Newsletter
of the
Katherine Anne Porter
Society
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"The Ship of This World on Its Voyage to Eternity:"

Allegories of Global Ecological Apocalypse in Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools*

By Lydia Nixon, Indiana University

Editor's Note: Lydia Nixon's "'The Ship of This World on Its Voyage to Eternity': Allegories of Global Ecological Apocalypse in Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools*" received the Katherine Anne Porter Society Graduate Paper Award in 2020. Lydia Nixon is a Ph.D. student at Indiana University, Bloomington, specializing in 20th and 21st century American literature with a minor in Critical Race and Postcolonial Studies. She studies ecologies and identity-making in the context of the Anthropocene, particularly looking at anti-colonial alternatives to mainstream American environmental literature and theory.

World War II was still in its nascent stages as Katherine Anne Porter began writing her novel, *Ship of Fools*, in 1941. Her painstaking drafting of the novel lasted over two decades, the violent conflict and aftermath of the war casting a shadow throughout this process. When she finally published the novel in 1962, it had evolved into a kind of post-mortem examination of the global devastation she witnessed during this period. The title, *Ship of Fools*, is taken from a satirical allegory written by Sebastian Brant in 1494, and Porter implies her own work should similarly be read allegorically: "I took for my own this simple almost universal image of the ship of this world on its voyage to eternity," she writes in her introductory note to the novel, adding cryptically, "I am a passenger on that ship" (vii).

The North German Lloyd ship SS Werra, on which Porter travelled from Mexico to Germany, August 22-September 17, 1931. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Set in 1931, during the global tensions mounting just prior to the war, Porter's ship embarks on a voyage from Veracruz, Mexico, to Bremerhaven,

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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.

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

Update on the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

Since last reported in June 2021, there has been progress on the correspondence project. Unfortunately, the online resources available on the project website remain the roughly 3,800 items comprising Phase One and Phase Two of the project: Porter's family correspondence and that of her literary friends. The items digitized documenting Porter's business dealings, relations with literary agents, and financial matters are still awaiting uploading to the website. However, an extremely positive development in January 2022 was the hiring of Mattie Lewis as the graduate student to support the project.

In the time intervening between June 2021 and the present, I concentrated on two tasks. For the first of these, I completed the preparatory work for Phase Four of the project that will include Porter's personal correspondence that was not included in Phase Two as well as her correspondence relating to her professional activities, lectures, awards, and interviews. This work included reviewing relevant files, assigning dates to undated Porter correspondence, recording the number of pages of her correspondence in each file. Mattie Lewis has made excellent progress on creating metadata for this grouping of correspondence. As it is not clear when the materials of Phase Four will be digitized, it is likely that a small amount of Porter correspondence in related collections will be added to the existing body of correspondence comprising Phase Four.

My second task, which is nearly completed, is transcribing Porter's handwritten letters and notes digitized in Phase Three. Eventually the plan is for researchers to be able to search the texts of the digitized letters. The texts of Porter's typewritten letters will be searchable; Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software has and will convert the digitized paper documents into an accessible electronic version. As the technology cannot convert handwritten documents, they must be transcribed manually. The transcription of handwritten letters in this phase has taken far longer than anticipated as Porter wrote a large number of handwritten letters to her lawyer and friend, E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr. When that task is completed, I will turn to preparing the additional

Porter correspondence to be digitized in Phase Four.

For more frequent updates on the Project's goings-on, follow the University of Maryland Special Collections and University Archives blog at www.hornbakelibrary.wordpress.com or follow the SCUA Twitter account @HornbakeLibrary. Feel free to contact Beth Alvarez, alvarez@umd.edu, or Amber Kohl, amberk@umd.edu, if you have questions. ∽

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2020-2021

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

Porter and her work continue to receive scholarly attention. This past year saw the publication of two book chapters, three articles, and one dissertation chapter. Porter was also profiled in three books: *Notable American Women Writers*, edited by Laura M. Nicosia and James F. Nicosia, Salem Press, 2020; *Daily Rituals: Women at Work*, by Mason Currey, Knopf, 2019; and *Texas Entertainers: Lone Stars in Profile*, by Bartee Haile, Arcadia Publishing Inc., 2019. Her 1958 and 1963 letters to and from Flannery O'Connor were included in *Good Things Out of Nazareth: The Uncollected Letters of Flannery and Friends*, edited by Benjamin B. Alexander, Convergent Books, 2019. An excerpt of the ending of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, titled "1918: Denver What Now?" was republished in the summer 2020 epidemic issue of *Lapham's Quarterly*.* And, *Texas Monthly* published Michael Agresta's 2020 "The Seminal Novel About the 1918 Flu Pandemic Was Written by A Texan," which comments on *Pale Horse, Pale Rider's* "enduring reputation."

To compile this bibliography, I searched the MLA International Bibliography, ABELL, and the University of Delaware's online catalog, 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.

Michal Choiński devotes the second chapter of *Southern Hyperboles: Metafigurative Strategies of*

2023 American Literature Association Conference

Jerry Findley will chair the Katherine Anne Porter Society session at the 34th American Literature Association Conference.

This session invites papers on any topic on or related to Katherine Anne Porter.

Please send a 200-word proposal and a brief biographical statement to Jerry Findley at jerryfindley1@gmail.com by December 1, 2022.

The conference will take place May 25-28, 2023, at the Westin Copley Place in Boston, MA. Conference details and information about hotel reservations will be available through the Web site of the American Literature Association: https://americanliteratureassociation.org. Information about the Porter activities planned for the conference will be posted on the society's Website: www.kaportersociety.org. ∽

Narration, LSU Press, 2020, to exploring how Porter employs extreme elements or tropes of hyperbole in her metanarrative design to chart Miranda's maturation. His study of Porter, along with six other U.S southern writers, argues that the mode of hyperbole "relies on a clash of opposites, along with the rapid intensification of disharmonious ideas pushed to extremes," which leads to "an ultimate break in established decorum." "The shock produced by hyperbole generates a momentary state of confusion that soon dissipates, allowing recipients to reach a new understanding of their surrounding world." In "Rites of Passage: Katherine Anne Porter" Choiński analyzes "The Source," "Old Mortality," and "The Grave" to illustrate the excessive rituals Miranda undergoes to escape the limits placed on females in the name of southern etiquette.

William Solomon's "Politics, Rhetoric, and Death in Katherine Anne Porter," published in *Modernist Women Writers and American Social Engagement*, edited by Jody Cardinal, Deirdre E. Egan-Ryan, and Julia Lisella, Lexington Books, 2019, argues that Porter often examined the psychology of her left-wing characters, many of whom contemplated death. Solomon notes that Porter's focus on the interior realm of subjectivity "did not occur at the expense of an awareness of the importance of outward matters, but rather was posited as the critical precondition for social involvement." He offers *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* and "Flowering Judas" as two compelling examples of this, for they provide insight into the unconscious processes and the role language plays in reflecting critically upon the anxieties caused by political turmoil that often are repressed.

In "Rendezvous with the Pandemic Survivors: An Analysis of the Spanish Flu in Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* and COVID-19," *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 12.5 (2020): 1-7, Salini Sethi, Sonali Das, and Mousumo Dash note the similarities between the pandemic of 1918 and our current pandemic, as they read "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" as an autobiographical account of a survivor.

Christine Grogan's "Visions and Revisions in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Jilting of Granny Weatherall,'" *Mississippi Quarterly* 72.1 (2019): 49-68, discusses the changes Porter made to her story between the one she published in *transition* in 1929 and the one collected in *Flowering Judas* in 1930. The essay charts those revisions and argues that, in the span of seven months, Porter made significant changes that merit exploration and that may help answer some of the long-standing questions about the piece and provide insight regarding Porter's changing views on religion.

In "Going Slumming in Mexico: Rereading Primitivism in Katherine Anne Porter's *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*," *Beyond the Margins: A Journal of Graduate Literary Scholarship* 1 (2020), Annika M. Schadewaldt argues against those who read Porter's Mexico stories as showing a gradual disillusionment with the Mexican revolution. Positioning "That Tree" as the last story Porter set in Mexico, she contends that *Flowering Judas*'s six short stories "provide a remarkably early depiction of the politically problematic elements of primitivism, highlighting both the romanticized world view inherent in this movement and the lack of real change for Mexico's native population."

"'That Deadly Female Accuracy of Vision': Katherine Anne Porter and Tina Modotti in Mexico," Kristina Krause's third chapter of her dissertation titled "A Web of Connections: How Early Twentieth-Century American Women Writers and Photographers Situated a New Way of Seeing," Claremont Graduate University, 2020, argues that Porter was connected to Tina Modotti

"through their involvement in the cultural renaissance in post-revolutionary Mexico in the 1920s and through their depictions of indigenous Mexicans."

* "1918: Denver What Now?" published in *Lapham's Quarterly* is identical with the *Collected Stories'* text of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, except for deletions.

In Memoriam: Catherine Arms Graves Prince (1927-2021)

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

Catherine Prince and Pouncetti, April 1963, Washington, D.C . Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Catherine Prince and her husband John met Katherine Anne Porter in the 1950s through their common friend Marcella Comès Winslow. Porter had lived with Winslow and her children in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, DC, in 1944 during her tenure at the Library of Congress. Although John Prince completed a graduate degree in English at the University of Missouri and taught there briefly, he moved to Washington, DC, in 1954 after study at the Cordon Blue in France. In Washington, Prince began work in catering, through which he met Catherine Graves, whom he married in 1955. Mr. Prince wrote a cooking column for *Ladies Home Journal* magazine in the 1960s. Illustrations of Mr. and Mrs. Prince's entertaining at their home were featured in several of the magazine's issues.

