Newsletter
of the
Katherine Anne Porter
Society
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Malcolm Cowley and Katherine Anne Porter: Bio-Notes on a Fretful and Fragile Friendship

By Hans Bak, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Editor's Note: Hans Bak's "Malcolm Cowley and Katherine Anne Porter: Bio-Notes on a Fretful and Fragile Friendship" is an expanded version of "Crossing Paths: Malcolm Cowley in Mexico, Katherine Anne Porter in *The New Republic*, 1930-1931," the paper he presented at the American Literature Association conference in Chicago on May 24, 2024. Bak is Emeritus Professor of American literature, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He is the author of *Malcolm Cowley: The Formative Years* (U of Georgia Press, 1993) and the editor of *The Long Voyage: Selected Letters of Malcolm Cowley, 1915-1987* (Harvard UP, 2014). He is currently writing a full-fledged biography of Cowley.

Malcolm Cowley, 1930, photo by Jim Casey, Malcolm Cowley Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.

At the end of Malcolm Cowley's first strenuous year on *The New Republic*, he was entitled to a month's vacation in October 1930. Cowley had joined the staff as a junior editor three weeks before the Crash in October 1929 and, from the summer of 1930, had replaced Edmund Wilson as literary editor. As he told Allen Tate in mid-August, his wife Peggy and he were "cherishing the wild idea of spending a month in Mexico." By mid-September, their travel plans had taken on a more definite shape: they would drive west from New York through Pennsylvania, spend a night at Belsano to visit Cowley's parents, then move on south to see Tate and Caroline Gordon in Tennessee, before travelling on to visit Katherine Anne Porter in Mexico.[1] In early October, after debating Southern Agrarianism with the Tates, Malcolm and Peggy journeyed on to New Orleans, where they embarked on a ship for Mexico, arriving at Vera Cruz in mid-October. From there they took a train inland to Mexico City, to stay with their friend Katherine Anne Porter.

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President's Message: The International Dimension of Porter's Work and Porter Studies

By Alice Cheylan, President, Katherine Anne Porter Society

It is the time of year again to send you an update on this year's KAP activities. Last year I wrote of the hope that our newfound post-Covid vitality would rekindle interest in the society. This wish is indeed slowly, but surely being fulfilled. This year the society has several new members coming from the United States as well as Europe. Our total membership has now reached fifty-eight members!

Our very successful Porter panel at this year's American Literature Association Conference in Chicago also attests to the very good international reception of her works. Beth Alvarez read a linguistically oriented paper entitled "The Body as Curious Monster: Embodiment and Absence in 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider'" written by Tjaša Mohar of the University of Maribor, and Olivera Kusovac of the University of Montenegro. Hans Bak from Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, read his newly completed study "Crossing Paths : Malcolm Cowley in Mexico, Katherine Anne Porter in *The New Republic*, 1930-1931." An expanded version of his paper appears in this *Newsletter*. Christine Grogan's compilation of Works on Porter, also published in this *Newsletter*, confirms that international interest in Porter is growing. The list includes Porter scholars from India, Spain, and Poland. As an avid traveler and keen observer of foreign countries, Porter would no doubt have appreciated this international approbation of her work. Having travelled in Mexico, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Italy, and Bermuda, her work contains insightful observations on foreign culture.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Daniel Mack, Associate Dean of University of Maryland Libraries, and the members of the Executive Committee for their constant support and dedication to Porter studies. Daniel Mack's update on the Porter Collection and Katherine Anne Porter Trust at the University of Maryland Libraries informs us on access to Porter's papers as well as to the dynamic evolution of the Katherine Anne Porter Trust. Thank you also to Darlene Unrue who presented an excellent paper titled "The Roaring Twenties and the Evolution of Katherine Anne Porter's Feminism" at the ALA Conference in Chicago and whose thoughtful ideas and recommendations are an invaluable asset to the society. Another thank you goes to Beth Alvarez whose now legendary energy and fervent

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.

American Literature Association Conference 2025

Christine Grogan will chair the Katherine Anne Porter Society session at the 36th American Literature Association Conference. The conference will take place May 21-24, 2025, at the Westin Copley Place in Boston, MA.

Conference details and information about hotel reservations are available through the web site of the American Literature Association, https://americanliteratureassociation.org/.

Send proposals on any topic related to Katherine Anne Porter to Christine Grogan, cgrogan@udel.edu, by December 1, 2024.

devotion serve as a motor for us all. Her ceaseless work on the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project has allowed Porter scholars invaluable access to letters and references. Her editing skills, which are formidable, have greatly enhanced the *Newsletter*. Another thank you goes to Christine Grogan who found time despite her courses and administrative responsibilities at the University of Delaware to present a thought-provoking study titled "Chasing Kevin: A Rereading of Rosaleen O'Toole's Journey in 'The Cracked-Looking Glass. She has also contributed to this *Newsletter* with her compilation of works on Porter and update on the American Academy of Arts & Letters Katherine Anne Porter Award. Another thank you goes to Jerry Findley whose continued research on Porter and her literary and artistic friendships have inspired many of us. He has also dedicated both time and effort to the graduate student award. Finally I would like to thank Amber Kohl without whose work the publication of this *Newsletter* would not be possible. She is always kindly and devotedly available for all queries by Porter scholars concerning references available at the University of Maryland Libraries. Her knowledge of Porter's papers and the special collection is a precious gift to Porter scholars.

If you as members of the society have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the other members of the Executive Committee. We would like your input and look forward to hearing from you.

Update on the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

As reported in 2023, no additional online resources have been uploaded to the project website. The available correspondence remains 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 in Phase Three of the project documenting Porter's business dealings, relations with literary agents, and financial matters are still awaiting uploading to the website.

In the last year, I completed the review and revision of the metadata for the materials comprising the fourth and final phase of the project. The roughly 3000 items of this phase include Porter's personal correspondence that was not included in Phase Two; her correspondence relating to her professional activities, lectures, awards, and interviews; and correspondence in eleven additional smaller collections. These collections include the papers of Marcella Winslow, William and Fern Wilkins, Rhea Johnson, Edna Frederikson, John and Catherine

Porter Activities at the 2024 American Literature Association Conference

On May 24, 2024, at the 35th annual American Literature Association Conference in Chicago, IL, Alice Cheylan chaired the Katherine Anne Porter Society's panel entitled "Coming Into Consciousness." The papers included "The Roaring Twenties and the Evolution of Katherine Anne Porter's Feminism" by Darlene Unrue, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; "Chasing Kevin: A Rereading of Rosaleen O'Toole's Journey in 'The Cracked-Looking Glass'" by Christine Grogan, University of Delaware; "The Body as Curious Monster : Embodiment and Absence in 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider'" by Tjaša Mohar, University of Maribor, and Olivera Kusovac, University of Montenegro; and "Crossing Paths : Malcolm Cowley in Mexico, Katherine Anne Porter in *The New Republic*, 1930-1931" by Hans Bak, Radboud University.

At the annual business meeting conducted by Society President Alice Cheylan, members discussed current membership, the treasury balance, plans for the 2025 and 2026 American Literature Association conferences, the graduate student paper award, the forthcoming newsletter issue, and the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust's forthcoming Katherine Anne Porter research award. ᔓ

Prince, Herbert Schaumann, Harry Perry, Robert Morris, Clark Dobson, George and Toni Willison, and Desmond Willson. I checked the metadata created by former Graduate Assistant Mattie Lewis, revising as necessary. I removed Porter's correspondence from the files, created folders into which they were placed, and housed the folders in boxes that will eventually be sent to the digitization vendor. It is still not clear when the materials of Phase Four will be digitized.

I have turned my attention to creating contextual information for the materials digitized in Phase Three. The subjects for these short pieces include her agent Cyrilly Abels and Abels's husband Jerome Weinstein, her French translator Marcelle Sibon, her lawyer E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr. and her publisher Seymour Lawrence and his wife Merloyd. There will be texts for her corporate publishers, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc./Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc./Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Inc.; Atlantic Monthly Press; and Little, Brown & Company; as well as officers of those publishers: Donald Brace, Charles Pearce, Alfred Harcourt, and William Jovanovich; Edward Weeks and Peter Davison; and Arthur H. Thornhill and Arthur H. Thornhill, Jr.

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

KAP News from the University of Maryland Libraries

By Amber Kohl, University of Maryland Libraries

I am pleased to report on this year's Katherine Anne Porter activities in Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Maryland Libraries.

Digitization will resume this year for phase 4 of the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project (https://exhibitions.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence/kap-correspondence-project).

Updates have been made to the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Collection database (https://digital.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence) and include a more streamlined interface and improved integration with the Libraries' Digital Collections.

I am excited to announce the Katherine Anne Porter Research Award has been approved and is in the early stages of development. The award will promote research in the Katherine Anne Porter holdings in Literature and Rare Books in Special Collections and stimulate interest in literary research at the University of Maryland related to Katherine Anne Porter and her literary circle, Modernism, twentieth century literature and culture, and other related topics. More details will be announced in the coming weeks.

A total of twenty-four reference inquiries were submitted remotely for the Katherine Anne Porter papers during the past year, including inquiries from both scholarly researchers and the general public. Several researchers visited our reading room to consult the Katherine Anne Porter papers and requested private tours of the Katherine Anne Porter Room in Hornbake Library.

Maryland Day 2023 at the University of Maryland was a great success. On Saturday, April 29, visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter room were given guided tours by Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita.

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.

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 2023-2024 academic year, there were six public programs held at the house. The writers featured included Elizabeth Wetmore, Tomás Q. Morín, Greg Marshall, Kaveh Akbar, Paige Lewis, and Alexander Chee. 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. Poet Cecily Parks, who teaches in the MFA program at Texas State, spearheads this responsibility.

Texas State University's MFA program has published Porter House Review (https://porterhousereview.org/) since 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 Cecily Parks, 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. Riley Welch will serve as the 2024-2025 Writer-in-Residence. She is a recent poetry graduate from Texas State University's

Katherine Anne Porter Society Graduate Student Paper Award

The Katherine Anne Porter Society is pleased to invite submissions for its biannual Graduate Student Paper Award. Interested applicants should submit an article-length (15-25 page) paper on any Katherine Anne Porter topic.

