

Newsletter

of the

Katherine Anne Porter

Society

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A Little Incident in South Bentley Avenue

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

Last January in Los Angeles, I went back to the places that had been residences of Katherine Anne Porter between 1945 and 1947. Some of the readers of this newsletter will recall that I had previously made this pilgrimage in May 2002 and reported it in Volume 10, dated May 2003. The 2020 visit was made in the company of Society President Jerry Findley and our tour guide and host, Dan Bennett. We visited residences on 25th Street, Santa Monica; South Bentley Avenue, Westwood; and 6th Street, Santa Monica. On arrival at each, Jerry and I took photographs. Our first two stops were in Santa Monica. At South Bentley Avenue, we encountered Joe, the man of the house, who was about to pull out of his garage. He asked if he could help us, and we confessed why we had come. He was unfamiliar with Porter but assured us his wife, Patsy, was. Although she had just returned from exercising, she joined us and was delighted that Porter had once lived in their home. I gave her my card and told her that, when I returned to Maryland, I would consult my notes to refresh my memory and do some additional research on Porter's residence on South Bentley Avenue.

When I spoke with the owners of the South Bentley house in January, I told them that Porter had lived with her niece Ann Hollaway at the house in Westwood. In fact, she lived there alone for approximately two months in 1945. Previous to that, Porter had arrived in California on January 10, 1945, and immediately



South Bentley home where Porter resided from June 30 to September 7, 1945, January 7, 2020. Photograph by Jerry Findley.



Ann Hollaway [Heintze], southern California, circa February - May 1945. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

began her work at MGM. She resided at the Beverly Hills Hotel from January 10 to February 21, when she moved with her niece Ann to a house on 25th Street, Santa Monica. In early February, Ann had come to California from New York City at Porter's invitation, joining Porter at the Beverly Hills Hotel. While in southern California, Ann studied ballet at the studio of Bronislava Nijinska. Porter and her niece enjoyed a lively social life while living in Santa Monica, attending cocktail and dinner parties. They also entertained at 25th Street. Apparently sometime before May 15, Porter's birthday, she and Ann made the acquaintance of Robert Lewis (1909-1997). Actor, director, educator, and author, Lewis was an original member of New York's Group Theatre (1931-1941). In the 1940s, he acted and directed in Hollywood until returning to New York in

Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter

Members are welcome to submit articles, announcements, and comments for the society's newsletter. Please send them to Amber Kohl, Newsletter Editor amberk@umd.edu and/or Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita alvarez@umd.edu University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, MD 20742,

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.

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1946. His first major directing success was of the musical *Brigadoon*, which opened in New York in March 1947. In addition to his successful career as a Broadway director, Lewis became well-known as an educator. He co-founded the Actors Studio (1947), established and taught the Robert Lewis Theatre Workshop (1952-1997), and taught at colleges and universities including Yale University where he chaired the Acting and Directing Departments at the School of Drama (1975-1976).

Porter's May 19, 1945, letter to Monroe Wheeler described the birthday celebration orchestrated by Ann. Although Lewis is not named as one of the celebrants, it is clear that the party ended at Lewis's residence, on South Bentley Avenue. Like Porter, Lewis was a music lover with a large collection of

recordings. After dinner at the Beverly Hills Hotel, the party of five “went over to the pretty new home of one of the men, with a little patio full of roses, and listened to wonderful music—Trenet and Beethoven, Josh White and Burl Ives, and a lovely-voiced Russian woman singing the drunken song from Perikola, and then Conchita Supervia, a half dozen of her best things.” The correspondence exchanged between Porter and Lewis, found in her papers at the University of Maryland and his at Kent State University, documents the development of their relationship beginning in June 1945.

[Continued on page 13]

