

## STRINGS OF LIFE: MEMORY AS MYTH IN PORTER'S MIRANDA STORIES

OANA-RAISA STOLERIU

"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași

**Abstract:** *The Pulitzer-prize writer, Katherine Anne Porter, dedicates a great part of her work to the Southern history. Through Miranda's memories, this writer questions some of the major Southern myths – the Southern belle, the Southern family. This paper aims to highlight the moulding of a feminine voice of the South, whose identity is torn between the Old and the New Order.*

**Keywords:** *feminine voice of the South, mythical past, Old Order – New Order, reality-myth-“blind” memories, Southern belle*

## 1. Introduction

“Memory is identity” (Barnes 2008:189). The past is shaped from millions of memories – personal or historical – that give us a meaning, and mould our present and future. Can our identity be destroyed? What does it happen then, with ourselves or with our society? How do we forge a new identity, when all of our values have collapsed under the pressure of History, of wars, or of scientific developments? How do we survive in a new world, different from the traditional one, alienated from the reality that we have known, within a present so different from the one in which we have been born or raised?

Like William Faulkner (2005), Katherine Anne Porter presents in her short stories a decayed, aristocratic world; “[e]ven the future seemed like something gone and done with when they spoke of it. It did not seem an extension of their past, but a repetition of it.” (Mooney Jr. 1957:17) Miranda Rhea, one of her major and intriguing characters, lives at the intersection between a sublime, mythical past and a decayed, empty present; she is raised in the mosaic of family memories, which proves in time not to be so real and perfect as she imagined in her childhood. Miranda from “Old Mortality”, the little girl or adolescent who lives in the South, is not the same as Miranda from “Pale Horse, Pale Rider”, the one who stops “embracing place” and runs away from the South, ignoring one of the ancient unwritten rules of Southerners. As Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. (2008:4) puts it in his interesting study, *Remapping Southern Literature – Contemporary Southern Writers and the West*, “a solitary figure breaking free from the community would, in the fiction of most Southern writers, be less a hero than a potential psychopath, a person tragically alone and isolated, cut off from the nourishing bonds of family and community.”

How does she then evolve? What happens when the Old South's mentality clashes into the motionless present, into the mind of the new generation of the South, who was bred with ancestors' memories, memories that are no longer representative for their times, but which are playing an essential role in these characters' lives? And do these characters, who are filled with such ‘blind memories’ – memories that are not theirs – belong to the Old South, to the dead past, or to the New South, to the present?

## 2. Miranda's *Songs of Innocence*

How can the Southern woman be defined? As the young Miranda Rhea learns from the portrayals of Aunt Annie, from "Old Mortality" (Porter 1980), or of Miranda Gay, the cousin from "The Circus" (Porter 1980), one has to be a beauty, to know and to respect the social habits, and later, to be a submissive wife and to give birth to as many children as possible. In her innocence, Miranda hopelessly dreams to be like the legendary depictions of Annie or like her cousin, Miranda, "a most dashing young lady with crisp silk skirts, a half dozen of them at once, a lovely perfume and wonderful black curly hair above enormous wild gray eyes." (Porter 1980:343) She listens to her father's description of the Southern belle, wishing to be like that in her maturity, but at the same time she dimly acknowledges the fact that she will never possess the necessary features:

First, a beauty must be tall; whatever color the eyes, the hair must be dark, the darker the better; the skin must be pale and smooth. Lightness and swiftness of movement were important points. A beauty must be a good dancer, superb on horseback, with a serene manner, an amiable gaiety tempered with dignity at all hours. Beautiful teeth and hands, of course, and over and above all this, some mysterious crown of enchantment that attracted and held the heart. It was all very exciting and discouraging. (Porter 1980:176)

In her childhood, Miranda is left on her own to discover the world; she does not receive answers when she asks her father if they go to the Cedar Grove or not, because she "never got over being surprised at the way grown-up people simply did not seem able to give anyone a straight answer to any question, unless the answer was 'No'" (Porter 1980:354); she is not asked of the things that bother her, why she is crying, or why she is scared by the Circus, and she does not receive explanations for simple notions of life. Even so, she is living in a world where past memories are still alive, where everything and everyone nourishes the Southern story of romantic love, and of the perfection of the Southern belle. As Porter puts it, the child is a stranger in the adult world, as the children described in Henry James' works were, and these adults from Miranda's life, in a more direct or indirect way, try to inflict in her the Southern code and standards.

