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***Philosophers, Fools, and Kings: Notes on The Brother's Karamazov
and All the King's Men***

C. JASON SMITH

The fiction of Fyodor Dostoyevsky—the Russian, Slavophil, Christian-existentialist, Populist writer—might seem to have little in common with that of Robert Penn Warren—the Southern, Agrarian, Fugitive, modern American. However, even though Dostoyevsky and Warren come from widely disparate backgrounds, at least in terms of immediate cultural referents, certain philosophical conflicts common to both authors serve as the ideological centerpiece of their novels; and, further, these two very different authors reach similar resolutions as both interrogate rational-humanism as a site of philosophical and moral sloth.

While rational-protagonists abound in the works of each author, two works present themselves as particularly appropriate for comparison: *The Brother's Karamazov* and *All the King's Men*. Both novels have identifiable roots in the canonical texts of Occidental culture. These specific, common ancestors speak through Warren's and Dostoyevsky's texts; through them readers may come to a greater understanding of what Konstantin Muchulsky calls "the tragic conflict of faith and disbelief."¹ We need look no farther than the epigraphs to *The Brothers Karamazov* and *All the King's Men* to locate thematic common ground as both authors introduce their texts with promises of hope and growth. Dostoyevsky chooses an epigraph from the book of John: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."² Warren finds his epigraph in Dante's *La Divina Commedia*: "*Mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde*" ("While hope has a flower of green"). Both quotations implicitly condemn the sin of sloth (or acedia) but, even more importantly, they speak of hope.

The Recourse to Power: Willie Stark and the Grand Inquisitor

In the opening chapters of *All the King's Men*, Willie Stark is firmly established as the pragmatic rational-humanist who will use whatever means necessary to achieve his desired ends. Although the narrator, Stark's researcher and jack-of-all trades Jack Burden, does give the reader a clear picture of a younger, idealistic Stark, these images, appearing as flashbacks, serve as referents to a lost past and as a gauge to whom or what Willie has become. Only through the narration of Stark's past do we witness any great change in Stark, excepting of course his enigmatic final proclamation that "It might have

all been different”³ Warren asks for Stark’s acceptance in terms of his progression from the idealistic “Cousin Willie” to the pragmatics of “the Boss.” How he reached the point of extreme pragmatism is integral to the question of his nature and the meaning of his respective stories. Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor—envisioned by the intellectual Ivan Karamazov as the epitome of rational humanism in his literal rejection of Christ—has clearly adopted the role of the savior of mankind at the expense of their freedom. As he tells Christ, “Know that I, too, was in the wilderness, and I, too, ate locusts and roots; that I, too, blessed freedom, with which you have blessed mankind, and I, too, was preparing to enter the number of your chosen ones, the number of the strong and mighty But I awoke and did not want to serve madness.”⁴ Change is inherent in the character of the Grand Inquisitor, and he is proud of the change because the move from idealism to pragmatism allowed him to “improve” mankind’s condition by feeding the masses and relieving them of the burden of self-doubt and guilt resulting from free will. Stark, on the verge of his change from “Cousin Willie,” asserts much the same thing in his drunken speech in Upton: “Yeah, you’re hicks, too, and they’ve fooled you, too, a thousand times, just like they fooled me. For that’s what they think we’re for. To fool. Well, this time I’m going to fool somebody The time has come, the truth is going to be told and I’m going to tell it. I’m going to tell it all over this state from one end to the other if I have to ride the rods or steal me a mule to do it, and no man . . . can stop me. For I got me a gospel” (93). When idealism fails, the only recourse is to pragmatics and power: to become the Boss or the Grand Inquisitor.⁵ Though the issue is sublimated in Warren’s text, we clearly see that the Grand Inquisitor identifies the move to pragmatism as actively embracing the three temptations of Christ; or, as the Inquisitor terms them, Miracle, Mystery, and Authority. His code is feed the people, give the illusion of sanctity, and make the hard decisions to alleviate the people’s responsibility and guilt. As the Inquisitor tells Christ: “They will become timid and look to us and cling to us in fear, like chicks to a hen. They will marvel and stand in awe of us and be proud that we are so powerful and intelligent to have been able to subdue such a tempestuous flock of thousands of millions Yes, we will make them work, but in the hours free from labor we will arrange their lives like a children’s game, with children’s songs, choruses, and innocent dancing” (259). The Boss may not don the robes of the church, but he does wear the mantle of righteousness and miracle, beginning with his speech in Upton and his earlier “prediction” of the collapse of a schoolhouse. Like the Grand Inquisitor, Stark must abandon his ideals, asserting that he will abandon his morals (he will steal if necessary) to accomplish his end of social progress. While Stark proclaims a new gospel—his reference is clearly not to *the* Gospel—the Grand Inquisitor literally rejects Christ, banishing Him to the fiery stake with the final word “*Dixi*” (“I have spoken”).

