



KAP on the west balcony of her Westchester Park Towers apartment, College Park, Maryland, May 15, 1975. Photograph by Paul Porter. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

A Bouquet for Aunt Katherine

By Paul Porter

Editor's note: This is the text of a talk delivered at the conference celebrating the one hundredth birthday of Katherine Anne Porter at the University of Maryland on May 11, 1991.

"I have planted five orchards in three states, and now I see only one tree in bloom." This rueful observation is made by the Grandmother in Katherine Anne Porter's story, "The Source"; but it could have been made by Aunt Katherine about herself. I have no idea how many gardens she planted in her ninety years, but I do know that only one was on land she owned, and she was never in one place long enough to achieve the perfect and enduring garden she saw in her mind's eye.

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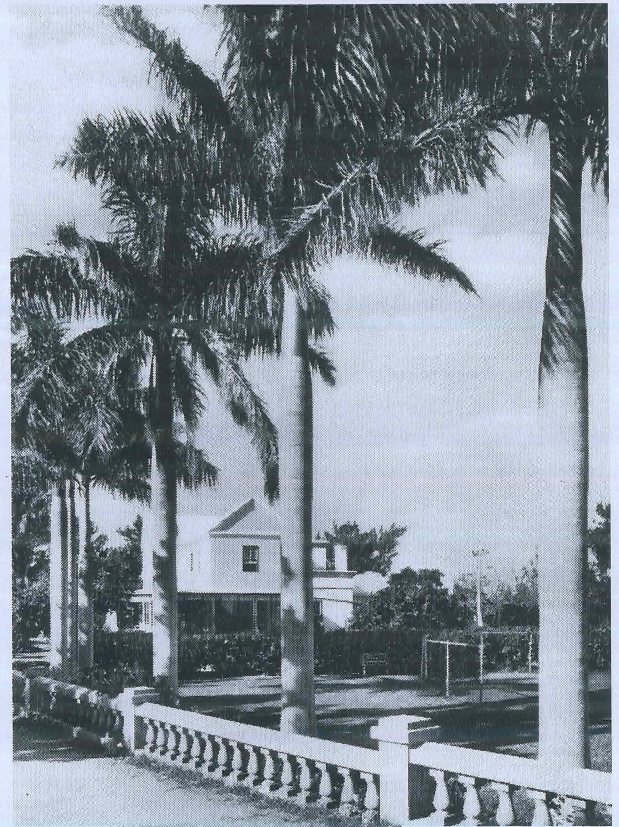
Bermuda: Katherine Anne Porter's Lost Paradise

By Darlene Unrue, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

After Katherine Anne Porter spent five months in Bermuda in 1929, Bermuda joined Amecameca, Mexico (a town she visited perhaps only once), and Indian Creek, Texas (her birthplace, of which she had no memory at the time), to constitute a Utopian cosmos in her imagination. From 1932 to 1936 she lived in Paris, which became a new planet in her ideal universe, and in 1963, after she visited Sicily in the aftermath of the publication and financial success of *Ship of Fools*, she added Taormina to her collection of romanticized places. Although the glorification of all those places can be explained in the context of her constant search for an idealized home and her quixotic nature (in conflict with the cold-eyed realism of her imaginative writing), Bermuda of 1929 is distinctive for its timely effect on her creative force and its particular illumination of her personal psychology.

In March of 1929 Porter was trying to recover from her usual bout with wintertime influenza and bronchial infection, and she was struggling with a depression that had followed the end of a brief and painful love affair. Friends collected enough money to send her to Bermuda for what they hoped would be a healing of her body and soul. They also hoped, as did she, that in the island seclusion and sun she could find renewed energy to complete her biography of Cotton Mather and two novels, one she called "Thieves Market," set in Mexico, and one she called "Many Redeemers," a three-part autobiographical novel that was inspired by the genealogical research she had done on the Mather family in Salem in the fall and winter of 1927. What was released powerfully and unexpectedly in Bermuda, however, was a potent homesickness for her family and her past that led her to the threshold of the most productive period of her life.

Porter was delivered to the port of Southampton by *The Avon*, and she was dazzled by the harbor scene and her six-mile trip by Victoria to Sunnyside, the fourteen-room house she would live in for a few weeks with Thorberg Haberman and her husband, Basil Ellison, and stay on for several weeks more



Cedar Grove as it looked when Porter saw it in 1929.

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Katherine Anne Porter Society

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The officers of the Katherine Anne Porter Society are Beth Alvarez, President and Newsletter Editor; Darlene Unrue, Past President; and Janis Stout, Secretary. Members of the Executive Committee are Beth Alvarez, Thomas Austenfeld (North Georgia College & State University), Virginia Spencer Carr (Georgia State University), Christine Hait (Columbia College), John Edward Hardy (emeritus, University of Illinois at Chicago), George Hendrick (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Janis Stout, and Darlene Unrue. Michael Yates provides editorial support for the newsletter editor.

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KAP Society Membership

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A Bouquet for Aunt Katherine

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Her choice in flowers reflected her style in prose: graceful, formal, nothing garish, an illusion of simplicity that disguised complexity. Knowing that, you might guess that her least favorite flowers were orchids. About a corsage of cymbidiums pinned on her shoulder at a function in her honor, she told a friend, "It was horrible. All evening the nasty little thing nibbled on my ear like a carnivorous bug."

She loved many flowers, but loved camellias and roses most of all. Her favorite colors were red, pink, and white. She didn't care at all for coral and orange, and she was appalled by efforts to create a black rose. Also high on her list of people she called "monkey-minded" were the breeders who created floral monsters at the expense of fragrance, for she adored the aroma of flowers. Even her perfumes were floral, which moved one Hollywood cab driver to exclaim, "Lady, you smell just like my wife's rose garden!" Delighted, she complimented him on the keenness of his nose—the cologne was White Rose from Caswell-Massey.

