

Newsletter

of the

Katherine Anne Porter

Society

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“All my past is usable”: Online Access and the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project at the University of Maryland

By Beth Alvarez and Amber Kohl, University of Maryland

Beth Alvarez and Amber Kohl gave the following presentation at the 2018 American Literature Association Conference.

Beth Alvarez: Late in my tenure as Curator of Literary Manuscripts at the University of Maryland Libraries, I began to dream of building a publicly accessible digital edition of the Libraries’ holdings of Katherine Anne Porter’s correspondence. Although two volumes of her correspondence have been published, the volumes include only 406 of the thousands of letters Porter wrote. In early 2011, one of the possible impediments to such a project was removed when the Libraries’ Dean was appointed a Trustee of Porter’s Literary Estate. This allowed the Libraries to assume control of the intellectual property residing in Porter’s unpublished work. In spring 2012, an opportunity to begin the project arose when Professor Tanya Clement, with whom I had worked when she completed her University of Maryland doctoral dissertation, structured a graduate course class project at the School of Information at the University of Texas, Austin, that made use of digital surrogates of Porter’s letters to her older sister Gay Porter Hollaway. Staff of the Libraries provided these digital surrogates of Porter’s correspondence from the Libraries’ holdings. One outcome of the course was graduate student Wendy Hagenmaier’s Capstone project for her MSIS degree, “Exploring the Future of Digital Scholarly Editions: A Case Study of the Letters of Katherine Anne Porter.” Her report outlined many issues involved in creating a digital edition and served as the starting point for this project.

The original charter for the project, a collaboration of two Libraries’ units, Special Collections and University Archives and Digital Systems and Stewardship, was signed in late 2012. With funding from a grant from the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust, the initial goal was to



Katherine Anne Porter, 1946, Santa Monica, California, photo by John Engstead, Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

“create a digital edition that contains all of the family correspondence of Katherine Anne Porter.” An additional goal, subsequently abandoned, was to transcribe and mark up a portion of the correspondence making use of the Text Encoding Initiative’s Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange. Work began in earnest in early 2013 with the hiring of Liz DePriest, a Ph.D. candidate in the university’s English Department, as the project’s graduate assistant. Other Libraries’ staff on the project included Trevor Munoz, Joanne Archer, Robin Pike, Eric Cartier, and myself.

During the first phase of the project, stretching from spring 2013 to summer 2015, an item-level inventory of all of Porter’s correspondence with her family members, including both the items written by her and those addressed to her, was recorded on a spreadsheet. Also included on the spreadsheet was metadata that categorized each item by recipient, date of creation, location where written, and archival collection of which it is a part. From this spreadsheet, a shipping manifest was created for the correspondence written by Porter and included in the shipment to the vendor contracted to provide digital surrogates. The vendor also provided digital files of the typewritten letters processed by optical character recognition software to allow researchers to search for specific words and phrases in the letters. Handwritten letters were manually transcribed so that they too could be searched by words or phrases. The materials digitized in this phase of the project included approximately 2,300 letters, postcards, telegrams, and other forms of correspondence that Porter sent to over 20 members of her family between 1912 and 1977.

Concurrent with the work of the vendor, project staff began work on an interface to make the correspondence publicly accessible. Libraries’ Assistant Dean for Digital Humanities Research, Trevor Munoz, created a draft Web site for the project. In addition, he also conducted some experiments: generating visual representations of the paths of the letters Porter sent and received; graphs showing the frequency of letters Porter wrote to individuals, at different times, and from different locations; and groups of letters related by topic. Liz DePriest and I created supplemental materials to provide context for Porter’s life and relationships as they are presented in the letters: biographical

sketches of each correspondent; short summaries outlining the professional, personal, historical and geographical events of each decade of her long life; and a comprehensive timeline of Porter’s life.

In fall 2015, the Libraries embarked on a second phase of the project that continued through spring 2017. With Liz DePriest’s departure, Caitlin Rizzo, the Libraries’ graduate assistant for Access and Outreach Services, joined the project. During the second phase, 1,500 more Porter letters, greeting cards, postcards, and telegrams were digitized, comprising correspondence sent to over forty correspondents, including confidants and personal acquaintances. For this phase of the project, descriptions of the format of each item (i.e., typed letter signed, autograph note, etc.) was added to the metadata recorded on the inventory spreadsheet. However, providing public access to the work completed during the first two phases of the project remained problematical, as the ingest of the digitized materials into the Libraries’ digital content repository was delayed, because of the Libraries’ migration from Fedora 2 to Fedora 4. Also, the development of the digital environment to deliver the products of the project was slow. Despite these delays, in fall 2017, project staff began the work preparing a third grouping of Porter’s correspondence for digitization. The materials of this phase, still ongoing, document Porter’s correspondence related to agents and publishing activities, derivative works, and financial and legal matters and will add over 2,500 pages of additional correspondence to the project.