Having thus solidified their respective rebellions, Stark and the Inquisitor move to the implementation of their humanistic plans for mankind through the pragmatic exercise of power, and the manner of implementation in both texts is also analogous. Ivan’s tale is set during the Spanish Inquisition which the Inquisitor alludes to as being based in atheistic-humanist doctrines. According to the Inquisitor, the illusion that the power of the Inquisition derives from Papal theocracy is merely a utilitarian guise to lead the people. And, as James Billington notes, “The Inquisitor defends his authoritarianism as a form of philanthropy which keeps ordinary people from being weighed down by the ‘unbearable burden’ of freedom.”⁶ The pseudo-theocratic power of the Inquisitor is

analogous to Stark's basis for power, for Stark proclaims that his premonition about the doomed schoolhouse "came to him with the powerful force of God's own lightning . . ." (AKM, 91). Stark does not, however, stop there, for he has some finger-pointing to do first. Primary on his list is Tiny Duffy, whom Stark labels as Judas Iscariot, and then the Democrat candidate MacMurfee. The telling blow, however, is dealt to Governor Joe Harrison: Stark says, "Me and the other Hicks, we are going to kill Joe Harrison so dead that he'll never even run for dogcatcher in this state" (93). Stark is calling for an Inquisition and is setting himself up as Grand Inquisitor.

In shifting from idealism to pragmatism, Stark and the Inquisitor are still actively pursuing the original goal of the betterment of man. What changes is the method they will use to attain their goals. (Interestingly, both feel they have been made a fool of, their faith labeled folly, and their hostile reaction and subsequent conversion indicates a nascent problem of pride.) In the past, both Stark and the Inquisitor actively pursued a truth they believed to exist. In the relative present, however, they become morally stagnant even as their actions rise to a frenzied pitch. Willie Stark and the Grand Inquisitor—and to a lesser degree their narrators, Jack Burden and Ivan Karamazov—adopt pragmatics as the means to power; however, neither the Grand Inquisitor nor Willie Stark achieves his ends. Stark's attempt to do good by building a free hospital for the poor reveals his knowledge that the ends do not always justify the means. That Stark wanted the hospital to be independent of his pragmatic politics and dirty dealings points back to his earlier innocence and reveals his desire to return, too late, to faith. And as Alyosha reminds Ivan (and the reader), the Grand Inquisitor did not succeed in creating a second paradise on earth.

In the fictive worlds of Dostoyevsky and Warren, pragmatism is not a means to an end but an end unto itself; therefore, pragmatism is, as Warren phrases it in his introduction to the thirty-fifth anniversary edition of *All the King's Men*, "un-philosophical."⁷ The Grand Inquisitor and Willie Stark are, in the end, trapped in their own means, and the desired ends (a free hospital, the earthy paradise) sink below the surface of relevance. As Ellis Sandoz writes in *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor*, "political authority which recognizes no higher authority than its own exercise" perverts its own ends.⁸ Symbolically, as Randolph Runyon notes, Willie carries his own death warrant with him in the person of Tiny Duffy as does Belerphon from *The Iliad* and Uriah from the book of Samuel.⁹ In this respect, "the Boss" kills Willie Stark just as surely as the Grand inquisitor would kill Christ.

In the fiction of Warren and Dostoyevsky, pragmatism is an un-philosophical, static position that allows zero-growth and apparently offers no return. Unlike Raskolnikov's Hegelian/Nietzschean existentialism in *Crime and Punishment*, the pragmatism of Stark and the Inquisitor is final and, in Stark's case, fatal. This loss of philosophical nature, the abandonment of the quest for Truth, seals these characters' fate. To fail to quest and grow is to wither and die, as the epigrams to *The Brothers Karamazov* and *All the King's Men* remind us. Only those left behind—Ivan Karamazov and Jack Burden among them—have any chance to escape from the recursive nature of pragmatism and continue their philosophical growth. In this sense the maxim "power tends to corrupt" proves true.

