

Newsletter

of the

Katherine Anne Porter

Society

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“Pale Horse, Pale Rider”: Humanity, Truth, and Immortality

By Jerry Findley, Independent Scholar

Editor's note: Jerry Findley delivered this paper at the American Literature Association Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois, May 2022.

“[T]he stubborn will to live” is within Miranda at her “innermost self” for her to summon. Miranda knows it. It can change her. But it “[knows] itself alone.” She cannot change it. The transmutation of “the stubborn will to live” from the “minute fiercely burning particle of being” into “this fiery motionless particle of being” is transmutational, not in and of itself, but in and for Miranda. Its transmutation from one guise to the other, albeit subtle, signals the life-changing transformation of Miranda. She changes, as did Porter:

I had almost died, and it had cut my life in two, so that I was not the same, and was never again the same. The spirit and energy that appeared to you supernatural was in fact just that. I have not the slightest idea how I did it, nor precisely why, but I am beginning to see a little what I must have known in my bones then, you might say: that the latter time would be better than the first, if only I would consent to survive and see it. (*Selected Letters* 78)

This excerpt is from Porter's reply to a letter she received from a colleague who worked with her on the *Rocky Mountain News* when Porter nearly died from the influenza epidemic, Lucile Clayton Robinson, who wrote to congratulate Porter on the publication of *Flowering Judas*.

The way of thinking, the habit of mind Porter's letters to her family chronicle, Porter in her reply blocks in. What Porter knew in her bones at the end of the First World War, she was “beginning to see a little” over a decade later.

[Continued on page 10]



Portrait of Katherine Anne Porter taken in early spring, Texas, 1918. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, UMD Libraries.

Changes and Momentum in Porter Studies

By Alice Cheylan, President of the Katherine Anne Porter Society

The last year has been full of unforeseen changes and promising possibilities for the Katherine Anne Porter Society. We have continued our dynamic of trying to attract more international scholars to our society. Christine Grogan's annotated biographical list of recent publications on Porter has become invaluable to us. Every year the doctoral candidates, who have mentioned Porter in their theses, and both aspiring and confirmed members of academic communities around the world, who have written articles on some aspect of Porter's work, are contacted and invited to join the Katherine Anne Porter Society. We have also begun inviting English department chairs and professors from nearby universities to be our guests at the Porter panel.

Unfortunately, two of the panelists who were to participate in the Porter session at the May 2025 American Literature Association Conference in Boston were unable to attend. Consequently, the Society's Executive Committee decided to cancel this year's Porter panel. Although it was, of course, a disappointment, the presentations are not lost, but only postponed. Darlene Unrue will chair the Porter session at the 2026 American Literature Association Conference in Chicago. We expect that Allen Ireland will present his "Lazarus, Come Forth: Katherine Anne Porter's Resurrection on YouTube." Jerry Findley and Mark King are already preparing studies for the panel. We have also been able to reprogram Beth Alvarez's paper on Porter's relationship with her French translator Marcelle Sibon. Beth will present her work at the 2027 Porter panel in Boston chaired by Christine Grogan which may be in collaboration with the Kay Boyle Society.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter

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

Society membership inquiries should be directed to Beth Alvarez. Entries for the annual bibliographical essay on Porter should be addressed to Christine Grogan at cgrogan@udel.edu.

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Although the Boston panel was cancelled this year, we were still able to hold a very successful annual business meeting via Zoom on May 22nd. Beth Alvarez confirmed that our membership numbers and budget are very stable. We were able to establish chairs for the next five ALA Conferences to assure that we are not losing momentum. One of the major changes which was made by the Executive Committee was the decision to replace the graduate student award with a travel grant offered to national and/or international Porter scholars to enable them to attend the ALA Conference and present their work. This travel grant could be extended to the graduate students working with Amber Kohl on the Katherine Anne Porter holdings at the University of Maryland's Hornbake Library Special Collections, as well as to doctoral candidates and university professors in the U.S. or abroad whose research involves some aspect of Porter studies. Independent Porter scholars are also welcome to apply for it.

Katherine Anne Porter Society Travel Award

The Katherine Anne Porter Society is delighted to announce the Katherine Anne Porter Society Travel Award. This award provides up to \$2,000 to support travel expenses to attend the Katherine Anne Porter Society session at the 2026 American Literature Association Annual Conference. The award is open to all.

