

Newsletter

of the

Katherine Anne Porter

Society

Volume XXVI

August 2026

ISSN 1528.655X

“Between the truth and well-regulated fiction”:

Katherine Anne Porter and George Platt Lynes in Letters and Photographs

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

Editor’s Note: This paper was presented at the American Literature Association Conference in Boston on May 27, 2023. Beth Alvarez is Emerita Curator of Literary Manuscripts, University of Maryland Libraries. The slide presentation that accompanied the paper can be viewed [online](#).

For roughly twenty years between 1932 and 1955, one of Katherine Anne Porter’s most significant relationships was with the photographer George Platt Lynes. They were brought together through their mutual friends Barbara Harrison, Monroe Wheeler, and Glenway Wescott, specifically because of *Katherine Anne Porter’s French Song-Book*, a 1933 publication of Wheeler and Harrison’s fine press, Harrison of Paris. By May 1932 when Lynes conducted the first of about a dozen photographic sessions with Porter, he had established his photographic career in the United States with exhibits of his portraits and other work. His biographer, Allen Ellenzweig, suggests that “[i]f Lynes never entered the canon of the greatest twentieth-century figures in photography. . . it was in part because he worked in commercial arenas. . . fashion and dance photography and the suspect category of the ‘celebrity’ portrait” (p. xi). Lynes, who was born in 1907 and died in 1955, was unapologetically homosexual. Despite Porter’s ambivalence toward homosexuality, she developed a warm and supportive relationship with Lynes that grew directly from the first sitting he conducted with her in Paris in 1932.



George Platt Lynes took this iconic photograph of Porter in Paris on May 27, 1932

[Continued on page 16]

Message from the President

By Alice Cheylan, President of the
Katherine Anne Porter Society

As this year's Katherine Anne Porter Society events draw to a close, it is once again time to assess our activities and report on our hopes and aspirations for the future. Before beginning, I would like to thank you for your vote of confidence, which has allowed me to serve another term as President of the Katherine Anne Porter Society.

The Katherine Anne Porter Society's panel at the American Literature Association Conference, held in Chicago on May 22, was a great success. Darlene Unrue chaired the panel, which showcased three different facets of Porter scholarship. The first presentation, "Lazarus, Come Forth: Katherine Anne Porter's Resurrection on YouTube," demonstrated how the visibility of Porter's work and Porter studies can be enhanced through digital media. Allen Ireland's YouTube channel offers analyses of several of Porter's works as well as interviews with Porter scholars. The channel can be accessed directly through YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@KatherineAnnePorterChannel>

Both Jerry Findley's paper, "Katherine Anne Porter and Hannah Arendt: Shared Affinities," and Mark Joseph King's paper, "Mythic Imagery in Katherine Anne Porter and Tennessee Williams," revealed the rich possibilities of studying Porter's work in relation to that of her contemporaries. Darlene Unrue concluded the panel by offering an extensive list of suggestions for future research on Porter and her work. (See page 12 of this newsletter.)

Christine Grogan's annotated bibliography of recent publications on or related to Porter reveals that, although the volume of scholarship on Porter

Katherine Anne Porter Society Newsletter

Members are welcome to submit articles, announcements, and comments for the *Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society*. Please send them to Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books at the University of Maryland 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.

© Katherine Anne Porter Society 2026. ♻️

appears to have declined somewhat, the quality of the work remains exceptionally high. Pakistani scholar Hira Ramzan's dissertation, "Reading Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in the Time of COVID-19: A Psychological Reader-Response Study," and Christine Grogan's article, "Looking for Kevin: A Rereading of Rosaleen O'Toole's Journey in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Cracked Looking-Glass,'" are excellent examples of contemporary Porter scholarship. Christine's article was originally presented on the Porter panel at the 2024 American Literature Association Conference and was very well received.

As Beth Alvarez reported at the annual business meeting, the Society's membership numbers remain stable. We hope to increase membership in the near future and to raise both our national and international visibility. We will continue our efforts to reach out to Porter scholars and enthusiasts, informing them of the Society's activities and our commitment to supporting Porter scholarship. The Travel Award will again be offered to assist graduate students and scholars wishing to attend the Katherine Anne Porter Society's panel at the American Literature Association Conference.

There will be three important changes in the coming year:

- Beginning in 2027, the Society President's annual letter will be distributed by email. The 2026 letter will be the last sent by post.
- Annual dues will increase from \$10 to \$15.
- In addition to paying by check, members will be able to pay their annual dues by credit card.

I would like to conclude this message by thanking all those who have contributed to the Katherine Anne Porter Society's efforts to promote interest in Porter and her work.

First, I would like to thank 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 for allowing the Society to be indirectly associated with the research grant provided by the Porter Literary Trust.

I would also like to thank Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature & Rare Books and University

Archives/Research Engagement, for her work on the Society's Executive Committee, editing of the *Newsletter* and revisions to the Society's website. Members wishing to submit articles, announcements, or comments for the *Newsletter* may contact her at amberk@umd.edu.

Special thanks are due, as always, to Beth Alvarez, Curator of Literary Manuscripts Emerita, who continues to devote so much of her time and energy to the Katherine Anne Porter Society. Despite her many obligations, she has contributed the excellent leading article on George Platt Lynes to this issue of the *Newsletter*, along with numerous other pieces. Membership inquiries should be directed to her at alvarez@umd.edu.

I would also like to thank Christine Grogan for her tireless dedication to the Society. Christine is always ready with suggestions and assistance for Society activities, and her research and annual bibliographic essay on Porter are greatly appreciated. Entries for the bibliographic essay should be sent to her at cgrogan@udel.edu.

Many thanks also go to Jerry Findley for his continuing support of the Society and his active service on the Executive Committee. This year, his presentation on the relationship between the works of Porter and Hannah Arendt was one of the highlights of the Society's panel at the ALA Conference.

Finally, many thanks go to founding member Darlene Unrue, who continues to inspire Porter scholars. She organized and chaired this year's ALA panel and concluded it with a lengthy and thought-provoking list of potential topics for future Porter research. Many future scholars of Katherine Anne Porter will be indebted to her foresight and dedication. 🌸

The Year's Work on Katherine Anne Porter: 2024-2025

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

The year was quiet for scholarship on Porter's fiction, yielding only one scholarly note and one dissertation.

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.

My "Looking for Kevin: A Rereading of Rosaleen O'Toole's Journey in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Cracked Looking-Glass,'" *The Explicator* 83.3 (2025): 278-284, adds to the reasons scholars have given for Rosaleen's trip to Boston by way of New York City: she is searching, however unconsciously, for her former boarder, Kevin. It offers a biographically informed rereading of the story, emphasizing how Rosaleen's journey engages questions of romantic love, age, and social judgment in ways that resonate with Porter's own life.

Hira Ramzan's dissertation, "Reading Katherine Anne Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in the Time of COVID-19: A Psychological Reader's Response Study," Government College University, Lahore, 2025, labels Porter's three short novels as pandemic

2027 American Literature Association Conference

The Katherine Anne Porter Society and the Kay Boyle Society will host two joint sessions at the 38th American Literature Association Conference, to be held in Boston, Massachusetts, in May 2027.