Just as the Grand Inquisitor and Willie Stark are men of action, Ivan Karamazov and Jack Burden are men of thought. Jack studied history in graduate school and some of the Cass Mastern story, on which Jack was working for his dissertation, becomes part of the text of the narrative. Ivan, too, is educated (the only Karamazov who has a higher formal education) and writes articles on politics and religion, which give rise to the “poem,” as he calls it, of “The Grand Inquisitor.” Both characters supply commentary on the philosophical substructure of their respective worlds. Ivan discusses the hedonistic nature of the Karamazov family, calls into question the nature of religion, and (in seeming conflict with his other rationalist views) supports the unification of secular and ecclesiastical courts under church rule. However, as the Grand Inquisitor makes plain, the “church rule” Ivan proposes is not “religious” in the sense that authority is derived from God. Similarly, Jack Burden identifies the philosophical forces behind the action of *All the King's Men* when he describes Cass Mastern's metaphysical “Web,” and proffers his own (later discarded) theory of “The Great Twitch.” However, the strongest similarity between Jack Burden and Ivan Karamazov is their obsession with facts.

To any careful reader of *All the King's Men*, Jack's obsession with fact is painfully evident. True to his philosophical position, any fact is as good as another because “A student of history does not care what he digs out of the pile, the midden, the sublunary dung heap, which is the human past” (167). Ivan, too, is obsessed with the facts of the past, and it is a sordid past indeed, filled with suffering and abuse. For Ivan the facts of the past are clearly unacceptable, and the suffering of children in particular leads him into rebellion against creation. Ivan, like Jack, is a collector of facts, and his material is the detritus of the courts and, particularly, cases involving the abuse of children. One case he remembers well involved “educated parents” who beat and kicked their small daughter regularly, locked her in the outhouse overnight during the winter, and finally made her eat her own excrement. As Ivan asks Alyosha, “Can you understand that a small creature, who cannot even comprehend what is being done to her, in a vile place, in the dark and the cold, beats herself on her strained little chest with her tiny fists and weeps with her anguished, gentle, meek tears for ‘dear God’ to protect her—can you understand such nonsense my friend and my brother, my godly and humble novice, can you understand why this nonsense is needed and created?” (241-42). As he proclaims, “I want to forgive, and I want to embrace, I don't want any more suffering. And if the suffering of children goes to make up the sum of suffering needed to buy truth, then I assert beforehand that whole of truth is not worth such a price” (245). Sadie Burke, the scarred woman behind the Boss's throne, epitomizes that abused child grown to the fullness of adulthood. She confesses to Jack, “my father, he would look at me and grab me and start kissing me all over the face, all over the holes, slobbering and crying and stinking of whiskey—or he'd look at me and say, ‘Jeez,’ and slap me in the face . . .” (143). Both Ivan and Jack find this suffering unacceptable but feel impotent to change it in any way. At the outset of *The Brothers Karamazov* and *All the King's Men*, Ivan and Jack have joined the ranks of the contumacious, rebelling against creation in thought and moving more and more rapidly towards nonaction. Then, for want of better action, they have fallen into sloth (inaction), looking to other, more powerful figures to affect change. The combination of metaphysical rebellion and inaction creates a vacuum in their lives, a vacuum that can only be filled by characters who at least have the semblance of action.

Therefore, the relationship between Jack Burden and Ivan Karamazov and their narrative creations—the Boss and the Grand Inquisitor—goes far beyond the simple narration of their respective stories. Ivan and Jack are both intimately entwined with the power structure of their respective novels, but their lack of action sets them apart from the political figures of Stark and the Inquisitor. The irony is that while Jack Burden is the “research department” for Stark, finding facts or “dirt,” he does not put his knowledge into action other than handing over the envelope full of “information,” an envelope which he is eternally afraid of opening himself, for “The world was full of things I didn’t want to know” (142). Though Jack may consider the outcome of his searches, he makes no effort towards change, deferring instead to the Boss, and hiding in what Robert Feldman terms “the enchantments of the past.” Jack leaves the outcomes to the Boss because the Boss is a man of action while Jack is “a man of thought.”¹⁰

Ivan Karamazov also participates in the political realm. Unlike Jack, however, he does not attempt to influence the power structure beyond commentaries written for newspapers and magazines. In fact, the particular article discussed in *The Brothers Karamazov* is so controversial and impractical that even those inclined to agree with its main argument¹¹—that ecclesiastical courts should try secular cases—disagree with Ivan’s premise that the church could force right action on the populace more readily than the secular courts could, even though both were already Departments of State.¹² In any case, Ivan’s chance of affecting change on the magnitude he describes is virtually nonexistent, an “infinitely remote dream” as Miusov points out, and therefore his writings become little more than a mental exercise (63).

