since they had forgotten her presence, but had become Eva and Harry, who knew each other well, who were comfortable with each other, being contemporaries on equal terms, who occupied by right their place in this world, at the time of life to which they had arrived by paths familiar to them both. (219)

Miranda eventually rejects "the legend of the past, other people's memory of the past" (221) and acknowledges that she will never know the truth about Amy. Ultimately, the story of Amy and the truth regarding her identity become parabolic, reflecting Porter's concerns about the way history and identity are constructed. Porter suggests that Miranda, "in her hopefulness, her ignorance," is probably too young to understand (221). Miranda, recognizing the contradictions in the stories of the past she has heard, wrongly assumes that she will be able to recognize and hold onto the truths of her own life. In Porter's world, there is no absolute, objective truth. We all write and rewrite our own stories and histories based on our circumstances, agendas, pains, and individual narrative purposes.

Porter uses a variation of this paradigm in the story "He." Mrs. Whipple's primary concern, or perhaps her obsession, is "appearances." Nearly every

action she undertakes, nearly every thought she expresses, is related to what others (her neighbors and her brother's family) will think of her. Although there is much debate among critics over the question of whether or not she actually loves Him and does her best for him, it should be clear that Mrs. Whipple does not love her son as she should. Debra A. Modellmog, in fact, goes so far as to claim that Mrs. Whipple, a "moral monster," not only wants to do Him harm, but also harbors a death wish against him (119–121).

He is caught up in a complex interplay between Mrs. Whipple's own guilt about her negligence and lack of love for him and her narrative purpose. When Mrs. Whipple tries to convince others (and herself) that she loves Him more than anything, it is not because she has an overwhelming love for him, but because she believes people expect it of her. She tells her husband, "You know yourself it's more natural for a mother to be that way. People don't expect so much of fathers, some way" (49).

Mrs. Whipple is actually engaged in a double narrative. There are the outward statements she repeats to her neighbors and family and her inner dialogue, which represents her conflict and must result in rationalization if she is to maintain her sense of identity as a good woman. In both cases, however, the primary concern is what people will think and say. Because she must convince both herself and her neighbors that she "does right" by Him and loves him unconditionally, she must write him as being so different from the other children that he doesn't mind the cold and doesn't feel pain or experience fear, thus justifying her unloving and uncaring actions.

Mrs. Whipple has done such a good job of defining or writing His identity (as well as her own) that even critics are fooled. I have not encountered one critic who bothers to question the extent of His impairment. Most routinely label him as "idiot" or "retarded" when, in fact, the only direct designation he is ever given by Porter (or the narrator) is "simple-minded" (49). If we compare Him, for example, to Benjy in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, the difference is staggering. He is only a ten-year-old boy who is neglected, overworked, given little love or attention, and yet is capable of helping his father run the family farm. He is intelligent enough to be sent, alone, three miles away to retrieve a bull and bring it home. He may, indeed, be slow. Yet the only significant impairment he seems to have is his inability to speak, which may be the result of a head injury. In fact, Mrs. Whipple seems to recognize his capabilities. When a neighbor tells her that she shouldn't let Him climb trees, she screams at the neighbor, "He *does* know what He's doing! He's as able as any other child!" (50). When she finally gets him to come out of the trees, he grins at her—a typical reaction from any mischievous, tree-climbing, ten-year-old boy. Immediately after this incident, Mrs. Whipple tells her husband, "He sees a lot that goes on, He listens to things

all the time. And anything I tell Him to do He does it" (51). These statements prove to be true, not merely the hysterical reactions of an unrealistic mother.

Perhaps Mrs. Whipple's disappointment in her son stems from her family, who are "Ambitious every last one of them, and they don't take second place for anybody" (56). Despite the irony of this statement, considering the economic situation at the Whipple farm, clearly He will never be a "winner." Mrs. Whipple's essentially fabricated narrative, her story, is that He is different and difficult, that he (as opposed to her other children) has no brains, no feelings, no desires, but that she loves him in spite of it all and does absolutely everything possible for his welfare. Yet, apparently from birth, surely before any indication of a deficiency in him is obvious, she has withheld from him an identity of his own, calling him only "He," denying him a name or a sense of "I." One can only speculate on what his condition may have been in another, more supportive environment. In *Truth and Vision*, Unrue suggests that parental negligence is the cause of his ultimate decline (34).