For the panel session, we invite papers that examine translation, circulation, and reception of their works. For the roundtable, we welcome papers that explore constructions of otherness in their writing.

Conference information, including hotel and registration details, will be available through the American Literature Association Web site at <https://americanliteratureassociation.org/>.

Please send proposals to Christine Grogan (cgrogan@udel.edu) by December 1, 2026.

fiction and argues that reading them in the context of COVID-19 can elicit both anxiety and comfort.



KAP Marginalia Project

By Elinor Berger, University of Maryland Libraries

Editor's Note: Elinor Berger began work as the Katherine Anne Porter graduate assistant in October 2024. She is enrolled in the University of Maryland's History and Library Science Master of Arts (HiLS) dual-degree program. HiLS students graduate with both a Master of Arts in History and a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree. As the Porter graduate assistant, Elinor has recorded and revised metadata for the correspondence in the digitization project and inventoried the marginalia in Porter's books in the Libraries' holdings. She is also a recipient of the 2026 Katherine Anne Porter Research Award.

During the past year, I inventoried the University of Maryland Libraries' holdings of books Katherine Anne Porter annotated. Porter's personal library is housed in Hornbake Library, with the majority of the books located in the Katherine Anne Porter Room. Some of these books are inscribed, including books gifted to and from friends, family, and fans. Others include commentary, some of it scathing. There are interesting gems in the margins of the over 4,000 books. Porter's personal library reflects her personal and professional interests. Some document her research interests such as Cotton Mather and Joan of Arc.

The collection also includes novels and collections of letters of her friends and contemporaries. In addition, there are contemporary works of fiction, books about cats, and cookbooks; there is even a 16th-century Bible. The books include drafts of letters and poems, expansive annotations of Porter's favorite fiction or research for projects. It was surprising that annotations of some works of obscure nonfiction were heavily annotated while some famous works contain no annotation. Although Porter asserted in an interview that she reread *Wuthering Heights* many times, her copy contains no annotations.

Porter enjoyed reading and annotating books about herself and her work, commenting and reflecting on her life. She also had a lot to say about the inaccuracies in these works. In her copy of George Hendrick's *Katherine Anne Porter* (1965), she commented, "Another bloody monkey-mind." In the portion of the work where Hendrick identified parallels between the lives of Porter and Ford Madox Ford, Porter exploded, "God damn it no!" "Can't you keep your grubby little paws off of our lives? You don't know anything and you can't guess right, so shut up!" In response to Hendrick attributing the title of "Old

Mortality" to work by Sir Walter Scott, Porter wrote, "I have never read a page of Scott, either prose or poetry in my life!" Porter humorously responded to Hendrick's assertion, "Miss Porter's movements during the next ten years are almost completely unknown." In the margin, Porter replied "To you, perhaps."

One of the touching annotations comments on Virginia Woolf and her publisher Donald Brace. In a copy of *A Room of One's Own*, Porter reflected:

I read this book again, all through, in the night in January 6, 1956 – long after Virginia Woolf is dead, and Donald Brace is dead, and their time – 1929 – is dead, and so much has changed – but it is still fresh, full of truth, of energy, and life – her lovely intelligence and generosity.

Porter's admiration of Woolf is also apparent in annotations of works about Woolf. In response to E. M. Forster's comment that Woolf "perished because she had no position or money," Porter disagreed:

No, she perished because she was a woman. That is a creature without status in the world of men – Therefore, no position – no money – But her brother had no money either and had to win his way – but he began with the imbalanced status of a male.

Porter's annotations also expressed admiration for her friend and fellow writer Eudora Welty. There are copies of Welty's works in Porter's library and Porter's papers contain their correspondence. In her copy of Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter*, Porter wrote:

This book is a self-portrait by Eudora, at last. Sacredly, inviolably human, winning her a long glorious battle by facing it – with the courage of

angels and the faith of her own heart – How happy I am in having our love and friendship all these bitter and terrible years. But one great thing we knew together and it does not fail – life is to be lived, endured, fulfilled, and loved – KAP, 9 May 1972 I read this book all day. First page to last today, 7 o'clock morning to 10:25 night.

When taken into context, marginalia can tell a story. Porter's library documents her interest in those writing about her and her peers; her annotations document her defense of herself and fellow writers as well as her criticism of others. Ford Madox Ford and Hemingway were among those who received less generous commentary, despite her familiarity with them. Porter's annotations compliment the storytelling of women writers and argue with authors whose biographies psychoanalyzed them.

The completed inventory documents which books were annotated by Porter, which were inscribed by her, which contain only non-textual notations such as underlining, and finally, which were simply signed by Porter. Disappointingly, some works are sparsely annotated. For example, Porter's library includes a single volume of the collected works of all seven of Jane Austen's novels. In this volume, Porter only annotated four pages of *Sense and Sensibility* and only to characterize John Willoughby as a cad and compare him to Ford Madox Ford ("à la Ford M. Ford—self-pitying cad," she writes).

Working on this project required me to turn the pages of every book in Porter's personal library. Even the minor ways Porter interacted with books, underlining or penciling in exclamation points, provide insight into her reading, what she valued as a reader, and the knowledge she gleaned from her reading. The completed inventory will be available to the public soon, attached to the

finding aid of the Papers of Katherine Anne Porter. It will provide a valuable resource for scholars of Katherine Anne Porter. 🌸

In Memoriam: María de los Ángeles García Walsh

By Beth Alvarez, University of Maryland

María de los Ángeles García Walsh, wife of the late Katherine Anne Porter scholar Thomas F. Walsh, died June 18, 2025, in Los Angeles, CA. She was born March 10, 1929, in Mexico City, Mexico. Fluent in French, she began working at the Banco Nacional in Mexico City in 1946. She subsequently held a position at Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, a French investment bank. In Summer 1958, she met her future husband, a Georgetown University professor, who had come to Mexico City to teach at Jesuit Universidad Iberoamericana. Their long-distance courtship culminated in marriage in Mexico City in 1963. After marrying, the couple first lived in Washington, DC, but, in November 1963, moved to Silver Spring, MD. While raising their sons Thomas, born in 1964, and Eugene, born in 1967, she began teaching Spanish at Grace Episcopal Day School in Kensington, MD, retiring in 1994.

María Walsh actively participated in civic activities for many years. These included serving on the Suburban Maryland Fair Housing Commission and volunteering in local elementary schools. She had a long association with CASA of Maryland, founded in 1985 as Central American Solidarity and Assistance. Between 1989 and 2014, she served on the Board of Directors, volunteered at the weekly food distribution program, taught and administered CASA's ESOL programs, and

founded and conducted CASA's literacy program. At Christ the King Catholic Church, she served as a catechist in the Religious Education Program, as a Lector and Eucharistic Minister for the Spanish language mass, on the Parish Council, and on various commissions.

