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ROBERT PENN WARREN: PHILOSOPHER-NOVELIST

by

George John Jabol

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of the requirements for the degree of
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INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago at an interview in the Rome apartment of Ralph Ellison, Robert Penn Warren related how he acquired an early aversion for reductionistic systems of thought. In his teens, he explained, he read Buckle's History of Civilization:

> Thing that interested me about Buckle was that he had the one big answer to everything: geography. History is all explained by geography. I read Buckle and then I could explain everything. It gave me quite a hold over the other kids; they hadn't read Buckle. I had the answer to everything. Buckle was my Marx. That is, he gave you one answer to everything, and the same dead-sure certainty. After I had had my session with Buckle and the one-answer system at the age of thirteen, or whatever it was, I was somewhat inoculated against Marx and his one-answer system when he and the depression hit me when I was about twenty-five. I am not being frivolous about Marx; but when I began to hear some of my friends talk about him in 1930, I thought, "Here we go again, boys." I had previously gotten hold of one key to the universe. Buckle. And somewhere along the way I had lost the notion that there was ever going to be just one key. [1]

At the same interview he made it clear that he also opposes a systematic approach in his method of writing and prefers to regard his art as one of searching for meanings rather than one of imposing preconceived answers. Commenting upon his creation of Night Rider and At Heaven's Gate, he said, "But what I want to emphasize is the fact that I was fumbling rather than working according to plan and already arrived at convictions. When you start any book you don't know what, ultimately, your issues are. You try to write to find

them. You're fiddling with the stuff, hoping to make sense, whatever kind of sense you can make."[2]

These statements and others like them are surprising in view of the fact that Warren not only deals with a similarity of philosophical themes in novel after novel, but also shapes them into unity very much in the manner of a systematic philosopher. In statement he eschews systematism, but in nine novels and especially in his essay "Knowledge and the Image of Man" he presents a highly structured world picture. This is not to say that he has a "one-answer system" like that of Buckle or Marx, but it is to say that he has an organized philosophy and that, contrary to his statements about his method of writing, he has brought definite preconceptions to his art.

Warren's dislike for systematism and his consequent refusal to own up to the fact that he has a philosophy have only added to a kind of critical confusion surrounding his work and in a sense have helped to prevent his achieving the eminence he deserves as a novelist. He has been the victim of a more than average amount of misinterpretation--what Leonard Casper refers to as the "critical lag"[3] in the study of his fiction--which a more honest explanation of his intentions as a writer than he has so far given might have succeeded in avoiding. As the critical situation now stands there is a compelling need, as John L. Longley, Jr. has aptly expressed it, "to get the Augean stables cleaned up enough to reveal the general shape of the building."[4] Ignorance of this important shape is the critical bane which has led not only to journalistic slams, such as Warren's being called a fascist for his creation of the likeable demagogue Willie Stark, but also to academic irrelevancy, such as the examination in a recent dissertation of the importance of environment in Warren's fictional world, where, as Louis D. Rubin, Jr. has more cogently argued, "environment finally matters very little."[5]

Critics have not, of course, ignored the obviously ruminative nature of Warren's fiction, but their observations are characterized by an unfortunate tendency to regard Warren as an ideationally fragmented, noncommittal speculator upon philosophical issues. Illustrative of this is Paul West's statement that Warren's work is "something he fingers endlessly, and in the long run it is the feel, not the feel's meaning, that he communicates, although many meanings are tried on for size on the way."[6] This critical tendency has been reinforced by Warren's well known essay on Nostromo in which he refers to Joseph Conrad as a "philosophical novelist." While numerous critics have seized upon this misleading appellation as descriptive of Warren as well, the difficulty is that Warren's approach to experience and meanings is synthetic rather than analytic, and is therefore contrary to that of the "philosophical novelist" as Warren defines him. "The philosophical novelist, or poet," Warren says in the essay, "is one for whom the documentation of the world is constantly striving to rise to the level of generalization about values, for whom the image strives to rise to symbol, for whom images always fall into a dialectical configuration, for whom the urgency of experience, no matter how vividly and strongly experience may enchant, is the urgency to know the meaning of experience."[7] The philosophical novelist, then, works from the particular to the general, from experience to meaning. Such is not the direction of Warren, whose art is one of imposing meaning upon experience. Rather than beginning with experience and working meanings out of it, he starts with his philosophy and renders his stories meaningful by applying his ideas to the facts. The undeniable proof of this is that every one of his novels is essentially a reworking of the same basic philosophy. It is characteristically true that his protagonists search through experience for values and meanings, but it is not true that Warren does. In a consciously premeditated and artistic manner he guides and patterns his

characters' searches so that the writing of his novels, far from being the pursuit of meanings from selected experience, becomes the pursuit of suitable experiences to fit selected meaning. The "philosophical novelist," says Warren, "is (not) schematic and deductive. It is to say quite the contrary, that he is willing to go naked into the pit, again and again, to make the same old struggle for his truth." If, as he says, the philosophical novelist is not "schematic and deductive," then Warren is something other than a philosophical novelist. Not at all naked when he descends into the pit, he is, in fact, a "philosopher-novelist," by which is meant a writer who approaches his art through the imposition upon facts of systematic ideas.

While Warren's method as an artist is deductive, his philosophy, in positing that abstractionism is a form of evil, is decidedly antideductive. Abstractionism, in fact, he regards as the worst form of evil, and indeed this would account for both his antipathy toward the "one-answer system," which attempts to reduce the world to an abstraction, and his disavowel of having anything like a philosophy of his own, since such an admission would be incommensurate with the antiabstractionist tenet of his philosophy and would involve him in complicity with the very evil he is fighting against. This distinction between his deductive method as a writer and the opposed, generally mediatory content of his philosophy is a critically important one. It has bearing upon the description of his philosophy undertaken in Chapter I, where the balancing and harmonizing of dichotomies (rather than the repudiation of one half for the other) is discussed as his major approach towards solving the philosophical problem of dualism, and crucial bearing upon the discussion of problems relating to his narrative art undertaken in Chapter II, where paradoxically his abstraction of ideas upon his narrative materials results in his major

artistic "evil," the undesirable dichotomy between rumination and narrative event, idea and fact, within his fiction.

Warren's narrative art has serious flaws. His deductive approach to his art is responsible for incongruities between narration and rumination, as in Flood, where the story of Bradwell Tolliver, Yasha Jones, and their loves and lives in Fiddlersburg, Tennessee, is burdened inappropriately with exceedingly weighty philosophical issues which the "romance of our time," as Warren designates the novel, simply cannot support. Effective artistic integration is further weakened by Warren's extensive use of historical material. While the utilization of such material is consistent with his notion of including the past in our configuration of present reality, it interferes with his deductive method of writing. Given this method, congruity of fact and idea would be abetted through the use of invented rather than historical narrative material which, because of its relative inflexibility, precludes to some extent the interrelatedness of meanings imposed upon fixed events. This may cause a collision rather than unity of ideas, as it does in World Enough and Time, where Warren's adherence to the history of the Beaumont tragedy, even though loose, contributes to the novel's ideational chaos.

A further liability to narrative integration, equally as serious as the drawbacks of his deductive method, is created insofar as his narrative art is informed by the precepts of his philosophy. The difficulty is that the philosophical "unity" Warren prescribes is not entirely amenable to the creation of a satisfactorily unified narrative art. In "Knowledge and the Image of Man" he presents his philosophical solution to the dichotomy dilemma as a "fitful and precarious . . . unity presupposing separateness."[8] Applied correlatively to his narrative art, this kind of unity produces similarly ambivalent effects. It is a curious feature of Warren's fictional world that, like the spider web world conceived of by Cass Mastern

in All the King's Men, it is, or strives to be, "all of one piece," yet, as the title suggests, it is broken beyond repair. The "terrible division" which occurs philosophically in the private and public lives of his characters has its artistic counterpart, and regardless of what evaluation we give to the philosophy as philosophy, its influence upon the narrative art is generally detrimental. Only when Warren introduces a third artistic element to bind together the "precarious" unities of his violent dialectics does he begin to overcome this limitation; he manages this to an extent in All the King's Men through the use of the enveloping narrative perspective of Jack Burden, and in Meet Me in the Green Glen he is more successful through the use of a pervasive lyricism. Elsewhere, lacking a satisfactory device to integrate the pieces of his fiction, his narrative art incurs a split similar to that he describes philosophically.

The primacy to Warren of his philosophy is such that, not only does he repeatedly work it through novel after novel, but, as this survey of his artistic difficulties should make clear, he even goes to the extent, when necessary, of surrendering his narrative art to the fulfillment of his philosophy. This is not to say that Warren is not a conscientious or even a good artist; he has scored exceptional successes in the novel genre. It is to say, however, that the deliverance of his system of ideas supercedes in importance the effective integration of fact and idea in his art, or more simply, that idea is finally more important to him than fact.

Relatively little work has been done to discover the reasons for this precedence of "idea" in his fiction, or to locate its sources and the circumstances which led to Warren's confronting the problem of dualism. In the search for ideational sources critical labors have been expended upon Warren's association with the Fugitives and Agrarians. Unquestionably he does owe much to these groups, and particularly to John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, whose works are

premised upon dualism and with whom Warren has had close personal and professional connections. Of the Fugitives Warren has said, "In a very important way that group was my education. I was exposed to the liveliness and range of the talk and the wrangle of argument."[9] But he has also remarked that this and other groups with which he has been associated had no wholesale agreement of ideas: he adds about the Fugitives that "there were deep differences in temperament and esthetic theory,"[10] and of the New Critics he says, "It sometimes seems hard to find much they do have in common except their enemies."[11]

Recent scholarship has tended to confirm Warren's estimation of his alinement with the Fugitives and Agrarians. His obligation to these groups was chiefly that they inspired him, providing him early in his career with a rich forum for the exchange of ideas. Even the members' shared "Southernness" was less a point of unification than one of departure: "It was not," says Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "in the poetasters of the pre-World War I South that the Fugitives found their poetic confreres; rather they looked toward Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Mann, Hart Crane, Robert Graves, Wallace Stevens. . . . They were part of a world literary movement, a world-wide artistic questioning of their time and place."[12]

Warren personally was steered toward older literatures in his search for a unified world picture to combat the shattered image of modern experience, where he felt that "man is the victim of abstraction and mechanism."[13] He read heavily in the literatures of the Renaissance, initially the Metaphysicals and later Shakespeare and Dante; John L. Stewart in The Burden of Time has convincingly argued that he was as much influenced by writers of the Renaissance as he was by those of the Southern Renascence.[14] In his observation of the modern world he longed for a pattern of completeness; he felt we can nostalgically look back upon

> Dante's world of the Catholic synthesis, Shakespeare's world of Renaissance energy, or the world of our grandfathers who lived before Shiloh and Gettysburg and feel the loss of traditional values and despair in its aimlessness and fragmentation. Any of those older worlds, so it seems now, was a world in which . . . men were, integer for integer, more simple and complete.[15]

This and other evidence concerning Warren's relations with and indebtedness to the Fugitive and Agrarian movements is considered in Chapter III of this study. There as here the evidence supports the need to universalize Warren beyond the demographical limitations which have critically constrained him, hindering an appreciation of the distinctness of his art from other members of these schools and an acknowledgement of his participation in the continuum of Western literature.

Warren's own critical essays are themselves attempts to get beyond limited perspectives to the deeper and universal issues in his subjects' art. These essays are typically concerned with the philosophical aspects of other novelists, and almost invariably with those issues which conform to the same fundamental dilemma he confronts. We have already seen this overriding concern for the philosophical in Warren's treatment of Joseph Conrad. Similarly, Warren describes William Faulkner as "not concerned ultimately with the South, but with a general philosophical view."[16] Denying that the emphasis in Faulkner's work is upon the disintegration of the Southern traditional life, Warren adds:

> I should put the emphasis not in terms of South and North, but in terms of issues common to our modern world. The Faulkner legend is not merely a legend of the South, but of a general plight and problem. The modern world is in moral confusion. It does suffer from a lack of

> discipline, of sanction, of community of values, of a sense of mission.[17]

He finds the identical moral crisis and attempt to resolve it philosophically in Ernest Hemingway, who deals "seriously with a moral and philosophical issue, which, for better or worse, does exist in the modern world in substantially the terms presented by Hemingway."[18] The issue is that "the general human community, the general human project, has gone to pot."[19] He compares the world depicted by Hemingway to Wordsworth's in that Hemingway's world too can no longer believe in the absolutisms, the "lies," of its preceding generation. But unlike Wordsworth's world, Warren argues, the modern one has converted the phenomenological innocence of the Romantic's leech-gatherer and child seeking truths in nature into the violence of the tough hero who, unable to gather existential meanings from either natural experience or systematic ideals, is caught in a painful trap of unbelief.

This world view, Warren adds, is not a new theme to literature. The inability to find a solid locus of meaning, with the resultant nada, is at the center of the work of numerous writers, past and present, who have had to deal with the removal of value caused by scientific naturalism and secularization:

> It is the world we find pictured (and denied) in Tennyson's "In Memoriam"--the world in which human conduct is a product of "dying Nature's earth and lime." It is the world pictured (and not denied) in Hardy and Housman, a world that seems to be presided over by blind Doomsters (if by anybody), as Hardy put it in his poem "Hap," or made by some brute and blackguard (if by anybody), as Housman put it in his poem "The Chestnut Casts Its Flambeaux." It is the world of Zola or Dreiser or Conrad or Faulkner. It is the world of, to use Bertrand Russell's phrase, "secular hurryings through space." It is the God-abandoned world, the world of

> Nature-as-all. We know where the literary men got this picture. They got it from the scientists of the nineteenth century. This is Hemingway's world, too, the world with nothing at center.[20]

Warren's own antiscientism is traceable in part to his association with the Agrarians, but though his essays, and particularly his most recent ones in Democracy and Poetry, are overtly deprecating of science, his fiction is much less concerned with the scientific antecedents of the crisis in moral value than with its specific philosophical terms. His novels, in fact, make very little direct reference to science. Aside from the major exception of Dr. Adam Stanton and the minor exceptions of Sugar Boy, who has a mechanical obsession with guns and cars, and Lois, Jack Burden's first wife, whom Jack describes in one place as a "juicy machine," Warren seems scarcely concerned in his novels with the effects of science in the modern world. His characters are seldom unaware victims or perpetrators of mechanism and industrialism, as are some notably important ones of Zola, Faulkner and Dreiser. Quite the opposite, they are most often painfully aware of the predicament of their existential placement between nature and God. Warren does apply the "Nature-as-all" concept, as quoted above, in his fiction, but his interest in it is as a philosophical counter to abstractionism, one of the two self-annihilating moral extremes man can go to, and his application of it to historical characters, such as Jeremiah Beaumont, suggests that the problem of moral degeneration through exclusive attention to particularities is far less a result in Warren's work of the impact of scientism than it is an abiding, universal concern of humanity. More importantly, of the two extremes, abstractionism and particularism, the worse, as explained earlier, is adherence to the idea, the abstraction. The major difficulty of the citizens of Warren's fictional world is not that they find life devoid of meaning, whether

because of science or otherwise, but that there are too many ideas, too many voices, too many men who force the world to conform slavishly to their ideals and who, in perpetrating their abstractions, thereby leave the world in a state of moral chaos and confusion.

While Warren is certainly correct, then, that the dilemma of moral chaos is present in the works of many writers, his treatment of this problem differs from theirs. His approach is more explicitly philosophical, more exclusively involved with its ideational aspects, more concerned with the chaos which arises from a superabundance of idea than lack of idea, and ironically more persistent in formulating an ideational solution to the dilemma.

This approach gives cause to take issue with his mode of criticism of these writers, for his attribution to them of philosophical intentions may be more a deductive projection of his own outlook than an accurate assessment of what is in their work. Or, while we may agree that the central dilemma in their work is philosophical, their emphases in confronting it may be more scientific, artistic or otherwise than, as is true of Warren, an openly philosophical coming to terms with it. A case in point is Faulkner. While, as Warren says, his ultimate concern may not be with the South, it may also not be ultimately with "a general philosophical view" as much as it is with the context of facts, tragic and comic, surrounding that view and the inductive process of their working themselves out, in whatever shape that may be. The difficulty of critically generalizing about Faulkner, of ascertaining what his position on a given subject is, stems precisely from his process attitude. The avoidance of fixities and ideational verities, the fluidity of Faulkner, is what most distinguishes him as a novelist, and if he is "philosophical," he is so more in the tradition of a philosopher like Alfred North Whitehead, who eschews metaphysics and whose process ontology essentially precludes any abstraction of fixed moral ideas, than in the tradition of one like Immanuel Kant,

who, like Warren, seeks an imperative for morality. Chapter IV compares Warren and Faulkner, who both deal with the moral dilemma Warren describes, but who do so from different philosophical perspectives: Faulkner from a process, factually oriented perspective, which yields essentially non-ideational verities of "love and honor, pity and pride, compassion and sacrifice," and Warren from a dualistic, ideationally oriented perspective, which, while acknowledging the importance of moral contingencies, attempts to make a firmer statement than Faulkner's contextualism allows as to the locus of ethical value.

Warren and Faulkner do agree on one important aspect of morality--that for any judgment to be considered moral it must originate as felt inwardness. If it originates otherwise, in pure rationality or empirical example, it involves no responsibility on the part of the individual producing it and is not even morality but, at best, prudence. These two writers see clearly that obedience to moral precepts does not make a person moral, for, as they painstakingly chronicle in their novels, the plight of man is that he can never actually "know" cognitively what is good or evil. Hence in Warren's work the denunciation of abstractionists, the "would be Angels of Light" as he calls them in "Knowledge and the Image of Man," who usually take the form of politicians, and who, in their frenzy to eradicate the world's evil, that which does not conform to their notions of what is right, destroy themselves and others around them. Hence too the tragedy in his fiction, which arises from man's inability to know before he acts what consequences his actions will have. And hence the redemption Warren offers for those characters who, acting despite their moral ignorance, through the "agony of will," come at last to the internal "knowledge" that morality derives finally from neither mind nor matter, idea or fact, but from the inwardness of the heart.

Warren is quite explicit in his repudiation of both fact and idea as bases for morality. In his novels ideational moralities arise from every man's inevitable disintegration of his "primal instinctive sense of unity"[21] and discovery of the existential condition of separateness. Since men are lonely and afraid inwardly as a result of their break from innocence, they defensively project their isolation outward, as Jack Burden does in the first phase of his journey toward moral understanding:

> I heard somebody open and shut the gate to the barn lot, but I didn't look around. If I didn't look around it would not be true that somebody had opened the gate with the creaky hinges, and that is a wonderful principle for a man to get hold of. I had got hold of the principle out of a book when I was in college, and I had hung onto it for grim death. I owed my success in life to that principle. It had put me where I was. What you don't know don't hurt you, for it ain't real. They called that Idealism in my book I had when I was in college, and after I got hold of that principle I became an Idealist. I was a brass-bound Idealist in those days. If you are an Idealist it does not matter what you do or what goes on around you because it isn't real anyway.[22]

Fortunately Jack does not allow his defensive masking of reality by Idealism to erupt into full-scale abstractionism, as Willie Stark does in the same novel, and as Jeremiah Beaumont does in World Enough and Time. Writing in his manuscript not long before his death, Jerry lucidly describes the terrible transition from idealism to abstractionism.

> He had thought that the idea in and of itself might redeem the world, and in that thought had scorned the world. But that thought, he tells us, had led to a second error, which must always follow from the first when we

> find that the idea has not redeemed the world: the world must redeem the idea. "Then in this thought," he writes, "man will use the means of the natural world, and its dark ways, to gain that end he names holy by the idea, and ah! the terror of that, the terror of that."[23]

With the horror of Conrad's Mr. Kurtz, both Warren's and Faulkner's abstractionists come to learn, usually too late, that the enforcement of the idea upon the world leads to moral and often physical death.

When tragic events in Warren's fiction threaten to topple idealism and abstractionism by implicating in responsibility the individuals practicing them, his characters sometimes swing to the other extreme, materialism. Jack Burden's adoption of the Great Twitch viewpoint, the second phase of his moral development, allows him to avoid implication through mechanism: if all the world is nothing more than a machine, then neither Jack nor anybody else needs to face up to his participation in events. Jerry Beaumont calls this form of escapism the "third error . . . that follows from the second: to deny the idea and its loneliness and embrace the world as all, or, as he puts it, 'to seek communion only in the blank cup of nature, and innocence there.'"[24] In neither fact nor idea, in natural experience or abstraction, can man find moral absolution; the best either offers is an escape from responsibility.

So far Warren and Faulkner are in substantial agreement. Where they philosophically depart is that Faulkner, seeing that there is no possibility for making definitive rational or empirical moral statements, renders his philosophy, and his art, in process terms, which, while they may generate a sense of moral value, have nothing ideational to say about it; Warren, however, like Kant, has not been content to leave man without some guidance, some imperative, some more explicit utterance of how, despite the fact that morality is not inherently rational or empirical, man may attain to moral virtue.

No figure in the history of philosophy is more essential to an understanding of the moral dilemma in which Warren and his fellow novelists are engaged, and no figure is more at the philosophical root of the problem, than Immanuel Kant. While Kant cannot be directly charged with responsibility for the moral chaos of our time, it was he who formulated the philosophical terms of the moral question for modern man, and these terms have led directly to post-Kantian difficulties regarding the accessibility and nature of ethical judgments. For if, as Kant conceived it, morality originates internally and is a matter of feeling--a conception with which, as we shall see, twentieth century philosophy has been inclined to agree, and to which, as we have already seen, Warren and Faulkner give assent--then how can good and evil be determined absolutely? If ethics is cognitively non-referential, if moral judgments do not involve the determinate, conceptual apparatus of the mind, then what standard can be applied to such judgments except a subjective one, yielding them relative to personal opinion? This, in its simplest terms, is the nature of the dilemma which Kant unknowingly created, and to which Warren and his contemporaries are heir.

It can hardly be said that Kant intended a crisis in moral value; his intention, rather, was, as Carl J. Friedrich explains, to re-establish "ethics as the central human concern;" this, and not epistemology, is "the real core of Kant's philosophy."[25] Internalizing ethics was his means toward fulfilling this concern, for Kant realized that as long as morality meant obedience to outwardly prescribed duty rather than the performance of an autonomously willed action, it had no intrinsic worth. Considering Kant's complete philosophy in this light illuminates even the difficult Critiques, which seem to be concerned only with cognition, but which, by reorienting the act of knowing in terms of a perceptual rather than an objective base, made it possible for Kant to show that reality is what men actively and

existentially make it, and not something passively received. Like Copernicus, who, as Kant explains in the preface to the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, "when he could not get ahead with explaining the motions of the heavenly bodies as long as he assumed that the stars revolved around the observer, tried whether he might not be more successful if he let the observer revolve and allowed the stars to remain stationary,"[26] Kant sought to make man the prime and active agency of morality by reversing his perspective from a concern for the external and really static manifestations of morality to their vital cause, man himself. It was to convince men to live their lives not passively "as duty requires," but actively "because duty requires"[27] that Kant undertook his examination of the ethical question and, no doubt, his entire philosophy.

Most crucial to Kant's examination of ethics is the principle on which the whole of his critical philosophy is founded, that judgment, moral and aesthetic, must furnish its own criteria; Kant saw that the determinateness which applies to reason does not apply to morality, which, since it issues from the separate faculty of "feeling," is concerned with sensibility and not truth.

> It is only recently that men have begun to realize that the capacity of perceiving the true is knowledge, while that of sensing the good is feeling, and that the two must, under no circumstances, be confused.[28]

He understood, however, that while morality rests in feeling, it nevertheless has connections with both rationality and empiricism. His study of aesthetic judgments no doubt led him to this conclusion, that despite the fact that aesthetics and ethics properly belong to the realm of feeling, which is arbitrary and not constrained by logicality or any of the conceptual apparatus of the mind, there is still a kind of "knowing" involved with such judgments. That we can and do argue

about moral issues is proof that there is a link between ethical and determinate cognitive activities. A good moral will exists regardless of any man's ability or inability to reason out what is right or wrong, but still "reason is imparted to us as a practical faculty; that is, as one which is to have influence on the will."[29] Kant was determined that no one need be deprived of participation in morality due to lack of rational capacity: "I do not need any sharp acumen to discern what I have to do in order that my will may be morally good,"[30] but he was equally determined to utilize the resources of reason as a guide to morality.