Clearly, Jack Burden and Ivan Karamazov desire to remain separate from the world around them. They choose by inaction and defer to the “imminent Will” of the Other, and participate in the world only vicariously as observers and reporters. Why, we might ask, has Ivan never done anything to help suffering children? Ironically, because of this inaction, Jack and Ivan find themselves in a static philosophical position like the politicians they serve. The fact that Ivan’s Grand Inquisitor (as a fictional creation) is infinitely more remote than the Boss only reinforces Ivan’s inability to act. True action—the ability to originate authentic change—is so remote from his experience as to be a myth. Something has brought Ivan and Jack to a point where they are incapable of moving beyond the formulations of theories, and the “end” of helping humanity at any cost is an impossible goal. Rather, the *fact* that humanity cannot, or will not, be helped has led to rebellion against creation. As Ivan states, “I don’t understand anything . . . and I no longer want to understand anything. I want to stick to the fact. I made up my mind long ago not to understand. If I wanted to understand something, I would have to immediately betray the fact, but I’ve made up my mind to stick to the fact . . .” (243). We find the same sentiment in Burden’s third-person self-narration explaining his reason for leaving the Cass Mastern story and his Ph.D. behind: “He [Jack] did not have to know Cass Mastern to get the degree; he only had to know the facts about Cass Mastern’s world. But without knowing Cass Mastern, he could not put down the facts about Cass Mastern’s world . . . Or perhaps he laid aside the journal of Cass Mastern not because he could not understand, but because he was afraid to understand for what he might understand there was a reproach to him” (188-89). Feldman describes this phenomenon when he writes of Burden as possessing a moral vision of “idealization and symbolization” because “Jack is unable to face *the reality* of human beings whose actions

oftentimes are a mixture of right and wrong, virtue and vice.”¹³ This inability to accept contradiction is essentially the same dismissal of reality professed by Ivan when he states, “In my opinion, Christ’s love for people is in its kind a miracle impossible on earth” (236).

Willie Stark adroitly identifies the problem to Burden when he asserts that “Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud. There is always something.” And, as Burden flatly notes, “the Boss was right” (49). The very conditions that allow the existence of the Boss and the Grand Inquisitor are the conditions that Jack and Ivan cannot accept. The fact that “there is always something” causes Jack and Ivan to withdraw from the world, temporarily safe in the knowledge that they have not added to the corruption. Ivan Karamazov believes he cannot change his brother Alyosha by telling him of the Grand Inquisitor, just as he initially believes he is not responsible for the death of his father, Fyodor. Neither is Jack Burden “responsible” for what happens when he gathers his information, nor when he passes it on to Stark. As long as they do not act and cause change, they cannot be held accountable for evil results, nor in the end, the evils of humanity. Both have, as Ivan says, “returned their tickets” to the responsibilities of life. They wait, like Hamlet, and abdicate responsibility on the basis that “nothing matters” in the world, creating instead nihilistic theories like Burden’s “The Great Twitch” or Ivan’s “Grand Inquisitor,” which deny reason or meaning in the universe beyond brute temporal existence.¹⁴

Ivan Karamazov and Jack Burden do, however, eventually reach the point of accepting action and responsibility. Ivan dreams of a devil who accuses him of patricide after Fyodor Pavlovich’s murder, and he realizes that he is responsible for his father’s death just as surely as the bastard son Smerdyakov, whose hand committed the murderous act. Furthermore, as Ivan’s personal devil predicts, he even reaches the point of accepting the responsibility for the murder in the courts.