She was forever making lists which I found after she died among recipes, between the pages of books, in the back of drawers, everywhere—scraps of paper bearing the names of flowers and trees, fertilizers, mulches, soils, and insecticides; and that was just for starters. With those dirt-plain and sometimes mephitic purchases she coaxed into bloom flowers that were not only beautiful, but sweetly fragrant as well.

On Roxbury Road in the Connecticut countryside she was seized by the notion of planting a field with tulips. She did plant quite a few if not a whole field, and at once entered into grim dispute with a gang of woodchucks over just whose tulip bulbs those were. She loved fauna almost as much as flora, but she wasn't constant in her love. In wintertime she threw the woodchucks carrots and lettuce, but when spring came, she threw rocks. When this failed to frighten them off, she spoke of buying a twenty-two caliber rifle, boasting that she was an expert shot. Not entirely convinced, I kept quiet and hoped to be in the next county when the shoot-out started. It didn't matter, the gun was never bought, and as far as I know the woodchucks, battenning on tulips bulbs, lived happily ever after.

The home she rented in Spring Valley in Washington, D.C., was backed by a steep slope overgrown by a ragged copse. Along the side of the house were plants put in by the owner. Of course it was all wrong, the wrong colors, the wrong shapes, and too many of what she called "those detestable little shrubby things." Even the slope behind the house was wrong, one of God's mistakes she wasn't about to let Him get away with. But no problem! She would uproot the shrubs around the house and replace them with her favorite flowers. Then she would clear the slope and carve it into terraces to be planted with dogwood, redbud, and fruit trees, all flourishing over a groundcover of violets. Needless to say, the owner took a dim, indeed a very dark view of her plans for the property, and she had to content herself with pulling up a little garden at the side of the house and replanting it with her beloved roses. She pampered them into glorious bloom, but as always the day came when she had to move away and leave still another garden to the mercy of strangers.



KAP inscribed this photograph, "Eros, fauna, flora, dining room," Westchester Park Towers, College Park, Maryland, August 17, 1973. *Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.*



KAP and her "blooming jungle" in the dining room of her apartment in Westchester Park Towers, College Park, Maryland, 1973. *Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.*

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after her friends returned to the United States. In early May she moved to Hilgrove, a nearby house owned by a business acquaintance of Basil Ellison, and she remained there until early August when she sailed back to New York. Looking carefully at Bermuda as it was in 1929 and at the houses in which she lived explains what the island evoked and why it was important.

Both estates were located in Hamilton Parish. Sunnyside sat at Number 56 on the east side of North Shore Road near Shelly Bay and the entrance to Flatts Inlet. Hilgrove lay several miles farther along North Shore Road and faced Bailey's Bay. Sunnyside, built in 1872 on eight acres of land by Captain James Love Pearman, a member of the Bermuda parliament and a local merchant, was a substantial Victorian home, U-shaped with the kitchen in the rear and a wooden veranda with iron balusters in the front. The large rooms had high ceilings with lovely molding but no fireplaces, and horse stables sat behind the house at a proper distance. Pearman sold the house in 1919 to Captain Josiah Alpheus Stubbs, whose son, Josiah Alpheus Stubbs, Jr., inherited it in 1922 and owned it at the time Basil Ellison rented it and then sublet it to Porter. The lot had been reduced to four and a half acres by 1929, and rooms had been added to both wings.¹ Like Sunnyside, Hilgrove had fourteen rooms, but it had terraces and gardens and sat on a knoll at the seaside. Both houses delighted Porter, as did Bermuda itself. "There are no automobiles," she wrote Andrew Lytle exultantly. "No machinery of any kind. No trains. Only horse drawn vehicles such as surreys, carry-alls, victorias, coupes, gigs, carts, and landaus. Bicycles. The blue, blue, heavenly blue sea, cedars, oleanders, palms and bouganvilleas. I am happy here, I was never so happy."²

Bermuda appealed to Porter in uncanny ways, for despite its distinctiveness, it seemed also to be an aggregate of significant elements of her past life and ancestry. There was something of Louisiana and Texas in it; something of Mexico; and a great deal that was British and reminded her that Porters and Skaggs had emigrated from England several centuries

earlier, as she had confirmed during her Salem research. The West Indian culture and her Trinidadian maid were reminiscent of the New Orleans of her girlhood ("I can 'repose myself'

[here], as the Cajuns say," she wrote Lytle),³ and the temperature, especially in the summer months, was similar to the humid heat of both southern Louisiana towns and Texas towns such as Houston, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi. The tree frogs common to Texas and already woven into the draft of her story that would become "The Fig



Front view of Sunnyside. The east and west wings are not visible.

Tree," were everywhere in Bermuda, where they were called "Whistling Frogs" or "Singing Frogs." Imagine her surprise when she saw a stately house called "Cedar Grove," the very name of a beautiful area in Hays County at which her family camped overnight during her childhood. And imagine her pleasure when she observed Bermudians' mania for horse racing that was not only reminiscent of that of Texas but also suggested that of the nineteenth-century Kentucky about which her paternal grandmother spun stories ("Bermuda is a Kentucky sort of place," she wrote Lytle).⁴ The Union Jack flew over every government building, and other signs of British rule were pervasive. Even Mexico, which she hadn't visited since 1923, seemed to echo in Bermuda, especially in the pastel, thick-walled buildings and the lush, wild vegetation that surrounded both her houses.