This is the critical juncture of Kant's examination of the moral question, for, having first deposed morality from a position of absoluteness by arguing that it is feeling and not reason or example which delivers moral worth, he sought to restore it to a position where the universality attendant to these cognitive faculties could apply; otherwise morality would remain wholly subjective and relative. A. E. Teale observes in his Kantian Ethics that at this juncture Kant was compelled to return "once again to the only human faculty which carries with it necessity, objectivity, and universality, and embarked on a critique of pure reason with a view to exposing the limitations of intellectual insight while at the same time revealing reason's grasp of moral principle."[31]

Kant's solution to this predicament, the categorical imperative, succeeds logically in its objective of providing a universal standard for morality, but since the standard is rational, by its very nature it precludes consideration of the contingencies of morality and is therefore incomplete as a guide to moral action. Furthermore, though Kant's argument effectively retains the internal aspect of morality he insisted upon by grounding it in the autonomy of the human will, in his search for a principle of ethical universality he allows through his deductive procedure the inward, felt quality of morality

to be practically swallowed up by reason. In net effect Kant does not get very far beyond the problem with which he started: if morality is feeling, which is contingent and indeterminate, how can it be explained by a determinate cognitive activity without its being either taken over by the determinate faculty, so that it is no longer "feeling," or explained only to the limited extent to which one faculty can inquire into the nature of another, in which case part of the question must go begging. The damage was done by Kant's separation of the faculties; to attempt to put them back together again would indeed take an army of "all the king's men." In making the simple observation that the mind contains differing faculties, Kant had stated (by analogy) that the function of the eye is to see and that of the ear to hear. To go back and attempt to get the eye to hear was the task he now had to perform, and the liabilities in his performance and that of post-Kantians have made it clear that once the egg is dropped, there is no easy restoration.[32]

Post-Kantian philosophical attempts to resolve the bifurcation dilemma have been notably less satisfactory than Kant's, which at least attempted a closure by way of reason. In our time positivists and existentialists, rather than trying to heal the split, have rigorously and dogmatically asserted the righteousness of one half of the bifurcation or the other, resulting in a division of current major philosophical movements which is virtually complete. For both movements the bone of contention has been the stigma of untruth attached by Kant to non-rational, non-referential cognitive activities. If, as Kant reasoned, "perceiving the true is knowledge, while . . . sensing the good is feeling," then matters of feeling do not have the status of truth. This has been sufficient invitation for the positivists to dismiss ethical and aesthetic experiences as interesting data for the psychologist but not otherwise worthy of consideration, as A. J. Ayer explains in Language, Truth and Logic: "the only information which

we can legitimately derive from the study of our aesthetic and moral experiences is information about our mental and physical make-up." Since "ethical words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response,"[33] there is no basis for attributing to them "objective validity," which is the positivists' criterion for truth. The existentialists essentially agree, arguing that since the rational and empirical standard simply does not apply to ethics, the individual is entirely at liberty to create himself morally, free from the strictures of rule or principle. Granting that ethics has an immense importance for the existentialists which is entirely lacking in the positivists' approach, the problem for the existentialists is that almost unwittingly, by advocating an infinite multiplicity of moral constructs, they have literally sealed themselves off from any coherent explication of what being moral or morality is. If the standards of rational consistency and empirical verifiability do not apply, how can ethics be discussed in any terms having validity? Either point of view, it seems obvious, leaves out something important and carries to an extreme only a portion of what Kant was saying: the positivists in their rigid adherence to an empirical standard of truth utterly lack an appreciation of the qualitative aspects of life; the existentialists, by insisting that there is no single truth, that all moral ontologies are equal, have left themselves with no standard of truth at all.

Robert Penn Warren has referred to our age as "remarkable, not for a massive and systematic orthodoxy, but for the variety and internecine vindictiveness of voices."[34] The problems with our age's divisiveness are that with each side making logical or passionate assertions of the righteousness of its convictions, nothing is left in the middle, as Hemingway's fiction testifies, and that the sides tend to cancel each other out, as Warren makes almost diagrammatically

clear in the fatal shoot-out in All the King's Men between Willie Stark, the "man of fact," and Adam Stanton, the "man of idea."

Warren's solution to the bifurcation dilemma, his "unity presupposing separateness," is one which fully acknowledges that the dilemma cannot ever be wholly answered and yet which goes beyond Kant's attempt by way of reason to bring the split ends together by positing not a single agency of restoration, but a double one. Kant failed because the terms of his solution, the apprehension of emotion by reason, were precluded by the very nature of the terms of the problem, that the "two (faculties) must, under no circumstances, be confused," which he had, ironically, set himself. Warren's solution fares better by setting an individual standard for each side of the bifurcation and by his providing a justification for his standards not, as with Kant, in order to supply a "metaphysical foundation" for morality, but simply because man faces moral chaos without them. Warren's moral "law" is justified not because it is the only moral imperative which is categorical (non-contingent), but because it is imperative that man has moral law. And law in Warren is needed not, as with Kant, as an "absolute" to rule supremely over the emotional faculty, but in fact to limit the power of the rational faculty, which Warren sees as prone to overextend itself into abstractionism. In a sense going far beyond Kant, Warren recognizes that there must also be some standard for the sensibility, the contingencies which Kant had virtually ruled out in his rational scheme, and that this standard must be supplied not by a faculty external to itself, but by itself. This standard, therefore, cannot be rational or empirical, but must be of feeling and sufficient to cover all of feeling's contingencies. This standard, Warren finds, is love.

Warren's "love and law"[35] solution is not subject to the one-sided deficiencies noted in connection with positivism and existentialism. But it still retains the problem of integrating the halves of

the split; even with a separate standard serving each side, the sides, Warren finds, tend to pull in opposite directions. What is required is "full balance and responsibility"[36] -- balance to keep the sides equal and working in harmony and to prevent the usurpation of one by the other, and responsibility to maintain the unity achieved thereby. Any such unity, Warren recognizes, is bound to be "precarious." He observes, however, that such a unity, when achieved, is also "precious,"[37] for it alone allows man to define himself as human. To be human in Warren's fiction means that man is not simply animal, wholly subject to the quirks of his sensibility, nor "Angel of Light," wholly subject to self-idealization, but both of nature and of the mind, and not either in isolation.

In a passage from his essay on Faulkner, Warren describes the obstacles involved with achieving and maintaining this "precious" humanity:

> Everything is against it, the savage egotism, the blank appetite, stupidity and arrogance, even virtues sometimes, the misreading of our history and tradition, our education, our twisted loyalties. That is the great drama, however, the constant story.[38]

Warren's humanism makes high and precise demands, for it requires a kind of "negative capability" -- the ability to entertain effectively two opposed notions at the same time. It is a capability which even Warren himself, as we shall see especially in Chapter IV, has not been able to maintain invariably. His fiction, while always concerned with the same fundamental philosophical dilemma, has not been uniformly consistent in terms of solution. For the most part his moral outlook has remained mediational, philosophically straddling the halves of man's "divided nature,"[39] but he has succumbed to vacillations in his medial stance, and even at times to violations.

Such lapses as he has had, however, have been in the service of the arduous task of finding some more satisfactory way to integrate and harmonize man's ideational and sensuous components, somehow better to restore man to wholeness.

It is ultimately to the performance of this mighty labor, to put man back together again, that Warren has dedicated himself as philosopher-novelist, and that has determined the important "shape" of his fiction.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1]Ralph Ellison and Eugene Walter, "The Art of Fiction, XVIII: Robert Penn Warren," Paris Review, IV (Spring-Summer, 1957), pp. 115-116.

[2]Ibid., p. 120.

[3]Leonard Casper, Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. xi. In his foreward Casper reviews the history of critical approaches taken to Warren's prose and poetry and uncovers some glaring errors of misinterpretation and oversight. This work contains a very complete and useful bibliography.

[4]John Lewis Longley, Jr., ed., Robert Penn Warren: A Collection of Critical Essays (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. xi.

[5]Louis D. Rubin, Jr., The Faraway Country: Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p. 179. "Wherever he lives," Rubin adds, "man must confront his own identity." The dissertation referred to is by Henry Dunham Herring, "The Environment in Robert Penn Warren's Fictional South," Dissertation Abstracts, 29 (1969), 3141A (Duke).

[6]Paul West, Robert Penn Warren, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 44 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 10.

[7]Robert Penn Warren, "Nostromo," Sewanee Review, LIX (1951), p. 391, rpt. as Introduction to Nostromo (New York: The Modern Library, 1951).

[8]Warren's "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, LXIII (1955) was originally given by him as an address before a conference of philosophers at Columbia University in 1954. The reference appears on p. 187.

[9]Ellison and Walter, p. 122.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Robert Penn Warren, Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1951), p. xii.

[12]Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Southern Literature: The Historical Image," in Modern Southern Literature in Its Cultural Setting, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 40.

[13]Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Selected Essays, p. 66.

[14]See John L. Stewart, The Burden of Time: The Fugitives and Agrarians: The Nashville Groups of the 1920's and 1930's and the Writing of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 455, where he writes of a conversation between himself and Warren on January 6, 1954: "When . . . Warren looked back upon the long preparation, it seemed to him that Shakespeare and Dante were the most important influences upon both his poetry and fiction."

[15]Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Selected Essays, p. 66.

[16]Ibid., p. 68.

[17]Ibid., p. 65.

[18]Robert Penn Warren, "Ernest Hemingway," in Selected Essays, p. 114.

[19]Ibid., p. 102.

[20]Ibid., p. 89.

[21]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 187.

[22]Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. 33.

[23]Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time (New York: The New American Library, 1952), p. 503.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Carl J. Friedrich, ed., The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), p. xxiii.

[26]Quoted from Friedrich's Introduction, p. xxvii.

[27]Immanuel Kant, The Metaphysical Foundation of Morals, in Friedrich, p. 145.

[28]Quoted from Albert Edward Teale, Kantian Ethics (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 29. It appears in the Berlin Academy's Kant's gesammelte Schriften, ii, p. 299, and is from Kant's first published treatise which undertook to deal with definitely moral issues, the Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral.

[29]The Metaphysical Foundation of Morals, in Friedrich, p. 143.

[30]Ibid., p. 151.

[31]Teale, p. 35.

[32]The argument for the imperative in Kant's Metaphysical Foundation of Morals was to be the first of many by his descendants to find a way to deal with his bifurcation between the faculties of the mind. Kant builds from the subjective ground of the autonomy of the human will a case for the objective validity of ethical judgment by arguing, in effect, that since the free will is self regarding it ideally generates only those moral laws which serve itself as an end, in unconditional terms, rather than as a means, which would mean treating itself conditionally, as an object of volition; if the free will in seeking laws looks to maxims determined by objects or anything other than itself as an end, the result is always "heteronomy" (dependence, lack of autonomy). But the formulation of such unconditional laws is the business of reason, not feeling, for reason is the only faculty capable of making absolute, unconditional statements. To be morally free, then, requires that we "transfer ourselves into the world of the intellect" (The Metaphysical Foundation of Morals, in Friedrich, p. 198) where constraints are imposed upon our freedom. Reason obliges us to assent that not only is each man subject to the laws he makes himself, but also that all men, like him, are morally autonomous and regard themselves morally as ends, so that the laws which each man wills for himself are related as well to a "realm of ends," all of humanity, of which he is by nature a member. Kant's supreme law of morality, then, regards men as subjectively autonomous, but binds that freedom by the non-contingent, general laws of reason.

Kant's categorical imperative is perhaps sufficient as a paradigm for general moral conduct, but since it is rational it can do only what reason can do, which is to supply a general law. Despite

what Kant's ethical investigation proved about morality being universal in its appeal, necessary in its bindingness on all men, and therefore governable by a principle of some kind, the problem of what to do in specific ethical contexts, where the application of general law raises uncertainty and where because of contingencies there can be little conviction of being morally right, remained unsolved as before.

[33]This and the quotation immediately preceding are from Alfred Jules Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., n. d.), p. 114; p. 113.

[34]Robert Penn Warren, Selected Essays, p. xi.

[35]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 187.

[36]Ibid., p. 189.

[37]Ibid., p. 187.

[38]Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," Selected Essays, p. 79.

[39]Robert Penn Warren, Democracy and Poetry (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 92.

CHAPTER I

This chapter is concerned with Warren as philosopher, but as a philosopher in his novels. The Introduction attempted in part to place him among what he has called the "glittering articles"[1] of professional philosophy; the present discussion limits itself to Warren alone and to the literary formulation of his philosophy. He has spoken of his philosophy, with "becoming diffidence," as his "amateur and homemade product."[2] No such deprecation is necessary, for his literary formulation is not, as he has it, amateurism, but simply the adaptation of philosophical tenets to a literary mode. This adaptation requires that the discussion in this chapter be correspondingly adapted to primarily literary rather than philosophical terms. It is through the discussion of literary themes, then, including man's discovery of separateness, his consequent loss of identity, the errors of abstractionism and animalism he purposely effects to cope with his isolation, his acts of violence and violation, and his achievement of reconciliation and redemption through the growth of his moral awareness, that this chapter will proceed.

To underscore the systematic unity of the ideas conveyed through these themes, it is preferable to organize this discussion thematically than by tracing the themes through each novel. Each of the novels contains all of the named themes, varying in differences of narrative and in thematic emphases. Some of the novels undertake to develop in depth one aspect of the philosophy, usually to the lesser treatment of other aspects: Night Rider concentrates upon separateness, Band of Angels upon identity crisis, World Enough and Time upon violence, At Heaven's Gate upon violation, and Meet Me in the Green Glen upon the moral and spiritual awareness which makes reunification possible; All the King's Men is exceptional in being most direct in its presentation of the entire philosophy. By treating

this discussion as a progression of literary themes, utilizing for each theme those novels which most conspicuously develop it and examining All the King's Men in reference to all of the themes, it will be possible to show what the philosophy is and how it is a unified whole with interconnected and interdependent parts.

Warren's literary rendition of his philosophy begins with his concept of separateness, which in his fiction is an existential condition afflicting all men, although not all men are aware of it. The mechanicals, like Sugar Boy and Lois in All the King's Men, are so thoroughly complacent that they fail to grasp the schism between their self-conceptions and the sensible world. While rare in his novels, such characters are used by Warren to suggest that a lack of recognition of separateness makes man no better than a machine: functional but without spirit, quantitative but without human quality. Because for most men separateness is an unavoidable fact of existence, Warren is scarcely concerned with those few individuals who, lacking some ingredient of basic intelligence or essential humanness, fail to bring themselves to a recognition of their separateness from all things.

For Warren awareness of separateness is an inevitable and normal part of the development of every moral consciousness. Invariably in his fiction it is inflicted by a traumatic event or an insidious course of events which causes an irreconcilable contradiction in one's view of life. The individual is forced to discover that some primal and innocent connection he once had with the world has been severed, and that the world with which he always thought he was one has become strange and apart from him. Painful as this discovery is, it is for Warren life's necessary corrective to that naive view of life which, however simple and agreeable, is for man unstable and untenable. For Warren man's fall is not unfortunate, though its aftermath is often misfortunate; plainly and repeatedly he insists that man must fall, and accept the internal and external consequences, if he is

to acknowledge his humanity. His fiction is an extended definition of humanity, and its fundamental premise is that man must grasp knowledge of his separateness, submitting himself to a painful breaking between self and world, before he can grow in moral awareness.

Most often the cause of separation comes unbidden to Warren's characters, and seems undeserved; usually the victims are depicted as either young and utterly defenseless or, if older, blameless of complicity in the web of circumstances which breaks them. The best example of a young mind broken by experience occurs outside the novels in the short story "Blackberry Winter." There the nine year old boy, a complete innocent whom the story makes clear "nobody had ever tried to stop"[3] before, is struck by the incongruous remark of the tramp he has been following out of town: "Stop following me. You don't stop following me and I cut yore throat, you little son of a bitch."[4] The boy is so impressed by this unexpected slam that he does, of course, keep following the stranger, as he says in the story's last line, "all the years."[5] Jack Burden's early separation also abides with him through much of his life, though its formation is apparently more insidious than the sudden disaster which befalls the narrator of "Blackberry Winter." Jack's bewildering childhood succession of fathers, which leaves him without a satisfactory identification at a time when he is most dependent, renders him through much of his adult life incapable of achieving anything but cynical personal and communal relationships; in large part the prominent search for a father theme in All the King's Men is Warren's expression in that novel of the terrible impact upon innocence of the primal separation. In Band of Angels, though Amantha Starr is physically and emotionally grown up when her world is overturned, she is so totally guiltless that the effect of separation is no less upon her than upon a child. Regardless of youthful innocence or the lack of bad

intentions, Warren is saying, all men are subject to the shock of being broken by experience, as Jack Burden learns in studying the life of Cass Mastern:

> It does not matter whether or not you meant to brush the web of things. Your happy foot or your gay wing may have brushed it ever so lightly, but what happens always happens and there is the spider, bearded black and with his great faceted eyes glittering like mirrors in the sun, or like God's eye, and the fangs dripping.[6]

Night Rider departs from this pattern of an innocent victim by showing its protagonist, Perse Munn, openly soliciting trouble before recognition of his separateness comes. Aside from this deviation, the novel offers Warren's most developed commentary upon the psychology of the awareness of separateness. Warren seems more concerned with the consequences of separateness in his other novels, but in Night Rider he focuses steadily upon the causes and the accompanying emotional upheaval of Mr. Munn as he approaches knowledge of his isolation.

Mr. Munn, who is seldom called in the novel by his first name (a symptom of his prolonged inability to confront his identity problem), awakens gradually to his separateness through his involvement with the Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco, which draws him into surreptitious activities violating not only legal law, but also his internal, moral law. As his participation in the terrorism of the Night Riders increases, his moral self-image as quickly deteriorates, compelling him finally to a loss of identity, which in Warren means literally the loss of correspondence ("identity") between the image which an individual projects outwardly and that which he retains inwardly.

Anxiously sensing awareness of his encroaching split, but still unable to acknowledge it within himself, Mr. Munn has a reaction which is typical of Warren characters: he begins to ruminate, psychologically distancing his moral difficulties by abstracting them, and circumventing self-criticism by switching from an "I" orientation to a safer second or third person. "Death grew in you," Mr. Munn speculates,

> like the leaves on the trees in spring, gentle and tender and unobtrusive, and then, in the moment of knowledge, was already luxuriant, full-blown, blotting out the familiar objects. If not the small pain in the side, some word you spoke, some careless gesture, some momentary concession to vanity, some burst of pity, or some trivial decision -- that was the bud, the leaf swelling toward recognition.[7]

At the moment of his recognition, as he runs from the law and falls tired at the edge of a stock pond, Mr. Munn acquires Adam-like vision, seeing the world as though for the first time. So radically have his actions violated his idealized, internal moral conception that he no longer understands who he is, and, not knowing that, he has no reference, no self, by which to define the outer world. The dawn above him had "a stark purity, an emptiness, an innocence, a primal namelessness. He lay, feeling the slow, minute suction of the mud beneath his body, and stared at the treetops, the heave of the dark mass on the sky. The light was growing on the sky. His mind named that: light."[8]

Although Perse Munn's identification of the light indicates that even at this dark extreme of his predicament he has acquired the rudiments of a new knowledge, his response to his awareness of separateness is brooding and pessimistic. He can only distrust any new knowledge, for it is knowledge which has caused his distress.

It has forced him in a moment (and, unfortunately for Mr. Munn, only for a moment) to surrender time, the undisciplined progression of events which have brought him to his moral impasse, for Time, an overview perspective which in Warren carries an "awful responsibility"[9] -- that of morally controlling events, deterring one's existence from randomness. Knowledge has made Mr. Munn incapable of conceiving any future, for the identity which supported his relation to the world in the past has become invalid, even in its most minute and harmless aspects. The "live germ," as he calls the future, is gone, and replaced by an uncertain and dismal present.

> He could not tell exactly when it (the future) had died. Perhaps it had been dying for a long time, dying and shriveling slowly, and he had only come to know that fact, and to know his isolation when he lay by the stock pond at the edge of the woods, with his body pressed against the cold mud, and saw the impersonal light grow on the sky, above the dark trees. Perhaps it had died long before, and he had been living, only, on the hope and the meaning there was in other men. But now it was dead; and because the future was dead and rotten in his breast, the past, too, which once had seemed to him to have its meanings and its patterns, began to fall apart, act by act, incident by incident, thought by thought, each item into brutish separateness. Sometimes he would try to build up some old scene of happiness or distress, to try to make the image communicate to him again the verity of his past feelings. But it was no use. . . . he could not torture himself into the old response that had been the lively birth of that moment. There was only the new numbness, the new isolation.[10]

This point of confusion and despair over separateness is where most of Warren's fiction begins. It is the point for Warren when man actually initiates his humanity. What comes before, the

condition of primal innocence, is in his fiction a pre-human or even non-human phase, and therefore normally receives only brief or incidental narrative attention. What follows it comprises the substance of his fiction: the running and self-deception, the morbid self-preoccupation, the ascent into angelicism through rigid adherence to idea, the plunge into animalism through exclusive attention to particularities, the definition by each soul for good or for evil, and, for most of his characters, eventual stabilization and reconciliation through acceptance of the agency -- knowledge -- which at first nearly destroys them, but which alone can save them.

Shortly after his discovery of separateness, Mr. Munn, having achieved a partial redemption, dies, and Night Rider ends. In a sense it is continued by Band of Angels, which is unique among Warren's novels for its singular devotion to an examination of the confusion aspect of the discovery of separateness, with which Perse Munn's story closes. The opening words of Band of Angels are "'Oh, who am I?'," and they are spoken by Amantha Starr, a human being utterly distracted and panicked by her sense of isolation. Her separation from the world comes as a result of her discovery that she has Negro blood from a mother she never knew. This, along with the cruel awakenings caused by her loss of faith in a father she trusted and loved and her further insight that all men are not the band of angels she once thought them to be, creates in her a mental distress parallel to the physical violence of her being sold into slavery and degraded sexually. The doors of heaven slam shut behind her, and she is thrust into an unnatural world in which, throughout most of the novel, she insists upon asserting her rights as an angel rather than accepting her more limited human rights.

Mandy Starr's identity confusion, however, takes overall a form different from that of Perse Munn's nihilism, which brings him quickly to death. Despite the pain of her predicament, falling socially

as she has from wealthy belle to slave in a single day, she begins to question and search. While this slow process is fraught with error and peril, and involves as much resistance to knowing as desiring to know, for Warren it is here and everywhere in the novels equally as necessary to what defines man as the condition of separateness. Only through the trial of questioning, Warren asserts, can man gather knowledge for growth of his moral awareness. Entertaining in comic and tragic ways as the manifestations of man's confusion often are in the novels, they bear a signal importance, which should carry the reader beyond empathetic laughing and crying, of the necessity, and bravery, of man's groping to find knowledge. In Warren's novels, man's erratic behavior is philosophically symptomatic of his search for himself, as Timothy Bingham realizes when he reflects upon the gathered crowd and fundamental confusion of man in The Cave:

> They had wept, and prayed, and boozed, and sung and fought, and fornicated, and in all ways possible had striven to break through to the heart of the mystery which was themselves. No, he thought, remembering Brother Sumpter with his arms lifted under the floodlights, to break out of the dark mystery which was themselves.[11]

"Dark" as well as "light" are key words in Warren's novels. In the discovery of his separateness and in his ensuing confusion, man also discovers his ignorance of how to act and what to do about his situation. To conceal the acts he performs in his ignorance (acts of confusion which are often violent and deserve concealment), he uses the cover of outer darkness commensurate with the inner darkness of his soul. Most of the activities of the Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco in Night Rider take place at night, as the title suggests. And in The Cave the crowd sings "Oh, God, bring him out to daylight bright and clear!"[12] over and over, referring to Jasper

Harrick's entrapment in the blackness of the cave, but also, by its repetition, almost as a prayer for the release of man from his moral ignorance. The sleek Cadillac which Sugar Boy drives in All the King's Men goes on its private political errands often in the darkness of night. But perhaps the most poignant and telling image of darkness and ignorance in all the novels is that of the foetus in All the King's Men, which Jack Burden employs in his musing over man's simultaneous inclination to remain ignorant and need to know:

> . . . the clammy, sad little foetus which is you way down in the dark which is you too lifts up its sad little face and its eyes are blind, and it shivers cold inside you for it doesn't want to know . . . It wants to lie in the dark and not know, and be warm in its not-knowing. The end of man is knowledge, but there is one thing he can't know. He can't know whether knowledge will save him or kill him. He will be killed all right, but he can't know whether he is killed because of the knowledge which he hasn't got and which if he had it, would save him. There's the cold in your stomach, but . . . the end of man is to know.[13]

Cold, blind, confused and in darkness -- helpless as an infant except for the saving influence of knowledge which has caused him to be aware of his condition and which he can only fear in his ignorance -- man's is the "Dark and Bloody Ground."[14] Committed to action by reason of the necessity to escape the condition of separateness, Warren's characters struggle, often violently, usually in error, sometimes hurting others, occasionally destroying themselves. The violence in the novels takes place on two levels which are reflections of each other: the inward and the outward.

Inward violence is the emotional turmoil that the mind which no longer knows itself undergoes in seeking identity readjustment.

Like knowledge of separateness, it is an almost unendurable condition which demands resolution. To pacify the turbulence of their souls, Warren's characters select masks, made-up images of themselves and artificial ways of looking at the world designed to forestall their mental conflict until a later day when better solutions are presented. In the novels masks are forms of escape, but they are also safety mechanisms and are not necessarily bad unless they prove to be so satisfactory as to completely prevent any continuation of effort towards wholeness, balance, and a real solution to the problems of life. Masks represent, or should represent, stages along life's way; they are healthy and temporary steps toward the gradual easing of inner hostility brought about by self-fulfillment through self-knowledge.

