



The Wittliff Collections

Guide to the Roger L. Brooks Collection of Katherine Anne Porter

1972-1977

Collection SWWC-031

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Brooks, Roger L. (Roger Leon)
Title:	Guide to the Roger L. Brooks Collection of Katherine Anne Porter
Dates:	1972-1977
Abstract:	This collection of correspondence, photographs, and two interviews lends an insight into Katherine Anne Porter's relationship to her home state of Texas in the last years of her life. Also included are several letters to Dr. Brooks from famous writers regarding Porter's work.
Identification:	SWWC-031
Extent:	2 Linear Feet, 4 boxes
Language:	English
Repository:	The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University

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Biographical Notes

Katherine Anne Porter, Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winning author, was born Callie Russell Porter in Indian Creek, Texas, in 1890. She was one of five children. Her mother, Mary Alice Jones Porter, died during childbirth in 1892, leaving the Porter children to be raised by their father, Harrison Boone Porter. Mr. Porter took the children to Kyle, Texas, in his native Hays County, to live with him and his mother, Catherine Anne Skaggs Porter. The young Ms. Porter attended Kyle public schools. The family was very poor, but her grandmother proved to be a very strong and resourceful woman, making a deep impression on Ms. Porter. In 1901, when Ms. Porter was eleven years old, her grandmother died. Not long afterwards, in 1904, the family moved to San Antonio, where Ms. Porter attended the Thomas School. She studied acting at this time, and performed in several summer stock productions.

In 1906, at sixteen, Porter married John Henry Koontz of Inez, Texas. Mr. Koontz' family was Roman Catholic, and Ms. Porter converted to that faith in 1908. The marriage did not last. Ms. Porter left Mr. Koontz and Texas in 1914, heading north to Chicago to pursue her interests of writing and acting. Apparently it was around this time that she took her grandmother's name, Katherine Anne. The divorce from Mr. Koontz became final in 1915, the same year in which she became very ill with tuberculosis. She returned to Texas, recovered from her illness, and in 1917, worked for the *Fort Worth Critic*, covering theatrical and social events. Soon afterwards, in 1918, Ms. Porter moved to Denver, Colorado, not to return to Texas for close to fifteen years. In Denver, she reviewed books and theatrical performances for the *Rocky Mountain News*. During this period she became nearly fatally ill with an influenza which was sweeping the nation. This experience with grave illness served as the background for her short novel, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.

During 1919-1920, she worked in New York City as publicist for a motion picture company, wrote stories for the children's magazine *Everyland*, and met several Mexican artists who encouraged her to write journalistic works on Mexico. She traveled to Mexico for the first time in 1920, during the time of the Obregon Revolution, and she made many more trips to Mexico during the 1920s. Her first published short story, "Maria Concepcion", appeared in 1922, and was soon followed by other short stories and essays, poetry and book reviews. She was married briefly to Ernest Stock, an English World War I pilot, from 1925-1926. In 1927, she became

very interested in the Sacco and Vanzetti case in Mexico, but she would not publish the story of this experience until 1977, in "The Never-Ending Wrong".

"Flowering Judas", one of her most well known short stories, was published in 1930. She was living in Mexico at this time, and met Eugene Pressly, whom she married in Paris in 1933. Around this time, she returned to Texas for a family visit. She also traveled to Paris and Germany during the turbulent 1930s. In 1936, she moved back to America and finished "Noon Wine" and "Old Mortality", and began work on "Pale Horse, Pale Rider". The next year, she and Mr. Pressly separated. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Porter went to New Orleans and became involved with Albert Erskine of *The Southern Review*. She and Mr. Erskine were married in April, 1938.

In 1939, J. Frank Dobie's *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver* and Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* were both nominated for fiction awards by the Texas Institute of Letters. Dobie won the prize, leaving Ms. Porter feeling insulted and bitter. (Porter was later awarded the Texas Institute of Letters fiction prize for her 1962 novel, *Ship of Fools*.) In 1940, Porter and Erskine separated, and Ms. Porter moved to Saratoga Springs, New York, to continue her writing, beginning what would become *Ship of Fools*. In 1945, she began taking work as a Hollywood scriptwriter, and in 1948 began teaching at various universities including Stanford, the University of Michigan, Washington and Lee, and the University of Liege.