Although in its totality Bermuda was unlike any of those individual places, its parts stirred up in Porter a sad longing that replaced the giddy joy of her arrival and expressed itself in more intense correspondence with her family, especially her father, Harrison Boone Porter; in poetry in which she lyrically described her yearning for Texas, family, and her past, including a reunion with her dead mother; and in imagining the Virginia in which those British Porters and Skaggs had settled long ago. Urging her father to visit her in Bermuda, she wrote in mid-June from Hilgrove, "I wish, Daddy, I have wished it many times since I came to this house: that you could come here and stop awhile."⁵ In "West Indian Island," a poem she worked on throughout her Bermuda sojourn, her painful homesickness is dramatically apparent:

O Island, loosen your roots, take to the sea,
Leap the waves like a ship, nose bravely through storms,
... let me return thus
To a familiar country. . . .
This land
Will receive me as a friend, as a member
Of the family, will not mock at my journeys, nor recall them to
me, nor deny them,
But will say easily, "So, daughter, you are late,
But come in, and welcome!"⁶

In "Night Blooming Cereus," another poem she wrote in Bermuda,

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KAP in Bermuda, her "lost paradise," 1929. Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

A Bouquet for Aunt Katherine

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In 1970, she moved to a fifteenth-floor apartment in College Park, Maryland. In no time at all she had one bedroom of the twelve-room apartment turned into a potting room. Brown and wrinkled bulbs were laid out on the floor like the shrunken trophies of a New Guinea headhunter. The room was stacked with planters, from tiny seedling cups to terra cotta pots as big as washtubs. Sacks of fertilizer and God only knows what else spilled out their contents, and there were so many liquids and powders on so many shelves it might have been a corner of some old apothecary.

She created a blooming jungle on the west balcony and in the sunlit dining room. A real tree, grown from the seed of an avocado, towered to the ceiling. Almost hidden among the leaves and blooms of plants were ceramic animals and a large working fountain, a bronze cupid and dolphin in a great sea shell, a souvenir of Italy. All of this was a substitute for the real thing, of course, and it must have been frustrating for someone who really wanted to get her hands on a large piece of the landscape that was hers alone, to do with as she liked. Still, her jungle was beautiful, it gave her joy, and everyone who saw it was charmed.

In 1977 she was stricken by her long and mortal last illness. The apartment was taken over by shifts of nurses, different ones every week it seemed; and there was no one who knew enough, or cared enough, to give the plants the attention they demanded. The time came when the enormous apartment could no longer be maintained, and Aunt Katherine had to be moved into a nursing home. But by then, her beloved plants were already no more than dry stalks in pots of dust, and even those were soon hauled away. When the building manager and I walked through the empty and echoing apartment for a final inspection, I found that the movers had left hanging on a doorknob a large blue bag filled with dried rose petals, saved by Aunt Katherine over many years. I took it with me. It was a poignant reminder of the devoted gardener who all her long life, in so many places, had created so much green and flowering beauty.

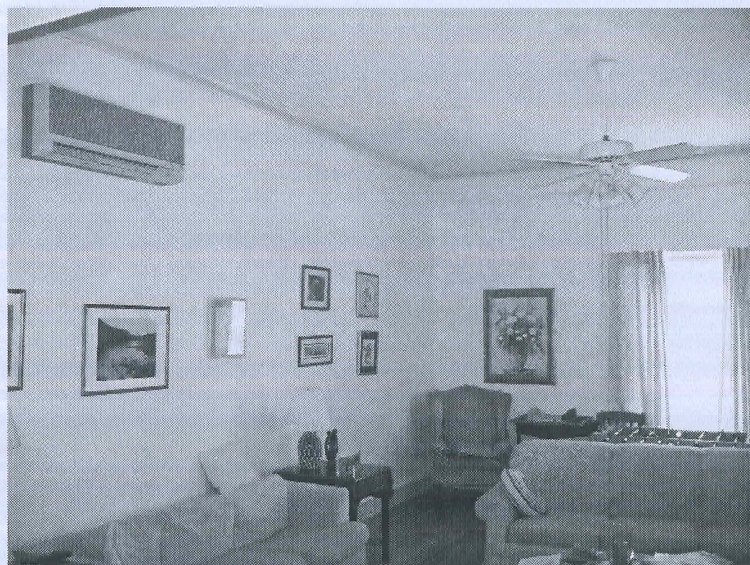
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she celebrated the Bermuda evening in which the young child "that on the hillrocks scampered" returns "weary to his mother from his play."⁷ Among several letters she dashed off to friends with Virginia ancestry was one to Rebecca and John Crawford in which she suggested establishing a

Southern Writers Colony where they all could live together. "I think it would be noble to get up a migration to the Old Dominion," she wrote.⁸

During Porter's five months in Bermuda she completed neither the biography nor the two novels. She worked on the two Bermuda poems and several unfinished stories, and to earn a little money she wrote a review for the *Herald Tribune* and re-wrote for the publisher Macaulay a translation of a biography of Peter Breugel for children. But the total Bermuda experience, short and intense, touched the many-branched well-springs of her deep memory and created a profound nostalgia out of which emerged the creative energy for her important short novels of the 1930s, especially *Old Mortality*, *Noon Wine*, *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*, and the pieces that make up *The Old Order*, the broad concepts of which she had envisioned in 1927. She said later that Mexico and Europe gave her back her past that was the source for much of her fiction, a declaration pointing out that her stories needed time and distance to form slowly around the kernel of real experience that inspired them. Perhaps she never fully realized that it was Bermuda where the intense homesickness arose that was to lie unresolved in her psyche for seven more years and provide the fuel for her most autobiographical short novels. But she did know that Bermuda had been important in some significant way. When she returned in 1972, she declared that her 1929 visit to Bermuda was "the only time in my life I would live over again just as it was!" She called Bermuda her "lost paradise."⁹



The front parlor of Sunnyside. Porter said she spent peaceful hours in that room.

