Notes

Introduction

1. The beeches acquire more and more reason for being where they are as the story subtending his fiction unfolds. They will not appear here until chapter 5 (where they are the name in a dream the dreamer knows he knows but cannot remember), but from that point on they begin to form a subplot to that story, whose main plot has to do with the recurring images of the dream in Night Rider. In the end, the name of the original dreamer reveals—or acquires—its true meaning, one that in the final chapter is shown to bear a filial relation to the name in the other dream, which made its first appearance as a forgotten name. Like Warren's protagonists, then, we too will be engaged in a search for that paternal text, the father's name—and the son's.

2. This anticipates Paul de Man's more recent declaration that "the only irreducible 'intention' of a text is that of its constitution" (65).

3. According to which the creative process is a basically rational mining of the unconscious and not "merely an expression of the unconscious" (287). I agree that it is not the latter, for to say that the creative process is governed by the rules by which the unconscious works is not to say that it is merely the unconscious speaking.

4. My understanding of Warren is indebted to such precursors as James Justus, Marshall Walker, Barnett Guttenberg, and Leonard Casper—Justus in particular, because of the comprehensiveness of his reading of Warren and the accuracy of his insights into his declared, as well as unconscious, intent.

5. It will be important to remember that in "I Am Dreaming of a White Christmas" Warren did not say he wanted to recover the dream itself, but its logic. And though this search is echoed in both the figures of the Christmas present he is forbidden to open and the unwrapped object in Night Rider's dream, I wish to caution the reader not to hope to find a presence in that present, some hidden truth, some tangible—say—biographical detail in Warren's life that will explain all. It might be more reasonable to expect the revelation of an absence. Shoshana Felman has recently written of such an absence of meaning when she contrasts Jacques Lacan's approach to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" to the more traditional one of Marie Bonaparte, who represents the school of psychoanalytic literary criticism that seeks ultimate answers in the biography of the author. The
latter sees the analyst's job as being to uncover the content of the stolen letter in Poe's story, "which she believes—as do the police—to be hidden somewhere in the real, in some secret biographical depth. For Lacan, on the other hand, the analyst's task is not to read the letter's hidden referential content, but to situate the superficial indication of its textual movement, to analyze the paradoxically invisible symbolic evidence of its displacement, its structural insistence, in a signifying chain. . . . The history of reading has accustomed us to the assumption . . . that reading is finding meaning, that interpretation can dwell only on the meaningful. Lacan's analysis of the signifier opens up a radically new assumption, an assumption that is an insightful logical and methodological consequence of Freud's discovery: that what can be read (and perhaps what should be read) is not just meaning but the lack of meaning . . ." (44–45). In the case of Poe's "Purloined Letter" this means that Lacan is more interested in the triangular structural relationships that duplicate themselves in the text among those characters involved in the letter's circulation than he is in its actual content, which Poe (quite rightly, surely, for Lacan) never reveals. Poe's story spectacularly illustrates this way of reading any literary text—and so can Robert Penn Warren's. All the more so because Warren will, in the end, make absence itself thematic.

Chapter 1

1. Yet the buzzards in "Pondy Woods"—who, like the sun-gazing hawks and eagle, drift "high in the pure sunshine / Till the sun in gold decline"—do possess at least the nobility of "hieratic" eyes ("Then golden and hieratic through / The night their eyes burn two by two").

2. The words with which Night Rider's sentence about the buzzard begins—"At a great height"—are the last words of the poem in which Warren contemplates the flight of wild geese, "Heart of Autumn": "I stand . . . my arms outstretched in the tingling / Process of transformation, and soon tough legs, / / With folded feet, trail in the sounding vacuum of passage, / And my heart is impacted with a fierce impulse / To unwordable utterance— / Toward sunset, at a great height." Just as Munn would have liked to repeat the Senator's eloquence but could not (at least not at first), so here the poet yearns to duplicate the flight of the geese. And as Munn made the nothingness he perceived the substance of his speech, here the poet speaks of a vacuum that sounds—and of an unwordable utterance. On birds in Warren, see Harold Bloom, "Sunset Hawk: Warren's Poetry and Tradition," and Sister Bernetta Quinn, "Gull Against a Crimson Sky: Birds in the Later Poems of Robert Penn Warren." Bloom argues that the stuffed hawk in "Red-Tail Hawk and Pyre of Youth" is "text" (72); while for Calvin Bedient the red-tail hawk is the father (190). I agree with both (as I argue in The Braided Dream): it is the father, transformed by the poet's taxidermy into text. This conjunction of father and text is at the heart of my reading of Warren.

3. Leonard Casper's implied answer to this question—"Ball . . . keeps his own hands disguised under antiseptic bandages" (102), that is, the Professor manages in this symbolic way to keep his hands clean—is plausible, but cannot account for all that echoes his bandages elsewhere in the novel.
4. The “patches of white cloud no bigger than a man’s hand” echo a well-known biblical verse from the story of Elijah, 1 Kings 18:44: “Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” At a time of drought, the prophet had predicted rain from a sky as cloudless as the one in whose empty blue indiscernence the Senator lifted his hand. What happened at the command of that hand—the first spatter of applause that broke out sporadically like the first drops of a rainstorm (“like the first heavy, individual, tumescent drops exploding upon the dry roof before the storm breaks in full volume”)—seems, too, a retelling of the long-delayed rain announced by the hand of cloud. Warren does, in fact, retell it in the poem “Elijah on Mount Carmel”: “sky darkened, / Rain fell, drouth broke, for God had hearkened. . . .”

5. Mr. Morphee’s name was evidently Morpheus in its original French, which is Morpheus in that tongue to which Warren will continue to have recourse in subsequent novels for the slyly hidden meanings of proper names.

6. Although he might have noticed as he rode out that night, had he been paying attention, that his assiduous search for the truth was leading him into something like a trap: “The almost bare boughs of the trees made a web-like pattern of shadow on the road” (58).