The winner, who will be announced on December 1, 2026, will be invited to present a shortened form of the paper at the annual Katherine Anne Porter Society Session at the 2027 American Literature Association Conference. The award-winning paper will be featured in an article of the *Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society*.

The award also brings a monetary prize of $1000. Please email submissions as Word attachments to Jerry Findley at jerryfindley1@gmail.com by June 30, 2026.

Creative Writing program. She intends to make use of her MFA thesis to begin creating a poetry collection to be completed during her time at the KAP house. Funded by the Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Writer-in-Residence lives in the house and acts as curator of the museum and as the coordinator of the visiting writers series. The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center is open to visitors and school groups by appointment. To arrange a visit e-mail kapliterary@txstate.edu.

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center will host authors Amanda Churchill, Cassandra Lane, Justin Torres, and Ben Lerner. Updated information will appear on the Center's new website, http://www.kapliterarycenter.txst.edu.

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 and welcome to all readers, scholars, and other fans of Katherine Anne Porter! On behalf of the Porter Literary Trust and the University of Maryland Libraries, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on some developments regarding the Libraries, the Porter collection, and the Porter Trust. As always, you can find the most recent information about using the Porter collection, as well as other resources and services from our Special Collections and University Archives, at https://www.lib.umd.edu/special. The University of Maryland Libraries' hours, location, services, and collections are always complete and current at https://www.lib.umd.edu.

The Porter Trust has been busy the past year working in collaboration with our rights manager The Permissions Company and with Porter copyright holders. Writers, translators, production companies, and others continue to explore creating adaptations of Porter's works for various audiences and a wide range of media. The coming year might see new translations, stage adaptations, and other reimaginings of Porter's writings. We will keep you posted as these move forward. The Trust is always interested in other opportunities for collaboration. Please let us know if you have ideas!

The Trust continues to grow through royalties from Porter's works. Open Roads Media once

again held promotions during the past year featuring the digital edition of *Ship of Fools*. Other Porter works, including translations and adaptations, also generate revenue for the Trust. These resources support the work of the Trust and the Libraries to advance Porter studies.

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2022-2023

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

This past year, Katherine Anne Porter's fiction was the focus of one essay from an edited collection, six articles, and a part of a dissertation chapter.

To compile this bibliography, I searched the MLA International Bibliography, ABELL, and the University of Delaware's online catalog, using the term "Katherine Anne Porter." To find dissertations, I searched ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, using the term "Katherine Anne Porter" and limiting the search to "abstract." I did not include material that contained only passing reference to Porter. My annotations summarize instead of evaluate. If I missed any publications, please email me at cgrogan@udel.edu so that I may include the source in next year's bibliography.

Four of the eight sources focus in part or entirely on *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. In "The Trauma and the Triumph: Katherine Anne Porter's 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider'" (chapter 2 of *Literary Representations of Pandemics, Epidemics and Pestilence*, edited by Nishi Pulugurtha, Routledge, 2022, pp. 32-42), Tania Chakravertty argues that Porter's story, while faithful to art, also captures the historical realities of feminism, World War I, and the influenza of 1918-1920. It recounts how "individual consciousness" reacts to "external traumatic events" (37). Reassessing the story "to soothe our own pandemic anxiety," Rebeca Gualberto Valverde in "Reading Illness from the 'Dead Cold Light of Tomorrow': Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in the Times of Covid-19" (*miscelánea*, vol. 66, 2022, pp. 171-190) asserts that Porter's work, although a distinctively modernist response to trauma, nonetheless, provides a framework/narrative of the experience of illness that can aid our current path toward recovery (173). Also exploring the story's implications for our current post-Covid-19 moment, Bailey Rhodes in "The Weirdness of Post-Traumatic Identity in Katherine Anne Porter's 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider'" (*Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 75, no. 3, 2022, pp. 325-354) employs Mark Fisher's theories of the weird and the eerie in her reading of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. She contends that Porter/Miranda were attuned to the eerie vibrations of the illness, which allowed them to survive the trauma and craft a post-traumatic identity. Justyna Rusak's "Alienation and Identity Crisis in the Apocalyptic World of Katherine Anne Porter" (*Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2024, pp. 49-66) examines *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in addition to *Old Mortality*, *Noon Wine*, and "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," exploring the fiction's engagement with alienation and existentialism.

Race relations in Porter's work are the subject of three of the articles published this past year. Bailey Moorhead's "The South/Western Gothic: White Capitalist Zombies in Katherine Anne Porter's *Noon Wine*" (*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2022, pp. 367-395) discusses "the Thompson farm as a miniature model for labor systems under racial capitalism" and argues that Porter's story reveals "white anxieties about borders" as it critiques racial capitalism in South Texas in the 1930s through

the exaggerated whiteness of Helton, who is hired to replace two black workers (387, 371). In "What Can Be Said and Not Said, Is Known and Not Known: Race and the Work of Jean Rhys, Fanny Kemble and Katherine Anne Porter" (*Feminist Modernist Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2023, pp. 84-100), Elaine Savory reads Rhys's "The Imperial Road" in the context of Porter's "The Journey" and Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*. She argues that all three writers attempted to write against white racism but were ultimately limited by their cultural indoctrination. Tabea Alexa Linhard's "Writing Mobility, Writing Stillness: Silvia Mistral's Transatlantic Displacements" (*Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2023, pp. 95-122) includes a section that addresses Porter's *Ship of Fools* in the context of Mistral's own ocean voyages to and from Europe. Employing Michael Rothberg's work on the "implicated subject," Linhard contends that Mistral's "Yo fui pasajera en 'El barco de los tonots'" challenges Porter's depiction of the Spanish refugees in steerage on the Vera, asserting that "Porter appears as implicated in, or folded into, the silencing of a story of displacement that also happened to be Mistral's own" (98).

Across the five body chapters of his dissertation, "'The Great Art of Telling the Truth': Tragic Evasion in American Fiction, 1789-1952" (Oklahoma State University, 2022), Oliver Spivey traces instances in American fiction from Charles Brockden Brown to Ralph Ellison in which characters evade tragic realities, turning away "physically and psychologically… from their problems only to run up against the limits of themselves and their world." Chapter 5 explores three Southern tragic evasions, examining *Noon Wine* alongside Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Welty's "The Hitch-Hikers."

American Academy of Arts and Letters: Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature, 2024

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

Gayl Jones received the 2024 Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters at the Ceremonial held on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at the Church of the Intercession, Washington Heights, 550 West 155 Street, New York, New York 10032. This year's award committee members were Mona Simpson (chair), Henri Cole, Elizabeth Kolbert, Caryl Phillips, and Yiyun Li.

In 1942, 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."

Jones is the twelfth 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), Christine Schutt (2020), and Lynne Tillman (2022).

The Ceremonial citation commends Jones for "imagin[ing] the lives of Black women across the full extent of the American continent, and in many different centuries. Her subtle understanding of the nuances of Black vernacular experience,

married to an unflinching reckoning with the violence that has often underpinned American life, has produced an outstanding body of work that has influenced, informed, and enabled countless American writers."

Perhaps the highest praise for Jones and her work came from Toni Morrison, who said, after reading Jones's first book, "no novel about any black woman could ever be the same after this"; Jones "changed Black women's literature forever."

Like Porter, Jones is a writer's writer, fiercely dedicated to her craft. Born in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1949, she started writing when she was seven years old, influenced by her mother, who was also a writer and had read stories she had written to Gayl and her brother. After attending a segregated elementary school, she was one of the few black students at her high school and then attended, on the recommendation of Elizabeth Hardwick and sometime-husband Robert Lowell, Connecticut College, studying under Robert Hayden and William Meredith. She excelled, receiving the Frances Steloff Award for her short story "The Roundhouse" in 1970. She came of age during the Black Arts Movement and, at Brown University, earned her doctorate in creative writing, mentored by Michael Harper, one of the great poets and chroniclers of Black history and culture.

In 1974, Harper sent a box of Jones's writing to his friend Toni Morrison, then editor at Random House. An annoyed Morrison "wondered who would be so callous as to send me 'all' of the literary output of a student and expect a reasonable response." Originally planning to scan the material for reasons to reject it, she found herself struck by one of the pieces—*Corregidora*. Edited by Morrison, it was published the following year to critical acclaim. Nineteen seventy-five was a big

Gayl Jones with her mentor William Meredith, 1970s, Connecticut College, New London, CT, photo by Philip Biscuti. Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives, Connecticut College.

year for Jones, as she also earned her Ph. D. and turned twenty-five years old. James Baldwin, who blurbed the book, called it "the most brutally honest and painful revelation of what has occurred, and is occurring, in the souls of Black men and women."

She published the plays *Chile Woman* in 1974 and *The Ancestor: A Street Play* in 1975; her second novel, the self-proclaimed "horror story," *Eva's Man* in 1976; the short story collection *White Rat* in 1977; and her epic poem, "Song for Anninho," in 1981 (later rereleased in 1999 and 2022 as *Song for Almeyda & Song for Anninho*). She taught at the University of Michigan, the only Black woman on the English faculty to earn tenure, and at Wellesley College.

In 1983, she left Michigan for Europe where she wrote *Die Vogelfaengerin* (The Birdwatcher) in Germany. She and her late husband, Robert Higgins, lived abroad for five years.

She has also published the poetry collections *The Hermit-Woman* and *Xarque and Other Poems*. Her works have also been included in the anthologies

Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women (1983) and *Daughters of Africa* (1992). In 1991, her critical work, *Liberating Voices: Oral Tradition in African American Literature*, was printed.

Her third novel *The Healing* was published in 1998 and shortlisted for the National Book Award. *Mosquito*, an experimental fourth novel, followed in 1999. Much like Porter's *Ship of Fools*, Jones's latest novel, *Palmares*, was decades in the making. The 500-page, jewel-toned covered book has been described as her magnum opus. It was a 2022 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in Fiction. That same year she was honored for lifetime achievement at the 43rd annual American Book Awards, presented by Ishmael Reed. Her second short story collection, *Butter: Novellas, Stories, and Fragments*, was published in 2023.

She is the recipient of the Howard Foundation Award, the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and a fellowship from the Michigan Society of Fellows.

