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Perhaps upon first consideration St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and the modern American writer, Robert Penn Warren could not be more different literary and historical figures. Augustine, who lived in North Africa during the fourth and fifth centuries, has come to be considered a founder of Christian theology after completing such works as *On Christian Doctrine, On the Trinity,* and *The City of God.* Robert Penn Warren lived over 1500 years after Augustine and, as a secular writer and poet, deals in much of his writing not with doctrinal issues but specifically with aspects and concerns of the American South. However, despite the obvious differences in the experiences and lifestyles of Augustine and Warren, I argue that these writers share in their works fundamental concerns about the nature of existence and the search for meaning in life. Warren indeed read Augustine, and Augustine's writings had a direct influence on him and his poetry. Warren, for example, quotes Augustine in epigraphs to his volumes of poetry *Being Here* and *Altitudes and Extensions.* Beyond his direct citations of Augustine, however, specific themes and conflicts in Warren's poetry also reveal his ideological connections with Augustine.

Although much recent scholarship investigates the spiritual dimension of Warren's poetry, critics have yet to make a direct link between the theology of Augustine and the spirituality in Warren's writing. Most studies, in fact, emphasize Warren's opposition to orthodox religion and organized systems of belief. While Warren admittedly is not a churchgoer or member of any organized religion, his insistence upon meaning in life beyond everyday living parallels Augustine's intensive search for union with God. In his spiritual autobiography, *The Confessions*, Augustine reveals his desire for divine meaning and establishes the fundamental principle of his philosophy with the statement that "Our heart is restless until it rests in you"(*Confessions*, tr. Ryan, 43). Augustine's quest for rest with God becomes not only the subject of much of his writing, but the basis of his personal existence. Warren similarly is driven by a sense of

impatience in mortal life. In a1976 interview with Bill Moyers, Warren speaks about his own restlessness for meaning:

> Warren: I still believe in such things as religious conversion . . . though I'm a non believer, I'm a non churchgoer, put it this way: I'm rather a common type, I think now, of a yearner . . . I would say that I have a religious temperament with a scientific background.
>
> Moyers: Pilgrims sought God and looked for a promised land in hereafter. What do you yearn for?
>
> Warren: I yearn for significance, for life as significance. (Watkins, 204-5)

Warren, like Augustine, expresses a restlessness or yearning for meaning that encompasses his entire life and work. Although Warren does not say that he yearns for "God the father" in this interview, Warren writes explicitly in his poems about God and ultimate truth as universal human ideals. Furthermore, Warren's view of "significance," the goal of his search, does contain values similar to those involving union with Augustine's God. In his foreword to *Democracy and Poetry*, Warren defines "significance": "By *significant* I mean two things: continuity -- the self as a development in time, with a past and a future; and responsibility -- the self as a moral identity recognizing itself capable of action worthy of praise or blame" (xiii). These two achievements, the positioning of self in the greater scheme of time and recognition of personal responsibility, also mark the central steps in the Augustinian journey toward God.

Augustine's and Warren's emphases on the conscious formation of a responsible and whole identity are important not only because they are philosophically similar but because they originate in part from the writers' similar reactions to the societies in which they lived. Both Augustine and Warren lived in eras of great change in which the development and maintenance of a unified self was important both personally and socially. Augustine, for example, struggles to define his identity throughout his life as he

undertakes a spiritual journey from sinfulness toward union with God. The notion of the past therefore remains important to Augustine as he learns from his former mistakes and searches for belonging in history. In addition to facing questions of personal identity, Augustine as the Bishop of Hippo also had to address problems of identity on a social level as he led a newly founded Christian community. Although Hippo was part of Rome during Augustine's leadership there, he had to contend with non-Christian forces that occupied the northern boundary of the Sahara (O'Donnel, 2). Furthermore, after the sack of Rome in 410, many Christians fled to Africa from Rome. In Africa they began to question seriously the value and power of their new Christian faith and God who let their entire world be overtaken (O'Donnel, 2). In Augustine's time, therefore, identity and spiritual conviction were fundamental issues on both a personal and social level as Augustine struggles to discover his individual identity as well as the larger identity of the Christian community.

Warren's preoccupations with identity and personal responsibility also stem partly from the ideology of modern American society. In his interview with Bill Moyers Warren states that "the whole western world is undergoing some deep change in its very nature in what it can believe in. And one of these things is clearly how democracy can function in a world of technology" (Watkins, 198). Warren sees the modern age of technology and machines as one of the world's most significant changes. He feels that in his era is "the sense of disintegration of the notion of the individual . . . .the machines [of power] disintegrate the individual so you have no individual sense of responsibility and no awareness that the individual has a past and a place" (Watkins, 22). In his lifetime Warren experienced the same sense of social instability and change that Augustine experienced 1500 years before. Notably, Warren compares the change and uncertainty within American life to the fall of the Roman Empire, which occurred during Augustine's time: "[In modern America] human responsibility, human instinct is changing. Now to *what* nobody knows yet. It's the world of the Roman Empire again. Things are falling

apart and we don't know how to define this" (Watkins, 192). The sense of change on a societal level that Warren mentions also occurs within him personally. Warren must find his identity not only within the changing American ideology but also must discover the relationship between his strong southern heritage and his current self outside of the South. As Augustine looks back to his past as an essential part of his journey toward Christianity, Warren also struggles to define his position within time as well as the importance of the past within his identity.

Thus, both Augustine and Warren, borne out of massive social change and uncertainty, seek to define what is constant and meaningful in a world limited by time. Their discoveries do differ somewhat since Warren is not an orthodox Christian who sees God the father as ultimate happiness, but on the whole, Augustine and Warren manifest similar expectations and beliefs about the journey toward divine significance. In this essay I would like to draw attention specifically to each writer's treatment of the process of spiritual journey, the human experience of time, and the importance of memory within each of these issues. Focusing specifically on Warren's poems "The Ballad of Billie Potts," "There's a Grandfather's Clock in the Hall," and "Reinterment: Recollection of a Grandfather," I will examine how Augustine and Warren each view journey, time, and memory as fundamental aspects of achieving spiritual conversion and complete identity.

Let us turn first to the idea of journey as the primary model for spiritual development in the thought of Augustine and Warren. As mentioned before, although the nature of the divinity that Augustine and Warren seek is somewhat different, their concepts of spiritual journey remain similar as they persistently convey in their writings the gradual movement from sin toward self knowledge, personal responsibility, and ultimately God. I think that Augustine's *Confessions* and Warren's "The Ballad of Billie Potts" provide the most effective comparison of each writer's fundamental beliefs about the process and importance of spiritual journey. Before moving directly to a comparison of these works, however, I shall identify Augustine's general thoughts about the nature of

existence on earth and the possibility for redemption in a fallen world, as revealed in the *Confessions*, *The City of God*, and the *Enchiridion*.

In all of his works Augustine argues definitively and most importantly that to live a correct life each individual must love rightly, or rather, must love God above all else. According to Augustine, ultimate happiness, permanence, and peace exist only with God in heaven. However, as a mortal being who has undergone a spiritual conversion, Augustine elaborates extensively on the possibility for salvation on earth, and his *Confessions* deals most explicitly with the reality of spiritual transformation. Using the paradigm of the journey, Augustine in the *Confessions* reveals to us the challenges, progress, and ultimate resolution of his spiritual struggles. With journey as the model for personal development, we are also able to see more specifically the three phases of his spiritual life: *aversio* or being turned away from God, *retorqueo,* the point of turning back toward God, and *conversio*, the stage of being turned toward God. In addition to his account of the process of conversion in the *Confessions* Augustine's beliefs about the existence of evil, the need for self knowledge, and the mystery of God's grace are also significant to the idea of spiritual transformation.