The memories and the events from this stage, that are illustrated in "The Fig Tree", "The Circus", "The Grave", and "Old Mortality" (Porter 1980), have an essential role in her development, because, as Porter (1970:16) affirms in "Reflections on Willa Cather", "the rest is merely confirmation, extension, development. Childhood is the fiery furnace in which we are melted down to essentials and the essential shaped for good."

Miranda's journey starts with her innocence and naivety, gaining with every new story a piece of experience. In "The Fictions of Memory", Edward Greenfield Schwartz (1960:204-205) makes a comparison between Porter's Miranda and Shakespeare's heroine from *The Tempest*. Schwartz pointed out that Miranda begins her journey where Shakespeare's character ends it: "O, wonder!/ How many goodly creatures are there here!/ How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world! That has such people in it!" Moreover, if in the case of Shakespeare's Miranda, the name has Latin origins, meaning *strange* and *wonderful*, Porter gives to her character the Spanish meaning, "the seeing one", a feature that characterises Miranda, because she easily observes the absurdities of the world, the discrepancies between reality and the things that her family tells her.

If Prospero's daughter is sheltered on an island, and she is characterised through her lack of experience, Miranda Rhea is also sheltered, "immured" from the present world, from her individuality and independence through the mentality of her grandmother, and the stories

of her father, in an indirect attempt to transform her into the Southern female prototype. However, in this ignorance, as she observes, she already has the memories of other generations, memories that are already influencing her way of perceiving the world:

Maria and Miranda, aged twelve and eight years, 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 grown-ups around them, old people above forty, most of them, who had a way of insisting that they too had been young once. (Porter 1980:174)

First of all, the *grandmother* represents the authoritarian figure, the matriarchal image of the South, who ordered the chaos, and offered stability to the family. She is the mother with eleven children, who does not say a word against her husband's decisions, even when he gambles away her dowry. She is the image of the Southern aristocrat, and at the same time she is for the children the mother figure and the tyrant, conservative even in her tastes: in her house, she has Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Dante, Pop, Milton, and Dr. Johnson's Dictionary. For her, like for the characters of Faulkner, the changeless past represents the *illo tempore*, the time in which everything, in one way or another, should return.

However, Miranda observes in astonishment that this Grandmother, who wants to control everything in her house and on her farm, in front of whom nobody from the family says a word, pretends "not to see anything" when Great-Aunt Eliza snuffles her nose, a "shameful habit in women of the lower classes, but no lady had been known to 'dip snuff', and surely not in the family." (Porter 1980:359) So, is the code that she imposes real, or is it another story?

Sophia Jane's way of thinking symbolises the cultural ideologies of the South, and transmits to the *new order* the *patriarchal* way of thinking. She is depicted in "The Old Order" (Porter 1980) as one of the "giants" of the past, showing to Miranda how a woman should be, if she wants to be respected and have a place in society. Her grandmother, although she is depicted as the head of the family, who takes control of the family business after her husband's death, who is feared by everyone, is still a carrier of patriarchy. As Andrea K. Frankwitz (2004:2) shows in "Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda stories: a commentary on the cultural ideologies of gender identity", "Sophia Jane's thoughts reflect the patriarchal ideology of gender, which reinforces the feminine as subordinate and the masculine as authority".

She is also the product of the past, the last one who remained from the Old Order. For her, men and women have fixed places and roles in society, and a woman who is too fragile to bear children or too modern in her thinking, such as the wives of her sons, cannot be accepted.

This is the mentality that shaped the universe of Miranda, the child. However, owing to her way of thinking, of analysing things, and seeing the incoherence of the story, she does not only discover the patriarchal world, but she also reacts to it, discovering inside herself her femininity, power, and independence.