In 1958, rumors circulated to the effect that Harry Ransom, of the University of Texas at Austin's Humanities Research Center, was planning to name a building or at least a room for her at the University. Ms. Porter was very enthusiastic about these reported plans, and accepted an invitation to visit the University. She even considered moving to the area, but the agreement with UT fell apart. Ms Porter was once again disappointed in Texas.

In 1959, Ms. Porter, supported by Ford Foundation grant, moved to the Washington, D.C. area, where she continued to work on *Ship of Fools*, which was published in 1962.

In 1965, she published *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*, which won a Pulitzer Prize Award. She also received honorary doctorates from many universities, and was very much in demand for lectures and teaching positions. In 1966, she received an honorary degree from the University of Maryland at College Park, and in that same year she made the decision to donate her personal papers and library to UMCP. The university named a room for Ms. Porter,

which was opened on May 15, 1968. In the Spring of 1976, Ms. Porter was again given an opportunity to return to Texas. Dr. Roger Brooks, President of Howard Payne University, in Brownwood (close to Ms. Porter's birthplace), organized a literary conference of Porter scholars. The university also presented Ms. Porter with an honorary degree. Dr. Brooks and Ms. Porter became close friends in the last years of her life, and during this visit, Dr. Brooks took Ms. Porter to visit her mother's and brother's grave in her hometown cemetery. It was at this time that Ms. Porter decided to be buried next to her mother in her home town. Later that year, she suffered a series of strokes. Her last book, "The Never Ending Wrong", an account of the Sacco and Vanzetti case in Mexico, was published in 1977.

Ms. Porter died on September 18, 1980, and she was buried alongside her mother's grave, in the Indian Creek Cemetery, near Brownwood, Texas.

Since Porter's death, her reputation as a "Texas" writer has grown even though she herself had fled the state and felt unappreciated by it. Critic A.C. Greene, writing in *The Fifty Best Books on Texas*, calls *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* "the best Texas fiction ever written." Greene also concludes that he "always thought it strange [that] she was so bitter in her disavowal of things Texan but did so many of her best stories with a Texas background." (Greene, A. C. *The Fifty Best Books on Texas*. Dallas : Pressworks, 1982. p.33

Katherine Anne Porter's return to Texas has now come full circle. A historical marker has been erected in Kyle, Texas, celebrating her career. Her childhood home there has recently been purchased by a preservation group, and the house will be restored for use as a museum and a residence for visiting writers at Texas State University. The 1998 Texas Writers Month poster, hung widely across the state's libraries and bookstores, featured Ms. Porter.

Scope and Contents

This collection of correspondence, photographs, and two interviews lends an insight into Katherine Anne Porter's relationship to her home state of Texas in the last years of her life. Correspondence with Dr. Roger L. Brooks of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, documents Porter's interest in returning to Texas and visiting her mother's gravesite. While these 10 letters and 2 telegrams hardly comprise the bulk of this collection, they shed light on Ms. Porter's relationship to Texas during this time of her life. Correspondence from other writers and literary figures to Dr. Brooks regarding Ms. Porter's work represents the status Ms. Porter enjoyed towards the end of her life nationally, internationally, as well as within Texan literary circles. The bulk of the collection is comprised of these letters from other writers to Dr. Brooks. A lengthy interview with Ms. Porter in the early 1970s also gives a unique view into her definitions of art, religion, her methods of writing, and more. Also included in this collection is Dr. Brooks' collection of Katherine Anne Porter books signed and inscribed by the author. Dr. Brooks' personal copies of periodicals in which Ms. Porter's stories and articles appeared have been cataloged separately. Dates for this collection range from 1898-1977, bulk 1972-1977.

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchase, 1998.

Related Materials

Additional Porter materials in the Wittliff Collections can be found in the Paul Porter Collection of Katherine Anne Porter (Collection 032).

The University of Maryland - College Park holds the Katherine Anne Porter Papers.

Preferred Citation

Roger L. Brooks Collection of Katherine Anne Porter, The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University.

Physical Location

Materials may be stored off-site. Advance notice is required for use:

<https://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/makearesearchappointment.html>.