Notes

- 1 I am indebted to the current owner of Sunnyside, Leslie Barrett, whose late wife was the daughter of Josiah Alpheus Stubbs, Jr., and his daughter, Carolyn Armstrong, for providing history of the house. Other facts were drawn from *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage*, Vol. Four: *Hamilton Parish* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda National Trust, 2002). Leslie Barrett and Carolyn Armstrong gave me a tour of the house and allowed me to take photographs.
- 2 Katherine Anne Porter (KAP) to Andrew Lytle (AL), 18 March 1929, Andrew Lytle Papers, Vanderbilt University.
- 3 KAP to AL, 5 April 1929, AL Papers, Vanderbilt.
- 4 KAP to AL, 5 April 1929, AL Papers, Vanderbilt.
- 5 KAP to Harrison Boone Porter and Gay Holloway Porter, 16 June 1929, KAP Papers, University of Maryland Libraries.
- 6 *Katherine Anne Porter's Poetry*, edited by Darlene Harbour Unrue (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 87-88.
- 7 *Katherine Anne Porter's Poetry*, p. 86.
- 8 KAP to Becky and John Crawford, 5 July 1929, KAP Papers, University of Maryland Libraries.
- 9 KAP inscription on photograph sent to her nephew Harrison Paul Porter, Jr., August 1972, KAP Papers, University of Maryland Libraries.

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2004 and 2005

By Christine H. Hait, Columbia College, Columbia, South

Because the newsletter is going to press late in the year and because the fall of 2005 has seen significant contributions to Porter scholarship, I include in this essay scholarship from 2004 and scholarship from this year, 2005. The publication of a new biography makes 2005 a notable year in Porter scholarship. In addition, 2005 has brought us a new full-length study of Porter's work. As the end of the year approaches, Porter scholars have much to celebrate.

Books

Many years in the making, Darlene Harbour Unrue's *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist*, published by the University of Mississippi Press in 2005, is a major contribution to Porter scholarship. Required reading for all Porter scholars, the biography offers revelations concerning Porter's family background, marriages, romances, and reproductive history. It may be tempting for some readers to read the biography primarily in pursuit of its more spectacular revelations. However, the value of the biography is in its narrative of Porter's life, a narrative that helps us to see Porter's life freshly. Porter scholars may find that the biography answers questions that they had not realized had gone unanswered. For example, Unrue's discussion of the family of Mary Alice Jones Porter, Porter's mother, reveals how much discussions of Porter's ancestry have focused on the Cat Porter family. Unrue's rich description of Porter's Texas years particularly exposes the gaps heretofore in our knowledge of her life before 1914. The biography offers then not only the life of the artist that its subtitle promises but also the portrait of the artist in development, and readers can appreciate the degree to which the experiences of her childhood and young womanhood shaped the artist that Porter became. Unrue's biography is the product of extensive mining of public records and exhaustive study of Porter's personal papers. She also builds on prior work, and it is exciting that the record of Porter's life, as it should be, continues to be updated, deepened, and refined.

Mary Titus has contributed to our understanding of Porter's work through a number of important articles over the years. These articles have reflected her interest in Porter as a woman artist, and her new book, *The Ambivalent Art of Katherine Anne Porter*, published by the University of Georgia Press in 2005, reflects this interest as well. As Titus argues in the book, Porter studies have been greatly enriched in recent years by the publication of many previously unpublished works, and scholars have easy access now to a number of new and exciting texts that deepen our understanding of the entire body of Porter's work. She singles out one of these texts, the unfinished story "The Princess," as a representative text that supports her argument about the ambivalent nature of Porter's art. As she writes, "Throughout her long career, Porter repeatedly probed cultural arguments about female creativity, a woman's maternal legacy, romantic love, and sexual identity, always with startling acuity, and often with painful ambivalence." Titus has in the past written perceptively on "Holiday," "The Fig Tree," "The Grave," and Porter's Mexican fiction. In *The Ambivalent Art of Katherine*

Anne Porter, Titus extends her reach to include Porter's early fairy tales and *Ship of Fools*, among other works. In a notable chapter, Titus emphasizes Porter's gender performance and studies the photographs taken of her by George Platt Lynes. In sum, Titus makes a valuable contribution to Porter scholarship.

Chapters in Books

Although William Pratt asserts that there "have not been many full-fledged literary studies of Katherine Anne Porter's work," one could argue that the Miranda stories have received extensive scrutiny. Pratt does not use scholarship on the Miranda stories in his chapter "Place in Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda Stories: Portrait of the Artist as a Rebellious Texas Belle" in *Place in American Fiction: Excursions and Explorations*, edited by H. L. Weatherby and George Core and published by the University of Missouri Press in 2004. He offers his own assessment of Porter as a writer and provides an introduction to the Old Order stories, "Old Mortality," and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." Pratt makes an interesting comparison of Porter and William Faulkner, writing that Porter "is even, in a sense, more southern than Faulkner, for her regional accent was never as idiosyncratic as his," and expressing admiration for Porter's "ear for southern speech."

Articles

Although some critics have argued that Sophia Jane, the Grandmother in the Miranda stories, both perpetuates the patriarchy of the old order and, in her independence and assumption of male responsibilities, undermines it, Andrea K. Frankwitz argues that Sophia Jane "remains consistent in her adherence to the traditional patriarchal ideology." In "Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda Stories: A Commentary on the Cultural Ideologies of Gender Identity," *Mississippi Quarterly* 57.3 (2004): 473-489, Frankwitz argues that Sophia Jane as a result of her "passive acceptance of patriarchal culture" and Aunt Amy and Cousin Eva as a result of their "paradoxical rebellion against it" are all defined by their relation to patriarchy, whereas Miranda seeks other alternatives.

The story "Magic" receives due attention in Darlene Harbour Unrue's "'Magic': Levels of Meaning in a Neglected Masterpiece," *Southern Quarterly* 42.3 (2004): 55-63. Unrue applies her insights into Porter's life to a reading of the story in order to point to its "Jamesian subtleties and layers of meaning." She reviews Porter's first-hand knowledge of New Orleans, the setting of the story, and points to evidence in Porter's personal papers of her interest in "black magic." Unrue highlights various aspects of Porter's life that allow her to identify with three of the story's characters: Ninette, the prostitute; Madame Blanchard, the woman of privilege; and especially the maid, the storyteller. According to Unrue, "The most enduring theme of the story is that art—storytelling in this instance—is the true magic."

