

Not Southern Gothic

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1 Katherine Anne Porter

1.1 Background

- Known mainly for short stories, lived in Indian Creek TX
- Wrote Ship of Fools
- Among her focuses are the burdens of past love.
- Her work is skillfully crafted, tightly structured, and written in a clear, elegant style.
- Wrote stream-of-consciousness.
- Tells stories with vivid sense of scene.
- Stream of Consciousness is a style of writing that portrays the inner workings of a character's mind.

1.2 The Jilting of Granny Weatherall

- Jilting is oft used in the context of someone not showing up to a marriage.
- Granny's mind is where the majority of the story unfolds, and Porter uses the limited Point of View.
- The reader is plunged right into the stream of consciousness.
- Granny is dying, can't hear, is not very lucid, but tells him to leave anyway.

- The opening page establishes Granny's character, age, and physical condition.
- Her bones feel loose and floaty, and she sees Dr. Harry as like a balloon floating about.
- She asks where he was forty years ago when she could have used a doctor, and says she is well as she is.
- Waving goodbye is too much trouble for Granny.
- Granny is suspicious of others.
- Cornelia whispers around doors, keeping things secret in a public way. She is the tactful, kind, dutiful daughter.
- Granny always ran a clean, tidy, neat house. She was a motivated person and after her husband passed away she was a widow raising the kids.
- The details of housekeeping provide metaphors for how Granny approaches life.
 - Making a neat bed, for example, is a metaphor for leaving nothing that should be done undone.
 - Dust-free clock and carefully arranged row of jars also serve some symbolic purpose or something.
- As the story continues, one idea leads to another and Granny ends up thinking of death.
- She thinks of people looking through the letters in the attic. All the letters there make her uneasy because she does not want her children to see how foolish she was.
- Death feels clammy and unfamiliar in her mind.
- She has spent so much time preparing for death, there is no reason for her to take it up again in thought.
- She takes comfort in a memory of when she was sixty and didn't die in spite of being ill. She feels she can now focus on more important matters, like...

- Her father, who lived to one hundred and two years of age. He had drunk a noggin of strong hot toddy on his last birthday and he claimed it was his secret to living.
- She decides to plague Cornelia. The thing that annoys Granny about Cornelia is that Cornelia thinks Granny is "Deaf, Dumb, and Blind."
- Granny thinks to go back to her own house so nobody will remind her constantly that she is old.
- This brings her to the thought of children, and how her husband would be younger than the children now.
- She feels proud of the house she ran.
- A fog rises over the valley "like an army of ghosts."
- It would then be time to light the lamps. She prays, in a sense like her children when they wait for her to light the lamp in that she is waiting for death in much the same way.
- To have the lamps lit is comforting, and both Granny and her kids are praying in a sense for comfort.
- This brings Granny to memory of when she was jilted. For sixty years she prayed against remembering him and against going to hell.
- A voice in her head tells her to stand up to the jilting, and she decides she wants to see George again to see the life she's made.
- She thinks of her children: Cornelia, Jimmy, Dead Hapsy.
- Hapsy died at a young age, and the whole thing gets confusing.
- Hapsy was her favorite.

2 T. S. Eliot

2.1 Background

- No 20th century poet has had greater critical esteem than T. S. Eliot and he has had an incredible influence on other writers.

- Born Thomas Stearns Eliot, went to Harvard and wrote poems while there.
- Wrote of J. Alfred Prufrock a couple of times.
- When WWI broke out, moved to England and met Ezra Pound
- Wrote The Wasteland.
- Won a Nobel Prize for literature.

2.2 Prufrock

- Separation of the individual from the society.
- The poem is considered to be a dramatic monologue, and is written in stream of consciousness style.
- A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part of a thing is used to stand for or suggest the whole.
- An epigraph is a quotation or motto at the beginning of a chapter, book, short story, or poem that makes a point about the work.
- The epigraph is from Dante's Inferno, making a point of the fact Prufrock is speaking of his own personal hell.
- The poem reflects ideas about Eliot's own time:
 - People are spiritually bankrupt
 - Contemporary life is unromantic and unheroic
- The poem opens with a proposition of a journey through city streets. The destination is unclear.
- Speaker's state of mind is reflected in the way he perceives the evening and the part of the city being passed through.
- The first simile is the idea of the evening spread against the sky like a patient etherized upon a table. This is talking of the evening as an environment unresponsive to events and emotions.
- Prufrock is reluctant to say what his overarching question even is.

- The women mentioned talking of Michelangelo.
- The October night is described as soft (synesthesia.)
- The yellow fog is described as though it were a cat.
- Passage of time is remarked upon, and there may be some significance to the approaching of winter or something.
- There will be time, he says.
- Prufrock seems self-conscious of indecision, revision, and time.
- It is noted that people are insincere with those who they meet.
- This all leads back to the room, which seems closer now. He continues to speak of the time.
- The stanza has Prufrock growing increasingly insecure, wanting to interact with others but something is keeping him back.
- The question "Do I dare?" implies he wants to do something bold at the party.
- Prufrock is concerned about and self-conscious about his appearance, but he does not have an attractive appearance.
- He has measured out his life with coffee-spoons, suggesting a dull life with possible repetitive motifs.
- Prufrock recalls being scrutinized by women at other parties. The image painted is one of a live insect that has been classified, labeled, and mounted for display.
- His days are compared to smoked cigarettes.
- "I've known the eyes" is a synecdoche for knowing women.
- Another image of himself is made to be a lobster or a crab.
- All these comparisons suggest Prufrock lacks self-esteem.
- An allusion is made to John the Baptist, with the head on the platter and all that.
- The eternal footman (likely death) has been seen to hold his coat and snicker.

- Another allusion is made, this time to Lazarus.
- Nerves may be Prufrock's inner thoughts for all to see. He compares these to patterns illuminated by a magic lantern on a screen.
- He fears people will ignore or dismiss his sensibilities.
- He is "Not Prince Hamlet." He views himself as a supporting character rather than a starring one in life. He thinks of himself as almost being the fool at times.
- He grows old, and asks if he dares to eat a peach.
- Prufrock has seen the mermaids, but feels they are indifferent to him. Despite this, he is held by the romantic notion they represent.
- Prufrock's longing, in the end, is unfulfilled.
- The sense is given that Prufrock will never actually ask his overarching question—that which was mentioned at the beginning of the poem—as he has not by the end of the poem.