Jack, too, comes to understand that he could have stopped the sequence of events that led to the deaths of Judge Irwin, Adam Stanton, and Willie Stark. In effect, Jack Burden and Ivan Karamazov come to realize that they can bring about change, but the initial change must come from within. They both must accept the fact that they are responsible, at least to some degree, for the evils of the world and they must, as Francis Bixler writes of Burden, “participate in the commonness of humanity and thus become a responsible human being.”¹⁵ Burden speaks of this change when he describes himself as “a man who lived in the world and to him the world looked one way for a long time and then it looked another and very different way” (435). The only way he can begin to describe how he came to the “very different way” is—like Plato’s Philosopher who wanders blinded back into the cave—by the telling of the tale, the narration of events that led to the change. Ivan Karamazov, too, comes to a point of change by the end of the novel because, as Kolenda states, “he is now facing the question of whether he can really *live* with his convictions.”¹⁶ But, one thing is certain in both cases: Ivan’s and Jack’s transformations involve the passage beyond the pragmatics represented by the power figures of Willie Stark and the Grand Inquisitor. Temporal power, the second temptation of Christ, must be rejected before they can move on and come to understand that “nothing is lost, nothing is ever lost.”¹⁷

The unique relationship between Ivan Karamazov and the Grand Inquisitor (his own, internal, philosophical demon) and Jack Burden and Willie Stark are, as Hegel

might put it, between “master” and “servant,” or more specifically, the association between those with temporal power and those subjected to power. For, in the end, the realization of the inadequacy of either temporal power or philosophy alone to affect substantive change eventually impels the Philosopher to abandon rational-humanism and along with it the spiritual lethargy resulting from the fact of perpetual human suffering.

The question still remains, however, of whether the abandonment of rational-humanist ideals is an improvement—whether it is life-affirming and, therefore, *moral*. At the very least, the Philosopher in both of these tales has once again become dynamic and able to change and adapt. And we are reminded that the potential for change simply slept there in Ivan and Jack. As Ivan says, “Sticky spring leaves, the blue sky—I love them, that’s all! Such things you love not with your mind, not with logic, but with your insides, your guts, you love your first young strength . . .” (230). Like Jack Burden, what Ivan never really loses is hope in the possibility of life represented by the sticky, green spring leaves. This potential for change—which always existed within these characters, even within Willie Stark and the Grand Inquisitor, or *especially* in them—has been realized for Jack Burden and Ivan Karamazov. Where the Grand Inquisitor is left as an aging Judas Iscariot and Willie Stark sees his grand dream perverted, Jack and Ivan move forward, but to where? In the end, the changes in Ivan and Jack are amorphous at best, and the reader, like Plato’s men chained in the cave, is left knowing only of the change, the exact nature of the transformation no more than a passing shadow on the wall. Though they constantly circle the center of the text, and are the ones seeking the truth, the full answer to their own change does not lie within the Philosophers, because these stories are not solely about Willie, Jack, Ivan, and the Grand Inquisitor. *The Brothers Karamazov* and *All the King’s Men* are about how these different characters abide the opposing ideologies by which we gauge the method of the protagonists’ liberation from sloth.

Fools, Onions, and Little Green Apples

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the self-described “bitch,” Grushenka, tells an interesting story of a woman whose only kind act in her entire life was that “once she pulled up an onion and gave it to the beggar woman.” When the woman is condemned to Hell, her guardian angel goes to God to beg for her forgiveness. God replies, “take that same onion, hold it out to her in the lake, let her take hold of it, and pull, and if you pull her out of the lake, she can go to paradise, but if the onion breaks, she can stay where she is.” The angel takes the onion down into hell and begins carefully to pull the woman out of the lake; but when the other sinners see that she is about to escape from eternal torment, they grab onto her heels. The woman kicks at them screaming, “‘It’s me who’s getting pulled out, not you; it’s my onion, not yours’” (352). As she thrashes about, the onion breaks, dropping her and the rest of the sinners back into the lake. Grushenka tells this story to the novice Alyosha to explain why she will not take advantage of him in his own moment of rebellion. Alyosha returns the onion by loving Grushenka “as a sister” and by recognizing her great suffering—as he says, “‘One cannot ask so much of a human soul, one should be more merciful . . . ’” (355). Through her, he comes to understand the nature of human kindness, and as he tells the theologian Rakatin, “‘I came here looking for a wicked soul—I was drawn to that, because I was low and wicked myself, but I found a true sister, I found a treasure—a loving soul She spared me just

now . . . ” (351). An onion, a simple exchange of kindness, binds them together and gives each hope.

In *All the King's Men* the fable of the onion becomes an apple, and an accusation against Jack's moral torpor.

“Oh, you start to feel sorry or glad or something but it just doesn't come to anything” [Anne].

“You mean like a little green apple that's got a worm in it and falls off the tree before it ever gets ripe?” [Jack]

...“Yes, like little green apples with worms in them” [Anne].