7. The distancing ability that writing has—of which newspapers are but one example—is a recurring theme in Warren. Any medium will do, even mud, as the boy Seth proves in “Blackberry Winter” when he seeks to make on it the “perfect mark” of his foot. Once the mark is made, it ceases to be his mark. The distancing has been accomplished, and you can “then muse upon it as though you had suddenly come upon that single mark on the glistening auroral beach of the world” (The Circus in the Attic, 64).

8. Discovering the father’s texts, both those he owned and those he wrote, is a scene Warren will later retell more than once. In “Fox-Fire: 1956” it was his father’s old Greek grammar: “Years later, I find the old grammar, yellowed. . . . [I]n the dark, / Amid History’s vice and vacuity, that poor book burns / Like fox-fire in the black swamp of the world’s error.” In the quite recent Portrait of a Father, he recalls the discovery of The Poets of America, a vanity anthology in which his father had published several poems. “The discovery was, in itself, a profound and complex surprise” (41).

9. This symbolism is all the more resonant because of yet another literary allusion, and a suppressed name. Isabella Ball, the loyal daughter who contributed to the framing of Percy Munn for her father’s crime by pretending to do him the favor of telling him to get out of town, was originally supposed to have been called Desdemona (remember that the Professor gave all his daughters Shakespearean names). But when Mrs. Ball asked her husband, “didn’t the book say that the man she ran off and married was colored?” Ball decided “to spare even the tenderest sensibility. So we named the baby Isabella” (257). And so the woman who gives Munn the advice to leave town, thereby completing the illusion that he was guilty of a crime he did not commit, was meant to have been named for one who was likewise framed for a crime she did not commit, and against whom the most incriminating piece of evidence was a missing handkerchief. A handkerchief from Thebes is missing in Munn’s story too, although he doesn’t know it. And there is some measure of poetic justice here, for Munn, though not guilty of that murder,
is responsible for the deaths of four other men: the black on Mr. May's place who was hanged for Trevelyan's crime, Trevelyan, Benton Todd, and Bill Christian, who died from the stroke brought on by Munn's adultery with his daughter. The very fact that Isabella was not named Desdemona makes this all the more intriguing, as well as making it all the more apparent that something in Night Rider is doing what the unconscious does in dreams: disguising the truth the better to express it.

Chapter 2

1. Richard Law points out the irony of Warren's casting "Slim Sarrett, who is a pathological liar, poseur, and murderer, as a New Critic." Sarrett's talk about pure and impure poetry sounds remarkably like what Warren was writing in "Pure and Impure Poetry" in 1943, the same year At Heaven's Gate was published. "Not only do these ideas obviously resemble Warren's," Law continues, "but Sarrett's narrative style becomes at times a parody of the author's mannerisms: his attempts to catch the fullness of the moment in the impurity of its components exaggerate Warren's familiar techniques (see, for instance, Sarrett's life story as told to Sue Murdock)" (93–95).

2. Leonard Casper, too, notes some other common ground between At Heaven's Gate and the contemporaneous Eleven Poems (107).

3. There is, in fact, a key to the gate in the title's allusion to its original source, for in Cymbeline Cloten obscenely jokes with his musicians about how he hopes their efforts will open up erotic opportunities for him with Imogen: "If you can penetrate her with your fingering, so; we'll try with tongue too" [2.3.14–15], suggesting what kind of heaven lies beyond those gates.

Chapter 3

1. By calling this gesture a wink here and elsewhere in this chapter, I do not mean to conclude that it was one. It might, after all, as Stark suggested, have been a blink. There is no more convenient term, "ambiguous eyelid closure" being more accurate but somewhat cumbersome. Imagine that "wink" appears here within quotation marks.

2. Taken by itself, Willie's ambiguous eye movement can prove irritating to a reader, who may conclude from its inconclusiveness that Warren made a mistake in leaving it so unresolved. Thus Erwin R. Steinberg cites the wink as evidence that "[n]either Jack nor the reader is ever to be sure of what motivates Willie Stark or of what he thinks" (18) and finds it "a cause for dissatisfaction, even for frustration. Perhaps it is this frustration that makes one feel that the devices used by Warren to prevent the reader from understanding Willie Stark . . . are artificial" (27–28).

3. John Edward Hardy writes that "Jack Burden . . . is in his relationship to Willie both Odysseus [that is, father] and Telemachus [son] by turns. (One can hardly miss the significance of the transformation of Stark from 'Cousin Willie' the 'plowboy' and 'teacher's pet,' who was glad to meet 'Mr. Burden' to 'the Boss' who,
when some years later they reminisce about the occasion of their first encounter, specifically addresses Jack as 'boy'" (165).

4. John Edward Hardy, though he claims that "it is both Willie and Jack ... who are Humpty" (161), has noticed the resemblance to Duffy, who "teeters precariously for an instant on the edge of the stand before crashing to the ground—enacting here, obviously, a slapstick comic version of the Humpty role" (162). He notes as well that the way Willie "picked up the pieces and put him back together" is "a variation on the nursery-rhyme imagery."

5. Like Uriah (2 Sam. 11:15), Bellerophon was the unwitting bearer of his own death warrant. His story is told in the sixth book of the Iliad.

6. Not only his name but that of the place where he fell contains fragments of the name to which the novel's title alludes: DuffY, UPTon.