The Princes developed a warm friendship with Porter that was nurtured by correspondence and occasional visits during the 1950s. In 1959, Porter moved to the Georgetown section of Washington, where she rented a house near the Princes until 1962. Between 1959 and 1963, Porter and the Princes socialized frequently. After the publication of *Ship of Fools*, Porter decided to settle permanently in Washington, D.C. At her request in late 1963, Mr. Prince, now working in real estate, acted on her behalf to locate a house for her to purchase. Their friendship abruptly terminated in January 1964 as a result of the subsequent failed real estate transaction. John and Catherine Prince continued to live in Washington, where Mr. Prince remained active in real estate. John Prince died on February 11, 2011. Portions of the following obituary of Catherine Prince were published at the time of her death in December 2021.

A lifelong resident of the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, DC, Catherine Prince was born on May 26, 1927, in Cambridge,

Massachusetts. Her father, Frederick Mortimer Graves, was a linguist who served as Executive Director of the American Council of Learned Societies. Her mother, Jane Hamlin Everett, was the daughter of Herbert Edward Everett, the first-named professor of the History of Art and Architecture, at the University of Pennsylvania. Catherine's family moved to the District of Columbia in 1927, and she lived at five Georgetown addresses during her lifetime.

In 1936, when Catherine was nine, she spent over eight months traveling with her parents to Belgium, Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Kyiv, Russia, and China. They took the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to Peking and spent Christmas in Shanghai. After that, they went to Nanjing and took a boat to Japan, stopping at Kyoto and Tokyo and through the Inland Sea before taking the Empress of China ship to Hawaii and home. Catherine spent summers in Newburyport, MA, and winters visiting in Key West, FL, where she learned to drive a car.

In Washington, DC, Catherine attended Mrs. Whitehead's Nursery School and the Town and Country School. In 1932 she attended Beauvoir during its founding year and graduated from the National Cathedral School class of 1945. She went to Bryn Mawr College for two years before accompanying her parents on an extended trip to the Near East countries of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt.

After her return from the Near East, she worked at Ann's Kitchen, a Georgetown food and catering shop at the end of P Street on the northwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue. There she met and helped hire her future husband. They married in 1955 at St. Mary's Chapel, Washington National Cathedral. A talented artist, Catherine created decorative tiles and ceramics. Katherine Anne Porter, commissioned Catherine to create a tiled coffee table about her life, which is housed in the Katherine Anne Porter Room at Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Mrs. Prince was a member of Christ Church, Georgetown and the Georgetown Recorder Group. She was a Mayflower descendant of two pilgrims, Stephen Hopkins and Edward Doty.

KAP News from the University of Maryland Libraries

By Amber Kohl, University of Maryland Libraries

This year we have returned to normal operations in Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Maryland Libraries and are excited to continue work on Katherine Anne Porter projects and resources. Our priority has been to resume our efforts digitizing the outgoing correspondence of Katherine Anne Porter for the online exhibit/database Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence from the Archives, 1912-1977. The exhibit/database, which can be found online at www.go.umd.edu/KAP, showcases digitized correspondence from the Libraries' Katherine Anne Porter papers and related collections. It also provides contextual information on Porter's life and the individuals with whom she corresponded.

I am pleased to announce a new member of the Katherine Anne Porter team in Special Collections and University Archives, graduate student assistant Mattie Lewis. Mattie, a graduate student in UMD's iSchool, is continuing the work of compiling metadata for material from the Katherine Anne Porter collections to be shipped

Katherine Anne Porter Activities at the 2022 American Literature Association Conference

On May 26, 2022, at the 33rd annual American Literature Association Conference in Chicago, IL, Beth Alvarez chaired the Katherine Anne Porter Society's panel entitled "Katherine Anne Porter: Out of the Archives." The papers included "The Correspondence between Katherine Anne Porter and Janice Biala" by Alice Cheylan, Université de Toulon, France; "'Pale Horse, Pale Rider': Humanity, Truth, and Immortality " by Jerry Findley, Independent Scholar; and "The Ship of This World on Its Voyage to Eternity': Allegories of Ecological Apocalypse in Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools*," by Lydia Nixon, Indiana University. Lydia Nixon was awarded the first Katherine Anne Porter Graduate Student Paper Award in 2020. Amber Kohl, University of Maryland, served as the respondent.

At the annual business meeting conducted over lunch, members discussed current membership, the treasury balance, plans for the 2023 and 2024 American Literature Association conferences, election of a president for 2023-2026, the graduate student paper award, and the forthcoming newsletter issue.

out for digitization. Mattie has also started a project inventorying annotated and inscribed books from Katherine Anne Porter's personal library. This will allow researchers to more easily identify titles in which Porter wrote notes and comments in the margins. Mattie has also planned social media posts for our Special Collections blog, Instagram, and Twitter accounts that will help further promote our Porter holdings.

2022 saw the return of in-person Maryland Day events at the University of Maryland. On Saturday, April 30, visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter room were given guided tours by Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita at the University of Maryland. Visitors to Hornbake Library were given the opportunity to create their own Special Collections or Katherine Anne Porter themed button.

A new collaboration is in the works with the Jiménez-Porter Writers' House at UMD, a campus-wide literary center for the study of creative writing across cultures. The Jiménez-Porter Writers' House, named for 20th century writers Juan Ramón Jiménez and Katherine Anne Porter, lists among their mission to: "Study and support creative writing specifically in its cross-cultural dimensions by maintaining this focus in who we are (recruitment of a diverse student body and staff), what we study (curriculum), and what we produce (reading series and publications)." In the upcoming semesters, students will be given tours of the Katherine Anne Porter collections as well as the potential opportunity for volunteer projects that provide hands-on experience with the collections. It will be a wonderful opportunity for students to learn more about Porter's life and literary output.

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.
The Katherine Anne Porter Room will remain closed until further notice. Plans to open the room to visitors are expected to be finalized during the Fall semester.

The first in a series of Instagram posts featuring Katherine Anne Porter's cats. This post highlights Porter's cat Charro, who lived with Porter in Mexico in 1930. On the back of the photo KAP writes, "she wandered in from the street and was a Darling." Katherine Anne Porter papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

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 2021-2022 academic year, there were four public programs held at the house. The writers featured include Phillip B. Williams, Melissa Lozada-Oliva, Jenny Offill, and Joy Harjo. Information about each of these writers is currently on the literary center's Web site: http://www.kapliterarycenter.com/KAP_BiosPage. Programs are sponsored by Texas State University's Department of English, the Lindsey Literary Series, the Burdine Johnson Foundation, and the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center. After twenty-two years spearheading the activities at the Literary Center, Tom Grimes is stepping down. Poet Cecily Parks, who teaches in the MFA program at Texas State, is taking on this responsibility.

The Literary Center was the location for the April 18, 2022, episode of the PBS Newshour's Canvas Arts and Culture Series. Published in April 2022, the poetry anthology, *Dear Vaccine: Global Voices Speak to the Pandemic*, was the subject of the feature. A collaboration between the Wick Poetry Center at Kent State University and the University of Arizona Poetry Center, the book includes poetry from individuals around the world on their experiences with COVID-19. Newshour contributor Jeffrey Brown discussed the work with its editor, Naomi Shihab Nye, a Professor of Creative Writing at Texas State and currently Young People's Poet Laureate. They talked about shaping the book and the outpouring of interest from people who don't necessarily identify as poets. The discussion also touches on Katherine Anne Porter and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." The episode may be viewed at https://www.pbs.org/video/dear-vaccine-1650317461/.

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://porterhousereview.org/) in November 2018, the online review is produced in conjunction with Texas State University's MFA program in Creative Writing. The review publishes a range of literary forms and styles and pays 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 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.

Plans for the 2022-2023 programs at the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center are currently being finalized. Updated information will appear 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.

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust

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

Greetings to all fans, scholars, and readers of Katherine Anne Porter on behalf of the Porter Literary Trust and the University of Maryland Libraries. As we enter the third year of the global pandemic, I want to express our thanks to you for your patience as the University, the Libraries, and the Porter collection continue to provide access while monitoring conditions. You can find the University's current protocols for visiting campus at https://umd.edu/4Maryland. For up-to-date information about using materials from Special Collections and University Archives on-site, please see https://www.lib.umd.edu/special.

The University of Maryland Libraries continues to explore several programs to advance Porter's canon. These include creation of a visiting scholar's program to fund research on campus using the Porter collection, as well as a possible future symposium on Porter studies. We continue to monitor the pandemic and its effect on research and travel and will move forward with these initiatives when the situation permits. Our primary concern is always the health and safety of our users and our personnel.

Meanwhile, researchers can find engage with a considerable amount of digitized content online. The Porter finding aid, online at https://lib.guides.umd.edu/KatherineAnnePorter, provides access to the collection, including Porter's digitized correspondence at https://www.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence. Please contact Amber Kohl, Curator for Literature and Rare Books, at amberk@umd.edu, for more information about

the Porter collection at the University of Maryland.

The Trust continues to work with copyright holders to publish, distribute, and promote Porter's work. Several ongoing initiatives are underway, including translations into other languages, overseas distribution, and adaptations of works for various media, including possible theatrical performance. We will report on these in a future issue when negotiations are complete. Meanwhile, the Trust continues to grow through royalties. The digital edition of *Ship of Fools*, published by Open Road Integrated Media, continues to gain readers. Open Roads has featured *Ship of Fools* in several promotions during the past year. These funds will permit the Trust to sponsor some of the activities discussed above, promote Porter studies, and bring Porter's work to even more readers.