“Well,” [Jack] said, “here's a little green apple with a worm in it...”

(107)

Jack gives an apple as Grushenka gives an onion, but Jack's apple holds even less substance than Grushenka's little onion; rotten on the inside, the little apple is nothing more than a shell, and an unripe one at that. Jack Burden can only give the semblance and not the substance; his apology to Anne is empty because he denies any responsibility for his own, and humanity's, actions. In effect, Jack refuses to acknowledge anything of reality beyond Anne's “image come through the image of a door” (240). Jack's apple, like Jack's world, is rotten on the inside. Grushenka's onion carries all the weight of her self-acknowledged sin; her onion is small, but real.

In the contrast between Grushenka's onion and Jack's apple lies the difference in time between *The Brothers Karamazov* and *All the King's Men*. The world of Dostoyevsky and the Karamazovs can still hold a character like Alyosha, even in the presence of a Dmitri and an Ivan. Jack Burden's world cannot. Whereas Alyosha is beloved by his brothers, Burden cannot stand Adam Stanton's idealism, or Adam's “smile which humbly, but with dignity begged [Jack] to forgive him . . . for not being like everyone else, for not being like the world.” Jack sees Adam as “a man who stops to give a beggar a buck and in opening the wallet lets the beggar catch sight of the big roll . . . ,” and having caught sight of the big roll, the beggar will follow the man down the block “waiting for the block without the streetlamp. Not so much because he wants the roll as because he cannot now endure the man who has it and gave him a buck” (236). Anne's “innocence,” too, must be destroyed. Where Ivan longs to believe like Alyosha, Jack ignores belief. If Dostoyevsky may be said to be “modern” in sensibility because of characters like Ivan and Dmitri, then the absence of an Alyosha who is able to survive the narrative confirms the modernist trait in Warren. Onions become rotten apples. The simple object with multitudinous layers, complexity, and sustenance given in love is replaced with a rotten semblance of life. Jack cannot give an onion because he is incapable of anything more than the semblance of belief or love, as Anne Stanton knows.

Ivan Karamazov moves from active rebellion against all creation to understanding that he is responsible for the actions of his fellow man in the broadest sense. Jack Burden, too, with his adherence to the facts of the world and his knowledge of the plot behind Stark's assassination chooses not to allow the series of deaths to continue. Even though Sugar Boy winks at him “like a brother” Jack refuses to pass on what he knows about Stark's death (420-21). By the end, Jack has come to understand that by his very existence he affects others and so has the ability, the responsibility even, to make moral

decisions. Alyosha Karamazov, coming from the alternative perspective of innate belief to active, questioning belief, also moves to a position of responsibility, and comes out from under the wing of the Elder Zossima and into the sensual world. Like the morally encumbered prince Hamlet, all of these characters come to the point of accepting their ties to the rest of creation and moving into the world.

We learn from the Grand Inquisitor that that innocent belief (the philosophical position of Fool, holy or otherwise), exemplified by the child-like faith of Alyosha and the images of the youthful Jack, Adam, and Anne, is potentially just as dangerous as an excess of reason. An excess of reason created the Grand Inquisitor, and an excess of blind, untested faith pulled together his herd. The decision of Adam and Eve must be honored and Original Sin acknowledged. Thus, not only are Judge Irwin, Adam Stanton Willie Stark, Fyodor Karamazov, Smerdyakov, and the Grand Inquisitor destroyed, but the voices of faith—particularly Zossima and Ellis Burden—are also quieted, leaving the stage clear for the final soliloquy of the survivors.

Conclusion: The Maimed King

From Philosopher to Fool to the synthesis of reason and faith in the King, the dynamic of the protagonists moves forward to the completion of the texts. Willie Stark dies at the hands of his own disillusioned idealism and is reborn in pragmatism as the Boss only to die again at the hands of another's disillusioned idealism. The Grand Inquisitor is, in the end, a figment of a factious character's rebellion, no more factual than the Christ he deigns to rebuke. Alyosha moves from his child-like belief and subservience to the Elder Zossima to a more active faith where he can question and ask God and Creation, "Why?"

Faced with the facts of science and history and the "awful responsibility of time," the rational-protagonists join the ranks of the contumacious. In the end, Ivan Karamazov and Jack Burden find some peace in discovering their own action. Jack Burden realizes that the story he tells of Willie Stark is his own story, too. The dialectic of reason and faith is presumably fulfilled in the synthesis of Jack and Ellis Burden and Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov. However, both texts conspicuously reject both *fathers* and *fatherhood* and by extension the synthesis of reason and faith represented in *kingship*.

