

# Robert Penn Warren Studies

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## Contents (Volume 9)

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JOSEPH MILLICHAP  
*Robert Penn Warren and Photography* 1

Robert Penn Warren's career and canon demonstrate his more than casual interest in photography, much like those of several contemporaries in the Southern Renaissance. Warren's 1972 essay about photographer Walker Evans recalls how photographs in the 1930s opened the emerging writer's imagination to the power inherent in any art form to revise commonplace perceptions of social and subjective reality. Evans and many other photographers thus influenced Warren in his use of photographic tropes for an artistic transformation of the visual art of photography into the verbal art of literature. My close readings of recreated photographs in several major works of Warren's fiction and poetry are focused on their texts and contexts within thematic considerations of time and death.

THOMAS DERRICK, INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
*Robert Penn Warren's Emblematic Imagination in All the King's Men* 17

Robert Penn Warren's use of a static image with an explanatory motto has not been traced to its roots in Renaissance emblems. Warren's coy responses to interviewers about the historical basis of the Huey Long story were balanced by admissions of the literary influence of Elizabethan and Italian culture. Realistic and imaginative events provided material for the author's deep and slowly developed technique of a dynamic relationship between image and idea. Three phases of development are noticed in Warren's fiction. His preliminary experiment was seen in the 1943 novel, *At Heaven's Gate*; his intermediate development came in his 1950 novel, *World Enough and Time*; and Warren's most explicit reference to emblematic form appeared in his 1977 novel *A Place to Come To*. Warren's first mature and sustained development of an emblematic artfulness was manifested in *All the King's Men*. A literary theory of allegory and the cultural phenomenon of emblem books are summarized. Four moments in the story of *All the King's Men* are analyzed as evidence of this emblematic consciousness. When Warren likened Willie Stark to Sampson or the emperor Vespasian, or when he juxtaposed Little Jack Horner and Machiavelli's prince, he had worked out a merger between literary emblematics and popular forms of political reporting. Jack Burden's style of motto and event is thus linked in Warren's imagination to Renaissance literary tableaux, which are comparable in form to political cartoons of the 1930s but decisively more artistic.

LEVERETT BUTTS, GAINESVILLE STATE COLLEGE  
*Twilight of the Boss: All the King's Men and Norse Mythology* 37

This essay explores the deep connections between Warren's third novel and Norse mythology, particularly the Ragnarok myth. By comparing characters, settings, and events in the novel with various figures from Norse mythology, as well as Richard Wagner's operatic interpretation of the Ragnarok myth *Ring of the Nibelung*, this paper contends that Warren employs Norse myths that mirror his own themes of balance and acceptance that run throughout his novel.

JOAN ROMANO SHIFFLETT, CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY  
"Reckoning" with America's Past: Robert Penn Warren's Later Poetry 63

Robert Penn Warren's later poetry, specifically *Rumor Verified* and *Altitudes and Extensions*, deserves closer critical attention to the function served by the American past. Whether it is facing the bloody reality of westward expansion or acknowledging the alienation and dehumanization that results from the Industrial Revolution, Warren's poems suggest a method of self-reflection that yields a fuller sense of American identity and, consequently, an awareness and knowledge of how to live in this modern world. A close study of the poetic techniques in "Going West" serves as a model for how Warren uses historical backdrops to employ his underlying philosophy that Americans must come to terms with the past in order to develop selfhood.

D.A. CARPENTER, TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY  
*The Windhover and Evening Hawk Shudder in Sync: Gerard Manley Hopkins and Robert Penn Warren* 83

The author traces the philosophical and poetic similarities between Robert Penn Warren and Gerard Manley Hopkins. In doing so, he addresses the meditative process that Warren and Hopkins use in their work in order to demonstrate human connectedness to each other and nature in the form of what could be called a mystic unity. Integral to this meditative process is Hopkins' idiosyncratic concepts of "inscape" and "instress," which are defined and explored by the author while demonstrating how Warren's work is in dialogue with these concepts, particularly in his 1968 collection of poems, *Incarnations*.

ALLISON VANOUSE, BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY  
"Always the truth, and always the lie":  
*Language as Symbol in Brother to Dragons* 111

Robert Penn Warren, in an introductory note to *Brother to Dragons*, writes that the poem is not ruled by action, but by its characters' "inner urgencies ... the urgencies of argument." He seems to be addressing something about the agency of language. In addressing the intoxicating puissance of argument itself, Warren activates a strange and uneasy space between words and the truths they try to describe. It is by navigating this space that he draws parallels between the voice of Thomas Jefferson — struggling with the unfulfilled legacy of his political writings — and the troubled role of the poet himself.

MICHAEL SOBIECH, UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE  
*A Critical Look at Robert Penn Warren's New (and old) Criticism on Satire* 121

Although a father of New Criticism, Warren did not always restrict his analysis of a text to the text itself. In his work with John Marston's satires, Warren appears to go against what will become key attributes of New Critical theory. This essay explores Warren's work with Marston's satires, in particular examining his historicizing of the text, arguing for a more complicated view of Warren's New Criticism.

In his “confessions,” the Footnoter, one of the three editors of the *Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren*, shares trade secrets, spins tales, and recounts anecdotes of success and failure in his attempts to bring understanding to metonymy, synecdoche, allusion, and suggestion as well as to identify individuals mentioned in the letters of Robert Penn Warren, particularly his attempt to discover the identity of the very skillful and amusing writer Paula Newman Miner and her attempt to remain an enigma wrapped in fog living quietly on Cape Cod with her husband and her Loenbergers.

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