Public access to the already completed work of the project is now in sight. It finally has become possible to take advantage of innovations in digital preservation and display at the University of Maryland Libraries. Libraries’ staff have developed a new interface to display digital collections currently stored in the Libraries’ digital content repository. This interface will greatly enhance the researcher’s ability to view, search, and manipulate the digitized Porter correspondence by utilizing powerful Apache Solr indexing. The interface will also make use of a Mirador International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) image viewer to provide high quality images of digitized material. These will allow forthcoming Web site users to zoom and view close ups of the images of correspondence clearly.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter

Members are welcome to submit articles, announcements, and comments for the society's newsletter. Please send them to Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, MD 20742, alvarez@umd.edu, and/or Christine Grogan, President of the Katherine Anne Porter Society, clg5579@psu.edu. Society membership inquiries should be directed to Beth Alvarez. Entries for the annual bibliographical essay on Porter should be addressed to Christine Grogan.

The newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society is published at the University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, Maryland.

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Until all the completed work of the project is publicly accessible, a portion of Porter's correspondence with her family members is now available on the Libraries' Web site. Amber Kohl, the Curator of Literature and Rare Books of the Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, has created an online exhibit for the project, "Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence to Her Family, 1912-1977." Originally conceived as an interim measure to allow public access to the work of the first phase of the project, it provides contextual information for the completed and on-going work of the project.

Amber Kohl: My involvement in the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project began as the project team was completing phase two. Our goal was to make use of the digitized correspondence completed in phase one and develop a Web site that would serve as an access point to the documents. The online exhibit could therefore become a teaser for the larger, more complex correspondence database that is

currently under construction and expected to be completed in fall 2018, by our Digital Systems and Stewardship staff at the University of Maryland Libraries. An online exhibit also has the advantage of an appealing design, user interactivity, and flexibility when it comes to creating a unique platform to highlight primary sources, in this instance correspondence written by Katherine Anne Porter.

Creating an online exhibit parallel to the Correspondence Project gave us the opportunity to highlight the historical context in which the correspondence was written and also showcase images for a more interactive and visual user experience with the documents. The Correspondence Project provided the building blocks for the online exhibit, including digitized images of the documents, metadata for each item, and background information about Porter that provides context for the correspondence. The online exhibit also allowed us to highlight the Katherine Anne Porter related collections and resources available in Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Maryland. After several months of collaboration, I am happy to announce that the online exhibit, titled "Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence to Her Family, 1912-1977," was officially launched in May 2018.

The intended audience for the online exhibit is two-fold. First, we wanted to provide an introduction to Katherine Anne Porter for students and visitors who might be unfamiliar with her work. In order to help both educate and engage this inexperienced audience, the exhibit features historical summaries and photographs of Porter throughout her life, along with a streamlined design intended to draw visitors into the exhibit. The "About Katherine Anne Porter" page serves as an introductory overview of her life and work, beginning with her early family life in Texas to her later years in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. As a result, the digitized correspondence featured in the online exhibit is both informative and approachable.

We also recognize that the digitized content in the online exhibit will be of interest to our second intended audience, Porter scholars and enthusiasts. As such, we were mindful of providing detailed information and resources in the online exhibit for this informed audience. Links to Katherine Anne Porter related collections and resources in Special



Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence to Her Family, 1912-1977

ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence to Her Family, 1912-1977 highlights material from the Katherine Anne Porter holdings in [Special Collections and University Archives](#) at the University of Maryland. This material was digitized as part of the [Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project](#). The project scope includes digital surrogates of approximately 2,300 articles of correspondence, numbering over 5,000 total pages, which spans the years of 1912-1977.

Because Porter preferred typing to handwriting when composing correspondence, the vast majority of included materials are typewritten letters, often with handwritten notes added in the margins. The digitized collection also includes a number of letters that are wholly handwritten as well as picture postcards, telegrams, greeting cards, annotated newspaper and periodical clippings, sketches, and more.

Although most of the included materials are the originals Porter composed, she was also in the habit of keeping carbon copies of her letters. These copies are included in the digitized collection only when the originals were not preserved or when both were preserved and the carbon differed from the included original. For some of the correspondents, notably Paul Porter Jr. and Ann Hollaway Heintze, both originals and carbon copies of Porter's individual letters have been included. The originals and carbons of these duplicate letters are housed in the papers of [Paul Porter Jr.](#) and [Ann Hollaway Heintze](#) as well as in those of [Katherine Anne Porter](#).

"All my past is 'usable,' in the sense that my material consists of memory, legend, personal experience, and acquired knowledge. They combine in a constant process of re-creation."

Katherine Anne Porter, Collected Essays

ABOUT THE CORRESPONDENCE OF KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

Katherine Anne Porter's family correspondence documents her life and her career as fiction writer, provides context and resources for the study of her work, and shares insightful perspectives on many cultural and historical events of the twentieth century. She was in [New York City](#) throughout the 1920s, in [Mexico](#) during the retrenchment after the Revolution ended in 1920, in Germany when the Nazis were beginning to gain power, in Paris with other expatriates in the 1930s, and in [Washington, D.C.](#) during World War II and during the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Her friends and acquaintances included fellow writers, publishers, artists, cultural figures, and politicians.

For these reasons, this digitized collection of Porter correspondence to family members includes sources for literary study and accounts of political, social, and cultural history she experienced that are of interest to members of the general public as well as to scholars in a wide range of academic disciplines.