7. Jack pleads guilty to the deaths of both Adam and Stark, "of having delivered his two friends into each other's hands and death" (436). Tiny Duffy, of course, and Sadie Burke, are more immediately blamable; but it should also be pointed out that in the end the responsibility for the death of both of Jack's fathers, Stark and Judge Irwin, really belongs to a fetus—the one inside Sybil Frey. It is how the plot works: it was to counter the advantage MacMurfee had acquired from his knowledge of her pregnancy and Tom's possible paternity that Willie made Jack confront the Judge with the information about Mortimer Littlepaugh, which led to Irwin's suicide. Willie had counted on that information to force the Judge to make MacMurfee give up his plans. But with the Judge dead, the only card Willie had left to play was to give the hospital contract to Gummy Larson, which Tiny Duffy had been trying to get him to do all along, because Tiny stood to profit handsomely from the kickback. That would be a blow against MacMurfee, in his whose camp Larson had been. So he does, but then when Tom is gravely injured in a football game, Willie reneges on the deal because now he wants to name the hospital for Tom and cannot bear to have any "evil" involved in its construction. Stark's abominable treatment—abominable even to Jack's jaded eyes—of Tiny Duffy is most prominent in the scenes connected with this incident: when he first awards the contract to Larson but manages to splash a drink in Tiny's face all the same (362) because he is taking out his anger on him for having to do what he doesn't want to do; and later, when he tells Duffy that Larson cannot have the contract after all (387). It is immediately afterward that Duffy calls Adam Stanton to tell him all about Anne and Stark. And even though it was Sadie who told Duffy to do it, his disappointment over losing what he had striven for for so long surely fueled his eagerness to comply. Had the fetus not existed, Stark would never have been forced to give Larson the contract on which he later reneged, and Duffy would not have had to endure the ultimate disgrace of telling Larson the deal was up.

8. Master's impulse, in fact the entire novel (and quite possibly the two that precede it), is anticipated by yet another mysterious package, one that in "All the King's Men: The Matrix of Experience" Warren says he found in the hand of a "mythological figure" who stands at the origin of his novel. In September 1934, Warren left Tennessee to begin his new teaching assignment at Louisiana State University. "Along the way I picked up a hitchhiker—a country man, the kind you call a red-neck or a wool-hat, aging, aimless, nondescript, beat up by life and hard times and bad luck, clearly tooth-broke and probably gut-shot, standing beside the
road in an attitude that spoke of infinite patience and considerable fortitude, holding a parcel in his hand, wrapped in old newspaper. . . . He was, though at the moment I did not sense it, a mythological figure” (76). He was such a figure because he represented the countless poor who loved Huey Long and were grateful for all he had done. But in the context of all the other newspaper packages and their equivalents in Warren's first three novels, the myth he embodied may have had another dimension of which Warren might not have been consciously aware. In any event, this hitchhiker “became, it would seem, the old hitchhiker whom Jack Burden picks up returning from Long Beach, California, the old man with the twitch in the face that gives Jack the idea for the Great Twitch. But my old hitchhiker had had no twitch in his face” (81).

9. I refer to the logic of the recurring dream: Munn's original dream of a package whose contents he thinks he can identify as its torn newspaper wrapping shreds away, together with the way handkerchiefs and newsprint become interchangeable both there and in At Heaven's Gate, contribute to the enormous resonance of the gesture Jack's mother makes when she discloses his father's true identity (Judge Irwin): “Her hands twisted and tore the handkerchief she held before her at the level of her waist. . . . She flung down the shredded handkerchief and ran off . . .” (429). She had appeared to him at the beginning of this scene “like somebody who has fallen into deep water” (428); in the recurring dream Munn's wife approaches him slowly, as though her feet were weighted with lead, echoing the deep-water scene of the ballad he had just heard of Pretty Polly, who had sunk beneath the sea and held out her infant before her—at waist level, surely, as Munn's wife “held out” (317) the disintegrating bundle and Burden's mother the shredded handkerchief. To both the dreamer and Jack Burden what is ultimately revealed is the father.

Chapter 4

1. I have taken that risk in The Braided Dream: Robert Penn Warren's Late Poetry.

2. Being Here: Poetry 1977–1980, one of Warren's most closely integrated poetic sequences, bears a similar, though more informative, notice concerning the rearrangement its contents have undergone: “The order of the poems is not the order of composition. . . . The order and selection are determined thematically, but with echoes, repetitions, and variations in feeling and tonality” (107). Although we do not know in exactly what order the stories were written, we do know that “Testament of Flood” and “The Love of Elsie Barton: A Chronicle,” which first appeared in print in 1935 and 1946, respectively, were originally meant to appear together in chapters 2 through 4 of the untitled, uncompleted, and unpublished novel Warren wrote in 1933–34.

3. He is also in chapter 9 of the unpublished novel “God's Own Time.”

4. I hope it will be understood that by equating femininity with passivity I am dealing with a certain set of stereotypes accepted by the citizens of a fictional town, Bardsville.
5. Substitutability reigns here, as it does in dreamwork: Bolton's wife is a stand-in for Sara Darter, who is likewise one for Bolton's mother, as the fact that they both utter wild and uninterpretable cries suggests.

6. James Scott notes Viola's awkward gait, as well as some of the instances of foot and shoe symbolism, in *The Circus in the Attic*.

7. Warren suggests a similar linkage in "'Blackberry Winter': A Recollection" when he notes the irony of the resemblance between Old Jebb's name and that of the "dashing Confederate cavalryman" J. E. B. Stuart (642).

8. Shakespeare was older than Webster, a point the book Steve was reading stresses: "After Shakespeare there developed a drama which, in comparison with the broad sympathy and humanity of the great bard, rightly deserves the name of decadent. But John Webster is sometimes capable of real poetic feeling, if not scope . . ." (168). Steve's feeling of triumph after he repeats the line from the play consists in large measure of feeling older—"much older; older than Frank Barber" (169)—as if he had experienced an anxiety of belatedness.

9. What Steve is projecting here, upon a flat surface, is in fact Frank Barber's sexual prowess, for later in the paragraph someone will make a joke about Barber's probable intimacy with Helen by metaphorizing it as "spring plowing." The line that follows the one cited here hints at the same sexual imagery: "Behind the man the earth split open like a ripe melon."

10. In the untitled novel Steve is in fact Thomas Adams's son.

11. It is not perhaps by chance that the engagement in which Bolton's father received his wound was the Battle of Franklin (18), the one part of Robert Franklin Warren's name that was entirely his own and not inherited by his son, nor fortuitous that it was Warren's left eye that was lost in a childhood accident (see chapter 9 on this point, where a deformed leg will likewise play a significant role).

Chapter 5

1. Jeremiah had, in the short-lived land speculation venture with Josh Parham, traveled to western Kentucky to do some surveying; this is evidently "the West" to which he refers in the dream.