If in "The Circus" (Porter 1980), which represents a microcosm of the world, Miranda becomes aware of the physical distinctions between males and females, in "The Grave" (Porter 1980) she explores several Southern codes, myths, and taboos. First of all, she and her brother Paul discover in the tomb a small treasure: the coffin screw in form of the *dove*, well known for its Christian symbol of the soul's immortality, here seen as the immortality of the past and its traditions, and the *ring*, also a symbol of the past, but also of marriage and femininity. Before she had the ring, she was unaware of gender distinctions and limitations, and felt free in her boyish clothes, in her games with Paul, shooting rabbits and birds. Once she puts the ring on her finger, she wants to be pretty and covered in the old, lost luxury. The

golden ring “turned her feelings against her overalls and sockless feet, toes sticking through the thick brown leather straps. (Porter 1980:365)

The ring is a strong symbol for sexuality, marriage, and death, and when she later discovers the fetal young rabbits, she suddenly becomes aware that being a woman has also physical implications, that giving life can sometimes mean death – and here, in her subconscious, we can easily depict the images of her grandmother and her mother – that the womb may mean the destruction of the feminine; at the same time, in an indirect way, she understands the power that it has over Paul, who looks in amazement at the tiny things, speaking “cautiously, as if they were talking about something forbidden”, his voice dropping when he utters the word “born” (Porter 1980:367).

DeMouy (2001:140) asserts that

Miranda is not traumatized until her quick mind sees the link between her femaleness and the precarious, bloody ritual of birth. Giving life means risking death. This is her true legacy from her grandmother and her society.

“The Grave” (Porter 1980) – as Mary Titus (1988) emphasised in “Mingled Sweetness and Corruption” – represents at the same time the shifting of Miranda’s family from nurturing, fulfilment, stability and wealth to the violence and the instability that the death of the mother-figure, the grandmother, who also represented the faithful image of the old order, brought into their world. When that past is dead, time seems to fall into chaos. This grandmother, with everything that she represented, tried to teach Miranda the Southern moral code of the woman, the sacredness of marriage, of honour, and of beauty. “Old Mortality” (Porter 1980) is another version of this image, of the illusion of romantic love, that characterises the South, of the differences among *reality*, *poetry* and *story*. The story of Amy, of Eva, and the rest of the legends that she hears in her childhood represent for Miranda, as Janis P. Stout (2001:45) asserts in “The Expectations in the story”, her *mental independence*, “a struggle toward self-definition through acts of separation from family and home”.

For Maria and Miranda, Aunt Amy represents a sad, beautiful, Southern story. She “had been beautiful, much loved, unhappy, and she had died young” (Porter 1980:173), the main ingredients for moulding a Southern myth. In their family, every road goes to the sad story of Amy – the women are always compared with her, the men with Gabriel, while the girls wish to be just like “poor Amy”. However, the little girls see the contradictions between reality and the story told by the adults, asking themselves why everyone saw Amy so beautiful and charming, when they only see an ordinary girl in the photos. She represents all the values that a Southerner searches in a woman – slenderness, gracefulness, charm –, but she strongly disobeys her family, rejects Gabriel several times, causes Henry’s exile, and she describes her own wedding as her funeral. Why did she become the myth of the Southern belle?

There was a certain peculiarity in the South for romance, as Miranda easily observes at the beginning of the story; she and her sister are also attracted by Gothic novels and sentimental readings, and in their naïve beliefs, they give credulity and attention to the story. For them and for their family, Gabriel becomes the image of the Southern knight, whose heart was broken by the loss of his beloved. He “had youth, health, good looks, the prospect of riches, a devoted family circle” (Porter 1980:181), but somehow, he lost everything. He was perfect for this role, and he fell in love with Amy, the other character that is moulded by the family. As M.K. Fornataro (2001:49) puts it in “Neil on the Family Legends”, “both Amy and Gabriel have, in effect, been written by others so as to conform to the romantic ideal of the Old South.”

One Sunday afternoon, when they are freed from their “immured” state at the convent, they face the reality of their myth: Gabriel is an ugly drunkard, who makes a living through horse-races, having an unhappy marriage, and he feels also self-pity and ignorance towards the reality around him. This is the moment when the girls question the myth of the romantic ideal, and part of it is dismissed.