Naturally, the son does replace the father by becoming the father himself, just as Prince Hal replaces Henry IV when he becomes Henry V. In *All the King's Men* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, however, the sons do not replace the fathers. Rather, we see in Warren and Dostoyevsky a movement away from the paternal and toward the fraternal. Just as Hamlet rejects Claudius as King (the ultimate earthly father), all of the protagonists in some way reject their paternal role models. Ivan, Dmitri, and Jack all reject their legal fathers. Ivan and Alyosha ignore their de facto father, Grigory, and Dmitri only accepts him when he thinks Grigory is dead. Jack is indirectly responsible for the death of his natural father, Judge Irwin, and his mentor, Stark. This rejection of the paternal is a symbolic rejection of traditional Authority. We see this clearly in Jack's "character assassination" of Judge Irwin and Governor Stanton. The son, incapable of accepting the fact of evil in the father, is compelled to destroy him (patricide); the subject, incapable of understanding evil in the Divine Person of King, rebels (regicide); rational man, powerless to eliminate evil in the world deconstructs God the Father, King

of Heaven and Earth. With the death of the King and disintegration of the kingdom, the subjects are free in the garden—a proposition rejected in both *All the King's Men* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The problem lies in a distorted view of what the King as synthesis between reason and faith represents. Obviously, the potential for kingship lies in the human become divine. In Occidental mythology, Ascension is not unknown: great heroes become demigods and men and women are canonized as saints. The Christ, as the epitome of the god-man-god cycle, would appear to be the basis for the idea of King, and herein lies the problem: the King is not a Christ image, and should never be considered as such. The King is temporal power, authority, and if by divine right he is allowed to rule, this rulership has nothing to do with the savior who rejected temporal power. Kings do not rule in Christ's name but by the older principle of the Wrathful God, the Father—also known as the Balance—and not the Son. If man is both good and evil, the King is even more so in his potential use or abuse of power. His only hope is in the continuance of the rulership which comes to Balance (between good and evil, temporal and eternal, human and divine). The King, and kingship, is crippled by power, a fact personified in the Maimed King:

The Maimed King's wound and the agony of the revolving wheel are equivalent symbols of the knowledge and anguish of existence as a function not merely of this or that contingency, but of being. The common man, in pain, believes that by altering his circumstances he might achieve a state free of pain . . . Socratic man too believes that life can be trimmed somehow to reason—his own Procrustean bed for it. Hamlet learned, however, that *his* world, at least, had something at the heart of it that was rotten and, like Oedipus, who read the riddle of the Sphinx ("What is man?"), became maimed. Oedipus, self-blinded, is equivalent to the Maimed King—and, as Freud has shown, all of us are Oedipus. For this there is no cure.¹⁸

All are maimed, all imperfect, seeking through life the Grail that will cure the wound of human folly. And if the Grail is found, one wound is healed, another created. As in death, the end of one's suffering is the beginning of another's. When Arthur was wounded, so was the land, and in their suffering they are bound together. The bringing of the Grail relieves the King and the land for a moment of glory when the King is able to cleanse his sin from the world. But, the due of the Grail is called and the King's wound makes him, once again, maimed.

The quest for kingship, then, is not necessarily a doomed quest, but an *immoral* quest, as the King—Willie and the Grand Inquisitor in this case—accepts the Second Temptation of Christ with the idea that he can bring about at least a part of the Earthly Paradise. Jack and the remaining Karamazovs—Ivan, Dmitri, and Alyosha—embody the rejection of the same ideal. The struggle in Warren and Dostoyevsky may, therefore, be described as the attempt to reconcile the soul with the mind and to affect positive change based upon the balance between reason and faith, the desire to raise the Philosopher-King to power in order to correct the problems of the world. For both Dostoyevsky and Warren, however, the search for a King is a doomed attempt intimately tied to Original Sin. Dynamic growth is the only solution that either offers, and for both authors, faith seems to be a logical result of that growth. All of the characters who survive (literally and figuratively) find some element of faith, at least in the form of hope: what James A. Grimshaw terms "redemptive love."¹⁹ The search for paternal synthesis must, in the end,

fail, as King Arthur is not able to return from Avalon. Thus, the cultural dynamic towards the synthesis represented by kingship is inherently false. The supremely Occidental myth of kingship—the synthesis of the dialectics of rational and spiritual, of individual and society, theory and practice, law and justice—is the synthesis of human and divine nature in this life. Original Sin denies the possibility.