As both the global pandemic and our response to it continue to evolve, the University of Maryland Libraries and the Porter Literary Trust continue to serve scholars and readers both on campus and online. We look forward to a time when we can move forward with some of the exciting programs mentioned earlier, and hope that time will come soon. Meanwhile, please stay safe, stay well, and let us know if you have questions about using the Porter collections or suggestions about future program opportunities.

American Academy of Arts and Letters: Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature, 2022

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

After holding a virtual Ceremonial last year to honor the 2020 and 2021 recipients, the American Academy of Arts and Letters resumed its annual in-person Ceremonial on May 18, 2022. Lynne Tillman was awarded the Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature. The 2022 Awards Committee comprised Amy Hempel (chair), Louise Glück, John Guare, Edward Hirsch, Sigrid Nunez, Caryl Phillips, and Joy Williams.

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."

Tillman is the eleventh winner of 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), Noy Holland (2018), and Christine Schutt (2020).

Sharon Mesmer writes in *The Paris Review* that it is difficult to provide a brief summary of Tillman's works: "Writing a short introduction about Lynne Tillman isn't easy; her singular and visionary writing covers a great deal of territory. The author

of twelve books [as of 2014], she is adept at fiction, short and long essays, cultural critique, and interviews." In her three-decades-plus career, Tillman has authored six novels, five collections of short stories, two collections of essays, and two nonfiction books (plus a forthcoming one). Her works, the earliest of which focused on the rebellion of young women, have widened to include "self-reflexive perspectives on art and culture," "contentious viewpoints," and discursive nonfiction forms.

The iconic New York writer and cultural critic is a professor and writer-in-residence in the English Department at the University of Albany and teaches in the School of Visual Arts' Art Criticism and Writing MFA Program. She earned a 2006 Guggenheim Fellowship and the 2014 Andy Warhol/Creative Capital Arts Writing Fellowship. Tillman was a finalist twice for a National Book Critics Award: for her second essay collection, What Would Lynne Tillman Do? which can be accessed here in its entirety: https://whatwouldlynnetillmando.com and for her 1989 novel *No Lease on Life*. Her 2006 novel (reissued in 2019), *American Genius, A Comedy*, was cited as "one of the best books of the millennium so far" by The Millions.

In addition to *No Lease on Life* and *American Genius, A Comedy*, her novels include *Haunted Houses* (1987); *Motion Sickness* (1991); *Cast In Doubt* (1992); and *Men And Apparitions* (2018), the latter of which has been described as "a culminating of Tillman's decades-long work as a novelist and critic, weaving together genres, histories and ideas into a roving, brilliant fiction of great humour and candour."

Her five collections of short stories are titled *Absence Makes The Heart* (1990); *The Madame Realism Complex* (1992); *This is Not It* (2002); *Someday This Will Be Funny* (2011); and *The Complete Madame Realism and Other Stories* (2016). Tillman's first essay collection is *The Broad Picture* (1997). Her books of nonfiction include *The Velvet Years: Warhol's Factory 1965-67*, with *Stephen Shore's Factory photographs* (1995) and *Bookstore: The Life and Times of Jeannette Watson and Books & Co*. (1998).

Her latest work, a book-length autobiographical essay titled *Mothercare: On Obligation, Love, Death, and Ambivalence*, will be released on August 2, 2022, by Soft Skull Press. It is an account of her caring for her ill mother, who was diagnosed with a rare and little understood brain condition. Tillman illustrates the sudden change in her relationship with the woman who went from an independent and spirited provider to one completely dependent on her children. Her writing captures the heartbreak of caring for a dying parent.

As one can tell from the titles of her work, her purview is broad. Additionally, she has penned essays on Gertrude Stein's work for *The NY Times Book Review*, John Waters's *Role Models for Artforum*, O.J. Simpson's trial for Bookforum, and the COVID-19 pandemic for Literary Hub. Appealing to a wide readership, Tillman's writing style has been described as "exquisite" and "technically virtuosic," and she has been said to be a "rich noticer of strange things," whose "clever intricate fictions…map both the complication and comedy of the moments that most writers miss."

Alone Together

By Jerry Findley, President, Katherine Anne Porter Society

George Platt Lynes: The Daring Eye (Oxford University Press, 2021) offers those interested in Lynes's friends and cohorts, like Katherine Anne Porter, a more in-depth context for reassessing their life and work. I read Allen Ellenzweig's biography, in part, as an exposition of the schema reproduced on the back cover of the catalogue for the 2019 exhibit *The Young and Evil: Queer Modernism in New York, 1930–1955*. Those curating the exhibit and contributing to the catalogue acknowledge Ellenzweig's help (62; 148), and he acknowledges the relevance of the exhibit to his study (415). To place Porter in the context of these two recent endeavors makes evident how pervasive homosexuality was in her life and the role homosexuals played in her career.

George Platt Lynes: The Daring Eye details a more comprehensive history of the role homosexuals played in creating the new art and the new literature of the twentieth century. Lynes holds the same place in Ellenzweig's biography he holds in the schema for the exhibit. He is alone, at the center of three of the major schools of Modernity: Classicism, Archaism, and Surrealism. Lynes, along with Porter, is identified as a Classicist; and, as a Classicist, Lynes, like Porter, took inspiration wherever he found it, with no regard to any school, doctrine, ideology, dogma, or credo. As Ellenzweig points out in his Preface, Lynes "never saw himself as a member of any school or aesthetic movement. He fled from any aesthetic orthodoxy just as he ignored partisan politics and showed little interest in the contentious issues of the day" (xi). Lynes's fearless independence plotted the trajectory of his personal life of sexual and romantic intrigue and the encompassing sweep of his career: "his life was his own." The same is true of Porter and, going beyond the scope of *The Young and Evil*, the many others Ellenzweig includes in his study.

Randy Jacks, George Platt Lynes, Lynes's dog Bozo, and Porter at Lynes's Hollywood home, 1948. Porter lived with Lynes from January to April 1948. Katherine Anne Porter papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

When Lynes first met Gertrude Stein at age 18, he, like older aspiring artists—Ernest Hemingway comes to mind—fell under her influence. Lynes mulled the idea of being one of Stein's acolytes. This phase lasted long enough for Lynes to be put off by anyone who tried to exert any control over him. As he found his vocation as a photographer, he returned to the earlier relentless independence that characterizes his life, his career, and his work, from beginning to end. So, too, Porter.

Antithetical to Stein, neither Lynes nor Porter made any effort to groom acolytes. The brief period of apprenticeship Lynes gave Jonathan Tichenor is case in point. Lynes focused on the

skills Tichenor needed to be a versatile photographer—portraiture, fashion, dance, stage, myth, travel—so that he, like Lynes, could pursue photography as he chose, to develop into the artist he wanted to be, a promising career and future that ended with their relationship.

Lynes may have seen his struggle for autonomy as endemic in the type of people he wanted to be around and the type of people who wanted to be around him, a trait that often ends in compromised relationships. Any relationship that does not progress beyond that of teacher and student is limited in its longevity, as Lynes learned, first, as a student, then, as a mentor: "'[T]here comes a moment in every young man's life when he has to assert himself and to demonstrate his independence, and I'm afraid that my influence is too often all-pervasive'" (446). Lynes merits less reproach and more commendation than he pays himself. Like the role Monroe Wheeler and Glenway Wescott played in his life and career, Lynes tried to guide and to coach others—the Tichenor brothers, Randy Jack, Charles "Chuck" Howard—to the life they wanted: an understanding and an appreciation of art: the calling and the mission Porter, like Lynes, was giving her life to further.

An independence, a freedom that refuses to compromise may be the shared sensibility that best explains how Porter could maintain her relation with homosexuals better than with many of their heterosexual counterparts; and they, like Lynes and others of his ilk—of most significance to the life and career of Lynes and Porter, Monroe Wheeler and Glenway Wescott—could maintain their relation with her better than with others who shared their homosexual identity. Porter was determined, like Lynes, to stay independent of aesthetic credos and schools; and Porter, Lynes, those featured in the exhibit, and the many others Ellenzweig includes in his biography valued the artistry and the work of one another within and across the various circles of friends and schools of art Ellenzweig's engaging exposition brings to life. Like Lynes's relation to Porter and Porter's relation to Lynes, other artists were "second family." They wrote reviews, essays, pamphlets, and occasional pieces to advance one another's career, yet without compromising their integrity. No one felt any compunction to show allegiance, alliance, or affiliation. This theme running through Ellenzweig's biography puts the life and the work of Lynes's friends and cohorts in the context they wanted. Their art was *sui generis*: alone unto itself; and they, as artists, stood alone together.

George Platt Lynes: The Daring Eye in its reach is timely. By including the life and work of others, this biography of Lynes and study of his era enjoins the controversies that have roiled the world since the Great (First World) War. Porter's interest in the contentious issues of her life and times, in contrast to Lynes's, never flagged. This is the most evident and most important contrarian point where Lynes in relation to others stands alone: "his indifference to anything that smacked of politics was an ingrained instinct" (441). Never for Porter.