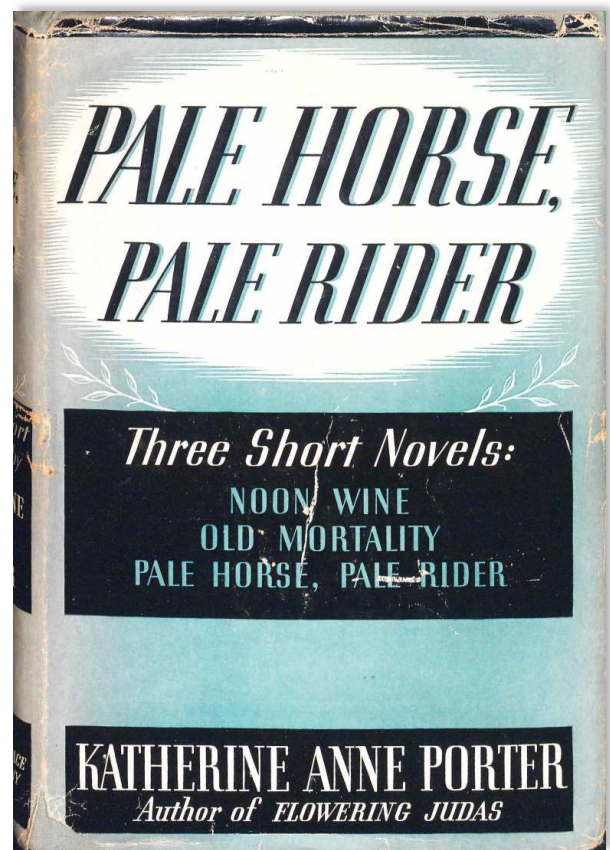
A Message from the President of the Porter Society

By Jerry Findley, Independent Scholar

The panel scheduled for the American Literature Association Conference in San Diego will present in Boston, May 27-30, 2021, along with a second panel and session. If you have a paper you would like us to consider, please submit your proposal by December 1 (jerryfindley1@gmail.com). Hilton Als of the *New Yorker* and *New York Review of Books* is scheduled to give a lecture at the Porter Center in Kyle, Texas, September 18, 2020, world permitting. If the lecture cannot go forward due to the coronavirus (or any other reason), I, speaking for the Society, hope it, too, will be rescheduled. If you learn of other events that might be of interest to the Porter Society, please send us the information to post.

2020 may be the year that brings the work of Katherine Anne Porter back to life. This guise of

life and death—her life as a writer is the life of her work—Porter knew well. At a party to celebrate the publication of *Ship of Fools*, a reporter greeted Porter with the question, “My GOD, Katherine Anne, isn’t it like being brought back from the dead?” The party, at 21, one of New York City’s most fashionable venues, Porter found “a purely commercial circus” and the reporter “some idiot.” Her rejoinder, “Why, nobody told me you’d been dead!” echoes one of Mark Twain’s most famous retorts. He was one of the writers Porter most admired; and, like Twain, Porter used a wry, caustic sense of humor to protect that which she most valued and loved: life.



Porter, Katherine Anne. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider: Three Short Novels*. 1st Edition. Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1939. Katherine Anne Porter Library. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Annual American Literature Association Conference 2020 and 2021

The 31st annual American Literature Association conference in San Diego, CA, scheduled for May 21-24, 2020, was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Katherine Anne Porter Society's planned session, "Katherine Anne Porter: Out of the Archives," will be presented at the 32nd conference in Boston, MA, May 2021. The papers on the panel, chaired by Beth Alvarez, will include "Katherine Anne Porter: Letters from Berlin, 1931-1932" by Joseph Kuhn, University of Adam Mickiewicz, Poznań, Poland; "The Correspondence between Katherine Anne Porter and Janice Biala" by Alice Cheylan, Université de Toulon, France; and "Intuition and Telepathy: How the Chance Encounter of George Platt Lynes with Katherine Anne Porter Created the Iconic Image of Shared Artistry and Lasting Friendship" by Jerry Findley, Independent Scholar. Amber Kohl, University of Maryland, will serve as the respondent.

The Society intends to sponsor a second session at the May 2021 conference. It will feature the graduate student paper awarded the first Katherine Anne Porter Graduate Student Paper Award. Jerry Findley will chair this session and invites papers on any topic on Katherine Anne Porter.

Please send a 200-word proposal and a brief biographical statement to Jerry Findley at jerryfindley1@gmail.com by December 1, 2020. Information about the Porter activities planned for the conference will be posted on the society's Web site: <https://kaportersociety.org/>. ☺

Porter, like Miranda in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," had crossed the line between life and death; and like those on board the *Vera* in *Ship of Fools*, between hope and despair, the latter many times. Around the time Porter received news of her first Guggenheim that would help fund her first trip to Europe on board the *Werra* (*Vera*), she wrote to a colleague (10 January 1931) who had worked with her on the *Rocky Mountain News* during the influenza epidemic of 1918:

The spirit and energy that appeared to you supernatural was in fact just that. I have not the slightest idea how I did it, nor precisely why, but I am beginning to see a little what I must have known in my bones then, you might say: that the latter time would be better than the first, if only I would consent to survive and see it. (*Selected Letters* 78)

