

# Promises

Poems 1954–1956

*To Rosanna and Gabriel*



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And under blue shadow of mountain, over blue-braiding sea-shadow, 5  
The gull hangs white; whiter than white against mountain-mass,  
The gull extends motionless on shelf of air, on substance of shadow.  
The gull, at an eye-blink, will, into the astonishing statement of sun,  
pass.

All night, next door, the defective child cried; now squats in the dust  
where the lizard goes.  
The wife of the *gobbo* sits under vine leaves, she suffers, her eyes  
glare. 10  
The engaged ones sit in the privacy of bemusement, heads bent: the  
classic pose.  
Let the beetle work, the gull comment the irrelevant anguish of air,  
But at your laughter let the molecular dance of the stone-dark glimmer  
like joy in the stone's dream,  
And in that moment of possibility, let *gobbo*, *gobbo's* wife, and us, and  
all, take hands and sing: redeem, redeem!

## EMENDATIONS



## EXPLANATORY NOTES

1 **I. Sirocco** 2–4: Rocca: La Rocca, an abandoned fortress near Porto Ercole in Italy. Warren lived there with Eleanor Clark and their new daughter Rosanna in 1954.

1 **II. Gull's Cry** 10: *gobbo*] hunchback



## TEXTUAL NOTES

### Promises

#### Poems 1954–1956

For this volume I have examined the typescript, two sets of galley proofs (they differ slightly), and the plate proofs, all of them in the Beinecke Library, as well as the relevant correspondence with Random House and with Eyre and Spottiswood. The typescript is corrected both in black pencil, in what seems to be Warren's hand, and in red pencil, in what is probably Albert Erskine's. Unless noted otherwise, corrections in the typescript described here are those in black pencil. The typescript seems to have been prepared in one piece on one typewriter, with typed page numbers, although the typescript for the most part follows the magazine versions, with most of the changes being penciled in.

On 23 May 1987, Warren marked up a copy of *Promises* with proposed revisions for Stuart Wright's use. That copy is now at the Special Collections of the Emory University Library. Because Warren clearly did not collate this copy against his later revisions of the poem—indeed, he seems to have forgotten that many of the lines he revised had already been revised in later editions—I have not adopted any emendations on the sole authority of the Emory volume. I cite the emendations from that volume with permission of the Special Collections of the Emory University Library.

Warren prepared the SP66 revisions from a typescript that follows P but the setting copy is a marked up photocopy of P marked up in red pen and green pen. Some revisions were made on the dummy paste-up of SP66. I have not marked in which of these places each SP66 revision was made. The typescript for SP75 is cut and taped text prepared from SP66. The typescript for SP85 is cut and taped text prepared from SP75.

1 **To a Little Girl, One Year Old, in a Ruined Fortress** Text: P. Variants: *Partisan Review*, 23 (Spring 1955), pp. 171–78 (as “To a Little Girl, One Year Old, in Ruined Fortress”), SP66, SP75, SP85. The sequence also appeared in a 1956 private limited edition, *To a Little Girl, One Year Old, In a Ruined Fortress* (here Doggett), which was designed, illustrated, and printed by Jane Doggett in the Department of Graphic Arts, School of Design, Yale University. The sections are untitled in *PR* and in Doggett. Doggett reflects changes made after *PR*, which it cites, but Warren seems to have lost sight of the revisions he made for Doggett when he republished the poem in P. SP85 includes only “Sirocco,” and “The Child Next Door.”

1 **I. Sirocco** Title] Warren complained in a letter of September 8, 1985, to Stuart Wright that he had misspelled the word for thirty years, and that the correct spelling is “Scirocco.” But “Sirocco” is often listed as an alternate spelling, so I have chosen not to emend the title. (The letter to Wright is in the Special Collections of the Vanderbilt University Library.) Warren did not put periods after the Roman numerals in the sequence section titles in Doggett, P, English, SP66, SP75 or SP85. I have done so here in order to treat all sequences in the same way. 2–5: clamped] set *PR*, Doggett 3–9: A hill, no. Sea cliff, and crag-cocked, the embrasures] No hill, but a sea-cliff, and crag-cocked embrasures Doggett 3–14: Sea cliff,] Sea-cliff, *PR*, On a sea cliff, SP66, SP75, SP85. PTS reads “Sea-cliff,” but the hyphen is deleted in pencil. There is a red check in the margin of the line that is crossed out in pencil. I read the red check as the editor’s query, and the penciled marks as authorial revisions. Therefore I have let the reading from P stand. Where similar cases recur—as they do frequently when Warren employs hyphenated compound words in this volume—I have allowed the reading from P to stand. (Early reviewers of *Promises* complained about Warren’s verbal tic of employing hyphenated words. Clearly had he not revised his typescript, he would have given them more to complain about.) 5: anguished,] ~^ English 7: great scutcheon] a great scutcheon SP66, SP75, SP85 7: at drawbridge,] over the drawbridge, SP66, SP75, SP85 7: have now languished] now have languished PTS (revised to P) have languished SP66, SP75, SP85 8: Long in the moat,] Now long in the moat, SP66, SP75, SP85, Long now in the moat, *Emory* 8: blue,] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. These marks are for the typesetter to follow in cases where the line cannot be set on one line, but they rarely occur at places where Warren himself bent long lines in the typescript, and they are also not always followed on republication of the poems, so therefore I have treated them as a feature of the design of the book rather than as a feature of the versification of the poem. 9: Sun blaze] Sun-blaze *PR*, Doggett, PTS (revised to P) 9: it is the sirocco,] now the sirocco, SP66, SP75, SP85 10: bay face,] bay-face, *PR*, Doggett, PTS (revised to P) 10: traverses] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. 11: geometry] the geometry *PR*, Doggett, PTS (revised on PG to P) 11: survives] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. 11: rigor] rigour English 13: blueness] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. 14: gorse bloom,] gorse-bloom, *PR*, Doggett, PTS (revised to P)

1 **II. Gull’s Cry** 2: oleander,] oleanders, SP66, SP75 4: Goat droppings] Goat-droppings *PR*, Doggett, PTS (revised to P) 5: shadow] shade SP66, SP75 5: of mountain,] of the mountain, SP66, SP75 6: against mountain-mass,] against the mountain-mass, SP66, SP75 7: on shelf] on the shelf *PR*, PTS (revised to P), on a shelf SP66, SP75 7: The gull extends motionless on shelf of air,] The gull, without motion, extends on the shelf of air, Doggett 7: on substance] on the substance SP66, SP75 8: The gull, at an eye-blink] There is a red mark, crossed out in pencil, in the left margin of this line, indicating I think a query

about the hyphenation of eye-blink. But nothing is altered in pencil in the line, which leads me to believe that the penciled corrections are Warren's responses to Erskine's queries and are therefore authorial rather than editorial. Such marks are frequent in PTS, and, having noted that Warren often does not take their advice, I won't record them further. 9: where] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. There is a note in PTS in red pen, not in Warren's hand, indicating that the run-over parts of long lines should be carried over flush with the right margin. 11: bent:] ~, *PR*, Doggett 12: Let the beetle work,] And the beetle will work, *PR*, Doggett 12: air,] ~. *PR*, Doggett 13: glimmer] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. 13: at your laughter] in the moment of your laughter *PR*, Doggett, PTS (but PG is revised in pencil to P) 14: moment] instant *PR*, Doggett 14: all,] A red pencil mark in PTS here indicates where to bend the long line at the margin. 14: redeem, redeem!] *redeem, redeem!* SP66, SP75