Katherine Anne Porter sitting at typewriter while holding a cigarette in her apartment at 100 East 50th Street, New York City, New York, circa July 1950-May 1951. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

The homepage of the "Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence to Her Family, 1912-1977" Web site. go.umd.edu/KAP

Collections and University Archives at the Libraries are provided for those interested in going beyond the online exhibit to request and explore the archival collections for their research. In addition to linking to the finding aid to the Katherine Anne Porter papers, an extensive timeline of Katherine Anne Porter's life is also made available. This 35-page document is an invaluable resource created by Beth Alvarez and Liz DePriest during their work on the Correspondence Project.

When it came to organize the documents from the Correspondence Project into a smaller, cohesive online exhibit, we decided to arrange the correspondence into three main categories: Correspondents, Decades, and Locations.

Phase one of the Correspondence Project was focused on correspondence from Katherine Anne Porter to her family. The online exhibit highlights the following individuals:

- Albert Russel Erskine, Jr. (1912-1993), Porter's husband from 1938 to 1942
- Ann Hollaway Heintze (1921-1987), Porter's niece
- Gay Porter Hollaway (1885-1969), Porter's older sister
- Paul Porter, Jr. (1921-2012), Porter's nephew
- Eugene Dove Pressly (1904-1979), Porter's husband from 1933 to 1938

In the online exhibit, users can select a correspondent from the main menu to view biographical information about the individual, as it relates to Katherine Anne Porter, as well as a selection of digitized correspondence written by Porter to them. For example, someone who is interested in Gay Porter Hollaway can learn about her relationship to her sister and explore four letters written from Katherine Anne Porter to Gay, individually dated 1932, 1942, 1950, and 1965. Selecting on the image at the bottom of the screen will reveal the entire multi-page or single page letter, as well as available metadata for the document. In many instances, transcriptions for Porter's handwritten notes are provided.

These individuals were chosen based on the frequency of their correspondence with Porter and the impact they had on her life. However, there are additional correspondents represented in the online exhibit apart from these individuals. To provide insight into their relationships with Porter and to help identify them to visitors, we created a separate page featuring short biographical summaries for these individuals.

As with the correspondent's pages, users can utilize the main menu at the top of the screen to explore Katherine Anne Porter through the decades of her life. For these decades' exhibit pages, historical context about Katherine Anne Porter's life during that time is provided, emphasizing professional, personal, historical, and geographical information. A selection of correspondence written during that time is also made available. As an example, the letter reproduced below from the 1930s page is written by Porter to Eugene Pressly in 1937. It is particularly insightful about the nature of their relationship and dissolution of their marriage. After reading the information provided on the 1930s page, visitors will note that Pressly and Porter separated in 1937 and divorced in 1938.



An example of the online exhibit displaying a 1937 letter from Porter to Eugene Pressly.

Lastly, we wanted to highlight Katherine Anne Porter's extensive travels both in the United States and abroad. The locations tab in the main menu at the top of the screen offers users the option to explore the places she lived, worked, and visited in her life. Throughout the Correspondence Project, geographic locations for letters written by Katherine Anne Porter were included as elements of the metadata. This provided us with the opportunity to add another layer to explore the documents. While the locations are listed for most letters on the Web site, the locations pages offer users a more in-depth look at how geography played a role in her life. Summaries are provided for several locations within the United States and abroad, describing the when and why Porter may be writing letters and postcards from a particular area. Here you can see the locations within the United States, which include Texas, Louisiana, New York, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., California, and more, followed by the locations abroad, including Mexico, France, Europe, and Bermuda.

As an example, visitors to the Abroad exhibit page can read a letter written by Porter to her sister Gay in 1954, a month after Porter accepted a Fulbright posting in Belgium.

So, in conclusion, we are proud to have this exciting new resource for our Katherine Anne Porter collections online and open to the public. "Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence to Her Family 1912-1977" is an approachable, interactive, and visually appealing access point to the digitized materials from the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project, which originally started to take shape in 2012. The online exhibit provides only a glimpse into the wealth of materials digitized as part of the the Correspondence Project, and an even smaller subset of all the materials available at the University of Maryland related to Katherine Anne Porter. However, the online exhibit has the advantage of offering online access to larger audiences, including to those unable to make the pilgrimage to College Park, Maryland.

Now that the hard work of organizing, designing, and coding the online exhibit is behind us, we can look ahead to the impact the exhibit can and will have on audiences. In addition to convenience and greater access, we hope the online exhibit will provide inspiration for new ways to explore Katherine Anne

Porter's life and work. For example, it can serve as a resource for undergraduate students looking for primary sources on life leading up to and during World War II—after all, Porter was living in Berlin, Germany, during the rise of the Nazi Party—as well as for graduate students researching personal and literary connections within Porter's work. The possibilities are endless when there is access to digitized documents and reliable background information in an engaging format that can appeal to diverse audiences.

We encourage you all to visit go.umd.edu/KAP to get inspired by the life and letters of Katherine Anne Porter.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Activities at the 2018 American Literature Association Conference

By Christine Grogan, Penn State University

The Katherine Anne Porter Society celebrated its 25th anniversary of participating at the ALA at the 29th American Literature Association annual conference. Held on Saturday, May 26, 2018, in San Francisco, the panel, titled "Katherine Anne Porter: A Woman of Letters," was chaired by Christine Grogan, who introduced the session as follows.

Katherine Anne Porter wrote on one occasion: "Well, well, a little solitude and a job I ought to be at, and I become the world's champion letter writer" (KAP to Josephine Herbst, before 1928-03-30, Josephine Herbst Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University). Appropriately, she wrote this sentence in none other than a letter.