Death and the Armistice of the First World War fused the two Nemeses of humanity, the ravages of disease and the ravages of war, inseparably into Porter's conscience, the connection made famous by Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*. To commemorate her escaping death during the First World War and her nephew's service and escaping death in the Second, Porter wrote to him thirty-four years after the Armistice:

On that day I came out of the death-stupor of influenza, and realized that I would live, after all, but it made such a change in me, that near-dying, and knowing just what was happening, it is as if I had had two lives—one on the other side of that illness, and the second one ever since. I have not a word to say against life; when I complain, it is only because the conditions of living seem to be so unnecessarily and stupidly painful.

When I am raising the most hell, it is a paradox; because I love life so much, I can't bear to have it so abused! (*Letters* 439)

Like the fifty to one hundred million who lost their lives, the influenza epidemic of 1918 was life-rending for Porter. To survive near-death, to rise from despair cast life in a different light for it to take on a different aura; or, like a melody pitched in a different register, life found a greater resonance to give a greater lift: "It simply divided my life, cut across it like that. So that everything before that was just getting ready, and after that I was in some strange way altered." The question Miranda asks Adam, "Don't you love being alive?" Porter gave the rest of her life to answer: "you know, I really do love this world."

The social and political world today, like the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and the influenza epidemic of 1918, may parallel the interwar years enough to bring back *Ship of Fools*. Porter's only novel is one of the great dystopian works of the Twentieth Century, and Western Civilization. It holds its own alongside Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, Albert Camus' *The Plague*; and alongside Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and other social and political screeds and satires. In their critique of humanity and the human condition—their world—these works strive to make their readers see what is wrong with their world, what is wrong with humanity, with us. Read within this literary tradition against the scrim of the world today, *Ship of Fools* may win the audience and the appreciation it never fully won in 1962. It appeared just as the world was turning away from the immediate past of the Long War (the First World War, the interwar years, the Second World War, and the Cold War) to turn

toward the immediate present of the Civil Rights, Youth, and Anti-War (Vietnam) Movements, leaving for us to take up the history Porter tried to address.

Porter is one of history's most astute readers. As she studied and doggedly tracked, humanity has been far more successful in addressing its physical ills (the sciences) than in addressing its spiritual ills (the humanities). Since the advent of modern science in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, humanity has made greater progress in its battle against disease and illness than in its battle against hatred and war. Humanity's lop-sided success and failure has [sic: one is the other] not been for lack of effort. Humanity has been struggling to find social and political constructs to allay its social ills (hatreds leading to murder and genocide) eons longer than it has been searching to find cures for its physical ills (diseases causing death and pandemics). Humanity's greater success in the physical sciences and its greater failure in the social sciences, the Twentieth Century makes more evident than any other epoch. Things got worse, not better. More people lost their lives in the movements that enveloped the last century (the social and political ideologies) than in the influenza epidemic of 1918, or in the military and civilian carnage of the First and Second World Wars. Porter, as early as 1931, saw where the world was headed: the slaughter of over one hundred million, not to protect life, but to protect an ideology, the lingering vestige that continues to plague and to roil the world today: where humanity is, and where humanity has been mired for the past two millennia.

Life and death centered Porter's life (and much of her work) as the dialectic centers the life, the very existence, of each of us. The current pandemic, although it does not approach that of a century ago, has, with the aid of technology, morphed the

Katherine Anne Porter Society Graduate Student Paper Award

Beginning in 2020, the Katherine Anne Porter Society will sponsor an annual Graduate Student Paper Award. Interested applicants should submit an article-length (15-25 page) paper on any Katherine Anne Porter topic.

The initial winner, which will be announced on December 1, 2020, will be invited to present a shortened form of the paper at the annual Katherine Anne Porter Society Session at the American Literature Association Conference and will be featured in an article of the *Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter*. The award also brings a monetary prize of \$250.

Please email submissions as Word attachments to Jerry Findley at jerryfindley1@gmail.com by June 30, 2020. Submissions for the 2021 award should be emailed to Jerry Findley by June 30, 2021. 🌀

world into a memento mori. Death hovers over the world to remind us we are vulnerable. We are mortal. Reading “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” within the cultural context of the world today will not inoculate us—humanity—from disease and illness; nor will working through *Ship of Fools* inoculate humanity from hatred and war. No one, no thing can protect humanity from these evils. Humanity’s vulnerabilities to disease are endemic, inherent in the human condition; and humanity’s vulnerabilities to hatred are innate, intrinsic, part of the episteme of humanity and what it means to be human. The vulnerabilities of humanity are, like death, always there.