Because He has no language, his mother is able to write him in any way that suits her purpose. But close attention to the story shows that He does, in fact, communicate, using a simple, nonverbal sign system. Mrs. Whipple does not want to learn to read or hear him, because to do so would contradict her own illusions. Instead, she convinces herself that, since he does not cry out when he is hurt or complain when he is cold, as her other children might, he has no feelings. Yet both the reader and Mrs. Whipple can see that he does. After Mrs. Whipple boxes his ears, "He blinked and blinked and rubbed His head, and His face hurt Mrs. Whipple's feelings" (53). She trembles then because she recognizes that she has shocked him and hurt both his head and his feelings, a consequence of her actions which she must, of course, deny. When Mrs. Whipple heartlessly slices the pig's throat in his presence, "He gave a great jolting breath and ran away" (52). As Modellmog has also pointed out, His refusal to eat in the dining room is probably due to his sensitivity about the throat-slicing incident, rather than to his "shyness" or any oddity about Him; it is simply another expression of his feelings (124). Because Mrs. Whipple never sees him as being fully human, he is underestimated, undervalued, and unloved.

Even at the end of the story, as Mrs. Whipple escorts him to the institution, she does not hold him close to her as we might expect, but just holds onto the edges of the blankets in order to keep him steady in the cart. When she sees his tears, Mrs. Whipple is shocked to realize that her son is aware and that he experiences human feelings. Yet, rather than gaining an under-

standing of her son, Mrs. Whipple is momentarily consumed by her own guilt:

He seemed to be accusing her of something. Maybe He remembered that time she boxed His ears, maybe He had been scared that day with the bull, maybe He had slept cold and couldn't tell her about it; maybe He knew they were sending Him away for good and all because they were too poor to keep Him. Whatever it was, Mrs. Whipple couldn't bear to think of it. (58)

In this last horrible stroke of irony, she still cannot see his tears as an expression of the grief he must certainly feel due to his abandonment. Now that his tears and her guilt have shattered both her own and her son's constructed identities, the driver, a neighbor, doesn't dare look back at them.

Whereas Porter allows the reader a glimpse between the lines, a possible interpretive space where we can have some idea of the identities of Amy and He, she leaves us in an alien landscape with Olaf Helton of "Noon Wine." If we hope to uncover any kind of truth, or even a possibility, regarding Helton's identity, Porter sets us up for failure. Unrue presents a convincing argument that Helton and Hatch are, in one way or another, mirror images of Thompson's preconscious or darker self (*Truth and Vision* 40–44). For the purpose of this study, however, I will assume them to be individuals.

The Thompsons write Helton as "Regenerator" or "Savior." It is he who is responsible for turning the farm around, compensating for Thompson's laziness. In addition, his activities ensure that Thompson can maintain the illusion he has of himself, the identity he wants to present to the neighbors. Because of his great concern about "the appearance of things," Thompson has been willing to live in poverty, with the farm in a state of decay, rather than lower himself by doing what he considers to be menial work. Thompson notices that "judging by his conduct, Mr. Helton had never heard of the difference between man's and woman's work on a farm" (235). Under Helton's quiet influence and through his hard work, the Thompsons can finally lead a worry-free, comfortable life, and Thompson can bask in his public and private persona of successful farmer, employer, and family man.

We know a few positive things about Helton that render his eventual "lunatic" label questionable and support the Thompsons' narrative position. He is a hard, diligent, and honest worker, never takes a drink of alcohol, shows initiative, and is unselfish with his time and skills. He cares enough about his mother to risk the discovery of his whereabouts in order to send her money. In the final confrontation between Thompson and Hatch, Helton intervenes, presumably in defense of Thompson, suggesting a loy-

alty to his employer. All in all, the Thompsons see Helton as a positive presence in their lives:

Mr. Helton was the hope and the prop of the family, and all the Thompsons became fond of him, or at any rate they ceased to regard him as in any way peculiar, and looked upon him, from a distance they did not know how to bridge, as a good man and a good friend. (241)

But Porter quietly subverts this view of Helton throughout the story, causing the reader to wonder if there might be a sinister side to this character. When Mrs. Thompson (with her "diseased eyes") approaches Helton with an invitation to join them in Sunday services, "for a moment Mrs. Thompson was almost frightened at his face. The pale eyes seemed to glare past her, the eyebrows frowned, the long jaw hardened" (237). Helton's eerie silence bothers Mrs. Thompson, yet she explains his taciturn behavior away at one point, saying, "He *can't* talk, for one thing . . . it's a shame to keep at him when he don't know the language good" (229). Mrs. Thompson's near-blindness and Mr. Thompson's determination to "leave him alone," not wanting to question a good thing, suggest that their narrative position may be questionable.