Porter's "aggressive" letter writing served as an escape from, and, perhaps, cause for, her writer's block (Bayley, *Letters of Katherine Anne Porter* 23). To say she wrote many letters over the course of her lifetime is an understatement. In fact, some have commented on the voluminous letters she penned in comparison to the sparse literary work she published.

As Janis Stout notes, "it seems clear that she did at least use letter writing as a means of avoiding both the sustained effort that was necessary to produce the

quality of work she was willing to publish and recognize and the fact that for long periods she was not producing that work" (*A Sense of the Times* 11).

To Porter's dismay, Malcolm Cowley once remarked that her genius was best seen in her letters (Malcolm Cowley to KAP, before 1931-10-03, Papers of Katherine Anne Porter, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries). This panel grapples with Cowley's comment as it examines Porter as a woman of letters, in both the literal and figurative meaning of that phrase.

Through her notes, Porter conversed with many family members in addition to her fellow writers, including Robert Penn Warren, Caroline Gordon, Glenway Wescott, and Josephine Herbst. The largest archive of her letters is housed at the University of Maryland Libraries, where a project to digitize her outgoing correspondence will provide online access to Porter's epistles. In our first paper, "'All my past is usable': Online Access and the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project at the University of Maryland," Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita at the University of Maryland Libraries, and Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books in the Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, tell us about the progress made regarding the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project.

At one point, Porter's father encouraged her just to write letters instead of pursue a writing career. I'm sure we're all glad she didn't follow his advice. In her fiction as well as in her letters, we witness how central the act of writing was for Porter, who demonstrated an astute engagement with literary topics and the crafting of fiction. In some of the stories Porter left us, she creates characters who write. Professor in the English and Applied Foreign Languages departments at the Université of Toulon, Alice Cheylan explores in "Katherine Anne Porter's Special Bond" to what extent her characters manifest Porter's driving force to write and to what extent the stories illustrate her claim that writing was the strongest bond she ever had.

In her fiction and personal writing, Porter reflects on how the present too often repeats the past. Focusing on Joan of Arc, independent scholar Jerry Findley

argues in our panel's last paper, "Millennialism: The Past Is the Present," that the interwar period shares many of the characteristics of the Early Modern period.



Jerry Findley, Christine Grogan, Alice Cheylan, Beth Alvarez, and Amber Kohl at the Katherine Anne Porter session of the American Literature Association Conference, May 26, 2018.

Society for the Study of American Women Writers' Conference in Bordeaux, France

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

The Katherine Anne Porter Society, one of the affiliates of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, participated in the larger organization's international conference in Bordeaux, France, July 5-8, 2017. The Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW) was established in 2000 to promote and advance the study of American women writers through research, teaching, and publication. It is the goal of the Society to strengthen relations among persons and institutions both in the United States and internationally who are undertaking such studies and to broaden knowledge widely among the general public about American women writers. The conference, "Border Crossings: Translation, Migration, & Gender in the Americas, the Transatlantic & the Transpacific," took place at the Université Bordeaux Maigne's Pessac campus. Highlights of the conference included Professor Alice Kaplan's keynote address, "Susan Sontag's Parisian Year (1957-1958)"; a screening of Nancy Kates's

documentary, “Regarding Susan Sontag,” followed by a discussion with Kates; and Sarah Rose Etter’s presentation, “Bizarre Feminism: Surrealism in the Service of a Movement.”

The Porter Society session took place on Friday, July 7, and was titled “Katherine Anne Porter’s Familiar Countries.” In 1923, Katherine Anne Porter asserted, “I write about Mexico because that is my familiar country.” Porter resided nearly half of the years between 1920 and 1936 outside of the United States, not only in Mexico, but also in Germany, France, and Switzerland. These “familiar countries” were important to her, providing her with subjects and settings for her fiction and nonfiction as well as her worldview. Chaired by Beth Alvarez, the panel examined the role Porter’s interests in European history, politics, and philosophic thought played in her art and philosophy. Darlene Unrue’s paper, “Unraveling Katherine Anne Porter’s French Murder Mystery: New Clues to Her Life and Art” examined Porter’s never completed French murder mystery as a key to her artistic values and techniques. In his exploration of Porter’s attempt to understand the period between 1914 and 1945, Jerry Findley explored the concept of millennialism which undergirds some of Porter’s controversial claims in his “Millennial Change: Katherine Anne Porter’s Political Understanding of the Long War: (1914-1945).” Finally, the parallels between the writings of Porter and the German-born political theorist Hannah Arendt were the subject of Joseph Kuhn’s paper, “Katherine Anne Porter and Hannah Arendt: Thinking Guilt and Responsibility after the Second World War,” which focused on their interest in the collusion of good in political evil, particularly as this was demonstrated in the interwar period of the European dictatorships.

Anne Reynes-Delobel, a member of the conference organizing committee as well as a member of the Porter Society, and her husband Philippe, served as unofficial guides for the society’s participants during their stay in Bordeaux. Two memorable experiences included the conference’s closing reception at the Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, featuring many local wines, and a bus trip to UNESCO world heritage site, the medieval town of Saint-Émilion that concluded with a wine tasting at the nearby Chateau de Ferrand Vineyards.