All the King's Men is a perfect source for the study of masks because its pages are filled with a variety of examples of them and of their use as a method of progression toward self-knowledge. The mask of the Idealist suffices to permit Jack Burden to function efficiently in life up to the point when certain events force him to discard it. When he discovers that Anne Stanton is Willie Stark's mistress, Jack can no longer avoid looking at things happening around him as he did as an Idealist. But he can deny his complicity in human affairs, and he does so by means of the Great Twitch, the philosophy he develops as he observes a twitch under the left eye of a hitchhiker he picks up in New Mexico.[15] For a while it too serves as a concealment, for under it "nobody had any responsibility for anything and there was no god but the Great Twitch."[16] Finally Jack finds that "he did not believe in the Great Twitch any more. He did not believe in it because he had seen too many people live and die."[17] He is able to live at last without a mask because he has achieved, by means of a dialectic between extremes, a reconciliation of his private and public images: in short, an identity.

Jack's trips to the West on the three occasions of his abandoning graduate school, leaving his wife Lois, and escaping from the affair between Anne and Willie, are evidence of his inner turmoil and result in periods of what he calls Great Sleep, suspensions of all activity for the sake of recuperating from severe affronts to his mask-like images of the world. Literally the periods of Great Sleep are escapes to cope with life. They are the most difficult form of escapes because they are alternatives to outward violence. Warren suggests that when man is confronted by a sharp contradiction in the way he views the world he has but two choices: to change or to fight. Changing, however, requires that he first accept the need for change, something which is much more difficult to do than fighting. The effort of accepting change is exhausting; hence, the Great Sleep. The far easier, more natural, but less reasonable and less desirable choice is to meet violence with violence. That is, in spite of the consequences, man fights back through outward violence. He retains his notion of the world in the face of all obstacles and challenges.

Upon no point in his philosophy is Warren more emphatic than that of the evil which derives from man's adhering so rigidly to a way of looking at the world that he values his viewpoint beyond life and the lives of others. Warren recognizes that man's attachment to a viewpoint, and especially his laboring to enforce it upon others, is a destructive vanity springing from a need to make real the mask he has created to ensure his protection from life's circumstances. He tries, Warren says, to "fulfill vicariously his natural emptiness by exercising power over those around him."[18] Lacking identity, in confusion, he attempts to extend his mask-like illusion into reality.

This is the approach of both Willie Stark and Adam Stanton in <u>All the King's Men</u>. Each tries to force the world to conform to to his one-sided notion of what is good for man. Adam, as his name implies, believes in innocent goodness; he recognizes badness, but

only as it exists in other men as a perversion of goodness. He has not actually assimilated the concept of badness into his own thinking; much less has he accepted the presence of evil within himself. Because of the lack of integration of evil in his outlook, when any association, however remote, of evil with himself is made, his reaction is bound to be extreme and, ironically, far from beneficent. For all the purity of his conception of goodness, when brought to a testing by reality it results in an unmasking and unleashing of its repressed opposite. His response to learning of his sister's affair with Willie is not concern that she may have lowered herself, but that she has lowered him; the maintenance of his idea of goodness is more important to him than Anne, whom he violently rejects for indirectly tainting him, and Willie, whom he murders for the same reason.

> "He came here and said it was all because of me. Of what I had done."
> "What was because of what you had done?"
> "He was made Director because of me. That's what he said. Because of what I had done. That's what he said. And he said -- oh, Jack, he said it --"
> "Said what?"
> "He said he wouldn't be paid pimp to his sister's whore -- he said that -- he said that, Jack -- to me, Jack -- and I tried to tell him -- tell him how it was -- and he pushed me and I fell down on the floor and he ran out -- he ran out . . . "[19]

Willie is a considerably more complicated character. Professing a faith in facts and called by Jack the "man of fact," he nevertheless retains to his death an ideal of innocent goodness which is identical to Adam's, as evidenced by his erection of a hospital which he wishes to keep undefiled by Gummy Larson or any other corrupting influence. Willie actually operates throughout the novel according to a double ethical standard, and not just a factual one: he has an ideal of goodness segmented from his sensational methods as

a politician, where he employs his concept of goodness derived from badness. In part this enigmatic condition[20] is attributable to Warren's trying to have Willie fit two roles which his philosophy prescribes are incompatible: as one of Warren's "redeemed" characters Willie must acknowledge, as Adam does not, both good and evil, but as one of the novel's two representatives, along with Adam, of the "terrible division" of our age, he must finally be portrayed as one-sided. He is through most of the novel one-sided factually, and despite interpretational problems accruing from his redeeming notion of innocent goodness, he does, like Adam, resist balancing and harmonizing opposites. The result is a mutual cancellation of strong oppositions of fact and idea which fail to yield. Failure to yield, to change, and thereby to grow, Warren suggests, may end in violent action and in death.

Seldom in Warren criticism has the presence of violence in the novels been attributed, as it is here, to the outward expression of man's inability to balance and harmonize his inward conflicts. John Lewis Longley, Jr. is correct in asserting that Warren is not "creating the violence for its own sake," but he delimits the scope of Warren's treatment of violence by ascribing it to "the extent to which order and decorum have been overturned in the disordered age we live in."[21] Warren's concern is with our age, but it is even more with the universal condition of man, regardless of the time in which he lives. Furthermore, to say that violence indicates "the extent to which order and decorum have been overturned" is to define violence, not to explain it. Violence is, of course, the overturning of order and decorum, but this does not get to the heart of the problem as to why violence exists in the world and in Warren's novels. Charles R. Anderson states that "violence is life without principles . . . order is living by principles."[22] This applies to some Warren characters, like the "factual" Willie Stark, but is inadequate because it does not

take into account the frequent occurrence of characters who are principled but still violent. Violence in Warren's novels is, in fact, usually the result of a man's holding to principles in the face of an opposition which threatens to uproot them. Adam Stanton is clearly a man who lives according to principles, but lacking an experiential counterpart to sustain them, they comprise only an untested virtue. The problem is not simply one of lack of principles, but of what Frederick McDowell refers to as lack of "wholeness of vision":

> All Warren's novels, in fact, chronicle the tragic wasting of human resources through a continuing failure by their protagonists, even when essentially admirable, to attain wholeness of vision. The presence, in varying degrees, of a naive and uncritical idealism and a naive and uncritical intellectuality constitutes the tragic flaw in Warren's heroes.[23]

There is another area in which lack of wholeness of vision operates. Aside from peak acts of violence there are also acts of what can be called violation. Warren's novels have abundant violence, but far more abundant in proportion to the acts of violence are the violations of men relating to their everyday living. The source of the problem is the same as that of violence: man is outwardly what he is inwardly, and what he does is determined by what he is.

Violence and violation differ in degree. Violence is violation exploded. Acts of violation are therefore smaller in size, but they are scarcely less painful in the effects they produce. They concern interrelationships among men, how men act toward each other. They often concern what men do to each other mentally and are sometimes acts of omission in which an individual fails to consider the human rights and feelings of another.

Although violation exists in all the novels, it is in At Heaven's Gate that Warren examines it most closely. In his introduction to All

the King's Men, Warren explains about At Heaven's Gate that Dante's Seventh Circle "provided, with some liberties of interpretation and extension, the basic scheme and metaphor for the whole novel. All of the main characters are violators of nature."[24] He explains further his intentions regarding Bogan Murdock, who "was supposed to embody in one of his dimensions the desiccating abstraction of power, to be a violator of nature, a usurer of Dante's Seventh Circle."[25] The Seventh Circle of the Inferno is that of the violent: against self, against fellow men, and against God. The characters and surroundings of At Heaven's Gate are like the creatures and atmosphere of Dante's hell, and the pressure of evil in the novel is unrelieved except for the religious conversion of Ashby Wyndham. It is not surprising that one critic's verdict of the novel is that it is "nihilistic"[26] and that another calls it "a novel about monsters."[27]

What makes the characters monstrous is violation. Aside from the violence of Ashby Wyndham's life and the strangulation murder of Sue Murdock by Slim Sarrett, there is little more actual violence in the novel. But covert disturbances arise from infringement, transgression, and non-observance -- in short, violation. It is a Sartrian novel about how hell is other people, about how two or more people cannot be in a room together without mentally trampling upon one another. Slim Sarrett's studio apartment provides the same sort of setting for conflict as does the room in Sartre's No Exit. To Slim's studio apartment comes a varied group composed of intellectuals, pseudo-intellectuals, and anti-intellectuals who rub and grate against each other's personalities. In their own ways they are as perverted in their relationships with each other as Slim Sarrett himself is as a homosexual. In their sustained, high-pitched level of violation the characters of At Heaven's Gate show how man's separateness from other men, though not necessarily leading to violence, can lead to a living hell.

Acts of violation in the other novels are generally not as extreme and grotesque as those in At Heaven's Gate, but they are just as plentiful. In All the King's Men, for example, the coarse and slangy conversation of certain characters (including Sadie Burke, Willie Stark, and Jack Burden), amusing as it often is, is a violation of normal human intercourse. It shows how these characters are not able to reach others except in spontaneous flashes of low wit and obscenity, and their speech indicates that their true feelings have been driven into themselves and replaced outwardly by hard and frosty exteriors designed to combat rather than communicate. Their talk is merely functional rather than meaningful. It carries them through successive moments of crisis, which is what their lives are, and prohibits any mutual contact closer than perhaps a uniting of the forces of bitterness against the rest of the world. Willie, Jack and Sadie join in a kind of sardonic clique to oppose those factions which seek to overthrow them. It is a self-defeating attitude because the warmth and love they are really searching for are barred from them as much as are the opposing factions. Sadie would have Willie's love, but her unapproachable hardness excludes her from not only the rest of the world but also from Willie. Jack Burden does not comprehend why Anne Stanton will not marry him. He keeps losing her because she sees that he is far from being a whole man. In erecting a wall of antagonism against the intrusion of the world he alienates even those with whom he has a chance at love and happiness.

The path to wholeness as a man, the way to the avoidance of confusion, violence and violation, is for Warren a narrow one between extremes. For man to regain an image of himself by which he can satisfactorily relate to other men he must arrive at an understanding of what his position as man is; he must "accept his middle place in nature," says Charles R. Anderson, "between the animals and the angels, neither sinking into naturalism nor aspiring to perfection, but

creating the best possible order out of his recognized limitations and preserving it."[28]

In his earlier novels (particularly in At Heaven's Gate, All the King's Men, and World Enough and Time) Warren is especially concerned with the problem of the individual obsessed with angelicism, the type for whom, as William Havard says, "self-identification, or mythical self-projection, takes the form of the avenger or rectifier of perceived wrongs."[29] Almost invariably in these novels this type is political. It is logical that this should be so, for the individual who is upset by the world's evil and who wishes to correct it is likely to seek political leadership as an effective means of making his ideas come true. Politics is a veritable paradise for the "would-be Angel" for it offers the highest gratification this moral type desires. It provides an audience to hear his idea and the power to effect any changes deemed necessary. It is no wonder, then, that Warren utilizes politics so often in his novels. Through political characters he is able to show the dangers of abstraction in operation in a way he could not through the selection of any other kind of character. The fact that Warren's politicians are so often corrupt is not so much a comment upon politics in general (as some of his readers have assumed) as it is a criticism of the moral type who upholds the abstract idea, as Havard says, "to an extent which permits him to act entirely outside any moral restraints."[30] Warren's novels, rather than being condemnatory of politics, are condemnations of that type of politician (or man) who exemplifies one of the tragic extremes to which an individual can go in his search for self-identity. "The truth is," says Longley, "that tragedy grows as often out of our own inordinate idealism as from the grasping intentional evil of others. We want so much to be more than we are (the sin of Lucifer), and we want to drag others upward with us. Perhaps the greatest sin is to insist that we already have perfection."[31]

In the three novels named in the preceding paragraph all but one of the main characters ends up being destroyed by the pursuit of the abstract ideal. The exception is Bogan Murdock of At Heaven's Gate who, at the end of the novel, is more ready than ever to carry on with what Slim Sarrett calls "the special disease of our time, the abstract passion for power, a vanity springing from an awareness of the emptiness and unreality of the self which can only attempt to become real and human by the oppression of people who manage to retain some shreds of reality and humanity."[32] Bogan, however, is a special case, just as At Heaven's Gate is a special novel. It would have been inconsistent with Warren's purpose of creating a modern hell in the novel to have the possibility of redemption made available to any of the characters. No character in the novel is redeemed. Warren has sentenced all of them to an earthly hell where hope is abandoned, and Bogan Murdock, unlike Jerry Beaumont and Willie Stark, is a devil incarnate ruling over the host of lost souls. Whereas Warren's other politicians come to realize the error of imposing an idea upon the world, Bogan does not. And though the other politicians are condemned to die for their sin of abstractionism, they are almost always saved spiritually before death by the knowledge which they acquire of their error. Warren, of course, is not saying that physical death is better than life, but that life redeemed through knowledge, though the penalty be death, is preferable to the living death of a character like Bogan Murdock.

"The black outward abyss of nature,"[33] as Warren calls it in his essay on Nostromo, is the other extreme to which man can go in his pursuit of self-identity. Instances of this extreme in the novels are much more rare than that of devotion to the abstract idea, suggesting that Warren regards it either as a lesser sin or at least as one which man less frequently commits. It is the opposite of idealism in its composition, but it is identical to it in cause and effects. Both

derive from the hunger to regain lost unity, and both result in waste and destruction, but the fall back to nature as an animal is an act of repudiating mind for matter, intellect for sense, and reason for pleasure.

The long chapter dealing with the island of Ole Big Hump, La Grand' Bosse, in World Enough and Time is Warren's most significant attempt in his fiction to describe man fallen into nature. Jerry and Rachel Beaumont come to the hidden island after their escape from jail and find that they have only traded one kind of prison for another. Rachel decays in the new environment, but Jerry gives himself to it:

> I was drunk with others and gave myself to the violence, and took my joy to be part of it. Lay with the woman whose child my wife had stolen and tasted her carnally for she made herself agreeable to me and I was hot with drink. We lay behind shed where wounded man had been put and been forgot, and to judge from the evidence of my ears a man and woman were in the shed with him and took their pleasure there near him while his life bled out. We heard them as we worked our lust, and took added relish thereby and profane delight.[34]

Shortly after his debasement, however, Jerry gathers an insight more important than any other which a Warren character can achieve:

> I record the fullness of my shame and my joy in the foulness thereof, for there is that in man's soul which seeks his own shame and glories in it. Or am I different from all others and most accursed? I do not longer ask. I am what I am, and what is man that he should know his journey?[35]

Though it has taken debauchery to impress it upon him, Jerry has come to terms with his material nature, and has thus countered his earlier radical idealism. Recognizing the error of treating his

physicality as an extreme too, he finds a concluding position in the center between extremes. "I am what I am" signifies his final understanding that he is neither angel of light nor devil of darkness, but himself.

This assertion of self in Warren has been misinterpreted as a form of denial of self since it prescribes that man not extend himself beyond what he is. Longley misconstrues the meaning when he says "self may ultimately live only in that redemption which is the death of the self."[36] Initially with the break from innocence this is true, but "ultimately" it is not. Warren's redemption consists of the life of the self. It is not that man must ultimately deny self; quite the opposite, to live life most fully he must affirm it. Abstractionism and animalism, Warren insists, are the real forms of denial and death of self, for through them the individual's true self is buried under layers of masks. This is what Slim Sarrett tells Sue Murdock in At Heaven's Gate:

> He told her that she had to learn never to make up a picture of herself, never, never, to do that, but to be what she was, that it was hard to do but she had to do it. And she thought wildly, oh, what am I? But his voice went on, and she said, yes, yes. He told her that it was hard, that it was much easier to make up a picture to suit other people, but that that was not to be alive. It was hard to be alive, he said. And hard to be alone, as you must be to be alive.[37]

Not to affirm the self is to live in a make-believe world. Warren's affirmation is that of removing from the self the layers of escape devices which accumulate during the years of searching for self-identity: as Perse Munn is told in Night Rider, "Getting older is breaking through the surfaces. Layer after layer. Peeling them off to find out what's inside."[38]

Man's task in attaining identity in Warren's philosophy is, in effect, one of returning to that point from which he began his search--that point when he first discovered his separateness, before his weakness and fear caused him to create masks to conceal his isolation. It is for man to realize that that from which he is trying to escape--knowledge of his separateness--is the very thing which gives him identity, for it is, ironically, what most identifies him as human. Once man realizes, that is, that isolation is a universal of man's experience, that separateness is a condition shared by all men, he can begin to regain his lost identity. All the rest, all the running and hiding, is deception. "My God," says Brad Tolliver in Flood, "at least a man didn't have to twitch and jerk and pule and mutter and twist his face in craziness and call it all something else. At least a man did not have to lie."[39] Not a denial, but an affirmation of honesty of self, an attainment of true self-identity, are the words "I am what I am" repeated over and over by Warren characters. Not a resignation to weakness, but a display of strength, an acceptance of responsibility for one's human identity, is Adam Rosenzweig's moving cry in Wilderness: "I am what I am. I must do what I have to do. God help me."[40]

Once a Warren character manages to learn what he is--that he is not animal or angel, that he cannot borrow an identity from others, that to be a man requires that he be himself--there comes a period of reflection over the momentous consequences of this new knowledge. Typically the character quietly removes himself from the stream of the novel's action to examine what he has discovered. In The Cave this is what Jack Harrick, the father of the trapped boy, does. He returns home after a long vigil at the cave's entrance and considers what it means to say that he is himself:

> I am me, I am me, he thought, and saw the white moths, with their frail, wayward plunging, come out of the dark to butt so softly and sadly the screen that kept them from the light.
>
> But who was Jack Harrick?
>
> And he thought that he, the old man sitting under the electric bulb in the bare room, sweating in the wheel chair, could not possibly be Jack Harrick.
>
> No--for Jack Harrick, he knew then, was nothing but a dream. He was a dream dreamed up from the weakness of people. Since people were weak, they dreamed up a dream out of their need for violence, for strength, for freedom. Sitting there, he hated them for their weakness, for all their praise and envy, for the hands clawing at him for his strength, or in supplication for it.
>
> He hated them for their weakness, which had made him what he was.
>
> No, he knew then, as calmly and indifferently as morning mist parting on the mountain, the weakness was not theirs. It was his. Out of his own weakness, he had dreamed the dream of Jack Harrick. And from that all had followed. [41]

"All had followed" from his being Jack Harrick, a dreamed identity, but nevertheless one which has influenced outward events, the lives of others, including his son's lost in the cave. Though his identity was only a mask to conceal his weakness, it has not permitted him to escape responsibility for affecting others. Though he would have had it otherwise, the two worlds, his inward dream and the outward world of events, have interplayed, and he can no longer deny his complicity. Indeed, this complicity, the converging of the worlds, has enabled him to see his identity as a reality, to shatter his dream perspective of himself by acknowledging what he thought was only dreaming as real; as Murray Guilfort points out in Meet Me in the Green Glen, "The dream is a lie, but the dreaming is truth." [42] "I am me" means

to Jack that the internal confusion he has tried to hide has not been hidden at all, for it has influenced, tragically, a course of events, and that his responsibility rests not just with those external events, but also with his self-conception which has brought them about. What he thought was secret is public, and always has been.

It is not a matter that the two worlds never converged before for Jack Harrick. They always did, for that is the nature of man and his outer reality. The difference which occurs to Jack and other enlightened characters in the novels is that they come to recognize that they converge, and knowing this they also know that wearing masks is useless. They know that acts they perform have consequences for which they are responsible, and they know that how they act is inextricably determined by who they are, for which they are also responsible.

Earlier in this study it was shown that inward and outward violence are reflections of each other. What was only implied before but can be made clearer now is that violent characters like Willie Stark and Adam Stanton do not realize the dangers of the interplay between the two worlds. They maintain their belief in abstractions without regard for consequences. They lack a moral sense, which is what Jack Harrick acquires by accepting responsibility for both inner and outer selves and by growing to understand the peculiar and terrible unity between man's two worlds.

In "Knowledge and the Image of Man" Warren speaks of the "tragic experience" and describes it as "universal and a corollary of man's place in nature."[43] What is tragic about experience is exactly the fact that the world inside man and that outside him are never wholly separate. If they were, then man could live different lives in each. But, as Jerry Beaumont realizes in World Enough and Time, things are not that simple:

> He had enacted his secret drama, masked and by night with the steel in his hand, as he enacted in secret the sequel with Rachel, but he was torn between that secret world and the public world. Where did he belong? He belonged in both.
>
> The problem, however, was more than a problem of doubleness. If the worlds had been entirely different, with a gulf of unplumbed nothingness between, then all might have been easy. He could have lived in both untroubled, speaking different languages, abiding by different laws, worshipping different gods, walking different streets, admiring different landscapes.
>
> But it was not so. The two worlds impinged, overlay and lapped, blurred and absorbed, twisted together and dissolved like mist. That was the trouble. You never knew when the doubleness you embraced might become simplicity, or when the single to which you looked or on which you laid your hand might divide like smoke, or to what strange corner the familiar street down which you walked might lead. The common word in your mouth or mind betrayed you.[44]

Reality, by which is meant both worlds, thus becomes in Warren's philosophy a gigantic "web," to use Cass Mastern's word, in which no individual can perform any action or even think without there being resultant consequences elsewhere on the web. In At Heaven's Gate, Ashby Wyndham agrees with Cass but uses the image of a pond of water to describe life: "You throw a rock in a pond and it don't make but one splash but they is ripples runs out from it."[45] And in Flood, Brad Tolliver uses still another kind of image:

> Everything was always tangled up like that. Everything you remembered was like those long strands of lights for the Christmas tree you take out on Christmas Eve and can't for hell's sake untangle, and half the bulbs are busted anyway, and when you start following a certain strand it will certainly take you into a new snarl you hadn't anticipated.[46]

Finally, in Wilderness, Aaron Blaustein addresses Adam Rosenzweig, giving him knowledge which Adam will carry with him on his journey southward into the Civil War: "everything is part of everything else . . . It is hard to know. . . . Only by learning it can you live. That is the only way I can live. Whatever comes out of History--out of this anguish even--will come only because everything is part of everything else."[47]

The interconnectedness of things, the union of inner and outer worlds, is the tragedy, the anguish, of man's existence, for man cannot help but affect, often hurt others. "Such is the nature of his inherited defect," says Leonard Casper, "that man inevitably causes suffering. Its presence makes his existence possible. Evil conspires to define man: the fiction of Robert Penn Warren makes this conclusion unavoidable."[48] Man cannot try to perfect a position of neutrality as Jack Burden does in All the King's Men. Neutrality is impossible. All that man can do, Warren suggests, is to "achieve the courage and clarity of mind to envisage the tragic pathos of life."[49] That is, man can realize that all men are united by reason of their common existential predicaments of separateness and of the mutual, dialectical interplay between all things. In this way redemption is possible. Only in this way can man "return to a communion with man and nature."[50] As Warren says in "Knowledge and the Image of Man":

> Man can return to his lost unity, and if that return is fitful and precarious, if the foliage and flower of the innocent garden are now somewhat browned by a late season, all is the more precious for the fact, for what is now achieved has been achieved by a growth of moral awareness. The return to nature and man is the discovery of love, and law. But love through separateness, and law through rebellion. Man eats of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and falls. But if he takes another bite, he may at least get

> a sort of redemption. And a precious redemption. His unity with nature will not now be that of a drop of water in the ocean; it is, rather, the unity of the lover with the beloved, a unity presupposing separateness.[51]

The acceptance of responsibility for one's own identity and the recognition that all men share the universal fate of being interconnected with one another lead ultimately to the discovery of love and law. In none of Warren's novels is this discovery better exemplified than in All the King's Men.

Neal Woodruf, Jr. sees All the King's Men as an "autobiography of a mind"[52]--Jack Burden's mind. Through Jack's inquisitive, searching[53] mind the reader goes on a journey through the length and breadth of Warren's philosophy. From separateness to confusion to violence and violation to redemption--all of it filters through Jack's mind. And when the discovery of love and law is made, it is again through his mind that the reader comes to know how the goal of man in the philosophy is achieved.

Jack learns near the end of the novel that to be able to love himself he must love others; the interconnectedness of things is such that if he hates and distrusts them, he must do so to himself. His experience with Tiny Duffy, the conspiring successor to Willie's governorship, teaches him this.