Painfully shy and evasive of the public eye, Jones commented in a 1979 interview on the kind of writer she would like to be—"those whose works have a certain kind of reputation, but the person, the writer, is more or less out of it." She names J. D. Salinger as having had the kind of anonymity she wants to enjoy. She lives in her hometown, in her late mother's house, where she continues to write. Her papers are currently housed at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

John Edgar Wideman, who won the Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2008, has expressed his indebtedness to Jones's work. Calvin Baker has described her as "the best American novelist whose name you may not know" and writes that "she has boldly set out to convey racial struggle in its deep-seated and disorienting complexity." Imani Perry, whose beautiful tribute to tracking Jones was published in *The New York Times Magazine*, has maintained that Jones is "one of the most versatile and transformative writers of the 20th century." Her mastery of rendering how trauma resonates through time has continued to speak to the many generations of those writing in her wake. ∽

Malcolm Cowley and Katherine Anne Porter

[Continued from page 1]

Katherine Anne Porter and Cowley & Co., 1919-1929

The Cowleys had known Katherine Anne Porter since first befriending her in Greenwich Village around 1919-1920. In the Village, she moved in the leftwing circles of Peggy's friends—Mike Gold, Floyd Dell, Dorothy Day, Josephine Herbst—and in the mid-1920s was a regular companion of Cowley's cohort of friends, including Herbst's husband John Herrmann, fellow Southerners Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, and Dorothy's sister Delafield (Della) Day. Like Cowley, Porter had suffered badly in the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918, but there was more to tie both writers together, despite their age difference. (Porter, like Peggy, was born in 1890 and was Cowley's senior by eight years.) Porter, writes her biographer Darlene Harbour Unrue, had "a good many experiences and values in common with Cowley, whose youthful, ruddy face belied the sophistication of his critical and literary skills. In 1925 she agreed completely with him on political and aesthetic

issues as both of them affirmed their preference for craftsmanship and classical humanism."[2]

Porter struck up close friendships with Peggy and Della Day, Josie Herbst and Caroline Gordon, discussing literature, painting, politics, as well as clothes and food, cats and flowers (two of Peggy's obsessions). In Cowley's slanted recollection, Porter and Herbst were "the two talkingest women" he ever met.[3] There were political sympathies to draw the women together. Just as Peggy and Dorothy Day had picketed the White House in 1917, been arrested, jailed, and gone on hunger strike in protest against a violation of the political rights of prisoners, so Katherine Anne in August 1927 attended a six-day rally in Boston to protest the imminent execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, together with Mike Gold, John Dos Passos, and other women activists including Lola Ridge, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Della Day.[4] More than through politics, however, Peggy, Dorothy, and Katherine Anne may well have felt drawn together in shared trials of womanhood. Peggy, for reasons not entirely clear, could not have children, and, possibly as a result, had embraced an uninhibited lifestyle, leading to a bout with syphilis in the early stages of her marriage to Cowley. Both Katherine Anne and Dorothy Day shared the private painful memories of having undergone abortions, Day in 1919, Porter in 1921. While Day took her subsequent motherhood as a sign of God's grace and converted to Catholicism, Porter gave birth to a stillborn baby in 1924, and remained childless, like Peggy.[5] Each in her individual way had had emotionally crushing experiences and had much to share in terms of private pain and guilt.

From the late 1920s Porter had enough confidence in Cowley's literary acumen and business instincts to cherish his advice. In 1928, temporarily stalled on her (never finished) biography of Cotton

Katherine Anne Porter, circa 1928-1929, when she knew the Cowleys in New York City. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Mather, she warmed up to Cowley's suggestion that she might want to write a book on the South-American freedom fighter Simón Bolívar. Cowley had broached the idea to Macaulay's, the publishing firm for which he was then acting as an informal advisor, manuscript reader, and translator, found the firm hospitable to it, and offered practical tips to Porter on how to pitch the book to the publisher. He urged her to "draw up a prospective two or three-page outline for the book, emphasizing its biographical aspect less than the picturesqueness of the setting, the adventure and cruelty of the battles and marches, and the internal drama in Bolivar's mind when he had finally become perpetual dictator of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru."[6] Porter enthusiastically took up Cowley's suggestions and "swung into action" with mock-military

energy—"Light but spirited skirmish from the trenches, no bayonet work. Planning a charge with cavalry and heavy artillery on Friday next. Forced march to Carnegie Library Wednesday or Thursday. Looks like a successful campaign." Though the book never materialized, in this early stage of their friendship Porter eagerly greeted the "blazing surprise" of Cowley's help: she insisted she wanted his advice "in great, gorgeous, gosh-awful gobs," and thanked him for offering her "the cockeyed world on a flower decorated silver tea tray," just as she needed it most.[7]

Though relations remained cordial, in the late 1920s the friendship between Porter and the Cowleys' circle may well have become strained by the bitter afterglow of the turbulent affair Porter had with Matthew Josephson in the fall and winter of 1928-1929, aggravated by the painful memory of the strange events that took place in Sherman, Connecticut, in the fall of 1929 during the birthday party of painter Peter Blume. Though accounts vary as to what exactly happened during this "Walpurgisnacht" of heavy drinking and casual pairings off, Porter was presumably assaulted by Cowley's writer-neighbor Robert Coates.[8]

Seeking relief from the depressing memories of a painful winter in New York, in late April 1930 Porter sailed for Mexico. For a few weeks she lived with Dorothy Day and her daughter Tamar in Xochimilco, where Day, now a devout Catholic, was working among the Mexican poor. In May, shortly after reaching forty and still searching for love, Porter moved to Mexico City, where she rented an old-fashioned townhouse at Calle Ernesto Pugibet 78, near Alameda Park.[9] The place served to lift her melancholy spirits and seemed ideal for receiving guests.[10] In June, she met Eugene Dove Pressly, an attractive, intelligent native of Pennsylvania, fourteen years her junior,

Porter holding her cat Charro, 1930-1931, roof of Ernesto Pugibet residence, Mexico City. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

then employed at the Institute of Current World Affairs in Mexico City. Reputedly somewhat dour and reclusive, he adored the gregarious Porter at first sight—it was the start of one of Porter's most durable relationships; they married in 1933.[11]

Porter and/in *The New Republic;* Cowley and/in Mexico, 1930-1931

In September 1930, Porter's break-through volume of short stories, *Flowering Judas*, came out in a limited edition of 600 to enthusiastic reviews. At *The New Republic,* Cowley offered the book to Edmund Wilson, as his preferred reviewer; when Wilson declined, his "second choice" was Louise Bogan—even though, he noted, "she keeps protesting that she wants to review a book by a man."[12] In her review, Bogan praised Porter's "range of effects," her "patience of detail," and her

"thorough imaginative grasp on cause and character" and judged her "exacting" talent to be unique: "There is nothing quite like it, and very little that approaches it in contemporary writing."[13] Wilson, still *The New Republic*'s foremost literary critic, did not read *Flowering Judas* until early 1931, but then—as Cowley reported to Porter—grew "wildly enthusiastic" about it and embarked on a search for "the inner intellectual meaning of your stories." Porter's book received further attention under Cowley's editorship from critic John Chamberlain who, as Cowley humorously observed to Porter, thought she had "solved the short-story writer's philosophical dilemma by deserting both Behaviorism and Psychoanalysis and stressing Volition. Yes, really, that's what he said. Howdy-do Miss Katherine Anne Hegel, Mrs. Friedrich Nietzsche Porter."[14]

Also in September 1930, Peggy Cowley wrote to Porter that she and Malcolm planned to visit Porter in Mexico for a week or ten days—"We are doing a perfectly wild stunt that you may or may not be pleased about." Peggy acknowledged, without apology, that it was the result of Porter getting her "Mexico minded years ago."[15] The Cowleys arrived at Porter's place on Calle Ernesto Pugibet in mid-October.[16] Cowley reported to Allen Tate that Porter "isn't as ill as we had feared," but "she isn't as well as we had hoped." He had found her living "comfortably," attended to by Eufemia, "a very inefficient maid who looks like Montezuma's daughter," and trying against odds to work on a novel.[17]

Porter felt strong enough to join the Cowleys on a memorable trip to the little mountain town of Taxco, some 100 miles westward toward Acapulco, then still pristine. Driving over the narrow mountain roads, they nearly went over the cliff, and, upon arriving, Porter recalled many years later, "we went and had an ex voto painted to hang in the church as a thank you for our deliverance."[18] In Taxco, Porter introduced the Cowleys to William Spratling, an American designer of works in silver, who was reviving the local silver industry, and Moisés Sáenz, an official in the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education. In Mexico City, Porter also introduced the Cowleys to her circle of American and Mexican friends and acquaintances, notably Frances (Paca) Toor, editor of *Mexican Folkways*; Mary Doherty, a Mexican government employee Porter had met in Mexico in 1921 (a model for Laura in "*Flowering Judas*"); and Eugene Pressly.

Porter's maid Eufemia holding Charro, 1930-1931, Ernesto Pugibet residence, Mexico City. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Despite the brevity of the trip, Cowley saw enough of Mexico to find its present and past situation "something to be studied by anyone interested in the defense of the agrarian system," as he told Tate, one of twelve Southerners who had just jointly published their "agrarian" manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). Ruminating over Mexican life, Cowley was led to conclude that the industrial and agrarian systems could not coexist without the

Peggy Cowley in Mexico, December 1931. Malcolm Cowley Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.

latter ("colony") becoming a "dependency" of the former ("metropolis"). Instead of marshalling arms and armies, the industrial system now used all the capitalist trappings of technology and metropolitan consumerism: "radios, phonographs, automobiles and money lent at interest." In contemporary Mexico, he argued (in lower case to which his typewriter defaulted), "only the mountain villages are economically independent. the rest of the country is as much an american colony as if it were ruled by a governor general appointed in washington. and when a mexican wants a word of utter praise to describe a luxurious mansion, he says, 'why, it's perfectly pullman.'" Cowley departed from Mexico City by night train on Saturday evening November 1, not wishing to miss the All Saints' Day celebrations of that day, while Peggy stayed on with Porter for another week.[19]