Beth Alvarez, Jerry Findley, and Joseph Kuhn on the red carpet in front of the Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, Bordeaux, France, July 7, 2017.

Remembering Virginia Spencer Carr

By Darlene Unrue, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Virginia Clair Spencer was born July 21, 1929, in West Palm Beach, Florida, the daughter of businessman Louis Perry Spencer and society reporter Wilma Bell Spencer. Carr earned a B.A. from Florida State University and, after receiving an M.A. from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, returned to Florida State for her Ph.D., completed in 1969. Carr was an English professor at Columbus State University, in Columbus, Georgia, from 1969 until 1985, when she left to become chair of the English Department at Georgia State University and eight years later would be named the John B. and Elena Diaz-Verson Amos Distinguished Professor of English Letters. Carr was married to Roger Alton Carr from 1951 to 1975. Shortly after her retirement in 2003, Carr moved to Lynn,

Massachusetts, with her partner, Mary E. Robbins, whom she married in 2006. Carr died April 10, 2012. She was survived by Robbins, three daughters, Karen Carr Gale, Catherine Carr Lee, and Kimberly Carr Morris, and seven grandchildren.

Virginia Carr's contributions to American letters include her definitive biography of Carson McCullers, *The Lonely Hunter* (1975), and two other acclaimed biographies, *John Dos Passos: A Life* (1984) and *Paul Bowles: A Life* (2004). She was also the author of *Understanding Carson McCullers* (2005) and the editor of "*Flowering Judas*": *Katherine Anne Porter* (2005), a casebook in the Women Writers: Text and Context series. Throughout her professional life Carr received numerous awards and prizes.

In addition to editing the casebook and writing biographies of two persons with whom Katherine Anne Porter shared a literary era, Virginia Carr touched Porter's life in other significant ways. She met Porter in the summer of 1971 in College Park, Maryland, where Porter was living out the last decade of her life. Then completing *The Lonely Hunter*, Carr was interested in hearing Porter's version of her infamous encounter with McCullers at the artists' colony Yaddo in 1940. However, Carr had not been able to arrange an interview with Porter, whose telephone number was unlisted and who was notoriously wary of both biographers and reporters. A fiercely determined researcher, Carr never tired of telling how she showed up uninvited at Porter's apartment, knocked on the door, and in response to Porter's "Who is it?" shouted through the door that she badly wanted to talk to Porter but hadn't been able to call in advance because Porter's phone number was unlisted. When Porter grudgingly opened the door a crack to provide Carr with her number, Carr planted her foot carefully in the opening while she cajoled and charmed Porter, telling her she had come 700 miles to talk to her about Carson McCullers. Porter relented and invited Carr in for a satisfying hour and a half visit.

Carr never met with Porter again, but she retained interest in her and her fiction. In 1990, having heard about the delay in a centennial celebration planned by the University of Maryland, College Park, home to the primary Porter archive, she set about arranging a celebration on short notice in order that the

centennial of Porter's birth year not pass without recognition. With funding from Georgia State University, the Georgia Humanities Council, and especially from Carr's benefactor, wealthy Georgia philanthropist Elena Diaz-Verson Amos, Carr invited everyone who had written a book or a substantial article about Porter, students who were working on studies of Porter, relatives and friends of Porter, other writers, and persons important to Porter's professional career. The Katherine Anne Porter Centennial Celebration took place November 9-10 at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Thirty-five persons participated in panel discussions or gave talks at lunches and dinners. Among the participants were Paul Porter, Porter's nephew; Seymour (Sam) Lawrence, the publisher who had shepherded *Ship of Fools* to completion; E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., Porter's attorney and longtime friend; Barbara Thompson Davis, a friend whose interview with Porter published in the *Paris Review* in 1963 was a starting point for many studies on Porter; Isabel Bayley, trustee of Porter's literary estate and editor of the recently published *Letters of Katherine Anne Porter*; and Tillie Olsen, one of several younger writers, including Eudora Welty, Porter had admired and promoted.

Virginia Carr's 1990 Georgia State Centennial Celebration of Katherine Anne Porter's life solidified a professional network of the Porter scholarly community that had begun with conferences and symposia in Texas in the 1970s and 1980s. The solidification continued the following year when the University of Maryland, College Park, held its own, more elaborate, NEH-funded, celebration of Porter's one hundred years May 9-11. The two centennial celebrations led to the founding of the Katherine Anne Porter Society in 1993. Virginia Carr served on both the Society's Founding Committee and the Coordinating Committee that succeeded it. Until the end of her life, Virginia Spencer Carr maintained a close association with many of the scholars, family members, and other Porter associates she had first met at the 1990 Centennial Celebration she organized and carried out.

Porter News from the University of Maryland Libraries

By Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries

A new online exhibit showcasing digitized correspondence from the Libraries' Katherine Anne Porter holdings is now available online at www.go.umd.edu/KAP. The exhibit highlights the historical context in which the correspondence was written, providing insight into Porter's life and her work. Visitors to the online exhibit can view letters written in a decade of Porter's life, or from a specific location, such as France, Mexico, and Washington, D.C. Correspondence from the following individuals are also highlighted: Albert Russel Erskine, Jr., Ann Hollaway Heintze, Gay Porter Hollaway, Paul Porter, Jr., and Eugene Dove Pressly.