The story of Amy becomes a double source of torment for the young Miranda; first she feels uneasy because she cannot be another image of Amy, and second she sees the things that happen when women are only judged by their beauty, as it is the case of Eva’s emotional scars and her plight. Amy is “the heroine of the novel”, who brings poetry nearer, as Miranda remarks, but she is also a character who, according to M.K. Fornataro (2001) in “Neil on the Family Legends”, speaks a different language. Her real personality is not the image of the Southern belle, and very often we have the impression that she wants to escape the mentality of the old order. In order to do so, she rejects all social codes, dresses as her family tells her not to, cuts her hair when Gabriel tells her that he loved it. She tries to determine her place in the family myth, within it, or outside it, and as it happened with Miss Lucy’s victory, there is a side of this story that we cannot know.

At the end of this short novel, Miranda remains caught between the old order and the new one. As she learnt from her society, marriage is the fulfilment of the romantic story, so she is in a certain way proud that she is eighteen and married: “‘I’m married now, Cousin Eva,’ said Miranda, feeling for almost the first time that it might be an advantage.” (Porter 1980:212) On the other hand, before her father’s rejection, in her conscience, she thinks the following:

[...] it was important, it must be declared, it was a situation in life which people seemed to be most excited about, and the only feeling she could rouse in herself about it was an immense weariness as if it were an illness that she might one day hope to recover from. (Porter 1980:213)

Miranda rebels and stands outside the family myth, but her rebellion and her escape are given by her pride, “in her arrogance” (Porter 1980:219). She is rejected by her father, and she “feels homeless” (Porter 1980:219), unable to return to her husband, but also finding it impossible to remain there. By rejecting several myths – the one of Amy, and the one of Eva – she forges her own myth, with her own romanticism, as “the Byronic exaltation of the solitary rebellious spirit” (Stout 2001:270). She does not have a mother figure in her life to tell her to protect her marriage, as Mrs. Halloran tells to her daughter in “A Day’s Work” (Porter 1980), but she cannot escape the influence of her own family, in “her hopefulness, her ignorance” search of personal truth.

### **3. Miranda’s *Songs of Experience***

“When you don’t like it where you are you always go West [...] We have always gone West”, says Robert Penn Warren in *All the King’s Men* (1996). Miranda goes West, too. The *innocent* girl from the “Fig Tree” (Porter 1980) has slowly started her life, gaining with every new episode another *experience* for her own development. Through these experiences, she understands the Southern code, but at the same time they lead her away from the South. In her “innocence”, she thought that she could run away from her family, leaving the past behind, and start a new life, without memories, in the West, a symbol of freedom, where the past is left behind. But Miranda is still a Southerner, and in “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” (Porter 1980), we discover a woman whose thoughts are running back in time, especially to the fields in which she grew up. This short novel, “the most death-haunted of all stories” (Stout 2001:60),

is built on a world of dreams, depicting with their help the inner reality of Miranda, her stream of consciousness, and the reality of the South.

“Pale Horse, Pale Rider” (Porter 1980) has five dreams in its structure, with the help of which a “sleeping reality” is revealed, a reality whose truth could not have been depicted in another way. It is the sleeping South inside Miranda, the unconscious world that is always influenced by memories, the reality within, in which the past is always present.

This story of the present is filled with *death, loss, and sufferance*. As William Faulkner’s character from *Absalom, Absalom* (1971), Quentin Compson, her only escapement from the voice of the South, of her own past, and of other’s memories, seems to be in death. Her entire life had been under the sense of death, which meant “gone away forever. Dying was something that happened all the time, to people and everything else.” (Porter 1980:354) And the rider from the “Pale Horse” is not a stranger to her:

The stranger rode beside her, easily, lightly, his reins loose in his half-closed hand, straight and elegant in dark shabby garments that flapped upon his bones; his pale face smiled in an evil trance, he did not glance at her. Ah, I have seen this fellow before, I know this man if I could place him. He is no stranger to me. (Porter 1980:270)

If in “Old Mortality” (Porter 1980) Miranda seldom speaks with anyone, the reader detecting around her a sense of isolation, in this short novel we discover her as a social being, in her room, in the newspaper office, in her walks to the theatre, or at the dance hall. However, in this amalgam of characters, in the several moments that are shown from her life, we have the impression that Miranda is more isolated than she has ever been. She is away from her family, which she tried to forget, and she feels away from people like her. Her illness is the last drop of her inner and social isolation: “Far from putting up a sign, she did not even frown at her visitors. Usually she did not notice them at all until their determination to be seen was greater than her determination not to see them.” (Porter 1980:271)

