

Newsletter

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Katherine Anne Porter

Society

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Life in a “World Capital”: Katherine Anne Porter in Washington, DC

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

This presentation was part of the panel entitled “‘The Truth that Finally Overtakes You’: Katherine Anne Porter” for the American Women Writers National Museum at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, May 22, 2014.

In the introduction to her 1963 *Paris Review* interview with Katherine Anne Porter, Barbara Thompson Davis wrote that Porter “once said,” “‘I want to live in a world capital or the howling wilderness,’ . . . and did.” Although Porter spent significant periods of her life in other world capitals (Mexico City, Berlin, Paris, Rome), the Washington, DC, metropolitan area was her primary residence for a period comprising two decades. Porter lived in residences in Washington, DC, for nearly ten years and in the Maryland suburbs of the District of Columbia for more than another decade.

Porter’s first residence in the District began in January 1944, when she was appointed to replace the ailing John Peale Bishop as Fellow of Regional American Literature at the Library of Congress. Her first residence was with her friends and fellow writers Allen Tate and his wife Caroline Gordon at a house they were renting at 3418 Highwood Drive, across the Anacostia River in South East Washington, with another writer couple, Lon and Fanny Cheney. That arrangement lasted until early April 1944, when the last in a series of disagreements with Gordon led to Porter’s move to 3106 P Street, NW, in Georgetown. A friend of the Tates, Marcella Comès Winslow, a painter and mother of two young children, was happy to welcome Porter as a boarder because her husband, a U.S. Army colonel, was serving in Europe during World War II. Porter enjoyed interacting with the Winslow children, eight-year-old Mary and six-year-old John, as well as socializing and entertaining with Winslow. Among the individuals with whom Porter interacted or developed relationships during this period include military officers; high government officials and their



Porter holding a dressed chicken in the back garden of 3106 P Street, NW, Washington, DC, July 9, 1944. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

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 Amber Kohl, Newsletter Editor, ambergkohl@umd.edu. Society membership inquiries should be directed to Beth Alvarez. Entries for the annual bibliographical essay on Porter should be addressed to Christine Grogan at cgrogan@udel.edu.

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

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wives; politicians; both new and previously known artistic and literary friends; as well as two men subsequently among her romantic entanglements. During this period, she also met and befriended Eleanor Clark, who subsequently married Porter's friend and fellow writer Robert Penn Warren. When Marcella and her children left the P Street house for two months at Rehoboth Beach, DE, Porter was joined in leasing the entire P Street house with Mary Louis Doherty, an old friend she met in Mexico in 1921, and Mary Louis's sister Peggy.

Porter's frail health and demanding social life interfered with her completing much, if any, of her literary work during this period. Although she had completed more than 200 pages of the manuscript of the full-length novel that would be published as *Ship of Fools* in 1962, it does not seem that any work on it resumed during her 1944 residence in the District. During that period or immediately after it, she published only three works; the first of these, "Portrait Old South," is an essay about her Grandmother Porter (*Mademoiselle*, February 1944). Frustrated that her novel was not completed, her publisher Harcourt, Brace brought out the short story collection *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* on

September 16, 1944, just days after Porter moved from P Street. The close proximity to Allen Tate during the first nine months of 1944 likely is the reason that the first excerpt from the long novel was published in October 1944 in *Sewanee Review*, on which Tate served as an editor from 1944 to 1946.

When Porter left Washington in mid-September 1944, she probably did not realize that she would return in 1959 to live her life out in the Washington metro area. In the intervening fifteen years she lived in California, New York City, Michigan, Connecticut, and Virginia, with shorter stays in France and Belgium. After serving as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia and Washington and Lee University during the 1958-1959 academic year, Porter returned to Washington, DC. She spent a month in the late summer of 1959 at the Jefferson Hotel, then as now at 1200 Sixteenth Street, NW. On September 1, 1959, she moved into the top two floors of a house she leased at 3112 Q Street, NW, in Georgetown. Rhea Johnson, a U.S. State Department employee, was already living in the



3418 Highwood Drive, SE, Washington, DC, Spring 1999, where Katherine Anne Porter lived with Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon from January to April 1944. Photograph by Beth Alvarez.