To apply, complete the online [application form](#). Applications are due December 31, 2025.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who have been instrumental in encouraging interest in Porter's work this year. Firstly, thanks go to Dan Mack, Associate Dean of Libraries, at the University of Maryland Libraries, for his annual contribution to the *Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society* and allowing the Porter society to be indirectly associated with the research grant from the Porter Literary Trust. I would also like to thank all the members of the Executive Committee for their hard work and wonderful team spirit. Beth Alvarez has devoted her time and legendary energy to the society. Membership inquiries should be directed to her at alvarez@umd.edu. In spite of her busy schedule, she continues to work with Amber Kohl on the KAP Correspondence Project and the society's newsletter. Amber's work is also very much appreciated by everyone. She is always available for inquiries concerning all aspects of KAP studies. Her thoughtful and helpful comments and suggestions are invaluable. If members would like to submit articles, announcements, or comments to the *Newsletter*, she can be contacted at amberk@umd.edu. Next, I would like to thank Christine Grogan for her tireless involvement in the KAP society. Always reactive and reliable, she is an inestimable asset to the society. Her annual bibliographic essay on Porter is a very popular feature of the newsletter. Entries for it should be addressed to her at cgrogan@udel.edu. Many thanks also go to Jerry Findley who is a pillar of the society.

His widespread research interests offer an incentive to other Porter scholars. This year he contributed the excellent leading article titled "Pale Horse, Pale Rider": Humanity, Truth, and Immortality" to the newsletter. And last but certainly not least thanks go to founding member Darlene Unrue who is an inspiration to Porter scholars. Her thoughtful advice, active support, and constant encouragement continue to be a boon to all of us. 🍷

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2023-2024

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

Yet again, Katherine Anne Porter's works have attracted critical attention. This past year saw the publication of one article, two essays in edited collections, and a dissertation that in part discusses *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. Additionally, Rebecca Parks's edited *Short Story Criticism: Criticism of the Works of Short Fiction Writers*, volume 321, published by Gale, a Cengage Company in 2023, reprints five essays on Porter's fiction: Charles A. Allen's "Katherine Anne Porter: Psychology as Art" (originally published in 1956); Marvin Pierce's "Point of View: Katherine Anne Porter's *Noon Wine*" (originally published in 1961); Philip Page's "The Failure of Language and Vision in 'Noon Wine'" (originally published in 1993); Kodai Iuchi's "Katherine Anne Porter's Faithful and Relentless Vision of Death in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*" (originally published in 2015); and William Solomon's "Politics, Rhetoric, and Death in Katherine Anne Porter" (originally published in 2019).

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.

Porter's only novel, *Ship of Fools*, garnered the attention of Nissa Ren Cannon in "[Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools* and the Ephemeral Promise of Transnational Community](#)" (*Open Library of Humanities Journal*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 1-18, 2024). She argues that the novel, with its ship on international seas that could prove to be an ideal setting for transnational unity, ultimately shows nationalism as more powerful than the promise of internationalism in the 1930s. Moreover, the ship's ephemera (such as its passenger list, tickets, and seating cards), which usually foster community, are instead objects of division.

Heidi Oberholtzer Lee revisits Porter's "Flowering Judas" in "Katherine Anne Porter's 'Flowering Judas': Mexican Politics, Appetitive Language, and Alimentary Religious Symbolism," published in *Significant Food: Critical Readings to Nourish American Literature*, edited by Jeff Birkenstein and Robert C. Hauhart, University of Georgia Press, 2024, pp. 230-241. Contrasting two religious scenes in "Flowering Judas" (when Braggioni's wife washes his feet and when Laura dreams Eugenio is offering her his body to eat), Lee argues that Braggioni and Laura represent extremes appetites—he, "too gluttonous" and she, "too restrained." This focus of Porter's "appetitive" language, she maintains, helps in understanding Porter's argument regarding the Mexican revolution, which failed not because of unsuccessful physical conflict but because of selfishness. Lee adds that the self-interest becomes most apparent through the revolutionaries' excessive appetitive words in place of where action should be.