Augustine's position on evil becomes an essential aspect of his philosophy as he explains how God can allow evil to exist and how individuals should live despite the presence of evil. According to Augustine, because God made the world, everything in it is inherently good. Evil and sin therefore come into existence as a corruption of natural goodness rather than as independent entities. Although opposites, goodness and evil are inextricably connected, as Augustine explains in the *Enchiridion*: "Yet although there is no doubt that good and evil are contraries, not only can they exist together but evil without good and in anything that is not good cannot exist at all." (379). In *The City of God* Augustine again underscores the relationship between good and evil as he explains the connection between the earthly and heavenly cities. While the earthly city is formed "by the love of self, even to the contempt of God," the heavenly city is formed by "the

love of God, even to the contempt of self" (*City of God*, tr Dodds, 477). Despite their opposite natures, however, the earthly and heavenly cities "are mingled together from the beginning down to the end" because evil cannot exist without goodness (668). Connected to his theory that evil is not an independent entity is Augustine's rejection of the Manichean philosophy which proposed that life on earth was a battle ground between a good and an evil god. Augustine rejects this philosophy because it not only allows for an evil being to exist independently of the good, but also because it denies humans responsibility for their actions.

Augustine's rejection of Manicheanism on the basis that the follower has no responsibility for sin marks a significant turn in Augustine's own intellectual and moral journey. With this rejection Augustine comes to accept that humans indeed are responsible for their actions and should control themselves accordingly. In the *Confessions* Augustine recounts his disillusionment with the Manichean philosophy: "I thought that it was not ourselves who sin, but that some sort of different nature within us commits the sin. . . . I loved to excuse myself, and to accuse I know not what other being that was present with me but yet was not I. But in truth I was the one whole being and my own impiety had divided me against myself" (126). With the admission of personal responsibility, Augustine no longer experiences a divided identity but discovers his unified self. It is important to note that just as Augustine's personal impiety creates a schism within his identity, impiety or sin on a larger level creates a schism within community. Augustine focuses not only on the personal effects of sin but on its social ramifications as well in order to stress that sin destroys community. In *Conversion and Disenchantment in Augustine's Spiritual Career* R. A. Markus notes Augustine's emphasis on sin and community as he explains that "all community -- with God, with one's fellows, and even with one's own self -- is fatally ruptured by sin. The radical flaw in human nature is . . . transcribed in terms of a retreat into a closed-off self" (32). As Augustine recognizes the isolating potential of sin and that humans are accountable for

their sins, self knowledge and reason become essential to Augustine's philosophy as a way to achieve personal goodness and community. On one level, self knowledge allows all individuals to learn about their weaknesses, past mistakes, and to modify their behavior accordingly. In the *Confessions* Augustine also refers to how self knowledge can lead to a connection with divinity: ". . . under your leadership I entered into my inmost being. . . . I entered there and by my soul's eye . . . I saw above that same eye of my soul, above my mind an unchangeable light . . . . He who knows the truth knows that light, and he who knows it knows eternity (170).

Although self knowledge marks perhaps the essential advancement toward leading a correct life, Augustine admits that knowledge alone does not allow for salvation. True blessedness lies only within God, and until an individual is united with God, he or she will remain in some sense a flawed being. Augustine believes that a person's salvation is largely dependent on the grace of God, which as Markus puts it "strikes gratuitously, unpredictably, where God wills" (20). While humans can use reason and discover personal truths, Augustine denies that humans can rationally understand the order of the universe and mysteries of faith. For example, Markus explains: "Augustine never ceased to believe that there was an order in the world. But from the late 390s it was no longer an order that could be so calmly taken for granted, nor one to be detected by well educated and well exercised intellectual powers, or realized in this life by the rational control of mind over body, or of an enlightened ruler over a society" (21). For Augustine, human reason stretches only so far and remains incapable of deciphering God's grace and ultimate plan. Therefore, beyond reason and self knowledge, God's grace and influence play a significant role in the journey toward spiritual conversion.

"The Ballad of Billie Potts," one of Robert Penn Warren's earliest poems, is a modern American version of Augustine's spiritual transformation as demonstrated in the *Confessions*. Although the poem, which is based upon a Kentucky folk tale, is obviously

a secular work that is different from the *Confessions* in many ways, "Billie Potts" examines spiritual issues very similar to those treated by Augustine. In "Billie Potts" Warren juxtaposes sections of simple narrative language with more formal parenthetical stanzas to relate the story of the Potts family, who operate an inn where they rob and kill the guests for profit. The narrative stanzas focus primarily on the actions of Billie and his family while the parenthetical sections dramatize Billie's journey of spiritual transformation in the Augustinian tradition as he literally travels west to live out the American dream. Particularly explicit in Warren's use of the journey is his emphasis that while movement away from origin in itself causes isolation and false security, departure from the home is a necessary step in spiritual development and ultimate reunion with the divinity. In "Sacramental Vision: The Poetry of Robert Penn Warren," A. L. Clements asserts that Warren's poetry affirms a presence of divinity "only after its journey through the valley of suffering and the dead, only after spending its season in hell" (Clark, 232). Thus, in Billie's story and the story of the human journey, Warren seems to dramatize Augustine's question, "Even now, after the descent of life to you, do you not wish to ascend up to it and live?" (*Confessions*, 105). Despite his adaptation of the Augustinian journey to modern American mythology, Warren, like Augustine, deals with the same fundamental issues of spiritual conversion, the coexistence of good and evil, the value and limitation of self knowledge, and the mystery of grace.

The central action in "Billie Potts" involves the planned attack on a visitor in which Big Billie calls on his son to act as the middle man in the murder. Billie, however, decides to kill the man himself, but is instead shot and returns home to be banished by his father for not obeying his orders. As Warren introduces the characters and the setting he first establishes a sense of the coexistence of evil and good, as discussed by Augustine, within the world of the Potts family. Given mythical and Biblical significance, the area where the Pottses live is known as "the land between the rivers," a translation, as Victor Strandberg notes, of Mesopotamia, the paradise between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

However, in direct contrast to the edenic connotations of "the land between the rivers," Warren in the following parenthetical gloss, reveals that the land has been corrupted and no longer retains any utopian qualities. Referring to the land he describes, for example: "the fetid bottoms where the slough uncoils." Warren goes on to write that "the landscape steams and simmers. . . .[and] the hills [are] now gutted, red. . . ." (*New and Selected Poems*, 287). The presence of the Potts family themselves also denies the possibility of utopia. Warren's initial description of the Potts family reveals their manifest deformations and alludes to their more significant lack of moral behavior. Warren, for instance, describes Billie Potts as a character whose "gut stuck out ' like a croker of nubbins" and whose "holler and shout / made the bob-cat shiver." Additionally, Mrs. Potts is a "dark and little" woman who "never said a word" and who had "eyes [that] worked slow and narrow like a cat." Billie, the son of the Potts, is himself "a clabber-headed bastard with snot in his nose / and big red wrists hanging out of his clothes."

Beyond their general physical descriptions, the actions and livelihood of the Potts also serve to contrast the initially edenic connotations of their surroundings by revealing the family's corruption of human goodness. Motivated by the desire for wealth and profit, the Potts seem to embody the worst sins that exist, according to Augustine, in the city of man. Warren describes the greed of Billie:

> Big Billie was sharp at swap and trade. . . .
> And he added up his money while he sat by the fire,
> And sat in the shade while folks sweated and strove,
> For he was the one who fatted and throve
> in the section between the rivers.

Exemplifying the "mingling" of good and evil in the city of man, the Potts exploit the existence of kindness in the world as they create an illusion of shelter and security with their inn. Living essentially two opposing identities as they warmly entertain and feed

the visitors during their stay, the Potts suddenly reverse their welcoming pretensions as they kill and rob the people for whom they had just pretended to care. Thus by corrupting the natural virtues of hospitality and security, the Potts family and their actions adhere to Augustine's definition of evil as a privation of good. The Potts never acknowledge that their actions are sinful, and Little Billie sees no wrong in robbing and murdering. He, "grinning to think / how Pap would be proud and Mammy glad / to know what a thriving boy they had," instead opts to kill the visitor himself. Further revealing the callousness of the Potts, Big Billie sends little Billie away as a punishment for his action. As Billie leaves he begins the journey that shapes not only his spiritual existence but becomes a symbol of the human search for identity and wholeness.

