

# **David L. Vanderwerken research collection on Chaim Potok**

**Ms. Coll. 1234**

**Finding aid prepared by Sam Allingham.**

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Last updated on September 16, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2016 September 16

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Vanderwerken, David L., 1945-2015
<b>Title</b>	David L. Vanderwerken research collection on Chaim Potok
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 1234
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1962-2013
<b>Extent</b>	2.4 linear feet (3 boxes)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	This collection includes material related to a planned critical biography of author Chaim Potok (1929-2002) by David L. Vanderwerken (1945-2015), an American literary scholar and professor of English literature. It contains correspondence regarding the proposal for the book; general research on the critical literature surrounding Potok's literary career, as well as his life and art; a Vanderwerken interview with Potok; and copies of Potok's novels and nonfiction works, with annotations by Vanderwerken.

**Cite as:**

David L. Vanderwerken research collection on Chaim Potok, 1962-2013, Ms.Coll 1234, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

## Biography/History

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David L. Vanderwerken was an American literary scholar. Born in Canastota, NY in 1945, Vanderwerken was a graduate of Colgate and Rice Universities, and in 1971 became a professor of English Literature at Texas Christian University (TCU). During his forty-three year teaching and research career at TCU he received the Distinguished Teaching Award, an award for Distinguished Achievement as a Creative Teacher Scholar, was twice nominated for the Chancellor's Award, and was a Fullbright Scholar to Hungary in 2005 and 2008. He was the author of *Faulkner's Literary Children* (Modern American Literature vol. 8) (1997); *Sport in the Classroom: Teaching Sport-Related Courses in the Humanities* (1990); and *Sport Inside Out: Readings in Literature and Philosophy* (1986). At the time of Vanderwerken's death in 2015, he was working on an extensive critical biography of Chaim Potok.

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## Biography/History

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The author Chaim Potok was born in the Bronx, NY in 1929, to a family of Polish Hasidic immigrants. Discouraged from pursuing a talent in drawing and painting, he pursued an Orthodox Jewish theological education at the Yeshiva schools, where he discovered the novels of Evelyn Waugh, which convinced him to pursue a career as a writer. After graduating from Yeshiva University, Potok abandoned Orthodox Judaism and enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America to become a Conservative rabbi. His first published novel, *The Chosen*, was an immediate and enduring popular success, and was nominated for the National Book Award, inaugurating a long literary career in which he produced novels, nonfiction, literary criticism, books for children, and collaborated on a new English translation of the Hebrew bible. His bibliography includes the novels *The Promise* (1967), *My Name is Asher Lev* (1972), *In the Beginning* (1975), *The Book of Lights* (1981), *Davita's Harp* (1985), *The Gift of Asher Lev* (1990), and *I Am the Clay* (1992); the short story and novella collections *Zebra and Other Stories* (1998) and *Old Men at Midnight* (2001); the nonfiction works *The Jew Confronts Himself in Modern Literature* (1975), *Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews* (1978), *Tobiasse: Artist in Exile* (1986), *The Gates of November* (1996), and *Isaac Stern: My First 79 Years* (with Isaac Stern; 1999); and the children's books *The Tree of Here* (1993) and *The Sky of Now* (1994). After living briefly in Israel in the 1970s, Potok and his family settled in the suburbs of Philadelphia, where he died of a brain tumor in 2002.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection includes material related to David Vanderwerken's planned critical biography of author Chaim Potok. It contains correspondence concerning the proposal for the book, submitted as an application for funding from Vanderwerken's employer, Texas Christian University; research on the critical literature surrounding Potok's literary career, life, and art; research on the critical literature surrounding individual works by Potok; a Vanderwerken interview with Potok, including Potok's edits; and copies of Potok's novels and nonfiction works, with Vanderwerken's annotations.

The majority of the collection's arrangement preserves Vanderwerken's original order. The general research is organized at the subseries level by the type of secondary literature under review (articles and book chapters, theses and dissertations, online biographies). The research pertaining to the critical literature around specific works is organized alphabetically by title. The Vanderwerken interview is arranged chronologically. The copies of Potok works are organized alphabetically by title.

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## **Administrative Information**

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

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### **Access Restrictions**

The bulk of this collection is open for research use. However, access to original audio/visual materials and computer files is restricted. The Kislak Center will provide access to the information on these materials from duplicate master files. If the original does not already have a copy, it will be sent to an outside vendor for copying. Patrons are financially responsible for the cost. The turnaround time from request to delivery of digital items is about two weeks for up to five items and three to seven weeks for more than five items. Please contact Reprographic Services ([reprogr@upenn.edu](mailto:reprogr@upenn.edu)) for cost estimates and ordering.

Once digital items are received, researchers will have access to the files on a dedicated computer in the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center. Researchers should be aware of specifics of copyright law and act accordingly.

