

Africa

April 29, 1943

Dear Dayton:

Your April 13<sup>th</sup> letter arrived swiftly, by air. You are one of my few remaining contacts with the literary mainland of the U.S. Over here I have difficulty in writing letters, and have unforgivably neglected my friends and relatives. I hope all will understand.

Katherine Ann Porter wrote recently, a letter rich in humanity and ideas. I have stopped waiting for the publication of Katherine's "The Voyage Home." She will turn it over to Ham Davis and Harcourt, Brace

in her own good time. You might be interested to know that she read the last few pages of it aloud to me several years ago. What has she been doing to the manuscript all these years? I think the answer is simply this — she is not psychologically ready to let the novel out of her hands. I don't think Katherine will mind if I quote a passage from her letter: "I am finishing up my promised work, that work for which my whole life has been a preparation, and I am going on with it now, in the midst of everything because not to finish, to lose faith, would be to add to the confusion and be too wasteful..."

Do you happen to know Newton Arvin, Professor of English at Smith College? He has sent a letter of good hope. Newton wrote a biography of Walt Whitman a few years ago — etc. You might have noticed Van Wyck Brooks' indebtedness to him in the preface to "New England: Indian Summer." Newton is a rare soul.

It is sad to know that Thomas Wolfe's mother is selling his very literary bones. When I talked to her a couple of summers ago I knew she would do ~~just~~ <sup>this</sup> ~~that~~. But I shall read, in time, this last book out of morbid curiosity though not with good heart.

James Stobley (of the Tennessee canning family) who was a close

friend of Wolfe's said this curious thing to me once: "Concerning Wolfe I have one great regret, and that is the fact you never <sup>know</sup> him and that he never knew you. You, alone, of all the people I know might have saved him from his madness."

The above statement should be taken with all the brine in the Atlantic Ocean. I quote it only as a curiosity.

How does your writing progress? Did you work for Columbia Broadcasting again last summer?

I am envious of your garden. Two ~~years~~ <sup>seasons</sup> have passed since I dug a hole and dropped a seed. But there will be other times and other springs.

Do you have a snapshot of yourself, wife and chaps to send me?

Your friend,  
James Still