Before Warren describes Billie's actual departure, however, he treats the concept of journey in general and describes the initial phase of *aversio*. Following the narrative explanation of the existence of the inn for "folks bound West," the parenthetical gloss addresses the initial isolation that the sinful journeyor experiences as he or she leaves home. Emphasizing the traveler's total alienation from familiar surroundings, Warren compares the situation of the journeyor to that of a fish ripped out of the water. Although Warren describes the journeyor's experience to the readers, the traveler remains isolated because the reader cannot even hear the traveler's torment. Warren, for example, writes that "you" do not:

> . . . hear the rustle of the heart
> that, heave and settle, grasp and start,
> Heaves like a fish in the ribs' dark basket borne
> West from the great water's depth whence it was torn.

With the image of the journeyor's heart as a fish torn from the water, Warren foreshadows Billie's isolation in the West and perhaps alludes more specifically to the spiritual void of the American West as the destination for those seeking material wealth and opportunity. Despite the threatening implications of journey, however, Warren goes

on to say that beings are nonetheless driven away from their origins. Warren speaks generally of the origin of life as "the slush and swill of the world's great pot" and then explains how its creations are left to journey towards a sense of meaning:

> . . . the unfulfilled
> Disparate glitter, gleam, wild symptom, seed
> Flung in the long wind: silent, they proceed
> Past meadow, salt-lick, and the lyric swale
> Enter the arbor, shadow of trees, fade, fail.

Thus, in accordance to the Augustinian journey and in anticipation of Billie's journey West, Warren introduces the notion that journey is necessary for all beings, although it may initially lead to a material and superficial existence.

Following Warren's initial exploration of the larger concept of journey, he examines both the human desire for truth, often the motivation for journey, and the reality, as iterated by Augustine, that rational understanding fails in the search for ultimate knowledge of existence. Warren explains that humans fail to understand the nature of their lives, and in particular their origin and fate. Just as Augustine believes in a divine order that no human can comprehend, Warren writes: "There was a beginning but you cannot see it. / There will be an end but you cannot see it" Although the essence of existence is undefinable, Warren notes that humans nonetheless continue to question and attempt to rationalize the nature of life. Humanity, however, ultimately fails to know the meaning of existence as ". . . speculation rasps its idiot nails / across the dry slate where you did the sum." Warren also declares that "the answer is in the back of the book but the page is gone." In addition to the failure of analysis, Warren also reveals the inability to gain knowledge from past generations. Partially in reference to little Billie who learned nothing about goodness from his parents, Warren describes the failure of the supposed wisdom of the elderly. He writes that "Grandma told you to tell the truth, but she is dead." Furthermore, past generations are "beyond your call or question now" and

are "sainted and sad and sage as the hairy ass . . . ." The human, who cannot rely completely on his own rationality, can also find no consolation in other more experienced people. Warren asserts that others do not have the answers and that people are left with only instinct and faith to complete the journey toward wholeness with self and God.

To illustrate further the principles of journey involving the failure of rationality, the desire for self knowledge, and the mystery of *conversio*, the glosses turn more specifically to Billie's life and spiritual development. Drawing upon his rebuke of rational knowledge in the previous gloss, Warren narrates little Billie's life-altering decision to shoot the traveler and urges the reader to make his or her own decision about the nature of the action as well. Warren describes Billie's decision to kill the man as a mockery of the human rational process. As he directly describes the child's thought process, Warren underscores that Little Billie's action is not a whim or moral decision but an attempt at reason:

> Little Billie had something in his clabber-head
> By way of brains, and he reckoned he knew
> How to skin a cat or add two and two.
> So long before the sky got red . . .
> He hobbled his horse back in the swamp
> And scratched his stomach and grinned to think . . . .

Equating his ability to do simple arithmetic to the ability to decide to kill a person, Warren mocks the superiority of human reason. In the ballad stanza he does not go on to explain little Billie's actual decision but elaborates in the following parenthetical gloss about the nature of his choice. The parenthetical lines draw attention to the seriousness of little Billie's act by asking the reader to imagine him or herself as either the killer or the victim. Recalling the notion of journey, Warren demands the reader to imagine being the traveler:

> Think of yourself riding away from the dawn,
> Think of yourself and the unnamed ones who had gone

Before, riding, who rode away from *goodbye, goodbye,*
And toward *hello,* toward time's unwinking eye.

The reader must perceive him or herself as the person who journeys and leaves behind part of the self while looking forward to new experiences, despite imminent danger and the limitations of time. Warren then asks that the reader, after relating to the role of the traveler, identify with Billie, the potential murderer. Warren recognizes the extremes of humanity and emphasizing the coexistence of good and evil, assumes that the reader as a human can readily relate to both characters and situations. Warren says: "think of yourself crouched at the swamp-edge . . . .[as] you wait for the stranger's hoofs on the soft trace." Finally, Warren further engages the reader in the poem as he demands the reader to choose a perspective and to question his or her own identity: "Think of yourself at dawn: Which one are you? What?"

With the reader forced to make a decision and at least to identify with Billie's perspective, the reader remains involved both with Billie as a character and with Billie as a human as he commits the crime and embarks upon his journey West. From this point the parenthetical stanzas examine the psychological and spiritual effects that the journey has on Billie and on human individuals as a whole. After Billie heads West like many Americans "to try his luck," Warren explains in the following gloss that the westward wanderer becomes obsessed with attaining innocence and a pure identity. In Book II of the *Confessions* Augustine explains this fruitless search for innocence in the state of *aversio*: "Thus the soul commits fornication when it is turned away from you, and apart from you, seeks such pure, clean things as it does not find except when it returns to you" (73). Therefore little Billie, like many Americans, and like the young Augustine, becomes a figure of Narcissus who searches superficially for personal meaning and value that he can find only with God. Warren writes that in the West:

. . .you lean with the implacable thirst of self,
. . .you lean to the image which is yourself,

> To set lip to lip, fix eye on bulging eye,
> To drink not of stream but of your deep identity . . . .

Warren explains that initial movement away from the place of origin and the established boundaries of home, leads to the development of a new sense of identity that is so alluring that the wanderer wants to consume his entire being in the exploration of this new self. In discussing his own time of *aversio*, Augustine similarly recounts his fascination and belief in Manicheanism. Speaking of his teacher, Augustine writes:

> Therefore, that greed of mine with which I had so long awaited the man, found delight in his lively manner and feeling in disputation and with his language, which was so appropriate and arose so easily to clothe his thoughts. I was delighted with him, and together with many others, indeed more so than many of them, I praised and extolled him (*Confessions*, 120).

Just as Augustine is attracted only to the superficial charisma and manner of his teacher, rather than to universal truths of his philosophy, Billie is attracted to only a reflection on the water: "water is water and it flows / Under the image on the water the water coils and goes." The image remains thus only an image and not the essence of identity as the wanderer believes. Unable to find confirmation of identity within an image on the water, the person on the journey then seeks validation of the new self in other people as "the eyes of the new friend will reflect the new face / and his mouth will speak to frame / the syllables of the new name."

The person who journeys initially comes to believe that his experiences in the West make him an entirely new and better person. Warren describes the formation of this new identity as a virtually holy experience as the new name and face "have been dipped in the healing flood . . . dipped in the redeeming blood . . .dipped in Time." However, this apparent redemptive formation of a new identity is actually a superficial illusion. The comfort and sense of self that Billie apparently achieves offers only a false sense of security. In the West Billie actually remains the fish torn out of the water as he discovers the emptiness of his life.

In the following stanza Warren then explores the point of *retorqueo* as he examines Billie's rejection of the West as a natural part of the Augustinian journey toward God. Within Billie a gradual awareness begins to develop that wholeness of self depends on acceptance of the wholeness of life; and that the new identity in the West neglects the person and meaning of the past. Although Warren describes a successful existence in the West for Billie, the West no longer remains the final destination as Billie, an emblem of all humans, realizes the superficiality of his new life and supposed identity.