Emron Esplin's study of twentieth-century Latin American literature and theory enriches his article "Magic Realism in 'Flowering Judas' and the Dual Realities of Katherine Anne Porter's Time in Mexico," *Southern Studies* 12.1-2 (Spring/Summer 2005): 23-46. He argues that although Porter's "Flowering Judas" predates the period of magic realism in Latin American literature, its portrayal of dual

realities and its reflections on death and time invite a “magic realist” reading of the story. Esplin encourages the reader to “study Porter’s text in its Mexican, Southern, and Anglo-American contexts as New-World fiction, a choice example of literature of the plural Americas.”

In a brief article, “Porter’s ‘Rope’: The Symbolic Catalyst for Self-Strangulation,” *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 35.2 (March 2005): 6-7, John V. McDermott argues that the husband and wife in the story “Rope” know their partner’s faults well but know little about themselves. The story exposes the consequences of a lack of self-knowledge. McDermott considers the number of coils in the rope purchased in the story, twenty-four, significant.

Dissertations

Melanie R. Benson, in “Disturbing Calculations: The Economics of Southern Identity,” *DAI* 65.08A (2005): AAI3142365, completed at Boston University, uses postcolonial theory and the concept of the “narcissism of mastery” to explain the impact of slavery’s “legacy of human quantification” on Southern identity. A chapter brings together James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright, Frances Newman, and Porter in order to discuss the authors’ efforts to “locate personal value beyond the needs and abuses of the dominant group” and “seek reparation . . . by repeating the language of narcissistic desire and calculation.”

Ellen Margaret Crowell, in “Aristocratic Drag: The Dandy in Irish and Southern Fiction,” *DAI* 65.08A (2004): AAI3143677, completed at University of Texas at Austin, describes the dandy as a character “whose strategic gentility masks a destructive modernity.” She uses the character of the dandy to explore connections between the “ruling-class literatures of Protestant Ireland and the Anglo-American South.” One chapter brings together the work of William Faulkner, Elizabeth Bowen, and Porter in order to discuss the influence of the dandy figure on their works.

Each of the dissertations above devotes a part of a chapter to discussing Porter’s work. According to *Dissertation Abstracts*, no dissertations focused on Porter’s work appeared in 2004 or have appeared so far in 2005. However, I am happy to include two non-U.S. dissertations not listed in *Dissertation Abstracts*, both focused on Porter. By the way, I encourage international Porter scholars to inform me of dissertations or other scholarship on Porter that I might otherwise overlook.

Jan Bloemendaal, makes extensive use of Porter’s personal papers in “Constructing Identities: Ethnicity and Race in Katherine Anne Porter,” completed in 2005 at Leiden University, in the Netherlands. Employing theories of race and ethnicity found in the works of Werner Sollors, Stephen Cornell, and Douglas Hartman, Bloemendaal argues that despite changes in Porter’s political views, her “insistence on freedom, her social engagement, her liberalism, and her fear of political power” remain constant in her writings. Over the course of several chapters, he studies Porter’s representations of indigenous Mexicans, Chinese, Germans, Jews, and African Americans, and in a chapter entitled “Porter and the Law,” he spotlights Porter’s ideas about justice.

Ananta Lakshmi, in “Quest Motif in the Works of Katherine Anne Porter—A Critical Study,” completed in 2005 at JNT University, Hyderabad, in India, explores a variety of topics addressed by Porter—

including relations between children and parents, romantic and marital relationships, attitudes toward nature, and views on religion, politics, and death—in order to present Porter’s “philosophy of humanism.” Lakshmi also makes recommendations for further research on Porter.

Please send information on any additions that need to be made to this essay to me at chrishait@colacoll.edu so that I may include the information in next year’s essay.

Highpoints of the Year at Katherine Anne Porter School

By Yana Bland, Ph. D., Superintendent/Principal, KAP School

Students at the Katherine Anne Porter School are very concerned about environmental devastation and global warming. Recycling waste materials is just one way for them to make a difference. Although this is one of the smallest schools in the Austin area with just 100 students, they collected so much waste paper that KAPS won the Abitibi Paper Recycling Award of \$800 in Spring 2005.

Student leadership is encouraged in many ways at this unique high school, from leading assemblies to helping hurricane survivors. One young student decided he would approach Cirque du Soleil headquarters in Canada. A couple of months later, KAPS received 150 complementary tickets to their astounding show, acclaimed by all as the best field trip of the year.

Students who graduated in May 2005 went on to many different experiences, including Berklee College of Music, University of Texas, Texas State University, and community colleges. The members of the class of 2005 won more scholarships from more sources and are planning to be teachers, health-workers, musicians, veterinarians, linguists, businessmen, artists, a culinary artist, a masseuse, a welder, a fireman, and a computer scientist.

Among the new classes offered to KAPS students this year are Tai Chi, Photography, Theater, Dance, English II pre AP, Algebra II Honors, Guitar II, and Choir. The Fine Arts Department was in full flourish at the KAPS Annual Music Festival Java Jive Fundraiser in November 2005, which drew an unprecedented crowd. Two KAPS musical groups, the Dragon Dancing Company and the KAPS Choir, gave excellent performances.

The next big event to be hosted at KAPS is the Texas Writers’ Roundup and Katherine Anne Porter Literary Festival on February 18, 2006. Aspiring writers can win recognition and prizes, while interacting with published authors.

In October 2005, KAPS received the news that it had been awarded a \$1.2 million dollar rural community development loan to refinance the original loan and upgrade the building. The staff and students are looking forward to learning new ways to expand the school in an ecologically friendly and sustainable manner. The school is located at 515 FM 2325, Wimberley, Texas; the mailing address is PO Box 2053, Wimberley, TX 78676; telephone, 512-847-6867, fax, 512-847-0737; website, www.kapschool.org.