> It was as though in the midst of the scene Tiny Duffy had slowly and like a brother winked at me with his oyster eye and I had known he knew the nightmare truth, which was that we were twins bound together more intimately and disastrously than the poor freaks of the midway who are bound by the common stitch of flesh and gristle and the seepage of blood. We were bound together forever and I could never hate him without hating myself or love myself without loving him.[54]

The discovery of love necessarily leads Jack to the discovery of law, for, loving others, he is able to respect them, to think before he acts, to consider how his actions must inevitably affect their lives as much as his own. The discovery of love and law causes Jack to refrain from giving Sugar Boy the real facts about how Willie died, which would certainly bring about further violence; to avoid telling his mother the truth about Judge Irwin's death, which would only cause her unnecessary pain; to reunite himself with Anne Stanton, who now accepts him in marriage; and to bring into his home the Scholarly Attorney, whom he formerly despised. These are acts of law and love, of compassionate moral giving and restraint, of doing good and avoiding evil. Good and evil, it should be clear by now, are not polar opposites for Warren. Good is the balancing and harmonizing of opposites and the attention to particulars; evil is abstractionism or animalism: one-sidedness. Evil is the result, as Warren says in "Knowledge and the Image of Man," of "the fact that we have not achieved balance and responsibility in the ever-unfolding process of self-definition."[55] Evil is being more or less than we are; it is abstracting an idea and ignoring everything else for its perpetuity, or it is sinking below the level of humanity to a purely physical or animal existence. Good is the end of our longing for "full balance and responsibility in self-knowledge, in a recognition and harmonious acceptance of our destiny."[56]

Unlike Willie Stark and Adam Stanton, both of whom were "incomplete with the terrible division of their age,"[57] Jack has, at last, "wholeness of vision," a completeness achieved through the binding of the philosophical and existential disparities of idea and fact by which he alternately saw life. The agency by which this unity is sustained is not identified in All the King's Men, but in his other novels, particularly the latest ones, Warren names a third, non-rational, non-empirical agency of reunification. "Only in my heart

can I make the world hang together,"[58] says Adam Rosenzweig in Wilderness, and "There is no country but the heart,"[59] affirms Brad Tolliver in Flood. In Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground, Leonard Casper concludes that "It is the heart that rescues, the Original Goodness perhaps more immemorial and ingrained than Original Sin itself."[60]

The nature of Warren's redemption has been the subject of considerable critical controversy. It resists analytic paraphrase because it is a process melding of the synthetic and analytic elements of love and law, because of its religious connotations, because Warren's own attitude toward it has evolved ("redemption" is the only portion of his philosophy which shows real inconsistency of treatment), and mostly because he has neglected, until the recent publication of Meet Me in the Green Glen, to perform a close study of it. In his other novels redemption is not developed--as in the case of Jack Burden, the novel ends before more about its composition is explained than that Jack acquires a peaceful understanding and acceptance of life's terms and that this changed outlook influences the course of his living, or, as in the cases of Willie Stark and Jerry Beaumont, the death of a character closes off detailed explication of what it is.

In Meet Me in the Green Glen, Warren undertakes what must have been one of his most difficult labors as a novelist: the creation of a work which begins where most of his fiction ends, with achieved redemption, and which moves not so much toward a point of final narrative resolution as toward a lyrical, fugal iteration with variations upon the opening theme of redemption.

The novel's central character, Cassie Spottwood, is not another of Warren's arch-escapists, but a thorough-going confronter of life and an unrelenting upholder of the tenets of love and law. She is a moral giantess akin to Faulkner's Dilsey in her solitary refusal

to conform to social respectability, for which the other characters brand her as insane, and her willingness to acknowledge publicly and personally her guilt for murdering her husband relates her to another Faulkner heroine, Nancy Mannigoe, who also valued human authenticity above jurisprudence, the trappings of abstract, formal legality.

> She was the fixed point from which there was forever the going-away. She stood there and experienced the pure joy that comes only with the full, free recognition of destiny, which is the recognition of the self. Standing there in the sunlit kitchen, she felt calm and immortal.[61]

Following this early description of her begins her amorous and later legal involvement with a stray Italian named Angelo Passetto. He confronts her moral resolution by challenging her identity: "'Who you?' he cried out. 'Porca Madonna! Who you are?'"[62] And her response to this recurrence of love in her life is, "Oh, why did everything have to begin again!"[63] The condition of spiritual autonomy she had achieved is being tested once more, and the novel is a study of her ability to maintain, through love and law, the hard moral lessons she learned from her past, and a testing of her strength to grow from her new experiences.

Surrounding her and Angelo are a host of reflector characters whose excessive hotness or coldness serves to establish by contrast the fulfilled love relationship. At the hot extreme is Sunderland Spottwood, Cassie's husband, who has a reputation for "directness, callousness, idiotic courage, and amiable bestiality,"[64] and for whom marriage was a proposal of playful annihilation: "'You know,'" he tells Cassie, "'--you know why I ever laid into you? . . . it was because I could see you were bottled-up crazy, and I thought it might be fun to make you blow the cork.'"[65] More numerous are the cold characters, the most prominent of these being Murray Guilfort, for whom the word "Love . . . rang hollowly in his head as in a great

cave,"[66] and who, in contemplating the shallow victories of his legal career as he "with calm marveling" emptied a box of sleeping tablets into his mouth, "cried out in his heart--But nobody told me--nobody told me!"[67]

What nobody told him is what Cassie, who exemplifies Warren's combination of love and law, dramatizes in the novel. Sunderland, who loves without law, thereby brutalizes love into animalism, but Murray, who is not accidentally depicted as a ruthlessly ambitious lawyer, is worse as the embodiment of law without love. Without love, law is at best outward constraint, abstract principle; such law does not even generate inner discipline, for without love it instills no internal, felt motivation for self-discipline to operate. Without inward discipline, life is illusion, for the lack of felt discipline prevents the assertion by man of his own identity and, as with Murray, causes him to pretend, to be what he does not feel, "to live, in fact, by the image of the life of that face which was the face of another man."[68] Fearfully Murray ponders, "If that face were withdrawn, what would he have? By God, he thought in a burst of terror at his own temerity, he would have himself!"[69] Appropriately, then, Cassie asks him, "'Didn't you ever love anybody?'"[70] And, without waiting for his answer, she explains her own feelings toward Angelo Passetto:

> "(Angelo) knelt down. He took my right hand in both of his, and he kissed my hand. Then he went away, but--" She had stepped back from (Murray), not looking at him now, her head lifted, looking far away. "He has gone away," she was saying. "Somewhere far away, and he is happy. And I'm happy too, because I made him happy, for oh, I loved him--"[71]

This passage is nearly a compendium of the novel's meaning, the necessity of interaction between love and law. Loving Angelo, Cassie

is able to will discipline to the extent of surrendering Angelo, when the time comes, to another woman whom he loves better. This self-discipline is an expression of the authenticity of her love, for she finds it preferable that what exists for each of them be genuine, than that she passionately cling to an unresponsive object or that he stay with her unwillfully. The law, the discipline, is not abstract principle having no felt connection, but is conjoined with her love. The love is equally enhanced by discipline, for it is made stronger by the assurance that not even forfeiture of the physical object can diminish it; it is raised to a love for the being rather than solely the body of the beloved. It is not carnality, which is love without abstraction, but is love conjoined with law. Without love, law is mere idea, and without law, love is only sensuous.

What Warren is suggesting about redemption in Meet Me in the Green Glen is that it is an ongoing process, involving, not surprisingly, the same counters which man must struggle to avoid in his pre-redemptive state. Man is in the world, Warren says, "with continual and intimate interpenetration, an inevitable osmosis of being . . . and so identity is a continually emerging, an unfolding . . . creation."[72] The process of self-identity, which only death can actually terminate, may become less warlike and agonizing and more peaceful and satisfying, but it never, until death, really ceases. Redemption, likewise, is a process, something which must be continually re-earned. There is a spiraling upward with the addition of each new piece of knowledge, a movement away from the extreme misery caused by the discovery of separateness and what ensues, but as long as man exists in the world there will necessarily be dialectical conflict. Redemption, however, which derives from a heightened understanding by each individual of what it is to be man, can serve to ease that conflict in both the inner and outer worlds. Inwardly it can subdue the soul's pain; outwardly it can serve to bring

understanding between men and to unite them in a common search for a better life to live. Though even with redemption man must continue to avoid the pitfalls of the extremes of idea and fact, through the increased moral awareness which redemption gives him, Warren suggests, his ongoing journey becomes less arduous and less dangerous.

Leonard Casper perceptively notes Jack Burden's attitude at the end of All the King's Men and remarks: "According to his convictions, his hope should be greener than ever, but despite his convictions he has never seemed less vigorous, less prepared for birth than at the end of the novel. Instead of passing into the 'awful responsibility of Time,' Jack Burden speaks with the calm of one ready to lie down now with Anne and share with her the long, long sleep."[73] Casper's objection may be partly explained by the consideration that Jack's assumption of the burden of responsibility for his complicity in events at the end is one which prevents him from being happier or more active about his redemption than he is or appears to be. Jack, after all, has envisioned the "tragic pathos of life" as a requirement for his redemption, and this does not make for a "happy ending" to the novel. Another explanation of Jack's attitude exists in the fact that Warren's redemption has the effect of liberating the individual from anxiety concerning his predicament. To achieve knowledge about himself and redemption, Jack has had to come a long, hard way. His experience at the end of the novel is one of the calm after the storm, the result of the resolution of a major conflict in his struggle for self-identity. And if the novel were continued, as Meet Me in the Green Glen in sequeling the achievement of redemption makes clear, Jack would not necessarily remain calm and resigned. In All the King's Men, Jack achieves a level of self-

identity which promises to sustain him for a long time, but as Warren shows in Meet Me in the Green Glen, this accomplishment must be continually re-earned.

Inconsistencies in Warren's treatment of redemption stem from two sources: chiefly the evolution of his attitude toward it as a solution to the problem of dualism, and secondarily the perplexing religious connotations which surround the redemptions of some characters. The evolution of Warren's attitude will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter in terms of a growing alinement of Warren's approach with Faulkner's process solution. From evidence which has already been given in this chapter, it is apparent that Warren's movement toward a "heart" solution and toward stylistic lyricism in his most recent novels is an attempt to de-emphasize the play of philosophical counters of his earlier novels and to focus upon contextual insight and artful impression as ultimate guides to the dilemma of human morality. Also to be discussed in Chapter IV is the difficult subject of what Warren means by "knowledge." As his fiction has shifted its orientation from a dualism which includes idea as one of its counters to a process view, which lacks rationality and defies analysis, Warren has compounded his problem of defining what he means by the knowledge his characters acquire in their growth toward moral awareness, and he has thereby actually made more remote the possibility of arriving at an explicit, unequivocal utterance of what the moral standard is that men may live by.

Warren, of course, frequently utilizes religious materials in his novels, but confusion arises as to what the reader is to make of them. Some of the redemptions, like Jack Burden's, seem to be religious. But are they? The Scholarly Attorney, a minor figure through most of All the King's Men, appears rather suddenly at the end of the novel to dictate his tract:

> The creation of man whom God in His foreknowledge knew doomed to sin was the awful index of God's omnipotence. For it would have been a thing of trifling and contemptible ease for Perfection to create mere perfection. To do so would, to speak truth, be not creation but extension. Separateness is identity and the only way for God to create, truly create, man was to make him separate from God Himself, and to be separate from God is to be sinful. The creation of evil is therefore the index of God's glory and His power. That had to be so that the creation of good might be the index of man's glory and power. But by God's help. By His help and in His wisdom.[74]

According to the tract man is sinful because he is separate from God, and it is implied that he needs God's help to do good. Jack Burden gives hesitant approval to the tract: "I was not certain but that in my own way I did not believe what he had said."[75] The questions of the importance of the tract and the nature of Jack's redemption--whether or not it is positively religious--seem to be left for the reader to wonder about, as is the larger question of whether or not Warren requires that religion be an integral part of redemption. The redemptions of many characters--including Willie Stark, Jerry Beaumont, Perse Munn, Amantha Starr, and Brad Tolliver--seem to be devoid of religious connections.

Statements like this one by Ashby Wyndham in <u>At Heaven's Gate</u> add further confusion:

> But a man cannot be good out of plain human kindness. He cannot be good for it ain't in a pore man. He cannot be good unlest it is good in the light of God's eye. God's eye ain't on him and he just swaps one sin for another, and it worse maybe. I laid off likker, but I swapped for another sin.[76]

Is it to be assumed that only through a strict adherence to religious principles "in the light of God's eye" man can hope to be good? Is Willie Stark's assertion that "Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud"[77] a statement of original sin? These examples and others like them have puzzled Warren's readers and graveled his critics.

In considering the problem of religion in Warren, Cleanth Brooks offers this advice:

> A Christian may be tempted to transpose the problem into terms of conversion or redemption. But if he yields to the temptation he must take responsibility for the transposition and not assume that it formed part of the author's intention. Still there is no doubt that one can learn from Warren's fiction a great deal about the psychology of conversion and the cast of redemption even though Warren himself poses his problems in non-Christian terms--often in terms of movement from ignorance to knowledge or from bafflement to order and insight.[78]

Others are more positive about Warren's use of religion. Randall Stewart sees Willie Stark's explanation to Adam Stanton about how goodness is made out of badness as a "down-to-earth statement of original sin" and adds that "Robert Penn Warren has advised young writers to read their Bible, and mark it well. Warren's writings show he has read and marked his own Bible to good purpose."[79]

The evidence in the novels supports both interpretations, and whatever final truth there is to Warren's position on religion would seem to lie, characteristically, in the middle. In "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Warren speaks of the "secularization of things" and explains that "we have limited and revised the idea of the sanctity of life. Human life we mean in our world."[80] Redemption

in the novels is achieved, then, religiously (as with Ashby Wyndham and the Scholarly Attorney), secularly, or most often secularly with religious overtones. In this last form it is helpful in implanting redemptory convictions in man, but it is not essential for redemption to occur.

Rich in associative value, Warren's religious themes, symbols and images tend to give depth, height and backing to his philosophy. For example, Warren has found it necessary to remind man that he is matter as much as or more than whatever else he is. The would-be Angel, as has been shown, is a type who wishes to leave behind his material nature in reaching for higher things. He tends to forget that being man, being what he is, means accepting that he is a creature of the earth. In reacting against this angelic type, in trying to bring him back down to earth, Warren stresses, often through the use of religious themes, man's lower nature. The religious idea of man as fallen and in a state of original sin reinforces this message. This is not to say that Warren's philosophy necessarily includes original sin; it is only to say that the use of the concept of original sin is very effective in conveying the emphasis that man is not angel but man, and being man he is matter. Matter is dirty. Sometimes it stinks, and sometimes man stinks. Willie's repeated saying that "Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud" and his interpretation of goodness as made from badness are both statements which emphasize man's material nature. They may be construed as declarations of original sin, and they are more effective because they can be. Whether or not they are, these statements play important parts within the context of Warren's philosophy by serving to emphasize that for man to be man he must accept that he is matter.

While Warren renders his literary themes in religious, psychological, political and even mythopoeic terms, it is to be

insisted that the themes collectively represent his philosophy, and that while it is instructive and rewarding to interpret his fiction in non-philosophical terms, such as religiously or politically, no interpretation of his work is complete or even adequate without reference to the philosophy, to which the non-philosophical elements are subservient. This "shape of his fiction," his philosophy, is finally controlling; without it Warren's work is likely to be misconstrued. Repeatedly critics have neglected to acknowledge that Warren is a philosopher and have proceeded to evaluate elements of his fiction without referring them to the whole of his systematic thought. With religious elements this has meant the overlooking of his humanism, his recognition of the "secularization of things," and the mediational thrust of his philosophy, and has resulted in extreme interpretations which belie his higher purpose of explaining philosophically the nature of man. To understand Warren as a novelist requires that he also be understood as a philosopher. As a philosopher-novelist who delivers systematic meaning through the agency of the creative imagination, he is not "non-commital,"[81] as in Eric Bentley's view, and as a writer who believes in wholeness and harmony of vision he is not "unaffirmative,"[82] as in Alfred Kazin's. Behind the surface violence and tortured unwinding of his narratives stands Warren's philosophical appeal for a unity to heal man's brokenness.

This study began with Warren's own assertions that he is antisystematic and that he comes to his fiction free from preconceptions. His reasons for maintaining these views must remain his own, but undoubtedly they are related to his reaction against what he has found to be man's chief sin, that of aspiring to perfection through the creation of an artificial, abstract ideal. But, as has been shown, Warren's philosophy, while being systematic and unified, is still quite plastic. It lacks the rigidity of the "one-answer system" he

opposes. It seeks to account for the condition of man and to propose solutions within a broad framework which includes a consideration of many aspects of existence and which recognizes the great diversity of human life.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]Robert Penn Warren, "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, LIX (1955), p. 190.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Robert Penn Warren, "Blackberry Winter," The Circus in the Attic and Other Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1931), p. 63.

[4]Ibid., p. 86.

[5]Ibid., p. 87.

[6]All the King's Men (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. 200.

[7]Night Rider (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1967), p. 281.

[8]Ibid., p. 306.

[9]All the King's Men, p. 464.

[10]Night Rider, p. 313. Despite his bleak attitude, it is wrong to assume that Mr. Munn does not achieve at least a partial redemption before his death. Eric Bentley's comment in "The Meaning of Robert Penn Warren's Novels," Kenyon Review X (Summer, 1948), p. 409, that Perse Munn "dies unenlightened, bewildered, unfulfilled, not knowing himself, and therefore unrepentent" is simply not true. If his sin is of isolation, of being drawn away from other men because of his devotion to the abstract idea of the Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco, then his penultimate act of refraining from killing Senator Tolliver, who he believes has betrayed him, is one of drawing closer to men, and his ultimate act of betraying his presence to the law and causing his own death is one which refutes the false principles he has been guided by throughout the novel. Studies of the Association as an abstraction can be found in Charles H. Bohner, Robert Penn Warren (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), and in Alvan S. Ryan's "Robert Penn Warren's Night Rider: The Nihilism of the Isolated Temperament," Modern Fiction Studies VII (Winter, 1961). Bohner states that "Munn's failure . . . is his besetting sin of abstraction. For Munn the Association becomes the idea incarnate, a means to salvation beyond the flux of history"

(p. 69), and Ryan remarks that Munn "is able only to give himself to the abstract idea of the Association of Dark Fired Tobacco, and his isolation is increased rather than diminished" (p. 212).

[11]The Cave (New York: Random House, 1959), pp. 395-96.

[12]Ibid., p. 225.

[13]All the King's Men, pp. 11-12.

[14]In World Enough and Time (New York: The New American Library, 1952), "In the days before the white man came, the Indians called the land of Kentucky the Dark and Bloody Ground," p. 509.

[15]In "All the King's Men: The Matrix of Experience," Yale Review (Winter, 1964), Warren tells the true life hitchhiker story and discusses the influence of the world of Huey Long's Louisiana upon his creation of All the King's Men.

[16]All the King's Men, p. 461.

[17]Ibid.

[18]In Warren's introduction to the Modern Library edition of All the King's Men, p. iii.

[19]All the King's Men, p. 413.

[20]See Erwin R. Steinberg's "The Enigma of Willie Stark" in All the King's Men: A Symposium, ed. A. Fred Sochatoff et al. (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1957). Steinberg explains that Willie was a unified personality in Warren's earliest version of the story--he was an idealist corrupted by power who discovered his own emptiness. In the novel Steinberg regards Willie's complexity as forced upon Warren as a consequence of his introducing Jack Burden as a major character. Steinberg speculates that "making an enigma of Willie added useful tension to the story" and, as another possibility, "that to carry Jack through various stages of responsibility and maturity (Warren) had to keep him uncertain about Stark, or even misguided." Steinberg concludes that Willie's ambiguity in the novel is an artistic flaw and a cheat to the novel's readers, who desperately wish to know the "real Willie," but are only teased by Warren.

[21]John Lewis Longley, Jr., "Self-Knowledge, the Pearl of Pus, and the Seventh Circle," Modern Fiction Studies VI (Spring, 1960), p. 15.

[22]Charles R. Anderson, "Violence and Order in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Hopkins Review VI (Winter, 1953), p. 90.

[23]Frederick P. W. McDowell, "The Romantic Tragedy of Self in World Enough and Time," Critique (Summer, 1957), p. 34.

[24]In Warren's introduction to the Modern Library edition of All the King's Men, p. iii.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Charles H. Bohner, Robert Penn Warren (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 78.

[27]"Self-Knowledge, the Pearl of Pus, and the Seventh Circle," p. 14.

[28]Anderson, p. 91.

[29]William C. Havard, "The Burden of the Literary Mind: Some Meditations on Robert Penn Warren as Historian," The South Atlantic Quarterly LXII (Autumn, 1963), p. 521.

[30]Ibid., p. 522.

[31]"Self-Knowledge, the Pearl of Pus, and the Seventh Circle," p. 16.

[32]At Heaven's Gate (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 250.

[33]In Warren's "Nostromo," Sewanee Review LIX (September, 1951), p. 391. This essay has been reprinted as the introduction to the Modern Library edition of Nostromo.

[34]World Enough and Time, p. 488.

[35]Ibid.

[36]John Lewis Longley, Jr., "When All is Said and Done: Warren's Flood," in Robert Penn Warren: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Lewis Longley, Jr. (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 172.

[37]At Heaven's Gate, p. 155.

[38]Night Rider, p. 86.

[39]Flood (New York: The New American Library, 1965), p. 367.

[40]Wilderness (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 94.

[41]The Cave, p. 388.

[42]Meet Me in the Green Glen (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 370.

[43]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 187.

[44]World Enough and Time, p. 334.

[45]At Heaven's Gate, p. 120.

[46]Flood, pp. 27-28.

[47]Wilderness, p. 74.

[48]Leonard Casper, Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. xi. In his chapter entitled "Fiction and Biography: The Ornate Web" Casper views Jack Burden as the man who "tries to perfect neutrality" (p. 122).

[49]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 187.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Neal Woodruf, Jr., "The Technique of All the King's Men," in All the King's Men: A Symposium, ed. A. Fred Sochatoff et al. (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1957), p. 51. Woodruf argues that our understanding of the novel's events depends upon Jack's mind and his "distinctive vocabulary and syntax of response to life." Jack is described as "alert and observant," "an intellectual of sorts," "curious," having "a tendency to generalize about humanity and an impulse to philosophize about himself and often about man," and capable of "honesty of mind." Woodruf sees the presentation of the novel's facts and characters through the subjectivity of Jack's mind and the generalization of values which arises from it as commensurate with Warren's credo in his introduction to Nostromo where the "philosophical novelist" is defined as a man who seeks to elevate image to symbol and to derive the general from the particular. The

process of the transformation of character into symbol is "dialectical and cumulative." Characters emerge as symbolic patterns through their personal relationships; they are involved in "a dramatically vital process--which is the essential structure of the novel."

[53]Robert C. Slack, "The Telemachus Theme," in Sochatoff. Slack finds the theme of "the dispossessed young man who is searching for a spiritual father and striving to re-establish a lost relationship with his home, his community, and his world"--a theme represented by Telemachus who speaks for the modern century as Ulysses has spoken for centuries past--of central importance in All the King's Men. He locates the sources of Jack's negation and lack of direction in Jack's formative years when he grew up with no real father and no real home. Jack is incapable of purposefully shaping his existence; this results in his inability to succeed in Law School and explains why he cannot complete his Ph. D. paper on Cass Mastern, a man who achieved purpose in his life. Slack examines Jack's unsuccessful search for a father image: the weakness of the Scholarly Attorney causes Jack to reject not only that father but also all other possible fathers--like Judge Irwin and Governor Stanton--who stand for the tradition of his own class. Thus shattered he seeks a father outside of his own tradition and is attracted by "the force of Willie's personality, like iron filings by a magnet." But, Slack continues, Jack has not found the right father in Willie, and fortunately Jack realizes his mistake before he is destroyed. Slack sees Judge Irwin's death and Jack's discovery that the Judge was his true father as the turning point in Jack's life; the profound change caused by his true father's death reveals itself in his acceptance of the responsibilities of time and history.

[54]All the King's Men, p. 442.

[55]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 188.

[56]Ibid., p. 189.

[57]All the King's Men, p. 462.

[58]Wilderness, p. 169.

[59]Flood, p. 368.

[60]Leonard Casper, "Trial by Wilderness: Warren's Exemplum," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature III (Fall, 1962), p. 49.

[61]Meet Me in the Green Glen, p. 94.

[62]Ibid., p. 103.

[63]Ibid., p. 109.

[64]Ibid., p. 83.

[65]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[66]Ibid., p. 365.

[67]Ibid., p. 370.

[68]Ibid., p. 23.

[69]Ibid., p. 24.

[70]Ibid., p. 358.

[71]Ibid., p. 359.

[72]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," pp. 186-87. In his essay on Nostromo, Warren adds: "Wisdom, then, is the recognition of man's condition, the condition of the creature made without gills or fins but dropped into the sea, the necessity of living with the ever renewing dilemma of idea as opposed to nature, morality to action, . . . justice to material interests. Man must make his life somehow in the dialectical process of these terms, and in so far as he is to achieve redemption he must do so through an awareness of his condition that identifies him with the general human communion, not in abstraction, not in mere doctrine, but immediately. The victory is never won, the redemption must be continually re-earned."

[73]Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground, p. 87.

[74]All the King's Men, pp. 462-63.

[75]Ibid., p. 463.

[76]At Heaven's Gate, p. 119.

[77]All the King's Men, p. 442.

[78]Cleanth Brooks, The Hidden God (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 125.

[79]Randall Stewart, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge: State University Press, 1958), p. 143.

[80]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 182.

[81]Eric Bentley, "The Meaning of Robert Penn Warren's Novels," Kenyon Review X (Summer, 1948), p. 417.

[82]See Kazin's chapter on Warren in Contemporaries (Boston: Lytle, Brown and Co., 1962). Also see his article, "The Seriousness of Robert Penn Warren," Partisan Review XXVI (Spring, 1959) where he says Warren is too serious with his moral ideas. For a defense of Warren against Kazin, see Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Theories of Human Nature: Kazin or Warren," Sewanee Review LXIX (Summer, 1961).