"The Grave" is read as a story of redemption by Elizabeth Moore Willingham in "Shape and Meaning and Point in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Grave,'" printed in *An Earthy Entanglement with Spirituality: Critical Reflections on Literature and Art*, edited by Elizabeth Moore Willingham, Liverpool University Press, 2023, pp. 273-288. In her close reading of the story, Willingham argues that Miranda's childhood

2026 American Literature Association Conference

Darlene Unrue will chair the Katherine Anne Porter Society session at the 37th American Literature Association Conference. The conference will take place in May 2026 in Chicago, IL. 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 Darlene Unrue, darleneunrue@gmail.com, by December 1, 2025.

experience with her brother is given shape, meaning, and point twenty years later when she realizes that Paul's expression provides spiritual peace.

Pale Horse, Pale Rider, which has enjoyed renewed focus because of the 2020 pandemic, is discussed in Sally Lochowski Tanaka's dissertation, "Porter, Maxwell and O'Hara: Reading Pandemic Trauma in 1918 Influenza Literature in the Time of COVID-19," University of California, Davis, 2024. Tanaka performs a close reading of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, in addition to William Maxwell's *They Came Like Swallows* and John O'Hara's *The Doctor's Son*, in the wake of COVID-19. She applies a Health Humanities approach to put these texts in conversation with each other and with narratives by COVID-19 victims, survivors, and witnesses. 🌱

2025 Katherine Anne Porter Research Award

By Amber Kohl, University of Maryland Libraries

Twenty twenty-five marks the inaugural year for the Katherine Anne Porter Research Award. The award supports research utilizing the Katherine Anne Porter papers and related holdings in Literature and Rare Books in Special Collections and University Archives at

the University of Maryland. Located in Hornbake Library, these collections bolster literary research on the life and work of American author Katherine Anne Porter and her literary circle. They also encompass broader topics including literary Modernism, twentieth century history and culture, women's literature, and more.

Two Ph. D. candidates at the University of Maryland were selected for the award. They will conduct research in the Katherine Anne Porter holdings in Special Collections over the course of the year. The 2025 Katherine Anne Porter Research Award Recipients are

1) **Declan Apuzzo Langton**, Ph. D. candidate at the University of Maryland, Department of English.

Project: *Life & Legacy of a Manuscript: Katherine Anne Porter's Unfinished Biography of Cotton Mather*

Declan Apuzzo Langton is a second year Ph. D. student studying nineteenth century American literature through a queer, gender-expansive, and archivally-informed lens. While thus far their studies have focused on authors such as Louisa May Alcott, Julia Ward Howe, and Walt Whitman, their ongoing critical interest in archives has led them to UMD's expansive collection of Katherine Anne Porter's papers. Archives can function as a sort of holding ground where, rhetorically, the life of a manuscript continues, even behind closed doors. Porter's unfinished biography of Cotton Mather is an example of one of these texts. What happens to a text trapped in the archives? What can we learn from pieces of literature that have remained unexposed to the passage of time? What does it mean to leave something to the archives, as Porter did? What does it mean to release it?

2) **Man Liang**, Ph. D. candidate at the University of Maryland, A. James Clark School of Engineering.

Project: *Leveraging AI for Literary Analysis*

As a researcher applying artificial intelligence to infrastructure engineering, policy, sustainability, and resilience, her work focuses on automating the design,

analysis, and management of infrastructure systems. She is also deeply interested in the potential of AI to narrow the gap between STEM and the humanities. While studying at UMD's Hornbake Library, she encountered the collections of Katherine Anne Porter. As Porter is widely recognized as one of the finest short story writers in American literature, her work is famous for precious language, intricate characters, psychological depth, and imaginative narratives, reflecting themes of courage, morality, and personal freedom. As a newcomer to American literature, she was inspired by Porter's work to explore how technology can support literary analysis. Her rich narratives provide an ideal source for helping beginners and STEM students better understand story structure, character relationships, and emotional nuance. Building on this idea, this research aims to integrate technology with literature by developing a framework that uses LLM to enhance comprehension and cultivate interest in literature and the humanities. By doing so, the developed framework has the potential to deepen the understanding of human experiences, foster empathy, strengthen critical thinking, and better prepare students to navigate complex social challenges with greater awareness of human factors. 🌀

In Memoriam: Clark Dobson

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

Edward Clark Dobson, Jr., an important friend of Katherine Anne Porter at the end of her life, died at his home in Lakeland, Florida, on January 25, 2025. Dobson, known as Clark, was born April 22, 1939, in Auburndale, Florida. He graduated from Auburndale High School in 1957, after which he completed an undergraduate degree in music education at Florida State University. After his 1961 graduation, Dobson took a position as a music teacher at Tavares High School in Tavares, Florida. In 1968, he returned to Florida State University, completing an M. A. in music (1969) and a Ph. D. in Education Administration (1972).

