



# **Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren: Toward Sunset, at a Great Height, 1980--1989 (Southern Literary Studies)**

*Robert Penn Warren*

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In the last decade of his life, Robert Penn Warren remained a vibrant force in American literature, producing new works of poetry and nonfiction while also dealing courageously with the gradual decline of his health and the diminishment of his poetic powers. *Toward Sunset, at a Great Height, 1980--1989*, the sixth and final volume of the author's selected letters, provides crucial documentation of this period, containing Warren's correspondence with friends, family, fellow writers, editors, critics, and the scholars studying his works.

Warren published several volumes of poetry, including *Being Here* (1980), *Rumor Verified* (1981), and *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce* (1983), and returned to nonfiction prose with *Jefferson Davis Gets His Citizenship Back* (1980) and the memoir *Portrait of a Father* (1988).

His letters reveal that he tried to begin writing a novel but was unable to make substantial progress on it, and that from 1985 on he became increasingly dissatisfied with his new poems. Until his death at age eighty-four, however, Warren maintained an active correspondence filled with news about his writings and travels, accounts of the lives of his wife and children, and a stoic attitude about his own physical decline as well as a solicitousness regarding the health of others, such as his brother, Thomas, and sister, Mary. He communicated with rising young scholars and encouraged younger poets he admired.

*Toward Sunset, at a Great Height* offers rich insights into the closing chapter of Robert Penn Warren's professional and personal life, making it an essential resource for understanding the full scope of the author's contribution to American letters.

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