> Though your luck held and the market was always satisfactory,
> Though the letter always came and your lovers were true,
> Though you always received the respect due to your position,
> Though your hand never failed of its cunning and your glands always
> thoroughly knew their business,
> Though your conscience was easy and you were assured of your innocence,
> You became gradually aware that something was missing from the picture,
>
> And upon close inspection exclaimed: "Why, I'm not in it at all!"
> Which was perfectly true.

With the realization that the journey West fails due in part to its material obsessions and denial of the past, Billie as the wanderer embarks on the final travel home. For as Augustine questions, "What does ambition seek, except honor and glory, while you alone are to be honored above all else and are glorious forever?" (*Confessions,* 72). Thus after leaving the origin in search of unity and prosperity, the traveler is compelled to return in search once again for that same unity. At this turning point, Billie demonstrates a sincere desire for self knowledge and spiritual meaning in life, not for prosperity and superficial comfort. In the West Billie is unable to achieve wholeness and must ascend homeward to replace what is missing. Warren explains:

> Therefore you tried to remember when you had last had
> Whatever it was you had lost,
> And you decided to retrace your steps from that point,

But it was a long way back.
It was, nevertheless, absolutely essential to make the effort . . . .

You came back.
For there is no place like home.

Thus Billie as the unfulfilled journeyor returns home in search of what he has lost -- in search of innocence, reconciliation, and wholeness of self.

Once Billie enters the state of *conversio* and returns home, he demonstrates humility, love, and the desire for forgiveness. Billie, secure now of his true identity, is able to conceal from his parents who he really is in a playful attempt to fool them. As the parenthetical information explains, Billie rejects the supposed innocence and identity formed in the West as mere naiveté and falsity. He is now "weary of the new friend's smile . . . weary of innocence and the husks of Time." Billie and the human wanderer he represents return home to gain not a new identity or false sense of healing, but instead a sense of "conscious innocence" as they accept the past with its sins and flaws "to ask forgiveness and the patrimony of [their] crime." His last act while alive, is to drink from the stream, not in search of his reflection, but reverently on his knees to drink the water from his home. As Billie enters the home on the final step of the journey, his birthplace is removed from ordinary existence to become a place of "no-time," or rather the place where God's *chairos* allows rebirth in the formation of complete self. Warren's description of Billie's return home reflects Augustine's belief in the intervention of God's grace. While Warren does not here refer specifically to God, he describes an innate force that unites Billie with the natural world and drives him homeward toward reconciliation. On the return the wanderer, for example, becomes brother to animals and part of the world's rhythm as he "plunges" back home just as "the bee knows . . . the eel's cold ganglia burn . . . the goose hoots North . . .[and] the salmon heaves at the fall." Billie, at this point after his repentance, participates in what Warren terms the "osmosis of being."

Warren's explanation of "osmosis of being" in his essay "Knowledge and the Image of Man, " parallels Billie's experience:

> There is . . . in the world with continual and intimate
> interpenetratedness an inevitable osmosis of being
> which in the end does not deny, but affirms identity.
> It affirms it . . . [as] man creates new perspectives,
> discovers new values -- that is, a new self -- and so
> the identity is a continually emerging, and unfolding, a
> self affirming and, we hope, a self-corrective creation. (Warren, 58)

After his conversion Billie does ultimately transcend the evil of the city of man after death, but in opposition to the positive outcome of the Augustinian model of journey, Billie is killed by his own parents before he can reestablish connection to the past as a living person. The most valuable outcome of the tale perhaps occurs with the parents' recognition of their sinfulness and the subsequent interruption of the legacy of sin within "the land between the rivers." The end of the poem, though, perhaps as product of the modern secularized world, is not a tribute to the power and eternity of God's grace, but instead reveals the eternal presence of evil within the existence of goodness in the human world. As A.L. Clements writes : "Warren's joyful, interrelated and sacramental vision is not an easy or facilely optimistic one but one gained through judicious qualification and hard, unblinking, recurrent recognition, even a pervasive sense of pain, darkness, and death" (Clark, 232). The wanderer comes back in search for forgiveness and reunion not to triumph and live happily but instead to "kneel in the sacramental silence of evening / at the feet of the old man / who is evil and ignorant and old. . . ." The poem thus ends with an image that maintains the dual existence of evil and goodness but that also reveals the possibility for the reassertion of goodness and the potential for change.

Building upon the general issues of the Augustinian journey that he addresses in "Billie Potts," Warren, like Augustine, begins to focus more specifically in his poetry on the nature of time and its role in spiritual transformation. In "Billie Potts" Warren does

touch briefly on the concept of time and its relationship to journey. He most significantly mentions time in the poem as he describes Billie's false conversion in the West. Commenting upon Billie's seemingly newfound innocence, Warren writes:

> [The name and face] have been dipped in the healing flood.
> For they have been dipped in the redeeming blood.
> For they have been dipped in Time.
> For Time is always the new place,
> And no-place.
> For Time is always the new name and the new face,
>
> And no-name and no-face.

From this brief and initial comment on time, we are able to see not only the complexity of time but also its importance as an agent in spiritual conversion. According to Warren in the above passage, time has dual natures; time is both new place and no-place, new name and no-name, and new face and no-face. This idea that time is multi-dimensional is fundamental to Warren's and Augustine's theories of time. In "Billie Potts" Warren goes on to describe the different realms of time and how they relate to Billie's journey. Continuing this description of Billie's false innocence, Warren says that "for Time is motion / For Time is innocence / For Time is West." This explanation of time, however, turns out to be inadequate as we learn that in the West Billie is not so innocent but rather ignorant of his past, his true self, and his personal responsibility. When Billie does actually realize the emptiness of his life, he, "weary of innocence and the husks of Time," returns home. According to Warren, home, unlike the West, is a place of "no-Time." For Billie, who is dressed in disguise, home is not the new name and new face, but the no-name and no-face. In no-Time Billie is the universal man who is able to connect with his past, the natural world, and the divinity as he accepts responsibility and seeks forgiveness.

Beyond the "Ballad of Billie Potts," however, Warren treats the concept of time in much greater detail and gives us the opportunity to see the parallels between his and

Augustine's thoughts about time. In his discussion of time in Book XI of the *Confessions*, Augustine establishes fundamental principles about time which Warren echoes in much of his poetry. Termed "perhaps the most time conscious poet of this century" by Richard Jackson in his article, "The Generous Time: Robert Penn Warren and the Phenomenology of the Moment" Warren shares with Augustine an intense desire to discover the nature of time (1). Warren, for example, cites Augustine in an epigraph to his volume of poetry *Being Here* as he quotes: "I thirst to know the power and nature of time" (*Confessions*, 295). Each writer's investigation of time is fundamentally connected by the belief that there are essentially different forms of time. For Augustine and Warren, there is an obvious distinction between time as measured by the clock and Time as a more spiritual entity removed from constant change. Although this designation of *chronos* and *chairos* exists in the writings of Augustine and Warren, each writer sees the nature of *chairos* somewhat differently. For Augustine, there is a contrast between the time of man as governed by change and the Time of God as eternity. Augustine, for example, begins his discussion of time in Book XI with the invocation "Lord, eternity is yours," and later continues to explore the nature of God's eternity. Speaking to God he says:

> You precede all past times in the sublimity of an ever present eternity, and you surpass all future times, because they are yet to come, and when they come, they shall be past . . . . Your years neither come nor go, but our years come and go so that all of them may come . . . . With you, today is eternity. (286)

In Warren's poetry, however, the concept of Time is a more secular notion. In a 1957 interview with Ralph Ellison, Warren reveals that there are additional realms of time beyond that of the clock as he states that "America lives in two times, chronological time and history" (Watkins, 40). In another interview twelve years later, Warren expands upon this distinction as he remarks: "If you lived, say, in my generation, you still live in two kinds of time. The element of the past, the tale told . . . . The sense of the past and the sense of the present are somehow intertwined constantly" (Watkins, 91). In addition

to this definition of the past or history as a presence beyond the limits of chronological time, Warren's poetry also reveals other moments which exist out of clock time and provide a glimpse into eternity. These moments often occur as an interruption of chronological time that is inspired by a sense of communion with nature or the power of recollection. In *The Achievement of Robert Penn Warren* James Justus, writes about *Being Here* that: "The same speaker who is haunted by human limitation is preternaturally alert for any sign in nature that consciousness itself may be transcended, any intimations that the self, rapt by distances, high peaks, and stars, may enter into an eternity that those natural phenomena often symbolize" (109). Specifically in "First Moment of Autumn Recognized," for example, Warren describes such a glimpse of eternity inspired by nature which, unlike Augustine's, includes no reference to the Christian God. As Warren recognizes the chronological change of seasons, he experiences a sense of permanence outside of the progression of time: "This is to be no mere moment, however brief, / however blessed, for / moment means time, and this is no time, / only the dream, untimed, between / season and season" (*NSP*, 62). Other moments outside of *chronos*, like Billie Potts' return to the "homeland of no-Time," seem to reveal a divine presence of eternity in the world.

