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Editors' Foreward (Volume 2)

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EDITORS' FOREWORD

To those of us who study and write about Robert Penn Warren (or simply read him for his wisdom and eloquence), this past year must stand out as a watershed. It witnessed the publication of a new, "restored" edition of *All the King's Men*, scrupulously assembled by Noel Polk, whose earlier work on the novels of William Faulkner has earned him a reputation as one of the premier textual editors of our day. In approaching his task, Polk was fully aware that he would be working with a book that is not only an acknowledged masterpiece, but one of the most beloved of modern American fictions. In the end, he presents us with a text that is "new" in many ways, great and small; and the reactions of critics and common readers alike have been predictably mixed. Though it remains to be seen if Polk's restoration will in time supercede the original version of *All the King's Men*, which first appeared in 1946, one thing is certain: Our framework for assessing Warren and his work has been forever altered. The nature of our discourse has grown more complicated, but our appreciation for the genius of Robert Penn Warren can only be enriched. With this thought in mind, the editors of *RWP* are particularly grateful to Professor Polk for his contribution to this, our second volume; and we are likewise honored to feature a lively tribute by Aaron Frankel, that celebrated and versatile man of the theater, who recalls the excitement he felt in working with Warren on stage adaptations of *All the King's Men* and *Brother to Dragons*.

But our gratitude does not stop there. John Burt, the magisterial editor of Warren's collected poems (and a powerful poet in his own right), offers his thoughts on Warren and an ostensibly quite different poet, John Ashbery; and Steven D. Ealy provides us with a significant revisionist reading of one of Warren's most controversial texts, the essay "The Briar Patch." The range of approaches employed by the authors here is broad indeed. Bill McCarron and Paul Knoke trace allusions and point out philological subtleties in *A Place to Come To*, while Aimee Berger draws upon contemporary theory to get at crucial issues in *Flood*. John K. Crane, a novelist in his own right, draws distinctions between Warren's cautious approach to the writing of historical fiction and William

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Styron's less circumspect practices. As though to underscore the centrality of *All the King's Men* to any discussion of Warren's place in the Western canon, in their respective essays C. Jason Smith and Polly Detels examine aspects of that novel in light of two Russian masters, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

The editors, like everyone who values the achievement of Robert Penn Warren, owe an ongoing debt to the Center for Robert Penn Warren Studies at Western Kentucky University for its generous sponsorship of this annual publication and to those members of the WKU community who have helped make it a reality. President Gary Ransdell, Provost Barbara Burch, and Dean David Lee of the Potter College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences have proven themselves friends of *RWP* many times over; and Professors Joseph R. Millichap and Mary Ellen Miller of the English Department worked tirelessly to launch our inaugural issue last year. With this second volume, we welcome aboard their colleagues Ted Hovet, Jr., and Lloyd Davies as Managing Editors and Connie Mills (of the Kentucky Library) as Editorial Assistant. Undoubtedly, others have silently supported this annual; for their contributions we are also grateful.

We welcome submissions, which should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style* (chapter 15) and should be accompanied by a SASE and diskette. We also welcome comments from readers of *RWP*.

William Bedford Clark • James A. Grimshaw, Jr.