CHAPTER II

In his essay, "Pure and Impure Poetry,"[1] Warren likens the critic to a warrior whose impossible task is that of analytically defeating a many-armed "monster," which is literature. The critic who attempts total victory over a work of literature is "doomed to failure," Warren explains, for there is no single methodology of criticism which is complete, any more than there is any weapon the warrior can use to lop off at once all of the regenerating arms of the monster. The best a critic can hope to do is apply his human resources toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of the power of literature: "Intelligence, tact, discipline, honesty, sensitivity--those are the things we have to depend on, after all, to give us what we prize in criticism, the insight."[2]

Unfortunately, few of Warren's literary critics have taken advantage of the somewhat rare opportunity which his roles as major artist and critic afford: that of criticizing his art in the light of his own critical theorizing and criticism of other writers. Perhaps critical absolutists, eager for some all-encompassing literary strategy, are disappointed that he views criticism with such limited scope. Or, possibly, critics with a scientific or positivist bent regard his "things we have to depend upon" and his notion of "insight" as random, unempirical, and insufficiently standardized for the making of valid critical observations.

Whatever reasons Warren's critics may have for generally ignoring his station as critic, the net effect has been the creation of a body of criticism which either gives us only scattered observations of his technical genius, with no attempt to see his art as part of a larger perspective which includes his own criticism and philosophy, or offers us theory not related to the larger view, in which case the criticism is irrelevant. Much like Cass Mastern's world, Warren's

is "all of one piece." Without satisfactory referents to the author's own critical writing and his philosophy, we find in criticism on Warren something close to what I. A. Richards found in his survey of extant critical theory, "an almost empty garner."[3]

Rightly, some critics, like John M. Bradbury, have noted the extension by Warren of his poetic theory to his writing of fiction and have utilized it as a sensible starting point for analysis of his narrative art. Bradbury observes that in his prose

> . . . Warren's dramatic symbolic naturalism embodies all the chief Fugitive poetic theories: Ransom's doctrine of "metaphysical poetry," Tate's "tension" between intensive and extensive factors, and his own concept of "impure" poetry. Each of the novels, premised on the dualism of fact and idea, probes human experience in both of its aspects (physical and Platonic, intensive and extensive, naturalistic and symbolic) in order to "earn" its insights and tensions.[4]

But even when this valuable connection has been made, there has been a remarkable hesitancy by Bradbury and other critics to explore its implications very far or to render judgment upon Warren's success in transferring his method from the poetic medium to that of fictional narration.

An important exception is Calvin Lane's study of World Enough and Time.[5] Lane's examination of this novel is primarily of Warren's use of the historical material relating to the Beauchamp-Sharp affair, which Lane regards favorably. Noting, however, the novel's wrenching and veritable chaos of ideas, Lane theorizes that Warren has imposed upon the dramatic structure of World Enough and Time metaphysical tensions derived from his theory and practice of writing poetry. While such effects may fare well enough in poetry,

he argues, they tend to produce hindrances to the narrative line in an extended work of fiction and result only in confusion for the reader:

> . . . when he tries to apply his poetic theories to the writing of fiction, trouble arises, because for the Aristotelian single action, so admirably followed in World Enough and Time to the novel's climax, he has substituted conflicting effects, dichotomies, and not always successful ambiguities. He has used a classical dramatic structure, yet has imposed an ambiguity taken over from his technique of poetry, not as readily applicable to fiction, and which involves matters of narrative perspective and shifts in motivation of which the reader is totally unaware.[6]

While Lane's theory goes farther than the efforts of many of his contemporaries in providing rationale for the difficulties Warren evinces in his narrative art, it is by no means the only possible one or even the most plausible among the several he proposes. Elsewhere in his dissertation, Lane mentions another likely cause for the novel's aesthetic failure in Warren's oscillation between the roles of relatively uninvolved narrator of historical events and very directly involved relater of the moral issues at stake.[7] While largely undeveloped by Lane, this argument begins to go considerably deeper than even the one based upon Warren's adaption of his poetics to his prose.

For one thing, "oscillation" suggests that the novel's disharmony may be attributable to a conflict between Warren's presentation of historical events and the development of his moral ideas; Warren, that is, alternates from one to the other rather than presenting them integrally because they somehow preclude each other. In a sense, his frequent usage of history as skeleton material in his earlier novels (in Night Rider, World Enough and Time, and

All the King's Men, for example) is disadvantageous for a writer as profoundly concerned with moral ideas as he is, for the reason that the two, fact and idea, simply do not always correspond (ironically, this is one of the major tenets of his own philosophy). History, while never absolutely intractable, is rigid enough to produce a barrier to the neat, organic evolution from it of moral lessons, particularly a complex system of morality like Warren's which may be only tangentially related to the historical frameworks he employs. Thus Warren is compelled, especially in each of his earlier novels, to take his readers aside from the narrative flow and, chalk in hand, to discuss almost pedagogically the lessons we were supposed to have derived from his stories. As readers, we may well wonder at the necessity of his doing so. If the lessons arise naturally from the narratives, then his explanations are unnecessary authorial intrusions; if, as is frequently the case, the lessons bear only obliquely upon the narratives, then his ruminations may serve better in a separate philosophical tract than in the context of novels. Warren's repeated fascination with history is bewildering, then, from the standpoint of the damage it inflicts upon his narrative art, especially when we consider that he might have avoided the difficulty of a fiction often divided between rumination and narrative (historically-based) event through the use of more fully imaginative, flexible plots, which he could have more easily conformed to his moral system of ideas.

Lane's "oscillation" theory provides a second, and most important, possible conclusion. Warren's alternations between telling the story and telling the truth of the story are indicative of a generalized problem which confronts any serious narrative artist in any age: how best to tell the truth artistically. This difficulty is compounded for the contemporary writer, however, in that the truth, as Warren has said, is no longer "one and simple."[8] For Warren especially, as an artist most deeply engaged in the question of truth

and well aware of its disparate quality in our time, his satisfactory resolution of the modern writer's dilemma has been difficult indeed.

Warren has addressed himself to this dilemma in several critical essays, the longest and most complex being a study of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" entitled "A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading." It might with equal validity be subtitled "An Experiment in Writing," for its central purposes are to discover how and why Coleridge composed his poem as he did--how, that is, the poet managed to fuse in his extended narrative poem the elements of truth and artful story-telling, and what his justification for this union might have been. Like so much of Warren's critical writing, this is an essay written not only by him, but also about him; the guarantee that Warren's own beliefs are in accord with his arguments in the essay, and that he is not just writing as a detached critic, implicitly pervades the essay and is stated explicitly in its final sentences: "I cannot admit that our experience, even our aesthetic experience, is ineluctably and vindictively divided into the 'magical' (imaginative) and the rational, with an abyss in between." If poetry (literature) "does anything for us, it reconciles, by its symbolical reading of experience . . . the self-divisive internecine malices which arise at the superficial level on which we conduct most of our living."[9] His essay is almost an exercise to work out and affirm his own literary, and philosophical, beliefs. For "The Ancient Mariner," in its successful integration of truth and tale, is exemplary of what Warren sees as the necessary function of literature, to unite disparities. By fingering and studying it, by examining closely the workings of this model for our age, we can hope to discover the formula for unification we have lost.

The essay is remarkable for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that Warren, who has been critically linked with Renaissance writers and other schools but seldom with the Romantics,

should devote such attention to an exceedingly "Romantic" poem. But early in his essay Warren establishes his affinities for the poem, first by discrediting that "brand of hyperaesthetical criticism of our poem,"[10] as set forth by Earl Leslie Griggs and John Livingston Lowes, who regard "The Ancient Mariner," Warren says, as "nothing more than a pleasant but meaningless dream,"[11] and, second, by defending it as a form of "impure"[12] poetry: it does admit of moral statement. The meaning of the poem is not rendered overtly, however, but thematically, the two themes isolated by Warren being among those which, not incidentally, are most prevalent in his own fiction. The "primary" theme is that of "sacramental vision,"[13] the aesthetic context of the poem yielded through the Mariner's story of crime, punishment and reconciliation; the similarity between this chain of sacramental events and Warren's thematic rendering of the break from innocence, descent into ignorance and eventual redemption of his fictional characters should be apparent. The "secondary" theme is that of the imagination "in its value-creating capacity"[14] --the equivalent in Warren's fiction to "knowledge," the dialectical agency through which moral redemption is achieved.

Following his delineation of the two themes is Warren's extended discussion of how Coleridge subtly intermingles and fuses them through the agency of symbolism, principally of light and darkness which correlate for the reader the status of moral value attained by the Mariner at different points in his journey; though Warren attempts approaches other than symbolism in effecting unity in his novels and poetry, we are reminded of his commensurate use of light and darkness, especially in Night Rider and The Cave. In accomplishing the fusion of his aesthetic and moral themes, Warren concludes, Coleridge has thus given expression to his "general belief concerning the relation of truth and poetry, of morality and beauty."[15]

The point about Coleridge which Warren has taken such detailed and careful effort to make clear may be easily missed by our age, when practically every school child knows and mindlessly recites the equatable Keats formula, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." The point is not that poetry has the capacity to utter truths prettily, and not that the truth is always beautiful, but rather that they are, without the equivocation of adjectives, equal. Warren views "The Ancient Mariner" as no less than a "document"[16] of Coleridge's age--the poet's defense of poetry in a time when the status of the poetic sensibility as bearer of truth was being seriously undermined by science. If the empirical and rational formulations of science claimed to supply truth and knowledge, what then of the role of poetry? Coleridge's "precarious"[17] solution (significantly, Warren gives exactly the same wording to his own solution in "Knowledge and the Image of Man") was to unite thought and feeling, to show man's concern for moral truth and his aesthetic concern as aspects of the same activity of the mind, the creative (not the empirical or rational) activity in which the poet (and not the scientist) is engaged.

If "The Ancient Mariner" was Coleridge's "document" attesting to the truth function of poetry, then "Knowledge and the Image of Man" is Warren's. As a brief, personal statement of philosophical belief, this essay reaches toward conclusions without purporting to justify them logically, which is why it is so valuable to study it in conjunction with "A Poem of Pure Imagination," which does give us Warren's reasoned arguments--indeed with reference to Coleridge, but equally for the sake of his own beliefs. The conclusions drawn in both essays are remarkably alike, the major difference being that "Knowledge and the Image of Man" reflects the experience of the artist in the twentieth century, when the claim of science to truth has become well-established; even so, Warren's concession to

modern science is that it provides a "kind" of knowledge, but not the only kind.

Warren affirms that "poetry--that is, literature as a dimension of the creative imagination--is knowledge."[18] He probably intends the remark immediately preceding this, where he explains that this is "one of the most debatable statements one can make," somewhat facetiously, since it would be debatable to empiricists, but not to poets. That the knowledge he is thinking of which literature delivers is not of the empirical sort he makes perfectly clear in what follows:

> I do not mean, for instance, the absurdity I now shall tell you about, an absurdity we have all encountered in many places but which I have most recently encountered in a philosophical journal. The author of this absurdity, who no doubt embarrasses his friends, announces himself as a logical positivist, then argues that the novel is the most valuable form of art, for some novels give valid historical, sociological, and psychological knowledge. True, all novels report human motives and actions, and the settings, spatial, temporal, and social, in which those actions take place. But such reports occur much more systematically in works of history, geography, psychology, and so on, and most certainly cannot be taken as the thing that characterizes and differentiates the novel as an art form. No, the novel, as novel, as art form, is not reporting anything--how to drive chariots or govern cities. It is using certain materials, which may include valid knowledge of chariot-driving or city-government, for its characteristic purposes, and so on. There is no use to pursue the argument. Let us blush, avert our eyes, and pass on from this scene of logical naiveté and terminological carnage and Hobbesian nonsense. In other words, knowledge by report is not the kind of knowledge I mean in this discussion.[19]

What is characteristic and differentiating about the knowledge which literature supplies, Warren continues, is that it is "knowledge of form":

> By this I mean the furthest possible thing from any doctrine that might go as sheer formalism. I mean the organic relation among all the elements of the work, including, most emphatically, those elements drawn from the actual world and charged with all the urgencies of actuality, urgencies not to be denied but transmuted --as we are told Tintoretto transmuted the gamin divers of the Venetian canals into the angels of his painting. The form is a vision of experience, but of experience fulfilled and redeemed in knowledge, the ugly with the beautiful, the slayer with the slain, what was known as shape now known as time, what was known in time now known as shape, a new knowledge. It is not a thing detached from the world but a thing springing from the deep engagement of the spirit with the world. This engagement may involve not only love for the world, but also fear and disgust, but the conquest, in form, of fear and disgust means such a sublimation that the world which once provoked the fear and disgust may now be totally loved in the fullness of contemplation. The form is the flowering of that deep engagement of spirit, the discovery of its rhythm. And the form is known, by creator or appreciator, only by experiencing it, by submitting to its characteristic rhythm.[20]

While Warren, like Coleridge (following Kant's lead before him), has helped to elevate the cognitive status of the arts by equating literature with knowledge, the kind of knowing involved, "of form" as defined above by Warren, has created serious difficulties for the artist and critic. If the true value of literature is somehow beyond the conceptual, logical, scientific apparatus of the mind (it is not "knowledge by report"), then how is it accessible? If it is

felt or experienced ("the form is a vision of experience") rather than directly apprehended by rational or empirical resources, then by what universally understood standard can the artist hope to reproduce it or the critic judge it? Long before Warren and Coleridge devised their formulations, Immanuel Kant had asserted the relationship between art and knowing: aesthetics involves, he said, "a feeling of the free play of the representative powers in a given representation with reference to cognition in general."[21] But he had added in The Critique of Judgment a terse warning: "To seek for a principle of taste which shall furnish, by means of definite concepts, a universal criterion of the beautiful is useless trouble, because what is sought is impossible and self-contradictory."[22] If literature is knowledge, if beauty is indeed truth, in what sense, or by what sense, can we "know" it?

Critics and philosophers of our age have divided themselves basically into two camps over the issue: the positivists who agree with Kant's warning that it is "useless trouble" to locate any universal standard, and the far more numerous champions of literature as knowledge who, ignoring the warning, insist they have found the answer. In either case, Warren's own warning against taking "the easy statement as solution"[23] applies as the defects of the camps become readily apparent.

The positivist approach, in its rigorous adherence to the scientific standard, solves the problem by disposing of the qualitative aspects of literature entirely. A classic example is the criticism of Yvor Winters, whose "absolutist" position has resulted in his often ludicrous preference for "hard line" poets like Barnaby Googe, to poets he regards as a softer sort, like Shakespeare.

> The theory of literature which I defend . . . is absolutist. I believe that the work of literature, insofar as it is valuable, approximates a real apprehension and communication of a particular kind of objective truth.[24]

Obviously such a scheme allows for no appreciation of romantic literature at all. Similarly A. J. Ayer, in his Language, Truth and Logic, ascribes little importance to the felt, emotive aspects of aesthetics, since they lack "objective validity":

> Such aesthetic words as "beautiful" and "hideous" are employed, as ethical words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response. It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgments, and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics, but only about questions of fact.[25]

Perhaps the best illustration of the certain-answer champion is I. A. Richards, progenitor of the formalist school of critics, of which Warren is usually regarded, somewhat erroneously, as a member. Richards is distinguished by his insistence that although literature is "feeling," it can be reduced to scientific formulation. Enthused as were many well-intentioned academicians of the early part of this century over the tremendous problem-solving capabilities of the scientific method, Richards is convinced that the arts can also be reduced to empirical explanation, and so universally understood and appreciated. Previous (pre-Richards) attempts to deal with aesthetic questions have been practically devoid of significance (they show, Richards says, "inexhaustible confusion, a sufficiency of dogma, no small stock of prejudices, whimsies and crochets . . ."[26]) or otherwise wanting ("the technique of the approach to poetry has not yet received half so much serious systematic study as the technique of pole-jumping."[27]).

Richards' definition of what literature is supposed to accomplish is almost identical to Warren's: "The business of the poet," Richards says, "is to give order and coherence, and so freedom, to a body of experience."[28] The necessity of characterizing

the kind of statement that poetry makes about experience forces Richards into the same fatal predicament which Warren or anyone who views literature as primarily romantic is prone to: literature does not make the same kind of statement (it does not provide the same kind of knowledge, in Warren's terms) as science. Richards, however, considerably worsens his predicament by introducing his terminology of "statement," as the referential meaning conveyed by the scientific use of language, and "pseudo-statement," as the emotive meaning communicated by literature. The unfortunate consequences in Richards' scheme are that the arts lose the truth status they had attained in Coleridge's equation, and that Richards has set up different ends for science and poetry: ". . . it is <u>not</u> the poet's business to make true statements. Yet poetry has constantly the air of making statements, and important ones; which is why mathematicians cannot read it. A pseudo-statement is a form of words justified entirely by its effect in releasing or organising our impulses and attitudes . . . a statement on the other hand is justified by its truth."[29] Exactly the point Coleridge had labored to defend, Richards, although thoroughly a supporter of the arts, almost unwittingly destroys in his assertions that since the scientific, referential method delivers what is true, whatever it is that the arts deliver cannot also be regarded as truth.

Ironically, by creating this bifurcation between the roles of science and art, Richards has also set at odds any hope of successfully fulfilling his ultimate quest, that of finding some sort of universal, conceptual standard for judging the quality of the arts. Unlike the positivists who solve this dilemma by asserting that since the arts are literally <u>non</u>sense they have no value at all or only to the extent they yield objective truth, Richards' solution is unique in positing a criterion which, with further irony, is after all the most inappropriately unscientific, "romantic" view possible. In effect,

reaching an impasse beyond which his scientific weaponry will not avail, he surrenders to the other side by defending as his standard a "pseudo-truth," his notion of "sincerity" derived from Eastern thought, and wholly inimical to empirical apprehension. "The following extracts from the Chung Yung," he says, "seem the most relevant to our discussion."

> Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought. He is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains sincerity is he who chooses what is good, and holds it firmly fast.[30]

The state of Confucian sincerity seems to be equivalent to the state of psychological equilibrium which Richards takes to be the end of poetry. It is his final standard of judgment, and we must ask how we can measure or detect it. We are forced to recognize, as Richards himself never quite does, that it is beyond empirical knowing.

For Warren the solution is not so simple. While his critical standard of "insight" is, like Richards' "sincerity," finally subjective, it does not profess to the sweeping claims Richards makes of once and for all utterly relieving us of our aesthetic misunderstandings. Nor does it attempt to banish entirely conceptual approaches because they fail to provide us with quick and easy answers, since, after all, the critical tool of analysis, despite its shortcomings, does provide us with valuable aesthetic clues and may be the only workable key we have to begin to unlock the meaning of literature. At its extremes, criticism can either forfeit judgment because it lacks an all-inclusive standard, in which case the role of the critic is reduced to that of being a neutral presentational intermediary between artist and audience, able to point to a work of

art as its own expression of itself, but muzzled against criticizing because critical absolutisms simply don't apply; or criticism can claim too much for itself by forceably imposing an absolutist standard which just doesn't fit, no matter how cleverly it is twisted or construed. Acknowledging that there is a "knowledge by report" and a "knowledge of form," Warren does not also pursue the matter to its logical absurdity, as other theorists have, by calling one truth and the other something else. Rather, the kind of knowledge which is most appropriate to literature, that which "characterizes and distinguishes the novel as an art form" is the knowledge which is of form. If this sets limits to how far the critic can go, then the critic must be content with his limitations, recognizing that no single approach will furnish him with all of the answers, or even many of them.

> There are, then, many different kinds of criticism. This fact, however, should not put a premium on whimsy, lack of system, amiable amateurism, and irresponsibility. It should, rather, make the critic more systematic, more responsible, more scrupulous in his craft, more anxious to understand exactly what kind of criticism he himself is trying to practice, and less ready to denigrate other kinds. It should make him remember that there is no end to wisdom, and that, with his own limited equipment of intelligence, tact, discipline, honesty, and sensitivity, his own chances of adding to its sum are slight indeed.[31]

Interesting, and typical of his mediational approach, is Warren's verbal choice of the equipment the critic has to perform his labor. Both the emotive and referential sides of the bifurcation are drawn upon, some of the equipment, like "tact" and "discipline," derived from the more objective half, and other equipment, like "sensitivity,"

from the synthetic, subjective half. To Warren elements from both halves are indispensable if the critic is to earn his prize of "insight" into literature.

The aesthetic dilemma described here is no less attendant to the artist than the critic, unless the artist, too, like some critics, is content to divorce himself from the imagination, in which case he is an essayist at best, or to retreat wholly into made-up worlds with no reference to actuality. Providing that the artist does not also carry himself to extremes of exclusivity, his job is to convey, in Warren's words, "the organic relation among all the elements of the work, including, most emphatically, those elements drawn from the actual world and charged with all the urgencies of actuality."

The word "organic" should be underscored for Warren, for it is clear from examining his critical articles on other novelists that what he admires most about their work is that it possesses this unifying quality. What he likes best about Katherine Anne Porter is her "counterpoint of incident and implication." She never, that is, lapses into outright explanation of her ideas; rather, her "thematic considerations must, as it were, be validated in terms of circumstance and experience, and never be resolved in the poverty of statement."[32] And writing about Eudora Welty, Warren explains, with for us unavoidable implications about his own novels, that "Fiction may be said to have two poles, history and idea, and the emphasis may be shifted very far in either direction," but the stories are best when "we get the sense of one picture superimposed upon another, different and yet somehow the same."[33] History and idea work best in a novel when they are successfully melded. His own experience of literature, Warren says, is

> that we do not get any considerable emotional impact unless we sense, at the same time, some principle of organization, some view, some meaning.

> This does not go to say that we have to give an abstract formulation to that principle or view or meaning before we can experience the impact of the work, but it does go to say that it is implicit in the work and is having its effect upon us in immediate aesthetic terms.[34]

It would seem that Warren, fully aware as he is of the virtual impossibility of closing the gap between knowledge by report and that of form in the realms of criticism and philosophy (the solutions available to us are, at best, "precarious"), believes that in art itself the fusion can, and should, take place. The novelist or poet can do what the philosopher and critic cannot. For Warren, sufficient proof that it can be done is that it has been by writers like Porter, Welty, Melville, Hemingway, and, of course, the poet Coleridge. The question, at last, is whether Warren does so also.

For anyone who has read his novels, the answer must be negative, though qualified by the existence in his fiction of passages which are successfully organic[35] and also by the fact that several of his novels, particularly his later ones, come closer to the ideal of unification than others. Judging from his continual experimentation with narrative perspective, his varied use of the "story within the story," and his working and reworking of other literary devices, it is apparent that his quest for a satisfactorily integrated narrative art has been long and difficult. Every one of his novels presents a new strategem or altered use of a previously tried one to solve the problem of how to convey the message without breaking it from the narrative.

His earliest novel, Night Rider, has the liability of a central character who is so deficient in self-knowledge and understanding of the world that he can provide no rational commentary upon his actions. This, indeed, is a handicap Warren must work around in

nearly all of his fiction, which is populated mostly by individuals who are unknowing. In Night Rider, Warren devises the story of Willie Proudfit, a back-country, hard-working, godly man to whose home Perse Munn retreats in his flight from legal ensnarement at the end of the novel. Willie relates to Mr. Munn the tale of his wayfaring life, slaughtering buffalo in Oklahoma and Kansas, until his discovery that he had become as machine-like as his gun. Whereupon Willie had returned prodigally to his green home in Kentucky and reacquired his soul by learning that his old way of exploiting human and other resources was wrong and that he must dedicate himself to the personal work ethic of his forefathers. This is indeed an encapsulation of the novel's meaning, but one gets the impression, as Leonard Casper expresses it in The Dark and Bloody Ground, that this tagging of the moral at the end of the tale "seems an admission by the author that his major characters cannot convey that theme alone."[36]

Unlike Night Rider, which is narrated omnisciently, At Heaven's Gate presents a multiplicity of narrators; since they are all, with the exception of Ashby Wyndham, spiritually blind like Mr. Munn, the problem of focusing on meaning is also multiplied. Here Warren does not rely upon a belated exemplum to make up for the lack of ethical statement elsewhere in the novel, as in Night Rider, but introduces the morally-charged story of Ashby early in the work and alternates it, chapter by chapter, with the main plot involving the political corruption of Bogan Murdock and the hopeless search by his daughter, Sue, for human integrity and strength in a world of machinations. The characters clustering around Bogan are, like him, wholly physical and devoid of any spiritual significance: Jerry Calhoun is an ex-football player who has never quite left the field; Sue is a horsewoman; Sweetwater is a union roustabout; and even Slim Sarrett, who as a poet-boxer holds open for Sue the possibility of the unity of thought and action, uses his sport as evasive

action and his poetry to reveal the deficiencies of his soul. The story of Ashby, while it exemplifies the search for spiritual meaning and counterpoints the failures of Bogan's circle to recognize their moral responsibilities (Ashby constantly admits his complicity in wrong-doing: "I done things, and it is my shame and ruination."[37]), nevertheless fails to intrude sufficiently upon the story of the unregenerate sinners to make much difference. Even when at the very close of the novel the two up to then separate stories dovetail by means of Private Porsum, Ashby's backwoods kinsman, revealing to Bogan that he has exposed his illicit enterprise to the local newspaper, neither world, the physical nor the spiritual, is really affected by the other. Bogan's plans are upset temporarily, but he and his reflector characters are not destroyed or transfigured by their encounter with the spiritual hemisphere of the novel. We have here the classic example in Warren's fiction of the actual interference of his philosophy with his ideal of a unified narrative art. The philosophy presents the world as terribly divided; if the task of the novelist is to fuse meaning and narrative and so fashion his work organically, then the fusion of the particular meaning that Warren has to convey may result in an art which is similarly divided and, as in At Heaven's Gate, inorganic.

