

# A Guide to the Cathryn Hankla Papers, 1971-1992

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1971-1992

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A Collection in Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library M 299  
James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University  
2002

## History

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

**Collection number**

M 288

**Language**

English

**Creator**

Cathryn Hankla

**Physical Characteristics**

9.95 linear feet

**Repository**

Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University

## Administrative Information

**Access**

Collection is open for use without restrictions.

**Use Restrictions**

None.

**Acquisition Information**

On deposit to Special Collections and Archives. Transferred by Ms. Cathryn Hankla in August of 1992.

**Processing Information**

Collection processed in April 1993.

**Preferred Citation**

Box/folder, Cathryn Hankla, M 299, Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University

## Biographical/Historical Information

Cathryn Hankla was born on March 20, 1958 in the Appalachian Mountains in Richlands, VA to Joyce and Alden Hankla. From the age of thirteen her interest in writing was evident as she created a large body of poetry. She continued her interest in writing by working on the school magazine, "Inklings", at Pulaski County High School. After graduating from high school in 1976, she attended Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia and received a B.A. in English and Film in 1980, and in 1982 she earned a M.A. in English and Creative Writing. Throughout this period she continued to write poetry, short stories, plays, and got married to writer and critic Richard H.W. Dillard in 1979. They were divorced in 1992. Her first book, *Phenomena* (1983), was reviewed as one of the five best books of poetry published in 1983. Since then she has published a short story anthology, *Learning the Mother Tongue* (1987), the highly acclaimed novel, *A Blue Moon in Poorwater* (1988), and another book of poetry *Afterimages* (1991). Additionally, her reviews, poems, and short stories have appeared in such journals as *Yarrow*, the *Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine*, and *College English*. Hankla was visiting lecturer in fiction writing at the University of Virginia (spring of 1985), Randolph-Macon's Woman's College Writer in Residence (spring of 1987), and visiting Assistant Professor at Washington and Lee University (1989-1991). Currently, she lives in Troutville, VA and is an associate professor of English at Hollins College (1986-present).

## Scope and Content Information

Cathryn Hankla's collection contains her poetry, short stories, plays, and novels from 1971 to 1992. The material documents the development and maturation of Hankla from the age of 13. The bulk of Hankla's collection is in her poetry drafts (1971-1989) and her published work (1980-1992). There are no significant gaps in her collection since its contents are spread out evenly throughout its 21 year period.

Another strength of Hankla's papers is in her poetry. Containing the poems that she has written over a 18 year range, many of her initial poems have been revised repeatedly. These drafts provide an insight to her development as a poet and writer by demonstrating the obvious changes in her style, form, and content. The weakness of this collection is the lack of any biographical information about Cathryn Hankla. Except for some passing information in some of her book reviews, there is no significant information about Hankla herself.

In this collection of novels, poetry, short stories, plays, theses, and notes, a large area of interest is in her published work. This is especially true in examples like *Phenomena*, *Learning the Mother Tongue*, *A Blue Moon in Poorwater*, and *Afterimages* that contain a complete set of correspondence, drafts, and reviews. Specifically, the correspondence shows her initial contact with numerous publishing companies and her continuous discussion with the eventual publisher about the evolution of her work. As a result, the collection

documents the complete development of her work from draft to review. Presently, Hankla is not represented in any other repository.

## Arrangement

### Arrangement

Collection is arranged chronologically.

### Organization

The collection is a result of a single accession. Artificial series were imposed on the collection to highlight the development of Hankla's work. Series 1 was divided into two subseries and chronologically arranged therein from oldest to newest, while Series 2,3, 5-7 were arranged chronologically as well. In Series 4 there were eight subseries with correspondence arranged chronologically and placed at the beginning. Drafts are arranged chronologically, and reviews follow the drafts. Researchers must note that within the collection there are places where documents from one series could be placed in another if it were not for the fact that two different works shared a piece of paper. Also, it must be noted that "First Person Love" has not been published yet.

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