Porter saw that the cultural, the social, and the political are inseparable. There is no prescinding one from the other two. Partisan politics can never be ignored. For writers, artists, public figures to think that they can rise above the contentious issues of their world, Porter knew from her daunting study of history was folly. The challenge is to effect the same autonomy in the realm of partisan politics that one executes in the realm of art. To be and to remain independent of all collective thought—be it the aesthetics and credo of a school of art, the doctrine and orthodoxy of a

religion, the ideology and manifesto of a movement—is the way of thinking, the habit of mind that informs Porter's opposition to all collective (institutional) thought. "I am a heretic and a dissenter born," Porter touted. She was determined to stay independent—free—of religious doctrine and dogma; and she was determined to stay independent—free—of political ideology and movements. Being adversarial, a contrarian, became an ingrained instinct. She lived in a world where finding and asserting her independence was the key to her survival, her escape, and her success. The same is true for most, if not all, of the second family Porter and Lynes share.

In her personal life of sex and love and in her public life of "career and self-promotion," Porter, like Lynes, like the many others Ellenzweig includes, demanded others grant her her independence; and what she demanded of others, she had the integrity to demand of herself. She wanted to be an intellectual force, a social power, in securing the same independence, the same freedom for all humanity, so they, too, could exercise the same independence, the same freedom to know the same integrity she gave her life to attain and, once attained, to maintain. The life of every person, like the work of every artist, was sacrosanct. For Porter, inviolable. In his own way, although more limited, so, too, for Lynes, as Ellenzweig tracks in his day-to-day life. The sanctity of art, the sanctity of life is the force, the power that held Porter together with Lynes and his circle across their different sexual identities, and Lynes and his friends and cohorts together within the homosexual identity they shared.

Lynes at the center of the schema for the art exhibit visualizes Ellenzweig's engaging exposition of the zeitgeist shaping the first half of the twentieth century. It is the past leading to where we are today. The art of Lynes and his friends memorializes their acceptance of their homosexuality, and their ability to exploit—to leverage—the role their society forced—cast—them to play. For them and for the broader, all-inclusive world, their homosexuality was the most determinative and most defining factor in their lives. They responded. They were reactionary. They knew their world, and their adversary, and its aim, and its strategy. The broader, all-inclusive world marshalled its collective force, its collective power to control the way others judged—saw—them in its effort to keep homosexuals marginal (shunned and ostracized) and subservient (criminal). Lynes's friends and cohorts, *pace* Lynes, knew the strategy and the means to enjoin the contentious issues of the day with the requisite force, the requisite power to hold their own against those who wanted to see them fail for who they were, homosexuals, and what they were, artists. They fought fire with fire. Their art is epiphanic. It has the force, the power to transform. It changed then, and it changes now the way the world perceives and conceives masculine beauty, the legacy Lynes deferred. His celebration of masculine beauty the Comstock Laws made unlawful throughout his life. And the art of his circle of friends changed then and changes now the way the world perceives and conceives its way of life in contrast and in comparison to homosexuals and their way of life, the legacy of Lynes's friends and cohort that the broader, all-inclusive society still wants to marginalize if not outright censure. Once one sees the art of Lynes's friends and cohorts, one never sees the world the same.

As an example of how Ellenzweig's biography in conjunction with other scholarship provides a new context for subsequent studies, Lynes, charming and inveterate imp that he was, made Porter

confront that her nephew, whom she tagged as her favorite, was, like Lynes and his circle of friends, homosexual. Some of Lynes's letters suggest Paul may have been, like myriad others, one of Lynes's conquests. Whether or no, depending on how strictly one holds with Susan Sontag's definition, Lynes reminds Porter of an evening of camp or a campy evening. Lynes, Paul Porter, Christopher Isherwood, and his lover, presumably William "Bill" Caskey, spent an evening with Porter when Paul was living with her, soon after his release from the armed forces at the end of the Second World War. Porter was the fifth and odd person out. If Porter did not know her nephew's sexual identity before this evening, she knew after. On learning of the possible intrigue between Lynes and Porter's nephew, Wescott speculated, it "may have been the start of [Katherine Anne's] anti-homosexuality." Wescott is off from start to finish. If Porter did not bring her homophobia with her to Greenwich Village after the Great War and her escape from the influenza epidemic, it developed soon after her arrival, even as homosexuals, most notably Adolfo Best-Maugard, guided her to the role she would play in covering the cultural, social, and political life of Mexico to begin and to establish her career. Homosexuals accepted and supported Porter more than she accepted and supported them. Porter never overcame her homophobia. And Porter never broke with homosexuals, her second family. It is a conflict Porter never resolved. Her homophobia plagued her private life of sexual and romantic intrigue, and her public life of career and reputation from beginning to end. It was the world of her life and times.

That Lynes did not live long enough to see time vindicate his vision of beauty was a takeaway of the recent retrospective of Lynes's work, "Sensual/Sexual/Social: The Photography of George Platt Lynes," at the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields (Fall 2018). The publication of a long overdue biography of one of the twentieth century's leading photographers may lead to more exhibits similar to the retrospective of his work and *The Young and Evil* in the not-too-distant future to provide a context for many future studies of art and of literature.

"The Ship of This World on Its Voyage to Eternity:"

[Continued from page 1]

Germany, carrying nearly a thousand passengers from eight different countries. The passengers vary widely in terms of their cultural background, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, and individual character traits, but their one commonality, we soon learn, is a capacity for hatred and violence toward those who differ from them. The post-WWII context of the novel renders this ship a true "ship of this world" (vii)—a reflection of the world at war with itself.

Critically acclaimed for her shorter works, Porter applies a similar writing style to her novel, as many scholars have noted:[1] rather than cohering around a single, plot-driven narrative, the five-hundred-page work instead offers a collection of vignettes about the characters. This stylistic choice has garnered criticism over the years, with scholars overwhelmingly agreeing that her strength is in short fiction, not the novel.[2] Porter's contemporary, Theodore Solotaroff, has critiqued the novel for failing to follow the formal conventions of the genre; namely, it lacks a plot, and the characters do not undergo any significant

Porter on board the Werra. She inscribed one copy, "On board ship, mid-Atlantic, sunset, September 1931." Katherine Anne Porter papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

change.[3] As a result, he claims "the book has virtually no power to sustain, complicate, and intensify either our intellectual interests or emotional attachments" (280). The result, according to many critics, is that Porter brings many important issues into play, but the numerous elements of this "unwieldy"[4] novel do not satisfactorily come together. However, I argue an ecocritical reading of *Ship of Fools* renders this critique of the novel's form irrelevant. Rather, I locate the novel's chief concern at the intersection of growing concerns about globalization and an emerging ecological awareness during the mid-twentieth century. If the novel does indeed lack character development and a traditional plot, this absence draws readers' attention to the complex interactions among the human and nonhuman elements within the ecosystem of the ship.

The premise for my reading comes from the recent ecocritical turn toward studying the networks of connections that constitute our world.[5] My analysis of *Ship of Fools* rests on this notion that humans are intricately interconnected and interdependent with the other human and nonhuman elements that constitute our ecosystems, and I apply this ecological reading to the concerns of globalization that Porter's novel addresses. The globalization of the twentieth century uniquely created a "cultural moment in which an entire planet becomes as graspable as one's own local backyard" (4) to borrow Ursula K. Heise's framing, and the novel grapples with this changing sense of place. Following Heise's study of "environmentalist reflections on the importance of a 'sense of place' in communication with recent theories of globalization and cosmopolitanism" (13), I read Porter's ship as a microcosm of this rapidly globalizing world: the passengers come from all over the globe, with a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds, and they are forced to coexist in an unfamiliar environment. While Porter's novel is not an explicitly environmentalist work, I argue her work foregrounds the interconnectedness of human beings with their material world by depicting the human characters as deeply enmeshed in a complex network of interactions with the human and nonhuman elements that make up their environment. In their introduction to *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticsm*, Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace argue for an expansion of the traditional ecocritical notion of what constitutes our environment, suggesting that, "One way ecocriticism can and should widen its range of topics is to pay more consistent attention to texts that revolve around…less obviously 'natural' landscapes and human attempts to record, order, and ultimately understand their own relationships to those environments" (4). Porter's novel is precisely such a text. As the human passengers struggle to adapt to the new environment of the ship, they yet feel the need to deny their interconnection with the nonhuman elements in their environment, thus amplifying their feeling of

placelessness. In this light, the novel offers more than merely a worn-out critique of the nationalist ideology that triggered WWII; rather, it frames the violence that erupts on board the ship as an ecological problem—the inevitable result of the passengers' unwillingness to adapt to their new ecosystem, a refusal to be part of the mesh to which they nevertheless belong.

In this article, I first situate Porter's novel within the context of place studies, arguing that the novel's setting—a ship on a transatlantic voyage—replicates in its characters the extreme feelings of place-attachment and placelessness that emerged during the globalization of the twentieth century. I then apply a material-ecocritical approach, examining the network of interactions on board the ship to reveal the disconnections that throw the ship's ecosystem out of balance and foster violence among the human passengers. I then offer a close reading of the characters' varied responses to their position of placelessness on board the ship: some embody an optimistic re-envisioning of place, while most illustrate the dangers of failing to adapt to a new conception of place. Ultimately, I argue, Porter's ship offers an allegory for the trajectory she envisions for the human race, offering a grim answer to the question of whether human beings are capable of coexisting in a globalized world. Refusing to acknowledge their interdependence with the other elements of their ecosystem—the ship, the ocean, their fellow passengers—the characters in the novel find themselves embroiled in one conflict after another, unwilling and unable to maintain a peaceful coexistence. The violence among passengers gradually builds throughout the voyage of this ship of fools—not a voyage to some idyllic eternity, as her readers well knew, but a voyage bound directly for the center of the impending global apocalypse. Porter's ship acts as an allegory for the growing ecological crisis of the twentieth century, pointing to the inevitable apocalyptic end so long as humanity refuses to acknowledge its presence and responsibility within a global ecosystem.