Warren's next novel, All the King's Men, benefitted greatly from his switch to first person, retrospective narration, being told from the matured viewpoint of Jack Burden. This form of narration serves to filter all of the action, and not just some of it as before, through the seasoned commentary of an eye-witness character who himself has undergone Warren's redemption, and who can infuse each point of the narrative with his veteran knowledgability, much as the Ancient Mariner does with his story. Indeed, connections which may be said to exist between "The Ancient Mariner" and All the King's Men should not be considered accidental, for Warren researched

and wrote "A Poem of Pure Imagination" and this novel during the same time period in the early 1940's.[38] It is probable that Warren's selection of the more successful mode of narration he employs in All the King's Men was influenced by his close study of Coleridge's poem, and it is quite likely that other elements the poem and novel share derive from the same source. As suggested earlier, Warren's motivation for writing his hundred-page essay on Coleridge was far more than purely academic. Having failed, or succeeded only partially, in unifying his art in two previous novels, as he approached his third he was deliberately searching for, and found in "The Ancient Mariner," the assistance he needed to resolve his artistic dilemma.

It is not necessary, or even critically desirable, to belabor correspondences between the poem and the novel, which are not allegorical of each other. As Warren explains in his introductory remarks, the novel evolved over a long period of time and was shaped by many influences, including Machiavelli and Dante.[39] There is no single character in All the King's Men, for example, who is the Mariner, although Jack comes closest. Jack literally corresponds most nearly to the groom at the wedding-feast, since the novel concludes with his marriage to Anne. But like the Mariner, Jack figuratively is "burdened" with his own albatross, Judge Irwin, his father, whose death Jack is responsible for in a manner remarkably like the Mariner's killing of the Albatross. In his essay Warren explains, "The crime is, symbolically, a murder, and a particularly heinous murder, for it involves the violation of hospitality and of gratitude . . . and of sanctity . . . . This factor of betrayal in the crime is re-emphasized in Part V when one of the Spirits says that the bird had 'loved the man' who killed it."[40] Just so, the Judge had loved his son, and the son had unknowingly betrayed that love by a "particularly heinous murder," the killing of his father.

Jack's crime, like that of the Mariner, is also not willful, but a product of perversity, the lack of will, which for Warren is worse than the crime itself. Speaking of the poem, Warren underscores that "what is at stake throughout is not the objective magnitude of the act performed . . . but the spirit in which the act is performed, the condition of the will."[41] Exactly what is amiss with Jack throughout the novel is his easy yielding of his will to the Boss, and his refusal to admit his complicity in human affairs through his adoption of mechanistic and idealistic philosophies which leave him satisfactorily isolated from other men. Not until Jack dispells the influence of these defenses through episodes of Great Sleep, akin to the Mariner's fits and swounds, and learns finally the "nightmare truth,"[42] that he is brother to all men, even to Tiny Duffy, one of the novel's political "slimy things," does he begin to expiate his crime. It may be, too, that Jack's telling of his story, like the Mariner's, is another form of atonement. "For I have a story,"[43] Jack muses at the end, about how he grew to disbelieve that "nobody had any responsibility for anything," since he had "seen too many people live and die."[44] Warren comments about the Mariner that after he "has composed his poem of blessing, he can begin the long voyage home." And Warren adds, with for us equal relevance to Jack's narration of the novel, "So we may have here, and I do not mean this too whimsically, the case of a man who saves his own soul by composing a poem."[45] It is only after Jack has composed his tale that he can return at last to Burden's Landing.

These several noteworthy likenesses are sufficient to indicate the influence Coleridge's poem must have had upon Warren's creation of All the King's Men, and especially of Jack Burden as a kind of modern-day Mariner. But of course it was Warren's purpose to tell not only Jack's story in the novel, but also Willie Stark's. If Warren had been content in his novel, as Coleridge was in his

poem, to have only one central character, then perhaps All the King's Men would also have had the kind of organic integrity which Warren claims for "The Ancient Mariner." But in telling the tale of two men, All the King's Men unfortunately lapses into a complicated doubleness that not even the device of the enveloping narrative perspective of Jack Burden can wholly avail to resolve into unity.

Despite all of Warren's disclaimers, his Willie Stark is based, though more in spirit than literally, upon Louisiana's Huey Long. Warren's historical compulsion is to delineate Willie as the multi-dimensional political giant Long was, but his simultaneous philosophical compulsion is to reduce him to one-half of the neat fact/idea dichotomy he is supposed to represent in opposition to Dr. Stanton. Trouble develops as to just how the reader is supposed to regard Willie, who is not merely, as one justifiably confused critic refers to him, "enigmatic,"[46] but downright contradictory. He is enigmatic in his role of avenger/savior--as the terribly wronged, honest politician who sets out to do good through judicious application of the corrupt methods of the evil-doers--but at different times in the novel Warren also has him practicing a form of innocent goodness, as in his attempt to keep his hospital project undefiled by dirty politics, or of unmitigated badness, as in his two-timing of both Lucy and Sadie in his affair with one of the Nordic Nymphs in Chicago. Even if we interpret Willie as the "man of fact" to mean he is a pragmatist, whose diverse actions are dictated by practical circumstances, we still have difficulty reconciling this with his behaviors motivated by pure goodness or badness, which do not seem to take circumstances and consequences into account. While Jack is progressively acquiring his knowledge by gradual evolution, dialectically piecing together his lessons as each stage of his story unfolds, Willie's education is either non-existent or is so whimsical, in that he seems to learn and unlearn forms of behavior

as quickly as his moods change, that it seems an affront to the acquirement of the kind of knowledge Warren describes in "Knowledge and the Image of Man." Yet Willie is likeable; he evokes reader sympathy, and he even achieves a partial redemption at the end. Perhaps this sphinx-like quality Willie possesses is desirable in certain literary characters, in novels of intrigue and mystery. But it is not altogether appropriate in a work which involves, as Warren describes them, "deeper concerns,"[47] the purpose of which should not be bafflement, but elucidation.

As we have already seen, the same type of difficulty encountered in All the King's Men, of confusion for the reader, is also present in World Enough and Time. These two novels are alike in Warren's canon in being his most ambitious attempts to define his philosophy novelistically. In All the King's Men, Warren's advance over his previous fiction was that he hit upon first person narration as a suitable device to meld his ideas and actions--a technique that he re-employed in succeeding novels. The trouble with All the King's Men was that he found himself really telling two major stories, and trying to contain both under the aegis of a single system of ideas as ruminated by Jack Burden. The obvious solution in his next work was to confine himself to a single plot and character, which he did in Jeremiah Beaumont's narration of his own history. But the evident liability in World Enough and Time was that it was like trying to compress together the characters of Jack as the man of words and Willie as the man of actions. The net result was the creation of an exceedingly complex and disproportionate character, who busily makes love to Rachel on the one hand and composes entries in his erudite journal with the other, who swings violently from romantic idealization to debauchery on the isle of Ole Big Hump, and who at the deepest point of his misery, imprisoned in a low dungeon for the crime of murder, can still incongruously wax philosophical in his

irrepressible journal. Not the least of Warren's concerns must have been how to keep Jerry continuously supplied with pen and paper, and Warren's finally disposing of him by decapitation seems in this context to have been a matter of narrative expediency as well as justice.

In a sense, Warren's novels since World Enough and Time, in which he reached a virtual deadlock in his efforts to achieve a satisfactorily integrated narrative art, have comprised his long re-apprenticeship to the art of fiction. His first lesson was to attempt less than the full-scale exposition of his beliefs he had tried in All the King's Men and World Enough and Time. The product was Band of Angels, which, as discussed in the first chapter, is a prolonged study of one aspect of his philosophy, the search for self after the initial break from innocence. The philosophical scope in this novel has thus been considerably narrowed, and the cast has been somewhat mellowed by the introduction of a new element, a female as narrator and central character. Warren was to use a woman as protagonist in only one other novel, Meet Me in the Green Glen. But Cassie Spottwood is quite different from the almost tough, aggressive woman we see in Amanda Starr. What we have in Amanda, however, is our first glimpse into the shape Warren's new fiction was to assume.

The shape was to be lyrical, but it did not come all at once. In Band of Angels, Warren still retained from his previous novels the enormous spatial and temporal stage of history, with Manty travelling up and down the Mississippi, from Cincinnati to New Orleans and back again, during the years up to and including the Civil War. He also retained from his past work the weighty violence of historical tragedy, though for the first time he made his central character wholly a passive victim rather than a perpetrator of criminal events. And his tendency to lapse into the "poverty of statement" is almost

absent from this novel, which, since it does not purport to present much more than a study of lost identity, does not require the frequent intrusion of ideational support that his earlier novels needed. One of Warren's most important discoveries in Band of Angels was that the source of Manty's identity conflict was as much internal as external in her relations with other people. While the stage of history helped to dramatize the internal conflict, its spectacle also detracted from it. Thematically Warren had of course dealt with the internal, psychological aspects of such conflict, as in Jack Burden's musing over "the clammy, sad little foetus which is you way down in the dark,"[48] but fundamentally his treatment of it had been in terms of its outward manifestations among characters swept up in historical and political happenings. With his next novel, The Cave, he found in Plato's allegory a vehicle for turning fully inward his study of man's lost condition and his grasping for knowledge.

The most obvious difference between The Cave and every novel which preceded it is that the large, public backdrop has been completely removed, never again to appear in Warren's fiction. The stage in its place has been set very sparsely, and while there is a crisis upon which narrative attention focuses as in the historical novels, here the disappearance of a boy into a cave, it operates even more metaphorically to convey every man's internal lost condition than it does realistically. Most of the novel takes place at night, and there is a somnolent quality to the cave crowd's chanting. Jack Herrick, driven into himself by his distress over his son lost in the cave, realizes that his whole life has been "nothing but a dream."[49] And there is the use, unprecedented in Warren's fiction, of stream of consciousness technique: when Isaac Sumpter boards his plane bound for New York, we enter his mind on an extended flight reminiscent of Joyce's lengthy one-sentence passages: ". . . he would hear someone whisper, Yes, that's Sumpter, yes, that's Mr. Sumpter,

yes, that's the great Ikey, and hearing that, would curl his lip in a deep, mysterious, ironic satisfaction, for he was Ikey, Little Ikey, . . . "[50] The effect is unlike anything previous in Warren; where before the panorama of outward events and the public life had been Warren's trademark, the impression in The Cave is that external reality is illusory and that the true landscape is inward.

Whether or not Warren's radical departure in narrative method in The Cave and the novels which came afterward also signalled a similar departure in his philosophical beliefs will be the subject of Chapter IV of this study. It would appear, however, that Warren's architectonic adaption of Plato's allegory to his novel, with the attendant aura of idealism this adaption lends it, derived at least in part from his long experimentation with his art. He had learned that the interfusion of narrative fact and idea was not possible without some sacrifice of his art. Tagging the moral onto the end as in Night Rider, separating event and meaning into eventually converging lines as in At Heaven's Gate, telling the stories of a man of idea and a man of fact as in All the King's Men, or overloading a single character with contemplative and physical responsibilities as in World Enough and Time: these approaches had mainly succeeded in breaking his novels into parts, and were contrary to what he had early perceived as the necessary function of literature, to unite disparities organically. He began to see with his later novels that he could infuse meaning harmoniously into his narratives, but only if he infused it in smaller quantities, as in Band of Angels, and preferably, as he began to see with The Cave, if the narrative method itself helped to carry the import--as by means of a prolonged state of consciousness, an extended metaphor, or a modality of language--in short, by form. This is not to suggest that such a method called for a forfeiture of fact or experience, for we are reminded from Warren's definition of "knowledge of form"

that it includes, "most emphatically, those elements drawn from the actual world and charged with all the urgencies of actuality." What does begin to occur in Warren's fiction starting with The Cave, however, is that the landscapes against which the "urgencies of actuality" take place are more localized, less distinct, and not as dramatically important to his fiction. Likewise, the explicit statement of meaning by ruminative asides is not as necessary. For Warren had realized that the "knowledge of form" can be communicated--better in terms of his novels' aesthetic unity than the mere presentation of narrative event and statement of idea--by form.

This method of communication, ultimately non-rational and non-empirical, requires careful selection of a device appropriate to its subject matter and painstaking control over the device's use. In The Cave, a defect of Warren's use of Plato's allegory is the subordination of virtually every facet of the novel to its end. But if The Cave suffers from an excess of its metaphor, Flood is objectionable for the insufficient use it makes of its Biblical motif, which is suggested by the title and epigraph from the Book of Amos. In fact, the motif seems to relate very little to the events of the love story involving Bradwell Tolliver, Maggie Fiddler and Yasha Jones. The planned flooding of the town of Fiddlersburg because of a nearby dam project serves mainly to occasion the physical meeting of these characters, who gather to create a movie around the event. While Flood is a novel concerned with self-deception, redemption and other stock items from Warren's philosophy, vengeance plays no part in it, and the grand motif is never really carried through. It should have been, for the characters and localized scenario are too small-scale, even trivial, to bear the weight of the philosophical issues imposed upon them, and are needful of the support that a more scrupulous, and more obvious, weaving in of the motif might have given them.

Warren refined his method in Wilderness by using a less stiffly referential, and therefore less demanding in terms of its narrative adaptability, device than the cave allegory or Biblical story of the flood supplied. His use of "wilderness" as metaphor was "functional," in the Brooks sense, in his extending its referential and emotive significances beyond themselves to communicate the felt truths of his story of Adam Rosenzweig. With the religious touchstone of "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" as his reference, and all of the emotional associations "wilderness" conveys as a place where one is lost, confused, in despair and searching, Warren evokes in his novel a combining of import and event which is in its felt quality more nearly symbolic than metaphoric. The journey of an idealistic Adam from Europe to a nineteenth-century America strangely divided by its civil conflict is an event which demands profound revisions in him of his view of the world and his place in it. Figuratively baptized in the conflict as a soldier, Adam emerges "with a different heart,"[51] a deeper understanding of himself and appreciation of his relationship to the world. We are reminded in witnessing Adam's exploration of the hazy wilderness of his new country of Bradwell Tolliver's exclamation at the closing of Flood, "There is no country but the heart."[52] In Wilderness, Warren seems to intend Tolliver's remark almost literally, since the landscape which Adam traverses is neither physical nor mental, but transmuted by Warren into a less definite realm, where truth is apprehended finally not by rationality or objectivity, but by feeling.

One of Warren's keys to gain entry to this realm in Wilderness is linguistic. We notice from the beginning of this novel a very conscious poetic use of language:

> If the mountain had not gleamed so white. If yonder, under the peaks, the snaggled line of the fir forest had not been so blue-black, against the white.

> If the sky above that glitter of snow on the Zelzsteinberg had not been heart-breaking with the innocence of new blue. If one puff of cloud, white as whipped cream, had not lounged high in that washed glitter of blue. If the world had not been absolute in beauty. [53]

This use of language is by no means absent from his other fiction, but it is increasingly prevalent in his later novels, and in his last one, Meet Me in the Green Glen, it is sustained in a manner which causes it to become itself the formal device for unifying the disparities of his art.

In our time a great deal of critical effort, especially by the New Critics, has been expended upon the issue of what peculiar quality sets apart the "poetic" use of language from its other uses. For the most part that effort has been unproductive of any satisfactory distinction, [54] for reasons quite similar to those offered earlier in this chapter in explanation of Richards' failure to supply a universally demonstrable standard by which the arts can be judged. An attempt will not be made here, then, to define categorically what is meant by Warren's poetic use of language, except to agree with the voice of many critics that such use is not of a strictly logical or referential nature. Rather, the present attempt will be primarily in terms of the kinds of effects he produces from the novel's language.

Not the least interesting of these effects is the feeling conveyed that this, Meet Me in the Green Glen, is his last novel, or at least his novel of summation. The feeling arises partly from his dropping of certain verbal pointers or clues--words, expressions, concepts--drawn from his other novels and which are familiar to anyone who has read more than just this one. Many examples could be cited to substantiate this, he does it so frequently; several will serve to describe the procedure.

Meet Me in the Green Glen

> The volume of the TV was so low that now and then you could hear the soft, sad batting of moths on the screening at the open windows . . . (pp. 372-73)
>
> Me, he thought, in a wondering that grew more powerful and benumbing with the confrontation, detail by detail, of the knowledge that this image was, really, himself. (p. 108)

The Cave

> I am me, I am me, he thought, and saw the white moths, with their frail, wayward plunging, come out of the dark to butt so softly and sadly the screen that kept them from the light. (p. 388)

Meet Me in the Green Glen

> She was discovering something. If she could stand being in here, in this room where Sunder was, the thing inside her would get tired of clawing, and when it stopped, she could go back to the other room . . . . The thing that was inside her stayed curled up, furry and soft and tired, and went to sleep. So she went to sleep, too. (pp. 207-08)

All the King's Men

> . . . the clammy, sad little foetus which is you way down in the dark which is you too lifts up its sad little face and its eyes are blind, and it shivers cold inside you for it doesn't want to know . . . . It wants to lie in the dark and not know, and be warm in its not-knowing . . . (pp. 11-12)

Meet Me in the Green Glen

> He began to create a Time of which the days would be a part, a Time in which things could exist and change, a Time that would stretch backward and forward and that you could think about. There were things you

could do that would help make a picture of yourself in Time, and therefore make you real. (p. 170)

All the King's Men

But that will be a long time from now, and soon now we shall go out of the house and go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time. (p. 464)

Meet Me in the Green Glen

As she stood by the stove she did not feel anything. If she did not feel anything, then nothing would have happened, ever. And if nothing had ever happened, then she would not have to feel anything. (p. 100)

All the King's Men

I heard somebody open and shut the gate to the barn lot, but I didn't look around. If I didn't look around it would not be true that somebody had opened the gate with the creaky hinges . . . (p. 33)

Meet Me in the Green Glen

He would, forever, have to live with such a face before his eyes--the face of Milbank or the face of Spottwood, did it matter which?--to live under that amiable contempt, to live in his envy of that face, to live, in fact, by the image of the life of that face which was the face of another man. (p. 23)

Flood

My God, he thought, at least a man didn't have to twitch and jerk and pule and mutter and twist his face in craziness and call it all something else. At least a man did not have to lie. (p. 367)

In his other novels, the passages from which these quotations derive are characteristically lengthy and conclude the development of a substantive meaning. The "I am me" quote from The Cave, for example, follows a rather long ruminative effort by Jack Harrick to come to grips with his identity; there has been a gradual heightening of the narrative to bring Jack up to his intense conclusion, and the conclusion itself is a punctuation point, a period, to that segment of narrative progression. But in Meet Me in the Green Glen, the image of the moths, which symbolically is the soul deprived of knowledge by the veneer of man's defenses against knowing, is handled more casually. It is inserted into the stream of the narrative, but no particular pause marks its meaning. Similarly, Angelo Passetto's "Me" passage, while it has some narrative preparation behind it, comes early in the novel, rather than much later as with Jack Harrick's, and its involvement with the narrative is more incidental than conclusive.

The technique is reminiscent of Faulkner's reintroducing us to the same characters in a given novel who play parts in oth[illegible]s, which conveys the impression that he is telling us one continu[illegible] story. The difference with Warren is that what is repeated in Meet Me in the Green Glen are not characters, but verbal pointers to ideational constructs which have been developed in greater detail in the other novels. For Warren this is a particularly useful technique, since it obviates to some extent the need to expand intellectually upon their treatment again, and it considerably enriches the meaning of this novel by mental associations the reader is able to make backward to his other contexts. In drawing upon what he has written elsewhere and pulling it together into this novel, it is also in a sense a finalizing technique, a literary summation of all that he has tried to say in all of his fiction.

What had been more intellectualized before has become, through verbal suggestiveness of meaning, more sentient. We are reminded in this connection that Meet Me in the Green Glen is also a story of love. It is, in fact, incomparable to any other such love story Warren has written in that this love is not depicted as a spasm of idealism or passion or in the service of some other motive, as in Band of Angels where, although Manty Starr's romance is treated as a serious affair, it is nevertheless projected as an aspect of her quest for identity. The love between Cassie Spottwood and Angelo Passetto is its own excuse for being, and although there certainly are other elements common to his fiction present here, such as identity confusion, loneliness and ignorance, they are more peripheral to the central concern of the love itself as a force sustaining man in his search for meaning, the law that goes with love, to live by.

In being almost a personal evocation of all of his beliefs, in its focusing more upon an emotional state than a statement of idea, in the rhythmic and suggestive quality of its language, Meet Me in the Green Glen is in its effect nothing quite so much as lyrical. It is perhaps only fitting that his long-developing art should come to this, since his own philosophy prescribes that in each new confrontation with experience we go ever deeper toward order and harmony, toward that "knowledge of form" by which what was divided and broken may at last be redeemed, and so become something "totally loved in the fullness of contemplation."[55] We go simultaneously, however, ever farther from explicit meaning. Although Warren's latest fiction, as evidenced by Meet Me in the Green Glen, does succeed in one of his objectives, of better unifying and integrating his art through increasingly romantic narrative methods, it also detracts from another of his objectives, of attempting to find some direct utterance of how to heal man's moral devisiveness. Just what the moral

"meaning" is which Warren is trying to convey in his more lyrical novels becomes increasingly problematic, and Warren's dilemma becomes almost mathematical: a successful art, by his own standards, requires the organic melding of ideas and narrative events, but almost in direct proportion to the extent that they are melded his ideas become less clear and ever less capable of comprehending philosophically man's moral dilemma.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

[1]Robert Penn Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," in Selected Essays by Robert Penn Warren (New York: Random House, 1951). The two quotations below appear on page 3.

[2]From Warren's "Preface" to Selected Essays, p. xii.

[3]I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1925), p. 6.

[4]John M. Bradbury, "Robert Penn Warren's Novels: The Symbolic and Textural Patterns," in Robert Penn Warren: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Lewis Longley, Jr. (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 4.

[5]Calvin W. Lane, "Narrative Art and History in Robert Penn Warren's World Enough and Time," Diss. University of Michigan, 1956.

[6]Ibid., pp. 137-38.

[7]Ibid., p. 154.

[8]Robert Penn Warren, "A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading," in Selected Essays, p. 251.

[9]Ibid., p. 272.

[10]Ibid., p. 200.

[11]Ibid., p. 204.

[12]As defined in "Pure and Impure Poetry," the "pure poem (excludes) certain elements which might qualify or contradict its original impulse. In other words, the pure poems want to be, and desparately, all of a piece" (p. 16). Opposed to it is "impure" poetry, which has "realism, wit, intellectual complication" (p. 6) and which arises "from a recalcitrant and contradictory context; and finally involves that context" (p. 7). Of the two, Warren prefers, of course, the impure variety.

[13]"A Poem of Pure Imagination," pp. 222-23.

[14]Ibid., pp. 233-50.

[15]Ibid., p. 254.

[16]Ibid., p. 250.

[17]Ibid., p. 252. See Warren's "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, LIX (1955), p. 187, for his use of "precarious."

[18]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 190.

[19]Ibid., pp. 190-91.

[20]Ibid., pp. 191-92.

[21]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1951), p. 52.

[22]Ibid., p. 68.

[23]"Pure and Impure Poetry," p. 30.

[24]Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1947), p. 11.

[25]Alfred Jules Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., n. d.), p. 113.

[26]I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1925), p. 6.

[27]I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1929), p. 291.

[28]I. A. Richards, "Science and Poetry," in The Great Critics, ed. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1951), p. 755.

[29]Ibid., pp. 756-57.

[30]Practical Criticism, p. 267.

[31]From Warren's "Preface" to Selected Essays, p. xii.

[32]This and the immediately preceding quotation are from Warren's "Irony with a Center: Katherine Anne Porter," in Selected Essays, p. 155.

[33]This and the immediately preceding quotation are from Warren's "Love and Separateness in Eudora Welty," in Selected Essays, p. 168.

[34]Ibid.

[35]The kinetic image of the Boss' Cadillac roaring down Highway 58 at the opening of All the King's Men is perhaps the choicest example of Warren's ability to interfuse narrative event and meaning in a short passage. It introduces us immediately to the rapid action world of the novel, where fast talk and quicker thinking are essential for survival. It presents the notion of the easy fall to the wayside, later to be reiterated thematically in the descents from the path by Jack, Willie, and Dr. Stanton. It suggests the mental rigidity required to hold onto a defensive perspective--a rigidity which can hypnotize and betray a man over the edge, as Jack's strict adherence to idealism and mechanism, Willie's to fact, and Dr. Stanton's to idea, will blind and trick them. And it operates on the anagogical level in portraying man's spiritual journey, which, if he is not to lose himself, must of necessity be straight and narrow.

