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Robert Penn Warren's Emblematic Imagination in *All the King's Men*

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Robert Penn Warren customarily admitted and denied that *All the King's Men* was Huey Long's story. His coyness deflected attention from the incorporation of sixteenth-century poetic elements in his historically-inspired fiction.[1] Willie Stark may not have been a "man of power" in quite the exalted manner of Julius Caesar, but the novelist made him die in the Capitol before a rival's statue as Shakespeare—following Plutarch—imagined his assassination.[2] Willie Talos, the original surname for his politician in the novel, alluded to Edmund Spenser's ironclad servant Talus in *The Faerie Queene*.[3] Teaching Renaissance poetry and drama at L.S.U. and visiting Italy during

[1] "So I got to reading Italian, and later all those things flowed into the novel *All the King's Men*. Machiavelli and Italian history flowed into that too; the whole case of the man of power, the man of virtue and the world about him . . ." (David Farrell, "Poetry as a Way of Life: An Interview with Robert Penn Warren," *Georgia Review* 36.2 [1982], 324); "The original version was a tight play about the dictator, the Huey Long figure, and the people around him. Now, the theory of that play was that the dictator, the man of power, is powerful only because he fulfills the blanknesses and needs of the people around him" (Marshall Walker, "Robert Penn Warren: An Interview," in *Robert Penn Warren Talking, Interviews 1950-1978*, ed. Floyd C. Watkins and John T. Hiers [New York: Random House, 1980], 178); ". . . my main point being that the man, who is a strong man and takes over, actually is a fellow moving into a vacuum, which means the weakness of others. It's their need he fulfills" (*Conversations with Writers*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and C.E. Frazer Clark [Detroit: Gale, 1977], 292); "Huey Long, the governor of Louisiana, later Senator, and his assassination only planted the germ of drama for me. He died like Julius Caesar, and you could not miss the parallel that led me to the story *All the King's Men*, a story on corruption in politics and ruthlessness of power" (William Marshall Jenkins, Jr., *Of Words and Men: The Remembrances of Robert Penn Warren*, Typescript in the Warren Collection, Western Kentucky University, 84).

[2] *Julius Caesar* 3.1.114: "How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport, / That now on Pompey's basis lies along / No worthier than the dust!" (Riverside). For Shakespeare's probable source in Plutarch's *Lives*, see *Understanding Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*, ed. Thomas Derrick (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1998), 72. Warren interpreted this dramatic tableau by inserting a fictitious figure whose attributes almost described Andrew Jackson's: "the statue of General Moffat (a great Indian fighter, a successful land speculator, the first Governor of the State)" (*All the King's Men* [New York: Harcourt, 1996], 596; hereafter cited by page number in the text).

[3] *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), Book 5.1.12. For Warren's Spenserian naming of "my politician," see Walker (in Watkins and Hiers, 178), and Noel Polk, "Editorial Afterward," *All the King's Men: Restored Edition* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), 635.

Mussolini's rise had stirred Warren to perceive modern princes as types of fictional characters and to adapt Renaissance literary forms. He conceived a kinship between the American political cartoon and the stylized association of image and idea in a prolific genre, emblem books. This blend of low art and high culture suited Warren's poetic imagination. He had, after all, first rendered "Governor Long's" story as a blank-verse drama and then shifted to a prose meditation by a sardonic newspaper reporter. The classically educated Jack Burden became the medium that Warren employed to infuse his modern fable with allegorical figures from Renaissance sources, classical antiquity, and the Bible.

On one hand, concerning the question of cause, Warren acknowledged the ironic facts of Huey Long's self-aggrandized government: ". . . I lived in Louisiana—that 'banana republic,' as I think Carleton Beals called it—at the time when Huey P. Long held it as his fief and when he was gunned down in the grand new skyscraper capitol which he had built to his greater glory."[4] To Roy Newquist's naive question about the novel's origin, Warren gave a simplistic answer about merely imitating his cultural surroundings.[5] On another shaping hand, Warren answered novelist William Kennedy's question about Elizabethan influences on *All the King's Men* by elaborating,

> Back then—and now—I was much more soaked in poetry and Elizabethan drama than I was in fiction, and that fact, no doubt, made me think of a novel in much the same way as a poem. I think of a story, sure, but I also think of it as a metaphorical structure going at the same time as the narrative and other structure. And frequently this feeling I'm driving for seems to come as an image, even a scene, that is floating there, not tied to a narrative yet. It's there ahead of me. It couldn't be dramatized yet it is somehow in the background.[6]

[4] Watkins, 179.

[5] "I was writing novels and living in Louisiana, so there you are. It was just that simple. I was living in a melodrama. But all of my novels come out of the same sort out thing, out of a world I knew something about." *Conversations,* "Eleanor Clark and Robert Penn Warren," ed. Roy Newquist (New York: Rand McNally, 1967), 8.