In the wake of his Mexican trip, Cowley wrote, for *The New Republic*, an account of a memorable visit he and Peggy had paid to the hacienda of Rosalie Evans, an American property owner who had been shot in ambush in 1924 by Mexican agrarian revolutionaries. Of the piece, Peggy exulted to Katherine Anne, it was "one of the best bits of prose he has ever done. . . . It will interest you as your reactions to the whole episode are so identical."[20] In his account, based on his reading of Rosalie's letters and official documents of the case, Cowley displayed sensitivity to the tragic complexities of Mexican revolutionary history; he evinced his sympathies for the claims of the local farmers victimized by foreign landowners and capitalist expansionists, yet refrained from demonizing Rosalie Evans as "a symbol of foreign aggression." Nor did he simplify the struggle in terms of an ideological battle between "good" revolutionaries (Zapata, Obregon) and defenders (Rosalie Evans) of a "utopia of leisure and good manners." Though he did not in the least admire the purpose by which she was possessed—"I cannot believe that maintaining one's property rights . . . is a fit cause in which to sacrifice one's life"—yet he could not consider her "less worthy of being remembered" than the agrarian revolutionaries whose graves were enshrined in flowers. There was, he believed, a mythical quality to her struggle: "She fought for her Mexican land as single-mindedly as Alexander for possession of the world; she died for it almost like Leonidas." Though her cause was an unjust one obviated by history, Cowley could not but be respectful of the human tragedy—and heroism—implied in her struggle. Above all, above even Cowley's sympathy for the radical sentiments inspiring the Mexican agrarian revolution, loomed the people's inalienable right to the land: it was not the

hacienda itself they coveted, but the land it dominated. In his account, Cowley wrote, they desired "the rich land watered by unfailing springs and producing each year its thirty thousand bushels of wheat."[21]

Besieged by office pressures, deadlines, and appointments—"There's not even time to take time to say how little time I have"—Cowley looked back nostalgically to the "swell time" of his Mexican vacation, when there had been time for talk, drink, companionship, and "even, sometimes, take an hour to write one paragraph, which is my idea of heaven."[22] Porter, too, recalled the Cowleys' visit with exhilaration: it was, she wrote to Della Day in early January, "the pleasantest thing that has happened to me in Mexico. Now it seems as if they only stayed a day. It was such a short little time, but I felt happier for it, even if it was only a glimpse."[23] Five weeks later, she had grown disenchanted with life and politics in Mexico. She wrote Day, "what a sink this country has become, what with its rotten internal politics and the trainloads of Good Will enthusiasts who bear down on it at intervals, bent on studying the Indian and the Arts for at least two weeks"—but added: "The Cowleys saved my life, almost. This is a dreadful place."[24] By mid-February, her hopes were set on receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship which would allow her to spend time in Europe and work on "Thieves' Market," the novel which she contracted with Harcourt, Brace in March 1930. Not only had Burke, Wilson, Tate, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts written recommendations, but Cowley, too, had written to Henry Moe, "in a mild sort of treachery" to two candidates he was sponsoring, that he thought Porter was the most "gifted" of this year's applicants.[25]

Cowley was eager to secure as many of Porter's contributions to *The New Republic* as he could:

Malcolm Cowley at his New Republic desk, 1934, photo by Morton Dauwen Zabel. Malcolm Cowley Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.

stories, sketches from Mexico, reviews were especially welcome. In dealing with Porter as a contributor, however, Cowley faced the challenge of walking the tightrope between personal friendship and professional exigency. When Porter sent in "Leaving the Petate," it was, Cowley reported, "universally liked" but also "universally adjudged" to be too long, and he was "assigned to, condemned to, perform the amputation."[26] The sketch was a loving tribute to the Mexican woman who had been Porter's maid at the time of the Cowleys' visit, Eufemia—"young, almost pure Aztec, combative, acquisitive, secretive, very bold and handsome and full of tricks."[27] Eufemia stopped working for Porter to marry a local barber, her departure signalling her transition from an Indian heritage and home culture (symbolized by her "leaving the petate," a straw sleeping mat) to a modern lifestyle comprising a brass bed, a sewing machine, a victrola, and, perhaps, a Ford. Fully

aware of Porter's sensitivity and pride, Cowley was prepared to receive her curses, but apparently his cuttings—he deleted "all the nice pages about your little Indian boy friend"—were tactful enough to be acceptable by Porter: the piece appeared in *The New Republic* on February 4, 1931.[28]

Cowley was eager to see Porter more firmly established in New York's literary circles. He unsuccessfully tried to place one of her stories, "The Spivvelton Mystery," with *The New Yorker*—it was a "ghost story" which, speaking as her "old friend & buddy," he had to confess "ain't so hot. It's a story more to be told than to be written down," he thought, and pointed out that she had failed to integrate its three separate themes.[29] Cowley reported that *The New Republic*'s editors had decided "to print some straight short-stories," and "Everybody is favorable to the idea of printing a story by you." Over the next year, however, it would take all of Cowley's talent for patience, tact, and humor to bear up with Porter's capriciousness as a contributor. Once he had persuaded Porter to review Kay Boyle's *Wedding Day and Other Stories*, he had recurrently to urge her to make good her promise: "People are writing in and asking us why we haven't said anything about the short stories of the American woman writer who ranks with Katherine Anne Porter."[30] When she had not delivered in February, he suggested she might combine the review with that of Boyle's new novel, *Plagued by the Nightingale*, to be issued in March, and Porter, writing back from Mexico on Ash Wednesday, wittily admitted she had been "in the cinders" about the Boyle review:

I have fiddled all around it, trying to do that girl justice, and I am having a hard time. I have read her poems long ago, and some of these stories, and she is gorgeous and irritating, and sharp as a whip and mean as the devil, and a vitality that is like a sock on the snoot. I like her immensely, but there are some things to be said against her. And that is the trouble. It is almost impossible to get her disentangled from her work, she has the kind of personality that IS her work and comes very near sometimes to that simple self-exploitation that is the bane of too many literary women, and some men.[31]

Porter was happy to accept Cowley's suggestion for a combined review and promised to make "some kind of definitive estimate of her work" and stay within the assigned 1000 words. When, almost two months later, Cowley finally received the review, he had to acknowledge it was "embarrassingly long" but so good he "couldn't bear to cut it." He took out two sentences, "just to keep the old blue pencil in practice," and rearranged some sentences to make the paragraph structure less "muddled. You were never a great hand at building tight brick paragraphs," but those who could, he thought, "would be damned lucky if they could write as well as you."[32] Porter apologized for having to make Cowley work over the piece, but she was happy about the result: "whatever little retouching you did of the Boyle review was perfectly all right; it showed up so prettily I was half-persuaded I had done it all myself!"[33] The review appeared in *The New Republic* on April 22, 1931.

In Porter's "definitive estimate" of Boyle, she took her as one of the "newest" and "strongest" young talents to have emerged from the shadows of Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, part of the very heterogeneous group of writers associated with transition (she also mentioned Cowley), who "wrote in every style under heaven" and "spent quite a lot of time fighting with each other. Not one but would have resented, and rightly, the notion of discipleship or of interdependence. They were all vigorous not so much in revolt as in assertion, and most of them had admirably

subversive ideas." Boyle, she wrote, summed up "the salient qualities of that movement: a fighting spirit, freshness of feeling, curiosity, the courage of her own attitude and idiom, a violently dedicated search for the meanings and methods of art." Boyle, moreover, wrote about love, "not as if it were a disease, or a menace, or a soothing syrup to vanity, or something to be peered at through a microscope, or the fruit of original sin, or a battle between the sexes, or a bawdy pastime," but as one "who believes in love and romance—not the 'faded flower in a buttonhole,' but love so fresh and clear it comes to the reader almost as a rediscovery in literature."[34]

When Boyle read the review in France, she immediately wrote to Porter that Porter was a shining source of encouragement and inspiration: "just you alone alive in the world and writing would be reason and to spare for living and writing too. A sentence of yours, sitting anywhere, makes me want to shout and wave and cry."[35] Porter exultantly reported to Cowley that Boyle had written her "a letter like a streak of friendly lighting, and a touch of rain," and had invited her to visit her in Nice on her Guggenheim. "I mean to go. Seems we have been a mutual admiration society all this long time, without mentioning it to each other."[36] Though Porter's ambivalence about Boyle would resurface later, both women remained friends and admirers, Boyle dedicating *Crazy Hunter* (1940) "in homage" to Porter. They would find themselves in league against Cowley's reading of the expatriate 1920s in the early 1970s. But in 1931, ironically enough, it was Cowley's perseverance and patience with Porter's review of Boyle that first brought both writers into contact.

Fretful Frictions: Malcolm Cowley, Katherine Anne Porter, Stuart Chase

Fretful frictions followed in the summer and fall of 1931, complicating Cowley's editor-writer relations with Porter and straining their friendship. Porter was eager to review Carleton Beals's latest book *Mexican Maze*. But Cowley had already given the book to another Mexican aficionado, Waldo Frank, whose laudable review appeared in *The New Republic* of July 1, 1931.[37] In view of a political shift in Mexico, involving the resignation of her friend Moisés Sáenz (she had approved of a *New Republic* editorial on the situation), Porter enquired, in June 1931, if Cowley would be interested in any of her rarer political writings on Mexico: "I promise not to write as an authority on Mexico, nor apologist, nor propagandist, nor enemy, but as an observer putting two and two together in the probable but distant hope of getting four out of it." She promised to deliver quickly and stay within the word limit, adding: "Dear Malcolm, I know my little failings." All she asked—she made it sound like a warning—was to be given the freedom "to make what comment I please. I'm frightfully tired of discreet soft soap. . . . But the N.R. is beginning to be a place where a man—or woman, I hope—can speak his mind."[38] As she would discover soon enough, there were limits to what the magazine would tolerate.