So, too, Porter’s legacy. Porter was and her legacy is there to help others, not when times are good—

humanity does not need help then—but when times are bad and humanity needs all the help it can get. Having experienced the Happy Days of Greek mythology, the Beatific Vision of Judeo-Christianity, Porter tried to give others, her fellow humanity—us—what Adam gave Miranda and Alexander gave her (*Letters* 90; 605; *Selected Letters* 152): another life, not the literal meaning of *life*, but the metaphoric: a better chance at a better life. Her social, political, and cultural commentary, her stories, and her novel proffer, alongside the legacy of the many who went before and the many who have come after, a chance for humanity—for us—like Miranda, like Porter, to escape from the darkness and get into the light. It is our world and our time to “consent to survive and see it.” The transcendent world of life and death and life awaits each “salvaged creature” on this side of the great divide in the here and now. It is for some, like Porter, the most inspiring vision of eternity. “Now there would be time for everything.” 🌀

American Academy of Arts and Letters: Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature, 2020

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

Christine Schutt was the recipient of the 2020 Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. This year’s award committee members were Louise Glück, John Guara, Amy Hempel, Jayne Anne Phillips, Terry Tempest Williams, and Joy Williams. The ceremonial did not take place this year, because, in the interest of public health, the Academy canceled all of its spring 2020 events.

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.”

Schutt is the tenth writer to win this award, joining Lynn Freed (awarded in 2002), Nicholson Baker (2004), Arturo Vivante (2006), John Edgar Wideman (2008), Tim O’Brien (2010), Maureen Howard (2012), Sherman Alexie (2014), Kathryn Davis (2016), and Noy Holland (2018).

Noted for her craftsmanship and economic style that packs wit, beauty, and insight, Schutt is the author of six books (three collections of stories and three novels). “In all her novels and stories,” Christina Wood Martinez writes, “she lays bare, in musical and precise prose, the messiest parts of human life: ill-fitting intimacies, bad desires, fetid loneliness, physical and mental illness, and the desperate, scrabbling need for love and home—all that is most complex and contradictory in her characters.”

Often compared to Flannery O’Connor and Virginia Woolf by critics, she published her first work, *Nightwork*, a collection of stories, in 1996. It received critical acclaim and was chosen by poet John Ashbery as the best book of the year for the *Times Literary Supplement*. Although she began writing in her twenties, Schutt was 48 years old at the time her first book was published. In the *Paris Review*’s video series titled “My First Time,” she reflects on how difficult it was to believe in her writing and to publish her first book. Emboldened after her divorce to an abusive husband, Schutt released *Nightwork*, whose title, she has said,

captures the wee hours of the morning when she found the time to work on her book.

Nightwork was followed by two books published in 2005—a second short story collection, *A Day, A Night, Another Day, Summer*, and, her first novel, *Florida*. The latter was a finalist for the 2004 National Book Award. Her second novel, *All Souls*, published in 2008, was a finalist for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize. *Prosperous Friends*, Schutt’s third novel, was praised in *The New Yorker* as one of the best books of 2012 and was described by *The New York Times Book Review* as “shot through with [Virginia] Woolf’s lyrical, restless spirit.” Her most recent collection of short stories, *Pure Hollywood*, was released in 2018, to favorable reviews, among them many that praise her technical accomplishments: “This book is a masterwork that hits way harder than its weight class, and achieves what great fiction always achieves—it commands us to be aware.”

Her fiction has appeared in such literary magazines as *NOON*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Harper’s*, and *Granta*. It has also been anthologized in *The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories* (2004) and *KGB Bar Reader* (1998). Recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and New York Foundation of the Arts grant, Schutt garnered a Pushcart Prize and twice won the O. Henry Short Story Prize. In 2017, she was the Tin House Visiting Writer at Portland State University, Oregon. Senior editor at *NOON*, she has taught high school English at The Nightingale-Bamford School in New York City as well as creative writing in many MFA programs as a visiting writer; she regularly teaches at the Sewanee Writers’ Conference. Born and raised in a small town in Wisconsin, Schutt moved to New York City after earning her BA and MA degrees at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She studied at Barnard with novelist and critic Elizabeth Hardwick. She

received her MFA in fiction from Columbia University, where she frequently works as an adjunct instructor. ☺

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 2019-2020 academic year, Luis J. Rodríguez, Carmen Machado, Melissa Febos, Adrian Matejka, and Erika L. Sánchez 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. September 2020 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center. To celebrate the anniversary, Hilton Als will visit the center on September 18, 2020, to give a talk on the life and work of KAP. Als's "Enameled Lady: How Katherine Anne Porter Perfected Herself" was published in *New Yorker* on April 13, 2009. Als is a staff writer for the *New Yorker* as well as an associate professor of writing at Columbia University's School of the Arts and has taught at Yale University, Wesleyan, and Smith College.