María Walsh realized her aspiration of obtaining a college degree in 1994, earning a B.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from the University of Maryland. Embraced by and at home with her husband's academic colleagues, she enjoyed the intellectual life. She was an invaluable partner and resource for her husband's major work, *Katherine Anne Porter and Mexico* (1992), which she saw through the press after his untimely death in 1991. She also was instrumental in the publication of *Uncollected Early Prose of Katherine Anne Porter* (1993), co-edited by her husband. Through the University of Maryland's Spanish Department, she met and befriended prominent Latin American writers including Jose Emilio Pacheco, Saul Sosnowski, Rosario Ferre, Jorge Aguilar y Mora, and Coral Bracho. As University of Maryland Anthropology Professor Judith Friedenberg's volunteer assistant, she directed a service program which placed University of Maryland anthropology students as volunteers with CASA and other organizations. For ten years, she served as a docent in the Katherine Anne Porter Room at the University of Maryland's Hornbake Library.

In April 1988, I met María Walsh at a Katherine Anne Porter Conference at Texas A & M University. Blanche Ebeling-Koning and I had rented a car to use while we were at the conference, and we invited Tom and María to travel to Kyle and then to the Houston airport at the end of the conference. This was my first visit to Texas and to the town where Porter's early years were spent. We were unable to locate Porter's grandmother's house, but we did find the family graves in the

local cemetery. From that initial meeting, María's warm, congenial, and generous personality was evident. Subsequent to that trip, Tom and I developed a mutually supportive relationship as we worked on our projects, his book on Porter and my dissertation.

Ultimately, we finished both, and my husband and I developed a close and intimate relationship with both Tom and María during that period. To recognize the completion of my Ph. D. in May 1990, they invited us to visit them that summer in their beautiful home in Cuernavaca, Mexico, a place that I visited every year, sometimes with my husband, with one exception until 2012. In retrospect, I was grateful that Tom had insisted that we come to Mexico for the eclipse in summer 1991, as he succumbed to cancer in November 1991. After that, I joined several of Tom's colleagues in assisting María to get his important work to publication. The following year, she and I worked together closely to complete the work Tom and I had begun on *Uncollected Early Prose of Katherine Anne Porter*.

My husband urged me to spend three weeks in Cuernavaca after Tom's death in Summer 1992, and it became my favorite place in the world. Over the course of the years I visited, María enthusiastically joined me in visiting places associated with Katherine Anne Porter. Especially memorable was visiting Mary Louis Doherty in a nursing home in Cuernavaca and showing her Edward Weston's photograph of her in Tom's book. Other excursions took us to La Villa de Guadalupe, Xochilmico (where we surreptitiously spread Mary Louis Doherty's ashes), Amecameca, and Cuatlá. In Maryland, we celebrated many birthdays and holidays together. There is a very large empty space in my life now that she, like Tom, is gone. However, I have many wonderful memories to sustain their presence. As her

published obituary concluded, “María’s moral fortitude, accomplishments, and service offer an example of a life well lived.” 🌸

KAP News from Special Collections at UMD

By Amber Kohl, Curator of Literature and Rare Books,
University of Maryland Libraries

I am excited to share the 2026 Katherine Anne Porter Research Award, funded by the Porter Literary Trust, has been awarded to the following UMD graduate students:

- **Elinor Berger**, Master of Library and Information Science and Master of Arts in History candidate at the University of Maryland, Department of History and the College of Information Studies. She has been awarded for the project: “Joan of Arc of Texas’: Katherine Anne Porter and the Medieval World.”
- **Al Favilla**, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland, Department of English. They have been awarded for the project: “Porter and the Poet: Katherine Anne Porter and the American Reception of Gabriela Mistral.”

The award winners will begin their research in Hornbake Library, exploring material in the Katherine Anne Porter collections in The Literature and Rare Books collections in Special Collections and University Archives. They will be interviewed over the course of research and will write a paper about their experience using the collections.

Maryland Day 2026 at the University of Maryland was another great success. On Saturday, April 26,

2026 American Literature Association Conference

On May 22, 2026, at the 37th annual American Literature Association Conference in Chicago, IL, Darlene Unrue chaired the Katherine Anne Porter Society’s panel titled “Katherine Anne Porter and Other Writers.”

The papers included: “Lazarus Come Forth: Katherine Anne Porter’s Resurrection on YouTube” by independent scholar and poet, Allen Lee Ireland; “Katherine Anne Porter and Hannah Arendt: Shared Affinities” by Porter Society Executive Committee member Jerry Findley; and “Mythic Imagery in Katherine Anne Porter and Tennessee Williams” by independent scholar Mark Joseph King. Darlene Unrue concluded the session by offering an extensive list of suggestions for future research on Porter and her work. (See page 12 of this newsletter.)

At the annual business meeting conducted by Society President Alice Cheylan, members discussed current membership, the treasury balance, forthcoming changes to the Society’s website, plans for the 2027 American Literature Association conference, the Society’s travel award, the forthcoming Newsletter issue, and the president’s annual letter.

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 National Literary Landmark, and a home for writers-in-residence. During the 2025-2026 academic year, there were five public programs held at the house. In September 2025, the featured writer was ire'ne lara silva, 2023 Texas State Poet Laureate, author of poetry collections, chapbooks, a comic book, and a short story collection. Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Texas at Austin, Deb Olin Unferth was the featured writer in October 2025. Author of novels, a short story collection, and a memoir, she has been awarded prestigious prizes, and her fiction and essays have been published widely. Andre Dubus III appeared at the Center in November 2025. His works include the *New York Times*' bestsellers *House of Sand and Fog*, *The Garden of Last Days*, and his memoir, *Townie*. In February 2026, Nnedi Okorafor, international award-winning *New York Times* Bestselling novelist of science fiction and fantasy for children, young adults, and adults, appeared at the Center. She draws on her Nigerian heritage in her work to create captivating stories with unforgettable characters and evocative settings.

The final reader in April 2026 was Naomi Shihab Nye, author and/or editor of more than thirty volumes including poetry, essays, novels for young readers, picture books, and a collection of very short stories. She was named Young People's Poet Laureate by the Poetry Foundation in 2019, awarded the 2019 Lon Tinkle Award by the Texas Institute of Letters, and elected to The American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2021. Programs are sponsored by Texas State University's Department

of English, the Burdine Johnson Foundation, and the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center. Fiction writer Ben Reed, a professor at Texas State, became director of the Visiting Writer Series in 2025.

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, Jeremy Garrett, Riley Welch, and Mariah Price. John Ambrosio will serve as the Writer-in-Residence in 2026-2027. He is a fiction writer from New Jersey and a recent graduate of the MFA in Creative Writing program at Texas State University. He plans to use his time in residence to revise and expand his MFA thesis, a short story collection titled *Other People's Problems*. 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 2026-2027 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 phone at (512) 245-7681. ☞

Katherine Anne Porter Literary Trust

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

Hello and happy summer to Katherine Anne Porter readers, scholars, and fans everywhere! On behalf of the Porter Literary Trust and the University of Maryland Libraries, I would like to provide you with some updates regarding the Porter Trust and the Libraries, and how they support the Porter collection.

