

Katherine Anne Porter

(1890-1980)

Morning Song (1929)

He speaks:

Come, my laid lady, whom I wooed with words,  
And called my Star—  
Since you proved that you loved me, I  
Know what you are.

For, knowing what I am, I have a rod  
To measure by  
If you mistake what I gave you for love, you are  
More beast than I.

And having eased in you my ambiguous lusts  
I now can prove  
That you're a dupe who let me wallow you  
And call it love.

If I have feet of clay, yet you are now  
The dirt they trod—  
And in that moment when I brought you down,  
I was a god!

#### ANALYSIS

“In the autumn of 1928, Porter met Matthew Josephson and began another sure-to-fail love affair that would bring forth more poetry.... Hope is the element within her personality that sustained her numerous but futile attempts to find a lasting romantic relationship. ‘Morning Song,’ written at the end of the affair, reveals Porter’s usual reaction to the disillusionment that attends the failure of romantic love. What is unusual in this poem is that the persona is the jilting lover. Instead of bringing forth the personally experienced pain of being betrayed, Porter had to imagine the callous arrogance of the faithless lover.

For the effect of irony, she reverted to a conventional Cavalier beginning suggestive of Marlowe or Herrick (‘Come, my laid lady, whom I wooed with words, / And called my Star--’), which in this instance quickly turns to a contrasting bitterness. The depth of feeling in this poem is not so intense as that in the witch poems. Here, the motivating emotion is more evidently self-disgust for being deceived than it is blatant hatred. During the affair with Josephson, Porter’s ever-frail health broke, and a group of friends made it possible for her to have a restorative sojourn in Bermuda.”

Darlene Harbour Unrue  
*Katherine Anne Porter’s Poetry*  
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