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Review of *The Ambivalent Art of Katherine Anne Porter* By Mary Titus

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Plains areas of Texas and the southwestern United States, and these are important documents in the historical and cultural study of this geographical entity. It must be kept in mind, however, that Porter—like most writers of fiction—freely adapted descriptions of this area for her own aesthetic purposes; absolute realism, therefore, cannot be expected in her fictional accounts of the Texas Hill Country, the rural area around San Antonio and Austin, Texas, where she grew to maturity and which provided an important impetus for much of her creative work.

Readers of *Great Plains Quarterly* will perhaps be disappointed that Titus's purpose does not include specific analyses of the landscape of the Great Plains. The book is nevertheless an outstanding scholarly feminist study of Katherine Anne Porter's fiction.

Among the finely crafted works of short fiction that describe and analyze the Great Plains areas of Texas and the Southwest are "He" (1927), "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" (1929), "The Grave" (1935), "Noon Wine" (1936), "Old Mortality" (1938), and "Holiday" (1960). Inseparable from the hardscrabble rural landscapes are the memorable characters who are extensions and personifications of the land itself. The domineering grandmother in numerous stories has, in fact, been described as "a metaphor for Texas" because of her determination to survive and prosper despite the hardships and calamities inherent in the prevailing conditions.

A major disappointment for *Great Plains Quarterly* readers, perhaps as well as feminist scholars, is that no mention of Granny Weatherall appears in this scholarly work. Titus, in general, treats Katherine Anne Porter as a southerner, not as a southwesterner.

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The Ambivalent Art of Katherine Anne Porter. By Mary Titus. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005. xii + 252 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.

Mary Titus's *The Ambivalent Art of Katherine Anne Porter* is an original, serious, feminist study of Porter's ever-shifting and problematic self-analysis respecting the proper roles of women in modern culture. According to Titus, Porter rebelled against her upbringing yet never relinquished the belief that her work as an artist was somehow unnatural, unbecoming in view of the conventional notion of woman as childbearer. Yet Titus is certain that Porter overcame such notions, or at least ambivalently tempered them, to create her memorable fiction.

In her fiction, Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980) provides varied treatments of the Great