We have had a productive year working with The Permissions Company, which manages Porter rights on our behalf, and with the various copyright holders of Porter publications. Several translators, production companies, and other third parties have reached out to us regarding potential translations and adaptations of Porter's works. Discussions about several of these potential projects are ongoing and may come to fruition in the coming year. I will keep you updated as projects develop. Meanwhile, the Trust is always searching for new collaboration partners. If you are interested in a Porter project, or know of any researcher or organization who might be, please reach out to us!

Royalties from Porter's works continue to help the Trust support the Porter collection. *Ship of Fools* continues to provide new income to the Trust

through royalties from its digital edition, published by Open Roads Media. During the past year Open Roads has once again featured *Ship of Fools* in its promotions, and sales continue to increase. Royalty revenue from other works also continues to increase the Trust. These funds provide the Trust and the Libraries with resources to advance Porter studies through initiatives such as the recently established Katherine Anne Porter Research Award.

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/collections/special>. The University of Maryland Libraries' hours, location, services, and collections are always complete and current at <https://www.lib.umd.edu>. If you have questions or suggestions for the Porter Trust, please do not hesitate to contact me at dmack@umd.edu. ☞

2026 American Academy of Arts and Letters: Katherine Anne Porter Award

By Christine Grogan, University of Delaware

James Lasdun was the recipient of the 2026 Katherine Anne Porter Award in Literature. The American Academy of Arts and Letters presented the award at its annual Ceremonial on May 20, 2026. This year's literature award committee consisted of Mona Simpson (chair), Henri Cole, Adam Gopnik, and Yiyun Li.

Katherine Anne Porter was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1941 and to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1966. In

2001, the Literary Trust of Katherine Anne Porter established the biennial Katherine Anne Porter Award, a \$20,000 prize honoring a mid-career fiction writer whose “achievements and dedication to the literary profession have been demonstrated.”

Lasdun is the thirteenth recipient of the award, joining Lynn Freed (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), Lynne Tillman (2022), and Gayl Jones (2024).

The Ceremonial citation praises Lasdun’s “sly, tricksterish streak,” noting that he transforms the story of a family dentist who turned out to be a murderer into a meditation on American crime fiction. Celebrating his nonfiction, poetry, “unforgettable short stories,” and “superb novels,” the citation concludes: “We’re delighted by his impish intelligence, his precocious wisdom, and his affinity for the paradoxical and the amazing.”

As the citation suggests, Lasdun is among the rare contemporary writers whose work has achieved distinction across multiple literary forms. A novelist, poet, essayist, screenwriter, and short story writer, he has built a body of work marked by psychological precision, stylistic elegance, and a sustained interest in desire, memory, alienation, and moral uncertainty.

Born in London in 1958, the son of the architect Sir Denys Lasdun, he has lived in the United States since the mid-1980s and now resides in New York’s Catskill Mountains. Lasdun first attracted major attention with the 1985 story collection *The Silver Age* (published in the United States as *Delirium Eclipse*) and the poetry collection *A Jump Start* (1987). Praised for their

technical mastery and imaginative range, these early works announced the arrival of a distinctive literary voice. Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Anthony Hecht described Lasdun as “among the most gifted, vivid, and deft poets now writing in English.”

Over the following decades, Lasdun established himself as a master of both fiction and poetry. Story collections such as *Three Evenings* (1992), *Besieged* (1999), and *It’s Beginning to Hurt* (2009) reveal a remarkable ability to illuminate the tensions and anxieties of contemporary life. Bernardo Bertolucci adapted his story “The Siege” into the 1998 film *Besieged*, introducing his work to an international audience.

His novels—including *The Horned Man* (2002), *Seven Lies* (2005), *The Fall Guy* (2016), and *Victory* (2019)—have been widely praised for their explorations of paranoia, self-deception, and moral ambiguity. *The Horned Man* was named a *New York Times* Notable Book, while *Seven Lies* was longlisted for the Booker Prize and selected as an *Economist* Book of the Year. Reviewers have praised Lasdun’s prose for its combination of intellectual acuity and narrative suspense, with writers such as Jennifer Egan, Mary Gaitskill, and Michael Dirda celebrating the singular psychological power of his fiction.

Poetry has remained central to Lasdun’s career. *Landscape with Chainsaw* (2001) was shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize, the Forward Prize, and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, while *Bluestone: New and Selected Poems* (2015) further confirmed his reputation as a poet of formal sophistication and emotional depth. His poems frequently explore the tensions between his English origins and American life.

Lasdun has also written extensively for *Harper’s*,

Granta, *The Guardian*, the *London Review of Books*, and *The New Yorker*. His 2023 *New Yorker* article “The Corrupt World Behind the Murdaugh Murders” became the magazine’s most-read piece of the year. His memoir *Give Me Everything You Have: On Being Stalked* (2013) offers a gripping account of psychological harassment and obsession.

In addition to his literary work, Lasdun has written for film, co-authoring *Sunday* and *Signs and Wonders* with filmmaker Jonathan Nossiter. *Sunday* received both the Grand Jury Prize and the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at Sundance. He has also taught creative writing at Princeton, Columbia, New York University, and Bennington College.

Widely translated, Lasdun is the recipient of numerous honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the inaugural BBC National Short Story Award, the Dylan Thomas Prize, and an O. Henry Award. Moving with unusual fluency among poetry, fiction, memoir, criticism, and screenwriting, he has established himself as one of the most versatile literary voices of his generation. As James Wood writes, “James Lasdun seems to be one of the secret gardens of English writing . . . when we read him we know what language is for.”



Where Do We Go from Here in Katherine Anne Porter Studies?

By Darlene Harbour Unrue, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Editor’s Note: This document was discussed at the American

Literature Association Conference in Chicago on May 22, 2026. Darlene Unrue is Professor Emerita of English, UNLV.

Each of the topics below is directed toward an understanding of Katherine Anne Porter’s fiction.