3106 P Street, NW, Washington, DC, Spring 1999, where Katherine Anne Porter lived in the home of Marcella Comès Winslow from April to September 1944. Photograph by Beth Alvarez.

basement of the house, and he proved a valuable friend and neighbor. Once again living only a block or so from Marcella Winslow's P Street home, Porter resumed some of her previous friendships and added a few more. Porter had apparently completed more of *Ship of Fools* during a three-year residence in Southbury, Connecticut (1955-1958), but, when she moved to Georgetown in 1959, it remained unfinished, and Seymour Lawrence, her publisher, was desperately trying to get her to finish it. In fact, she was not able to complete the novel in Georgetown. Rather it was finally completed during two roughly one-month stays at an inn in Rockport, Massachusetts, in summer 1961.

During the approximately three years that 3112 Q Street served as Porter's primary residence, she kept up a hectic schedule of socializing and travel. There were romantic dalliances with a local eye doctor and a young naval officer. For income in addition to a two-year Ford Foundation grant, Porter took on speaking and other engagements, primarily at or with institutions of higher education.

From mid-May to mid-June 1960, she made a month-long U.S. State Department-sponsored visit to Mexico. Among her Georgetown friends and acquaintances, John and Catherine Prince, who shared common interests in literature and fine dining, probably most often socialized with her. Rhea Johnson, who shared the Q Street house with Porter, served as an escort and dining companion, and also was treated to gourmet meals prepared by Porter. It was he who, among Porter's disorganized papers, discovered the manuscripts of two of her stories, "The Fig Tree" and "Holiday," which were published to much acclaim in 1960 (*Harper's*, June 1960; *Atlantic*, December 1960). Although Porter published the two "rediscovered" stories and a few occasional pieces ("A Sprig of Mint for Allen," "A Wreath for the Gamekeeper," and "Ship of Fools" excerpt, Autumn 1959; "A Note" in Willa Cather's *The Troll Garden*, 1961; "On First Meeting T. S. Eliot," Spring 1961; "Letter to the Editor," *Yale Review*, March 1961) during the time she lived on Q Street, her major accomplishment was the publication of her full-length novel on April Fool's Day 1962. Finally freed from money worries, Porter took a one-month trip to Rome in June 1962, and finally left the Q Street house for an extended one-year residence in Europe at the end of October 1962.



Susana Jiménez-Placer in front of the Jefferson Hotel, Washington, DC, Spring 1999. Katherine Anne Porter resided here in Summer 1959 and from November 1963 to May 1964. Photograph by Beth Alvarez.



3112 Q Street, NW, Washington, DC, February 1960. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.



Katherine Anne Porter at home at 3112 Q Street, NW, Washington, DC, February 1960. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.



Katherine Anne Porter seated in front of 3601 49th Street, NW, Spring Valley, Washington DC, September 6, 1964. She resided here from June 1964 to May 1969. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.



KAP, her niece Ann Heintze, and Ann's son David Heintze in front of 3601 49th Street, NW, Spring Valley, Washington DC, April 1965. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.



Susana Jiménez-Placer in front of 5910 Westchester Park Drive, College Park, MD, Spring 1999. Porter lived here from June 1969 to April 1970. Photograph by Beth Alvarez.

When Porter returned to Washington, DC, in November 1963, she spent seven months in a small apartment at the Jefferson Hotel until signing a lease on a large home at 3601 49th Street, NW, in the posh Spring Valley section of Northwest Washington. Porter remained at the Spring Valley address for the next five years, from June 1964 through the end of May 1969. During this period of her life, Porter enjoyed her status as a local celebrity. She was among those honored at the White House by President Lyndon Johnson and made a return State Department-sponsored visit to Mexico. She also developed a close relationship with her lawyer, E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr. Her name surfaced widely in the press when the Stanley Kramer movie adaptation of *Ship of Fools* was released in the U.S. in late July 1965. However, her crowning literary achievement was the publication of *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* in September 1965. Subsequently awarded both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1966, the work secured her place in the pantheon of American literary lights. The year 1966 also brought Porter's decision to donate her papers and personal library to the University of Maryland, in nearby College Park, where a Katherine Anne Porter Room was formally opened in the main campus library on May 15, 1968.

Her published output during this period included about a dozen occasional pieces ("Tell Me About Adrienne" [1963]; Comments on *Good-Bye Wisconsin*, "Words on Length," "70. Katherine Anne Porter," "Her Legend Will Live," and "Paris: A Little Incident in the Rue de l'Odeon" [1964]; "Gracious Greatness" and "Letters to a Nephew" [1966]; "Ole

Woman River" [1967]; "Note to a Christmas Story" and "Speech of Acceptance" [1968]) and the Ben Shahn-illustrated edition of *A Christmas Story* (1967), her memoir of Mary Alice Hollaway, her beloved niece who had died in 1919.