The fact that this man is able to speak, yet persists in his silence, can be viewed as simple reticence or as a sign of silent antagonism, among other interpretations. Nine years pass, and "Mr. Helton never got ready to talk" (236). His violent but silent reaction when the boys are discovered handling his harmonicas is also troubling. But Porter seems to take any determination about his violent behavior and about Helton himself out of the reader's hands. We know that the boys are also strangely silent during this shaking incident, and one has the feeling that they somehow know that they dare not speak or cry out. Perhaps they know something that we do not. At any rate, the interpretive space regarding Helton's true identity is extremely limited, both for the Thompsons and for the reader. We have too many indications that Helton is a positive character to judge him too quickly.

But Helton's "strange" behaviors might support Hatch's allegations. When Hatch is introduced, Porter picks up and plays off these quiet threads of discomfort in order to give substance to Hatch's characterization of Helton. Hatch writes Helton as "a dangerous escaped loonatic, you might say" (252). However, Hatch's own personal narrative, that he is just a concerned citizen trying to uphold "law and order," is clearly false. He tells Thompson:

Now fact is, in the last twelve years or so I musta rounded up twenty-odd escaped loonatics, besides a couple of escaped convicts that I

just run into by accident, like. I don't make a business of it, but if there's a reward, and there usually is a reward, of course, I get it. It amounts to a tidy little sum in the long run, but that ain't the main question. (252-53)

Of course, that *is* the main question, the primary motivation behind Hatch's actions. He is a bounty hunter. In this way, Porter completely discredits Hatch as a reliable source of information. We know that he is a liar. In addition, before Hatch ever tells his real business on the farm, Thompson notices that Hatch himself had "laughed like a perfect lunatic" (245). Thompson also becomes angry and frustrated because Hatch seems to rewrite Thompson's own narrative, "taking the words out of Mr. Thompson's mouth, turning them around and mixing them up until Mr. Thompson didn't know himself what he had said" (248). Since Hatch's personal narrative is undermined, the "loonatic" label he ascribes to Helton must also be questioned.

As in the stories of the past in "Old Mortality," we are presented with a situation where two opposing narratives collide. Helton is so firmly embedded in the counternarratives of Thompson and Hatch that it is impossible to uncover any sense of his personal identity. We are given conflicting evidence, both hearsay and actual. Porter so carefully subverts the validity of each narrative that Helton's reality remains a complete enigma.

Helton cannot, or will not, speak for himself. We do not have the sense that he cares to express himself to others, as we do with Amy and He. His only real language, his sign system, seems to be the harmonica, an apparently private expression of his story, told in a language we cannot understand.

After the death of Hatch and subsequent trial of Thompson, Helton's identity is no longer important. During the last days of Thompson's life, "Mr. Thompson hardly ever thought of Mr. Helton. His mind just skipped over him and went on" (266). In other words, Helton is no longer a defining element in Thompson's personal narrative. Now, Thompson is engaged in a desperate inner conflict, reminiscent of Mrs. Whipple's in "He." Since Thompson's image of himself has been shattered, he finds himself in the position of having to construct a new narrative. He takes this reconstruction a step further than Mrs. Whipple does, traveling the countryside to repeat his story, trying to convince his neighbors, and himself, of his innocence. Of course, uncertain as he is about the truth of the matter, his story can never be completely reconciled to his memory or to his image of himself as an honorable man. Since he seems to have lost any narrative control of his own identity, Thompson takes his own life in order to prove his inno-

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cence. The irony here is that Thompson's final narrative act (his suicide note and death) will not prove anything to anybody.

Language and the absence of language are the key elements in Porter's "Holiday." In fact, Porter seems to emphasize the importance of language throughout the story in order to further dramatize Otilie's silence. According to Porter, language has the power to unite people as well as to alienate or separate them. Otilie's silence isolates her from the family and makes her an outsider. The narrator tells us early on (long before she becomes aware of Otilie's identity) that the Mullers are so clannish as to be like "one human being divided into several separate appearances," and that "The crippled servant girl . . . seemed to me the only individual in the house" (417). The Mullers' common language, as well as their defining narrative space, is what binds them to each other and makes them one.

Ironically, as a native English-speaking woman, the narrator is also a "hopeless outsider" (421). Porter weaves in double and triple layers of language alienation. The German-speaking Mullers themselves are outsiders in America—they speak a different language. The narrator, remembering a similar situation in her past, says that "here again, listening to another language nobody could understand except those of this small farming community, I knew that I was again in a house of perpetual exile" (413). What's more, Porter seems to direct the reader to focus on Otilie's inability to communicate as her primary problem. The unnamed narrator tells us: "Her muteness seemed nearly absolute; she had no coherent language of signs" (421). Although Otilie is a member of the family, not one of the Mullers claims her as such. Her sister Hatsy, who does not identify Otilie as her sister, simply mentions to the narrator that "she can work so well as I can. . . . But she cannot talk so you can understand" (420).