Warren's and Augustine's notions of Time, thus, both refer to a sense of permanence and peace beyond the everyday world. For Augustine, however, this sense of permanence lies within the Christian God and can be achieved through faith and God's grace. For Warren, it is located in a less definitive but no less majestic source and according to Jackson, it provides meaning ironically as it ultimately "reveals the changeable in our lives . . . and returns us to time" (2). This return to time, which Warren and also Augustine recognize, is inevitable for all mortal beings who, despite notions of eternity, exist in a world of change and loss. However, although Augustine and Warren do admit that humanity is ultimately powerless against the progression of

the clock, they also reveal that humans possess internal capacities that allow them to evaluate and cope with the constant change of chronological time.

Augustine's central idea about time as experienced by humans is that time exists in and is measured by the mind. Augustine initially questions how the past and the future exist since by logical definition they have no being; that is, past events have already occurred and the future has yet to happen. Augustine, however, ultimately concludes that past and future do exist because they are discerned by the mind. Commenting on the past and future, Augustine writes: "If such things were nothing at all, they could not be perceived in any way. Therefore, both future and past times have being" (*Confessions*, 290). Time then becomes not the "movements of the sun, moon, and stars" but a function of the mind (*Confessions*, 295). Augustine explains:

> It is in you, O my mind, that I measure my times. Do not interrupt me by crying that time is . . . . The impression that passing things make upon you remains, even after those things have passed. That present state is what I measure, not the things which pass away so that it be made. That is what I measure when I measure tracts of time. Therefore, either this is time, or I do not measure time. (*Confessions*, 300)

With time as existing in the impressions that events make upon the mind, time is not just the progression of seconds, minutes, and hours, but is defined according to how people experience and consider what happens.

Since time is measured in the mind, according to Augustine, the terms past, present, and future no longer serve to define time adequately, since they label only the movement of clock time from future to present to past. Augustine accordingly creates a new terminology for describing time in relation to human perception. Augustine focuses on the human dimensions of time and refers more specifically to the presence of the present, the presence of the past, and the presence of the future. Augustine further links these concepts to human perception as he labels the presence of the past, present, and future as memory, awareness, and expectation. Augustine's use of these terms serves to

emphasize how time is experienced within the mind. Through memory, awareness, and expectation, the mind orders and categorizes events for itself in a pattern often very different from the progressive movement of the time of the clock.

The existence and ordering of time in the mind through memory, awareness, and expectation are significant ideas in the poetry of Robert Penn Warren. From his commentary on time in "Billie Potts," Warren goes on to elaborate and expand upon the concept of time in his later poetry. As a writer who professes that the past constantly lives in the present, Warren sees time as a flexible and dynamic entity that shapes our lives and identities. The importance of time and more specifically the human experience of time in Warren's poetry becomes almost immediately obvious in his work. In the majority of his poems Warren discusses time in some capacity and often makes reference to the realms of "Timelessness," "no-Time," and "de-Timed." Furthermore, throughout his poetry and especially in the later poems, Warren repeatedly refers to the "coil "or "uncoil" of time "like a snake that swallows its tail" ("If Snakes Were Blue", *NSP*, 63). What remains distinctive about Warren's treatment of time is his view, like Augustine's, that time exists in the mind and plays a fundamental role in personal and spiritual development.

For Augustine and Warren, memory, awareness, and expectation are central to the identity of an individual because they are teleological and provide a way in which to evaluate life experiences and to position oneself in relation to the past, present, and future. In the *Confessions,* for example, Augustine obviously looks upon his past to discover the nature of his sinful actions and to avoid repetition of those actions in the future. In book X he says: "I combine with past events images of various things . . . and on this basis reason about future actions, events, and hopes and think of all these things in the present" (237). More generally, Warren's poetry reflects a similar need to view time as a whole in order to establish meaning and affirm personal identity. In

"Sacramental Vision: the Poetry of Robert Penn Warren, Clements explains the importance of understanding time as a living whole:

> . . .any event is meaningful only in relation to past and future events. The past is not separate and complete in itself but an ever developing part of a changing presence and future. Once this knowledge is learned, one's individual life and all life may be seen to fall into coherent and inevitable patterns which give meaning to the past, present, and future. (Clark, 229)

In "Tale of Time," for example, as Warren recounts his mother's death, he focuses on a past event in an attempt to find meaning and hope for his own life, and he comes to describe a time beyond chronological time in which he yearns to order and understand the idea of being: "Between the clod and the midnight / The time was. / There had been the public ritual and there would be / The private realization, / And now the time was, and / In that time the heart cries out for coherence" (*NSP*, 245-6).

In other poems like "There's a Grandfather's Clock in the Hall," we witness directly the mind's perception of time as it also focuses on different events and experiences to determine their meaning, importance, and connection to identity. Like Augustine in Book XI of the *Confessions*, Warren in "Clock in the Hall" explores the nature of time's progression, the powerlessness of humanity over time, and the possibility for happiness in a world of continuous change. In the first stanza Warren, like Augustine, questions conventional ideas about the movement and measurement of time. As Warren watches a grandfather's clock in the hall, he asserts that between the ticks of the minute hand, which denote the existence and progression of time, lies the realm of "no-Time." Warren writes: "There's a grandfather's clock in the hall, watch it closely. The minute / hand stands still, then it jumps, and in between jumps there is / no-Time" (*NSP*, 198). This idea that a dimension exists beyond the standard movement of the clock offers an alternative to the perspective that time is merely the inescapable and mechanical measurement of days, hours, or seconds. Rather, in the "period" of no-time,

Warren is not confined to the constant change from future to present to past, but can move freely among each time in his consciousness and discover new ways in which the past, present, and future relate.

The following stanzas of the poem describe the nature of no-Time and present a more complicated scheme for time than the movement of the clock. Perhaps Warren's most obvious revision of time lies in the fact that virtually the entire poem takes place during this period of no-Time which, according to the measurement of the clock, is actually only one minute. Furthermore, in his account of no-time Warren also undermines mechanical time as he reveals a complex interweaving of what we know as past, present, and future in order to show that these conditions are perhaps not necessarily definitive but instead often overlap and interact. In his discussion of no-time Warren first refers to the past and says that in no-time, ". . . you are a child again watching the reflection of early morning / sunlight on the ceiling above your bed." Although Warren cannot return to the past itself because it no longer exists, he can, as Augustine states, make the past present to him through memory. Thus, Warren's first image in the realm of no-time exemplifies the Augustinian "presence of the past" as the recollection of his childhood is not just a former event but comes alive in the present through memory. Consistently using the present tense, Warren continues to focus on the presence of the past as he remembers other events throughout his life such as struggling with an anchor underwater, thrusting in the act of intercourse, and proceeding to the operating room. The poem then shifts, however, away from Warren's personal past to that of his mother.

When Warren begins to think about his mother, the standard measurements of past, present, and future are again complicated as Warren remembers with great emotion a time when he did not yet exist. As Warren continues to describe the images and thoughts that arise within no-time, he writes about his mother on her wedding day:

> . . .your mother is standing up to get married and is very pretty, and
> excited and is a virgin, and your heart overflows, and you watch her

with tears in your eyes. . .