[6] William Kennedy, *Riding the Yellow Trolley Car* (New York: Viking, 1993), 170. Warren repeated this analogy: "All the novels I have written have seemed to me like big poems, with the chapters and events as metaphors rather than documents" (Newquist, 87-88).

Warren further explained some affinities between his protagonist and Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and Coriolanus, and between Jack Burden and Flaminio in John Webster's *The White Devil*. Kennedy invites his friend Red to speculate on the reasons for the popularity of historically based fiction and the future of the novel. Warren warns that "The novel approaches too close to journalism and forfeits its powers of imaginative creation to be more convincing at the level of reportage."[7] Warren's conscious fondness for poetic, non-realistic structures in fiction comes out in this exchange. He identifies masterworks of Renaissance drama as a creative inspiration for character and plot; he pledges, in effect, to continue in his current project this abstracting from the particular.

That finished novel, *A Place to Come To* (1977), displayed Warren's most overt evocation of Renaissance emblem structure in his prose fiction. The narrator-protagonist Jediah Tewksbury draws out the dynamic between latent concept and motto by describing, in Pliny fashion—for he is an academic classicist—the "natural history of love affairs, as of trees, men and revolutions," in two phases. Naming the idea of time-denying by the motto *carpe noctem*, he juxtaposes this concept of a passionate coupling in the dark to its ironically modified imperative, *carpe diem*; no literal picture is provided or needed in this abstracted emblem. Warren makes Jed immediately describe a second emblematic combination:

> Stage II has its motto: in contemptu mundi. As Stage I denies Time, Stage II, which intimately issues from, and fulfills, Stage I, denies Space. The lovers are not of this world. Each is the other's hermitage, and the world falls away, and in the drive toward orgasm—which, we are instructed by the poet, may seem but a poor, bewildered minute—the world is well lost.[8]

Given that most traditional emblems generated three parts—concept, motto/explanatory verses, and picture—this one is completed by Jed's reference to the bodies preserved in Pompeii

[7] Kennedy, 173.
[8] *A Place to Come To* (New York: Random House, 1977), 206-07.

by plaster casts of their suddenly arrested movements as the volcanic firestorm descended from Vesuvius. Warren is not interested in Italian history or erudite enigmas here but rather in literary emblematics at work by multiple combinations of phrase, concept, and visual image.

His fascination with Italian culture preceded his marriage to Emma Brescia in 1930, and it may be reasonably assumed that during their sojourns to Perugia in Umbria, in 1939 and later, he became acquainted with the works or the tradition attributed to the Italian civil lawyer and legal historian (jurisconsult) Andreas Alciato, who in 1522 translated epigrams from the Greek Anthology at the behest of a Milanese patron and published some of these plain verses in 1529. Alciato later agreed to an edition illustrated with wood cuts.[9]*Emblematum liber* (Augsburg 1534) represented the start of a flourishing printer's business supplying courtiers with emblem books, and the form merged with those of heraldic traditions. Shields, like Gawain's, bore the pentangle image and the narrator supplied the explanation.[10] Or they displayed just a self-proclaiming motto such as "Sans loy" in *The Faerie Queene* (3.33.9). These were the kinds of literary motifs that were worked into symbolic paintings, embroidery, royal clothing, theatrical "painted cloths," stage and house decorations, furniture, and jewelry.[11] Furthermore, Warren's reading of Elizabethan bibles, epics, and treatises would have presented him with emblematic title pages and printers' devices, such as the boar and flower bush whose motto was "spiro no tibi."[12] Emblems as visual metaphors satisfied that fondness he

[9] Peter M. Daly, "The Life of Alciatus and its Relation to his Emblems," *Andreas Alciatus, The Latin Emblems Indexes and Lists* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985), 1. xix-xxi.

[10] Gawain's pentangle shield is described and interpreted in Part 2, lines 619-65; one editor named the design an "emblem" but in the Middle English text it is called a "figure" and a "syngne" [sign]. See "Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght," *A Middle English Anthology*, ed. Ann S. Haskell (New York: Anchor, 1969), 36.

[11] Peter M. Daly, "England and the Emblem: The Cultural Contest of English Emblem Books," *The English Emblem and the Continental Tradition* (New York: AMS, 1988), 1-60.

[12] An architectural assembly of animals, scrolls, trumpeters, faces in profile and front view surround the letter-press title, author, printer, and date. Within a shield-shaped cartouche at the top is a porcupine, matched at the bottom with the image of a boar facing a flowering bush. The motto means "I exhale [sweet scents] but not to you, [hog]." For this and other depictions, see Margery Corbett and R.W. Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England, 1550-1660* (London: Routledge, 1979), 58.

expressed to Kennedy for artistic abstractions—no matter how intricate—and satisfied his love of Italian extravagance.