Until 2018, Texas State's MFA program published an on-line 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 (<http://frontporchjournal.com/>). Relaunched as *Porter House Review* (<https://porterhoureview.org/>) in November 2018, the 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 Jamel Brinkley, Charles D'Ambrosio, Erica Dawson, Ben Fountain, Cristina García, Carmen Maria Machado, 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 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: 2018-2019

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

The past year was a quiet one for scholarship on the work of Katherine Anne Porter: just two articles were published. 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 bibliography.

Contributing to Southern and modern studies, Melanie Benson Taylor's "[Katherine Anne Porter's Familiar Countries](#)," *American Literary History* 31.2 (2019): 187-205, explores Porter's ambivalent treatment of the South, arguing that the Southern region and mindset, which Porter displaced onto such settings as post revolutionary Mexico and Bermuda, served as a reservoir for "imperial infections" (188). Discussing Porter's unfinished biography of Cotton Mather, "Magic," "Pale

Horse, Pale Rider," among other works, Taylor maintains that *Ship of Fools* is "a perfectly apt end to a career early and continuously attuned to the infectious spread of human evil throughout the modern world" (200).

My "[In transition: Catholic Overtones in Kay Boyle's 'Theme' and Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Jilting of Granny Weatherall'](#)," *South Central Review* 35.2 (2018): 103-16, performs a rereading of two stories published in Eugene Jolas's *transition*: Boyle's little-known "Theme" and Porter's well-known "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall." The article argues that these two works appealed to Jolas not only because of their experimental form, but because the content contains traces of Catholicism. ☺

Katherine Anne Porter News from the University of Maryland Libraries

By Amber Kohl, University of Maryland

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Maryland closed to the public beginning Friday, March 13, 2020. As of June 1, 2020 staff are working from home to provide remote reference assistance to researchers until further notice. We hope to get clarity in the upcoming weeks about plans for opening the Libraries while also practicing social distancing and other health measures to keep our staff and visitors safe.

In the meantime, contact Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books in Special Collections and University Archives, if you have any questions

about accessing the collections or planning future visits to the archives.

You are still able to access digitized materials from the Katherine Anne Porter holdings at the University of Maryland while staying home and saving lives! Resources available online include digitized photographs in our digital collections repository (<http://digital.lib.umd.edu/>), content on our blog (<https://hornbakelibrary.wordpress.com/>), and approximately 3800 items of digitized correspondence in *Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence from the Archives, 1912-1977*: (www.go.umd.edu/KAP).

We have continued to enhance the online exhibit *Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence from the Archives, 1912-1977*, which now features new pages highlighting the correspondence with and information about the following correspondents in the archives: Isabel Bayley, Eleanor Clark and Robert Pen Warren, Glenway Wescott, Monroe Wheeler, and George Platt Lynes.

Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence from the Archives, 1912-1977 can be found online at www.go.umd.edu/KAP. 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 System and Stewardship units, supported by a grant from the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust.


Maryland Day was cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 health crisis, but you can experience virtual Maryland Day activities on our blog at <https://hornbakelibrary.wordpress.com/2020/04/25/virtual-maryland-day-2020/>, which includes information on the Katherine Anne Porter Room in Hornbake Library, a popular spot for visitors to drop in and speak with Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita at the University of Maryland. Beth continued to staff the Katherine Anne Porter room during the Fall and Spring academic semesters on Wednesday afternoons until the campus closure.

Inquiries to the curator about "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" have increased in the past few months, owing largely to interest in Porter's experience with the influenza pandemic in 1918. A blog post providing an overview of Porter and the Spanish Flu can be found online at <https://hornbakelibrary.wordpress.com/2020/05/28/katherine-anne-porter-and-the-1918-influenza-pandemic-part-i-the-spanish-flu/>.