By June 1969, when Porter moved to a townhouse at 5910 Westchester Park Drive, College Park, in the Maryland suburbs, she was 79 years old and increasingly frail. She was now only a short distance from her papers at the university, whose staff and faculty provided support and friendship. Late March 1970 saw the publication of *The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter* celebrated with a party at the university. Not much more than two weeks later, Porter fell and broke a hip. Following a two-month period of recuperation and rehabilitation, she moved into two connected apartments in a high rise in the same complex as the College Park townhouse—its address 6100 Westchester Park Drive, apartments 1517 and 1518.

Porter's College Park years were devoted to visiting with family and friends, old and new. Among these were her niece Ann and her family; favorite nephew Paul; Robert Penn Warren, Eleanor Clark, and their two children; Cleanth and Tinkum Brooks; Monroe Wheeler; Isabel Bayley; Sister Kathleen Feeley and Sister Maura Eisner, faculty nuns from Baltimore's



KAP in front of 6100 Westchester Park Drive, College Park, MD, ca. 1972. She lived here from May 1970 to March 1980. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

College of Notre Dame; Jane DeMouy; Ted Wojtasik; and Jack Horner and Clark Dobson, who served as something like surrogate nephews, as Paul was living in New York City. Often she was in the company of Addie Hubbard, a local woman who served as a companion and sort of nurse. Among the more unique of her experiences during this period was joining, in late 1972, a nine-day cruise to observe the launch of Apollo 17, which she was to cover for *Playboy*, a work that never came to fruition.

The period between late May 1970 and 1977 saw the publication of “The Spivvleton Mystery,” a “murder mystery” she had written many years before and published in August 1971 and four occasional pieces published between December 1971 and March 1975 (“And to the Living Joy” [December 1971], “Recollection of Rome” [January 1974], “You Are What You Read” [October 1974], and “Notes on the Texas I Remember” [March 1975]). With the help of Bill Wilkins, who worked with and for Porter for less than a year in 1976 and 1977, she was able to produce a publishable manuscript from drafts of the memoir of her participation in the demonstrations at the time of the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. That work, *The Never-Ending Wrong*, was published in June 1977, after a series of debilitating strokes in February rendered her unable to complete any additional work. Nephew Paul arranged for round the clock nursing care in her cavernous apartment, and, eventually, in September 1977, a Prince George’s County court ruled her incompetent.

Both because of the expense of maintaining round the clock nursing and because the College Park high rise was being converted to a condominium, Paul arranged for Porter to be moved to a Silver Spring, MD, nursing home at the end of March 1980. It was there, on September 18, 1980, that Porter died.

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 2018-2019 academic year, Tyehimba Jess, Kim Barnes, Robert Wrigley, Marie Hoew, Nikky Finney, Cheston

Knapp, and Viet Thanh Nguyen 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.

Until 2018, Texas State’s MFA program published an online literary journal, *Front Porch* (<http://www.frontporchjournal.com>), which included fiction, poetry, reviews, and nonfiction by emerging and established authors. Video of readings and Q&A sessions by distinguished writers who visited the KAP Literary Center are available on the *Front Porch* Web site. Relaunched as *Porter House Review* (<https://porterhousereview.org/>) in November 2018, the new online review is produced in conjunction with Texas State University’s MFA program in Creative Writing. Inspired by the legacy of Katherine Anne Porter, the literary journal seeks to publish bold and incisive writing that interrogates not only the complexities of the human experience, but also the prevailing social challenges of our time. In support of this mission, the editors seek unique perspectives from both established, award-winning authors, as well as emerging and underrepresented voices from around the world. It will celebrate a wide range of literary forms and styles and is committed to paying a competitive rate for all published work. The Executive Editors are Doug Dorst and Tom Grimes, and its Advisory Board includes Charles D’Ambrosio, Erica Dawson, Ben Fountain, Cristina García, Tomás Q. Morín, Naomi Shihab Nye, Tim O’Brien, Luis Javier Rodriguez, Karen Russell, and Evie Shockley.

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 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.texasstate.edu/mfa>).

txstate.edu/mfa/), via e-mail at mfinearts@txstate.edu, or by phone at (512) 245-7681.