The online exhibit will be a wonderful introduction for those just starting their exploration into Porter's world but also provides information and digitized content that will excite more experienced researchers. For the latter, a detailed timeline of the life of Katherine Anne Porter is made available in the online exhibit. We encourage you to visit www.go.umd.edu/KAP and enjoy the glimpse into Porter's life, letters, and the people with whom she shared them.

Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita, continues to staff the Katherine Anne Porter room during the fall and spring academic semesters on Wednesday afternoons as well as on Maryland Day, the annual all-campus open house. Visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter Room are also now treated to a new feature in the room, an A/V station that plays a video titled "'Flowering Judas': A Conversation with Katherine Anne Porter," recorded in the Porter Room in the 1970s. In it, Porter describes the inspiration behind and elements of her short story "Flowering Judas." Also accessible on the A/V station is James Day's 1973 interview with Porter that aired on WNET New York.

Beth Alvarez and I gave a presentation at the 2018 American Literature Association conference entitled "'All my past is usable': Online Access and the

Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project at the University of Maryland." The presentation highlighted the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project and a related online exhibit. The full text of this presentation appears in this issue.

All inquiries about the Libraries' Katherine Anne Porter holdings should be directed to Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books, at amberk@umd.edu, (301) 405-9214. Mailing address: 1202A Hornbake Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust

By Daniel C. Mack, Associate Dean, University of Maryland Libraries

As home of both the Katherine Anne Porter collection and the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust, the University of Maryland Libraries have been busy with all things Porter. One exciting project moving forward is the KAP Correspondence online exhibit at <https://www.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence>. The digitization of the correspondence and creation of related metadata is complete, as is most of the content. The one remaining task is to upload the digitized correspondence. This should be complete sometime in spring 2018. The KAP Correspondence is an amazing resource for both scholars and fans of KAP. Thanks for this project go to project team members Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita; Caitlin Rizzo, graduate assistant for Access and Outreach Services; Joanne Archer, Head of Access and Outreach Services for Special Collections; and Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books; with assistance from Liz DePriest, Eric Cartier, and Robin Pike. Amber Kohl's work on the Correspondence has been especially important. This issue of the newsletter includes more information about the project, as it includes the presentation Amber Kohl and Beth Alvarez made at the May 2018 American Literature Association Conference.

The Trust continues to collect royalties from a variety of projects. The digital edition of *Ship of Fools*, produced in collaboration with Open Road Integrated

Media, continues to sell well. Open Road has featured *Ship of Fools* in several promotions, most recently as part of their Early Bird Books (EBB). EBB is Open Road's daily digital newsletter with more than 400,000 subscribers, which Open Road also promotes via social media.

Recent agreements between the Trust and several publishers demonstrate KAP's continued popularity around the globe. Currently in development is an option for a future stage version of *Ship of Fools*; we will keep readers updated in future newsletters as this develops. The Trust also signed an amendment with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt regarding foreign language electronic rights. In addition, the Trust licensed three KAP stories ("Rope," "Magic," and "The Last Leaf") for inclusion in the database of Israeli publisher TSSP. Finally, the Libraries received copies of KAP's most recent translation into Italian, *Racconti: lo specchio incrinato* from Romanzo Bompiani (Florence, 2017). One copy has gone to the KAP Collection in Special Collections and University Archives, while another copy has been added to the general circulating collection.

The University of Maryland Libraries are proud of our association with KAP. We look forward to your visits, both in person and online!

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center News

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center at 508 Center Street in Kyle, Texas, serves as a venue for readings and talks by visiting writers, a museum, and a home for writers-in-residence. During the 2017-2018 academic year, Ocean Vuong, Karen Russell, Philipp Meyer, Gabrielle Calvocoressi, Junot Díaz, Martín Espada, and Lauren Groff gave readings at the center. The reading series is sponsored by Texas State University's Department of English, the Lindsey Literary Series, the Burdine Johnson Foundation, and the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center.

Texas State's MFA program publishes an on-line literary journal, *Front Porch* (<http://www.frontporchjournal.com>), which includes fiction, poetry,

reviews, and nonfiction by emerging and established authors. Video of readings and Q&A sessions by distinguished writers who visit the KAP Literary Center are available and regularly updated on the *Front Porch* Web site.

The Writers-in-Residence at the KAP House since 2008 include Michael Noll, Katie Angermeier, and Jeremy Garrett. Funded by the Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Writer-in-Residence lives in the house and acts as curator of the museum and as the coordinator of the visiting writers series. The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center is open to visitors and school groups by appointment. To arrange a visit, e-mail kapliterarycenter@gmail.com or call (512) 268-6637.

Updated Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center information appears at <http://www.kapliterarycenter.com/>. Inquiries concerning Texas State's MFA in Creative Writing can be made through the program's Web site (<http://www.english.txstate.edu/mfa/>), via email at mfinearts@txstate.edu, or by phone at (512) 245-7681.

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2016-2017

By Christine Grogan, Penn State University

This past year saw the publication of one essay, two book chapters, three articles, and four dissertations on the writings of Katherine Anne Porter.