In July 1931, Cowley responded by sending her Stuart Chase's new book, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* (1931).[39] Porter was glad to have it and—"Cross My Heart"—promised to do the review "double-quick."[40] What with the prospect of her departure to Europe on her Guggenheim, the actual delivery still took some time—it is unclear if she wrote her review before her departure on August 21, or during the memorable twenty-seven-day voyage from Vera Cruz to Bremen, which became the inspiration for *Ship of Fools*. It was not

until September 14 that Cowley sent his response to Porter explaining—as diplomatically but also as honestly and humorously as he could—how she had violated editorial decorum, offended friend and foe, hampered the effectiveness of her critique by allowing herself to be carried away by personal resentment, and why it was simply unthinkable for *The New Republic* to publish it:

You certainly spilled the bean-pot when you wrote about Stuart Chase. You were, to begin with, taking a good solid whack at The New Republic itself, considering that it had published a good deal of the book in serial form. You were sticking hat pins and hair pins into a very good friend of George Soule's and a very dependable contributor to the paper. All this was bad enough; we could take our loss and grin and bear it, or at least grin at Stuart Chase as <u>he</u> tried to grin and bear it; but the trouble was that you didn't get away with your attack. It had the sound of being bitter and unfair and the expression of a great deal of pent-up hatred against other people–Paca Toor included–which you were suddenly dumping on the rather inoffensive sun-burned head of Mr. Chase. . . . What did I do? I immediately tried to sell the review to The Nation, to the Hound and Horn; neither would take it, for the reasons listed above. I am going to try to get it printed somewhere, because what you said ought to be said, even if Stuart Chase himself is a lot better than you make him out to be–and also because I want to see you get some money for the review–but My God! Katherine Anne, we can't print it in The New Republic.[41]

Porter's review was nothing if not mean, harsh, and merciless. Her actual consideration of Chase's book took up only about the middle third of her review, but she bracketed it by a fierce critique of the American presence in Mexico which she had come to resent more and more, which made Mexico no longer a place to visit, let alone to live in: "The land has fallen prey to its friends, organized and unorganized; its arts and customs are in the dreadful convulsions of being saved, preserved, advertised and exploited by a horde of appreciators, amateur or professional." They visited all the obligatory sightseeing spots and hoped to write "a study, or an interpretation, or a survey" for any of the countless "slipshod" American magazines or to peddle Mexican art to cater to the tourist taste. All were seeking to profit from the "racket" which Mexico had become and, thereby, assist "the destruction of Mexican art and life as much as they can."

Chase's book but served to prove her points, she charged: it was a "got-up, trivial affair," based on limited observation, and "concocted" largely by rewriting other people's books. Though she granted Chase had "a field of his own," deserved "credit for original findings," and that the idea of comparing the American Middletown with Tepotzlan was "brilliant," she found *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* to be but "a machine-made hymn of praise to life without machines. . . . Or is it a cautious bread-and-butter letter to a friendly host? For of all bad books written recently on Mexico, this is the most peculiarly irritating mixture of glossing over, of tactful omission, of superficial observation, of, above all, surprising errors in simple fact." It was derivative, reiterated "all the old familiar jargon" about indigenous Mexicans, and echoed "all the things the professional propagandists have been paid for praising all these years; in short, there is not one shred of evidence that Mr. Chase ever set foot in this country, except for some rather sketchy glances at the scenery."

Porter ended her slashing verdict with a patronizing warning—aimed at all who wanted to write about Mexico—against condescension and

denigration of the "other" culture. American travellers would do well to visit Mexico "without meddling, without presuming that you are a natural candidate for official favor, and without that condescending kindness which is so infuriating to intelligent Mexicans. If you really love the way of life you find here, keep your hands off it. All this uproar of publicity helps to change, commercialize, falsify it. Do not apologize for Mexican political corruption, any more than you would for your own rotten politicians." The Mexican Indian's nature was "as complicated and mysterious as human nature is," she maintained, and deserved better than to be looked upon as "a problem, a spectacle, a kind of picturesque social monstrosity to be approached always in this arty-scientific-sociological manner."[42]

Given the complications of transatlantic mail, it took some time for Cowley's September 14 letter of rejection to reach Porter in Germany. Before receiving Cowley's letter, Porter wrote that she was awaiting the publication of the review in *The New Republic*. "There was more I could have said, maybe more explicitly," but it was "no good wasting critical energy on worthless books." The best of Chase's book had been published in the magazine, she said, and his "whole idea" had been "worth just that series and no more."[43] When Porter finally did receive Cowley's letter of rejection, she responded with a lengthy outburst of self-justificatory anger and bitter denunciation of the magazine's protective attitude towards Chase: "Viva the Sacred Cow!" she exclaimed mockingly. Cowley was right that her attack had missed its point, she granted, and she now realized that she should have "shown carefully step by step why this book seems to me not only highly unnecessary, but pretty fairly jerry-built." But even so, she refused to "retract one judgment [she] made, either on the book or the situation which produced it," even as she did regret the tone and manner in which she had attacked a widespread tendency much larger than Chase or his book. She angrily concluded it was "no good to protest" against a "popular racket" where "if you do not hurrah with the crowd you are simply a sorehead who won't play the game." Her review, she acknowledged, might have been inspired by personal resentment against the "tasteless" and "singularly blind" way Chase had dealt with people she knew well—Paca Toor, Moisés Sáenz, Mary Doherty, William Spratling—as well his sanctioning of "exploitation and corruption" by supporting certain "purely commercial" Mexican art dealers. But she also insisted that her "bitterness" against Chase had been "very gentle" compared to Mexican reviewers. Even so, she should not have reviewed the book: it was "devilish bad form . . . to be angry" and to try "to modify organized propaganda" which had "the public hysteria behind it, and the prestige of well-known names." "So throw the review in the wastebasket," she told Cowley: "I will do the story again, more clearly, more calmly, and without using any one person, or book, as a starting point. . . . I really know what I'm talking about, and this outburst," she noted inconsistently, "was not in pique, or anger against personalities, but did express–very hastily and badly, true–an ingrained point of view, a way of feeling I have, which changes very little with the fashions. . . ."

She went on to spit her venom at Cowley himself, taking him to task for the way he executed his editorship: it was "a dangerous policy," she warned him, "to take away, or nullify, the responsibility of your reviewers." *The New Republic* had never before done so to her—"but probably I was harmless." *Herald Tribune Books* had always printed her reviews, even if they held unfavorable judgments of books by friends of the paper. She went on to question: "What is happening to the New Republic? What is happening to you? I believe you did it for friendliness, and you have

probably saved me from a nasty series of skirmishes over something that is not worth fighting for: for this I do thank you; but it makes me wonder too, if I am only to have things printed in the New Republic that are harmless, or in accord with the personal beliefs and friendships of the editors. If so, my good friend, it is a pity." Offering a truce, she suggested, if not without a touch of malice: "Don't let's be editor and writer anymore, but the friends we are. I like you better as an artist, Malcolm, my dear."[44]

Cowley kept his cool and replied to "the matter of Sacred Cows" in a long letter. Of course, he granted, *The New Republic* had its Sacred Cows, as did every magazine, "be it ever so slashing and forthright and free speechy." And there was no doubt that he would print unfavorable reviews by good reviewers—unless the reviewer got personally insulting: "You could have said everything you did, and the review would have been printed, if you'd gone about it in a different way, adopted a more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger tone, praised what Stuart had said in the past, and then said 'But. . . .'" Being a good friend of *The New Republic*, Cowley insisted, Chase had "a right to expect politeness–but no mercy." Had she been polite, Porter could have been as unmerciful as she pleased. "Stick that in your hatband," Cowley urged, offering her the example of his own experience with the *Herald Tribune*: "It gave me, once, a book by Mark Van Doren [brother-in-law of the Books editor, Irita van Doren], and I wrote a most blasphemous review of it, said what I thought, but said it Lord how deviously, and they printed it."[45] It all came down to "tone," not her "judgments." He promised to have another look at the Chase review, with an eye to disposing of it and getting some money for Porter.[46]

In early November, writing from Berlin, Porter returned to the topic one last time, asking Cowley not to publish her Chase review since—as she now realized—she was "hopping mad" when she wrote it, and had been taking out her anger on the wrong person. She explained that she was "just getting over the atrocious shock of the Hart Crane episode, which made me sick and fairly took the skin off me." (Funded by a Guggenheim fellowship, Crane arrived in Mexico in April 1931 and joined Porter's household for two weeks. His outrageous, frightening, and malicious behavior, including his verbally obscene and deeply offensive harangues against Porter, led to their falling out in June 1931.) Furthermore, Porter wrote, "accumulated angers and nervous irritations had finally driven me to the point where I wished to repay brutality with brutality. . . . So I up and socked [Chase], and you are right, he was not the one to attack."[47]

Nonetheless, the memory of the collision lingered with Porter, rancorously and unforgivingly, over the decades: as late as 1965 she reminded Cowley how "once when you wanted me to do a friendly review of a silly book by Stuart Chase about Mexico, and I wrote scorching his hide for him as he deserved, and you, as one of the editors of The New Republic, refused to publish it. I hope you will be glad to know I still have that review and the correspondence we carried on about it and also a few pages of a letter I wrote you and never sent. This is merely for the record."[48]

"Your own masterpieces, darling, are your letters."

Further complications came up when Porter, while working on the Chase book, had agreed to review Virginia Woolf's new novel *The Waves*. Delays arose as she had trouble obtaining the book in Berlin. On September 14, Cowley sent her a second copy from *The New Republic*; in his next letter, he wrote that he was awaiting the review

"with high expectancy."[49] By early November, Porter had to confess she had gotten stalled in writing it. Unlike her letters, which she tended to "knock off" so that they were "completely upside down and wrongside out, with everything hurled in together mopsy-topsy," in writing reviews, she felt hampered by a perfectionism which cramped her style. The Virginia Woolf review was giving her "fits," she said: she was now at the stage where she sat looking at "a pile of notes, observations and sentences breaking off at the point where the idea I was trying to express died on its feet." She would need at least another two days to organize it all into 1500 "neatly strung" words that even then would not come "within a mile of what I want to say."[50] In late January, she completed the piece, but apparently had second thoughts about submitting it to Cowley. In a never-sent letter, she wrote, "Here it is. I hope it is alright," but added apologetically; "It's perfectly useless to say again how hard it is for me to write reviews, and yet I will keep on trying."[51] However much he cherished Porter's contributions to the magazine, by early February 1932, Cowley had reached the limit of his patience, gave up hope, and wrote her "as a matter of official record" that "we no longer expect a review of 'The Waves'–and may the devil fly off with your great-grandmother's ghost."[52]