2. I am fudging a bit here, but I think justifiedly. The dream speaks of "the names of the trees" in the plural, whereas I am reducing these names to one: the beech. I believe the plurality in the dream is part of the disguise, a disguise partly lifted at the other end of the dream when the narrator speaks of another "name" (singular) whose impossibility to recall is compared to that of the trees'.

3. Actually, Warren's own command of French is not perfect either. When he has the Gran Boz tell Beaumont "'Autrefois—autrefois—you tell me autrefois—how you keel—maintenant j'ai sommeil,'" he evidently means *une autrefois, "some other time"; autrefois would mean "formerly, "once, in the past"—unless Warren intended the Gran Boz to speak his native tongue incorrectly.

4. Robert Berner cites this passage and notes its womb symbolism (69–70).

5. Note that the beech bough is a symbol of his authority. A similarly imposing father figure, the Gran Boz, is also connected to a beech, in an almost mythic way. According to the legend of his origins, he had been a trader between the
whites and the Indians, who played both sides against each other, particularly on
the occasion when “He arranges at least one truce with a white outpost, and then,
when it has been lulled by his gifts and has bought corn from him, he sits under a
tree, at night—a beech tree, according to the story—and watches the flames and
hears the screams of the massacre” (433).

6. If it appears that certain elements of Oedipus’s story surface at times in
Beaumont’s, it is not only because Jeremiah murders the man who had been like a
father to him or marries that man’s mistress, or because he sees his mother’s face
when he gazes into his wife’s in his dream, but also because the narrator makes
explicit reference (as he had in the case of Thebes in Night Rider) to that ancient
myth when he speaks of the Sphinx and its riddle. It is Rachel who plays this role,
thereby reminding us that Jeremiah did not murder Fort for love of his wife so
much as for reasons that have more to do with solving a mystery and fulfilling his
destiny; nor was Rachel the ultimate object of his desire. Because of the crooked-
ness of her smile, Miss Jordan was, in Beaumont’s words, a “Sphinx that would not
slay the traveler who could not guess her riddle and leave his bones whiten on the
Greek road, but would let him pass on in peace except for the memory of her
face” (45). The specific content of that riddle and its answer may have something
to do with why walking sticks are so prominent in the novel (even Munn Short’s
lame leg becomes one when he stretches it out before him “like a stick” [384]).
And it might have some bearing on a curious detail concerning Jeremiah’s feet. In
Beauchamp’s Confession, the posse that came to take him back to Frankfort had a
drawing of a footprint at the murder scene, and to his horror his foot fit into it;
but in Warren’s version, the drawing makes Beaumont’s foot larger than it really
was. It is as though his oedipal crime had given him oedipal—that is, swollen—
feet.

7. The name of Runnymede, that place of ultimate origin, has a possible
origin of its own in the novel, in a “Runnion” and a “Mead”—two men with
whom Jeremiah once went hunting as a boy (“It was Jim Runnion who took Jere-
miah when he was thirteen on his first big hunt . . .”). As they camped under the
stars, “Jeremiah would lie awake . . . and ‘wickedly’ wish he had no family to go
back to and that he could stay forever in the forest” (15). This is precisely
what Morton Marcher could not get him to wish at Runnymede, which finds its first
mention after the Runnion-led hunting trip. Colonel Mead was the largest land-
owner in the vicinity where Jeremiah grew up; Runnion, “the chief disgrace of the
settlements” (14), was (possibly like the Kentucky descendant who is writing this
book) a most irresponsible character, though he had been one of the original pion-
eers. Then there is the other Runnymede, of course. Like the kingdom of the
Gran Boz, it was originally an island, like the maternal space Jack Burden’s mother
created for him in All the King’s Men when he lay with his head in her lap, her
cool hand covering his eyes: “she had the trick of making a little island right in the
middle of time” (112).

8. The evidence, not falsified, of another assassin’s guilt will appear in a
handkerchief in Brother to Dragons: “The Sheriff pulled a parcel out of his pocket./
Wrapped in a rag, his handkerchief I guess./ . . . And Lil, he unwrapped it slow. It
was a bone./ It was a jawbone, black where fire had burned” (1953: 156; 1979:
97). And what was wrapped in that handkerchief was, astoundingly (considering
the manner in which historical fact once more intersects the cluster of haunting
images *Night Rider* began), fetal: Lilburn's victim "sort of curled up there, / Drew
up his knees to make himself all little, / To lie all on that hunk of tulip-wood / And
not hang over, and be little there, / A-lying sidewise, and his eyes squinched shut"

9. Fort, in his fatherly way, had tried to give another text to Jeremiah earlier
in the novel (back when they were on good terms)—a volume of Byron. "But
Jeremiah would take it only as a loan" (37). Beaumont encounters it again in
Rachel's library, at a time when he is not having much success in courting her. The
"inspiration" comes to him to take the book from her shelf and read aloud to her
from it. "It was the blue book with the name Byron stamped in gold on it, the
book Colonel Fort had given him long back. As I held it in my hand; he wrote, 'I
felt a great excitement and thought... how the book which he had put in my
hands and hers might be sent as the instrument to fulfill the lives of us all... I
opened the book to find, as I knew I would find, the leaf torn out at the first and
the pages loosened. "Look," I said, "look what somebody has done. They have
ruined the book"' " (105–6). He has guessed, correctly, that the page held a ded-
ication from Fort to Rachel, and that after the tragic outcome of their affair she
had torn the page from the book. His beau's stratagem is to make her tell him what
he already knows about her past, so that he can gain entry into her closed heart.
It works, after a fashion; she "‘flung it into the fire, and the flames leaped up to
take it' " (107)—though it is not until the next scene, that of her mother's death,
that Rachel tells him her secret.

In the end, Beaumont will find himself writing in that space where the
father had first written, on the blank pages at the beginning and end of books. On
the Gran Boz's island, he will keep working feverishly on his autobiographical
manuscript, even though he is running out of paper. "[H]e tore out blank pages
from books and gathered the scattered papers on the floor in the corner. The last
of his manuscript is on these, on the end pages and title pages... " (441).