Conditions Governing Use

Materials from the Wittliff Collections are made available for use in research, teaching, and private study. The user assumes responsibility for determining copyright status, obtaining permission to publish, and abiding by U.S. copyright laws.

<https://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/visit/policies/publication.html>

Controlled Access Headings

- Correspondence
- Women authors, American

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Correspondence , 1972-1977

Box	Folder	
1	1	Katherine Anne Porter to Dr. Roger L. Brooks, 1972-1977
1	2	Various writers to Dr. Roger L. Brooks regarding Katherine Anne Porter, 1975-1976, undated
		Amis, Kingsley (December 3, 1975)
		Anderson, Robert (December 2, 1975)
		Auchincloss, Louis S. (December 9, 1975)
		Baldwin, Faith (June 26, 1976, and undated)
		Barth, John (December 2, 1975)
		Beckett, Samuel (November 4, 1975)
		Boyle, Kay (November 24, 1975)
		Bradbury, Ray (December 3, 1975)
		Bristow, Gwen (January 27, 1976)
		Brooks, Cleanth (December 27, 1975)
		Brooks, Gwendolyn (November 22, 1975)
		Burgess, Anthony (February 23, 1976)
		Burnett, W.R. (February 2, 1976)
		Caldwell, Erskine (November 11, 1975)
		Calisher, Hortense (February 17, 1976)
		Chase, Anya Seton (January 7, 1976)
		Cheever, John (January 19, 1976)
		Ciardi, John (November 16, 1975)
		Condon, Richard (December 2, 1975)
		Cowley, Malcolm (August 31, 1975)
1	3	Various writers to Dr. Roger L. Brooks regarding Katherine Anne Porter, 1975-1977

Daiches, David (December 9, 1975)

DeVries, Peter (December 10, 1975)

Eberhart, Richard (December 12, 1975)

Edmonds, Walter D. (November 16, 1975)

Fadiman, Clifton (December 8, 1975)

Fast, Howard (January 19, 1976)

Gardner, Isabella (April 2, 1976)

Garfield, Brian (December 12, 1975)

Givner, Joan (August 29, 1977 and September 20, 1977)

Gold, Herbert (December 10, 1975)

Grau, Shirley Ann (October 7, 1975 and January 2, 1976)

Gunn, Thom (December 6, 1975)

Guthrie, A.B., Jr. (November 20, 1975)

Hardwick, Elizabeth (undated)

Hayes, Joseph (December 22, 1975)

Heller, Joseph (December 7, 1975)

Hemingway, Mary (February 10, 1976)

Hoffman, Daniel (July 15, 1976)

Holland, Cecelia (undated)

Hollander, John (January 5, 1976)

Horgan, Paul (December 1, 1975)

1	4	Various writers to Dr. Roger L. Brooks regarding Katherine Anne Porter, 1975-1976, undated
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Ignatow, David (December 12, 1975)

Jacobsen, Josephine (December 15, 1975)

Knebel, Fletcher (December 11, 1975)

LeCarre, John (February 18, 1976 and March 5, 1976)

Lawrence, Josephine (December 26, 1975)

Lea, Tom (December 19, 1975)

Lessing, Doris (November 3, 1975)

Levertov, Denise (March 21, 1976)

Lincoln, Victorian (undated)

Lord, Walter (August 19, 1976)

1 5 Various writers to Dr. Roger L. Brooks regarding Katherine Anne Porter, 1975-1976, undated

McCarthy, Mary (January 14, 1976)

MacInnes, Helen ((January 1, 1976)

McKuen, Rod (December 31, 1975)

MacLeish, Archibald (November 3, 1975)

McPherson, Jessamyn West (February 6, 1976)

Mailer, Norman (September 23, 1976)

Malamud, Bernard (November 30, 1975)

Michener, James (January 23, 1976)

Miles, Josephine (November 25, 1975)

Miller, Kenneth (March 23, 1976)

Morris, Willie (January 6, 1976)

Murdoch, Iris (November 8, 1975 and undated)

Nicholl, Louise T. (undated)

Nathan, Robert (December 20, 1976)

Owens, William (January 20, 1976)

Ryhs, Jean (March 9, 1976)

Sandburg, Helga (January 24, 1976)

Sarton, May (December 6, 1975)