By now Cowley had every reason to think of Porter as a capricious and unreliable contributor at best, and Porter, writing to Josephine Herbst in the fall of 1933, admitted that the Chase incident "certainly damaged" her relations with both the magazine and Cowley, "at least on my side." Also the fact that she "didn't come through" with her review of *The Waves* did not help her "credit" any.[53] The fretful frictions, which had accumulated over the fall of 1931, were further complicated when a well-meant compliment by Cowley rubbed Porter the wrong way. Porter had written a long log-like letter to her friend Caroline Gordon from the *Werra*, the ship that carried her to Europe from August 22 to September 18, 1931, and Gordon had circulated large chunks of it among her New York friends. It was not until he got to Yaddo in October that Cowley found the time to read "all 60 pages of it," as he joked to Tate,[54] and to respond to Porter with what he intended as a compliment: "Your own masterpieces, darling, are your letters." The long account of the voyage was simply "marvelous," he noted.[55] Porter, however, heard a subtext of masculinist condescension, and vented her indignation to Gordon: the letter, she said, had been "hastily" dashed off on board the ship from day to day:

[W]omen are, as you know, fabulous letter writers. It has been supposed (by men) to be their ideal form of literary activity. Malcolm wrote that you had sent him fragments, and "Darling," says he, "Your masterpieces are your letters" for which cheerfully I could have throttled my good friend Malcolm. . . Even if it is true (God forbid!) somehow there was an echo of cheerful masculine voices down the centuries saying, "On his mother's side also our hero inherited some gleam of literary talent, for she was a writer of delightful letters."[56]

Writing to Josephine Herbst in the fall of 1933, she once more gave vent to her feeling that women writers were treated condescendingly by "politic" New York editors of magazines like *The New Republic*. She wasn't sure, she said, "whether it's a matter of the gempmun trying to hold us gals down, or what." "I don't think its malice," she added, but rather deficient sensitivity; "I think it is a matter of spots before the eyes and a touch of deafness and more than a touch of dumbness." She also surmised that the rancorous feelings toward her by the whole "set" of friends in New York might be "some sort of hangover of the Hart Crane episode."[57]

Friendship Under Strain[58]

Porter's friendship with Cowley had suffered irreparable dents in the wake of the reviewing debacle and her strained relations with what in early 1932 she mockingly referred to as "that grand old Communist publication, the New Republic."[59] There was no further correspondence between them for the next three-and-a-half years. Porter, who always cherished her innate individualism and in letters to Peggy had voiced her scepticism over mass political movements,[60] was more deeply ambivalent about Communism than Cowley, who, like many of Porter's New York friends, by 1932 had become a fervent fellow-traveller. In a letter to Peggy, Porter expressed her disapproval of the way New York intellectuals had "suddenly seized" on Communism as "a last resort" at a time when its radical effectiveness, she thought, had passed: "most of them didn't really think of it until their own economic problems were settled in safe bourgeois jobs. First they were so busy being artists they couldn't be Communists and now they're so busy being Communists they can't be artists anymore," she noted cynically. She also expressed her deep distrust of developments in Russia, where, as she had learned from Communist friends in Europe, the bureaucracy was "worse than it is in Germany," where "its propaganda is thoroughly dishonest, and . . . strangles its artists in this harness of propaganda."[61] Not surprisingly, when in June 1935 Cowley wrote to her on behalf of the League of American Writers inviting her to attend the International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in Paris, Porter scribbled on his letter: "Dear Internationalists: I am anti-war, anti-fascist, anti-Communist, anti-Catholic, anti-Semite, anti-Nationalist, anti-Occultism, anti-Democrat, anti-Republican, anti-prohibition [?], anti-Puritan, anti-Libertine, anti-Gold Standard, anti-imperialist, anti-Royalist, anti-Anarchist, etcetera. Will this help?"[62]

In the fall of 1936, Cowley—bearing no grudge (or hiding it well, if he did)—tried to re-establish contact and wrote Porter it was "a pleasure, a delight, a blinding revelation" to hear of her and Pressly's return to New York City. And as "Ye olde book review editor," he promptly invited Porter to review Carleton Beals's novel about Mexico, "a terribly bad novel, so I hear, but full of everything that Carleton knows about the inside of Mexican politics and all the characters very thinly disguised."[63] Porter obliged, and Cowley printed her review without alterations in *The New Republic*.[64] Despite minor frictions—Porter hoped Cowley would give her a new book by Ernie O'Malley for review, but Cowley liked it so much he did the review himself—their editor-writer relations seemed back on track. Cowley kept urging Porter to give priority to her work on her stories, but, he said, "if you do have a yen for reviewing, just let me know and I'll empty my shelves for you." ("Except the things he wants himself!" Porter scribbled.)[65] In March 1937, Porter reviewed Caroline Gordon's new novel *None Shall Look Back*.[66] However, a review of Josephine Johnson's novel *Jordanstown*, which Cowley was eager to have, urging her to "be nice" to "another handmaiden of the muse, even if you crack down on her in another fashion,"[67] never materialized, apparently to Porter's own mortification. "Honestly," Cowley wrote her on April 16, "I don't think this means that you ought to bow yourself out as a reviewer."[68]

No further review by Porter appeared in *The New Republic*, and Cowley and Porter did not resume regular epistolary contact, and then only briefly, until 1942. After Cowley's withdrawal from radical politics and his enforced resignation, in March 1942, from the Office of Facts and Figures in Washington, DC, they met at Yaddo, where Porter had relocated in June 1940.[69] In fall 1942, they discussed racial relations in the South apropos of a

book by J. Saunders Redding, *No Day of Triumph*, which Cowley was reviewing.[70] When Porter found herself temporarily destitute, Cowley lent her money, and, when she asked him to sponsor a Guggenheim application of a Spanish painter friend, Juan Mingorance, Cowley complied and enlisted the support of Robert Coates, then art critic for *The New Yorker.* [71] Their friendship, unfailingly warm, witty, and generous on Cowley's side, always seemed complicated, ambiguous, and sometimes malicious on Porter's. The two met regularly at the National Institute of Arts and Letters (Porter had been inducted in 1942, Cowley seven years later). They worked together in a spirit of literary camaraderie to get fellowships or promote membership for mutual friends, among them Newton Arvin, William Goyen, and Eudora Welty. In private, however, Porter expressed in less than amicable or complimentary terms her relationship with Cowley.

By 1949, Cowley had come to enjoy recognition as an authoritative literary critic, cultural historian, and self-appointed chronicler of the Lost Generation. Five years after his *Portable Hemingway* (1944), in January 1949 *Life* magazine published Cowley's bio-portrait of "Mister Papa." His *Portable Faulkner* (1946) had proved effective in lifting Faulkner from obscurity into new prominence. In 1949, the same year in which Faulkner received the Nobel Prize, Cowley had been elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. (He would become its president in 1956 and again in 1962.) But despite his successful professional rehabilitation, his radical political past came back like a boomerang, intensifying his guilt-laden struggle to come to terms with the past and aggravating his worries about minimizing damage to his income and his reputation. Nineteen forty-nine, indeed, proved a year of triumph as well as crisis and personal anxiety. Several events, broadly publicized in national and local newspapers, served

Yaddo artists-in-residence, Summer 1942, Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY. Porter is seated, fourth from left. Cowley is standing, eighth from left. Malcolm Cowley Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.

to bring his fellow-travelling past back into the limelight. In the winter and early spring of 1949, Cowley, a longtime advisor and director of Yaddo, was reluctantly drawn into the notorious "Lowell affair," when several guests, including Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Hardwick, accused director Elizabeth Ames, a supportive friend of both Porter and Communist Agnes Smedley, of having been "somehow deeply and mysteriously involved" in subversive activities. In June of 1949 (and again in December), Cowley was summoned to testify in the widely publicized Alger Hiss trials. In the winter of that year, he became the unwanted subject of public political controversy, when his appointment as Walker Ames guest lecturer at the University of Washington in Seattle was fought by reactionary forces in the state.[72]

In the postwar years, as Cowley's status as man of letters grew and he expertly managed to consolidate his position of prominence in what Porter may well have viewed as a male-dominated, women-unfriendly literary establishment, her judgment of Cowley lost much of the good humor, grace, and generosity that had marked their youthful years of friendship. As she watched

Cowley seeking to rehabilitate himself from his political mishaps in the late 1930s and his traumatic Washington debacle by embracing his role as defining chronicler of the Lost Generation, she seemed to become less respectful of what she once had appreciated as his literary acumen and more disturbed by what she now judged as his lack of political astuteness and his diplomatic adroitness. Given Porter's distrust of the fate of the individual artist in a mass political movement, by 1949, she may well have come to view with dismay how Cowley in the late 1930s had allowed his literary independence to become slanted under pressure of his Communist fervor. She may have also found disturbing his difficulty in avoiding prevarication during the sharply intensifying reactionary political climate of Cold War conformity and anti-Communist witch-hunting, as he moved with caution and diplomacy and struggled to maintain a precarious balance between courage and compromise.

Nineteen forty-nine also was the year in which both Porter and Cowley took public stands on the well-known controversy that arose in the pages of *The Saturday Review of Literature* over the Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound for his *Pisan Cantos*. Porter had been one of the Fellows of the Library of Congress to vote for Pound, who had been charged with treason for his wartime fascist broadcasts but ruled mentally unfit to stand trial and confined to a psychiatric hospital. In June 1949, the Fellows' award to Pound had been challenged by poet-critic Robert Hillyer as proof of a fascist conspiracy against American values. In a long five-page letter to *The Saturday Review*, Porter defended her decision to vote for Pound on the grounds that politics and poetry were separate domains. When the magazine refused to publish the letter, she circulated it among friends.[73] In *The New Republic*, Cowley took his own stand on the Bollingen affair, upholding the integrity of the Fellows' decision and arraigning Hillyer for betraying the "double duty" of writers—"to the public and to the values of their own profession." But he also advanced the argument that, in Pound's case, "the literary and political questions" were "intermingled" to the point where the faults of the poet's personality were the faults of his poetry: it was "hard," indeed impossible, to "draw a distinction between his art and his life, between the form and the content of his work or between his poetry and his politics." And so he felt justified to challenge the Fellows' decision to award the prize to Pound on literary grounds, rating the *Pisan Cantos* "spoiled work"—indeed "the weakest of his books, the most crotchety and maundering." He maintained that better books of poetry had been published in 1948.[74]