In lighter news, Amber Kohl won 2nd place in the #HaikuFromHomeUMD challenge sponsored by the UMD Libraries and the UMD English Department with her Porter inspired poetry.

Sick with Spanish Flu
Katherine Anne Porter survived
Pale Horse Pale Rider
—Amber



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

Updates from the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project

By Jeanette Schollaert, University of Maryland

The past year of work at the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project has been a busy and unique one! As we wait for the correspondence digitized in Phase 3 to be uploaded, we focused our efforts on updating the Correspondence Project website. The correspondence for Phase 2--focused on Porter's close friendships and literary communities--has been available on the Project website for some time, but this year, we uploaded new biographies for select correspondents from Phase 2. These biographies include featured pages for correspondents of particular significance to Porter, like the trustee of Porter's literary estate, [Isabel Bayley](#); Porter's close friends [Robert Penn Warren and Eleanor Clark](#); and Porter's intimate circle of [Glenway Wescott, Monroe Wheeler, and George Platt Lynes](#). These featured biographies provide a closer look at the role these friendships played in Porter's literary work and her personal life.

In addition to these featured biographies, we have also uploaded bite-size biographical annotations of a selected group of Phase 2 correspondents on the



Isabel Bayley, 1951, France. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Project's "[Additional Correspondents](#)" page. Brief overviews of Porter's relationships with literati like Cleanth Brooks, Caroline Gordon, Ford Madox Ford, Flannery O'Connor, and Eudora Welty provide multiple new entryways into navigating the rich relationships chronicled in Porter's correspondence. We hope that these annotations provide new perspectives on the fascinating relationships Porter enjoyed throughout her life.

Beyond updating the Project's website, we featured Porter's correspondence in two blog posts for the University of Maryland's Special Collections and University Archives site. These posts take a deep-dive into the adaptations of Porter's famous short novel, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" for [the screen](#) and [the stage](#). Porter's short novel, first published in *Southern Review* in 1938, set at the time of the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 on the eve of



Glenway Wescott, George Platt Lynes, and Monroe Wheeler, June 14, 1937, Coney Island, NY. Porter tore her face out of the photograph. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

World War I's end, is eerily resonant with our current coronavirus pandemic. These two blog posts, published well before the coronavirus pandemic began making global headlines in December 2019, offer a look into the archives of memorabilia that Porter herself kept regarding the screen and stage adaptations of what is arguably her most famous story. Though Porter's story was adapted decades after its initial publication, it continues to capture the audience's imaginations, and this resonance continues to the present day.

Upcoming projects for the Correspondence Project involve continuing to write and compile

biographic information from noted correspondents featured in Phase 3, Cyrilly Abels, Seymour Lawrence, and E. Barrett Prettyman. As soon as feasible, the digitized correspondence from Phase 3, as well as these biographical annotations, will be added to the project site. This year, we also hoped to make progress on a marginalia log of the books in the Porter room library, housed in Hornbake library; however, this particular project has been put on hold due to the University of Maryland's emergency shift to remote learning for the spring semester. We hope that all KAP Society members, readers, friends, and loved ones are safe and well in these uncertain times.

For more frequent updates on the Project's goings-on, follow [the University of Maryland Special Collections and University Archives blog](#) or follow the SCUA Twitter at [@HornbakeLibrary](#).

Jeannette Schollaert is a Graduate Assistant at the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project and a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Maryland. Her research focuses on twentieth century American literature, reproduction, and ecocriticism. She can be reached at jes5@umd.edu. ☞

Update from the Katherine Anne Porter Trust

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

I hope that all of you Katherine Anne Porter fans are staying safe and well during this uncertain and scary time. Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones!

Like most institutions of higher education in the United States, the University of Maryland has closed its campus for now. Teaching and research have moved online, including the work of the University of Maryland Libraries. You can read about the Libraries' response to the coronavirus pandemic, and keep track of our plans, at <https://www.lib.umd.edu/about/coronavirus-updates>. The safety, security, and health of Libraries employees and users are our primary consideration.

Meanwhile, the Libraries continue to support research and teaching online. This includes the Katherine Anne Porter collections in Special Collections and University Archives. Our finding aid for Porter at <https://lib.guides.umd.edu/KatherineAnnePorter> provides researchers with access to a wealth of digital content, including Porter's digitized correspondence at <https://www.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence>. If you have questions about accessing Porter material on the web, please contact Amber Kohl, Curator for Literature and Rare Books, at amberk@umd.edu.