Dobson began his career in education administration as the Associate Executive Director of the Association for

Supervision and Curriculum Development, a national professional organization, headquartered in Washington, D.C. He served the organization from 1971 to 1974. He subsequently accepted a position at the University of South Carolina at Columbia, where he served as an Assistant Professor of Education and a coordinator for the Doctor of Education Program from 1974 to 1976. In 1976, Dobson returned to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area to George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, where he taught and served in various administrative roles. From 1976 to 1999, he was an Associate Professor of Education Leadership, and, from 1988 to 1998, he was Assistant Dean for Academic Student Affairs. In 1998, Dobson was recognized for his contributions with the Distinguished Service Award from the university's Graduate School of Education. He retired in May 1999 and moved to Lakeland, Florida, near Auburndale. Although Dobson's professional career path diverged from music education, he remained actively involved in music. While in the Washington, D.C., area, he sang in the Wareham Chorale Society; worked with the Opera Theater of Northern Virginia, where he served as a member of the Board of Directors from 1978 to 1995 and as Trustee from 1996 to 1999, and served as an informal advisor to the U. S. Marine Band; he was also a member of the Gilbert O'Sullivan Society and Alexandria Opera Committee. In retirement, he served on the committee for the historic Baynard House in Auburndale and was the first Auburndale High School Hall of Fame Inductee.

Dobson developed a relationship with Katherine Anne Porter because of his friendship with Robert (Bob) A. Beach, Jr., Assistant to the President for University Relations at the University of Maryland from 1966 to 1978. In 1972, Dobson and Jack (John David) Horner met Porter, who was escorted by Beach, at a luncheon at the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C. Following the initial meeting, Dobson and Horner developed a warm personal relationship with Porter. Although Porter was in her early eighties, she enjoyed entertaining at her College Park apartment, and Dobson and Horner were often guests. The two men were frequently Porter's chauffeurs for and companions at concerts and social events. After her health




Clark Dobson, KAP, and Jack Horner, August 31, 1974. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, UMD Libraries.

deteriorated, Dobson and Horner maintained regular contact with Porter, providing invaluable support for her nephew Paul Porter, especially after his appointment as her guardian in 1977. They were instrumental in locating the Carriage Hill Nursing Home in Silver Spring, Maryland, where Porter relocated in March 1980. Dobson, Horner, Jane DeMouy (whose University of Maryland doctoral dissertation's subject was Porter), and Ted Wojtasik (whom Porter had suggested should edit her letters) planned and held a small gathering for Porter's ninetieth birthday, May 15, 1980.

Dobson began collecting Katherine Anne Porter items as a result of his friendship with Porter. Dobson was already an avid book collector, beginning his collection of books on music and Florida history as a high school student. In 1976, Porter gave Dobson a copy of her *A Christmas Story* as a Christmas gift. At nearly the same time, Dobson also began collecting Harrison of Paris imprints, fine press editions published by a firm founded by Porter's friends, Barbara Harrison and Monroe Wheeler. Dobson built his Harrison of Paris collection after receiving a signed copy of the press's edition of Porter's *Hacienda* from Monroe Wheeler. Dobson's collection of Katherine Anne Porter items

grew to include additional publications created and collected by Porter, correspondence, photographs, and memorabilia items.

One particularly unusual item that came into Dobson's possession was Porter's painted wooden coffin. Dobson and Horner acquired the coffin when her nephew Paul Porter disposed of the contents of her College Park apartment. Katherine Anne Porter purchased the coffin in 1974. Joseph Mayhew, the son of one of her neighbors at her College Park apartment, subsequently painted it. Porter kept the coffin in a closet in her apartment and enjoyed entertaining guests by stepping into it. As her wishes were to be cremated, Paul Porter made the decision to dispose of the coffin when he emptied and closed her College Park apartment. Dobson and Horner claimed it, ultimately using it as a closet in their home library. After Horner's death, Dobson donated the coffin to the University of Maryland Libraries for the Katherine Anne Porter Room, where it is housed. 