[36]Leonard Casper, Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. 104.

[37]Robert Penn Warren, At Heaven's Gate (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 334.

[38]As Warren points out in his "Introduction" to All the King's Men, "The work (on the novel) was constantly interrupted, by teaching, by some traveling, by the duties of my post in Washington, by the study for and writing of a long essay on Coleridge" (p. iv).

[39]Ibid., p. ii.

[40]"A Poem of Pure Imagination," p. 229.

[41]Ibid., pp. 232-33.

[42]All the King's Men, p. 442.

[43]Ibid., p. 461.

[44]Ibid.

[45]"A Poem of Pure Imagination," p. 254.

[46]Erwin R. Steinberg, "The Enigma of Willie Stark," in All the King's Men: A Symposium, ed. A. Fred Sochatoff et al. (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1957), pp. 17-28.

[47]From Warren's "Introduction" to All the King's Men, p. vi.

[48]All the King's Men, p. 11.

[49]Robert Penn Warren, The Cave (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 388.

[50]Ibid., p. 351.

[51]Robert Penn Warren, Wilderness (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 310.

[52]Robert Penn Warren, Flood (New York: The New American Library, 1965), p. 368.

[53]Wilderness, p. 3.

[54]Generally, Richards' descendents have made the same distinction which he made in "Science and Poetry": rational knowledge is referential and strives for maximum specificity and precision, since its business is to define and differentiate between particulars, while poetic language is to some degree contextual, non-referential, and strives for maximum variety of interpretation, since its business is to unite a fragmented and disparate reality under the symbolic unity of the literary work. Thus, the ordering principle of logical discourse is logic itself, an external and universally demonstrable standard, while the ordering principle for poetic language is its own unique, internal, organic unity. Therefore, for the New Critics there must be some quality, which they ultimately hope to define, which accounts for the expansion of meaning by contextual variation. The metaphors are well-known: Empson's "ambiguity," Brooks' "paradox," and even Eliot's "objective correlative" are all attempts to define the ability of poetic language to unite disparate experience under certain fixed symbols.

Perhaps the best illustration comes from outside the group of writers usually associated with New Criticism, in an essay by Philip Wheelwright, who proves himself a more thorough-going New Critic than the actual "members." His essay "On the Semantics of

Poetry" brings the problems into sharp focus. Wheelwright's characteristic bias is immediately obvious; he condemns modern criticism for its tendency to move away from the real issue of poetry into related fields where scientific clarity is possible: "Their aim is a marketable clarity; their instrument, conceptual language, guided implicitly by the canons of formal logic." Yet, like the rest of the New Critics, his approach is pseudo-scientific and his essay reveals the same over-zealous optimism of the scientists of the early twentieth century: "What I am proposing in this essay is a sort of Copernican Revolution in semantics. Or perhaps non-Euclidean, or trans-Euclidean would express the analogy more exactly." More ironic is the scheme he uses to define meaning in language. He defines three levels: the "atomic," the "molecular," and the "organic" which correspond more or less accurately to the structuralist divisions of morpheme, sentence and the complete context, upon which his thinking seems to be based. At all "levels" the basic New Critical distinction is maintained; even at the "atomic" level poetic language differs in kind from literal language: "Starting at the atomic level of meaning, where we consider the smallest ingredients of meaning distinguishable in logical (or 'literal') and poetic language respectively, we may declare: the atomic ingredient of literal language is the monosign; the atomic ingredient of poetic language tends to be the plurisign." The distinction between the two is as usual in the tradition: logical monosigns are ideally fixed; poetic plurisigns are ambiguous. The more interesting point is that he fails to define how the distinction operates. He tells us that the meaning of the plurisign is "partially contextual," but he seems to suggest that at this basic level the two types of symbolism are different in nature, and he does not describe the difference.

The same concept operates at the "molecular" level, where he distinguishes between logical "propositions" and "poetic statements," echoing Richards' distinction. The proposition is defined externally by its approximation to truth, while a "poetic statement is a quasi-assertable relation between plurisigns," because poetic statements do not involve the truth. The problem here is that, while his description adequately explains the failure of the plurisign statement to obtain precision, it does not explain its unique poetic ability: the unifying synthetic function.

The "organic" level is the poem itself. His discussion of this level presents no new concepts, but merely takes the argument to its logical conclusion. For Wheelwright, as for Coleridge, the final pattern of poetic language is unique and undefinable: "In authentic poetry the total statement is identical with the poem itself." In the end, Wheelwright's essay arrives at the same conclusion as all the New Critics have: that some transcendent, unanalysable quality sets poetry apart from other uses of language. The insight is not

very impressive for a critic who began with the intent of describing "how poetry means." Like all critics of his orientation, Wheelwright leaves the reader with the feeling that the argument is forced; intuition, if nothing else, seems to say that poetic language is not in fact different in kind, and that this explanation avoids the issue.

[55]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 192.

CHAPTER III

If Warren's use of historical material in his novels has been detrimental to his narrative art, his sense of history in his criticism has proved invaluable in satisfactorily defining an ideational continuum in our literature. While he is assuredly mindful of literary differences, he has repeatedly pointed in his critical essays toward a philosophical center upon which he sees the lines of practically every writer he has dealt with converging. Novelists as diverse in style and language as Faulkner and Hemingway, or poets distant in time and place as Wordsworth and Ransom, are united in his criticism through their respective chroniclings of the gradual debilitation of man's capacities to believe, to feel, to assert his selfhood. Reacting in a recently published set of addresses to what he calls technetronic man's "it-ified" existence, Warren observes that our literature reflects "more and more a general spirit of protest, despair, aimlessness, violence, and amoral transactions at all levels."[1] In "America and the Diminished Self," he delineates the literary history, from Emerson to the present, of our cultural debility, "the central point (being) that the decay of the concept of self has been, consciously or unconsciously, a developing and fundamental theme of our writers."[2]

Yet Warren himself, despite his efforts to identify a universal theme among writers, generally has not been accorded the same rights of participation by other critics. Unconsidered bracketing of him as a member of the Fugitives and Agrarians has had the effect of constraining him to regionalist status, and facile critical associations between him and other members of these groups, notably Ransom and Tate, have produced inaccuracies of interpretation. Even when he has been considered apart from these groups, there has been a tendency to regard his work as anomalous, and so

still not sharing in the continuity of literature. Thus Ellington White assesses him as a novelist "outside the mainstream of modern literature" because, unlike other contemporary writers who "with few exceptions . . . have gone underground," Warren has shown "concern with man as a political animal."[3]

While it would be a mistake to argue that Warren has not shown such concern, the extent to which social and political affairs really matter in his fiction is surprisingly small. Their appearance there certainly serves much more as the vehicle than tenor of his meaning, which, since it is largely internalized in his characters' identity struggles and, therefore, "underground," should by White's logic merit Warren placement in the literary mainstream. And while it would also be wrong to insist that Warren has not benefited from his participation in the Nashville groups, again the extent to which they have shaped his work proves to be minor compared to his individual achievement, and gives further cause for the needed universalization of his critical reputation.

One rather startling conclusion that the researcher of the Fugitives and Agrarians may justifiably come to is that their critical acclaim is based not so much upon their merit as groups as upon what each member later went on to accomplish. "What is astonishing about the entire Fugitive group," Louis D. Rubin, Jr., comments, "is the striking degree of success attained by almost all the members in their chosen occupations."[4] Many went on to eminent university teaching careers, primarily in literature, and among these not a small number, including Ransom, Tate, Davidson, Lytle and Warren, became outstanding writers. Those who chose non-literary professions excelled as well, and only one of the group, ironically its founder, Sidney Mttron Hirsch, can be said to have acquired little repute beyond his association with the Fugitives.

The Fugitive itself was not particularly distinguished. 1922, says Rubin, "was a time of much issuing of little magazines, and The Fugitive was much like other little magazines of the day: there were poems, there was a manifesto, and a knowing air about it all."[5] Historians intent upon discovering higher signficances and unities of purpose among the participants must be content merely with the members' shared love of poetry and talk. The Fugitives themselves attributed no special plan or system to what they were doing. In 1956 at their reunion William Elliott spoke, with agreement from other members, of the group's "complete resistance to anybody programming anything."[6] Allen Tate responded at the same meeting to Willard Thorp's question about the critical methodology employed by the Fugitives with, "Well, Willard, I would just say that we'd read the poems, and somebody would say, 'That's a very bad line, you've got to change that. This word won't do.' I mean it was minute and practical to a great extent."[7] Again Tate, reacting to the popular critical notion that the Fugitives were bound together by an interest in Symbolist poetry, stated,

> . . . I wouldn't think that the Symbolist influence accounted for very much in anything that this group wrote. It was somewhere in the background; we were certainly not Symbolist poets. And I think that some of the critics who have tried to place us in that historical perspective are wrong about it.[8]

And Warren expressed his own doubts about the group's cohesiveness:

> One thing that strikes me in recollection, now: a few years after I left Vanderbilt, and people began to refer to those people as a unit, you see, as if there were a church or an orthodoxy; and I was so shocked by that--because I was so aware of the differences of temperament, and the differences of opinions, you see, in

> conversation--the Fugitive meetings were outside--but the notion of a unity had just never occurred to me, really, except that the unity was just purely a unity of friendship and common background.[9]

Warren has conceded in other contexts that the "wrangle"[10] of the Fugitives' literary arguments was important to his intellectual development, and it would also seem that as a younger member of the group (both in age and experience) he benefited from the criticisms and high standards of composition of the older, more poetically sophisticated members. But it was not until well after The Fugitive had ceased publication in 1925 and the participants had dispersed that Warren drew into anything like an intellectual communion with Ransom and Tate, the two principal figures in the Agrarian movement. Their influence upon him during this later phase, however, must be strongly qualified and even, as in his treatment of the Agrarian theme in Night Rider, disqualified.

Warren had been a member of the Fugitives for only a year and a half when he graduated from Vanderbilt in 1925. After spending the ensuing summer at his family's home in Guthrie, Kentucky, he entered Berkeley, where he remained for two years, followed by a year at Yale and two more years as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. He did not return to Tennessee, to teach at Memphis' Southwestern University, until the fall of 1930, the year in which I'll Take My Stand was published. For several reasons it is important to bear in mind Warren's long absences from Nashville during just the period when ideas for the Agrarian movement were being formulated. One is that, although he carried on a correspondence with Tate, he was shouldering a full load of graduate English courses, and so was mentally as well as physically removed from the center of the Old South-New South conflict which had boiled up in 1925. In the summer of that year occurred the Dayton, Tennessee, trial of John Scopes--

an event which, because of the caricaturing of the South by Mencken and the Northern newspapers as backward, was very much responsible for the Southern backlash that eventually resulted in I'll Take My Stand.[11] A second reason is that at a distance Warren's native region began to take on a sentimental appeal for him, so that his interest in the South and Agrarianism at this time was cast much more in terms of his contemplating the significance of his faraway home than, as for Ransom, Tate and other contributors to the Agrarian statement, a defense against insults from the North. At the Fugitives' reunion, Warren attempted to explain "what Agrarianism signified for me."

> It hit me at an age when I was first away from this part of the country for any period of time. . . . I had broken out of the kind of life I was accustomed to in that part of the world I knew. And there was a sentimental appeal for me in this. It happened to coincide with my first attempt, my first story about Southern life--a novelette which I was writing at that time at Oxford. And it had coincided, a little earlier that is, with a book on John Brown. But this book led to fiction--that's what the Brown was: a step toward fiction. It was a sentimental appeal and an attempt to relive something--to recapture, to reassess. This was not thought out; it was just what happened in a sort of an instinctive way.[12]

Even the less instinctive, reasoned aspect of his involvement with Agrarianism seems to have derived not so much from the party line as from non-programmatic, abstract sources beyond it--from "some perfectly explicit speculations" with friends like Cleanth Brooks (not one of the twelve contributors to I'll Take My Stand), and from his reading of Bertrand Russell, where he encountered the "idea of how the individual was affected by the state: in the power state he lost existence, disappeared, was a cipher."[13]

Written at Oxford, Warren's contribution to I'll Take My Stand, "The Briar Patch," was one of the last to be turned in. It is notably restrained in its analysis of the position of the Negro in the South and its defense of segregation. By comparison, Ransom's "Reconstructed But Unregenerate," which treats the loss of the European-conservative mode that he argues had been preserved in the South but was rapidly being engulfed by Northern progressivism, and Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion," which is almost identical to Ransom's views in God Without Thunder on the destruction of religious belief due to abstractionism, are oversimplified and far more polemical. Warren does adhere to Agrarian doctrine in advocating a non-industrial setting as after all the most desirable one in which white and black men may reconcile their differences ("The rural life provides the most satisfactory relationship of the two races which can be found at present . . . "[14]), but even here he moderates his adherence temporally. Elsewhere he is more reluctant than Ransom and Tate to glorify the rural South, more willing than they are to look positively to the future for solutions than backward to the South's golden past,[15] and better able to see social problems attendant to industrialism and racism as universal rather than purely Northern or Southern:

> The relation of the two (races) will not immediately escape friction and difference, but there is no reason to despair of their fate. The chief problem for all alike is the restoration of society at large to a balance and security which the industrial regime is far from promising to achieve.[16]

Thirty-five years later in his lengthy and probing study, Who Speaks for the Negro?, Warren indicated that he had almost immediately felt uncertain about the "cogent and humane defense of segregation" he had written in "The Briar Patch": "I never read that essay after it was published, and the reason was, I presume, that

reading it would, I dimly sensed, make me uncomfortable. . . . (my) self-consciousness indicated an awareness that in the real world I was trying to write about, there existed a segregation that was not humane."[17] In his later works on prejudice, Warren significantly altered his former separate-but-equal stance to one favoring complete racial equality.

He also later subjected to criticism a notion which, while it was not so much a part of his essay, was certainly a component of the essays of Ransom and Tate and Agrarianism at large--the "simplistic and--well--childish notion of a golden age."[18] In several of his Agrarian articles Ransom had indicted the "eternal flux" wrought by industrialism upon society. "Affections, and long memories," he reasoned in I'll Take My Stand, "attach to the ancient bowers of life in the provinces; but they will not attach to what is always changing."[19] And he asked, "Will the Southern establishment, the most substantial exhibit on this continent of a society of the European and historic order, be completely crumbled by the powerful acid of the Great Progressive Principle? Will there be no more looking backward but only looking forward?"[20] Similarly, in "Remarks on the Southern Religion" Tate saw the old South as "a profoundly traditional European community," which, before succumbing to the Northern philosophy of material exploitation ("the post-bellum temptations of the devil, who is the exploiter of nature"), lived in a world of material, and mental, moderation.

> The old Southerners . . . planted no corn that they could not enjoy; they grew no cotton that did not directly contribute to the upkeep of a rich private life; and they knew no history for the sake of knowing it, but simply for the sake of contemplating it and seeing in it an image of themselves. And aware of the treachery of nature, as all agrarians are, they tended to like stories, very simple stories with a moral.[21]

Although Tate's contention in I'll Take My Stand was that "abstraction is the death of religion no less than the death of anything else,"[22] ironically both he and Ransom had inflated past Southern ways and manners into an abstraction--the "Southern idea," in Ransom's view, which "some prophet may even find it possible to expect . . . will yet rise again."[23] A quarter of a century later, Warren provided near the conclusion of Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South a most damning rebuttal to the Agrarian notions concerning resurrection and preservation of fixed social, "Southern," values. There are those, he said,

> whose eyes brighten at the thought of the new unity in the South, the new solidarity of resistance. These men are idealists, and they dream of preserving the traditional American values of individualism and localism against the anonymity, irresponsibility and materialism of the power state, against the philosophy of the ad-man, the morality of the Kinsey report, and the gospel of the bitch-goddess. To be Southern again, to recreate a habitation for the values they would preserve, to achieve in unity some clarity of spirit, to envisage some healed image of their own identity. . . . in seeking to preserve individualism by taking refuge in the vision of a South redeemed in unity and antique virtue, they are fleeing from the burden of their own individuality--the intellectual rub, the moral rub. To state the matter in another way, by using the argument of mere social continuity and the justification by mere mores, they think of a world in which circumstances and values are frozen; but the essence of individuality is the willingness to accept the rub which the flux of things provokes, to accept one's fate in time. What heroes would these idealists enshrine to take the place of Jefferson and Lee, those heroes who took the risk of their fate?[24]

Although objectionable in a number of ways, one of the main complaints leveled against I'll Take My Stand was the weakness of its economic argument. Detractors such as the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council ridiculed the venture's illusions about an agrarian-based economy, and Agrarian supporters were disappointed that the book did not provide firmer grounds for reforms needed during the Depression. The error of these criticisms, as Randall Stewart has pointed out, was that "I'll Take My Stand was not an economic blueprint, which many of its critics have mistaken it for, but a philosophy of a way of life."[25] In the brief "Statement of Principles" prefixing the essays, Ransom took some pains to explain that there was no intention by any of the contributors to be "very specific in proposing any practical measures," and he admitted that while many questions of importance would be raised, "they cannot be answered here." For Warren the Agrarian movement, as mentioned in connection with his reading of Russell, was tied in with more abstract than pragmatic concerns: "I was no economist and didn't fancy myself as one," he said at the Fugitives' reunion; "But for me it was a protest . . . against certain things: against a kind of de-humanizing and disintegrative effect on your notion of what an individual person could be in the sense of a loss of your role in society."[26] Donald Davidson put it in terms that won general concurrence from those present at the same meeting:

> . . . I would say that the symposium I'll Take My Stand can be taken just as much as a defense of poetry as it can be taken as a defense of the South--or of any particular politics, or economics, or anything. The general point is--in that book--that in the order of life that we would defend or seek to establish, these things are not to be separated if life is to be healthy at all; that the separation of them into specialties under the modern

> regime is the thing, above everything
> else, that destroys poetry.[27]

This idea, of I'll Take My Stand as a defense against man's fragmentation and an argument for the restoration of his fullness, was probably the single most valuable one to emerge from Agrarianism for its literary contributors. Turned around a little from the notion of a book of protest as a defense of poetry, the idea began to realize itself in the works of Ransom, Tate and Warren as poetry defending against modern man's brokenness, as literature as critique of society and guardian of man's unity. For Tate especially, the evolved idea became almost a battle cry against a society he felt had gone so awry in its worship of reason and the gigantic maw of scientific method that he saw only the man of letters left as a cruel reminder of what our culture had forfeited: "There would be no hell for modern man if our men of letters were not calling attention to it,"[28] he declared in "The Man of Letters in the Modern World." Ransom had regarded the role of the artist similarly in a much earlier work, which John L. Stewart credits with containing "virtually the whole rationale of Agrarianism,"[29] God Without Thunder: "Back of art there is the embittered artist, whose vision of the real has been systemmatically impaired under the intimidations of scientific instruction, and who seeks with indignation as well as with joy to recover it."[30] And Warren, perhaps less willing to wage war directly upon man's spiritual oppressors, described poetry as "a fifth column,"[31] whose function is to affect man's self-image by underground rather than overt maneuvers.

The ground of battle shifted rather quickly after 1930 from social to literary, where its impact for these writers has been longest-lasting and of greatest effect. Ransom did pursue economic studies for awhile, and even wrote an economic treatise on Agrarianism which was never published, and Tate collaborated with

Herbert Agar on Who Owns America?, a book of essays contributed by Agrarians. But since the mid-1930's their work has depicted modern man's dualism in the form of essays and poetry almost entirely lacking the bias of any special social movement. Never really an "inside" member, Warren contributed a total of two essays to Agrarian publications, but "The Briar Patch," written with reservations and eventually repudiated, and "Literature as Symptom," his offering to Who Owns America?, were both far less determinedly "Agrarian" in subject matter, tone, and programmatic emphasis than the essays of Ransom and Tate.

There was, however, a real benefit to Warren from his participation in the movement, and that was his intellectual association with a group of men who, in establishing the tenets of Agrarianism, had abstracted a way of perceiving reality, with a rhetorical method to match, that had great appeal to a young writer who was at the time engaged in advanced literary studies and also busy formulating his own literary philosophy in his earliest attempts at fiction. "For these Southerners, the world appeared in terms of dichotomies," explains Virginia J. Rock in her dissertation on I'll Take My Stand,

> or opposing principles which they characterized variously as art vs. science, religious humanism vs. materialism, agrarianism vs. industrialism. Consciously or subconsciously, the Agrarians subsumed all aspects of their thought into this dualistic mode. By such paired alternatives they were able simultaneously to attack industrialism; science; a fragmented, materialistic, chaotic world disintegrating as a result of its enslavement to specialization and its insistence on abstract thought.[32]

John L. Stewart's The Burden of Time, however, warns us against believing that Warren had picked up his philosophical orientation wholesale from the Agrarians. Warren, he says, had encountered the major themes that were to occupy his fiction "before he returned to Tennessee and made contact with the Agrarians."[33] He had published poetry and written his biography of John Brown and "Prime Leaf," a short story prototype for Night Rider, while still at Oxford. Stewart continues that

> while he gladly acknowledges the power of (Ransom and Tate's) thought in helping him refine his ideas Warren believes that initially his convictions . . . came from his experience and observations rather than the work of any particular thinker. . . . Though he was to put more of the philosophy of Agrarianism into his imaginative writing than any other member of the group, he used only a little of its social and still less of its cultural theory. One can understand him better for knowing something about Agrarianism, but only if one observes how independent he was.[34]

Perhaps the most obvious, and so most easily overlooked, variance in Ransom, Tate and Warren's treatment of their philosophic mode can be detected just by comparing the nature of their written products. Warren's emphasis has been decidedly literary, having published nine novels (and completed two more that remain unpublished[35]) and an abundance of short stories, poems, and essays dealing primarily with literary criticism. Tate has published one novel, The Fathers, with the bulk of his work being in poetry or essays divided about equally between social/philosophical and literary content. Ransom's principal output has been much like Tate's, with the omission of any novel and the addition of his philosophical and critical books, God Without Thunder, The World's

Body, and The New Criticism. It should be apparent from this evidence alone that Warren's method of presenting his philosophy has been almost entirely through, as Stewart says, his "imaginative writing," while for Ransom particularly the tendency has been to separate the expression of ideas into essay or book formats and the creative sensibility into poetry.

Warren has commented upon Ransom's compartmentalizing of his art and ideas in "John Crowe Ransom: A Study in Irony"--an essay which must have been difficult for a critic of Warren's powerful formalist convictions to write. Reacting to the conventional appraisal of Ransom's poems as consisting of so much wit and irony and so little meaning, Warren argued that Ransom's poetry can be said to be "systematic," but "peculiarly" so. He was forced to concede that if Ransom's poetry "is to be fully understood, if its theme is to be stated, if certain effects of the poetry itself are to be appreciated, it must be read in terms of that center to which it refers."[36] That center, however, does not exist within the poetry, but is an extra-literary concern from Ransom's essays that the reader must bring to bear upon the poems. The center, Warren explains, "has been objectively formulated by the poet himself, although not in relation to the poetry."[37] And of the essays where the center is to be found Warren says, "A very small proportion of this criticism is purely literary."[38] He cites the book-length God Without Thunder as one of the sources the reader might be expected to refer himself to, and one senses in reading his essay that though Warren has tried rather skillfully to conceal the lack of integration in his friend's work by arguing a relationship between his distinct philosophical and creative activities, his defense of Ransom is not one he really believes in. This seems especially true when we remember that Warren helped to revolutionize the teaching of English by authoring textbooks which re-oriented judgments of literature away

from non-literary concerns and toward the works themselves, and that he has consistently favored literary organicism in his critical essays.

Tate's treatment of ideas in his poetry is open to almost the reverse criticism as Ransom's. Similar to the difficulty in several of Warren's novels where the superabundance of ideas clashes, Tate's poems are frequently tangles of confusing concepts that can finally be understood only by, as with Ransom, resorting to the essays. But the chaos of ideas in Tate's art seems to be caused not so much by ineptness in integrating his ideas and forms, which is often Warren's problem, as it is due to Tate's inability to settle upon any locus of meaning which is secure. The principal theme of his poetry, as he expresses it in "Religion and the Intellectuals," is "man suffering from unbelief."[39] But ideas, as he tells us in "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," require belief: "Man is a creature that in the long run has got to believe in order to know, and to know in order to do."[40] In short, if there is no belief, cognition is not possible, and ideas lacking conviction are for Tate like the wind which "whirrs without recollection" around the rows of headstones in his "Ode to the Confederate Dead." It may even be that Tate--who in John L. Stewart's view "wrote poetry that tends constantly toward instability and disorder; the traditionalist and authoritarian was an artist with a penchant for anarchy"[41]--deliberately committed obfuscation upon his poetic ideas in order to accurately represent their status to him in a world without belief. Or, paradoxically, of the status he might wish the currency of ideas to have, for although Tate felt he lived in a world where ideas were meaningless since they lacked the backing of belief, he also found himself in a world of scientifically-based abstractions, where men "believed" in ideas not through faith or because of a felt empathy, but because they were logically demonstrable or empirically verifiable. Science had claimed its method the standard for truth,

and against this claim Tate wrote his essays and poetry. In his "Preface to Reason and Madness" he stated that "all the essays are on one theme: a deep illness of the modern mind"[42] which had been insidiously inflicted upon man by scientific abstractionism. He acknowledged that in his essays his ideas did not always exhibit the formulaic perfection demanded by science ("at present I am on record as a casual essayist of whom little consistency can be expected"[43]), and in his views on poetry he actually took pride in defending his art as a realm where consistency was not even required. He argued against the critical "assumption . . . that poetry must of necessity be like science, a quantitative instrument for mastery of the world,"[44] and he argued for poetry as an activity having no practical function: "poetry finds its true usefulness in its perfect inutility, a focus of repose for the will-driven intellect that constantly shakes the equilibrium of persons and societies with its unremitting imposition of partial formulas."[45] Far from seeing, as Warren did, the organic fusion of ideas with experience as the ideal of poetic art, one gathers that Tate saw poetry as a place where by routing and scrambling ideas, by presenting half-truths and incomplete logic, the poet could work defeat upon the false kind of "belief" which the scientific standard had engendered in man.