Such literary disagreements may have colored Porter's judgment of Cowley as a critic, but they hardly suffice to explain the vehemence with which she lashed out against him in a postscript to a letter to Monroe Wheeler of July 6, 1949. "Poor Malcolm Cowley never was anything but cold oatmeal from the neck up, and even warmed with likker it is still oatmeal. I wouldn't trust him for even the simplest insight or memory of any sort." Porter's slashing, pitiless verdict—witty but hardly warranted—was occasioned by a clipping from the conservative *New York World-Telegram* of June 24, 1949, which Wheeler had sent her, without comment, in late June.[75] The article, by Victor Lasky, reported on Cowley's June 23 testimony in the Alger Hiss trials and focused on Whittaker Chambers's charge that Cowley had blatantly "twisted facts" in recalling a December 1940 lunch in which Chambers, as Cowley testified, had implicated Francis B. Sayre, former Assistant Secretary of State, in Communist subversion of the State Department. Cowley's testimony was based on a factual and sober December 1940 notebook entry he had made immediately after the lunch,

whereas Chambers's disclaimer and version of the lunch showed unmistakable signs of fabulation and distortion. But the tenor of the article was to tip the scales in favor of Chambers and to cast doubt on Cowley's reliability as a witness. And Porter swallowed it whole: "The parade of names in this Chambers-Hiss business has been remarkable," she continued her postscript to her letter to Wheeler. Having Hillyer's recent charges against the Fellows of the Library fresh in mind, she observed: "I have been so annoyed about the Fascists I almost forgot to notice the Communists . . . I knew that M.C. in his sloppy way leaned towards some vague notion he had of Communism, but the only effect it ever had that I could see was to just add confusion to his natural chaos. Lucky that cause which hasn't Malcolm, I would have said. Let the Communists have him, by all means . . . ."[76]

Porter's response to Cowley's testimony must be deemed confused, inconsistent, and erratic at best. She must have known, as Cowley had publicly proclaimed often, that, after 1940, Cowley had definitively forsworn Communism, unambivalently rejected the Soviet oppression of artistic freedom, and reaffirmed his allegiance to the American creed. In June 1949, there was no question of a continuing allegiance to Communism—nor could his past allegiance to radical politics with any degree of justification be characterized as "sloppy," "vague," chaotic, or confused. Indeed, Porter appears to have missed or misunderstood—let alone evaluated fairly—the personal pain and cost involved in Cowley's post-1942 determination to live and work by the courage of his convictions. As Cowley had observed to Granville Hicks on April 20, 1949:

The whole world is in a paranoiac phase, and sensitive individuals become victims and representatives of a general condition. And now we're asked to prepare for twenty years of cold war. . . . They will be black years for human freedom, and for literature which depends so much on free minds. What is happening to the arts in Russia fills me with tears and nausea. . . . Now we're beginning to get some of the worst features of communism, under the guise of counter-communism. I do think that an assertion of individuality, not as a theory, but in one's own life and work, is perhaps the best that American writers can do now.[77]

As Cowley observed over three decades later: "Testifying for Hiss in the full knowledge of the cost I would have to pay was the boldest thing I did."[78]

One of Porter's final resentments concerned the way Cowley had portrayed her Mexican experience as a mode of "exile" in his revised edition of *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1951).[79] She had debated the issue with Cowley during one of their joint stays at Yaddo, but she waited until the book was reissued by Viking in a new Compass paperback edition in 1965 before she vented her anger directly and more circumstantially to Cowley in a series of letters.[80] Though she had personally guided Cowley through her Mexican habitat in 1930, apparently, in Porter's belated verdict, he had not grasped the real nature of her affection for its people and its culture. She insisted on correcting his mistaken impressions about her stay in Mexico. In doing so, as Jeffrey Lawrence pertinently suggested, Porter in effect challenged the modernist paradigm of "exile" and "return" (and its implied Eurocentric and masculinist bias) Cowley had influentially posited as defining for modern American literature.[81] Even more than Cowley's calling her "a newspaper woman," she resented his observation, in *Exile's Return*, that "Mexico City was her Paris and Taxco was her South of France"—and curtly set him straight: "Mexico City was not my Paris; it was my beloved

Mexico City. . . . I went to Mexico because I was not going into exile, but I was going back to a place I knew and loved."[82] In defense, Cowley reasoned that he had "only" used her Mexican experience as a personal variation on what he persisted was "the general pattern of the age"—of "departure and return" or "to use fancier words, alienation and reintegration"—and insisted on the general validity of his thesis: "Yes, yes, you were moderately alienated from the American life of the time, in your own fashion, it's true, but still with a cousinly resemblance to the sense of alienation that the rest of us felt."[83] He offered to make minor revisions in a future edition, but Porter was hardly pacified.

Porter was not the only nor the last writer to challenge Cowley's dominant paradigm and offer alternative readings of the expatriate 1920s. In the late 1960s, Kay Boyle had revised and reissued Robert McAlmon's memoir *Being Geniuses Together* (originally published in 1938), interspersed with chapters of her own reminiscences of the 1920s. Boyle's undertaking was inspired by her continuing loyalty to the memory of McAlmon and motivated by her determination to give him the recognition for his influential role as a publisher and mentor in expatriate Paris that she felt he had been unfairly denied. As she wrote to Porter, she was eager to put McAlmon "in a proper perspective" and remedy the dismissive treatment of McAlmon she had encountered in *Broom* and *transition* in the 1920s, as well as more recently in Cowley's *Exile's Return* and Josephson's *Life Among the Surrealists* (1962). "Bob was annihilated as a writer by Cowley, Josephson, Slater Brown, and others, and this book will, I hope, help to reinstate him both as a writer and publisher in our time."[84] Cowley had reviewed the book, praising Boyle's chapters, but coming down harshly on McAlmon who, he boldly claimed, "never in his life wrote so much as a memorable sentence."[85] An acrimonious altercation between Boyle and Cowley ensued, which was reignited three years later when Cowley, in reviewing John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (1971), inadvertently and in passing referred to McAlmon as "the bitter homosexual novelist."[86]

Boyle was so infuriated at Cowley's treatment of McAlmon that she expressed her anger to Porter. Admitting her distrust of Cowley's motives, Boyle wrote: "It is not that what Malcolm says is derogatory or insulting but that Malcolm certainly wished it to be." She was convinced Cowley lost "no opportunity to vent his venom on Bob" where he should have placed McAlmon "in the literary scene of the time."[87] Porter replied on January 21, 1972, that she had never been able to decide whether Cowley "is just so stupid that he doesn't know what he is saying, or just stupidly malicious–and swings his dull hatchet blindly." Porter's letter, in effect, was less a response to Cowley's review—she had not actually seen *The New Republic* lately, she confessed—than a personal endorsement of a female friend's verdict. She welcomed Boyle's writing her about "M's brutal remarks about our dear McAlmon," adding that Boyle, McAlmon, and Sylvia Beach had been "the only people I knew in Paris that I loved and trusted." McAlmon, she emphasized, was "a kind of living center of our many sympathies," and Porter admired Boyle's "elegance and restraint and perfect candour in this rebuke to Malcolm–it is too good for him, but yet it may seep through if there are any pores in that thick hide." As for McAlmon's homosexuality, she admitted to Boyle that she "never knew anything" about his private, sexual life: "I took for granted that sex is a private, individual mystery that cannot be explained, analyzed, subjected to public curiosity."[88] Though, at Boyle's request, Porter set out to draft a letter to Cowley about McAlmon, to all appearances she did not finish it.[89]

As Porter's letters make clear, over time her friendship with Cowley, both epistolary and in person, remained marked by a mixture of loyalty and distrust, cordial sensitivity and barbed-wire irritation, literary appreciation and slashing malice. In turn, Cowley, for all the kindnesses he extended to her, always felt the need to tread lightly in his dealings with Porter. If he had his moments of obtuseness and stubbornness in judging his contemporaries' literary or personal qualities, more commonly he was able to maintain the good-humored patience, shrewd literary intuition, and diplomatic wisdom that had marked his long career as critic and middleman of letters. For all of the crude and seemingly unforgiving sharpness of Porter's attacks, over time Cowley learned to survive such lashings-out and bear his sorrows like a Christian: "As I get older I begin to feel like a tough-skinned St. Sebastian, all bristling with arrows that couldn't pierce his leathery hide."[90]

Abbreviations

KAP Katherine Anne Porter
MC Malcolm Cowley
PC Peggy Baird Cowley

Footnotes

[1] MC to Allen Tate, August 15, 1930; September 18, 1930. Allen Tate Papers, Princeton University Libraries, hereafter ATP.
[2] Darlene Unrue, *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 105.
[3] Elinor Langer, *Josephine Herbst: The Story She Could Never Tell* (Boston & Toronto: Little Brown & Co, 1983), 89.
[4] Unrue, *Life*, 109-10; Joan Givner, *Katherine Anne Porter: A Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), 190-92.
[5] Unrue, *Life*, 106-07.
[6] MC to KAP, June 16, 1928; Katherine Anne Porter Papers, University of Maryland Libraries, hereafter KAPP.
[7] KAP to MC, undated letter [1928]; Malcolm Cowley Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago, hereafter MCP.
[8] Givner, 222-23.
[9] Unrue, *Life*, 125-27.
[10] KAP to Delafield Day, June 7, 1930; Delafield Day Spier Papers, University of Maryland Libraries.
[11] Givner, 225-26.
[12] MC to Edmund Wilson, August 27, 1930; Edmund Wilson Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.
[13] Louise Bogan, "*Flowering Judas*," *New Republic*, October 22, 1930, 277-78.
[14] MC to KAP, January 14, 1931; KAPP. Cf Hans Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage: Selected Letters of Malcolm Cowley, 1915-1987* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2014), 172. Chamberlain made his point in a combined review of five short story collections, "The Short Story Muddles On," *New Republic*, January 7, 1931, 225-26. He argued that whereas most short story writers seemed to be either "system ridden by the behaviorists" or mired in Freudian psychoanalysis, Porter refreshingly "seems to bind up the two by means of moral volition." (225)
[15] PC to KAP, undated letter [September 1930]; KAPP.
[16] Telegram MC and PC to KAP, October 16, 1930; KAPP.
[17] MC to Allen Tate, October 23, 1930; ATP.
[18] KAP to MC, March 3, 1965; MCP.
[19] MC to Allen Tate, October 23, 1930; ATP.
[20] PC to KAP, January 5, 1931; KAPP.
[21] MC, "Rosalie Evans' Ranch," *New Republic*, February 18, 1931, 10-12.
[22] MC to KAP, November 30, 1930; KAPP.
[23] KAP to Della Day, January 6, 1931; Delafield Day Spier Papers.
[24] KAP to Della Day, February 17, 1931; Delafield Day Spier Papers.
[25] MC to KAP, January 14, 1931; KAPP.
[26] MC to KAP, November 30, 1930; KAPP.
[27] KAP, "Leaving the Petate," *New Republic*, February 4, 1930, 319.
[28] MC to KAP, November 30, 1930; KAPP. KAP, "Leaving the Petate," *New Republic*, February 4, 1930, 318-20. *Katherine Anne Porter, Collected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Darlene Harbour Unrue (New York: Library of America, 2008), 923-28, reprints the story in Cowley's edited version.
[29] MC to KAP, January 14, 1931; KAPP. Givner (473) notes that much later, in the wake of the publication of *Ship of Fools* (1962), the story was published in *The Ladies' Home Journal* and won an award from the Mystery Writers of America.
[30] MC to KAP, January 14, 1931; KAPP. Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 172.
[31] KAP to MC, February 18, 1931; MCP. Givner quotes this passage too, but incorrectly identifies it as coming from a letter to Josephine Herbst. Cf Givner 231; 531 n 25.
[32] MC to KAP, April 9, 1931; KAPP.
[33] KAP to MC, June 17, 1930 [1931]; MCP. *Selected Letters of Katherine Anne Porter: Chronicles of a Modern Woman*, ed., Darlene Harbour Unrue (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2012),