Both before and despite the coronavirus pandemic the work of the Porter Trust continues to move forward. The digital edition of *Ship of Fools*, published by Open Road Integrated Media, continues to sell well and provide additional income to the Trust. The Trust has also received inquiries from several parties around the world to edit or adapt a number of Porter works in a variety of formats. We are working with the publishers and other rights holders on these projects, and will report on them in the next issue. There is particular interest in Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." Its setting during the influenza pandemic of 1918 is especially relevant today.

The Trust has also been planning other initiatives to promote Porter studies. One project in the works is the creation of a visiting scholar's program to fund researchers' travel to College Park and use the Porter collection on site. The Libraries are also exploring the possibility of hosting a symposium in the next few years. These projects are of course on hold until the University and Libraries reopen to researchers, but planning continues, and we will report on them in the next issue.

Despite the current crisis, the University of Maryland Libraries continue to support both the KAP Library and the KAP Literary Trust. We continue to support online researchers, and are actively planning how to reopen our facilities safely and responsibly. The safety, security, and health of our employees and users continue to be our highest priority. We look forward to the day we can welcome researchers back on campus, and hope that we can announce new Porter initiatives in the issue. Until that time, please be safe and well! 💜

A Little Incident in South Bentley Avenue

[Continued from page 3]

Porter shared with him the manuscript of the novel that would become *Ship of Fools*, and he sent her a document he described as a "critique." By June 14, Lewis had offered Porter his residence on South Bentley Avenue, during the roughly two-month period he would be working in New York. Apparently, dinner at the 25th Street house on June 15, hosted by Porter and her niece, settled the arrangement. In mid-April, Porter had left MGM,

to turn to work on the novel, supported by savings and income from her writing. Porter's lease at 25th Street was to expire at the end of May. When she learned the rent would rise from \$260 to \$400 a month, she needed a more modest residence, especially as Ann was to leave Los Angeles for New York City on May 25.

Porter moved into Lewis's South Bentley Avenue residence on June 30; it is unclear whether she sublet it from Lewis or simply paid the utilities and other expenses during her residence. The surviving items of correspondence exchanged between Porter and Lewis between June 30 and September 7, the period she occupied the South Bentley Avenue house, number nineteen, eleven written by Porter and eight by Lewis. Lewis reported on his activities in New York including his work and common acquaintances and friends, including Porter's niece Ann. His shipments of his extensive collection of recordings to Westwood initiated discussion of music and musicians they both admired, Maggie Teyte and Conchita Supervia. Porter reported on the house and garden, the receipt of Lewis's packages, and her idyllic life: "I live my days in the most fruitful idleness, reading, writing, and listening to music, sun bathing and eating properly for once" (KAP to Robert Lewis, 23 July 1945). But that idyll was belied by what she had concluded by July 23: "Am giving up any attempt to finish the novel or do anything else, as I cannot work any more, now that I know my time is so short. I can't bear to be interrupted again." Lewis urged Porter to stay at South Bentley Avenue once he returned. However, as her letters reveal, she decided to stay on in California rather than returning to New York and South Hill, a plan she considered.

The two months during which Porter lived in Westwood were momentous in terms of world history. Atom bombs were dropped on Japan on



The living room in Robert Lewis's South Bentley Avenue residence in Westwood, (Los Angeles) California, May 5, 1946. Katherine Anne Porter lived in Lewis's home from June 30 to September 7, 1945. Robert Lewis Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Kent State University Libraries.

August 6 and 9, and Japan formally surrendered on September 2, bringing an end to World War II. Porter's August 7 letter to Lewis was prescient: "What my mind won't leave is the atom bomb and the changed prospects for the human race. Imagine man having released a power somebody will have to patrol and guard night and day for all time to come; if for one day it falls into the wrong hands, bang goes the works, darling." Although Porter had given up work on the novel previously, it is not difficult to understand why she could not concentrate in the weeks leading to September 2. "I have done nothing but hang on the radio from seven a.m. until 1 a.m. and for the first time in my life I bless the radio for something beside an occasional piece of music I can bear to listen to" (KAP to Robert Lewis, 11 August 1945). "I'm useless to myself and every body these days. I must rush back to the radio. It COULD happen, any minute, maybe. . . Maybe this war is ended even now. . ." (KAP to Robert Lewis, 13 August 1945).

On September 7, the day before Lewis returned to California, Porter moved from South Bentley



Robert Lewis with a portion of his extensive collection of recordings at his South Bentley Avenue residence, May 5, 1946. Robert Lewis Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Kent State University Libraries.