Although Warren was not yet born at the time of his mother's wedding, he is able to recreate an image of that event and in reaction feel a strong sense of love and happiness. Warren does not merely speculate about how his mother's wedding day was, but instead has a concrete picture of how she looked and acted. Warren does not only remember the scene but actually "watch[es]" as if his mother on her wedding day is currently present to him. Thus, it seems as if Warren takes the definition of memory as presented in the first stanzas a step further with the reality that in no-time an individual can also make present a past in which he or she did not even exist. No-time becomes in a sense all time as Warren has access to all eras and memories. Furthermore, this imagined memory lends a sense of possibility and therefore a sense of future to the past as Warren speculates about how a past event occurred. In his musings about his mother's wedding day, Warren perhaps also implies that the ability to imagine the past can foster a sense of unity among individuals, as the past experiences of one person can also become the adopted memories of another.

After reflecting upon his mother as a bride, Warren returns to the more immediate past and exposes other relations between past, present, and future as he contemplates his mother's death as well as his own mortality. Warren connects the past to the present as he remembers his mother, but also connects the future to the present as he wonders about his own fate. Juxtaposing thoughts of the past with thoughts of the future Warren writes: "[Your mother] is the one in the hospital room and she is really dying. . . .They have taken out her false teeth. . . .You stand there and wonder if you will ever have to wear false teeth." Unlike the continuous progression of time as recorded by the clock, Warren can move from past to future and later back to past simply by thinking about each distinct time in the present. Therefore, as in Augustine's theory of time, the mind itself seems to control the order and duration of all events.

From Warren's musings about his own future, he then returns to the past and discusses his final conversation with his mother before her death. At this stage in the poem the past event of his mother's death remains Warren's reference point, yet Warren talks about the future in relation to this occurrence. For example, Warren recounts a conversation with his mother and then looks to the future from this moment to remark that these words would be her last: ". . .she is asking if it is a new suit that you are wearing. . . .You say yes . . . . For you do not yet know that the question . . . is the last thing she will ever say to you." Warren, thus, describes a future but within the context of a past event. With present knowledge of the outcome of the situation, Warren in reality is looking back to the past but in his explanation of that past, he, paradoxically speaks of a future that has already occurred. Warren, thus, perhaps goes further than Augustine with his exploration of time as he addresses the existence of a "past future" -- a time that has already occurred but remains the future within the presence of the past.

In addition to illustrating the complex and varied interaction between past, present, and future in the realm of no-time, Warren also acknowledges in "Clock in the Hall" the inevitable progress of time and its often painful effects on humanity. While memory seems to carry within it past, present, and future and allows for free movement between these times, memory is not an escape from *chronos*. Warren thus addresses the inability of humans to know the future, to make the present last, and to correct the past. Warren, for example, conveys intense personal suffering at the death of his mother and must accept that he can never again see her during his lifetime. Furthermore, the pain at his mother's loss is magnified by the fact that Warren knows that his mother will die but is unsure exactly when. As a result of his ignorance about the future, Warren's last words to his mother are not of love or gratitude but instead of "murderous triviality." After his dying mother asks if Warren is wearing a new suit, Warren responds:

> You say yes and hate her uremic guts, for she has no right to make you
> hurt the way that question hurts.

You do not know why that question makes your heart hurt like a kick in
the scrotum,
For you do not yet know that the question, in its murderous triviality, is
the last thing she will ever say to you . . . .

As a result of the power of time Warren experiences intense pain that he describes in terms of physical suffering . Warren's mother ultimately dies, and he has no ability to return to the time of her life in order at least to say good-bye without regret. Compounding the sense of personal loss and isolation resulting from death and the movement of time, Warren shifts the poem to a wider focus as he emphasizes his ignorance not only of the fate of his mother but also of the occurrences in the larger world. Just as Warren does not know he has heard his mother for the last time, he also does not "know what baptism is occurring in a sod-roofed hut or hole on the / night-swept steppes of Asia . . . ." Warren's illustration that baptism is occurring thousands of miles away at the moment of his mother's death serves on one level to emphasize the seemingly unrelated experience that humans have even though they live in the same moment. However, the image of baptism also presents a sense of hope as rebirth occurs simultaneously with death in the world.

Although Warren highlights the loss and suffering intrinsic to a life governed by the ceaseless change of time, he does not deny the possibility of peace and reconciliation within human existence. Like Augustine, Warren seems to ask in his poem: "who can lay hold on the heart and give it fixity, so that for some little moment it may be stable, and for a fraction of time may grasp the splendor of a constant eternity?" (*Confessions*, 296). Warren's response to this question does not guarantee attainment of eternity but does serve as a lesson of hope for an existence that is ultimately restricted by the movement of time. It is the mind's perception of time that presents the possibility for coherence in a world of change. The mind's ability to remember, to be aware, and to expect, provide a way to retain a sense of the permanence of time. In "Tale of Time" Warren emphasizes

the power of memory and the possibility for continuity as he explains the response or "solution" to personal loss:

> . . . You
> Must eat the dead.
> You must eat them completely, bone, blood, flesh, gristle, even
> Such hair as can be forced. You
> Must undertake this in the dark of the moon, but
> At your plenilune of anguish.
>
> Immortality is not impossible,
> Even joy. (*NSP*, 429)

The connection of past to present and the possibility for existence of the past in the future occur through memory, awareness, and expectation and provide glimpses of eternity in life. Warren's final command in "There's a Grandfather's Clock in the Hall" calls us to action and discourages us to be fearful of or limited by the progression of time. Warren advises:

> *Seize the nettle of innocence in*
> *both your hands, for this is the only way, and every*
> *Ulcer in love's lazaret may, like a dawn-stung gem, sing -- or even burst*
> *into whoops of, perhaps, holiness.*

It is possible for moments of joy, understanding, and even "holiness" to shine forth from ordinary time as we immortalize what has passed through love and memory. After suffering through change and loss, one can move beyond the sting of the nettle to reach the underlying innocence and value of life's occurrences. As Warren himself plunges into no-Time to examine and reorder his life experiences, he can heal the suffering that occurs within the realm of time and achieve a sacramental vision of joy. Although the vision of no-Time and the poem end as "Time thrusts through the time of no-Time," we remain empowered by the ability of the mind to search for coherence and to defy internally the incessant progression of the clock.

Within the constant progress of chronological time, memory for Augustine and Warren becomes the essential way to define identity and to position self within the larger

realm of time. The glimpses of Time beyond the clock that Augustine and Warren describe often come through the process of memory. For each writer memory is a continual reevaluation of personal experience that affects present and future action. The pasts of Augustine and Warren are particularly important to each writer personally as they attempt to remember the past as part of their lives but also to maintain a distinct identity in the present. Augustine, for example, rejects his past as sinful, but also recognizes it as a fundamental part of his identity and spiritual transformation. Warren also acknowledges an ideological movement away from his southern ancestors, but nonetheless views that heritage as essential in forming his current self. Thus both Augustine and Warren search in their writings to discover how they as individuals fit into the past and how the past fits into their present identities.

Before moving to a comparison of Augustine's and Warren's exploration of the past and memory, it is necessary to investigate Augustine's theory of memory as put forth in the *Confessions.* Although St. Augustine's *Confessions* as a whole explore the nature and function of memory as Augustine writes about his past, specifically in Book X Augustine investigates the significance of memory to human beings. In his exploration of the "fields and vast palaces of memory" Augustine most obviously is impressed by the power and versatility of memory. Amazed by the ability of the mind to recollect virtually any image, Augustine discusses the act of remembering not as a vague sense of recognition but as a powerful recreation of ideas and experiences. Equating the process of memory with the actual perception of phenomena, Augustine concludes that in memory: "I could see inwardly with dimensions just as great as if I were actually looking at them outside my mind." Memory, for Augustine, is not an unreal representation of events long past but a realm in which these events are recreated as realities. Augustine, for example, comments: "I mention the image of the sun and it is present in my memory. I recall not the image of this image but the image itself." Furthermore, as Augustine discusses his memory of ideas "not touched by sense-perception," he states, "I hid in

memory not their images but the realities." Memory, thus, becomes a way actually to re-experience aspects of life that are gone in the progression of time. Connected to this view that memory presents the possibility of recreating external phenomena and ideas, is Augustine's additional belief that memory is an orderly process controlled by the mind.