68. Although Porter dated this letter 1930, it is clear from the context that it was written in 1931.
[34] KAP, "Example to the Young," *New Republic*, April 22, 1931, 279-80.
[35] Kay Boyle to KAP, May 8, 1931; *Kay Boyle: A Twentieth-Century Life in Letters*, ed. Sandra Spanier (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: U of Illinois P, 2015), 183-84.
[36] KAP to MC, June 17, 1930 [1931]; MCP. Unrue 2012, 70.
[37] Waldo Frank, "Pilgrimage to Mexico," *New Republic*, July 1, 1931, 183-84.
[38] KAP to MC, June 17, 1930 [1931]; MCP. Unrue 2012, 68-69.
[39] MC to KAP, July 15, 1931; KAPP. The economist and social theorist Stuart Chase was a cherished *New Republic* contributor; his idea of a "New Deal" for America was first launched in the magazine and became the subject of Chase's 1932 book, *A New Deal*, which laid the groundwork for FDR's policy. A sizable portion of Chase's book on Mexico had been pre-published in *The New Republic* as a series of five weekly installments entitled "Men Without Machines" between June 17 and July 15, 1931.
[40] KAP to MC, July 22, 1931; MCP.
[41] MC to KAP, September 14, 1931; KAPP.
[42] Porter's review remained unpublished during her lifetime. In 2008 Darlene Harbour Unrue included the text of a four-page manuscript first published as "Parvenu" in *Uncollected Early Prose* (1993) in the Library of America edition of Porter's *Collected Stories and Other Writings*, 997-99. Quotations in the text are from Unrue's edition.
[43] KAP to MC, September 25, 1931; Unrue 2012, 90.
[44] KAP to MC, October 3, 1931; MCP.
[45] MC, "The Real Tragedy of the Farmer" [a review of *Jonathan Gentry* by Mark Van Doren], *New York Herald Tribune Books*, April 12, 1931, 5.
[46] MC to KAP, undated [before October 3, 1931]; KAPP.
[47] KAP to MC, November 5, 1931; MCP. For the June 1931 crisis between Porter and Crane, see Givner, 236-37; Unrue, *Life*, 130. See also John Unterecker, *Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 670-73.
[48] KAP to MC, March 3, 1965; MCP.
[49] MC to KAP, undated [before October 3, 1931]; KAPP.
[50] KAP to MC, November 5, 1931; MCP.
[51] KAP to MC, January 22, 1932; KAPP. The letter is among Porter's papers at the University of Maryland Libraries but is not among Porter's letters kept by Cowley in MCP, which seems to corroborate that Cowley never received it.
[52] MC to KAP, February 2, 1932; KAPP.
[53] KAP to Josephine Herbst, October 16, 1933; Unrue 2012, 114.
[54] MC to Allen Tate, October 19, 1931; ATP.
[55] MC to KAP, undated [before October 3, 1931]; KAPP. An edited version of KAP's letter appears in *Letters of Katherine Anne Porter*, ed. Isabel Bailey (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 46-60.
[56] KAP to Caroline Gordon, December 14, 1931; KAPP.
[57] KAP to Josephine Herbst, October 16, 1933; Unrue 2012, 114.
[58] A full comprehension of the complexity of Cowley's friendship with Porter would have to include an account of Cowley's separation from Peggy, his discovery of a new love (Muriel), and the period Peggy spent in Mexico, from July 1931 to April 1932, when she sought a divorce, and became involved (to Porter's horror) with Hart Crane, in the months before his suicide. These complicated and, at times, toxic entanglements will be part of my forthcoming biography. For reasons of space, the present essay focuses mostly on the literary dimensions to the friendship between Cowley and Porter. The full story of the friendship between Porter and Peggy Cowley also deserves separate treatment.
[59] KAP to MC, January 22, 1932; MCP.
[60] Cf KAP to PC, October 1, 1931; KAPP.
[61] KAP to PC, January 30, 1933; KAPP.
[62] KAP on MC to KAP, June 8, 1935; KAPP.
[63] MC to KAP, October 26, 1936; KAPP.
[64] "History on the Wing," Porter's review of Beals's *The Stones Awake: A Novel of Mexico* appeared in *New Republic*, November 11, 1936, 82.
[65] MC to KAP, March 1, 1937; KAP's tart comment was written in pencil on MC's letter; KAPP. Cowley's "The Boys," a review of O'Malley's *Army without Banners*, appeared in *New Republic*, March 10, 1937, 142-43.
[66] "Dulce et Decorum Est," *New Republic*, March 31, 1937, 244-45.
[67] MC to KAP, April 9, 1937; KAPP.
[68] MC to KAP, April 16, 1937; KAPP.
[69] For Cowley's traumatizing time in Washington, DC, in 1941-1942, see Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 297-314, which includes his letter of resignation, to Archibald MacLeish, March 12, 1942 (312-14).
[70] "Journey to the Slave States," *New Republic*, October 12, 1942, 470-71.
[71] MC to KAP, September 30, 1942, KAPP; KAP to MC, October 2, 1942, MCP; MC to KAP, October 13, 1942, KAPP; KAP to MC, October 13, 1942, MCP; MC to KAP, November 17, 1942, KAPP.
[72] For Cowley's engagement with the complex interactions of literature and politics between 1949 and 1954, see Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 396–463.
[73] Unrue, *Life*, 213-14.

[74] "The Battle over Ezra Pound," *New Republic*, October 3, 1949, 17-20. Reprinted in *The Flower and the Leaf: A Contemporary Record of American Writing Since 1941*, ed. Donald W. Faulkner (New York: Viking Press, 1985), 99-106.
[75] I am indebted to Beth Alvarez for checking on Wheeler's letters to Porter, June 29 and July 1, 1949, into one of which the clipping apparently was enclosed.
[76] KAP to Monroe Wheeler, July 6, 1949; KAPP.
[77] MC to Granville Hicks, April 20, 1949. Granville Hicks Papers, Syracuse University. Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 402-03.
[78] MC to Hans Bak, June 25, 1981. Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 405. For Cowley's version of his testimony in the Hiss trials, see his letter to Benjamin DeMott, May 6, 1978, in Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 664-68. Cowley computed that choosing to testify in the Hiss trials had cost him some $40,000 in lecture engagements, magazine assignments, and university appointments.
[79] In the new epilogue written for his revised edition of *Exile's Return* (New York; Viking Press, 1951), Cowley mentioned Porter in the following way: "Each life has its own pattern, within the pattern of the age, and every individual is an exception. Katherine Anne Porter was a newspaper woman in the Southwest before she went to Mexico and worked for the revolutionary government; Mexico City was her Paris and Taxco was her South of France" (291). He had not made this claim in the original 1934 version, which mentioned Porter once, in the prologue, as one of the writers belonging to the literary generation which by 1929 had made an impact. See *Exile's Return* (New York: Norton, 1934), 10. I have found no indication that this claim or mention insulted Porter at the time.
[80] Cf KAP to MC, March 3, 1965, MCP; MC to KAP, March 9, 1965, KAPP (Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 582); KAP to MC, March 16, 1965, MCP.
[81] Jeffrey Lawrence, "Why She Wrote about Mexico: Katherine Anne Porter and the Literature of Experience," *Twentieth Century Literature* 64, no. 1 (March 2018), 37-38.
[82] KAP to MC, March 16, 1965, MCP; Unrue 2012, 307.
[83] MC to KAP, March 9, 1965, KAPP; Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 582.
[84] Kay Boyle to KAP, August 8, 1967; Spanier, *Letters*, 605.
[85] Cowley's review, "Those Paris Years," appeared on the frontpage of the *New York Times Book Review* of June 9, 1968. Reprinted in MC, *The Flower and the Leaf*, 243-47. Cowley had earlier given the gist of his appreciation of both Boyle and McAlmon in a December 10, 1967, letter to Boyle: see Bak, ed., *The Long Voyage*, 603-04.
[86] Cowley's review, "We Had Such Good Times," appeared in the Christmas 1971 issue of *New Republic*. Reprinted in *The Flower and the Leaf*, 247-51.
[87] Kay Boyle to KAP, December 31, 1971; Spanier, *Letters*, 636.
[88] KAP to Kay Boyle, January 21, 1972, Kay Boyle Papers, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
[89] Among KAP's papers at the University of Maryland Libraries is a handwritten undated fragment of a letter which stops abruptly: "Dear Malcolm–Kay and I have been exchanging our views on your review of a book by one Buffy Glassco, (unknown to me) and we were equally mystified at your dismissing Bob McAlmon as 'Homosexual.' Bob was my dear friend, for enough years to make a test of any relationship, and I knew enough about him to find him entirely candid, and certainly sharp-tongued, critical, acute in – but there was nothing 'mean' about him in any way, and if you"
[90] MC to Leslie [Mrs John W.] Aldridge, January 16, 1957, MCP.