Warren, Robert Penn (1905-1989)

Robert Penn Warren was a renowned poet, novelist, critic and educator. He matriculated to Vanderbilt University in 1921, where, with Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom, he became part of *The Fugitives,* a group of poets named for the journal they published. Warren earned a master’s degree at the University of California and accepted a Rhodes Scholarship to study at New College, Oxford University. Here, he began to pursue the close readings of literary texts that eventually became associated with New Criticism: a focus on the text itself, without reference to the biography of the writer or the historical circumstances of the text’s composition or reception. In 1930, Warren joined the Southern Agrarians, or Twelve Southerners, which produced a manifesto against industrialism and essay collection, *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.* Warren taught at Louisiana State University, where, with Cleanth Brooks, he co-founded *The Southern Review* and published the widely influential textbooks *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943). In 1944, Warren was appointed Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress and published *Selected Poems, 1923 – 1943*. In 1947, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *All the King’s Men* (1946).

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