Katherine Anne Porter's Secret

By Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda

Come into the library, he said, and I will show you Katherine Anne's secret. Among the rare books the coffin stood on end, six feet of pine

painted Mexican style. I'll never forget the decorative reds that rose to greet us. Staring at the private box, I imagined her

lighting one last lamp before stepping in, those violet eyes alert, her white hair turning black in burial flames.

When I die, I will have the coffin and linen sheet ready, she told a friend one February, the plate-glass windows

of her apartment rattled by wind, her voice shrill, determined. I watched the pine box change into a ship headed from Veracruz

to Bremerhaven. She curled within it, searching for a sign. *May I stand in it?* I asked, touching the coffin.

My friend ran his fingers over the long brass hinges, opened the lid. Unafraid, I stepped in. My mind raced

back fourteen years to a room filled with caskets where Father and I selected a blue one for Mother. I realized then

that death can hold us for only a second before disappearing, Mother's spirit having risen out of my dream the night

she died. *We control our souls,* she said once, rocking on the porch swing. For years I held onto her words.

I pressed my body against the coffin's walls, hoping to leave an impression full of flight like the snow angels I had made

as a child. The afternoon filtered in, my eyes refocusing on brass fittings and plain wood. I stepped back into

the room, rested my hand on the smooth lid, closed it gently. Katherine Anne died the next month. That night at home, I lit all

the lamps, rose the next morning to find only one still burning. As I leaned down to turn it off, my eyes caught in the mirror a figure

draped in Liège linen. The face warmed the darkness, then vanished. All morning I read her stories in strong daylight.

On "Katherine Anne Porter's Secret"

By Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda

Editor's note: Poet and painter, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda holds two masters degrees and a Ph. D. from George Mason University. She has published four books of poetry, *Contrary Visions* (Scripta Humanistica), *Gathering Light* (SCOP Publications, Inc.), *Death Comes Riding* (SCOP), and *Greatest Hits* (Puddinghouse Press). She has also co-edited an anthology of poems, *In a Certain Place* (SCOP). Her poems and writings have appeared in *The Ledge*, *Hispanic Culture Review*, *El Quetzal*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poet Lore*, *Mid-American Review*, *Antioch Review*, *Passages North*, *The Journal of Teaching Writing* and *The Writing Center Journal*, and her art has been exhibited throughout Virginia and has been reproduced in her books.

Although I never met Katherine Anne Porter, our mutual willingness to accept death's inevitability drew me close to her one day in August of 1980, nearly a month before she passed away. I was attending a gathering of doctoral candidates at the home of Dr. Clark Dobson, Dean of Education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Clark and I had on occasion discussed Porter's work, remarking on her superb craftsmanship in the short story, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," and the short novel, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

Soon after arriving at Clark's home that day, he invited me into his study to see a rarity: the pine coffin from Montana that Porter had purchased by mail for \$160. Its lofty six-foot frame seemed to float to the ceiling. Clark asked if I'd like to stand in the priceless artifact. Without hesitating, I entered and immediately sensed Katherine Anne's spirit. Unafraid of death, she, too, on occasion had stepped inside, perhaps testing unknown terrain.

Something unexpected occurred during those brief moments inside the coffin. The memory of my mother's death played back, a clarifying vision that would later help mold the poem, "Katherine Anne Porter's Secret." Granted, most people wouldn't have taken Clark up on his offer, but the spontaneity of the moment was exhilarating, and the experience, though brief, was life-altering. Over the years, Porter's influence on my work as a writer has grown more apparent. Her meticulous rendering of short stories has prompted me to revise my writings exhaustively. Her universal themes have taught me to search beyond an insular vision for concerns that address larger audiences. Her idiosyncrasies have encouraged me to accept my own oddities, as I suppose she did, without censure and with a large dose of humor.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Activities at the 2004 and 2005 American Literature Association Conferences

Independent scholar Alexandra Subramanian chaired the Katherine Anne Porter Society's session, "International Influences on Katherine Anne Porter's Life and Writing," held at the American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco, on Thursday, May 27, 2004. The session began with "A Perfectly Proper Picture": Mexico and Art in Katherine Anne Porter's "Virgin Violeta," read by Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland. Jerry Findley of Indiana University presented "Culture, Politics, and International Conflict in 'The Leaning Tower.'" "Katherine Anne Porter and the Feminist Oriental Tale" was the subject of the paper of Mary Titus, St. Olaf's College. Jan Bloemendaal, Leiden



Mary Titus, Jan Bloemendaal, Alexandra Subramanian, Beth Alvarez, and Jerry Findley, participants in the KAP session at the ALA Conference in San Francisco, California, May 27, 2004.

University, the Netherlands, served as the respondent.

The society's 2004 business meeting was also held on May 27. Beth Alvarez reported that, on March 31, 2004, the balance in the society's account in the UNLV Foundation was \$2,549.46. The society continued to receive support for the newsletter from both UNLV and the University of Maryland. As the cost for an issue of the newsletter generally is \$350-\$400, the society had adequate funding for six additional issues. Volume XI was scheduled to be published in summer 2004. Membership stood at fifty-nine regular members and nine honorary members. The new by-laws were not implemented in 2004. Articles, news items, announcements, and ideas for future newsletters were solicited, and plans for the Porter session at the 2005 ALA conference were announced. Also announced was the awarding of the second bi-annual Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Prose to Nicholson Baker at the American Academy of Arts and Letters Ceremonial.