Update on the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

As reported in 2024, no additional Porter correspondence is yet available online. 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. Digital Collections at the University of Maryland have been undergoing upgrades over the past year, including a new interface for the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Collection, available online at <https://digital.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence>. Katherine Anne Porter: Correspondence from the Archives, 1912-1977 is now a stand alone online exhibit, available at <https://exhibitions.lib.umd.edu/kaporter-correspondence>.

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. However, progress toward

that end has taken place in 2024-2025. The new platform that the University of Maryland Libraries implemented for making the correspondence publicly accessible necessitated revision of the metadata created for both Phase Three and Phase Four of the project. The project's graduate student Elinor Berger has completed the work on Phase Three and has begun work on that of Phase Four.

The roughly 3,000 items of Phase Four 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 Prince, Herbert Schaumann, Harry Perry, Robert Morris, Clark Dobson, George and Toni Willison, and Desmond Willson. Once Elinor Berger has completed the revision of the metadata, these materials can be sent to the digitization vendor. It is not clear when the materials of Phase Four will be digitized.

During the past year, I began drafting 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, which include information on the 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. 🐦

Katherine Anne Porter News in UMD Special Collections

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. The inaugural Katherine Anne Porter Research Award, funded by the Porter Literary Trust, has been awarded to two University of Maryland Graduate Students: Declan Apuzzo Langton, Ph. D. candidate at the University of Maryland, Department of English; and Man Liang, Ph. D. candidate at the University of Maryland, A. James Clark School of Engineering. The students have begun their research using the Katherine Anne Porter collections. They will be interviewed over the course of their research and will write a paper about their experience researching the collections. The next Katherine Anne Porter Research Award cycle will be announced in Fall 2025.

A new Katherine Anne Porter student assistant was hired in Special Collections and University Archives. Elinor Berger began work as the Katherine Anne Porter student assistant in October 2024, after spending the previous year with Hornbake Library's Outreach and Engagement team. She is entering her third year in UMD's HiLS program, a three-year program that combines a Master's in library science with a Master's in history. As the KAP student assistant, Elinor has been recording and revising metadata for the Katherine Anne Porter Digitization Project. She is also working on creating an inventory of annotations left by Porter in her personal library.

In addition to continuing metadata work on the Katherine Anne Porter Correspondence Project, a second digitization project is in progress to digitize Porter's daybooks, which include her time in Mexico in the 1920s. A total of twenty-three items from Series 2 of the Katherine Anne Porter papers are currently being

digitized and will be available for researchers in Digital Collections (<https://digital.lib.umd.edu/>). Maryland Day 2025 at the University of Maryland was another great success. On Saturday, April 26, visitors to the Katherine Anne Porter room were given guided tours by Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita at the University of Maryland.

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 National Literary Landmark, and a home for writers-in-residence. During the 2024-2025 academic year, there were three public programs held at the house. In September 2024, the featured writer was Texas novelist Amanda Churchill, whose novel *The Turtle House* was published in February 2024. Cassandra Lane appeared at the center in October 2024. Lane's Memoir, *We Are Bridges*, won the Louise Merriwether First Book Prize in 2020. In February 2025, the program featured Justin Torres, author of *Blackouts*, which won the 2023 National Book Award for Fiction. His 2011 novel, *We the Animals*, was a national bestseller and adapted into a feature film. Programs are sponsored by Texas State University's Department of English, the Burdine Johnson Foundation, and the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center. Poet Cecily Parks, who teaches in the MFA program at Texas State, has directed the Visiting Writer Series since 2022. This fall fiction writer Ben Reed, a professor at Texas State, will begin his tenure as director.