To compile this bibliography, I searched the MLA International Bibliography and Academic Search Complete (formerly called Academic Search Premier), using the term "Porter, Katherine Anne." To find dissertations, I searched ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, using the term "Porter, Katherine Anne" and limiting the search to "abstract." I did not include material that contained only passing reference of Porter (even though H. Wendell Howard's article, "J. F. Powers's *Morte D'Urban*," is a fun read that explores why Powers won the 1963 National Book Award in fiction instead of Porter, Nabokov, and Updike). My annotations summarize instead of evaluate. Please send

information on any additions for this bibliography to Christine Grogan at clg5579@psu.edu so that I may include the information in next year's newsletter.

In a note to J. F. Powers, Porter claimed that reading letters was the best "kind of reading." The epistles of Katherine Anne Porter, along with those of Flannery O'Connor, Lillian Smith, and Zora Neale Hurston, are the subject of Will Brantley's "Letter-Writing, Authorship, and Southern Women Modernists," *The Oxford Handbook of the Literature of the U.S. South*, edited by Fred Hobson and Barbara Ladd, 2016, 344-60. Brantley argues that these four artists shaped their critical reputations, in part, through their consciously crafted letters. In his section on Porter, Brantley states "Porter knew that her letters would become part of any full assessment of her work." With the digitization of Porter's letters, a renewed discussion of her personal correspondences in relation to her published fiction should follow.

Porter and the changing definition of Modernism is discussed in three pieces recently published. Exploring "María Concepción," Rachel Adams in "Tradition," from *A New Vocabulary for Global Modernism*, edited by Eric Hayot and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, New York: Columbia UP, 2016, 236-38, concludes that Porter's primitivism, illustrated in her first short story, grew out of her direct dealings with Mexican indigenists. Not simply celebrating the primitive, however, Porter "participates in a political project that involves...a more general elevation of indigenous folkways, a project that was closely tied to Mexican agendas for social reform." Adams reads "María Concepción" as an example of a new Modernism, both politically engaged and aesthetically conscious, developed from a reimagining of American traditions.

In *How Myth Became History: Texas Exceptionalism in the Borderlands*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016, John E. Dean devotes his fifth chapter to exploring "Flowering Judas," titling it "The Archival Cave of Mediation in Katherine Anne Porter's 'Flowering Judas.'" Stating that today's anxieties over the Texas-Mexican border share similarities with those from 1835-1920 (the beginning of Texas's battle for independence to the disputed end of the Mexican Revolution), Dean's book project classifies "Flowering Judas" as a narrative of the latter—the only story Porter completed about the Revolution.

Dean argues that Laura, who travels from Texas to Mexico, is cast in an imperialist role, projecting her Mexican pupils' failure to speak English onto the Mexican revolutionaries' failure to fight a successful Revolution. The real failure, Dean suggests, is Laura's thinking that she could "create Mexican 'Indians' who are both fit subjects of colonial rule and future transmitters of civilization."

Rethinking Modernism's "uneven and unreflective relationship with Native America," Eric Gary Anderson and Melanie Benson Taylor compare Porter's and Hemingway's depictions of aboriginal peoples in their article "The Landscape of Disaster: Hemingway, Porter, and the Soundings of Indigenous Silence," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 59.3 (2017): 319-52. After investigating Hemingway's realistic representation of, rather than complicity in perpetuating, the economic and social inequalities between whites and natives, they turn to Porter's writings, particularly to "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," and argue that Adam is depicted as an Indian proxy, and a sacrificial Indian proxy at that, who dies from an infectious new-world disease. Anderson and Taylor see both Porter and Hemingway employing the "Indian" as "a trope for the wide-ranging ravages of the modern condition."

Rachel Lister's "'Preposterous Adventures': Affective Encounters in the Short Story Cycle," *Journal of the Short Story in English* 66 (2016): 1-15, examines Porter's Miranda cycle, along with Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* and Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* and *The Beggar Maid*, illustrating how these three twentieth-century women writers used the short story cycle to complicate the traditional understanding of happiness, specifically as that outlined in Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness*. Lister focuses on two defining narrative moments: "moments of potential transformation and moments of return to a site of past experience." In her reading of "The Grave," Lister argues that the ending—in which we see Miranda at twenty-nine years old, the oldest age in the cycle—presents a truly happy Miranda, who is able to acknowledge contradictory feelings.

Ru Wang and Yunyun Tian offer a deconstructive reading of "Noon Wine," in "Between Good and Evil: Deconstructive Interpretation of 'Noon Wine,'" *English Language Teaching* 9.11 (2016). Their paper

analyzes the virtues and vices of the cast of Porter's story, including Mr. Thompson and Helton.

In "Material Melancholy: Stranded Objects in Modern Southern Women's Writing" (University of Mississippi, 2015), James Travis Rozier adds a cultural materialist lens to psychoanalytic readings of select works by Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, and Zora Neale Hurston. He examines moments in their texts when these writers interrogate how historical narratives are constructed by focusing on objects, which "either represent an idealized past or reveal its constructed nature."

Bringing Katherine Anne Porter, Mary Hunter Austin, and Josephine Herbst together, Elizabeth Ann DePriest performs a bio-critical reading in "Resisting Reproduction in Early Twentieth Century American Women's Fiction" (University of Maryland, 2017). Drawing from materials in their personal archives, DePriest argues that their fiction "reveals inextricable relationships between the reproductive regulations American women faced and American prejudices about (dis)ability, sexuality, class, race, and/or country of origin."

