

## PROLOGUE

### Tell Me a Story

*Robert Penn Warren*

[A]

Long ago, in Kentucky, I, a boy, stood  
By a dirt road, in first dark, and heard  
The great geese hoot northward.

I could not see them, there being no moon  
And the stars sparse. I heard them.

I did not know what was happening in my heart.

It was the season before the elderberry blooms,  
Therefore they were going north.

The sound was passing northward.

[B]

Tell me a story.

In this century, and moment, of mania,  
Tell me a story.

Make it a story of great distances, and starlight.

The name of the story will be Time,  
But you must not pronounce its name.

Tell me a story of deep delight.

Robert Burt (ed.), *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren*  
(Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1998)