In one of RPW's autobiographical musings, he expresses his fascination with Italian "craziness" and indicates his awareness of that traditionally Italian humanist genre:

> But Italy is the magic country—crazy, crazy, crazy. I found the Italian world and the Italian Renaissance, and a little thereafter, fascinating. I knew it pretty well as an amateur. And the Elizabethans were very close to the Italians. While there [a former Spanish castle on the Tuscan coast, in 1954] I learned to read Italian.[13]

Signore Warren, his second wife, Eleanor Clark, and their two young children rented a courtyard from the "crazy old lady" proprietor who was devoted to a local priest. "This Monseigneur kept her busy embroidering golden bees for Santa Rita on vestments, because Santa Rita's emblem was a golden bee."[14] Although Warren's historical knowledge of the emblem was supplemented by scholarly reading—his library included the emblem scholar Mario Praz's *Storia della Letteratura Inglese*, 1937—his poetic understanding of its dynamic mix of metaphor and story stemmed from the scion of Renaissance emblematics grafted onto his fertile imagination.

Emblem-like constructions developed at first in Warren's fiction as points of emphasis. He felt his way toward the ends of novels until a striking image came to mind. The last paragraph of *At Heaven's Gate* illustrates this intuitive coupling of a separately framed pictorial description and a wise saying that labels its essential quality. When Bogan Murdock faces down a batch of reporters covering the story of his failed business, he appears in a tableau composed of his motionless, senile father, his glamorous wife, and their glowering son. Murdock speaks the putative motto, three times naming "Courage" as his paternal heritage and legacy and then gesturing toward an oil painting that functions like an emblem picture. The narrator's explanation completes the

[13] Jenkins, 143.

[14] Jenkins, 144. Santa Rita of Cascia was celebrated in Umbria on her name day, May 22.

three-part form:

> It is the portrait of a man, who, more than a century ago, endured cold and hunger, who killed men with his own hand, who survived steaming malarial swamps and long marches, who was ruthless, vindictive, cunning, and headstrong, who was president of his country, who died in the admiration, or hatred, of millions of men. There is the painted face: the sunken flesh over the grim jawbone, the deep, smoldering eyes, the jutting beak of a nose, and the coarse crest of grayish hair, like an old cockatoo.[15]

The source of Andrew Jackson's crested visage in Warren's admirable image is probably the twenty-dollar bill. That engraved likeness of the seventh president was first issued in 1928. A flourish of silvery hair surmounts his high forehead, and the avian nose does seem to jut out. Thus the novel is concluded with a moral value, its visual representation, and an explanation of the named concept. Compared to the seemingly odd choice of Little Jack Horner that Warren featured close to the end of *All the King's Men*, Andrew Jackson was an understandable token for this emblem moment because he was so unambiguously associated with the courage of the Bogan Murdock character. The casual reader only had to make the easy identification of the man on the Twenty.

We are thus prepared to trace the sources of Warren's deliberate allusions to Renaissance commonplaces worked into visual metaphors and to discover other latent ones.

II. World Enough and Time—Marvell's Emblematic Method

Warren borrowed more than the title for his 1950 novel from Andrew Marvell. The first line of "To His Coy Mistress" supplied an allusion to the carpe diem tradition, but more deeply to the practice of metaphor in his critical thought. Concerning the influence of Marvell's verse on his own, Warren told an interviewer that he was imitating "The Garden" in his poem,

[15] *At Heaven's Gate* (New York: Signet, 1963), 384.

"Bearded Oaks," and consciously turned his mind to the intricacies of metaphysical wit.[16] Warren's lovers lie beneath a green-shaded "floor of light and time" (line 9), and this concern with greenness is a trope for Edenic vitality and the fact of death in both poems. The "vegetable love" of the speaker to his potential mistress marks the present, while coming upon him from behind, the human past, is Time's winged chariot hastening their physical deaths and their souls' passage to future "deserts of vast eternity" (lines 22-24). The lover in Warren's "Bearded Oaks" expressed in the last stanza this Marvellean concept of humanity's temporal body and the soul's immortality:

> We live in time so little time
> And we learn all so painfully,
> That we may spare this hour's term
> To practice for eternity.[17]

If Jed Tewksbury's formal motto for Stage I lovers, Carpe noctem, is followed to its source, we again find Warren's contemplation of Marvell's emblematic habit of mind. And the sylvan setting of "Bearded Oaks" coalesces with the elegiac last comment by Jack Burden, when he and Anne Stanton take their leave: ". . . and soon we shall go out of the house and go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time."[18]

Ann Berthoff's study of allegory and narrative in Marvell's poetry articulates an anatomy of the imagination needed to explain the emblem moments of *All the King's Men*.[19] Her taxonomy of literary form, although not stated in Linnean terms, can be represented by the hierarchical relationships of Kingdom, Class, Family, Genus, Species—Phylum and Order excepted as being unnecessary complications. At the top is the

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[16] Jenkins, 68.

[17] *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren*, ed. John Burt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 65.

