



Selected Letters of Katherine Anne Porter

Darlene Harbour Unrue

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Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980) produced a relatively small body of fiction, but she wrote thousands and thousands of letters. The present selection of 135 unexpurgated letters, written to seventy-four different persons, begins with a 1916 letter written from a tuberculosis sanatorium in Texas and ends with a 1979 letter dictated to an unnamed nursing-home attendant in Maryland. Different from any previous selection, this body of letters does not omit Porter's frank criticism of fellow writers and spans her entire life. Within that circumscription is the chronicle of Porter, a twentieth-century woman searching for love while she struggles to become the writer she is sure she can be.

Porter's letters vividly showcase the twentieth century as the writer observes it from her historical vantage points--tuberculosis sanatoria and the influenza pandemic of 1918; the leftist community in Greenwich Village in the 1920s; the Mexican cultural revolution of the 1920s and early 1930s; the expatriate community in Paris in the 1930s; the rise of Nazism in Europe between the World Wars; the Second World War and its concomitant suppression of civil liberties; Hollywood and the university circuit as a haven for financially strapped writers in the 1940s and 1950s; the Cold War and its competition for supremacy in space; the Women's Rights and the Civil Rights movements; and the evolution and demise of literary modernism.

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