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust

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

Katherine Anne Porter studies are alive and thriving at the University of Maryland Libraries! One of the most exciting developments is the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence online exhibit. We told you about this project in the last newsletter. After several years' effort, this collection is now online at <https://www.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence>. This outstanding resource is already receiving a great deal of use globally from KAP scholars and readers. Many talented and dedicated Libraries' personnel have contributed to the success of this project, including project team members Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita; Liz DePriest, former Graduate Assistant for the project; Caitlin Rizzo, former Graduate Assistant for Researcher and Collection Services; Joanne Archer, Head of Access and Outreach Services for Special Collections; Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books; Robin Pike, Manager, Digital Conversion & Media Reformatting; and a host of other people. Check out the project today!

Both scholars and readers continue to explore KAP's works, and many of these continue to generate royalties for the KAP Trust. The ebook edition of *Ship of Fools* continues to sell well. Its publisher, Open Road Integrated Media, has again promoted this work through a variety of venues. In November 2018 and February 2019, the *Ship of Fools* ebook was featured in the international ebook newsletter BookBub. In October 2018, Amazon selected the edition as a Kindle Monthly Deal. Both the publisher and the University of Maryland Libraries promoted these via social media.

The Trust continues to work with publishers around the world to bring KAP's works to a rapidly-growing global audience. We are currently working with both Greek and Russian publishers on editions of *Ship of Fools*, and we will update you next time with a progress report. The Trust has also recently granted permission for a half dozen letters from KAP to

Flannery O'Connor to be used in a forthcoming Penguin book. In addition, there have been recent Korean and Italian editions of Eudora Welty's *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories*, and the Trust has granted permission for KAP's Introduction to the original edition to be used in those new translations as well.

The University of Maryland Libraries are proud to be both the home of the KAP Library as well as the KAP Literary Trust. We actively encourage researchers of all types to use our collections. Some of this material, such as the KAP Correspondence project discussed above, is available online and free of charge to readers around the world. However, this is only a fraction of the treasures available for KAP scholars at the University of Maryland Libraries. You can find out about our KAP resources at <https://archives.lib.umd.edu/repositories/2/resources/1564#>. To promote research and scholarship about KAP, in 2019, the Trust and the Libraries will develop and promote a visiting scholar's program. This program will supply grants to support research using the Libraries' KAP collections, including funding to travel to College Park, MD, and conduct research on site. This program is in development right now. Please keep an eye out for updates!

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2017-2018

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

The writings of Katherine Anne Porter were the topic of three articles, one chapter, and five dissertations this past year.

To compile this bibliography, I searched the MLA International Bibliography, ABELL, 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. My annotations summarize instead of evaluate. Please send information on any additions for this bibliography to Christine Grogan at cgrogan@udel.edu so that I may include the information in next year's newsletter.

In “From ‘Faithful Old Servant’ to ‘Bantu Woman’: Katherine Anne Porter’s Approach to the Mammy Myth in ‘The Old Order,’” published in the Special Issue: Representation and Rewriting of Myths in Southern Short Fiction of the *Journal of the Short Story in English* 67 (2016): 51-67, Susana Maria Jiménez-Placer explores the mammy figure in Porter’s Miranda stories, tracing “the conflicted white girl” who is influenced by a black mammy. Jiménez-Placer argues that after her grandmother dies and her Aunt Nannie leaves the house, Miranda witnesses the collapse of the old Southern order. Although she does not detect a racial epiphany for Miranda in “The Old Order,” Jiménez-Placer maintains that Aunt Nannie provided lasting lessons on race and gender for Miranda, as demonstrated in “The Last Leaf,” with Miranda’s reaction to Uncle Jimbilly’s account of slavery, and culminating in “The Grave,” when Miranda breaks the mold of traditional femininity, evidenced in her “tomboyish” outfit.

Porter’s treatment of the female gender is also examined by Matt Wanat in “From Jilting to Jonquil: Katherine Anne Porter and Wendell Berry, Sustaining Connections, Re-engendering the Rural,” *South: A Scholarly Journal* 49.2 (2017): 166-209. Exploring questions about gender and community, Wanat argues that “A Jonquil for Mary Penn” (1992) “offers a corrective for the hopeless alienation in modernist works,” particularly in “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,” where the dying Ellen is “frustratingly disconnected from virtually everything and everyone except her own thoughts.” However, as Wanat adds, Porter’s “Noon Wine” “serves as a corrective for some of the limiting gendered implications of Berry’s optimistic agrarianism” as seen in “Jonquil.” Although acknowledging that Berry may not be intentionally rewriting modernist classics, he nonetheless sees connections between Berry’s work and Porter’s. Wanat encourages a rereading of Porter’s fiction in the context of the discourse on agrarianism as her stories provide insight into “the relationship between marginalized selves and points of view.”