[18] *All the King's Men*, 661. An early paradigm well known to Warren was the tableau of the saddened, committed lovers leaving an Edenic childhood in Milton's final lines of *Paradise Lost*: "They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way."

[19] Ann E. Berthoff, *The Resolved Soul: A Study of Marvell's Major Poems* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970).

Kingdom of language. Human thought differs from animals' communication by intentionality and self-awareness. Next comes the Class of *mythos*. The Greek "story" is an implicit means to the ultimate purpose of conveying by spoken words a mysterious bond between immortal gods and mortal men. To take a thematically important example from Hesiod's *Theogony*, the myth of Kronos accounts for Time's murder of all living beings, not just the sons of jealous fathers.[20] Because mythic truth is barely expressible in its direct apprehension of the supra-rational, the Family of allegory makes analogies between familiar objects and their avatars in the eternal world. Hence, the green earth resembles heaven before the expulsion of Adam and Eve. Genus in my grossly simplified scheme is the place of poetic metaphor. The transference of traits between analogous things is made by the bold assertion of equivalence, even though we recognize its fiction. An aphorism or motto such as "time flies" announces the understanding that time is constantly moving, running, hurrying us toward the end of our history.

One Species of metaphor is the emblem. A pictured device such as a clock with wings, under the epigrammatic motto *Tempus fugit*, would signify the metaphor's analogy in plain sight for any initiate of classical culture.[21] An outsider or uneducated child would be baffled at the unnatural combination of a winged clock, but the motto or appended verse connects image and idea.[22] Emblems in Marvell's poetry are public statements of identity, Berthoff reminds us, not erudite puzzles, not arcane

[20] Hesiod, *Thegony*, 174-81. The icon of Father Time at New Years carries a scythe because he is a symbol for harvested death, and the infant represents regeneration. Natural death acts like Damon, the mower of gardens in Marvell's poems on that theme. See Berthoff's interpretation of the allegorical logic of this metaphor, whereby a grass-cutter/philosopher enunciates the tragedy of time and love, 132-42.

[21] See emblem 68 in Thomas Combe's 1593 illustrated translation of La Perrière's emblem book, *Le Theater des bonsengins*, using reproduced cuts and reprinted in France between 1539 and 1583. A man is sprawled beneath a winged dial surmounted by a bell. The verse moralizes on wasted youth, as follows: ". . . If time be lost, our life is likewise maimed." *Theatre of Fine Devices, Thomas Combe*, ed. Mary V. Silcox (London: Scholar, 1990).

[22] "Panofsky's analysis of Durer's engraving [Melencholia I] is not different in kind from the analysis we undertake as we explain to a child the significance of those accoutrements of Justice standing in front of the courthouse" (*Resolved Soul*, 25). Berthoff argues against critics who read the famous closing metaphor of "The Garden" as a literal clock dial planted in flowers, asserting that the figure of "this dial new" is simply and powerfully an allegorical metaphor for the created world (Appendix, note 11, 229-33).

historical allusions, not unapplied abstractions. The allegorical image performs a crucial task. It mediates between a particular object and the general class that makes it comprehensible.

Berthoff defines a literary emblem as that species of allegorical metaphor where two conditions persist: 1) When causal coherence matters, the poetic image's interdependent relationship to metaphor, allegory, myth, and ultimately, language, is crucial to understand; 2) The static moment of an emblem must be considered part of an ongoing narrative, especially when interrupted. The speaking voice, an heir to the ancient poet-singer, pauses his story to emphasize the involvement of special moments in relation to their general meanings. Berthoff'sterm for this rhetorical strategy where narrative time is suspended and embellished is the "voice of allegory," whose function she likens to that of an operatic aria. Her definition of emblem does not stress the picture over the motto or the verse: "[a] narrative moment from which the particular occasion has, to various degrees, been refined."[23] An interpreter might mistake any one of these elements by not assuming their triadic nature, that is, their three-way dependence.

Warren must have sensed the literary dynamics of the emblem tradition, whether in his teaching of Renaissance literature or unconsciously in his observation of Italian art and culture. Jack Burden, with his well-educated knowledge and cynical temperament, became the right narrator to tell Willie Stark/Talos's story in fragments of classical training at first and then in a grand and particularly Southern fusion of thought, word, and image. The same feeling about the figurative source in narrative that Red Warren discussed with William Kennedy might be termed the "cocklebur" phenomenon (as only a country boy would know). He is quoted in his obituary, beginning with a standard line:

> Everyone knows a thousand stories. But only one cocklebur catches in your fur and that subject is your question. You live with that question. You may not know what that question is. It hangs around a long time. I've carried a novel as long as twenty

[23] Berthoff, 24.

years, and some poems longer than that.[24]

If the seed for *All the King's Men* was planted about 1937, the question of "the man of power" germinated for only a decade. The fully articulated lexicon of emblems in that passage from *A Place To Come To* confirms Warren's final familiarity with emblem literature. We can be reasonably assured that emblematic figures were stuck on him during the middle years of his development of emblematic references and narrative structures.