On Friday, May 27, 2005, Thomas Austenfeld, North Georgia College and State University, chaired the Katherine Anne Porter session at the 2005 ALA Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, that he organized for the society. Entitled "Determining the Tragic in Katherine Anne Porter's Life and Work," the session featured four papers. Richard Pickering, University of Connecticut, presented "Confronting the Sacco-Vanzetti tragedy in *The Never-Ending Wrong*." "Falling Down: Motion Imagery, Suffering, and the Downward Path to Wisdom in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction" was the subject of the paper of Christine Hait, Columbia College. Lisa Roney of the University of Central Florida read "Physical Difference in *Ship of Fools*: An Interrogation of Eugenics." The final paper by Darlene Unrue,



Lisa Roney, Richard Pickering, Thomas Austenfeld, Darlene Unrue, and Christine Hait, participants in the KAP session at the ALA Conference in Boston, California, May 27, 2005

University of Nevada at Las Vegas, was "Katherine Anne Porter and the Ordeal of Maternity."

The society's business meeting also took place on May 27. The balance in the society's account in the UNLV Foundation on April 30, 2005, was \$3,375.21; revenue for the fiscal year on that date was \$820.00. Membership in May 2005 was seventy-three regular members and eight honorary members. Executive committee members Darlene Unrue, Thomas Austenfeld, Christine Hait, and Beth Alvarez agreed that it is imperative that the implementation of the new by-laws and election of a new president be accomplished in 2005-2006. Members were urged to submit articles, news items, and announcements for the newsletter and future sessions and meetings of the society in San Francisco (May 2006) and Boston (May 2007) were discussed. Announcements included forthcoming publication of Darlene Unrue's *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of An Artist* (University Press of Mississippi, September) and Mary Titus's *The Ambivalent Art of Katherine Anne Porter* (University of Georgia Press, October). The bi-annual Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Prose will be awarded in May 2006 at the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

2006 American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco

The Katherine Anne Porter Session at the forthcoming American Literature Association conference will be chaired by Professor Christine Hait. The topic will be "Katherine Anne Porter and the Artist." It will consider the variety of ways that Porter explored the role of the artist in her fiction and non-fiction. Possible subjects include, but are not limited to, Porter's artist figures, Porter's literary criticism, Porter's reflections on the creative process, and Porter's aesthetics. Please send proposals of 250 words to Christine Hait, Department of English, Columbia College, 1301 Columbia College Drive, Columbia, SC 29203. Proposals may also be sent by e-mail to Professor Hait at chrishait@colacol.edu. The deadline for submissions is December 9, 2005.

The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco, 5 Embarcadero Center, San Francisco, California, May 25-28, 2006. Details of the conference and information about hotel reservations will appear on the Web site of the American Literature Society: <http://www.americanliterature.org>.

Porter Activities at the University of Maryland Libraries

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

This report on the activities related to the Papers of Katherine Anne Porter and other Porter-related collections at the University of Maryland Libraries covers the period between May 2004 and September 2005. During this period, telephone, mail, and e-mail inquiries were received from Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. I also communicated with individuals from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, India, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain. During this period, the Libraries supplied 614 Porter or Porter-related photocopies to meet researcher demand, provided thirty-five reproductions of photographs, and loaned six reels of the microfilm edition of the Porter papers.

Led by my graduate assistant Mike Yates, a team of three additional Archives and Manuscripts student employees, Dan Schwartz, Lauren Bené, and Brad Houston, completed the work necessary to mount a number of the guides to Porter primary sources on ArchivesUM. This digital resource is the Libraries' portal to Special Collections holdings of archives and manuscripts that allows browsing and searching by collection descriptions and subject categories. The complete guides now available on ArchivesUM include that for Porter's papers as well as for the archives of the Atlantic Monthly Press and the Abels, Elder, Frederick, Lawrence, Perry, Prettyman, Prince, Schaumann, Spier, and Stout papers. The URL for ArchivesUM is <http://www.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/index.jsp>.

The Libraries' acquired additional Porter holdings through the generosity of donors. Once again, Clark Dobson donated Porter and Porter-related materials to the Libraries; among the most interesting of these are two wooden recorders, which Porter enjoyed and played late in her life. Dr. Dobson's additional gifts included two of Porter's dining room chairs and interesting items she marked or signed. The Libraries also benefited from the generosity of Porter's nephew Paul Porter. Some of his gifts were incorporated into the Katherine Anne Porter Papers: six audiotape recordings of his conversations with his aunt made between 1972 and 1976, one of KAP's silver pill boxes, and a letter from Laura Bush to Paul Porter framed with a photograph of the two of them at the KAP Literary Center in Kyle, TX. Additional donations were designated for the Paul Porter Papers. These included correspondence, clippings, photographs, printed matter, and manuscripts documenting the life, work, and reputation of his aunt as well as fourteen books from his personal library that were given to him and inscribed by KAP. Former University of Maryland employee Sarah Nary donated an audio recording of the December 1966 press conference at which the gift of KAP's papers and library was formally announced. The Libraries also acquired Abby Mann's screenplay for the movie adapted from *Ship of Fools*.

There were 258 visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter Room during this period, during which the room was open to the public on fifty-



MD Day-1: The Saturday Morning Quartet, Zeynep Dilli, Breno Imbiriba, Herbert Baer, and Fredrica Baer, performing in the KAP Room, April 30, 2005.

seven Monday and Thursday afternoons. Freddy Baer, Shirley Bauer, Beverly Lewoc, Joan Phelan, Betty Warner, and Maria Walsh all served as docents through September 2005. Visitors to the Porter Room from on-campus groups during the year included graduate students from the College of Information Studies and the Department of English. Groups that visited included the University History and Research Working Group of the University of Maryland 150th Anniversary Celebration Committee and Japan's National Diet Librarian and two of his staff. About forty individuals visited the Porter Room during our seventh all-campus open house on April 30, 2005. Activities were once held in the Porter Room during the day. Docent Freddy Baer and her husband Herb's group, the Saturday Morning Quartet, performed a program of music by Angelo Corelli and William Byrd. Their program concluded with three pieces from *Katherine Anne Porter's French Song-Book*: "Lament," "Marion's Song," and "To Charlotte," performed a cappella by Zeynep Dilli accompanied by Breno Imbiriba on drum. Graduate assistant Mike Yates and I performed a staged reading of Porter's "Rope."