Reflecting on Porter’s point of view as an authority on Mexico, Jeffrey Lawrence offers readings of “That Tree” and “Hacienda,” two stories set in Mexico, in “Why She Wrote about Mexico: Katherine Anne Porter and the Literature of Experience,” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 64.1

(2018): 25-52. Lawrence positions Porter at the center of what he calls “US literature of experience,” defined as works produced during the interwar years that equated literature’s merits with its authors’ “prolonged firsthand exposure to the places about which they were writing.” Whereas “That Tree” allows Porter to “authenticate her firsthand knowledge of Mexico” and “authorize her ‘own account’ of postrevolutionary Mexico against the narratives of other US writers and journalists,” “Hacienda” “offers a more positive model for how the literature of experience should be composed.” Beginning an important discussion on the relationship between the theory of New Criticism and the experiences of the writer, Lawrence credits “Hacienda” for showing that a literature of experience should portray and expose in an effort to understand instead of solve, and he ends by posing a question that has far-reaching implications—where is the authority of literature located.

Lawrence’s article is a version of a chapter he published in *Anxieties of Experience: The Literatures of the Americas from Whitman to Bolaño* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018). Taking a comparative approach, his larger project examines the intersection of the “two dominant subject positions [that] structure canonical twentieth-century literature in the Americas: in the United States, the subject position of the writer as *experiencer*, and in Latin America, the subject position of the writer as *reader*.” In chapter 4, “Full Immersion: Modernist Aesthetics and the US Literature of Experience,” Lawrence reads Hemingway’s and Porter’s writing, particularly *To Have and Have Not* and “Hacienda,” showing that the literature of experience they developed in the 1920s gave way to warnings about political positioning in the 1930s: both exposed “what they saw as the inherent danger of literature derived from ideological positioning as opposed to firsthand eyewitnessing.”

Among the dissertations published this past year, Katy L. Leedy’s “Discarding Dreams and Legends: The Short Fiction of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Flannery O’Connor, Katherine Anne Porter, and Eudora Welty” (Marquette University, 2016) argues that these four Southern women writers critique Southern regional identity. Leedy applauds these authors for evoking change in the South, especially much-needed change for Southern women. She

claims these writers do this by presenting flawed, insular communities and showing how they developed.

Kathryn Susan Roberts's "Colony Writing: Creative Community in the Age of Revolt" (Harvard University, 2016) discusses the impact that domestic writers' colonies had on literary production in the first half of the 20th century. Focusing on writers who experienced a significant shift in their career as a result of living and working in writers' colonies, namely Eugene O'Neill, Willa Cather, Thornton Wilder, Carson McCullers, and Porter, Roberts's study argues that these spaces outside of mainstream culture fostered aesthetic experimentation that had "the power to reshape social life."

In "Unusual Occurrences in the Desert: Symbolic Landscapes in the Cultural Exchange between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1939" (Temple University, 2018), Nathaniel Roberts Racine takes an interdisciplinary approach to explore "questions of cultural and intellectual exchange between the U.S. and Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s." In studying the diverse representations of Mexico during the interwar period in architecture, literature, journalism, and visual arts, Racine argues that the dominant narrative obscured the reality of Mexico even as it pointed to possible correctives.

Nissa Ren Cannon's "Paper Identities and Identity Papers: Documents of Interwar Expatriation and Modernist Writing" (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2018) includes archival research and examines novels by Porter, along with Claude McKay, Malcolm Lowry, and Ernest Hemingway, whom she refers to as transnational writers. Initiating a nuanced conversation about expatriation and citizenship and participating in the recent "material turn" in modernist studies, Cannon's work investigates how these writers engage with the paper artifacts of interwar mobility, which has implications for the modern-day's refugee/migrant identifications.