III. From Commonplaces to Cartoons

Five passages from *All the King's Men* illustrate Warren's premeditated use of the emblem in shaping his story. The first shows student Willie Stark naively collecting mottos; the second plants such aphorisms in the speech of the rising politician; next comes a related pair of Latin and Biblical evocations of static moments labeled by mottos; and finally, Jack Burden's prescient eulogy before the assassination is spoken in terms of an emblematic political cartoon based on a nursery rhyme and ratified by *The Prince*.

In an ironic imitation of Andrea Alciato's gathering of moral *sententiae* for humanist edification, Warren created a passage about Willie Stark's self education, which began in the hand-copied records of venerable sayings by the important men his Baptist college professors had recommended. While admitting this superficial method of learning history, he allows Jack to leaf through the "notebook, a big cloth-bound ledger, in which he wrote the fine sayings and the fine ideas he got out of the books . . . Emerson and Macaulay and Benjamin Franklin and Shakespeare copied out in a ragged, boyish hand."[25] Jack repeats the irony of this artificial fineness when Warren gives the reporter/biographer the insight that Willie could not see

[24] *The New York Times*, September 16, 1989, A: 1. Compare his professorial version: "Anyone knows a thousand good stories, but when you can get worked up about a thing that has a special rub, a special concern, then it simply has to be written" (Newquist, 87).

[25] *All the King's Men*, 100; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Tiny Duffy's duplicity any more than he could recognize the impotence of ink-horn terms, the refined language of the study when battlefield tactics were required. Willie evinced Machiavelli's virtù, however, in its sense of conviction, "a certainty and a blind compulsion within him that made him sit up in his room, night after night, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, to write the fine phrases and the fine ideas in that big ledger or to bend with a violent, almost physical intensity over the yellow page of an old law book" (103).

One proof of his proto-emblematic application appeared before this passage, in a form Warren cannily employed in the Little Jack Horner allusion preceding the assassination. Burden's coverage of the upstart hick includes a typical tableau as familiar to newspaper readers of the 1920s as to emblematists four centuries before:

> And when Willie was licked at the polls of Mason County, the Chronicle ran his picture, and under it the line KEEPS HIS FAITH. And under that they printed the statement which Willie had given me when I went back up to Mason City after the election and after Willie was out. The statement went like this: "Sure, they did it and it was a clean job which I admire. I am going back to Pappy's farm and milk the cows and study some more law for it looks like I'm going to need it. But I have kept my faith in the people of Mason County. Time will bring all things to light." (95)

The Bogan Murdock tableau of Andrew Jackson's iconic courage is here deepened by Warren's silent allusion to Willie's practical wisdom, for the clinching phrase is a Shakespearean commonplace from *2Henry VI*.[26] The country counterpart of this trust in eternity is the good old boy's "Time ain't nothin' to a hog," the very phrase Warren gives in Jack Burden's meditation on Willie's cracker constituency at the political rally: ". . . and under the eyes the jaw revolving worked the quid with a slow, punctilious, immitigable motion, like historical process. And

[26] 3.1.65. The Duke of York accuses Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, of withholding money for the French wars, and Buckingham replies, "Tut, these are petty faults to faults unknown, / Which time will bring to light in smooth Duke Humphrey."

Time is nothing to a hog, or to History, either" (143). These juxtapositions of journalistic image, literary aphorism, and philosophical explanation work according to the emblem logic Berthoff named as a refinement of a familiar but unmarked occasion. The meaning resides in the "dynamic reciprocity" among its three parts, with the narrator halting his story to call attention to that creatively ambiguous conjunction.

The second instance of Warren's emblematic, allegorical way of thinking was more overtly classical, befitting its association with Ellis Burden, the "Scholarly Attorney" and Jack's public father, and his real one, Judge Irwin—*juris consultus*, Roman catapult modeler and honorable suicide. Warren hit upon an aphorism from Vespasian for his motto but cast vaguely for a singular image to complement it. The third case went the other way: taking his context from an Old Testament parable about Samson, he adapted the general situation of a raging man loved by women to a specific kind of opposition in a humanist emblem about peace and war. Neither of these experiments is as successful as the Little Jack Horner political cartoon/emblem.

Warren's second attempt at an emblematic construction relied too much on a Latin motto that would mystify casual readers. The penultimate chapter traces the events following Jack's understanding of his paternal legacy from the Upright Judge—who had fallen once into taking a utility company's bribe long ago and was implicated in the pressuring and eventual suicide of the corporation's lawyer, Morton Littlepaugh. Chapter Nine follows the effects of the Judge's pistol shot to the heart as his illegitimately conceived son Jack struggles with this knowledge and the shame of financing a comfortable life of Southern leisure with the tainted money bequeathed to him. Warren tells Jack's internal story at the beginning of the chapter and punctuates it with one emblematic pause: the author halts the story of Anne Stanton's infatuated affair with the Boss by creating a kind of Samson emblem before resuming the story of Adam's anguished shooting of his sister's seducer—as Adam wants to believe, not suspecting that Anne chose to be Willie's

mistress—and pausing that rush of events with an emblematic cartoon much more sophisticated than the captioned photo of "KEEPS HIS FAITH." Warren was trying to find the right combination of elements for his emblematic depiction.