The answer supplied by both Warren and Dostoyevsky is not simply synthesis, but the realization of the limitations of dialectic; synthesis is thesis and the cycle can never be broken because no final thesis exists (except, perhaps, in God). Individuals can advance and grow, humanity can advance and grow, but the synthesis of individual thesis and antithesis is not an end (can never be an end) but is a means to an unattainable end. Rather than struggle for the perfection represented by kingship, mankind should try to achieve a full understanding of the imperfect nature of man, for the very imperfection represented by Original Sin—the knowledge and participation in good and evil—is mankind's glory. "Hurray for Karamazov!" indeed. For both Dostoyevsky and Warren, the glory of man lies not in the elimination of evil and the achievement of the Earthly Paradise, but in the recognition of the godliness of the individual in the struggle to understand self.

[Convert these endnotes to footnotes on the appropriate pages.—Eds.]

¹Konstantin Machulsky, *Dostoyevsky: His Life and Work*, trans. Michael A. Minihin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 596.

²John 12.24 (King James Version).

³Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1981), 400. Hereafter, references to this edition are cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkhonsky (San Francisco: North Point, 1990), 260. Hereafter, references to this edition are cited parenthetically in the text.

⁵James A. Grimshaw, Jr., points out that idealism is maintained in *All the King's Men* in the form of Adam Stanton (at least until his death). *Understanding Robert Penn Warren* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 44. His corollary in *The Brothers Karamazov* is Alyosha Karamazov, who also suffers a crisis of faith which borders on murderous passion, but who survives and grows.

⁶James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Random House, 1970), 423.

⁷Warren, "Author's Introduction," *All the King's Men*, 35th Anniversary Edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1981), xv.

⁸Ellis Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 423.

⁹Randolph Paul Runyon, *The Taciturn Text: The Fiction of Robert Penn Warren* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 265.

¹⁰Robert Feldman, "Responsibility in Crisis: Jack Burden's Struggle in *All the King's Men*," in *To Love so Well the World: A Festschrift in Honor of Robert Penn Warren*, ed. Dennis L. Weeks (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 415 and 102.

¹¹Namely Pyotr Miusov, Father Paissy, and the hieromonk Iosif.

¹²In November 1864, Russia adopted "a modern judicial system for civil affairs that embraced publicity, jury trials, and the basic elements of modern European jurisprudence. Church justice, by contrast, was a bizarre mixture of Byzantine canon law, Muscovite tradition, and Petrine rules—a hybrid that seems increasingly backward and unenlightened." Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 340.

¹³Feldman, 103.

¹⁴See, for example, James A. Grimshaw, Jr., "Shakespeare's *Henriad* and *All the King's Men*: A study in Parallels," in *To Love so Well the World: A Festschrift in Honor of Robert Penn Warren*, ed. Dennis L. Weeks. (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 45-72; Mark Royden Winchell, "Renaissance Men: Shakespeare's Influence on Robert Penn Warren," in *Shakespeare and Southern Writers: A Study and Influence*, ed. Philip C. Kolin (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985), 137-58. Ivan is also described as a "tragic hero" by Konstantin Kolenda (*Philosophy and Literature*, 44) and even quotes from Hamlet (Dostoyevsky, *BK*, 239).

¹⁵Francis Bixler, "Acedia: The Most Deadly Sin in Warren's Fictive World," in *Time's Glory: Original Essays on Robert Penn Warren*, ed. James A. Grimshaw, Jr. (Conway: University of Central Arkansas Press, 1986), 8.

¹⁶Konstantin Kolenda, *Philosophy and Literature: Metaphysical Darkness and Ethical Light* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes, 1982), 43.

¹⁷Warren, *AKM*, 293. This line originates in Warren's poem "Original Sin: A Short Story," *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren*, ed. John Burt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 69.

¹⁸Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* (New York: Arkana, 1991), 424.

¹⁹Grimshaw reads an Hegelian dialectic in *All the King's Men*: "the thesis of pragmatism, represented by Stark, is opposed to the antithesis of idealism, represented by Adam Stanton." Jack Burden, in the end, represents the synthesis of realism. *Understanding Robert Penn Warren*, 44.