There is yet another example of Fort's gift of a text to Jeremiah, and it
is his paternal ability to handle fire that makes it possible. It took place when he
was instructing Beaumont in the law: "‘Colonel Fort opened my eyes,' Jeremiah
writes, 'to the law as mankind's servant... So the book that had been dull now
glowed before my eyes as though it had been a drab, dead coal he leaned to blow
upon with his breath and bring to flame' " (42).

10. Warren could have found Fort's surname in the Beauchamp story. In fact,
it is more than likely that he did, for a certain French [sic] Fort did what Cassius
Fort is said to have done (but didn't): he said the baby was black. And he would
have been in a position to know, for he was the man who buried Ann Cook's
stillborn fetus (Kalsen, 352).

11. The mention, for what it is worth, comes from a doubtful source, as the
jailer, McIntosh (actually, Sharp's brother, who printed McIntosh's statement and
had his own axes to grind), put words in Beauchamp's mouth that directly contra-
dicted what the prisoner maintained until his dying breath in the manuscript of his
confession: namely, that he had worn the handkerchief on his hand when he killed
Sharp and had dropped it there, and that Patrick Darby (the original of Sugg
Lancaster) had been a co-conspirator in the murder.
Chapter 6

1. In Warren's *Portrait of a Father*, his own father would speak just such a gabble of a foreign tongue while shaving in front of his son. "A few times over those years he simply seemed to be gabbling something. At one time, as he told me, what he was saying came from the opening of the Gospel of John. To the boy... the words coming forth were just a gabble. Then, cleaning the razor, the wielder remarked: 'That's Greek. Now you know how it sounds'" (38).

2. The name of the poem that disappeared one night and left a pale rectangle as its mark could have contained Amantha Starr as well within its cenotaphic embrace, for not only was *vedetta* at first a place to view the stars, but *vedette*, since before Sears's time, has meant, in the language Amantha was studying with Prieur-Denis, "star" in the other, nonastral sense (from the practice of inscribing the name of the headliner in larger type, so that it stood out from the rest, like the honored name on a monument).

3. Raphael told Tobias to burn the viscera, thus creating a smoke that would scare off the evil demon who had killed her previous husbands. Tobias's reincarnation in several other twentieth-century texts is the subject of my *Fowles/Irving/Barthes: Canonical Variations on an Apocryphal Theme*.

4. Seth Parton, too, is involved in a possible echo from the Book of Tobit. "'Hannah,'" he tells Amantha, "'is the name of my wife. In the godly language the name means grace'" (226). It is also the name of Tobit's wife. Tobias's last name, whose connection to sight has already shown its relevance to "The Dead Vidette," may also, ironically, allude to his namesake's (or his namesake's father's, depending on which version of the story we read) inability to see.

Chapter 7

1. Thus, most recently, Madison Jones speaks of "the cave image, which furnishes the center around which the novel turns and to which all the characters, for better or worse, are finally drawn" (52).

2. What we learn on page 139 is that Jack Harrick had been baptized by MacCarland Sumpter "in Elk Creek, in the big still pool below where the creek came boiling white over the gray limestone of Beecham's Bluff Falls." It is not until page 376 that we learn that the cave and the falls are in the same vicinity. There, Jack Harrick recalls how at the age of seven or eight "he had climbed up the Sumpter Ridge, and had gone swimming in the pool below the falls, and then he had climbed on up to the glade where the big beeches were, and the little hole in the ground under the roots of the biggest beech." That hole is the entrance to the cave, although until Jack's son, Jasper, discovered it decades later no one realized that the hole led to such a cave. There the young Jack Harrick had lain on the ground "and wondered if the sun would dry his hair enough so his mother wouldn't give him a whaling for getting in the creek"—which indicates how close the creek, and the falls, were to the cave. Earlier, however, Isaac Sumpter had mentioned the cave and the falls in the same breath, thinking of the commercial possibilities of these scenic—and historic, in the sense in which Jasper's tragic entrapment would consecrate the cave as Floyd Collins's had hallowed another—elements: "'It will"
be big. It will stay big. There is a cave here about like Mammoth or something. This is a scenic location. There is the falls’ " (200).

3. Jasper is a sacrificial ram of another sort for his own father, who realizes that “I did not want my son to come out of the ground, because somebody always has to go in the ground. If he was there I would not have to go” (385); and likewise for Nick Pappy, who “felt a flood of sweet gratefulness” for the thought that “He is suffering for me. Jasper Harrick, he is in the ground suffering for me” (270).

4. Isaac’s willingness to sacrifice Jasper’s life for his own journalistic glory, and in particular his tricking the authorities into drilling from above instead of attempting a quicker rescue through the mouth of the cave, both suggest a more recent, and specific, source for the plot of The Cave than the story of Floyd Collins. Billy Wilder’s 1951 film Ace in the Hole starred Kirk Douglas as Chuck Tatum, a newspaperman fallen on hard times who stumbles across the story of a man trapped in a cave near Albuquerque, New Mexico. Tatum makes a deal with the sheriff to obtain exclusive rights to the story in exchange for ensuring the latter’s reelection by making him look good in the papers; he even gets the sheriff to insist that they drill from above, which will take seven days, instead of shoring up the walls to rescue the man through the way he came in. The result is that Leo Minosa dies before the drilling is completed; he otherwise would have been rescued in sixteen hours. Minosa’s blonde wife, Lorraine, like Giselle Fontaine in the novel, is a former nightclub dancer; like Fontaine’s husband, Papadoupalous, she profits handsomely from selling food and drink to the gathered crowds.

5. The word crops up in conversation as well. Monty Harrick, for example, talking to Jo-Lea about Jasper and his father says: “[H]e had just come out of Pappy’s room. I told you how it is. When he goes in to sit with Pappy” (23).

6. Only later, when we consider Warren’s last novel (A Place to Come To), will it be possible to determine the ultimate significance (or what appears to be such) of the fact that it was in the shadow of a beech—and while pretending to urinate by its trunk—that Isaac retrieved the scrap of paper Jasper had left behind.