Merging Local and Global: Writing Place in a Globalized World

The setting of *Ship of Fools* as a transatlantic voyage highlights a significant difference between the novel and Porter's shorter works: the novel lacks a clear sense of place. Critics and casual readers alike have lauded Porter's short stories for her vivid rendering of distinct places: the rural Texas farm in "Noon Wine" (1937); the striking, albeit Americanized,[6] depictions of Mexico in "Hacienda" (1934); and the "aftermath of southern slavery and plantation culture" (Wanat 167) that pervades her "Miranda" stories. Eudora Welty, a contemporary of Porter's, has famously claimed that "Fiction depends for its life on place," arguing that a clear sense of place is crucial for storytelling because "place has a more lasting identity than we have, and we unswervingly tend to attach ourselves to identity" (783). Porter's skill in crafting stories that subtly, yet clearly, intertwine the characters' identity with their place illustrates Welty's point. In his analysis of "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" and "Noon Wine," Matt Wanat examines the isolation the female characters experience, particularly in their alienation or disconnectedness from their communities (166). Wanat's analysis focuses on the characters more than the places, but the characters' (dis)connection with the places where they live is an inextricable part of the narrative. It is only through this vivid depiction of place that readers can so easily empathize with the characters' isolation.

This context of the importance of place in Porter's short stories offers some insight into why scholars and critics generally find Porter's novel

disappointing by comparison. The novel's opening scene is situated in Veracruz, Mexico, and the place comes to life with Porter's description of a town center in "the white heat of an early August morning," with an array of people meandering across the "hard-baked surface of the public square under the dusty shade of the sweet-by-night trees" (4). However, Porter's characteristically vivid illustration of the landscape abruptly ends when the ship embarks on its voyage just a few pages in, leaving readers and passengers unmoored, both literally and figuratively, for nearly the entire remainder of the novel. The nonhuman elements of the passengers' environment—ocean, ship, and any undomesticated animals [7]—are mentioned only in passing, with no detailed sensory descriptions to give readers a mental image of the setting. The absence of a distinct setting works similarly to the absence of a clear plot. In a novel where "nothing really happens" (DeMouy 178), readers struggle to feel a meaningful connection with a work whose setting they cannot even visualize.

Yet this lack of a connection is more than simply a failure to create a sense of place; rather, the absence of setting and plot works to emphasize the passengers' sense of placelessness. This emphasis indicates Porter's engagement with a larger conversation about the effects of globalization, specifically in how to define place in a globalized world. The term "globalization" can have a wide range of applicability; I use it in the context of the increased mobility and ease of transportation that developed during the twentieth century—a development which contributed to humanity's growing awareness of our interconnectedness with the entire planet, not merely the region or nation in which we live. Fredric Jameson's definition of the term provides helpful context for reading Porter's novel; he describes globalization as "an untotalizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts—mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which, however, continue to articulate themselves on the model of 'national identities'" ("Preface" xii). This definition acknowledges the underlying tension that exists when humans are required to construct both local and global identities. Even as we continue to identify ourselves with the local places in which we live, the international connectedness facilitated by twentieth century technologies requires us to identify as a citizen of the world as a whole. Porter captures this paradox in her novel's setting—that of a ship in the midst of a transatlantic voyage—for the characters remain in the same place throughout the entire voyage even while they are constantly moving. The passengers thus find themselves in this liminal area encompassing both place and space—terms which humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan defines as the opposing ways that humans relate to their nonhuman surroundings. These contrasting definitions delineate place as the areas of our world in which we feel safe, and space as everything outside of that. "Place is security, space is freedom" (3) Tuan explains, and, while space connotes both positive and negative feelings—both freedom and vulnerability— place has almost exclusively positive connotations of home. Simply stated, places are established as, "Spaces are marked off and defended against intruders" (4). The setting of Porter's novel blurs the line between these traditional conceptions of place and space, and the result is a growing anxiety among passengers as they struggle to develop a new sense of place.

Porter's treatment of place dovetails with a recent ecocritical trend toward a reconceptualization of place that acknowledges the presence and responsibility of humans, not merely as citizens of a city or nation, but as citizens of the world. This shift from local to global thought has been met with trepidation among mainstream

environmentalists. As Heise sums up, American environmentalism has long valued "the local as the ground for individual and communal identity and as the site of connections to nature" (9). However, as Heise goes on to point out, more recent ecocritical scholarship acknowledges that a traditional understanding of place as strictly local no longer holds the same meaning in a globalized world. This is largely due to a marked shift in human history, as Lawrence Buell explains: while "world history is a history of space becoming place" (63), a distinct reversal of this trend has slowly emerged, as "modernization has rendered place-attachment nugatory and obsolete" (64). As Buell points out, while place-attachment is important for humans to develop a meaningful identity as an integrated part of their ecosystem, too strong an attachment to place at the local level can have harmful results, including "xenophobic stigmatization of outsiders and wanderers" (68). Feminist geographer Doreen Massey has argued for a re-conceptualization of place that affirms the human need for place-attachment, while also acknowledging that globalization has dramatically and irreversibly altered our traditional localized notions of place. Rather than distinguishing between "global" and "local" as two incompatible concepts, Massey instead asserts that "the global is in the local in the very process of the formation of the local" (120), a view that suggests places "are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations" (121). By situating her characters within a ship on a transatlantic voyage, Porter constructs a setting that depicts the concepts of place and space, respectively, and lays the groundwork for a conception of place that allows for both local and global identities. This setting is uniquely suited for exploring Massey's suggestion. The ship is both global and local: the transatlantic journey and diverse passenger list accounts for the globalized world we live in, while the restricted environment of the ship itself offers us a tangible representation of a "local" place. Similar to Massey's suggestion of a merging between conceptualizations of global and local, Tuan suggests, "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (6). Seen in these terms, Porter's ship uniquely captures the possibility of a sense of place that is simultaneously local and global. Although its passengers are traveling, the ship masks the frightening open space of the ocean and creates a pause within their travels, allowing nearly all its passengers to consider the ship home. A sense of place allows people to feel safe and protected because it stands in opposition to the threatening unknown of space—a contrast illustrated by Porter's juxtaposition of the ship and the ocean.

Porter's ship offers the possibility of a globalized reconceptualization of place. Characters from diverse local ecosystems all gather to create a global ecosystem on board the ship. The few passengers who generally fare well on the voyage do so because they are able to adapt to a new ecosystem, but the majority of the passengers do not demonstrate such adaptability. Tuan's work offers insight into the particular difficulties of revising our traditional sense of place as no longer strictly local. He describes the traditional conception of place as "centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied" (4). Historically, our limited mobility restricted our "centers of felt value" to a small area—a town, a city, perhaps an area as large as a state or region. Likewise, limited mobility meant that the residents of each place would inevitably be quite similar, with little variation in their ideologies, traditions, cultural values, and even physical appearance. Nearly all the passengers identify strongly with their nation of birth—some passengers even identify more

narrowly with a particular region in their nation—and they carry with them this limited understanding of place as they board the ship. For each of the passengers, then, their gathering on the ship creates an entirely new ecosystem comprised of unfamiliar elements, both human and nonhuman. Porter's ship is an ecosystem in flux, and it reflects the ecological changes occurring on a larger scale during the globalization of the twentieth century. Heise calls this change "deterritorialization," and as she explains, "the increasing connectedness of societies around the globe entails the emergence of new forms of culture that are no longer anchored in place" (10). As *Ship of Fools* illustrates, this emergence leads to conflict as the cultural composition of nations, cities, and towns begins to shift, and perhaps even revert back to the unprotected openness of space. Travelers, in such vastness, become intruders.

In borrowing Brant's allegorical "ship of fools" to set the stage for her own work, Porter participates in an emerging narrative tradition of using allegory to address crises of the Anthropocene. In her book, *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues for the value and relevance of this approach: "It is precisely at [the] disjuncture between our awareness of the planet as a totality and our experience of embedded place that allegory plays a vital role" (11). The ship as the primary setting of the novel bridges this disjuncture, offering a close-up view of the chaotic intersection of awareness and experience. Though the setting suggests the possibility of a new conceptualization of place as both local and global, the allegory ultimately points to a much darker future. As the conflict between the characters builds, we see emerging the "rupture between the space of the planet and local place" (11) that DeLoughrey describes.

Missed Connections: An Ecosystem Out of Balance

The ecocritical notion of the world as a network or mesh of interconnection among human and nonhuman elements offers a useful framework for studying the tensions that arise from the changing conceptions of place in a globalized world. Morton describes the image of the "mesh" thus: "'Mesh' can mean the holes in a network and threading between them. It suggests both hardness and delicacy. … the mesh appears in our social, psychic, and scientific domains. Since everything is interconnected, there is no definite background and therefore no definite foreground" (28). Similarly, Iovino and Oppermann use the term "network" to describe our being "[e]ntangled in endless ways" with all other material forms in the world, engaged in "a constant process of shared becoming" (1). Such descriptions seek to erase the nature-culture split that environmentalism so often assumes—a split that positions humans as somehow outside of, separate from, or even superior to their environment. Instead, this materialist turn insists on an interconnectedness between all material forms, human and other-than-human. Such an approach recognizes that humans are inextricably embedded within their ecosystems, both influencing and influenced by all other material forms. In this view, living in a globalized world does not require a radical re-definition of place; rather, such a reconceptualization is more a matter of scale than of difference: our ecosystem exists on a global scale, not merely a local one.