"Reading and Writing Epidemics: Illness Narratives as Literature" (Texas Christian University, 2018) by Samantha Allen Wright traces the development of illness narratives from early American nonfiction writing to literary modernism and to contemporary memoir. Wright advocates an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the genre of illness narratives, arguing that they be read through both

literary and disability studies frameworks. Her study, which explores "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," along with Bentz Plagemann's *My Place to Stand*, Arthur Ashe and Arnold Rampersad's *Days of Grace: A Memoir*, and Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone: The Terrifying True Story of the Origins of the Ebola Virus*, concludes that these writings "challenge ableist assumptions and demonstrate how illness narratives are of both historical and literary importance in 20th and 21st century America" for showing their interconnections with "sexuality, racial identity formation, contemporary politics, and social justice."

KAP 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

It has been a busy year for Katherine Anne Porter projects and resources in Special Collections and University Archives! We continue to enhance the online exhibit *Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence from the Archives, 1912-1977*. The exhibit, which can be found online at www.go.umd.edu/KAP, showcases digitized correspondence from the Libraries' Katherine Anne Porter holdings. It also provides contextual information on Porter's life and the individuals with whom she corresponded.

In an exciting update, a searchable and browsable database is now available through the Web site. Researchers now have instant access to approximately 3,800 digitized items of her correspondence. The correspondence database provides the opportunity to browse the full catalog of digitized Porter correspondence, sorting results by decade, location, or recipient.

More updates to the online exhibit are planned for the upcoming year, including enabling keyword searching for the text of Porter's correspondence and continuing to upload additional correspondence written by Porter as it is digitized from the collections. This enhanced online resource is the result of an extensive digitization project in the Libraries. The Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project is an ongoing collaboration between the University of Maryland Libraries Special

Collections and University Archives and Digital Systems and Stewardship units, supported by a grant from the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust.

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. Visitors to the Porter room on Maryland Day this year were also given Porter themed buttons as a memento of their tour.

We are also pleased to announce a new member of the KAP team in Special Collections and University Archives, graduate student Jeannette Schollaert. Jeannette works closely with myself and Beth on the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project. On it, she assists with compiling and organizing metadata and contributing to the online exhibit. She also writes content for the Special Collections and University Archives blog (<https://hornbake.library.wordpress.com/>) specifically related to our Katherine Anne Porter holdings. Jeannette is pursuing a Ph.D. in English, and her research focuses on twentieth century American women writers and ecofeminism.

The Katherine Anne Porter holdings continued to grow this year. New acquisitions to the Ted Wojtasik papers include books, including an inscribed copy of *The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter*, as well as correspondence, and photographs relating to Porter. Some of our favorite items are photographs of Porter and Flannery O'Connor with her famous peacocks. New acquisitions were also received for the E. Barrett Prettyman papers.



Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, and peacock, Milledgeville, Georgia, April 1958. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

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

Updates from the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project

By Jeannette Schollaert, University of Maryland

Much has happened since the most recent issue of the Porter Society Newsletter in June 2018! The June 2018 newsletter, which included an overview of the history of the Correspondence Project by Beth Alvarez and Amber Kohl, provided comprehensive insight into the online exhibit available via that Katherine Anne Porter site. Since then, the Project staff were hard at work compiling the metadata for Phase Three of the Correspondence Project, the materials of which were sent to the vendor in early March. Currently, the online resources available on the Project Web site include Phase One and Two of the Project, which focus on Porter's family correspondence and that of her literary friends, respectively. Phase Three is the largest phase completed thus far, including 2,433 items that pertain to Porter's business dealings, literary agents, and financial matters. Phase Three includes work that spans the Special Collections holdings at the University of Maryland's Hornbake Library, including items from the Cyrilly Abels Papers, the Seymour Lawrence Papers, and the E. Barrett Prettyman Papers in addition to the papers of Katherine Anne Porter.

Phase Three allows Porter scholars and enthusiasts the opportunity to see Porter adopt a wide array of personas and tones, particularly in her relationships with the correspondents named above. Porter wrote warm letters to Cyrilly Abels, her longtime friend, her eventual agent, and managing editor of *Mademoiselle* in her own right, that are useful in examining Porter's balance between daily life and the duties of publishing, negotiating the space between friendship and business partnership.