I. Overview. The definitive biographies and collections of letters

Joan Givner, *Katherine Anne Porter: A Life* (University of Georgia Press, 1982/1991)

Darlene Harbour Unrue, *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist* (University of Mississippi Press, 2005)

Darlene Harbour Unrue, ed., *Selected Letters of Katherine Anne Porter: Chronicles of a Modern Woman* (University of Mississippi Press, 2014)

Isabel Bayley, ed., *Letters of Katherine Anne Porter* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990)

II. Needed Work

a. Update Ruth M. Alvarez and Katherine Hilt, *Katherine Anne Porter: An Annotated Bibliography* (Garland, 1990)

b. Include the bibliographies in *The Newsletter of the Katherine Anne Porter Society* and the recorded conversations on the Katherine Anne Porter Channel on You Tube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@KatherineAnnePorterChannel>

III. *Unexhausted Subjects*

Remembered, ed. Darlene Harbour Unrue
(University of Alabama Press, 2010)

a. Katherine Anne Porter's Marginalia

- Resource: Isabel Bayley's notes for her planned book on KAP's marginalia with the tentative title *Back Talk* – files at University of Maryland:
<https://archives.lib.umd.edu/repositories/2/resources/1564>

b. Katherine Anne Porter and Journalism

- Resource: John Fenstermaker, *A Way to Live Now: How Journalism Shaped Ernest Hemingway* (LSU Press, 2024)
- Resource: Bill Knight and Deckle McLean, ed., *The Eye of the Reporter* (Western Illinois Press, 1996)

IV. *Unexplored Subjects*

a. Katherine Anne Porter and Dance

- Relevant facts: KAP loved to dance and to attend dance performance and she supported her niece's dance study. Porter mentioned attending ballets by Purcell, Handel, and the one-act comic ballet *The Prospect Before Us* (premiered in 1940)

b. Katherine Anne Porter and Gardening

- Relevant facts: KAP was a serious gardener as was her grandmother, Catherine Ann Skaggs Porter, who is represented in fiction as Sophia Jane Gay
- Resource: See Harrison Paul Porter, Jr.'s reminiscence in *Katherine Anne Porter*

c. Katherine Anne Porter and the Movies

- Relevant facts: KAP loved to attend movies, often in the company of her nephew Harrison Paul Porter, Jr. (Her favorites were French movies, *film noir*, and comedies.) In 1915 she worked briefly for The Essanay Movie Company in Chicago and acted in several movies there. In the 1940s Porter worked in Hollywood as an uncredited scriptwriter.

d. Katherine Anne Porter and Modernism

- Relevant facts: Although KAP asserted that she preferred "older literature," she rejected nineteenth-century Romanticism and embraced the Modernism of "New Criticism," founded by her friends Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, and based on the belief that meaning lies within a literary work without the application of an external theory.

e. Katherine Anne Porter and Photography

- Relevant facts: KAP loved to be photographed and also enjoyed taking pictures of friends, family members, and acquaintances.

f. Katherine Anne Porter and Music

- Relevant facts: KAP loved many kinds of music, took piano lessons, and attended many concerts. Did music affect KAP's literary style?

V. *Katherine Anne Porter and Other Writers*

a. Katherine Anne Porter and Edgar Allan Poe

- Relevant facts: In KAP's autobiographical "Old Mortality," Miranda's family reveres Poe and considers him the greatest American poet. KAP was delighted when she won the Edgar Allan Poe award for "The Spivvelton Mystery" in 1972.
- Question: Can we draw a comparison between Poe's focus on the death of a beautiful woman (in such works as "Annabel Lee," "Morella," and "Eulalie") and Porter's "Old Mortality"?

b. Katherine Anne Porter and Rudyard Kipling

- Question: Is there a relationship between Kipling's treatment of British colonialism and Porter's treatment of slavery in "The Old Order"?

c. Katherine Anne Porter and Nathaniel Hawthorne

- Relevant facts: Porter owned (and presumably read) all of Hawthorne's works, considering them as background for her biographical study of Cotton Mather.
- Question: Was Porter's fiction influenced by Hawthorne's themes of the destructive power of secret sin, guilt, and the dangers of intellectual pride?

d. Katherine Anne Porter and Flannery O'Connor

- Relevant facts: Porter and O'Connor were friends who admired one another's writing.

Porter especially admired the Southern Gothic element in O'Connor's fiction.

e. Katherine Anne Porter and William Shakespeare

- If Porter's primary theme in her fiction is "betrayal," as Eudora Welty observed, did she find its source in Shakespeare's revenge tragedies (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Julius Caesar*)?

f. Katherine Anne Porter and William Faulkner

- Relevant facts: Porter admired Faulkner immensely. After reading *The Sound and the Fury*, she not only remarked that it had chilled her to the bone, but she praised Faulkner for "Such good, bold writing." Can we fruitfully compare Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" with Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"? Porter also admired Faulkner's sense of humor, grounded in the Southern Gothic.

g. Katherine Anne Porter and Ernest Hemingway

- Relevant facts: KAP met Hemingway in Paris. She considered him a great American writer and was flattered when she was compared to him.

h. Katherine Anne Porter and Russian Writers

- Relevant facts: Porter was ambivalent about the importance of Nietzsche and Hegel but admired the works of Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, and Tolstoy.
- Question: Can we draw a comparison between Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan

Ilych” and Porter’s “Noon Wine” or “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”?

i. Katherine Anne Porter and Henry James

- Relevant facts: KAP said that James was "the very greatest artist and novelist this country ever produced"; that she "went to school to him"; that "his *Art of the Novel* should be a Bible for young writers." She said her devotion to him grew as she studied his life.

j. Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty

- Relevant facts: both Southern women, good friends who admired one another’s writing. Welty was Porter’s protégé. Can we trace in their fiction their common interest in mystery?

k. Katherine Anne Porter and Jonathan Swift

- Relevant facts: KAP admired Swift immensely, referring to him respectfully as “Dean Swift.”
- Question: Can we trace the influence of *Gulliver’s Travels* on Porter’s *Ship of Fools*?

l. Katherine Anne Porter and Mark Twain

- Relevant fact: Porter’s father read to his children all of Twain’s works.
- Question: Can we locate evidence of Twain’s influence on Porter’s fiction?
- What do Twain’s Huckleberry Finn and Porter’s Miranda Gay have in common?

- Additional resource: Janis Stout, “Mark Twain and Katherine Anne Porter at the Circus,” *The Southern Quarterly* 36.3 (Spring 1999): 113

m. Katherine Anne Porter and St. Augustine

- Relevant fact: Porter owned multiple copies of *Confessions* and *The City of God* (some with her marginalia). Consider the significance of her essay “St. Augustine and the Bullfight” in the context of her larger canon.
- Question: Can her disdain toward Anatole France be traced to his satirizing of St. Augustine?

n. Katherine Anne Porter and D. H. Lawrence

- Relevant fact: Although Porter was critical of Lawrence’s view of Mexico and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, she admired some of his stories such as “The Rocking-Horse Winner.”

o. Katherine Anne Porter and Sherwood Anderson

- Relevant fact: When Porter met Anderson at a writers’ colony, she said he provided the “rough diamond note.” Given that the genre of his *Winesburg, Ohio* and Porter’s *Ship of Fools* was challenged, can one make a case that both are in fact novels?

VI. *Katherine Anne Porter and French Writers*

- Relevant fact: Porter admired Flaubert (especially his *Madame Bovary*), the satire of Voltaire, and the works of Montaigne,

who popularized the essay, a form Porter relied on in her nonfiction.

- Question: Do we find evidence of Montaigne's theme of the utility of experience in Porter's book reviews and essays?

VII. *Katherine Anne Porter and James Joyce*

- Can we find a similarity between the theme of paralysis in Joyce's "The Dead" (or others of his *Dubliners* stories) and Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider"?

VIII. *Katherine Anne Porter and Homer*

- Can we draw a comparison between Homer's *The Odyssey* and Porter's *Ship of Fools*?