7. The slick-faced boy thought Jebb Holloway was referring to Jasper when he was talking about Pappy; when Timothy Bingham asked Nick to make the arrangements for an abortion, Nick thought that Bingham had got Dorothy Cutlick pregnant, not realizing that he was referring to his daughter, Jo-Lea. And it was only when Jo-Lea herself seemed to have gotten confused about who was the father of her child—when she stood up and announced that she was the unwed mother she thought Jasper was referring to (even this error was induced by Isaac’s fiction)—only, that is, through another misplaced referent, did Papadoupalous realize his mistake (324–25).

Chapter 8

1. If Mollie’s feet were “turned inward,” then her toes would have been somewhat less visible than the rest of her feet. The fact that the hanged man’s fingers seemed “curled inward” to Adam until he realized that “There were no fingers” (45) suggests a further connection between the particular nature of Mollie’s pedal deformity—her pigeon-toedness—and the way the man’s extremities looked to Adam. The “pain of staring at the shoes” in Mollie’s case could, even on the
level of the story itself, very well have been caused by an unconscious recollection of the sight of the man with the missing toes.

2. Mose's other scars suggest yet another identification: Rau-Ru and what his scars stood for in Band of Angels. The scene where Mose reveals the whip marks on his back to Adam and the one where the old beggar in Halesburg shows his to Amantha are strangely alike. Amantha "saw ... how the shirt was tattered, and ... saw on the half-exposed shoulders and upper back the neat herringbone pattern of old welts and scars on the gray-black flesh" that she identified with what she had earlier imagined to be "scars ... interlacing"; Adam saw, when Mose twisted "his shoulder down, stripping the calico shirt back ... the old welts plaited and criss-crossing grayly on the dark skin" (85–86).

3. Not to mention a kind of author's signature, an initial he shared with his father, as well as with the title of the novel.

4. Other poems also hint at the equation of father with hawk. Calvin Be- dient has recently argued that in "Evening Hawk" the hawk is "the phallus, here winged" as well as "both father and son, in a crackling synthesis. . . . It is poetry as the son, seeking to be consubstantial with truth and glory, the father" (167). Similar conclusions, as we will see, can be drawn from "Red-Tail Hawk."

5. Warren contributed five poems to such a book, Driftwood Flames (Nash- ville: Poetry Guild, 1923; Grimshaw, 248).

6. "Until recently," Floyd Watkins writes, "it has not been widely known that Warren is blind in one eye, yet the accident was perhaps the most momentous event in his younger years" (54). Possibly the most revealing account of this incident and its significance can be found in Daniel Joseph Singal's chapter on Warren in The War Within: "Imagery having to do with eyesight, blindness, darkness and light, night and day would recur frequently in his writings" (344).

7. Mrs. Mary Warren Barber, in an address to The Nomads, a literary so- ciety in Maysville, Kentucky, 13 February 1985 (recorded by Mrs. Jane Alexander Smart, my mother-in-law).

8. In a 1977 interview, Warren lends support to his sister's version of how he became a writer: "Then I had an accident. I couldn't go [to Annapolis]—an accident to my eyes—and then I went to the university instead, and I started out in life there as a chemical engineer. That didn't last but three weeks or so, because I found the English courses so much more interesting" (RPW Talking, 243).

9. Hans Meyerhof, whose eyes were not only such signifiers without a referent, but who had the habit of lying on his back with his eyes open, in the same pose that had proven so unlucky for the young Warren: "I don't worry about him so much when he's asleep," his wife told Adam. "It's when he just lies with his eyes open, looking out the way they do" (123).


Chapter 9

1. Making a joke on the word that figures in a pun Brad will make on Digby's name, he points out to Maggie that the name suits his profession, and that "when he gets through digging, they will call him Dugby" (174).
2. The following excerpt from the transcript of Calvin's trial shows the degree to which the nickname had taken precedence. “Q: Who was on the porch when you came down? A: There was Tut, and—Q: Who? A: Al Tuttle—they called him Tut. Q: Is this Tut—or all Tuttle—the person legally known as Alfred O. Tuttle? A: I reckon. Q: What are you reckoning for? Haven't you seen his legal signature?” (308).


4. The trouble, perhaps, with Telford Lott's literary esthetic was that it was too enamored of sincerity: “he was sometimes moved to tears by fiction presenting images of generosity or of human suffering patiently borne” (60). That is why he so admired Brad's story “I’m Telling You Now,” but it is also why he was such a potentially bad influence on his career. Lott's idea of what literature is was noticeably lacking in irony, in the “awareness of that doubleness of life” without which, accord to Blanding Cottshill, “no real conversation, conversation of inner resonance, is possible” (294)—nor, from what is known of Warren's esthetic, any similarly resonant literature. It is instructive to compare what fictional reviewers said of Brad's short story collection with what real ones said of Warren's The Circus in the Attic: “The author had, it was said [of Tolliver's book], great compassion. He had reported, without flinching, extenuation, or romanticism, the degradation of life in his native region. He exhibited an instinctive awareness of social problems” (61). Warren's reviewers said nearly the same thing—unaware of the irony, for example, of the two Seths and of the possibility that there may have been something else going on in that book other than just an unflinching depiction of the decline of southern society.

5. Note that “Within that continent [i.e., Yasha’s scar], almost imperceptible lines ran crisscrossing, faintly crazing and hatching the surface” (20). Crazing here has the sense of having cracks in the surface (“making it look like some piece of precious china that has been shattered, then painfully and scrupulously reassembled and glued”), but even this word for the process through which the almost imperceptible lines seem to have appeared on the continent of Yasha's scar recalls (for Brad, for the reader anticipates) the adjective crazy, which at least three times is applied to the word Continental in the account of the stuck record: “just that one crazy word . . . that record with the one crazy word over and over” (317); “The stuck record was yammering it over and over, that crazy word” (319).