She survives, but she does not live, and her “survival had become a series of feats of sleight of hand” (Porter 1980:271). Because she left her family behind, Miranda does not have anything. In the first dream, we discover her struggle to escape the identity within her family, “her fear of engulfment by her family, and her emerging a wariness of death” (Porter 1980:58). For her, the old order and the Judeo-Christian conceptions of life, death, and afterlife – as George Cheatham (2001) in “Death in Porter’s Stories” emphasises – are gone. However, if we look behind her thoughts in the dream, we can feel, in her pride, a sense of remorse: “What else besides them did I have in the world? Nothing. Nothing is mine, I have only nothing but it is enough, it is beautiful and it is all mine.” (Porter 1980:270)

The South gave her myths, stories, and seemed sometimes cruel in its own code, if we think of Eva’s or of Amy’s stories. But the South, with all its oldness and past, was something that she had, that offered to her stability and a family. By not respecting the code, by running away from home and getting married – although marriage is one of the central myths of the South – she was rejected and she, in her turn, rejected it, hoping that the world outside the South would be better.

Miranda Rhea is in some aspects a feminine version of Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus: both have been “immured” in the religious life, both have wanted to escape it, and both have rebelled in front of tradition. But by doing so, both have sunk into remorse, into the *agenbite of inwit*, and have lost their ways. The “Let me be and let me live” (Joyce 2000:11) of Stephen, the last words he told his mother, are similar to the act of Miranda going away and trying not to look back. But in Porter’s depictions, the South, the past, and her childhood are too linked to her, too deep within herself to be forgotten, this is why we have access to the fields of South in Miranda’s dreams, meaning her unconscious, her deepest Self.

In “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” (Porter 1980), the narrative voice changes, depicting not only a world of decay *outside* the South, but also the decay within the character, who becomes almost a ghost, too tired to live her own life: “Miranda turned over in the soothing water, and wished she might fall asleep there, to wake up only when it was time to sleep again”. (Porter 1980:274)

Here, Miranda comes at the end of her path, caught now between the chaos of the modern world, and the memories of the old order; death seems to her the only escape that she got.

Her maturity and her personal truth comes with her sadness and her illness, which ironically, she says, starts when World War I breaks out, with her unobserved headaches, and ends when she wakes up from her agony, when the War is over.

There must be a great many of them here who think as I do, and we dare not say a word to each other of our desperation, we are speechless animals letting ourselves be destroyed, and why? Does anybody here believe the things we say to each other? (Porter 1980:291)

And this person who is like her is Adam. As George Hendrick (2001:78) explains, at a mythical level he is also the first Adam, Isaac, “subject to sacrificial slaughter”, and even Apollo, “a handsome young man”. He is also “the only really pleasant thought she had” (Porter 1980:278), who asks her of her own happiness and makes her think of it. Like her, he is a Southerner, from Texas, and he can barely wear a watch, symbol of the timeless South, where the only time was the past, the *illo tempore*. With him, Miranda remembers the old romance story, in which she used to believe, the poetry that she loved in Amy and Gabriel’s story. This time, she says the following words:

Once they had gone to the mountains and, leaving the car, had climbed a stony trail, and had come out on a ledge upon a flat stone, where they sat and watched the lights change on a valley landscape that was, no doubt, Miranda said, quite apocryphal – ‘We need not believe it, but it is fine poetry’, she told him; they had leaned their shoulders together there, and had sat quite still, watching. (Porter 1980:285)

If Miranda from “Old Mortality” (Porter 1980) had learnt the difference among poetry, reality, and story, here Miranda returns to the poetry that she loved when she was a child, poetry she can hardly believe in, but which she now discovers in ephemeral moments. Moreover, if at the end of “Old Mortality” (Porter 1980) she ran away twice, first with her lover, and then inside herself, away from her family, by rejecting the rejection, here she also wants to run away, but this time from the atrocities of modernity: “I’d like to run away; let’s both” (Porter 1980:282). The tranquillity of the fields – which taught her the secrets of the grave, of birth, and of death, and to which she returns in her dreams – seems to be here the only place in which she could live. In her futile attempt to run away from war and pain, she sees in Adam her only salvation.