Also making use of archival research, Heather Fox explores how Kate Chopin, Ellen Glasgow, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and Katherine Anne Porter demonstrate authorial control when rearranging their previously published magazine stories for their first short story collections. "Arranging Stories: The Implications of Narrative Decision in Short Story Collections by Southern Women Writers, 1894-1944" (University of South Florida, 2017) argues that these women writers were able to privilege and contextualize stories, thereby making sociopolitical statements.

Taking a comparative approach, Hannah Godwin in "American Modernism's Gothic Children" (University of Oregon, 2017) focuses on fictional representations of the child in works by William Faulkner, Djuna Barnes, Jean Toomer, Eudora Welty, and Katherine Anne Porter. She concludes that these texts "intervened in national debates about sexuality, race, and futurity" by depicting childhood as a "potent site for negotiating cultural anxieties about physical and cultural reproduction."

American Academy of Arts and Letters: Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature, 2018

By Christine Grogan, Penn State University

Noy Holland was the recipient of the 2018 Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She received the award at the Academy's annual Ceremonial in New York City on May 23, 2018. This year's award committee members were Joy Williams (chairman), Russell Banks, Henri Cole, Amy Hempel, and Anne Tyler.

In 1941, Katherine Anne Porter was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and, in 1966, to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2001, the Literary Trust of Katherine Anne Porter established the Katherine Anne Porter biennial award in literature in the amount of \$20,000 to honor a fiction writer in mid-career "whose achievements and dedication to the literary profession have been demonstrated."

The previous fiction writers to receive the award include Lynn Freed in 2002, Nicholson Baker in 2004, Arturo Vivante in 2006, John Edgar Wideman in 2008, Tim O'Brien in 2010, Maureen Howard in 2012, Sherman Alexie in 2014, and Kathryn Davis in 2016.

The award was presented to Holland by Joy Williams. The Ceremonial citation states, "To read Noy Holland is to be invited into a particularly astonishing chamber in the house of language. Her newest collection of storied effects *I Was Trying To Describe What It Feels Like* is a galloping phantasmagoria. She deals in dream states of the most inarticulable variety, yet her work is rooted in essentials—childhood, animals, birth, survival. She deals in dark delights."

For over two decades, Noy Holland has been writing about the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings. Her debut novel, *Birds*, was published in 2015 to critical acclaim. She has also published short story collections and novellas including *Swim for the Little One First* (2012), *What Begins with Bird* (2005), *The Spectacle of the Body* (1994), and her most recent, *I Was Trying To*

Describe What It Feels Like: New and Selected Stories (2017). Her work has appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Antioch*, *Conjunctions*, *The Quarterly*, *The American Voice*, *Glimmer Train*, *Western Humanities Review*, *The Believer*, *NOON*, and *New York Tyrant*.

Compared to Shirley Jackson and Cormac McCarthy, Holland writes about “the peculiar lives of ordinary people.” In his *New York Times* review of *I Was Trying To Describe What It Feels Like*, Scott Bradfield praises Holland’s storytelling ability: “For those of us who haven’t heard of Holland before, these new and selected stories testify to the fact that there are still fine short story writers out there, doing the hard job of serious literary production in our age of tweets and memes, just putting down one good story after another.” Holland captures the inner lives of her characters in challenging narratives that experiment with plot, time, consciousness, and point of view. Fellow writer Dawn Raffel credits Holland for “quietly publishing some of the finest short stories written in the English language.”

A professor in the MFA Program for Poets and Writers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Holland has also taught at the University of Florida and Phillips Academy. She directs the Writers in the Schools Project in Amherst and serves on the board of directors at Fiction Collective Two. In 2003, she received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. She was also the recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council award for artistic merit.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Activities at the 2017 American Literature Association Conference

At the 28th American Literature Association annual conference, the Katherine Anne Porter Society held a joint session with the Kay Boyle Society. Christine Hait chaired the panel titled “Katherine Anne Porter and Kay Boyle: In the World and on the Page,”

which was held on Saturday, May 27, 2017, in Boston, Massachusetts. Four papers were presented: Alice Cheylan’s “Katherine Anne Porter’s French Experience,” Krista Quesenberry’s “Being Authors Together: Kay Boyle as Memoirist, Activist, Modernist,” Christine Grogan’s “*In transition*: Katherine Anne Porter and Kay Boyle,” and Anne Reynes-Delobel’s “Places, Faces, and Words: Kay Boyle in/and the South of France.”

2019 American Literature Association Conference in Boston

Chaired by Darlene Unrue, the Katherine Anne Porter Society session at the 30th annual American Literature Association conference will be titled “Katherine Anne Porter’s Worlds.” This intentionally broad topic invites a variety of approaches to a study of Katherine Anne Porter and her works. Some possibilities include: the worlds of Porter’s fiction and the relevance of setting to theme; Porter’s moment in history and its influence on her style and characters; the interior worlds of Porter’s characters and their reflection of modernist movements; and Porter’s timelessness that addresses our contemporary world. Please send a 200-word proposal and a brief biographical statement to Darlene Unrue at darleneunrue@gmail.com by December 1, 2018. The conference will take place May 23-26, in Boston, Massachusetts. Conference details and information about hotel reservations will be available through the Web site of the American Literature Association. Information about the Porter activities planned for the conference will be posted on the society’s Web site.