Porter's novel examines the fallout that occurs when humans refuse to adapt to a global ecosystem. The consistent tension on board the ship highlights the complex entanglements that constitute an ecosystem, and the passengers' overwhelming refusal to acknowledge their interconnectedness with the other human and

nonhuman elements of their ecosystem leads, again and again, to violence. This is perhaps exemplified in one of the most brutal instances of violence on board the ship: the climactic altercation between William Denny and Mrs. Treadwell. Both are significant characters in the novel, but aside from a few brief conversations—enough to ensure that they dislike each other, but not enough to engender any deep-seated hatred (61)—the two rarely cross paths during the entire voyage. Rather, Porter develops each character quite separately from the other. As Denny interacts with the other passengers on board ship, he reveals himself to be deeply misogynistic and prone to violence against women. He refers to women as livestock (78), spends his evenings drunkenly muttering "short nasty names for women—all women, the whole dirty mess of them" (313), and later talks of "'beat[ing] the pants off that Pastora'" (381) after his relentless solicitation of Pastora, a member of the zarzuela company, is consistently unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Mrs. Treadwell's inner monologues and reminiscences about her past reveal a deep distrust of men, dating back to the beginning of her "nightmare" marriage to the "wrong man" (210). When the two meet by chance late at night, they are both entirely preoccupied with circumstances unrelated to the other: Denny has decided to finally confront Pastora with the violence he has been threatening (451), and Mrs. Treadwell has just managed to extricate herself from the unwanted embraces of a young officer (461). Denny knocks on what he believes to be the door to Pastora's cabin, and when Mrs. Treadwell opens the door—her face unrecognizable in elaborate makeup—he grabs the front of her dress and "wrench[es] her breast so painfully she almost went off balance" (464). Having just overheard Denny's angry tirade about the violence he intends to inflict upon Pastora, "of which rape would be the merest preliminary" (464), it is no surprise that Mrs. Treadwell violently shoves him away. However, rather than retreating to her cabin and locking the door, she proceeds to beat his face with "furious pleasure" (465), first with her fist, then with the heel of her shoe. Though the brutality of their exchange is shocking, their prior interactions with the opposite sex render it almost inevitable. This moment of violence is the consequence of a complex network of interactions that extends far beyond simply these two.

While my analysis will later delve further into the intricacies of the motivations and actions of the human passengers, it is important to first note how the nonhuman elements figure within this network. In Morton's mesh, as in Iovino and Oppermann's network, the nonhuman elements are as significant to and inextricable from the ecosystem as are the human elements. There is no hierarchy, nor any assumption that humans somehow exert more influence on the ecosystem than do nonhumans. The nonhuman elements do not merely create the backdrop against which the human narratives play out; rather, all human and nonhuman elements are intertwined in the narrative of the ecosystem as a whole. Porter's ship, however, is a decidedly human-centric ecosystem. Throughout the novel, the human characters consistently ignore or reject the nonhuman elements of their ecosystem, and this side-lining of the nonhuman ultimately has significant consequences for the ecosystem as a whole. We begin to see this disproportionate focus on the humans almost immediately as the passengers board the ship; the description of the ship's environment stands in stark contrast to Porter's lush description of Veracruz just a few pages earlier: "The passengers, investigating the cramped airless quarters...eyed with suspicion and quick distaste strange luggage piled beside their own in their cabins, and each discovered again what it was he had believed lost for a while though he could not name it—his identity. Bit by bit it emerged,

travel-worn, halfhearted but still breathing, from a piece of luggage or some familiar possession" (21). Porter offers only a meager description of the rooms which the passengers must now call home. The particulars of the nonhuman elements of their environment—the ocean and sky, the weather, the appearance of the ship itself, etc.—are virtually nonexistent in Porter's description, and this abrupt change from the detailed description of Veracruz indicates a shift in the passengers' attention to their surroundings. This change from a tangible sense of place in Mexico to the ambiguous placelessness of the ship in motion prompts an immediate wariness among the passengers and an amplified connection between their possessions and their sense of identity. The overwhelming reaction to their sudden sense of placelessness is this paradox of desperately grasping for some kind of connection, whilst simultaneously distrusting every unfamiliar element of their new environment. Though the setting of the ship possesses the possibility of a new sense of place, via Massey's suggestion, the problematic configuration of the nonhuman in the ship's ecosystem inserts a sense of imbalance.

Throughout the voyage, the humans continue to distance themselves from the other-than-human elements of the ecosystem, creating a disconnect among the network of agencies on board the ship that underlies the passengers' continued unease and violence actions. In the few, scattered descriptions Porter offers of the nonhuman elements of the environment, the nonhuman typically exhibits some sort of threat, and, more significantly, it nearly always suggests a feeling of distance between the human and nonhuman, as we see in Jenny and David's first sighting of Tenerife: "a jagged, rock-shaped, rock-colored fortress of an island rising abruptly from gray water, misty at the base and canopied with sagging violet clouds" (363). Beautiful and forbidding, Tenerife is never described in more detail in the novel. Though the subsequent forty pages are devoted to the passengers' arrival at and a brief excursion on the island, the narrative focuses almost exclusively on the humans and their interactions with each other, with no attention paid to the nonhuman elements of Tenerife. Perhaps the most noteworthy absence from these descriptions is the ocean. Though the novel takes place almost entirely at sea, and, indeed, the success of the passengers' voyage hinges entirely on an effective relationship between the ocean and the ship's crew, they nonetheless rarely acknowledge the ocean's presence. In the one instance in which a human being interacts directly with the ocean—Etchegaray's ill-fated rescue attempt when Bebé the bulldog is thrown overboard—he dies within moments of leaving the ship. However, even this reminder of the passengers' vulnerability to the ocean does not instill in them a heightened awareness of their interconnectedness with the nonhuman elements of the ecosystem; rather, most passengers blame Etchegaray for his own death; the priest Father Garza calls it "a deed of carelessness reprehensible to the last degree" (318). Such a response allows the passengers to cling to the illusion of a separation between humans and nonhumans. Ultimately, the novel is driven by human problems, human interactions, and human relations, and this exclusive focus on the human creates an ecosystem out of balance.

Out of Place: Humanity, Violence, and the Refusal to Adapt

Within this unbalanced ecosystem, the narrative's almost exclusive focus on the human elements highlights disparate attitudes toward the changing conception of place in a globalized world. Some of the passengers grapple with the anxiety of placelessness; others attempt to create a sense of place on the ship, an endeavor that nearly always results in conflict with others who also claim the

ship as their place; and a few manage to adapt their understanding of place to these new circumstances. Jameson suggests that a possible benefit of globalization is "a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation: suddenly all the cultures around the world are placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism" ("Notes on Globalization" 56-57), and Porter's ship with its diverse passenger list has the potential to offer a microcosm of this "immense cultural pluralism." However, what the novel ultimately illustrates is far from a celebration of difference. Rather, the aptly named *Ship of Fools* highlights the conflict that occurs when people do not adapt to their new ecosystems. Lacking tolerance, the overlapping of cultural and ideological values on Porter's ship leads to instances of violence that foreshadow a grim future for a globalized world.

The conflict that permeates the novel primarily stems from the passengers who exhibit a strong desire for place-attachment. The nationalistic proclivity to violence that so often accompanies a strong place-attachment explodes in an environment where one's place is not clearly defined. Nearly all the characters are openly xenophobic, racist, classist, and prejudiced against those whose religious beliefs and cultural practices differ from their own, and these are also the characters most concerned with establishing the ship as their place—an undertaking which necessarily makes enemies of the ships' other occupants. The religious tension between a group of Catholics and a group of atheists is one obvious instance of this, culminating in violent brawls on two occasions. Both clashes are instigated by a religious service—first a Catholic mass and subsequently a Catholic funeral—and both fights follow the same order of events. The group of atheist men, led by a man in a brightly colored shirt (150), stand by in a mocking protest of the religious ceremonies. In the first event, the man calls the Catholic priest a "'eunuch with a bread pill'" (150), denigrating both the priest and the ritual of the communion and goading the Catholic men into a fight. In the second event, their disruptive actions during the funeral instigate a chaotic melee the moment the ceremony ends. Porter keeps this conflict self-consciously metaphorical by never naming the men involved; in fact, her only method of distinguishing between the two groups—the "devout men" versus the "blasphemous men" (326) —seems more ironically symbolic than genuine. This metaphor serves a distinct purpose: it highlights the conflicts that inevitably occur when two opposing religious groups must coexist within a single place. Both groups of people feel justified in their use of physical violence against the other group, for both perceive the ship as their place, and the opposing group as intruders.

Alienated from the familiar places they call home, nearly all the passengers follow a similar route as they attempt to establish the ship as their place. Most of the passengers ultimately cling to this traditional definition of place, one that sanctions a defense against intruders—or anyone who differs from themselves—and this mindset pits the passengers against each other in a struggle to protect their sense of place and identity. This struggle illustrates Jameson's definition of globalization as "an untotalizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts," ("Preface" xii). Put in contact with myriad dissimilar people, the passengers overwhelmingly react by viewing each other as fundamentally different to themselves, as inherently a binary "other." It is thus no surprise that, as Jameson goes on to explain, "such relations are first and foremost ones of tension or antagonism, when not outright exclusion: in them each term struggles to define itself against the binary other" ("Preface" xii).