Texas State University's MFA program has published *Porter House Review* (<https://porterhoureview.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 served as the 2024-2025 Writer-in-Residence. During her tenure, Welch, a poetry graduate from Texas State University's Creative Writing program, completed *Shed*, a chapbook containing poems she created for her master's thesis. She also was able to write many new poems that are intended for a projected full-length collection. In July 2025, Mariah Price will begin serving as the Writer-in-Residence. Funded by the Burdine Johnson Foundation, the Writer-in-Residence lives in the house, serving as its steward, and coordinates the visiting writers series. The Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center is open for tours by appointment with at least one week of notice. To arrange a visit, e-mail kapliterary@txstate.edu.

Information on the 2025-2026 schedule of events at the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center will appear on the Center's 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 telephone at (512) 245-7681. ☞☞

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust

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

Hello and welcome to all Katherine Anne Porter fans, readers, and scholars! I would like to update you on some of the activities of the Porter Literary Trust and the University of Maryland Libraries that you may find of interest. You can always find the most recent information about using the Porter collection, as well as about other collections and services from UMD's 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 continues to work in collaboration with The Permissions Company, the Trust's rights manager, and with Porter copyright holders to advance our author's work. We have received several inquiries about possible adaptations, translations, and editions of Porter's stories. Both traditional publishers and others have expressed interest in bringing her writings to new audiences via new venues, including stage and media adaptations. We will certainly let you know as these advance. Meanwhile, the Trust and the University of Maryland Libraries are always eager to hear your ideas as well!

One important development that has finally come to fruition through the hard work of Amber Kohl, Curator for Literature and Rare Books, and funded by the Trust, is the inaugural call for proposals for the [Katherine Anne Porter Research Award](#)! Through its sponsorship of this award, the Trust will foster new scholarship and bring Porter's corpus to the attention of an expanding body of researchers. The University of Maryland Libraries are happy to advance the scholarly conversation around Porter by means of this award. For more information, please contact Amber Kohl at amberk@umd.edu.

The Trust can fund projects like the Porter Research Award in large part because of continued royalties from Porter's works. The digital edition of *Ship of Fools* continues to sell well. The publisher, Open Roads Media, once again featured her full-length novel in several promotions during the past year. Other Porter works contribute to the Trust's growth. 🌀

2025 Katherine Anne Porter Society Annual Business Meeting

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

The annual meeting of the Katherine Anne Porter Society was held on May 22, 2025, via Zoom. On that date, the society's panel at the American Literature Association Conference in Boston would have taken place. However, two of the scheduled panelists were unable to make their presentations, and the Executive Committee made the decision to cancel the session.

Executive Committee members participating in the meeting included President Alice Cheylan and members Beth Alvarez, Christine Grogan, Amber Kohl, and Jerry Findley. Beth Alvarez reported on current membership. She also reported the 2024-2025 expenses and current treasury balance. Members confirmed which Executive Committee members would chair the society's sessions at the American Literature Association conferences from 2026 to 2031.

Members discussed alternative ideas for the Katherine Anne Porter Graduate Student Award and settled on offering as much as a \$2,000 stipend for travel expenses to attend the American Literature Association Conference in 2026. Continuing the stipend will be reassessed in 2026. Discussion then turned to the proposed contents for Volume 25 of the society's newsletter to be published in summer 2025. Christine Grogan reported on recent publications on Porter. Authors of those works were invited to become involved in the society.

It is once again time to elect the society's president for a term of three years. Alice Cheylan agreed to run for a second term. The election will be conducted by mail and e-mail. President Cheylan and Beth Alvarez agreed to compose and send their annual letter to the society's large mailing list in summer 2025. Finally, Amber Kohl reported on the Research Award funded by the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust. Her report on the award and those awarded funding appears in this newsletter. 🌀

"Pale Horse, Pale Rider": Humanity, Truth, and Immortality

[Continued from page 1]

Once she turned to work on "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," Porter knew "how" she escaped death and "precisely why." The experience gave her the life she wanted: her belief and faith in herself, and her belief and faith in humanity, the theme that makes "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" the story that best represents Porter's life and career, and the character that makes Lynes's portrait the most iconic image of her. "You know I have to be believed in" (*Selected Letters* 6), Porter wrote her family, near the end of her "long preparation for fine work," writing for newspapers, first, in Dallas, then, in Denver. With her decision to move to Greenwich Village to enter public life, Porter announced "the next stage of my development" is about to begin: "I've more than made good here—way more than made good. . . . I shall go now, and do better things. The time has come" (*Selected Letters* 9).