IX. *Katherine Anne Porter and Emily Brontë*

- Relevant facts: Porter read *Wuthering Heights* many times from adolescence on and thought it one of the world's great novels.

X. *Katherine Anne Porter and Germanic Writers*

- Relevant facts: Porter especially admired Rainer Maria Rilke but also Kafka, Hesse, Mann, and Goethe.

XI. *Katherine Anne Porter and Virginia Woolf*

- Relevant facts: Porter admired Woolf's fiction and shared with her a need for private time and space for writing.

XII. *Katherine Anne Porter and Jane Austen*

- Relevant facts: KAP said she read Austen at an early age but had to grow into understanding her. In *Strategies of Reticence*, Janis Stout discusses silence and minimal speech, rhetorical strategies also employed by Austen, in "Old Mortality" and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider."

XIII. *Katherine Anne Porter and William Butler Yeats*

- Porter named Yeats in addition to T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as writers who had influenced her.

XIV. *Katherine Anne Porter and Dante Alighieri*

- Relevant facts: One of Porter's unfinished works was titled "Midway of this Mortal Life," drawn from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which also informs Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. 💜

"Between the truth and well-regulated fiction"

[Continued from page 1]

This paper will focus on Lynes's photographs of Porter in the holdings at the University of Maryland Libraries. It also draws on the nearly 250 items of correspondence Porter and Lynes exchanged between 1932 and 1955. Porter's papers hold nearly 90 of Lynes's photographs of Porter, both formal and informal, dating between 1932 and 1948. Both document a relationship that grew to be warm and supportive until Lynes's untimely death at age forty-eight.

May 27, 1932, Paris

The earliest of the photographs was taken in May 1932 in Barbara Harrison's Paris apartment. This beautiful and dramatic photograph has become the iconic photograph of Porter, published many times with biographical entries and on the dust jacket of Isabel Bayley's 1990 edition of Porter's letters. Lynes's May 29 letter addressed to "My dear Miss Porter" is the first item of their correspondence at the University of Maryland, and in it, he stated that the proofs from the sitting were ready and invited her to drop by to see them. Apparently, Porter did see the proofs, at which time the two set a date for another sitting on May 30. Porter's May 30 letter to Lynes explained she had a "slightly enflamed eye" and would not make the planned sitting. Lynes replied he "was desolate" that she could not come that day and suggested that, "If Harrison of Paris wants a picture of you in the meanwhile, I will make up 'the Dietrich one'—the one we agreed upon—" Porter left Paris on June 1 to join Eugene Pressly in Basel, Switzerland, and did not see the print of this photo until April 1933. On April 14, 1933, she wrote "Dear Mr. Lynes": "I did not see the print of the photograph you had made of me until last week. . . You must know I am delighted with it, you flattered me beyond all conscience and yet not beyond recognition, which is right and proper. . ." "And this shall be my official photograph until you make me another."

Summer 1933, Paris

In Porter's papers, only one photographic proof survived from a series of photographs Lynes took of her in Paris in the summer of 1933. Porter's June 25, 1934, letter to "Dear George" stated that Harcourt, Brace has a copy of the May 1932 photograph, "But I prefer one of those you made last summer in Rue de Condé. . . I sent to Monroe, just now, the proof I preferred. . . The picture I selected is not the most flattering in some

ways, but an honest likeness. . ." "I am coming home in the late fall, and maybe you can make another picture of me that will be the perfect compromise between the truth and well-regulated fiction. . ." Lynes replied on August 4, 1934, that he couldn't find the negative of the proof she sent. He asserted that instead, "I sent [Harcourt, Brace] a print of the pose out of that set I liked best, not that I ever liked it much, in which you lean on Soutine's blue man." Subsequently "(Harcourt) called to say they did not like it at all and would use the old one which we made in Rue de Vaugirard. We will have to content ourselves with your cinema, rather than your literary, aspects for the present."

May 1936, New York

Lynes photographed Porter in his New York studio during her February to May 1936 visit to the United States. From this session, eight proofs and prints of seven separate images exist in Porter's papers. This is the first set of Lynes's photographs of Porter that exhibit the characteristics that Anatole Pohorilenko describes in *When We Were Three: The Travel Albums of George Platt Lynes, Monroe Wheeler, and Glenway Wescott*. "What interested George was complete control over the lens, light, and subject. He did not use props to symbolize his subject's mood or occupation, he used them for compositional purposes. Almost from the beginning George used double exposure, montage, and airbrushing to alter the ordinary and nudge it into the realm of fantasy. His pictures were nearly always contrived compositions, meant to overcome the commonplace nature of the objects or subjects portrayed" (82-83).

Porter was delighted with the results of this session. In her June 9, 1936, letter to Lynes she wrote, "The photographs are much too fine to be prodigal with, so I mean to give them away carefully only to those who deserve to have some of

your work, and who would be apt to appreciate it properly. . . . I have them all ranged round a wall, and look at them again, and have decided they are all too good to be true. . . . The one I have chosen to be myself, at last, is that three-quarter one seated among the topsy turvy landscape, numbered in your files 170 B. Glenway asked me which one I thought was the real one, with more of myself in it, and I have decided on this one chiefly because I do so like the pose and the background and above all the camera work. . . .”

“The one Glenway called Portrait of The Beautiful Mrs. Pressly (No. 175 B) may be, after all, the one for the general public, if I have a general public, which I doubt. My Sylvie picked it at first glance across the room, and gave her reasons. . . . I decided then it was to be my official photograph.”

May 15, 1939, New York

By the time Lynes took these photographs of Porter, she had experienced major changes in her life. She and Eugene Pressly, whom she had married in Paris in 1933, sailed to the United States from Paris in October 1936. Their marriage was essentially over when Pressly took a position in Venezuela in March 1937. Having met Albert Erskine, a graduate student at Louisiana State University and manager of the *Southern Review*, at the home of Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon in August 1937, Porter moved to New Orleans in September 1937, subsequently marrying Erskine in April 1938 and relocating to Baton Rouge. In May 1939, Porter was in New York where she was lionized in the aftermath of the publication of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* to critical acclaim. During this New York trip, Porter signed the contract for the work that eventually would be published as *Ship of Fools* in 1962.



Katherine Anne Porter, May 1936, New York

Between March 1937 and March 1939, Porter and Lynes exchanged eighteen written communications. It is clear from the context of these letters that they became fond friends who met frequently when she lived in New York City for six months in 1937. Apparently, the glamorous photographs taken in May 1939 were intended for publication in *Vogue*. In a May 16, 1939, letter, Porter described the sitting to Albert Erskine: “George took pictures of me, very decorative pictures of me, he hopes, all prettied up with bunches of lilac and a white velvet background for the first set, flowered wall paper and a mid victorian settle for the second. I went to the studio in street dress carrying a bag with evening dress. Changed, posed, changed back to street dress.” She mentioned the photographs in a July 28, 1939, letter to Lynes: “Vogue is sending the proofs to me to choose from, today before twelve. They have promised me a full set to keep, though I must not give them to any other magazine or newspapers.”