Characters such as Herr Rieber and Captain Thiele represent the worst of this. Their Nazi ideology defines the binary other very broadly and endorses violence as a means of resolving that struggle. Thiele is a particularly extreme example of such nationalistic ideology, being outspoken about his hatred of people based on both race and religion: "he loathed Catholics on principle," and, "he was violently prejudiced against Spaniards as well as Mexicans" (172-173). Such violent prejudice is further illustrated in Rieber's chilling joke about the oven he would use to kill all the Spaniards in steerage (59)—an allusion to the atrocities carried out by the Nazis. However, Porter exempts no one from her damning depictions of nationalism, painting Germans and Jews, Americans and Europeans alike with the same brush. Nearly all the German passengers reveal an ethnocentrism that leads to hateful, racist criticism of anyone outside of their own homeland, even Herr Lowenthal, a Jewish salesman, and Herr Freytag, married to a Jewish woman. Despite suffering as a result of proto-Nazi prejudice, these two passengers exhibit their own prejudices: Lowenthal despises Catholics (96) and Freytag reveals his anti-Semitic feelings despite his marriage (262). The other passengers are no less prejudiced. Swiss passengers Herr and Frau Lutz dislike the Americans and the Spanish (39, 393), Swedish passenger Arne Hansen dislikes anyone who is religious (161), and American passengers William Denny and David Scott evince distaste for "dirty Reds" (60) and "Indians" (56) respectively. The one commonality among the passengers is some kind of prejudice, and this attitude is so thoroughly entrenched that it excuses, even encourages, the pervasive violence on board the ship. Porter's novel goes beyond a vilification of Nazi ideology, or even German more broadly, instead acting as a critique of all whose nationalist sentiments render them resistant to everyone outside of their own place.

While some critics have dismissed Porter's novel for offering no new insight into the dangers of nationalism, these characters with nationalist sentiments are most significant for the way they underscore drastically different conceptions of place. Alongside the characters who represent the danger of too strong an attachment to homeland, Porter juxtaposes a few characters whose lack of place-attachment points toward a new possibility. Elsa Lutz acts as the most dramatic antithesis to Rieber and Thiele. Born in Switzerland and raised in Mexico, she is virtually unable to envision attachment to place: "I was never at home in Mexico, but now maybe I shan't be at home in Switzerland, either" (67). Though Elsa is not typically read as one of Porter's autobiographical characters, Porter's own ambivalence toward place and placelessness emerge in Elsa's character. Stout writes that Porter felt obligated to leave her home state of Texas in order to "establish herself as an artist and an independent person" (*A Sense of the Times* 25), yet this departure led to a permanently transient, placeless life for Porter, and "her incurable restlessness and intermittent homesickness—for a home she never had—kept her from being able to work regardless of where she was living" (96). Elsa's character offers a similarly undecided view of placelessness. Her lack of connection to anything leaves her perpetually oscillating between a timid hope about the possibilities her future holds (143) and a despondent pessimism that she will forever lead a lonely, purposeless life (301). This conflicted view of placelessness is never fully resolved in the novel. Although Elsa is one of the few characters to exhibit no prejudice or violence, she is ultimately a pathetic figure with an undesirable life. Placelessness, then, seems only a meager

improvement over nationalism.

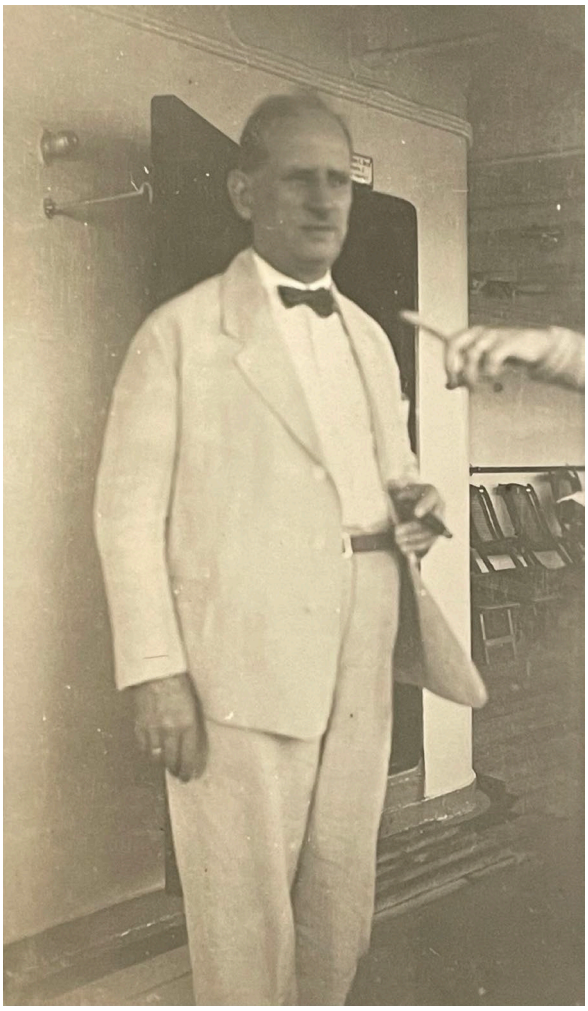
Between these extremes of place-attachment and placelessness, Porter offers two characters whose conception of place suggests the possibility of a balanced view: both Jenny and Dr. Schumann illustrate a version of place-attachment that lacks the strong attachment to homeland that generates conflict. Though Jenny identifies as an American and considers America her homeland, she has no nationalistic devotion to her country. By contrast, she possesses an empathy for people of all nations, races, and cultures—an empathy that is inexplicable to many, and even garners criticism from her partner, David. When he sees her crying at Etchegaray's funeral, his response is an instinctive disgust: "'*My God*, is there *nothing* you won't try to take part in? What on earth have you got to cry for now?'" (329). Her response is telling: "'Everything... .Everything in the whole world'" (329). Where David sees someone like Etchegaray as so different from himself that even death should evoke no emotion, Jenny's genuine grief demonstrates an ecological mindset. Though she had never interacted with Etchegaray, and his death did not directly impact her, her response about "the whole world" suggests she has some awareness of the way her life is entangled with Etchegaray's life, and, indeed, entangled with the whole material world.

Crucially, Jenny's ecological awareness is not derived solely from her lack of a nationalistic place-attachment; it is her agency in choosing this translocal way of life that is most significant. Tuan's examination of mobility and place provides an explanation: "When a people deliberately change their environment and feel they are in control of their destiny, they have little cause for nostalgia" (195). Jenny and Mrs. Treadwell offer contrasting illustrations of Tuan's explanation. While most of the passengers are on the voyage from necessity, Jenny has chosen to be on this ship, just as she has chosen to spend much of her adult life traveling from place to place. Mrs. Treadwell has also traveled a great deal, but as her late-night reminiscences reveal, she clings to nostalgic notions of place. However, Mrs. Treadwell's transient lifestyle has primarily resulted from the lack of control she has over her own life. In her longing for place, she exhibits place-attachment. Jenny, conversely, had the option to live out her life in a localized place, and she instead chose to leave. Whether by correlation or by chance, it is worth noting that Mrs. Treadwell is involved in one of the most violent incidents in the book, while Jenny's voyage never grows more violent than her emotional conflict with David.

Porter's other translocal character, Dr. Schumann, warrants particularly close attention. He is "typically understood as the moral center of *Ship of Fools*" (Brinkmeyer 114). The nomadic Dr. Schumann depicts an almost idealistic conceptualization of place that both dispenses with the ethnocentrism arising from nationalistic place-attachment and allays environmentalist concern about the consequences of placelessness. Obligated to spend much of his life traveling, the doctor has developed a translocal sense of place. He does not feel a strong attachment to one place, but feels at home within the broad region across which he travels: Germany, Mexico, and even the ship and the ocean itself. He illustrates Tuan's explanation: "in time the sense of place extends beyond individual localities to a region defined by these localities. The region...becomes itself a place although it lacks a visible boundary" (183). The re-envisioning of place conveyed through Dr. Schumann's character incorporates nuances of Massey's suggestion of place as both local and global, for his sense of place encompasses many places at once, and consequently many kinds of people. Unlike most other passengers, who either

choose a side during conflict or stay well away from conflict altogether, Dr. Schumann is a mediating voice on divisive issues. When Frau Rittersdorf asks what he thinks of Jewish people, he responds mildly, but unequivocally, "'I have nothing to say against them. I believe that we worship the same God'" (230). As a man whose place on board the ship means he is surrounded by a diverse and ever-changing population, Schumann's perspective is much more tolerant than most of the other passengers, and his openness to all human beings illustrates Massey's notion of a global sense of place as "open and porous networks of social relations" (121). With this character, Porter suggests the possibility of a middle ground between the violence of nationalistic place-attachment and the loneliness of total placelessness, one that reflects Massey's suggestion that the "identities" of various places may be "constructed through the specificity of their interaction with other places rather than by counterposition to them" (121). Dr. Schumann represents a more tolerant characterization of humanity than do the passengers who possess a strong tie to a single homeland.