Porter's correspondence with Seymour Lawrence, too, is included in this new phase, primarily via the Lawrence Papers, a collection spanning almost two

decades of material also housed at Maryland. Lawrence was a highly influential publisher with multiple prize winning authors on his list, including Porter, who left Harcourt, Brace to publish with Lawrence at Atlantic-Little, Brown in 1955. Porter scholars will be able to access Porter's writings to Lawrence during her long relationship with him as her publisher at first Atlantic-Little, Brown, and Knopf, then Delacorte. In the course of their relationship, captured via their correspondence, Lawrence named Porter godmother to his daughter, and Porter completed *Ship of Fools*. Their correspondence illuminates similar multiplicities of personality as that between Porter and Abels: what is the balance between business and friendship, particularly for a writer as particular in her writing routine as Porter? How did Porter respond—literally, to Lawrence's letters—inquiring about her progress on *Ship of Fools*? While Porter scholars and enthusiasts see a snapshot of the relationship between Porter and Lawrence in Darlene Unrue's charting of their relationship in her *Katherine Anne Porter: Life of an Artist* and existing biographical scholarship on Porter, now all will be able to read the correspondence firsthand, and explore Porter's perspective on her and Lawrence's close friendship, falling out, and reconciliation.

The E. Barrett Prettyman papers contain a more tragic view of Katherine Anne Porter, as the two met late in Porter's life, after Prettyman expressed his admiration for her novel *Ship of Fools*. Prettyman, a noted lawyer and author of a fact-crime novel, *Death in the Supreme Court*, became Porter's lawyer after the two became friends following Prettyman's first phone call to Porter. Porter's correspondence with Prettyman reveals the extent to which Prettyman was a character in the later stages of her life, though Porter imbued quite a bit of fantasy into their relationship. The inclusion of Porter's correspondence to Prettyman in Phase Three allows for a broad picture of her concerns as she established a will, faced end-of-life legal challenges, and continued to entertain new friends, new characters until the end of her life. The correspondence also offers a tragic, human view of a woman at the end of her life, imaging affections for herself as she grew older.

Other correspondents of interest included in Phase Three are the editorial team at Harcourt, Brace, as

well as that of Little, Brown, including Porter's condolences to Arthur H. Thornhill, Jr. on his father's passing. This correspondence can be used to track Porter's progress on and, sometimes, her evasions of her editors' deadlines. Additionally, Phase Three features more correspondence between Porter and Donald Elder, correspondence between Porter and her French translator and longtime friend Marcelle Sibon, a note to the company who produced a stage production of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in 1957, as well as countless financial records that can be used to outline Porter's activities as a consumer. We look forward to making this correspondence available in the near future, as the correspondence is currently being digitized. In the meantime, the Correspondence Project staff is busy preparing for Phase Four of the project, as well as completing some annotations to better scaffold the materials from Phase Two.



Ann Holloway Heintze, Walter Heintze, Gay Porter Holloway, Katherine Anne Porter, and Donald Elder, at the marriage of Anne and Walter Heintze, April 21, 1950, New York, New York. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

For more frequent updates on the Project's goings-on, follow the University of Maryland Special Collections and University Archives blog (featuring these two recent updates on the Correspondence Project) or follow the SCUA Twitter at @HornbakeLibrary.

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Katherine Anne Porter Activities at the 2019 American Literature Association Conference

On May 24, 2019, at the 30th annual American Literature Association Conference, Darlene Unrue chaired the Katherine Anne Porter Society's panel titled "Katherine Anne Porter's Worlds." The well-attended Friday morning session included three essays: Alice Cheylan's "The Objectivity of Landscapes in Katherine Anne Porter's Early Work," Christine Grogan's "Visions and Revisions in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,'" and Caroline Straty Kraft's "Katherine Anne Porter: The Unseen Intellectual."

At the annual business meeting, we discussed updates from the Correspondence Project, the treasury balance, and current membership. We're excited to announce that we also discussed starting a Katherine Anne Porter Graduate Student Paper Award. The deadline for submissions will be on June 30, 2020. The winner of the journal-length paper, which will be announced on December 1, 2020, will be invited to present the paper at the 2021 Katherine Anne Porter Society Session at the ALA in Boston. The winner will also be awarded \$250 and will be featured in the 2021 Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter. Please help us spread the word!

2020 American Literature Association Conference in San Diego

Chaired by Beth Alvarez, the Katherine Anne Porter Society session at the 31th annual American Literature Association conference will be titled "Katherine Anne Porter: Out of the Archives."

This session invites papers on any topic that makes use of Porter's correspondence digitized by the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project at the University of Maryland Libraries (<https://www.lib.umd.edu/Kaporter-correspondence>).

Please send a 200-word proposal and a brief biographical statement to Beth Alvarez at alvarez@umd.edu by December 1, 2019.

The conference will take place May 21-24, 2020, in San Diego, California. 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.