Shapiro, Karl (February 1, 1976)

Snodgrass, W.D. (January 19, 1976)

Stegner, Wallace (December 4, 1975)

Stern, James (December 16, 1975)

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| 1 | 6 | <p>Various writers to Dr. Roger L. Brooks regarding Katherine Anne Porter, 1975-1977, undated</p> <p>Stewart, Mary (November 11, 1975 and September 29, 1976)</p> <p>Talese, Gay (January 8, 1976)</p> <p>Tate, Allen (January 15, 1976)</p> <p>Taylor, Peter (August 1, 1977)</p> <p>Untermeyer, Louis (November 14, 1975)</p> <p>Viereck, Peter (January 12, 1976)</p> <p>Vining, Elizabeth Gray (January 25, 1976)</p> <p>Wakoski, Diane (May 1, 1976)</p> <p>Wheelock, John Hall (January 21, 1976)</p> <p>Wilson, Sloan (undated)</p> <p>Wright, James (January 30, 1976)</p> <p>van Wyck Mason, F. (January 15, 1976)</p> <p>Wagenknecht, Edward (January 13, 1976, and September 5, 1976)</p> <p>Warren, Robert Penn (November 7, 1975, and February 5, 1976)</p> |
| 1 | 7 | <p>Lists of items to be transferred to Howard Payne University, initialed by Porter, undated</p> |

Series II: Interviews, 1976-1977

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| 1 | 8 | Interview with Katherine Anne Porter, by a Howard Payne University professor (audio cassette tape and transcript), 1976 |
| 1 | 9 | Phone interview with Katherine Anne Porter and Dr. Roger L. Brooks (audio cassette tape and transcript), September 22, 1977 |

Series III: Photographs, 1898-1975

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| 1 | 10 | <p>Photographs , 1898-1975</p> <p>8x10 color photograph at 85th birthday party, undated</p> <p>8x10 color photograph of Katherine Anne Porter, head and shoulders, undated</p> <p>8x10 black and white, Katherine Anne Porter signing books with Dr. Roger L. Brooks and an HPU professor, 1976</p> <p>6x8 black and white, Katherine Anne Porter visiting with Sally Willison at Indian</p> |
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Creek Cemetery, 1976

6x8 black and white, Katherine Anne Porter at her mother's gravestone, Indian Creek Cemetery, 1976.

4x6 black and white photograph, Katherine Anne Porter at 8 yrs of age, with friends and teacher, 1898.

Series IV: Published Books, 1944-1977

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|---|---|--|
| 2 | 1 | Porter, Katherine Anne. Shahn, Ben, illus. A Christmas Story. New York : Delacourte Press, 1967. (Initialed by Porter), 1967 |
| 2 | 2 | Porter, Katherine Anne. The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter. New York : Delacourte Press, 1970. (Inscribed to Roger L. Brooks.), 1970 |
| 2 | 3 | Porter, Katherine Anne. The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter. New York : Delacourte Press, 1970. (Signed by Porter), 1970 |
| 2 | 4 | Porter, Katherine Anne. The Days Before. New York : Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1952. 1st edition. (Inscribed to Roger L. Brooks.), 1952 |
| 3 | 1 | Porter, Katherine Anne. The Leaning Tower and Other Stories. New York : Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1944. 1st edition. (Inscribed to Roger L. Brooks.), 1944 |
| 3 | 2 | Porter, Katherine Anne. The Never-Ending Wrong. Boston : Little, Brown, and Company, 1977. 1st edition. (Partially inscribed. Writing and figures drawn by Porter after a stroke which affected her writing arm and hand.), 1977 |
| 3 | 3 | Porter, Katherine Anne. Ship of Fools. Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1962. 1st edition. (Inscribed to Roger Brooks.), 1962 |
| 3 | 4 | Porter, Katherine Anne. Ship of Fools. Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1962. 2nd printing. (Inscribed to Roger Brooks.), 1962 |
| 4 | 1 | Porter, Katherine Anne. Ship of Fools. Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1962. 3rd printing. (Inscribed to Roger Brooks.), 1962 |
| 4 | 2 | Porter, Katherine Anne. Ship of Fools. Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1962. (Signed by Lady Bird Johnson.), 1962 |