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Editor's Foreword (Volume 7)

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Editor's Foreword

With this volume of *rWp*, we would like to state explicitly what has heretofore remained implicit in the nature of the journal: its mission. Our hope is to clarify this mission for our readers, for potential contributors, and for ourselves. Such a clarification seems necessary at this point because we also hope to *expand* the mission of the annual. Thus, what follows not only describes *rWp* during the splendid editorship of William Bedford Clark and James A. Grimshaw, Jr. (Volumes I through V)—a tradition we have attempted to carry on in Volume VI and in the present volume—it also describes our vision of the annual in the future:

Mission Statement for

rWp: An Annual of Robert Penn Warren Studies

Through *rWp: An Annual of Robert Penn Warren Studies*, we seek to foster interest in and to deepen appreciation of the life and work of Robert Penn Warren and his circle by publishing a wide variety of the best, most pertinent material available to us in a given year.

We solicit:

- Critical essays and reviews by both established scholars and neophytes;
- Memoirs and reminiscences;
- Primary and archival materials;
- Work by and about Warren's family, friends, colleagues, and students;
- Work dealing with writers important to Warren or about whom he himself wrote;
- Bibliographic materials;
- Criticism and commentary in the spirit of Robert Penn Warren.

In thinking about the fourth and fifth items in the list above, we came up with a couple of additional lists. They are not exhaustive—

though they are certainly impressive—and in publishing them, we not only hope to prompt Warren fans to submit materials on the persons listed here, we also hope to generate additions to the list, together with material on those additions that we can consider for publication.

The first list is primarily of American writers, including family, friends, students, earlier writers, important contemporaries, etc.

Eleanor Clark	William Faulkner
Rosanna Warren	Robert Frost
R. W. B. Lewis	Mark Twain
Cleanth Brooks	Nathaniel Hawthorne
Allen Tate	Herman Melville
Andrew Lytle	Ralph Waldo Emerson
John Crowe Ransom	John Greenleaf Whittier
Thomas Wolfe	James Fenimore Cooper
James Dickey	William James
Donald Davidson	Jesse Stuart
Caroline Gordon	Saul Bellow
Lewis P. Simpson	John Peale Bishop
Harold Bloom	Peter Davison
Pier Pasinetti	Ralph Ellison
William Styron	Elizabeth Madox Roberts
Louis D. Rubin	Ernest Hemingway
Dave Smith	Albert Erskine
Merrill Moore	William Meredith
Sidney Hook	Peter Taylor
John Hollander	C. Vann Woodward
Randall Jarrell	Brainerd Cheney
Robert Lowell	Malcolm Cowley
Eudora Welty	Sherwood Anderson
Katherine Anne Porter	Edmund Wilson
Theodore Dreiser	Ken Burns
T. S. Eliot	Robert Rossen

These last two are filmmakers, of course. Some of these people are primarily historians (Woodward) or philosophers (James, Hook). Also, since the list is of American writers, it makes some obvious omissions. For instance, Robert Penn Warren's son, Gabriel Warren, ii

is an American artist, but he contributed a wonderful essay to Volume V of *rWp*, a reminiscence of his family and a glimpse at the sources and nature of his art. Moreover, just in typing up this list, I thought of another ten names that could and should be added to it. Perhaps, though, these faults and limitations will also prompt readers to respond—with submitted materials, I hope—and if that is the case, then the list will have done its job.

Here is another list, this time of non-American writers:

Shakespeare
Dante
Coleridge
St. Augustine
Thomas Hardy
Joseph Conrad
John Donne
John Milton
Flaubert

Again, I invite readers to flesh out and elaborate upon this list, preferably in the form of submissions for publication. The same is true of the following list of historical figures:

Sam Houston
Audubon
Chief Joseph
Huey Long
John Brown
Floyd Collins
Daniel Boone
Jefferson Davis
Thomas Jefferson
Meriwether Lewis

Another item I would like to highlight in the list of materials we solicit is the last: criticism and commentary in the spirit of Robert Penn Warren. This item entails perhaps the widest expansion of the annual's mission and so deserves just a bit of explanation. We mean

by this something more than Warren's critical methods (the plural here, "methods," is used pointedly), and something more, even, than what Warren himself might call his cast of mind. We mean what William James, in *Pragmatism*, calls "temperament," for that term includes how one *feels* about the universe and so suggests the whole man, a whole (though not necessarily a unified) sensibility. Perhaps it is presumptuous to claim to know or recognize "the spirit of Robert Penn Warren," but to me, this is one of the most compelling aspects of Warren's writing: when we experience one of his works, in whatever genre, we almost invariably come away with a powerful sense of the man and his "individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos," as James puts it.¹ We like this man and his temperament, and wanting to spend time with him, we read his works again and again. Understandably, then, we might also like to read criticism and commentary similar in spirit, even if it is not directly and expressly about Warren and his circle. If it is in the spirit of Robert Penn Warren, it may help to promote and perpetuate that spirit, which is certainly one of the aims of this annual.

The essays in this volume of *rWp* accomplish that aim in a variety of ways. Again we have the mix of established scholars and newcomers, of genres being treated in the essays, and of styles and approaches—all, we think, in the spirit of Robert Penn Warren. Prof. Grimshaw's contribution was, as he notes, originally presented as a talk at Western Kentucky University, and it was also originally accompanied by a selected bibliography. Here, it is complemented by Robin L. Condon's more comprehensive selected bibliography. I am happy to see this important feature of past volumes return to *rWp* after its absence from Volume VI, and I would like to thank Jonathan Eller for recruiting such an excellent scholar to fulfill the need and Prof. Condon for taking on the responsibility.

The essays in this volume also show the variety of ways the annual's mission can be fulfilled. Bill McCarron and Paul Knoke take a new look at narrative technique and the use of autobiographical materials. James A. Perkins and Nicole Camastra both make use of manuscript materials, as does Nathan Snow, although in Snow's case, these are the manuscript materials made available to us by Noel Polk in the Restored Edition of *All the King's*

Men. Leverett Butts takes another look at “The Briar Patch” using an autobiographical framing device similar to that used by Warren himself in several works. Finally, new names should be added to the lists above according to Camastra (Blaise Pascal), Joseph Wensink (Josiah Royce), and Grimshaw (Francis Steegmuller). Prof. Grimshaw also highlights what strikes me as a crucial question for the future of Warren studies: if Warren is currently being omitted from anthologies and excluded from curricula, then how will the teachers being trained now know to teach him in the future? I invite potential contributors to *rWp* to consider this crucial issue and to submit materials that address it. These could include pedagogical materials of all sorts and for all levels of education: Warren works that have been successful, approaches and assignments that have been successful—anything on the teaching of Warren. What can we do to ensure that the spirit of Robert Penn Warren lives on in the schools?

Mark D. Miller

¹William James, *Pragmatism*, Dover Thrift Edition (1907; New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 1-2.