6. Actually, the pink chenille bedspread was off by then. But the pink bed lamp was still on, casting its rosy glow over the proceedings.

7. In his recent essay on Thomas Eakins’s The Gross Clinic, Michael Fried focuses on the same topos, finding “the association of scalpel with pen literally inescapable” (178n). We should not lose sight of the fact, either, that Yasha’s scar appeared “on a somewhat elongated parchment-colored surface—as if it were a kind of writing. That Warren is comfortable with the analogy of scalpel to pen is also evident in a letter to me (see Introduction, p. 2) in which he compared the critic’s work (mine, in this instance) to a surgeon’s.

8. Unconsciously at least, Brad seems to be remembering the article in Time magazine about the death of Echegaray and to be connecting Echegaray’s black hole of an eye with the black hole God left in the sky when, driving Yasha from Nashville to Fiddlersburg early in the novel, he puts on his Beverly Hills sunglasses and
observes that "Over Tennessee, the light, on the stroke, changed... It looked like
the death of the sun. The sun was dying. No—the wave of light that brought this
news had left the point of origin light years ago. The news was, therefore, outdated.
It was like last week's Time magazine. The sun was already, in fact, dead" (28). Like
the sun that itself is like the blackness in the sky God left when He departed,
Ramon Echegaray was already, in fact, dead: "The magazine—a copy of Time—
was almost a year old" (334).

9. Although if the sun—as the black hole imagery linking its disappearance
to fathers, and to fathers' eyes, suggests—is the father, then in the very last sen­
tence of Flood Brad is still just beginning to learn how to recognize what messages
his own eyes, as opposed to those fathers', can convey: "And for a moment he
mistook the brightness of moisture in his eyes for the flicker of sun, far off, on the
chrome and safety glass of cars passing on the new highway, yonder across the lake"
(440).

Chapter 10

1. In the Atlantic Monthly, December 1973. It appeared in the collection
Or Else the following year.

2. This is the letter that Angelo wrote to Cassie from prison just before his
execution and that she never received, in which he thanked her for trying to save
his life by confessing the truth. Guilfort, who had intercepted it, stuffed it in the
safe with the rest of Angelo's gifts to Cassie.


Chapter 11

1. The buck whose death begins Meet Me in the Green Glen had paternal
qualities, too, as I argued in chapter 10.

2. The verb has phallic applications elsewhere in the novel: when Rozelle
Hardcastle called Jed up on the telephone and identified herself, "as that name
came over the wire, out of time and distance, I was clutching my cock" (19); and
when he cited his version of how his father had died with his hand similarly
engaged, Dauphine Finkel wanted to know what "the Son of Old Buck... would
be like in the clutch." It is insistently connected to his father's dying gesture: telling
the story to Stahlmann (the true—urinary—version), Jed recounts that "They
found him in the middle of the road, next morning, clutching his prick'" (66); at
the end of the novel Jed wants to go back to Dugton to "see the spot where Buck
Tewksbury had taken his lethal header with the noble dong in clutch" (399). In
sum, when Stahlmann first spoke to Jed, he was making a gesture associated in
Jed's memory with his father's last act on earth. And the walking stick is clearly
phallic—as it was when Jeremiah Beaumont wrested it from his grandfather's grasp
in World Enough and Time.

3. The suicide had nothing to do with Jed but, rather, with Stahlmann's
despair over the death, some time before, of his Jewish wife and the feeling that
he had betrayed his homeland by not defying the Nazis.
4. When Jeremiah Beaumont in *World Enough and Time* finally encountered the beeches that had figured in his dream, it was only after passing through what now appears to have been the mother's vagina, up into her womb: "Into a constricted valley, then up the stream where the valley narrowed like a gorge, with dank stone walling each side. Then suddenly, there was a little open space, with grass and a few trees like great blobs of denser blackness. From the shape, Jeremiah decided that they must be beeches" (417). Those walls of dank stone recall the caves he had explored as a boy, "dank and unvisited by sun" (315), that we have already identified as the mother's internal space. Now that we know that the father is not only the beech but the sun (the golden shower that impregnated Danaë), we can understand why Jeremiah preferred that this space be "unvisited by sun." The missing father is clearly identified with the sun when Beaumont, holed up in the cave, imagines "how my father might at that moment be standing in a field full of sun . . ." (315), wondering where his son could be. Yet, as we know from *Flood*, the father, like God, is also a black hole in the sky—a dead, black sun. That blackness is visible here, in the "great blobs of denser blackness" that Jeremiah decides must be beeches.

5. Recall that the mummies whose eyelids, according to Jason Sweetwater in *At Heaven's Gate*, like those of fetuses, were peculiarly expressive because there was nothing in them any more—an emptiness we have come to recognize in Warren as an essential characteristic of the father—were (American) Indian too. And the turban that was essential to the swami's disguise has appeared before as a sign of the father in *Band of Angels*, when Amantha saw Jimmee's bandaged head and thought he was Old Shaddy, who had once held her in his lap like a father: "the head preternaturally big with swathing of white cloth, like a turban, all familiar, terribly familiar . . . it must be Old Shaddy . . ."

6. As he approached the mare, the stallion repeated what had been the dying gesture of another buck (one, as I argued in the last chapter, with connections to the father), the one whose death opens *Meet Me in the Green Glen* (as Old Buck's opens this novel): Dark Power's "front hooves [were] pawing the air as though to climb the empty bright blueness" (277), while "The buck was in the air . . . the forelegs making an awkward pawing motion as if they were trying to climb up a wooden ladder into the air" (8; emphasis added).

7. According to the Midrash, when Joseph produced his sons before his father, Jacob (Gen. 48:9), he also produced his wife in order to prove they were really his. His spouse, Asenath, was an Egyptian, daughter of the priest Potiphera. So, unlike Dauphine Finkel, she was not Jewish, which was enough of a scandal for legends to have arisen claiming that she was. "In one recension she is pictured as a Hebrew (daughter of Shechem and Dinah) who was adopted by Potiphera; elsewhere it is claimed that although she was Egyptian, she was converted to Yahwism by Joseph" ("Asenath," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*). Like Rozelle, however, whose eyelids could hieratically close (255), she had Egyptian eyes; and like Jed's mother (who, thanks to his oedipal outlook, was in some measure his bride), she had a certain one-eyed look, for according to the same source she "was blind in one eye" (935).