Porter enters public life with belief and faith in herself. It is the self-confidence and self-possession she will develop and ply and hone for over a decade before she meets Lynes for their first photography session. Their first collaboration looks back to the event that precipitates Porter's entry into public life, and it looks forward to the life and career that ensued.

The two hard truths Porter learns—that life in the modern world is a shattering experience and death is a



Mary Alice Hollaway, daughter of Gay Porter Hollaway, niece of Katherine Anne Porter, circa 1917. Katherine Anne Porter Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, UMD Libraries.

part of life—she experiences first-hand twice-over. Porter's sister replicates her experience: the same event in a different guise. Eight months after Porter escaped death only to confront the loss of the soldier who risked and lost his life to help save her, Porter's six-year-old niece lost her life to spinal meningitis (*Selected Letters* 7; 345). The sorrow and anguish her sister suffered from the loss of her six-year-old daughter Porter recognized was greater than the sorrow and anguish she suffered from the loss of Adam's true-to-life stand-in. Yet, the challenge was the same. Her sister, like Porter, had to come to terms with the death of someone she loved and for whom her love, like Porter's love for the soldier and Porter's love for her niece, lived on: "the whole desire of my heart now is to help you live over it somehow" (*Selected Letters* 7), Porter assured her sister.

To console her sister, Porter tried to bridge her sister's faith in the afterlife of Judeo-Christianity and her faith in its secular equivalent:

one day there will be none of us left . . . and these bodies will be part of the Great Earth again.

I would like to feel that the part of us that dreams, and loves beauty, and hopes and strives for better and happier things, will live always, and find a lovelier, free-er place where we shall see all our lost ones again and do all our work again with a clearer understanding.

But I seem to have no conviction on the subject. (*Selected Letters* 8)

The lived experience of Porter and her sister was the lived experience of others who survived the Great War and the influenza epidemic. Some, like Porter, faced the future with the experience of confronting and escaping death. All faced the future, like her sister, like Porter, with the experience of confronting the death of someone, like her sister's daughter and Porter's niece, like the soldier, who did not escape death. Porter, in her effort to help her sister, confronts the difficulty of meeting the subsequent challenge of the life and the career she, upon her escape from death, chooses to pursue. Porter's near-death experience leaves her with a new understanding of death, and of life. But to share with her sister what she learns from her experience, like the answer to a life-or-death riddle, presents a challenge equal to her month-long battle to survive. Her sister must arrive at Porter's understanding and acceptance of death, like Porter, on her own, yet, unlike Porter, without the help of confronting her own mortality. It all depends on Porter and the help she gives her sister; and it all depends on the willingness of her sister to embrace the help Porter gives her.

In her attempt to comfort her sister, Porter foresees the way an idea, the spiritualism of life after death, unites her and her sister, although in a different guise: "I cannot feel the religious urge as you do, but if you find a little comfort in it, I hope you come back to your childhood faith. Me, I can only say, be courageous. Be a soldier" (*Selected Letters* 10). Her sister and Porter

want the same thing to answer the same need. They want death to be life-affirming for the dead: for Mary Alice, the daughter of Porter's sister and Porter's niece, and for the soldier; and they need death to be life-affirming for the living; for them. Each belief is an attempt in a different guise to defeat death: for her sister, the second world of the eternal afterlife; for Porter, the second world of the in-perpetuity of art. Porter, in her ability to follow the line of thought inherent in and emanating from an idea (an idea and its ideation) apprehends that the eternity of the Judeo-Christian afterlife and the in-perpetuity of art sort through the immemorial past to predicate the infinite future of her belief and faith. The religious construct and the secular construct work the same. Each culls humanity's best: those who deserve love while alive and remembrance once dead. It is who Mary Alice and the soldier were; and it is who Porter's sister and Porter want to know they are to have belief and faith, first, in themselves; then, seeing their self-identity mirrored in one another, belief and faith in each other; then, seeing their self-identity mirrored in the larger word of which they are part, belief and faith in humanity. It is the self-identity they, in their different ways, set out to fulfill. It is the goal (the reason) and the means (the logic) of Porter's qualified yet unshakeable belief and faith. Like those who have come and gone before, like those who will come and go after, there are enough, like Porter, like her sister, for Porter to believe and hold faith in humanity. It is the way an idea and its ideation, if carried to the extreme of its full infinite power, can, like two mirrors in juxtaposition, envision the vanishing point of the Renaissance and Early Modern Period and the point of infinity of later optics. Like stars aligning in the firmament to reveal the workings of the world, the past, the present, and the future fall in line to delineate humanity. There will always be enough to salvage, looking at the world from Porter's secular perspective, there will always be enough to redeem, looking at the world from her sister's religious perspective, humanity. It is the greatest belief and faith anyone can hold, be it the mythic history and biography of Jesus of Nazareth for non-believers, like Porter, or be it the historic myth and biography of Jesus