Porter pasted the six existing photographs from this grouping onto the pages of a scrapbook.

November 23, 1939, Baton Rouge

In late November 1939, Lynes and Monroe Wheeler took a short trip to the South spending time in Pass Christian, MS, and New Orleans before stopping off in Baton Rouge to visit Porter and Albert Erskine. The six Lynes photographs that survive in Porter's papers include two in which Porter appears with Erskine and Wheeler. These photographs were taken with natural light. Porter's December 17, 1939, letter to Lynes expressed her delight with the shots of Erskine: "the pictures are simply heavenly. Every time I saw Albert during that series of poses, he seemed to be having a case of rigor mortis; he is more camera shy than I am, or used to be; I had little hope you could break him down into naturalness. But you did. Of course, I took them all, and Albert has none of his own to keep or send. Would you sometime, sometime make a set for him? For I shall never give these up, its quite impossible." In just six months, Porter and Erskine, who was twenty-two years younger than she, had separated.

December 3, 1940, New York

In June 1940, Porter relocated to Yaddo, the artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, NY. It was to be her home base until August 1942, when she moved into South Hill, the only home she ever owned. Porter and Lynes must have scheduled the sitting for these photographs to follow her December 2 participation on the panel for "Invitation to Learning," a 30-minute CBS radio show. There are seven existing prints from this studio session, which might represent the most successful of Lynes's efforts on Porter. Porter's December 30, 1940, letter to Lynes returned the proofs. "Here are the proofs. I sealed them once to

send, pulled them open to show again. I marked my choices. The ones I don't care for are as good photography as the others, but there are expressions I don't like on my face."

Porter received her prints from the session by the time of her January 17, 1941, response to Lynes. In it, she mentions the photographs from her earlier New York sessions of 1936 and 1939. She also describes her favorite photograph from this set. There are several copies of it, cropped into a head shot, in Porter's papers.

"The pictures came and they are splendid, but a dreadful mistake occurred. My very favorite. . . was left out all together, and another got in by mistake. My favorite was the very stern straight one, with hands clasped rather high, looking extremely like my own grandmother—the very look. And it was altogether a well posed well lighted portrait, and oh, it was left out. . . . For in all other pictures you ever made of me, I have almost none, and some of them that I liked best. So this time, I had decided really to ask for a set of my favorites. What shall I do? You do know which one I mean, don't you? It doesn't make me look as amiable, perhaps as some of the others, there is a foreshadowing of my 'old' face in it, but just for that prophecy I wanted it, to see whether it will come out that way....

You know I like all of them, but I am full of regrets for not having copies of several of the first ones you made in New York which apparently you have rejected: and I left out of the second series myself, one or two I wish now I had.... But the truth is, I treasure them all; and have the feeling that they are records and can't be replaced and no substitution will in the least do...."

August 23, 1941, South Hill

In January 1941, Porter found South Hill, the property she purchased and began renovating in



Katherine Anne Porter, December 3, 1940, New York

Spring 1941. Located in what was then Ballston Spa, it is 8.5 miles from Yaddo. Lynes and Monroe Wheeler visited Porter in Saratoga Springs during the renovation. Sixteen of the snapshots Lynes took during the visit are among Porter's papers. All but four of them are pasted into what she named the "South Hill book."

Porter described them in her September 4, 1941, letter to Lynes. "George Darling, did I write you about those superb, but oh superb pictures you made at South Hill? If I didn't, it was because I was moving, and getting settled again. . . . The pictures are quite unbelievable, I never saw such light and where the landscape shows, such distance and such depth. I am so happy about them, and for once, having a complete collection, I mean to treasure them all, every one. They are going into the house book, the best thing that will ever be in it. . . ."

May 15, 1943, South Hill

Porter moved into South Hill on August 28, 1942. Previous to that, she had spent much of the spring and summer elsewhere, most notably in Reno, NV, where her divorce from Albert Erskine was granted on June 19. Winter 1942-1943 was characterized by temperatures in double digits below freezing. However, Spring brought fine weather and visitors. Lynes and the artist Paul Cadmus made a visit to coincide with Porter's May 15 birthday. From that visit, four photographs remain among Porter's papers. They include shots of South Hill's living room and of Porter. Porter expressed her delight with them in a May 25, 1943, letter: "The pictures came this morning—I love them. They have gone into the book, with the date. They couldn't be nicer, they are exactly right!" She also remarked on them in letters of May 31, 1943, and June 7, 1943: "The living room ones are wonderful too: I pasted them up in the big book, side by side; what a record that book is getting to be." "Those birthday pictures, living room and self, are nicer every time I see them. . . ."

July 6, 1946, Santa Monica

By the time Lynes's 1946 photographs of Porter were made, both of them were living in southern California. In October 1943, Porter had fled South Hill to an inn in Massachusetts ostensibly to complete her long-promised novel. From there, she moved to Washington, DC, in January 1944 to take a position at the Library of Congress that terminated at the end of August. Until she departed for California and a job at MGM in January 1945, she was unsettled staying in New York and at Yaddo. When Lynes visited southern California and Porter in late February and early March 1946, Porter had quit the MGM position in April 1945 and had taken one at Paramount in October 1945. During Lynes's California visit, he photographed Porter and her nephew Paul, but none of the photographs of Porter survive in her



Katherine Anne Porter, July 6, 1946, Santa Monica

papers. Shortly after his visit, Lynes accepted a position with Vogue Studios in Hollywood that was to extend from May 1946 to May 1948. By the time he took these photographs, Lynes was living in Hollywood, and Porter had ended her contract with Paramount. In Porter's papers there are nineteen unique prints. In five of them, Lynes appears. Porter pasted eleven of these photographs into her scrapbook; none of these include Lynes. Porter annotated the scrapbook photographs with the date of the session and its location, her Santa Monica residence. On one she added, "This was the day I pulled Christopher Isherwood's hair, and served him right." Very little in Porter's correspondence documents this sitting. In a June 19, 1946, letter to Lynes she mentioned the plan for the photographs: "now I am out in the cold world with hordes surging at me—mostly by mail, that's true—shouting 'GIMME' and I am beginning to think if I had any sense I'd just cut all my hair off next Monday

and retreat to a convent. . . But certainly not until I've had my picture taken in my new white dress in your patio, and isn't there always something to live for?" A reference to them also appeared in her October 4, 1946, letter to her sister Gay: "I'll send you. . . a couple of the one[s] George made of me not long ago, which are of course finer just as technical work, and wonderfully flattering."

July 2, 1947, Hollywood

Porter worked on various projects and, in fits and starts, on her novel in the year intervening between the photographic sitting in July 1946, while Lynes was busy with his Vogue Studio work and his social life. Porter's papers contain prints of two photographs Lynes took of her at what apparently was an impromptu session at his home. Porter's July 11, 1947, letter to her sister Gay described the scene. "GPL made another set [of pictures], this time at a gay party, in the evening by giant flood light, and I send you the best of those. . . He really can get me into some odd poses, but it is a fact he makes me look purty, and what more could a natural woman ask?"