#### 4. Conclusions

The chaos of modernity and the memories from her childhood metamorphose in her illness. The South as an image disappears, but it is now part of herself, from which she cannot be separated, that haunts only her delirious dreams.

From struggling between the past, old world, and her new one, Miranda comes to struggle between other two worlds, the living one, and the dead one, a fight that changes everything. In her foreshadows and dreams, she says the following: “No, no, like a child cheated in a game, It’s my turn now, why must you always be the one to die?” (Porter

1980:305) Here, “you” emphasises the importance of her losses, “you” standing for her mother, her grandmother, and now, for Adam.

At the end of the story, Miranda acknowledges her own pain, but at the same time she becomes aware of the importance of life. The end is opposed to the one from “Old Mortality” (Porter 1980), in which we saw her ignorance; here, although Miranda seems defeated by her own pain, she is a survivor. In her last line, she says “Now there would be time for everything” (Porter 1980:317), a sentence that is uttered at the end of a long road, in her journey from the South’s *illo tempore* to the world of modernity and the nothingness of death. Katherine Anne Porter, in her interview with James Day (1973), confesses and completes Miranda’s final remark: “And it was”.

## References:

- Barnes, Julian. 2008. *Nothing to be Frightened of*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Brinkmeyer Jr., Robert H. 2008. *Remapping Southern Literature: Contemporary Southern Writers and The West*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press.
- Cheatham, George. 2001. “Death in Porter’s Stories”. *Bloom’s Major Short Stories Writer – Katherine Anne Porter*. Harold Bloom (Ed.). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Day, James. 1973. “Day and Night: Katherine Anne Porter, novelist and short story writer”. [Online]. Available: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6SUfHOn3W0&list=PL3DBEF6DFED2E44D1&index=11&feature=plpp\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6SUfHOn3W0&list=PL3DBEF6DFED2E44D1&index=11&feature=plpp_video) [2012, June 2].
- DeMouy, Jane Krause. 2001. “Amy’s Beauty”. *Bloom’s Major Short Stories Writers – Katherine Anne Porter*. Harold Bloom (Ed.). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Faulkner, William. 1971. *Absalom, Absalom*. London: Penguin Books.
- Faulkner, William. 2005. *The Sound and the Fury*. London: Vintage Classics.
- Fornataro, M. F. 2001. “Neil on the Family Legends”. *Bloom’s Major Short Stories Writers – Katherine Anne Porter*. Harold Bloom (Ed.). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Frankwitz, Andrea K. 2004. “Katherine Anne Porter’s Miranda Stories: A Commentary on the Cultural Ideologies of Gender Identity”. *The Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 3, Summer 2004.
- Hendrick, George and Hendrickon, Williene. 2001. “Family Legends” and “The Structured Frame of the Story”. *Bloom’s Major Short Stories Writers – Katherine Anne Porter*. Harold Bloom (Ed.). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Hendrick, George. 1965. *Katherine Anne Porter*. New York: Twayne’s United States.
- Joyce, James. 2000. *Ulysses*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Mooney Jr, Harry John. 1957. *The Fiction and Criticism of Katherine Anne Porter*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Porter, Katherine Anne. 1980. *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*. Harcourt Inc.
- Porter, Katherine Anne. 1970. “Reflections on Willa Cather”. *The Days Before and the Collected Essays and Occasional Writings*. Delacorte Press.
- Schwartz, Edward Greenfield. 1960. “The Fictions of Memory”. *Southwest Review*, 45(3):204-215, Southern Methodist University.
- Stout, Janis P. 2001. “The Expectations in the Story”, “Miranda’s Home”. *Bloom’s Major Short Stories Writers – Katherine Anne Porter*. Harold Bloom (Ed.). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Titus, Mary. 1988. “Mingled Sweetness and Corruption: Katherine Ann Porter’s ‘The Fig Tree’ and ‘The Grave’”. *South Atlantic Review*, May, 53(2):111-125.
- Warren, Robert Penn. 1996. *All the Kings Men*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

## Note on the author

Oana-Raisa STOLERIU is currently a second-year PhD student in American Studies at “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași. Her interests and research focus on Southern literature and history, modernist and postmodernist literature. She has published in different journals and cultural magazines, such as *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies* or *Prăvălia culturală*, and she periodically writes articles, reviews and interviews on the cultural site bookblog.ro.