In contrast to the modern emphasis on memory weakening with aging and remaining out of human control, Augustine argues that the mind organizes and categorizes perceptions within memory throughout life. In his description of the learning process, for example, Augustine reveals the organizational control that the mind possesses over memory:

> by acts of thought we gather together and collect . . . things that memory contained here and there and without any order and then observe them and see to it that they be placed near at hand as it were in that very memory, where they previous lay scattered and neglected. Thus they will occur easily to a mind already familiar with them. (240)

Learning and recognition, therefore, are willed and are made possible by the mind in an ordered procedure. Although Augustine does indeed view memory as a technical and ordered process, he does not dismiss the inherent complexity of memory as he considers both forgetfulness and the deep "caverns" of the mind. In his consideration of forgetfulness, Augustine exposes the paradox that forgetfulness must be in memory since he can recollect its image and existence; yet forgetfulness, by definition, destroys what is in memory. Augustine ultimately admits that he cannot comprehend this nature of forgetfulness and its relationship to memory. Augustine, however, does not express that he himself or even memory is debilitated by forgetfulness, but instead continues to marvel at the ability of the mind to recollect almost any image on demand. Augustine also addresses the recurrent existence of offensive images that present themselves to him during sleep. In this subconscious state, Augustine describes how he is "attack[ed]" by memories of his past sinfulness yet also how he experiences a sense of perverse pleasure

at the remembrance of his evil. Returning to the view that memory is an ordered process, however, Augustine recognizes that these images occur only in dreams and that, in a conscious state, reason functions to suppress and control "illicit" thoughts. Augustine, then suggests that memory should be controlled by reason in order to establish a responsible and unified self.

As the larger structure of the *Confessions* reveals, memory becomes not only a means of recreating and categorizing experiences, but in so doing acts also as the major vehicle for self-definition. The whole of the *Confessions,* as an exploration of Augustine's past and memory, illustrates the development of Augustine's identity as an individual who has rejected sin and then turned back toward God. Augustine must reconcile himself with the past in order to live as a complete person who is united with God in the present and the future. For Augustine memory provides a means for consciously establishing an integrated and enlightened self. Elizabeth de Mijolla in *Autobiographical Quests* illustrates Augustine's emphasis on the importance of memory in establishing identity:

> Augustine allows that memories may menace a man, habits may hold him, wrong thinking mislead him, but for all the subtlety of his psychological analyses, Augustine never allows that a man ultimately is denied a conscious choice on determining his character . . . . Reason ruling recollection, every man is responsible for what use he makes of his past, in the present and in the future. (23)

Although Augustine believes that each individual remains obligated to use the past in the formation of a more responsible self, he admits that this task is often difficult as, for example, he remarks: "There is a struggle between my regrets at my evil past and my memories of good joys, and which side has the victory I do not know." Nonetheless, Augustine remains compelled to explore and to discover the relationship between the past and his present self.

Robert Penn Warren's poem "Reinterment: Recollection of a Grandfather," which has largely been neglected by critics, embodies Augustine's theory of memory as a controlled entity that is essential in establishing an integrated identity. Like Augustine, Warren also interrogates his own memory as he positions himself in relationship to his grandfather and the Southern past. In an interview Warren speaks of the significance of his grandfather within his memory:

> I recollect that grandfather very vividly . . . .already an old man when I knew him, a confederate veteran . . . . His daughters used to say that he was a 'visionary,' by which they meant he was not practical. No doubt, in their sense they were right. But in quite another sense I suppose he was a 'visionary' to me, too, looming much larger than life, the living symbol of the wild action and romance of the past. He was, whatever his own small part in great events may have been, "history." (Watkins, 65)

Since Warren's grandfather is himself history, Warren sees the past from a strongly personal perspective. As Warren recollects the era that his grandfather represents and as he attempts to define his relationship to it, his perspective and thoughts are, therefore, not objective but are complicated in many ways by his love for his grandfather. Although the Southern past seems backward to Warren with its overt racism and advocacy of slavery, Warren also recognizes valuable traditions and lessons that he has learned from his grandfather. In order for Warren ultimately to resolve his relationship with the past, he turns to memory in "Reinterment" not only to evaluate his life's experiences but to position his life within the larger realm of time. In the poem Warren reveals the significance and power of the memory of his grandfather as he illustrates that his grandfather actually resides within his skull and attempts to communicate with him. The presence of Warren's grandfather in his head, however, reveals not just the strength of memory but the tension between the ideologies of past and present that interferes with Warren's individual existence. Virtually haunted by the memory of his grandfather,

Warren must gain control over his memory through reason and make a conscious decision regarding his place and identity within time.

In the opening stanza of "Reinterment: Recollection of a Grandfather," Warren, like Augustine, reveals the intensity and reality of memory as he describes the remembrance of his grandfather. In the very first lines Warren explains that the memory of his grandfather is not a part of the past but is a living presence within him that has affected and continues to affect his life: "What a strange feeling all the years to carry / it in your head!" (*NSP*, 49). By placing the verb "carry" at the end of an unstopped line, Warren stresses its meaning and, thus, creates and an image of himself actually holding the presence of his grandfather within his mind. Further emphasizing the personal significance of memory, Warren, in the next sentence, again uses the verb "carry" in reference to his grandfather as a fetus. Likening the presence of memory within himself to the presence of a child in the womb, Warren writes:

> What a strange feeling all the years to carry
> It in your head! Once -- say almost
> A hundred and sixty-odd years ago, and
> Miles away -- a young woman carried it/
> In her belly....

Warren's parallel between the existence of his grandfather within his memory and the existence of his grandfather within the womb underscores the intensity, vitality, and close physical presence of memory. Echoing Augustine's belief in the strength of memory, Warren illustrates that his grandfather is a reality within his mind. Furthermore, Warren shows the power and endurance of his recollection as he contrasts the temporal and physical distance of his grandfather's origin with the closeness of his grandfather within his memory.

As the poem progresses, however, Warren reveals that the very closeness of his grandfather in memory is the source of an internal conflict between the past and the present. Although the existence of Warren's grandfather in the womb and in memory is

similar in terms of physical closeness and vitality, the two locations represent very different circumstances for Warren's grandfather. Warren makes the conflict between past and present apparent as he describes his grandfather's loneliness in memory, in contrast to his grandfather's comfort in the womb where "[it] knew itself part of the world it lived in." Warren's memory seems to jail his grandfather who remains "locked in [his] head" and who makes "strange noises all night in [his] skull...fumbling to get out". As Warren continues to remember and to examine this conflict, his grandfather takes on a stronger identity and no longer remains the "it" of the first stanza. Lamenting a person alive in the recesses of his memory Warren writes: "He knows few others there or what they talk about." Warren's grandfather, representative of an age and ideology abandoned by the modern intellectual world, is alienated among "the new, strange voices" of Warren's mind.

As Warren continues to explore his memory he is able to recreate the era and identity of his grandfather as well as to explore his own role in the realm of time and family history. The poem moves toward a more detailed examination of Warren's relationship to his grandfather and the conflict that his presence produces. Similar to Augustine's discussion of the past images that "attack" him while he sleeps, Warren, in the third stanza, explains that the conflict produced by his grandfather extends into his dreams. Within the dream Warren struggles to resolve his position in response to his grandfather's demands for freedom and compliance. Warren depicts a virtual battle scene within the mind as his grandfather fights for prominence within Warren's thoughts and existence. As his grandfather's "croak demand[s] explanation of the totally illegal seizure" of his mind by new thoughts and beliefs, Warren struggles to keep his grandfather buried deep within. Recreating a sense of the struggle itself through alliteration and onomatopoeia, Warren describes the confrontation: "Then tussle and tangling./ But whence the choked weeping, manic laughter....It's a mob scene of some sort, and then/ *zip* and *wish*, like bat wings in dark air...." Because Warren's grandfather

is his blood and his progenitor, Warren is not able to dismiss and ignore his grandfather's pleas for release. Left with no other solution, Warren explains how he attempts to embrace his grandfather and listen to his demands: "But sometimes silence; and I seem to see/ how out of the jail of my head he comes free." Despite his efforts at communication, however, Warren cannot relate to the memory of his grandfather: "And in twilight,/ His lips move without sound, his hands stretch out to me there./ But his face fades from my sight." The conflict, thus, remains unsolved. As the individual he currently is, Warren, even when willing, cannot understand or reach his own grandfather; yet, Warren also is unable to free himself from the responsibility he feels to assimilate the past within him.