The paragraph beginning with "I was going to be genteel rich, for I had inherited the fruit of the Judge's crime, just as some day I would inherit from my mother the fruit of the Scholarly Attorney's weakness . . . ," proceeds to enunciate Jack's emotions about paternal loss. Warren tried two versions of the metaphor of tethering:

> True, since I had lost both my fathers, I felt as though I could float effortlessly away like a balloon when the last cord is cut. But I would have to go on the money from Judge Irwin. And that particular money, which would have made the trip possible, was at the same time, paradoxically enough, a bond that held me here. To change the image, it was a long cable to an anchor, and the anchor flukes clung and bit way down there in the seaweed and ooze of a long time past. Perhaps I was a fool to feel that way about my inheritance. Perhaps it was no different from any other inheritance anyone had. Perhaps the Emperor Vespasian was right when, jingling in his jeans the money which had been derived from a tax on urinals, he wittily remarked: "Pecunia non olet." (540)

Warren shapes this passage like an upside down emblem, with the motto last, the explanation first, and a conceptual metaphor as the mediating part. He groped twice for the right simile and kept both, self-consciously changing the figurative expression for the concept of obligation in the form of an object being tied to a line. More significant than the balloon or anchor comparison is the motto working as a thoughtful conclusion concerning a businessman's truth about filthy money. It buys things regardless of origin. Warren's excellent memory for classical lore may have precluded him from having to look up the anecdote in Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars*, or he may have had access to an early edition of *The Home Book of Quotations, Classical and Modern*.[27] The Latin text identifies the revenue coming from "the

[27] The Loeb edition of *Lives of the Caesars*, translated by J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge, Massachu-

same place" (*e lotio est*) as the stinking urinals, whereas Warren's aphorism is given in the fifteenth reference of the *Homebook*, under the category "IV—Money: Making Money":

> It [money] has no smell (Non olet.) VESPASIAN, to his son Titus, when the latter blamed him for imposing a tax on urinals. (SUETONIUS, *Twelve Caesars*: Vespasian, 23.)

Although this kitchen-table book is not in the Warren Collection at Western Kentucky, its likelihood as a source is advanced because the adjacent item fourteen quotes Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* 1.105: "But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that honour feels." Could this have caught Warren's eye and ear when he made the humorous anachronism about coins jingling in the emperor's blue jeans? The emblematic moment here is characterized by ironic interplay of a vulgar subject concluded by an emphatic motto. The paragraph is thereby set off from the continued narrative of Jack's relationship with the Boss.

The biblical version of Jack's mourning enlarges his cynicism about Anne's love affair with Willie, whom he compares to Samson in a more overt piece of adapted emblematizing. Willie's rage at Gummy Larson's graft over the hospital contract leads to a drunken tirade, a fury reminiscent of Samson's dismembering of the lion in Judges 14:6: "I'll rip 'em and ruin 'em. By God I will. Putting their dirty hands on it. For they made me do it" (548). Jack witnesses this confrontation and Willie's passing out on the couch, speculating on Adam's predictably righteous anger when he finds out the Boss has broken his promised deal and on Anne's uncertain response to her lover's vulnerability:

> If she had taken up with him because he was so big and tough and knew his own mind and was willing to pay the price for everything, well she ought to see him piled up there like a bull that's got tangled up in the lead rope and is down on its knees and can't budge and can't even lift its head on account of the

setts and London, 1914), 2.23; *The Home Book of Quotations, Classical and Modern* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1947), 1336.

> ring in the nose. She ought to see that.
>
> Then I thought that maybe that was what she was waiting for. There is nothing women love so much as the drunkard, the hellion, the roarer, the reprobate. They love him because they—women, I mean—are like the bees in Samson's parable in the Bible: they like to build their honeycomb in the carcass of a dead lion.
>
> Out of the strong shall come forth sweetness. (550)

This passage imitates the emblem structure of image mediating a concept that is named by a motto. Warren seems to have taken Samson's riddle identifying the honey bee's nest in the lion's dead body and either made his own emblematic tableau or recreated a famous one from Alciato.