However, Otilie uses a series of signs to communicate her identity, as a Muller daughter and sister, to the narrator. Her nonverbal sign system may be incomprehensible to her family, but she is clearly able to communicate, when motivated, to those who are willing to listen to her. Even the narrator's later mistake, assuming that Otilie wants to join the funeral procession, is corrected by Otilie's "signs."

Since Otilie is unable to speak the Muller language, her identity is rewritten by her family. She is no longer a beloved daughter and sister, a hearty and hale member of the family, but an invisible working presence in the house. The narrator tells us: "By a physical accident in her childhood she had been stripped of everything but her mere existence" (427). But what the accident has really taken from Otilie is her voice; it is the Mullers who leave her with nothing but her "mere existence." Ignored from day to day,

Ottilie seems to have learned the lesson that she is not considered to be a real and human member of the family.

As one can never fully comprehend another's identity, so Porter maintains a strong sense of mystery regarding Ottilie's true identity. Yet she does leave us with some interpretive space, some clue as to what Ottilie suffers due to her isolation and practical abandonment by her family. One possibility lies in the parallel established between Ottilie and an animal caught in a trap. The scene directly after Ottilie has identified herself to the narrator includes one of the Muller boys carrying a dead opossum he has trapped. His sister Annetje scolds him, saying, "No, it is cruel, even for the wild animals" (427). Although Annetje takes special and loving care of the animals on the farm, she fails to extend the same care to her own sister. The narrator notices, "Still, she seemed to have forgotten that Ottilie was her sister. So had all the others" (427). Ottilie, because she speaks no understandable language, is denied even the status of an animal in the Muller household.

Later the animal parallel is reinforced, this time, as M. M. Liberman has noted, in connection with the dog Kuno (84-86). After the family has left in funeral procession, the narrator dreams that she hears a dog howling. "I dreamed that Kuno was caught in the trap; then I thought he was really caught, it was no dream and I must wake . . ." (433). What the narrator actually hears is Ottilie, howling like a dog, the only sound she has uttered throughout the story. Denied human status for so long, as well as the necessary love and affection, Ottilie has one overwhelming desire. She howls like an animal in a cage, expressing her desire to be free, if only for a few precious moments. In this context, who can say that her choice to ignore the funeral, in favor of enjoying a little "holiday" in the outdoors, is an unacceptable one? Significantly, when the narrator later senses Ottilie's "realness, her humanity," she herself nearly howls like a grieving dog at the realization (434).

The Mullers' narrative space, although cheerful, is based primarily on a work ethic and patriarchal tradition. There is little room for sustained, heartfelt emotion, and certainly no place for an invalid. The narrator, although at first determined to enter into this alien narrative, eventually rejects it as she comes to feel a connection with Ottilie:

The bit of cardboard connected her at once somehow to the world of human beings I knew; for an instant some filament lighter than cobweb spun itself out between that living center in her and in me, a filament from some center that held us all bound to our unescapable common source, so that her life and mine were kin, even a part of each other, and the painfulness and strangeness of her vanished. (426)

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Although Otilie's life remains tragic, "Holiday" is the only story discussed here that ends on a hopeful, positive note. Recognizing their common humanity, the narrator realizes that although Otilie cannot speak her language, she has come closer to Otilie than to any of the other family members. What makes this connection possible is the narrator's willingness to "bridge the distance" between them, despite Otilie's silence (434).

In her introduction to *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*, which she titles "Go Little Book . . .," Porter writes:

"Holiday" represents one of my prolonged struggles, not with questions of form or style, but my own moral and emotional collision with a human situation I was too young to cope with at the time it occurred; yet the story haunted me for years. (v)

In the final analysis, perhaps this "haunting" has expressed itself throughout Porter's entire career, an observation that may explain further the similarities among these stories. Readers may notice, for example, that echoes of "Old Mortality" ring throughout the opening passages of "Holiday." As Liberman has also noted, when Louise convinces the unnamed narrator that she should visit the Muller farm, her description of the farm of her memory is highly romanticized, as Miranda's parents have romanticized the past, particularly as it involves Aunt Amy (83). When confronted with the actually bleak and muddy landscape, the narrator composes a letter to Louise, telling her, "In daily life . . . there are also such useful things as the plain facts that should be stuck to, through thick and thin" (409). Were she a few years younger, we might expect her to say, "Oh, what do you *mean* when you talk?"

Perhaps all of Porter's silent characters, particularly the enigmatic Mr. Helton in "Noon Wine," are explicated in "Holiday" in this passage:

I loved that silence which means freedom from the constant pressure of other minds and other opinions and other feelings, that freedom to fold up in quiet and go back to my own center. . . . I paused there a good while listening to this muted unknown language which was silence with music in it. . . . (413)

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