However, Porter's novel ultimately depicts a grim future for humanity. Despite the somewhat optimistic possibilities conveyed in Jenny and Dr. Schumann's radical re-conception of place, their individual views have no meaningful impact on the ship's ecosystem as a whole. These characters who present an idealistic depiction of translocal citizens in a global ecosystem are overwhelmingly outnumbered by the characters who reject such a reenvisioning. Of the nearly one thousand passengers on the ship, at least forty figure significantly in the novel, and nearly all forty demonstrate some level of prejudice or violence. Far from presenting a model for how one should behave as a responsible member of a global ecosystem, the novel's diverse cast of characters



Porter inscribed this photo, "'Dr. Schumann' on board the 'Vera' between Vera Cruz, Mexico and Santa? Vera? Cruz de Tenerife August 1931." Katherine Anne Porter papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

emphasizes the impossibility of such an endeavor. Almost all contribute to the violence on board ship in some way, whether directly engaging in physical violence, helping to perpetuate social hierarchies that lead to division, or simply contributing to the atmosphere of tension. On Porter's ship, it is not merely the Germans who are culpable: it is the Americans, the Swiss, the Spanish, the Swedish, even the Jewish. No race, gender, social class, or religion is innocent in Porter's sweeping indictment of the human race. All passengers are responsible for the violence on board the ship, and,

in Porter's allegory, all humans are likewise responsible for the global ecological crisis. The tension and violence build to a crescendo throughout the narrative, and the novel concludes upon the ship's arrival in Bremerhaven, Germany. Yet, given the time frame of the voyage, such a conclusion implies that the real-world apocalypse is only just beginning.

Global Ecological Apocalypse: Reading Porter's Pessimistic Allegory

While Porter's novel cannot be said to be an explicitly environmentalist novel, her focus on issues of globalization and changing conceptions of place situates her novel among works that reflect the growing ecological crisis—a trend that emerged during a marked shift in American environmentalism in the 1960s and 1970s (Heise 8). Published in the same year as Rachel Carson's groundbreaking environmental work, *Silent Spring*, *Ship of Fools* differs markedly: while Carson's work uses apocalyptic themes as a way of galvanizing her readers into action,[9] Porter's apocalyptic allegory is unequivocally defeatist. The ecosystem of the ship offers a case study, of sorts, of a global ecosystem in which humankind refuses to adapt. If the ship is any indication, the end of the world is unavoidable.

Yet, the value of the novel lies in her characteristically trenchant examination of human nature, and so I turn finally to an examination of the quintessential representation of the future: the figure of the child. Six-year-old twins Ric and Rac—the havoc-wreaking dynamic duo—are the embodiment of a hopeless future created by the violence and neglect of the present. While the violence of the adults stems primarily from nationalistic conflict or some other prejudice, the indiscriminate chaos and damage that Ric and Rac cause is motivated by nothing other than an unadulterated desire for destruction. In their first appearance in the novel, the children toss Frau Rittersdorf's pillow overboard, throw a sandal at a seasick man, and overturn a bottle of ink just to watch it make a mess (71-72). Their mischief is random, done solely to inflict damage. Their seemingly harmless mischief, however, soon devolves into a cold disregard for life when they attempt to throw a cat overboard. Their second attempt quickly escalates out of control and leads to the single death in the novel: they manage to toss Bebé the bulldog into the ocean—an action carried out once again "at random but with utter purpose" (312-313)—and Etchegaray, a woodcarver from the steerage deck, jumps overboard to save him. The dog survives, but the human does not; Ric and Rac, however, are entirely indifferent to the outcome. They continue wreaking havoc throughout the novel without any apparent concern for their role in Etchegaray's death.

Crucially, the chaos and destruction caused by the twins point us back to their interdependence within their ecosystem. At the heart of Porter's ecological view lies a keen sense of responsibility, as other scholars have demonstrated: Robert Brinkmeyer has argued that the novel directly addresses issues of "responsibility to history and one's community" (113), and Alexandra Subramanian extends this argument when she claims, "To Porter's mind, acts of unkindness, insensitivity, and a *failure to take responsibility*, especially regarding the weak and vulnerable, created a tragic and unnecessary cycle of violence, alienation, and despair" (170, italics mine). Ric and Rac exemplify this cycle, for, repeatedly throughout the novel, the harmful actions of the adult passengers leave lasting impressions on the young twins. At best, the adults fail to acknowledge their responsibility toward the children, and, at worst, they are verbally and

physically abusive. After Etchegaray's funeral, Ric and Rac nearly fall into the ocean while leaning over the railing to look at whales, yet not a single passenger makes an effort to save them. This indifference to their life or death mirrors the twins' own indifference toward whether Etchegaray and Bebé lived or died. And, although "Any one of [the adult passengers] would have been indignant if accused of lacking any of the higher and more becoming feelings for infancy," the passengers seem to justify their indifference about the children's near death through the unspoken agreement that "Ric and Rac were outside the human race" (330). Rather than grapple with their own responsibility for Etchegaray's death, or any of Ric and Rac's mischief, the adults exempt themselves from blame by concluding that Ric and Rac are aberrations of human nature. Significantly, though, Dr. Schumann sees them differently: even as he affirms their "blind, unwinking malignance, their cold slyness," he acknowledges that they are "not beasts, though, but human souls. Oh yes, human, more's the pity," (112). Schumann's acknowledgment of their humanity is a reminder that these children are as much a part of the ecosystem as any of the other humans on board the ship. Taking their own treatment into account, it is no surprise that these human souls are prone to cruelty at such a young age. A product of their environment, the twins replicate the selfishness and violence with which they are treated, and they put into action the rejection of the nonhuman that they witness in the adults' behavior. At just six years old, they are already the culmination of the worst of human nature that we see in the other characters. This disconcerting view of humanity clearly depicts a grim future for the human race.

Porter's allegory calls attention to the inherent problem of the "Anthropocene." Whether driven by ignorance or arrogance—both of which Porter portrays in her characterization of humanity—the widespread acceleration of human domination has thrown our global ecosystem out of balance. As Paul Crutzen and Christian Schwägerl observe, we live in an epoch that is, "no longer us against 'Nature.' Instead, it's we who decide what nature is and what it will be." This very problem plays out on board Porter's ship as the passengers struggle to adapt their concept of place to a new ecosystem—an effort that is doomed from the start through their refusal to acknowledge the significance of the nonhuman in their lives. Crutzen and Schwägerl use the term "Anthropocene" as a definition of our current epoch in order to "stress the enormity of humanity's responsibility as stewards of the Earth," ultimately concluding, "in this new era, nature is us." Porter's anthropocentric novel paints a dire picture of this conclusion. In creating a division between the human and the nonhuman within the ship's ecosystem, the human passengers exempt themselves from the responsibility to which Crutzen and Schwägerl refer. Ultimately, if Ric and Rac at only six years old already embody the worst of human nature, then what Porter's novel emphasizes is that the future is now. The selfishness, prejudice, and violence that the adult passengers exhibit will not merely lead to violence in some distant future: it is determining the future now. If nature is us and the future is *now*, the novel foreshadows that the world, like the ship, is doomed.

Ship of Fools offers a prescient vision of the world as a global ecosystem, addressing the individual responsibility each person has to their ecosystems— both local and global—and framing this with an awareness of the way our lives are entangled with the rest of the material world. Porter's cryptic final sentence in the novel's introductory note, "I am a passenger on that ship," may be read as an admission of guilt—a recognition of her own role in the violence of this globalized world, as well as the role of humanity as

a whole. She reiterated this sentiment in even more telling terms in a 1958 letter to Walter Clemons, writing, "I have now become all of the people in the book, the fat man in the cherry colored shirt, the captain on the bridge, the drowned man, the hunchback, the Jew, poor obstinate David, all of the women I'm sure, as well as the ship's cat and the sea-sick bulldog, and sometimes I have the oddest illusion that I am the ship, too" (*Selected Letters* 264). This demonstrates a keen, if unconscious, ecological insight: Porter sees traces of herself not only in those characters whose thoughts and experiences most closely mirror her own, but in all the material elements of her novel, even the worst of her proto-Nazi characters, and even the nonhuman elements that the ship's passengers choose to ignore. As her characters illustrate, lacking such an awareness creates an ecosystem out of balance—one careening toward catastrophe.

Footnotes

[1] Titus p. 199.
[2] Austenfeld p. 2.
[3] Other scholars have echoed this criticism; see Jane DeMouy p. 178.
[4] As Austenfeld notes (p. 3), both critics and Porter herself have described the novel as unwieldy.
[5] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann use this concept as the basis for their anthology, *Material Ecocriticism*, in which they describe "the world's material phenomena" as "knots in a vast network of agencies" (1). Timothy Morton's concept of the "mesh," according to which the world is a vast set of interconnections without a center or an edge, marked by "radical intimacy, coexistence with other beings, sentient and otherwise" (8) suggests a similar approach. Such descriptions, I suggest here, are useful guides to Porter's narrative form, since they encompass, in anti-hierarchical fashion, both humans and nonhumans.
[6] In his 2018 article, "Why She Wrote About Mexico: Katherine Anne Porter and the Literature of Experience," Jeffrey Lawrence compellingly shows why Porter was able to present her Mexico-based stories as drawn from firsthand experience, despite evidence to the contrary.
[7] The only animal who features significantly in the novel is Bebé the bulldog, whose anthropomorphized descriptions signify a clear distinction in this novel between the domesticated animals who exist within the human sphere and the undomesticated animals (such as the ship's cat) who belong in the nonhuman sphere.
[8] Many scholars read Jenny Brown and Mary Treadwell as autobiographical characters, and some have even suggested that Frau Rittersdorf and La Condesa might be reflections of Porter to some degree (Unrue 221).
[9] Graham Huggan has summarized Carson's work thus: "It is crucial not to mistake *Silent Spring* 's apocalyptic tone for an acknowledgement of defeatism. The apocalyptic environmentalist text may chart wholesale death and destruction, but it also suggests ways of *preventing* these from happening" (78).

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