Emblem 178 in the *Emblematum liber* (1534), and in subsequent editions with different woodcuts, depicts a detached helmet with winged insects entering and leaving the orifices, beneath the words "EX BELLO PAX" (From War, Peace). The six-line Latin verse is literally translated as "Behold a helmet which a fearless soldier had worn, once often splashed with enemy blood; now, with the onset of peace, it has surrendered to bees the use of its little hollow space, and it now yields honey-combs and sweet honey. May weapons lie afar off. May it be lawful to take up arms only when you cannot otherwise enjoy the art of peace."[28] That peace is preferable to war unless necessity dictates military action was a sentiment designed for the contentious city-states in Alciato's patron's home, Milan. Such Machiavellian pragmatism with its assumed hostility to Christian morality was countered by a seventeenth-century English emblem book. King William III was flattered by the Spanish ambassador, Don Diego Saavedra, in a translated emblem book promoting the education of a Prince by religious principles. Emblem XCIX interprets Samson's riddle of the lion in a visual transformation of Alciato's helmet, where the bees swarm inside

[28] "En galea, intrepidus quam miles gesserat, et qua / Saepius hostili sparsa cruore fuit; / Parta pace apibus tenuis concessit in usum / Alveoli, atq; [atque] favos, graque mella gerit. / Arma proculiaceant: fas sit tamen sumere bellum / Quin aliter pacis non potes arte frui" (*Alciato's Book of Emblems: The Memorial Web Edition in Latin and English*, April 26, 2005, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Arts Computing Centre, Department of English, Online, http://www.mun.ca/alciato/ e178.html). This emblem is also rendered in Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leyden, 1586), 138a.

a dead lion's body, the motto, MERCES BELLI.[29] The "wages of war," according to the long commentary, meant mercantile prosperity: "When War is ended, Peace opens the Doors of Commerce, brings the Hand to the Plough, re-establishes the Exercise of Arts, the effect of which is Plenty, as of that Riches which freed from the Fears that drove them away then begin to circulate." The contrasting readings of the "same" picture reinforce the variable significance of emblems generally.

Warren aligns himself with this tradition when he causes the love-wounded Jack Burden to characterize Anne's attraction to the Boss as a case of female opportunism. It is extremely unlikely that Warren knew of the obscure Saavedra emblem, and only slightly more possible that he had come across the Alciato or the Whitney versions. However, for an Italianophile able to tag Santa Rita's bees as an emblem, it is plausible that Warren in this passage was replicating this kind of verbal/visual/moral association.

Machiavelli at least was on his mind for the ultimate transformation of the emblem process into the journalistic process of Jack Burden's tribute to Willie just before Adam shoots him. The following paragraph epitomizes Warren's inventions with emblematic form. The newspaper's cartoon is interpreted by the editorial position statement, and the motto declares an identification plain to all popular readers of the state's politics but not erudite readers accustomed to dismiss a low-brow illustration of Buster Brown mimicking Little Jack Horner, sitting in his corner:

> I went back to my hotel and had a meal in the coffee shop, having left word at the desk to page me if a call came. But none came. So I dawdled in the lobby with the evening papers. The *Chronicle* had a long editorial lauding the courage and sound sense of the handful of men in the Senate who were making a fight against the administration's tax bill, which would throttle business and enterprise in the state. There was a cartoon opposite the editorial. It showed the Boss, or rather, a figure with the

[29] *The Royal Politician Represented in One Hundred Emblems*, trans. J.A. Astry (London, 1670), 2.354 [sig. Aa1^{v}, in *Early English Books 1671-1700,* reel 616].

> Boss's head but a great swollen belly, dressed in a Buster Brown suit with the little pants tight above great hairy thighs. On one knee the monster balanced a big pudding and from the gaping hole in the top had just plucked a squirming little creature. The pudding bore the label *The State* and the squirming little creature the label *Hardworking Citizen*. From the mouth of the Boss's head came one of those balloons of words the comic-strip artists use to indicate the speech of their characters. It said: "Oh, what a good boy am I!" Under the cartoon was the caption: *Little Jack Horner*. (591)

After this detailed account of the named image, Jack sardonically sums up the editorial's castigation of the Stark taxation program on the rich, and he alludes to the wisdom in Machiavelli's *The Prince* on the danger of this method of coercion: "A man may forget the death of the father, but never the loss of the patrimony, the cold-faced Florentine, who is the founding father of our modern world, said, and he said a mouthful."[30]

Given the exactness of the sartorial description of the character in Richard F. Outcault's syndicated comic strip in the Hearst papers up to 1921 and the advertising image continuing for decades more, one wonders whether the smock-suited kid with the page-boy haircut and knickers might have been drawn in Louisiana newspapers during the height of Huey Long's governorship, 1928–1930, up to the year of his election to the U.S. Senate (but not his assumption of that office, which he undertook in 1932, three years before his assassination).[31] If so, Warren's amalgam of "Little Jack Horner" and Buster Brown might owe more to the world of Jack Burden's journalism than to Renaissance emblematic conception. The evidence from my

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[30] *All the King's Men*, 592. Warren is probably translating this sentence from section seventeen of *Il Principe*: "ma, sopra a tutto, astenersi dalla roba d'altri; perché li uominis dimenticano piú presto la morte del padre che la perdita del patrimonio." Robert M. Adams translates it with equal literalness: "but above all, he should not confiscate people's property, because men are quicker to forget the death of a father than the loss of a patrimony" (Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* [New York: Norton, 1977], 46).