Highlights of my activities in the last year and a half included two trips to New York City—the first in September 2004 to dine with Dean of the Libraries Charles Lowry, his wife, and Barbara and Ned Davis. Michelle Wellens, Director of Development for the Libraries, my husband, and I were honored to be able to attend the September 29, 2005, event honoring the publication of Darlene Unrue's new Porter biography hosted by Barbara and Ned Davis at the Harvard Club.

Anyone who has questions concerning the Porter Room or the Libraries' Porter holdings should not hesitate to contact me, Curator of Literary Manuscripts, Archives and Manuscripts, Hornbake Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, 301-405-9298, alvarez@umd.edu. To locate the Katherine Anne Porter resources on the Libraries' Web site, begin at <http://www.lib.umd.edu/ARCV/litms/kap.html> and follow the appropriate links.

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center News

October 2004 marked the publication by the University of Texas Press of the children's book *Wiley's Way*, a collaborative effort of participants in the Katherine Anne Porter Young Writers Program of the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center in Kyle, Texas. The book recounts the adventures of Wiley the crab that lead him to the campus of a university. While there, he meets characters who inspire him to change his future prospects by attending college himself one day. Part of the College for Texans Campaign to motivate 300,000 more students to enroll in college by 2015, *Wiley's Way* is a unique collaboration. This bilingual chapter book, targeted at 4th, 5th, and 6th graders, was written and illustrated by twelve high school students from the Academy@Hays of the Hays Consolidated Independent School District: Bliss Blumenthal, Leticia Gammage, Samantha Garza, Ricky Gonzalez, Katy Johnson, Alex Mattis, Maria Mendoza, Wendy Moran, Samantha Owens, Kim Torres, Angel Saucedo, and Johnna Vessey. The students were guided by Michelle Detorie and Alexandra Yavorsky, MFA students from the Creative Writing Program at Texas State University. Funded by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the College for All Texans Foundation, *Wiley's Way* is designed to prompt children, especially those who might not otherwise aspire to a college education, to begin thinking about college at an earlier age. Since Wiley's character was created and developed by teenage students, he has a unique appeal and resonance for younger readers. *Wiley's Way* demystifies the college experience. The KAP Writers Program, which began in summer 2002, is generously sponsored by the Burdine Johnson Foundation.

Additional information on the KAP Young Writers Program can be found at <http://www.english.txstate.edu:16080/kap/>.

In addition to serving as a home for the KAP Young Writers Program, the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center at 508 Center Street in Kyle serves as a venue for readings and talks by visiting writers, a museum, and a home for writers-in-residence. Writers who appeared at the seminar house for readings and books signings in the 2004-2005 academic year included Barry Hannah, Heather McHugh, Dao Strom, Charles D'Ambrosio, Richard Ford, and Spencer Reese. The schedule for readings and talks for the 2005-2006 academic year includes Denis Johnson, Mary Powell, John Dufresne, Aimee Bender, Abraham Verghese, and Adam Zagajewski. Of special interest to members of the KAP Society is the event scheduled for Tuesday, February 7, 2006, at 7:30 pm; Darlene Unrue will discuss the writing of *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of An Artist*. Matt Oates continued to serve as Writer-in-Residence at the KAP House in 2004-2005; Michelle Detorie assumed that position in the 2005-2006 academic year. Funded by a grant from Curt Englehorn's "Angel" Foundation, the Writer-in-Residence lives in the house and acts as curator of the museum. The visiting writers series is funded by the Burdine Johnson Foundation.

The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center is open to visitors and school groups by appointment. To arrange a visit, call (512) 268-6637. Updated Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center information appears at <http://www.english.txstate.edu:16080/kap/>. Inquiries concerning Texas State's MFA in Creative Writing can be made through the program's Web site (<http://mfa.english.txstate.edu/>), via email at mfincarts@txstate.edu, or by phone at (512) 245-7681.

Forthcoming Unrue Book Events

Darlene Unrue, author of the new scholarly biography of Katherine Anne Porter, *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist*, will discuss the book and its composition at two events in 2006. On Tuesday, February 7, she will speak at the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center in Kyle, Texas. For more information, consult the Web site of the KAP Literary Center (<http://www.english.txstate.edu/kap/>) or telephone 512-268-6637. She will also appear at Hornbake Library, on the campus of the University of Maryland on Thursday, March 30. Direct inquiries about this event to Beth Alvarez (alvarez@umd.edu, 301-505-9298) or Mary Dallao (mdallao@umd.edu, 301-314-5674).

KAP Fiction Prize at the University of Maryland

The winners of the annual graduate student poetry and fiction competitions sponsored by the Creative Writing Program in English of the University of Maryland read from their works in May 2005. Heidi Jon Schmidt served as judge for the Katherine Anne Porter Fiction Prize. Emily Chiles won the award with a piece entitled "Waiting." Honorable mention was awarded to "Stuck" by Dave Adams and to "When Heaven Falls" by Mark Keats. The Porter Prize was established with an endowment from the Literary Trust of the Estate of Katherine Anne Porter, during the tenure of the late Isabel Bayley.

Forthcoming KAP Postal Stamp

The twenty-second stamp in the U. S. Postal Service's Literary Arts series will commemorate Katherine Anne Porter. Scheduled to appear in Spring 2006, the image of Porter on the stamp is based on a 1936 George Platt Lynes photograph of Porter.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Membership Application/Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

Institutional Affiliation _____

Telephone (work) _____

(home) _____

Fax _____ E-mail _____

Make checks payable to the Katherine Anne Porter Society,
UNLV Foundation; mail to Beth Alvarez, University of
Maryland Libraries, College Park, MD 20742.