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### **Source of Acquisition**

Gift of Karen Vanderwerken, 2015

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## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials note

At the Kislak Center for Special Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania:  
Chaim Potok papers, 1954-2002, Ms. Coll. 730

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### FORM/GENRE(S)

- Audiovisual materials
- Floppy disks
- Interviews
- Research notes
- VHS
- Writings (document genre)

### PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Potok, Chaim

### SUBJECT(S)

- American literature--20th century
- American literature--Jewish authors
- Authors
- Authors, American--20th century
- Literary criticism
- Literature

- Literature--Study and teaching

## Collection Inventory

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### CORRESPONDENCE AND PROPOSALS FOR BOOK PROJECT.

	Box	Folder
Correspondence and book proposal, 2000-2010.	1	1

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### RESEARCH ABOUT POTOK.

	Box	Folder
Preliminary research for book on Potok, 1999-2002.	1	2
Articles and book chapters on Potok, with notes by Vanderwerken, 1962-1984.	1	3
Articles and book chapters on Potok, with notes by Vanderwerken, 1985-1995.	1	4
Articles and book chapters on Potok, with notes by Vanderwerken, 1995-2005.	1	5
Theses and dissertations on Potok, with notes by Vanderwerken, 1965-1997.	1	6
Biographies of Potok, with notes by Vanderwerken, 1999-2008.	1	7
Research on Potok's paintings, 1999-2008.	1	8

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**RESEARCH ON POTOK'S INDIVIDUAL WORKS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE SURROUNDING THEM.**

**FICTION.**

	Box	Folder
<i>Book of Lights</i> , 1981-1989.	1	9
<i>The Chosen</i> , 1967-2007.	1	10
<i>Davita's Harp</i> , 1985.	1	11
<i>The Gift of Asher Lev</i> , 1990.	1	12
<i>I Am the Clay</i> , 1992-1993.	1	13
<i>In the Beginning</i> , 1975-1997.	1	14
<i>My Name is Asher Lev</i> , 1972-2006.	1	15
<i>Old Men at Midnight</i> , 2001.	1	16
<i>The Promise</i> , 1969-1970.	1	17
<i>Zebra and Other Stories</i> , 1998-1999.	1	18

**NONFICTION.**

	Box	Folder
<i>Ethical Living for a Modern World: Jewish Insights</i> , 1968.	1	19
<i>The Gates of November</i> , 1996-1998.	1	20
<i>The Jew Confronts Himself in Modern Literature</i> , 1975.	1	21

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<i>Tobiasse: Artist in Exile</i> , 1986.	1	22
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<i>Wanderings</i> , 1978.	1	23
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**GHOSTWRITING.**

	Box	Folder
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<i>My First 79 Years</i> (with Isaac Stern), 1999.	1	24
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**OTHER WORK.**

	Box	Folder
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Notes on Potok's work for children, 1993-1996.	1	25
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Notes on Potok's uncollected short fiction, 1967-1993.	1	26
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Notes on Potok's plays, 1990-1993.	1	27
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Notes on Potok's book reviews, 1964-1998.	1	28-29
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Notes on Potok's introductions and forwards, 1973-1995.	1	30
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Notes on Potok's interviews, 1976-1998.	1	31
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Vanderwerken review of critical anthology on Potok, 2013.	1	32
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**VANDERWERKEN INTERVIEW WITH POTOK.**

	Box	Folder
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Transcripts of Vanderwerken's interview with Potok, including Potok's edits, 2000.	1	33
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Floppy disk containing Vanderwerken's interview with Potok [RESTRICTED], 2000.	1	34
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**BOOKS BY POTOK, ANNOTATED BY VANDERWERKEN.**

**FICTION.**

	Box	Folder
<i>The Book of Lights</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1982.	2	1
<i>Davita's Harp</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1985.	2	2
<i>The Gift of Asher Lev</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1990.	2	3
<i>I am the Clay</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1992.	2	4
<i>In the Beginning</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1975.	2	5
<i>Old Men at Midnight</i> , first edition, 2001.	2	6
<i>Old Men at Midnight</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 2008), 2002.	2	7
<i>The Promise</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1975), 1969.	2	8
<i>The Promise</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1990.	2	9

**NONFICTION.**

	Box	Folder
<i>The Gates of November</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1996.	2	10
<i>Wanderings</i> (inscribed by Vanderwerken, 1999), 1983.	2	11
<i>My First 79 Years</i> (with Isaac Stern, inscribed by Vanderwerken, 2000), 2000.	3	1
<i>Chaim Potok: a Critical Companion</i> , 2000.	3	2
<i>Chaim Potok: Confronting Modernity Through the Lens of Tradition</i> , 2013.	3	3
<i>Good Conversation!</i> (video interview with Potok) [RESTRICTED], 1997.	3	4