[31] "Outcault, Richard F.," *The Encyclopedia of American Comics*, ed. Ron Goulart (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 281-82. For the merchandising of Buster Brown during the 1930s-50s, see Ian Gordon, "Comics as Commodity and the Agent of Change: Buster Brown," *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998), 43-58. The fact that the prissy-dressed boy was seldom separated from his slobber-lipped bulldog, Tige, suggests a combination of high morals and low-class toughness that enhanced shoe and clothing sales.

survey of the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* (July 3-June 23, 1928) and the New Orleans *Item-Tribune* (March 1-April 29, 1930) turned up no cartoons even close to the Little Jack Horner/Buster Brown motif. The only monograph on the subject confirms that the cartoonists in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* lampooned Long as a potbellied Napoleon, a bulbous-nosed clown figure, a turbaned Caliph, and a semi-realistic caricature of the Governor himself—but not as Buster Brown.[32]

Cartoons from regional or national artists tended to appear in the Sunday editions and were indeed flanked by an editorial column. One kind was overtly critical of the governor, and another sort featured allegorical figures about human sentiments. New Orleans staff cartoonist Chase depicted Long as a harem keeper—the satire arose from the paper's March 5, 1930 editorial scolding the governor for wearing pajamas while receiving a German naval commander at a morning reception in the official residence. Cartoonist John Chase drew a disgruntled farmer saying, "So he's shed cotton nightshirts for gold and green silk pajamas—Huh!" A caption reading "In Spring A Sultan's Fancy Turns to Bigamy" played on this same motif by showing a clown-nosed Long between two wives, the "$30,000 bond issue" gal with a rolling pin and the $60,000 wife with an anchor tattooed on her beefy arm.[33] Whether the political cartoon was accompanied by an editorial or not seemed to depend on how much the anti-Long papers like the *Item-Tribune* wanted to goad the administration. A more compliant editorial staff in the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* treated the new elected governor as a bold reformer. "Troops Raid Gamblers on Long's Order" was the headline on August 12, 1928.

Several editorial cartoons from this period illustrated the allegorical type in continuous circulation since ancient Greek literature: "Kid Cupid," whose small stature and wings would have been recognized in any Renaissance emblem book, retreats to his corner in a boxing ring. On the mat lies a prone figure

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[32] Garry Boulard, *Huey Long: His Life in Photos, Drawings, and Cartoons* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing, 2003).

[33] April 22 and 24, 1930.

of Gene Tunney with three hearts emanating from his breast. The motto at the top is "K.O."[34] Boxing fans did not need help understanding that the heavy weight champion had married a starlet and was a Knock Out by love. The criterion of self-evidence is nicely illustrated here, when a publicly accessible symbol like Cupid/Amor is applied to a local situation, just as scholars of iconography have documented.[35] Alternatively, the allegorical meaning could be spelled out and historically inaccurate. A 1930 cartoon showed a robed goddess with a long sword draped down her statuesque torso, one arm resting on a shield labeled "Long's Victory" and the other shading her brow within an effulgence of light surrounding her. The caption at the top, "With Confidence Louisiana Now Looks to the Future," delivers the optimistic message.[36] An emblem-savvy reader of *The Faerie Queene* like Robert Penn Warren might have noticed the discrepancy between the goddess's martial accoutrements and the inverted crescent of her crown. Inconstancy was identified by this attribute in Renaissance designs, and the concept of unpredictability was traditionally represented by a woman standing on a crab.[37] Political or social advocacy could be conveyed in word-image combinations with or without erudite knowledge of the exact attributes.

In the Little Jack Horner and Machiavelli sequence, Warren deployed just this kind of popular and scholarly wisdom. The most inspired of his emblematic intuitions in *All the King's Men*, this paragraph is the last of Jack's meditations on the human condition before Adam shoots Stark and effects the tragedy. As in the best literary emblems of seventeenth century poetry, the title, picture, and explanation work a kind of triple counterpoint. Machiavelli, Buster Brown, and Little Jack Horner culminate Warren's combinations of epigram, incongruous image, and explanation. This poetics helped Warren to elevate

[34] *The Morning Advocate*, April 17, 1928. The cartoon was distributed by the *New York World* newspaper.

[35] Jean Seznec, trans. Barbara F. Sessions, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York: Pantheon, 1953), 102-03.

[36] Boulard, 41.

[37] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*: *Padua 1611* (New York: Garland, 1976), 244.

Willie Stark's story from a semi-historical fable of Huey Long to an emblematic narrative with Italian Renaissance embellishment.