8. In *Portrait of a Father*, Warren writes at some length of his father's baldness. It had begun early, at age twenty-nine; when he spoke of its premature onset, "there was the angry and despairing expression on his face which I had
never seen before, nor have ever seen since" (10). When Warren thinks back to what his father looked like to him when he was a boy, the baldness is especially prominent, and even makes him look like the kind of statue Carrington made of Butler: "Even as I now think of him in his forties he was somewhat memorable, with the dignified calm of his face, the thrust of his Roman nose, and, especially in the glint of artificial light, the bald head seeming to be carved from some stone, even marble. Not that in my boyhood I had ever seen a bust, or any statuary, except in pictures" (11).

9. Marianne Krüll points out some further similarities. The biblical story of Jacob and his sons is "a 'family romance' with striking resemblance to [Jacob Freud's] own story. Like Jacob Freud, the Jacob of the Bible had children from several marriages. Of his twelve sons he loved Joseph best because—like Sigmund Freud—he was the fruit of his father's old age... I feel certain that... he saw himself as the biblical Jacob, and cast his son in the role of Joseph. Sigmund, for his part, must have realized that his father wanted him to be a second Joseph: upright, clever, the support of his father in old age, and—I would add—a son who did not enquire into his father's past..." (161).

10. Warren also needs to urinate in "Literal Dream" (part of Altitudes and Extensions, in New and Selected Poems: 1923–1985), after having dreamed of the blood about to drop from the ceiling in Tess: "I woke at the call of nature. It was near day. / Patient I sat, staring through the / Wet pane at parse drops that struck / The last red dogwood leaves." The connections between the need to pass water and the dropping liquids, both in and out of the dream, are obvious and betray a profound understanding of Freud's theory of how dreams are made.

11. Or why had the date of the dream changed from the night after to the night before the funeral? Krüll comments that by "changing the original version and claiming that he had dreamed this dream before, and not after, the funeral, Freud was able to dissociate his lateness from the impulse to flee the scene and his consequent guilt feelings" (42). In the letter to Fliess, Freud mentions this lateness: "On the day of the funeral I was kept waiting, and therefore arrived at the house of mourning rather late. The family... took my lateness in rather bad part" (Origins, 171). But he makes no mention of it in the subsequent version. Krüll continues: "He could accordingly relate the 'winking at' requested in the dream to the trappings of the funeral... his lack of filial piety was conveniently forgotten."

12. Peter Rudnytsky comments that the editors' "explanation is at best disingenuous, since it seems clear that the alteration in The Interpretation of Dreams is a deliberate attempt to minimize his self-disclosure on Freud's part" (366n31).

Conclusion

1. The last word of the first line quoted above (not the first line of the poem) became know in the Selected Poems of 1966 and 1975; quite recently Warren apparently revised it back to believe, when he reprinted "Mortmain" in the 1988 edition of Portrait of a Father. It makes a considerable difference: believe implies that the knowledge exists and all we have to do is accept it; with know, that knowledge is much farther from our grasp, perhaps unattainable.
2. The void sought in the youthful "Crusade" is related to the nothingness at the heart of Warren's poetry that Richard Jackson, in two remarkable articles, discusses from a Heideggerean and Derridean perspective. He cites the stones in the stream in "Dream of a Dream," which sing, but "What they sing is nothing, nothing./But the joy Time plies . . ." and such Warrenian paradoxes as "the glittering metaphor/For which I could find no referent" ("Time as Hypnosis") and Time as "a concept bleached of all content" ("Heat Wave Breaks"). Some, but not all, of Derrida's deconstruction of Western notions of the origins of writing is relevant to Warren. In "Plato's Pharmacy" he articulates the oedipal force of authorship: "Writing is parricidal" (166). "The specificity of writing would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father . . . the desire of writing is indicated, designated, and denounced as a desire for orphanhood and patrical subversion" (77). According to Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, the written text is an orphan, bereft of a father to defend it and to guarantee its meaning—as Jack Burden is deprived of Willie's guarantee as to the meaningfulness of the wink. To write is indeed to engender, for both Socrates and Warren; but there is a significant difference between the two with regard to the issue at the heart of Derrida's deconstruction of Plato.

In the *Phaedrus* and elsewhere, living speech is the father of this orphan, and father is to son as speech is to writing (and as Socrates is to Plato). But in Warren the father does not, like King Thamus, reject writing; nor does he, like Socrates, only speak and not write. For he is a writer too. Robert Franklin Warren, who becomes part of Warren's literary universe in "Mortmain" and *Portrait of a Father* and elsewhere, wrote poems in his youth and would have written more had family obligations not prevented him (as Warren tells the story in *Portrait of a Father*). Prophetically, one of the two poems his son discovered announced the inversion of generational authority that Warren would embrace in such a declaration as "I am the father/Of my father's father's father," in "The Leaf," and predicted, too, that sons would one day be doing the dictation: "We are marching to that lovely land,/Where . . . children command" ("Our Pilgrimage"). In fact, the father is so much a writer in Warren that in his late long narrative poem, *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce*, the Derridean situation is precisely reversed: there it is the son who rejects the father's infatuation with writing in favor of pure orality. The elder Joseph was too much taken with "The New Book of Heaven," the white man's Bible, for the son's taste, and committed as well the foolish mistake of writing his signature on a treaty with the enemy (I discuss this at greater length in *The Braided Dream*). What the son elsewhere in Warren writes is certainly, to use a Derridean term, a *supplement* to what is lacking in the father; but it is a supplement to the father's text, not to his speech. Yet, for Warren, the father is indeed a vanished presence, his tomb the black hole the sun left behind, as in Derrida's reading of Plato "the disappearance of the god-father-capital-sun is . . . the precondition of discourse" (168).