Christ for believers, like her sister. It is the nobility of purpose Porter saw uniting, first, her and her sister, then, her and her readership.

With the twenty years separating her near-death experience from the publication of the story based on it, Porter hit upon the pale horse of Antiquity and the Apocalyptic Horse of Judeo-Christianity as emblematic of her belief and faith. The Apocalypse, like the Apocalyptic Horse, contains within its own destruction and death the means to salvation and to redemption. There is the pale rider. There will always be one, like Porter, to tell the story; and, there will always be one, like Porter's sister, to listen and to learn from the story, and the one who tells it. This relation between the artist and the society marked, for Porter, the beginning of Western Civilization that has continued, and will continue: first, destruction and death: *The Iliad*, then, salvation and redemption: *The Odyssey*. It is Porter's belief and faith in humanity carried to the extreme of its full, infinite power.

If Porter's belief and faith in humanity exceeds that of Homer, it is her refusal to romanticize humanity: the object and the means of her belief and faith. Porter was unapologetic. She saw that good and evil are inherent in human nature, first and foremost, in herself; and she saw how good and evil inherent in human nature pervade the human condition. The opposition determines and defines humanity and what it means to be human. To try to be as exact as possible to make as clear as possible the distinction that has plagued humanity since before the advent of civilization, the best of humanity, whether culled by a secular matrix or a religious matrix of good and evil, is demotic: drawn from all strata of humanity, across all lines of race and ethnicity and caste and class and gender. Depending on the eon, the epoch, the era, the period, the year, the day, the hour, and the moment, humanity's best may or it may not be democratic: the majority.

To take another and final turn at how the immemorial past shows us where we are today, Porter's qualified, unromantic understanding of humanity and what it means to be human never dissuaded her from her belief and faith in democracy as the best social and political

construct. Porter saw during her life and times the evil in the totalitarianism of Fascist regimes of the right and the evil in the totalitarianism of Marxist regimes of the left. Same with democracy. Although better in principle than humanity's other attempts to organize and to structure its collective life, democracy, by being the best construct, exposes most glaringly humanity's unwillingness to live up to the very ideals it professes. Porter's support for democracy never blinded her to the errors, the misgivings, the mistakes, the wrongs, the transgressions, the sins, and the evil perpetrated in its name. To catalogue the concepts, principles, laws, codes, mores, strictures, codices, tenets, and precepts that prepare for democracy, puts in relief, like lithographs from the Renaissance and Early Modern Period and, since the advent of the medium, like high-contrast black-and-white photographs of today, the dynamics working within a society in the most revealing graphic clarity imaginable. To see and to know the world in the clearest, the starkest terms is the end goal of civilization: the purpose and the aim that, like the Apocalypse, contains within its own purpose, its own end, its on-going, never-ending continuation. It is the unshakeable commitment of enough of humanity to discover, to know, and to accept the truth, however ugly, however beautiful, however demoralizing, however uplifting, the truth may be. It is humanity and what it means to be human at its most daunting and daring: humanity at its most committed. Such a way of thinking, such a habit of mind is, for some, like Porter, a clarity forever in search of greater clarity and an understanding forever in search of greater understanding. It is the on-going, never-ending progress of time that humanity knows and marks as the interstices of the past, the present, and the future. Greater clarity, greater understanding are the goal (the reason) and the means (the logic) by which life transcends death. Each generation, each person needs and wants to leave "a little mark on their world in their time" (*Selected Letters* 236), bequeathing a better world to those who come after than the world it inherited from those who came before. 🌀