Exhibiting the Augustinian view that memory is controlled by the mind, Warren awakes from dream to examine consciously the strength of his grandfather's legacy and ultimately reasons that as an individual in the present he cannot rationally achieve connection with the past. In the fourth stanza the grandfather's presence and demands escalate. Warren explains that "It's again the fingernails clawing to get out,/ To get out and tell me a thousand things/ to make me aware of what life's obligation is." Warren remains haunted by the order and obligation of the direct past. Like Augustine who denies the modern perception that memory is entropic, Warren realizes that as he ages, perhaps now identifying more closely than ever with his grandfather, the memory intensifies: "Nails dig at a skull-seam./ They are stronger and sharper each year..../Each year more clawlike -- as I watch hair go thin and pate gleam." At the same time that Warren recognizes the growing existence of his grandfather, he is forced to acknowledge that there remains an immeasurable distance between their personal identities and systems of belief. As he yearns for a connection to the past, but also remains loyal to his present ideals, Warren realizes that he ultimately must choose between the two forces of past and present within his mind. Warren uses the past, as Augustine suggests, to form a unified identity for himself as he comes to realize that the ideological distance between himself and his grandfather is too great to overcome. Warren can only resign himself to

make a place within his heart, not the womb nor the mind, for his grandfather as a being of the past. Warren seems to resolve the struggle with his acceptance that "there's nothing to do but feel my heart full/ Of what was true more than three-score years ago."

In the final stanza Warren evaluates the personal effects of his decision as well as the isolating progress of time. After accepting that his grandfather represents ideals very different from those of today, Warren anticipates the night when he will have no remembrance of his grandfather and the past for which he stands: "Some night, not far off, I'll sleep with no such recollection...." Although he holds his grandfather in his heart, Warren will no longer experience the intense presence of the past that he felt before with his grandfather in memory. He plans to let go of the aspects of his grandfather and the past that no longer apply to current ideas and establishments. Warren will move beyond "his old-fashioned lingo...the scratched-in-dust map of Shiloh, and Bloody Pond...." However, Warren acknowledges regrettably that with his and the world's abandonment of these dated expressions comes the withdrawal from other valuable things for which Warren's grandfather and the past stand. A sense of loss and fragmentation pervades the end of the poem as Warren realizes that he has put the entire past behind him with its valuable lessons inextricably tied to its negative ones. With the rejection of his grandfather's tormenting appeals and lessons about life's obligations, he, as part of the present world also removes himself from "at dinner the ritual grace...the notion a man's word should equal his bond, / and the use of a word like *honor* as no comic disgrace."

With the past behind him, Warren initially feels cut off from his personal origin and history. As Warren recognizes that both he and the modern world have moved beyond the lessons and legacy of his ancestors, a spiritual disconnection on a universal level accompanies the last thoughts of his grandfather. Warren explains:

> And in our last communal trance, when the past has left no trace
> He'll not feel the world's contempt or condescending smile,
> For there'll be nobody left in that after-while,
> To love him -- or recognize his kind. Certainly not his face.

Warren confirms that there is now an even greater distance between present and past with his rejection of his grandfather's traditions and precepts. The alienation that Warren feels in the final stanza serves to contrast the sense of belonging that Warren explains his grandfather felt in the womb. Referring to this comfort within the womb Warren asks the reader in the first stanza: "Do you remember a place like that?" Warren, now, in the final stanza, seems to answer this initial question for his reader. He admits that time indifferently defines our existence and governs our relationship to the past often leaving all people with a sense of alienation and fragmentation from both history and the present. Warren's conclusion, however, is ultimately not so bleak as he experiences a sense of reconciliation with the knowledge that he, if no one else, can at least love his grandfather. The ability of human beings to consider and reflect upon their place in time is especially valuable because it allows for the development of a conscious identity beyond the often negative legacies of the past.

Similar to Augustine's theory, memory then for Robert Penn Warren in "Reinterment: Recollection of a Grandfather" becomes more than a way to remember but a way to negotiate one's place within the indifferent progression of time. For example, Warren does more than simply conjure an image of his grandfather as he remembers in the poem. Rather, through memory, Warren recognizes that he cannot be a living part of the past and, thus, actually reinters his grandfather as he sees the ideological distance between them. With the burial of his grandfather within his heart, Warren is left with the knowledge that he can no longer rely on the traditions and guidelines of history whether they are noble or not. This realization leaves him initially alienated from his origin. The poem itself, however, as another act of remembering becomes the definitive step toward repairing his disconnectedness from the past. By allowing Warren to reflect upon the nature of his new relationship to history, recollection, both as the subject and product of the poem, gives Warren the power to reorient himself toward a sense of belonging, or at least healing, within the progression of time.

Overall, in their lives and writings Augustine and Warren share the compulsion to find divine meaning in life. Although they come from different times and backgrounds, they see in common not only the need for spiritual meaning but the process and requirements of achieving union with God or at least a sense of his peace on earth, no matter how fleeting. Augustine and Warren remain alike in their belief that good and evil are fundamentally connected in this world and that both must be experienced in order to appreciate fully the value of goodness. Self-knowledge also becomes a way to attain meaning in life, as the understanding of one's actions and personal development leads to the acceptance of individual responsibility and whole identity. Knowledge and examination of the past, furthermore, serve not only to establish a stronger sense of self in the present but to provide for a sense of one's place in the larger context of time. Beyond the importance of self-knowledge, however, Augustine and Warren express that for all its value, self-knowledge is ultimately limited as a way to find divine significance. Reason and knowledge, although necessary for spiritual growth, cannot explain the mysteries of God's grace and the divine order of the universe. Reason and faith must complement each other as components in spiritual transformation.

Augustine's writings and Warren's poetry also reveal that the struggle for divine meaning, although necessary, is never easily won. For both writers, man on earth is limited by chronological time and achieves a sense of unity and meaning only after suffering and loss. Although through awareness, expectation, and especially memory, humanity can attempt to create coherence and meaning out of their experiences, time as constant change ultimately reasserts itself despite any glimpses of eternity. Nonetheless, the mind's ability to produce meaning and a sense of continuity in the presence of chronological change, empowers and aids humans in the search for spiritual significance.

In conclusion, it is important to address that perhaps the most fundamental difference between Augustine's and Warren's concepts of spiritual journey, time, and

memory involves their individual perceptions of God. Augustine the Bishop and devout Christian has a more immediate and concrete perception of God than does Warren. Although Augustine writes about his own spiritual conversion and the importance of seeking divine meaning, he does so with the basic understanding that these steps are essential in order to reach God in heaven. For Augustine, self-knowledge, personal responsibility, and memory are parts of the greater goal of immortality with God. For Warren, however, who admits his yearning for spiritual significance without belief in orthodox religion, it seems that self-knowledge, personal responsibility, and memory are themselves the meaningful rewards for life on earth. Although to Warren these parts of the spiritual struggle are the actual goal, this belief does not contradict Augustine's philosophy but reveals the different perspectives of the two men. While Warren does write about God and a divine presence that mortals cannot comprehend, the divinity is less explicit and available to humans in Warren's poetry than in Augustine's works. Warren remains more focused on life on earth, not the afterlife, and thus seems to give a greater importance to humanity's spiritual developments, instead of life with God in heaven, as themselves an attainment of grace. However, what makes Warren and Augustine similar and significant as thinkers is not their individual conceptions of God but their portrayal of the tension between the divine and the profane on earth, and their insistence, regardless of the larger goal, upon man's need to create moral awareness and meaning within life.

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