"He had invited me to dinner, friends kept dropping in among them the fashion editor of Vogue out here, a beautiful young woman who was wearing a new skirt with roman stripes running round. She insisted on having her picture made in her new clothes, and we began all of us, five by then, by being funny and making silly faces, etc, then George gradually got worked up and what began as a joke wound up with the three women working at posing until we were stiff, and George carrying on like a director at dress rehearsal. . These are not my clothes they're just clothes that were being used for fashion photography, and Jane dressed me up in them. It was a gay evening and as usual, George picked out the one he preferred and gave me half a dozen prints, but only one each of several others, which I

want to keep for my collection, But these are interesting I think, being one year apart and one outside in broad light and the other outside too, as it happens, on the stone terrace—he started early moving the furniture and props outside—but at night. . . .”

July 28, 1947, Hollywood

Apparently Porter was enlisted as a *Vogue* model for the five surviving photographs of this session. Likely made in the studio, these photographs epitomize what Anatole Pohorilenko characterized as “contrived compositions.” Porter’s August 14, 1947, letter to her friend Donald Elder described it succinctly. “I made my debut as fashion model recently. Twenty poses made by George Platt Lynes, one of which will be in *Vogue* sometime soon. I wore a \$500 black wool-lace evening gown, fifty thousand dollars worth of diamonds, and eight thousand dollars worth of mink stole. I studied the price tags while being photographed, which accounts for the very thoughtful not to say severe, expressions. I could think of nothing but what-all charming and interesting one could do with that much money, but I wouldn’t have paid \$1.98 for the whole lot of stuff I was wearing. . . . However, it seems to me a historic occasion for a *femme de lettres* to become a fashion model at a time when the best she might hope for reasonably would be a D.Litt. . . .”

April 1948, Hollywood

Porter had been living with Lynes and Randy Jack in Lynes’s Hollywood home for more than four months when these informal photographs were taken. In August 1947, Randy Jack had come into Lynes’s Hollywood residence with Wilbur Wright, one of Lynes’s friends. By late December when Porter joined the household, only Jack remained as a paying boarder. When the photographs were taken, Lynes had made the decision to leave California when his contract expired in



Katherine Anne Porter and Randy Jack, April 1948, Hollywood

May. Porter likewise planned to leave southern California at the end of April for a tour of colleges and universities.

Ten of the photographs, all group shots of the three, were taken by Lynes’s assistant. The remaining two, featuring Porter, Jack, and a tiger skin were taken by Lynes. In a March 27, 1948, letter to her sister Gay, Porter explained that a session is planned to “make farewell pictures of us sprawling around sunbathing: we agree with nostalgia in advance that, glad as we all are that we are going somewhere else and do other things, we know already that this is a time we shall all remember and it should have some kind of record.” After receiving the prints of the group shots, Porter wrote Lynes and Jack on May 9, 1948. “The pictures—ah, well, what a green field it was, what sunshine, what ease, what friendliness. . . . I knew they would have just that effect, I love to look at them because we do know what a *TIME* of

effort and strain and uneasiness it was for all of us, just in the most personal way of our own plans for the so uncertain future, yet the pictures tell the real truth, we were happily disposed to each other; and for myself I cannot imagine my life anywhere else but there in just that time. . . . There can never come a time when I shall not remember it with love and tenderness.”

Porter addressed the tiger skin photographs in her August 16, 1955, letter to Lynes. “the other day, I ran across those comic photographs you made of me and Randy sprawling in the floor on a tigerskin, flourishing half-filled glasses (half-filled with water, and 9 o’clock in the morning, I well remember) and I can begin dimly to surmise that a mere outsider might feel entitled to his own opinion of that household. Well, I don’t care, it was funny and strange and homelike and simple and pretty-mixed up all at once, and though I was glad to be out of it, to retrieve my blowed-up fortunes, yet I wouldn’t have missed it. . . .”

Conclusion

The August 1955 Porter letter to Lynes is among the last letters of their correspondence at the University of Maryland. In May 1955, surgery revealed that Lynes had terminal cancer to which he succumbed on December 6, 1955. Their paths diverged, connected, and diverged again over the course of the seven and a half years between their co-habitation in Hollywood and Lynes’s death. Lynes returned to New York in 1948, but his business declined, he eventually filed for bankruptcy and ultimately ended his life in reduced circumstances. Although she did not complete her novel during the same period, Porter spent two of those years teaching at Stanford University and the University of Michigan and part of a year on a Fulbright in Belgium. Those situations were interspersed with years long residences in New York. Shortly after Lynes’s

cancer diagnosis, she settled in Southbury, CT.

Porter and Lynes evince some interesting similarities. Both were sensitive, artistic, and socially charming. Both shared physical beauty and had hair that prematurely grayed. Both made extravagant purchases that had negative financial consequences. They also made unfortunate choices of younger romantic or sexual partners. But ultimately their relationship was nurtured through Lynes’s photographs of Porter. In a July 30, 1952, letter to Porter, Lynes suggested taking “up to date” photographs of Porter for a book of his portraits he was compiling. Porter’s August 2, 1952, reply recalled their first sitting in 1932 and subsequent ones. When she considered new photographs to bring her up to 1952, she perhaps inadvertently revealed one of the reasons for the longevity of their friendship, “gentle deceit”: “That rounds out twenty years so entirely, like drawing a circle around a whole epoch of our lives, the most important part of them perhaps until now. You threatened last year to make ‘interesting’ portraits of me instead of the beautiful outrageously flattering ones you have always done. Darling, the time for that is past, if it ever existed. You must remember that I am now at the age when I really need to be flattered in photographs, you must not get out your sabre-toothed lens at this point. Do you regret having always made me better looking than I was? Well, you mustn’t try to make it up now—you’ll do better, angel, to go straight on in this road of gentle deceit.”

Works Consulted

Ellenzweig, Allen. *George Platt Lynes: The Daring Eye*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Leddick, David. *George Platt Lynes, 1907-1955*. Koln: Taschen, 2000.

———. *Intimate Companions: A Triography of George Platt Lynes, Paul Cadmus, Lincoln Kirstein, and Their Circle*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Lynes, George Platt. *George Platt Lynes: Portrait: The Photographs of George Platt Lynes, 1927-1955*. Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 1994.

Pohorilenko, Anatole, and James Crump. *The Travel Albums of George Platt Lynes, Monroe Wheeler, and Glenway Wescott, 1925-1935*. Santa Fe, NM: Arena Editions, 1998.

Porter, Katherine Anne. Papers. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries.

Unrue, Darlene Harbour. *Katherine Anne Porter: The Life of an Artist*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2005.

Weirermair, Peter. *George Platt Lynes*. Berlin: Bruno Gmunder Verlag, 1989.

Woody, Jack. *George Platt Lynes: Photographs: 1931-1955*. Los Angeles: Twelvetreets Press, 1980.