Avenue to an apartment on 6th Street, Santa Monica, where she lived until December 1947. She and Lewis resumed their friendship, documented by the additional twenty-eight pieces of correspondence that survive in their respective papers. That evidence suggests that they remained fond friends through 1947. The last of the existing letters is Porter's December 27, 1953, letter to Lewis. The most significant groupings of this correspondence are Porter's to Lewis between March and July 1946 and their exchanges between August 1946 and December 1947.

In March 1946, Porter had retreated to a ranch in Lucerne Valley, California, to complete a screen writing project. Despite her reservations, she had signed a contract with Paramount, working with Charles Brackett between November 1945 and March 1946. Her March 21 letter to Lewis expressed her regret, "This is not my kind of work,

I always knew it, I didn't need this proof. But this will be all." In April and May 1946, Porter was on the east coast primarily to arrange the shipment of her remaining belongings at South Hill, her home near Saratoga Springs, NY, to California. (She had sold the property to George and Toni Willison.) Her June 9 letter to Lewis reported on the health collapse she had suffered on her return to California and her renewed resolution: "But I need at least three months of total freedom to finish my novel and I am going to have them—no matter who gets hurt feelings." Her last communication to Lewis from this period begged off from a social engagement: "very tired and staying in bed" (KAP to Robert Lewis, 3 July 1946).

Before his August 21, 1946, letter to Porter was written, Lewis had relocated to New York City. He was waiting to begin directing rehearsals for Thomas Job's play *Land's End* and reported on common acquaintances, searching for a house to buy in the country, and having seen the portion of her novel published in *Accent*. His remaining exchanges written through September 9, 1947, document the progression to production on Broadway of the musical *Brigadoon* that Lewis directed to universal acclaim. These letters also recount his success in buying a home in Connecticut and plans for a studio for professional actors to be conducted with Elia Kazan. In all of them, he expressed his affection for Porter and, in many, issued invitations to visit him at his Connecticut home. Porter's responses to Lewis range over a variety of subjects: common acquaintances, searching for a house to buy, gardening, various writing projects, and William Wyler's interest in one of her stories for a film. Her health is another subject as is its effect on the progress of her novel. After her collapse after a trip to Louisiana and Tennessee, she wrote Lewis: "For me, I make a fresh resolution about my time and energies, both of which are pretty shortened by my



Robert Lewis with a portion of his extensive collection of recordings at his South Bentley Avenue residence, May 5, 1946. Robert Lewis Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Kent State University Libraries.

latest illness: I shan't answer the telephone or doorbell or a letter, or go to a party or have any one here until my novel is finished" (KAP to Robert Lewis, May 14, 1947). That resolution, like many others, did not come to fruition.

The surviving correspondence of the two after Porter's 1947 Christmas greeting to Lewis consists of three items. It is likely that Lewis lost touch with Porter, as she moved from the 6th Street apartment in Santa Monica in early 1948. She lived with George Platt Lynes in Hollywood for four months, then spent approximately a year teaching at Stanford University before moving to New York City in September 1949. Lewis addressed a December 19, 1951, postcard announcing the opening of Robert Lewis Theatre Workshop to Porter's publisher. Having located her New York address, his January 8, 1952, letter noted "I have often wished to see you, and follow your fortunes as of old, and have certainly thought of you often," and asked for her phone number to arrange to take her to lunch. The last surviving letter is Porter's of December 27, 1953, writing from Ann Arbor, MI, where she had accepted a

one-year teaching appointment in September 1953. After the salutation, this letter opened: "It is not as if your career is unknown to me, but your personal whereabouts have been mostly." She described the subjects of her course on poetry and plans to go to "Egypt I hope or some where quite far away" after summer 1954, suggested he listen to her recordings of "The Downward Path to Wisdom" and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," and concluded, "Good luck and every thing you wish for the new year."

Like Porter's "A Little Incident in the Rue de l'Odeon," whose title I have modeled, the subject of this short piece does not center on the incident of the title. Porter's essay is primarily an appreciation of her friend Sylvia Beach, famous as the owner of the bookshop Shakespeare and Company in Paris. Mine is a reconstruction of a short, intense, and fond relationship in Porter's long and complicated life. Lewis was one of the many bright and talented individuals whose life touched hers. Sharing a love of music and theater, both derived pleasure and support from their brief relationship. 🌸