The development of ideas has always been exceedingly important to Warren, but he has seldom separated their treatment from the restraining influences of his narrative contexts, where his abstractions can be tested against what he calls in "Knowledge and the Image of Man" the "urgencies of actuality."[46] Because of the systematic nature of his ideas it has not been unusual for him to maintain them despite the absence of support and even with outright contradictions from the narratives; still, unlike Ransom and Tate, his philosophizing has been generally at least accompanied by

experiential touchstones, and regardless of his lapses he has always insisted upon the factual testing of ideas.

Although his narratives recurrently function as the pretext for his examination of ideas, their active social and political surfaces have often attracted more critical attention than the ultimate moral lessons he has tried to derive from them. Night Rider is an excellent case in point because, in depicting the plight of the small tobacco farmers at the hands of large corporations ruthlessly strangling their livelihood, it seems to convey a specifically anti-industrial, pro-Agrarian message. Closer inspection, however, shows it to be sufficiently pro-agrarian, but almost anti-Agrarian, or against, at least, the very real dangers of reactionary organizations which are even worse than the dehumanizing forces of capitalism because they use violence. The Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco, formed to protect the interests of the small farmers, starts out with a perfectly justifiable intention: "To make those son-a-bitching buyers pay me what my tobacco's worth,"[47] explains Mr. Sills. Perse Munn gets swept up by the Association and is intrigued by how all the members have come together from different counties to form "one thing." He quickly discovers the unifying factor was "An idea--that was it--an idea seized parts of their individual beings and held them together and made them coalesce."[48] Warren proceeds to test this idea, and before long it develops that subservience to the idea fosters aggressive tactics necessary for its preservation. Professor Ball is distraught by how "the Association is being attacked by fair means and foul. In the public press and in the courts of justice, by the moneyed interests. These interests walk in darkness and strike the unwary man and rob him of the fruit of his toil."[49] (If "South" is substituted for "Association," it is remarkable how much the Professor's remarks sound like those in the I'll Take My Stand essays of Ransom and Tate.)

Spitting into the fireplace, he suggests an extension of the Association to be named the Free Farmer's Brotherhood of Protection and Control, and he recommends a motto, "Le bras pour le droit," to signify the new direction of the movement. Predictably, violence erupts, and before it is over Mr. Munn has joined the night riders, had an illicit romance, lost his wife and home, committed murder, and been mortally shot while trying to escape from the soldiers who have come to restore order. If Warren had learned from his reading at Oxford that "in the power state (the individual) lost existence, disappeared, was a cipher," he seems also to have learned that becoming a "cipher" was a danger not at all limited to one's relations with the state, but capable of extending itself to virtually any passive acceptance of an idea; nor was it the worst that could happen, since one might through violent reaction become a casualty, pulling others down along the way, all in defense of the idea. Warren may well have intended Night Rider not only as a general protest against the power state or any social movement using force to achieve its ends, but also specifically as a negative response to Tate's surprising recommendation near the end of "Remarks on the Southern Religion" as to how the Southerner might "take hold of his Tradition." "The answer is," Tate said, "by violence." Meant seriously or not, it reads ominously enough in the essay:

> For this answer is inevitable. . . . Since he cannot bore from within, he has left the sole alternative of boring from without. This method is political, active, revolutionary. Reaction is the most radical of programs; it aims at cutting away the overgrowth and getting back to the roots. [50]

At Heaven's Gate is another novel which invites Agrarian interpretation, and in fact in its portrayal of the ravages of finance capitalism in the New South, it builds a stronger case for the

movement than Night Rider. Engineered by Bogan Murdock, the greedy industrial system operates at the expense of dirt farmers like Mr. Calhoun, who works the land conservatively with his hands rather than impersonally wasting it and displays an unselfish sense of humanity as foreign to Murdock's machine economy as sophistication is to Calhoun's. But though more prominent as background than that of the corrupt corporations disabling the tobacco farmers in Night Rider, the polarization of economic lifestyles is still only background in At Heaven's Gate, and serves perhaps mainly as physical counterpart or metaphor, than in its own right as social documentation, to the much more evident foreground of the dichotomized spiritual lives of Susan Murdock, Jerry Calhoun, and the numerous other lost and alienated persons in the novel seeking escape from their psychic hells. The ringleader Bogan is almost as absent from the narrative of At Heaven's Gate as the mentioned but never seen corporate bodies of Night Rider. What is very much visible in both novels are people trapped in dilemmas for which the only possible solution is not social reform, but individual exertion of the "agony of will"[51] to counteract whatever will-depleting forces--private, interpersonal or public--which inevitably challenge the human integrity of Warren's characters. In his essay "Love and Separateness in Eudora Welty," Warren suggests that we do not read her stories "with a neat point-to-point equating of image and idea," and describes a method which we might apply to the social aspects of his own fiction as to those of Welty and other writers.

> The method is similar to the method of much modern poetry, and to that of much modern fiction and drama, but at the same time it is a method as old as fable, myth, and parable. It is a method by which the items of fiction (scene, action, character, etc.) are presented not as document but as comment, not as a report but as a thing made, not as history but as idea.

> Even in the most realistic and reportorial fiction, the social picture, the psychological analysis, and the pattern of action do not rest at the level of mere report; they finally operate as expressive symbols as well.[52]

Warren has also cautioned the artist against behaving as social scientist. If he does, he becomes a purveyor of that very limited kind of knowledge about the world which science delivers, and so is no longer an artist. As an artist, Warren says in his essay on Ransom, his role is to convey "an appreciative concern with persons, objects, and events of this world--a concern called, in its formal aspect, art."[53] When the artist uses science as the basis of his art, he employs one rather narrow means by which to interpret all the others man has to chart his experience. The result is that "a violence is done to human sensibility,"[54] by which men are deprived of the variety of appreciative vantages which it is the artist's unique privilege to convey. The social artist is then guilty of that same reductionism, that same funneling of all experience through one method, the scientific, that has brought about our age's dissociation of sensibility. "Under the present order," Warren adds parenthetically, "one may observe that when the artist determines to be 'social minded' he generally becomes a propagandist, employing the technical resources of an art for the purpose of a thesis. His art becomes a mere instrument; and he a scientist, albeit an imperfect one."[55]

Although many of his characters are political, and although nearly all of his novels have disintegrating social structures as settings--whether they be a nation at civil war as in Band of Angels and Wilderness; corrupt political or organizational machinery as in Night Rider, At Heaven's Gate, and All the King's Men; the destruction of a city as in Flood; or rural poverty as in The Cave and

Meet Me in the Green Glen--Warren's focus is invariably upon the necessity of individual redemption in whatever public or private crisis man becomes involved. Wherever and whenever do not seem to matter much either, for Warren's search through history has shown crisis to be no respecter of place and time--quite a different lesson drawn from history than Tate's, which seeks man's solutions in improved social integration and the reinstatement of traditional values to replace contemporary disorder or excess of scientific order, even through extreme methods. It would damage the story but not the meaning of Band of Angels to remove Manty Starr with her racial and personal identity crisis to a more modern setting, like that in At Heaven's Gate or The Cave; one could likewise remove Jack Burden from his public world to that of Cass Mastern, a transposition he in fact does make imaginatively, and see as Jack does that external circumstances act similarly in either age as catalysts to trigger each man's moral awareness and growth. One could hardly make such alterations to Tate's The Fathers, where Pleasant Hill and Lacy Buchan function rather allegorically as representatives of the old, harmonious order and George Posey as the disrupting man of the future, without considerably distorting the author's meaning and intentions.

For Warren the artist's most precious contribution to man is not directly in the public domain, but, indeed, "underground," as he tells us in Democracy and Poetry: "What poetry most significantly celebrates is the capacity of man to face the deep, dark inwardness of his nature and his fate."[56] This is exactly the terrain his own fiction explores, but in doing so it also acts as a "fifth column" by performing a revitalizing social function that only the arts can. They remind man of the existence of perspectives, besides the scientific one, upon which his very selfhood depends. The tendency of science in our time has been to deny fullness of self by devaluating

feeling: "The self has been maimed in our society because, for one reason, we lose contact with the world's body, lose any holistic sense of our relation to the world, not merely in that there is a split between emotion and idea but also because perception and sensation are at a discount."[57] Failing in his essential role of non-scientific re-valuator, the writer will have denied man not only his art, but also, Warren insists, the very quality of his life: "For if once the oscillation, the vibrance, the dialectic ceases, life, as we know and esteem it, will cease."[58]

To Warren the universal theme of our writers, and most emphatically one in which he participates, is man's increasing depersonalization in a quantified civilization, in which the standard for truth is wholly objective rather than fully human. The universality of the theme ends, however, with the array of solutions, or reactions, our writers have furnished to it. The problem lends itself readily to schematization, so that if we imagine a critical yardstick, much like the one Warren has in fact used in evaluating his peers, with particularity, contingency and feeling at one end; with abstractionism, logical consistency and reason at the other; and with the center an area of balancing and harmonizing opposites, we may effectively measure the bias of virtually any writer's solution. For many artists the shock of our culture's scientific dehumanizing has compelled them to defend the subjective end, where the criterion by which truth and selfhood are gauged is existential authenticity. The moral rule book is, as it were, thrown away. But authenticity, Warren reminds us, "is merely one of the two poles of action," and complete allegiance to it results in the forfeiture of not only objective standards, but also even the faculty of articulation: "the only 'authentic' utterance is the scream of agony or the moan of bliss: solipsism."[59] Some of our writers, like Tate and Yvor Winters, have swung toward the other, absolutist extreme, with

liabilities which should be manifestly apparent. A tabulation of our writers' positions along the yardstick, however, is productive of the conclusion that few of them are close to the middle. Few, that is, seem to maintain consistently the necessity of including both sides of man's nature in their views of his cognitive, moral and other activities, as though either the ends of the yardstick are more popular or the central position is harder to sustain. By insisting upon the importance of both fact and idea in his fiction Warren is one of our writers who has tried to hold to the middle course. The shortcomings of his aesthetic performance, discussed in the preceding chapter, and the vacillations of his ethical stance, discussed in the next, are evidence of the adductive attraction of the one-sided position, where we may find what he has called the "easy statement as solution,"[60] and demonstrate the formidability of remaining integrated in a world which constantly demands our choosing one side or the other.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

[1]Robert Penn Warren, "America and the Diminished Self," Democracy and Poetry (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 30. This address and "Poetry and Selfhood" were originally delivered as the 1974 Jefferson Lectures in the Humanities. Both are notable in being uncharacteristically direct for Warren in their observations of the contemporary social scene. As discussed later in this chapter, Warren's presentation of social commentary has seldom been divorced from his imaginative literature, and even his critical essays tend to be oriented far more toward close literary than social analyses. In content as well as form these addresses are most like the cultural meditations of Tate and Ransom, and in fact Warren's choice of epigraph from St. John Perse, "And it is enough for the poet to be the guilty conscience of his time," seems remarkably like Tate's notion of the function of the man of letters ("There would be no hell for modern man if our men of letters were not calling attention to it"), and his allusion to "the world's body" on p. 72 immediately recalls Ransom's book of social essays bearing that title.

[2]"America and the Diminished Self," p. 3.

[3]Ellington White, "Robert Penn Warren," in South: Modern Southern Literature in Its Cultural Setting, ed. by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961), p. 206. Elsewhere White relates that Warren displays "a very real concern with the public affairs of men, a fact readily borne out by simply counting the number of governors and senators and meaty-jowled politicians who inhabit his novels" (p. 199), but his dubious, arithmetic argument does not consider the minor roles these characters usually play or the fact that they are as a rule cast by Warren into darkness and corruption, and so do not offer much recommendation for the "vitae activa," or Greek-style "life devoted to public-political matters" which White takes to be Warren's rationale for presenting his host of political types.

[4]Louis D. Rubin, Jr., from his Introduction to Fugitives' Reunion: Conversations at Vanderbilt May 3-5, 1956, ed. by Rob Roy Purdy (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1959), p. 16. Purdy has prefixed his record of the reunion with brief but informative professional biographies of the members. Sixteen of the original twenty Fugitives pursued university teaching, almost all in literature, or otherwise literary (publishing houses, e.g.) careers, and of the four who didn't, the physician Merrill Moore wrote "some 100,000

sonnets" and insurance executive Jesse Wills authored Early & Late: Fugitive Poems and Others, thus retaining the interest in literature which the group had fostered in them.

[5]Ibid., p. 15.

[6]Ibid., p. 91.

[7]Ibid., p. 119.

[8]Ibid., p. 99.

[9]Ibid., p. 119.

[10]Ralph Ellison and Eugene Walter, "The Art of Fiction, XVIII, Robert Penn Warren," Paris Review, IV (Spring-Summer, 1957), pp. 115-16.

[11]I am indebted for the chronology of Warren's academic career, for the survey of events which contributed to the publication of I'll Take My Stand, and for information about the critical aftermath, to John L. Stewart's excellent study, The Burden of Time: The Fugitives and Agrarians (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965)--particularly his chapters "Toward Agrarianism," "Agrarianism and After," and "Robert Penn Warren: The Long Apprenticeship."

[12]Fugitives' Reunion, pp. 208-09.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Robert Penn Warren, "The Briar Patch," I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition, by Twelve Southerners (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), p. 262.

[15]The important questions raised by Ransom and Tate in their I'll Take My Stand essays concern how the South can ward off change and preserve "historic identity" and "Tradition." In "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" Ransom asserts "The question at issue is whether the South will permit herself to be so industrialized as to lose entirely her historic identity, and so remove the last substantial barrier that has stood in the way of American progressivism; or will accept industrialism, but with a very bad grace, and will manage to maintain a good deal of her traditional philosophy" (p. 22). And for Tate in "Remarks on the Southern Religion," the essential question is "How may the Southerner take hold of his Tradition?" (p. 174).

[16]"The Briar Patch," p. 264.

[17]Robert Penn Warren, Who Speaks for the Negro? (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 12.

[18]Fugitives' Reunion, p. 210.

[19]John Crowe Ransom, "Reconstructed But Unregenerate" in I'll Take My Stand, p. 5.

[20]Ibid., p. 20.

[21]Allen Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion" in I'll Take My Stand. This and the two preceding quotations are from pp. 172-73.

[22]Ibid., p. 156.

[23]"Reconstructed But Unregenerate," p. 3.

[24]Robert Penn Warren, Segregation: The Inner Conflict of the South (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), pp. 96-97.

[25]Randall Stewart, "The Relation Between Fugitives and Agrarians," Regionalism and Beyond: Essays of Randall Stewart, ed. by George Core (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), p. 238. In this essay Stewart argues favorably and convincingly for I'll Take My Stand as the Southern version of New England's 1854 criticism of industrial America, Walden.

[26]Fugitives' Reunion, p. 210.

[27]Ibid., p. 181.

[28]Allen Tate, "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," Essays of Four Decades (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1968), p. 8. On p. 4, Tate asserts "The battle is now between the dehumanized society of secularism, which imitates Descartes' mechanized nature, and the eternal society of the communion of the human spirit" --an argument Warren reproduces almost exactly, but with a less warlike tone, in his Democracy and Poetry.

[29]The Burden of Time, p. 140.

[30]John Crowe Ransom, God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965), p. 363.

[31]Fugitives' Reunion, p. 216. The entire quotation is: "Last night, Charlie Moss and I were talking, after you all had left his house. He said, talking about Agrarianism, 'The question of civilizing and making progress amounts to a moral progress, or civilizing progress, and is a matter always of a fifth column in a society.' And the effect is slow; if we had any function, we were a fifth column. We couldn't step out and take over the powers of the state. Poetry is a fifth column--."

[32]Virginia J. Rock, "The Making and Meaning of I'll Take My Stand: A Study in Utopian-Conservatism, 1925-1939," Diss. University of Minnesota, 1961.

[33]The Burden of Time, p. 204.

[34]Ibid., pp. 448-49, 451.

[35]John L. Stewart reports the title of one as God's Own Time and the other as untitled, in The Burden of Time.

[36]Robert Penn Warren, "John Crowe Ransom: A Study in Irony," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (January, 1935), p. 93.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., p. 95.

[39]Allen Tate, "Religion and the Intellectuals," The Partisan Review, XVII (March, 1950), p. 250.

[40]"The Man of Letters in the Modern World," p. 7.

[41]The Burden of Time, p. 416.

[42]"Preface to Reason in Madness," in Essays of Four Decades, p. 615.

[43]"Preface to The Man of Letters in the Modern World," in Essays of Four Decades, p. 625.

[44]"Three Types of Poetry," in Essays of Four Decades, p. 189.

[45]Ibid., p. 196.

[46]Robert Penn Warren, "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, LIX (1955), p. 191.

[47]Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1967), p. 16.

[48]Ibid., p. 17.

[49]Ibid., p. 115.

[50]"Remarks on the Southern Religion," pp. 174-75.

[51]Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. 462.

[52]Robert Penn Warren, "Love and Separateness in Eudora Welty," Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1951), pp. 167-68.

[53]"John Crowe Ransom: A Study in Irony," p. 98.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56]"America and the Diminished Self," p. 31.

[57]"Poetry and Selfhood," pp. 72-73.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

[60]Robert Penn Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," in Selected Essays, p. 30.

CHAPTER IV

It is not by social or political change that the violent society Warren describes in his fiction will be morally improved; as he says in his essay on Conrad, "the moral regeneration of society depends not upon shifts of mechanism but upon the moral regeneration of men."[1] But the world, as Warren and other novelists appraise it, is "God-abandoned,"[2] and so is bereft of an encompassing standard of values by which men may assent to moral belief. Without super-imposed values, with "the secularization of things"[3] as he calls it in "Knowledge and the Image of Man," men have been compelled to self-impose them, to create values rather than receive them God-made. For all their efforts, however, men have failed to reproduce the universality of their lost religious standard. Instead, they have created a multiplicity of ethical standards, an "internecine vindictiveness of voices,"[4] each ironically proclaiming righteousness and even certainty, but all without agreement and, being salubrious only to individual interests, at the farthest extreme from any moral regeneration of society.

In the midst of the many voices claiming to have solved man's moral dilemma is Warren's fiction, which disputes that man will again achieve a single solution, a "one-answer system"[5] to encompass morality, or even a compromise solution as long as he refuses to acknowledge his limited capability as man by attempting to re-enact moral universality like God. Warren's fiction is a corrective to the existential deduction that because the world is God-abandoned, man is now God. It insists that without God man is still only man, and with only his human resources he is restricted as to what he may do.

In Democracy and Poetry, Warren gives us his most recent if not final views on the nature of man. At the conclusion of this

small book of essays he writes of man's "divided nature": "There is the self of appetite and action, and the self that observes and ponders appetite and action."[6] This has also been his ongoing view, for with remarkable consistency over a long career Warren has characterized man as divided, a creature of feeling, and a creature of thought. This categorizing of different selves is significant in terms of the limits it places upon man's ability to define himself fully, for the emotional half of man does not think, and his rational side does not feel. Yet, as Warren's fiction testifies, man is prone to negate one side or the other by establishing a single ideational or felt standard of conduct. Because of the duality of man, to Warren any standard which purports to resolve the moral dilemma cannot be singly rational or emotional to be "full-bodied,"[7] but must be a double standard, and so accommodate both the heart and the head, individually or in some combination.

While Warren has never entirely relinquished his beliefs that man is divided and that ethical mediation between the selves is necessary, he has vacillated in the emphases of his moral concerns, even to the extent of occasionally contradicting his view that no single answer to man's moral dilemma is possible. In his fiction men are not simply God-abandoned, but also because of their duality they are frustratingly the victims of "Dieu trompeur," the Jokester God, whom Warren defines as "a God who creates man with a passion for truth and then denies him any access to it, even to a truth about his own existence."[8] While man yearns for a pocket explanation of his nature, he can never attain it because any attempt results in the usurpation of one of his selves by the other. If he tries to define himself by thought, he has suppressed his emotional side by reason and succeeded only in producing an abstraction of himself; if he tries to feel the truth about himself, then he has excluded his distinctively human, rational self. It is a paradox which

Warren, for all of his insistence upon the "terrible division" of modern man, has at times refused to acknowledge, as he does at the end of his essay on Coleridge: "I cannot admit that our experience . . . is ineluctably and vindictively divided into the 'magical' and the rational, with an abyss between."[9] Behind even his most accepting and conservative approach to how man may cope with his divided nature is the sense of a cosmological affront against man attributable to the inaccessibility of absolute and unqualified truth. The vacillations in his ethical stance are evidence that Warren has been dissatisfied with the necessity of double standards for double selves, and that he has recurringly felt compelled to reassess and rearrange his moral solutions, and so somehow re-integrate men morally.

His fiction may be regarded generally as having three temporal phases corresponding to his vacillations of stressing the mental over the emotional self in his earliest novels, maintaining the selves as equally important in All the King's Men, and since then progressively arguing for man's emotional self as capable of producing a kind of knowledge. There are, however, certain factors which are not indecisive in Warren, and which apply with considerable uniformity throughout his moral system. These more constant factors serve Warren as a kind of frame confining the scope of alterations he has undertaken in his moral views, and preliminary discussion of these constraints will aid in the later interpretation of his interior, protean shapes.

Foremost are his definitions of evil as extremism and good as moderation. As documented in Chapter I, Warren's equation for violence is elementary: from the pain of his unknowing man creates "fictive selves," made-up images of himself designed to conceal and assuage his emptiness; but one man's false images conflict with the fictive selves of others in the same predicament, and the refusal of

selves to yield and to change erupts into violence. Evil is the refusal to compromise, the failure to release hold upon the fictive self, the God-like elevation of this self over other men. Good is recognition of the common human bond of unknowing realization that "the tragic experience is universal and a corollary of man's place in nature."[10] His "place in nature" is as a middle creature between God and matter, and good is not aspiring or descending wholly to the condition of one extreme or the other, but recognizing and sustaining his humanity, his "divided nature."

A related given factor in Warren's fiction is his rather consistent treatment of idea, although this treatment is considerably more complex than his definitions of good and evil. With only the possible exception of his latest novels, idea always functions positively in Warren as social and individual imperatives which guide men toward moral responsibility (hence, as external and internal law or control), as education, and as rumination about morality. It always functions negatively in his novels as ideas of morality, particularly when such ideas extend themselves to what Warren regards as the worst of evils, abstractionism, which is the rigid retention of a moral viewpoint and the subjugation of men by it.

Since idea is the product of the thinking half of man's nature, Warren has been compelled to render it its due importance within his moral framework. But as discussed in detail previously in connection with his belief that purely scientific approaches to man are dehumanizing,[11] Warren has evinced a strong suspicion toward idea and its components, logic and reason, as the very implements used by scientists to close off from man his broader, felt perspectives on life. He reminds us in his essay on Hemingway that the portrayal of the world as God-abandoned did not originate with twentieth-century novelists: "We know where the literary men got this picture. They got it from the scientists of the nineteenth century."[12] These

scientists fixated men, and made them into abstractions.

> It is a world in which self-interest, workableness, success provide the standard of conduct. It was a Yankee who first referred to the bitch goddess Success. It is a world in which the individual has lost his relation to society, the world of the power state in which man is a cipher. It is a world in which man is the victim of abstraction and mechanism, or at least, at moments, feels himself to be.[13]

Even if science is capable of producing for men a life of ease, "a cybernetic paradise" he calls it in Democracy and Poetry, such benefits as science may produce "are not adequate to bring man to any sense of the world as a whole and of himself as a whole."

> Even if the communal larder does bulge with bread and jam and tickets to all entertainments are free and the Clinic of Aphrodisiacs is open on a twenty-four-hour basis, the new world may, in fact, produce a more drastic fragmentation of man than we now endure.[14]

Scientists have abused the powers of mind through excess, by setting up idealized, abstract formulas of a supposed better life which in fact suppresses instinct and atrophies "the self of appetite and action." But a less rigid form of idea, such as a set of communal beliefs which permits the growth of human respect and responsibility, has been accepted by Warren, though with serious reservations. Especially in his earlier essays on other novelists, Warren is inclined to view the establishment of codes and ideas of virtue favorably. About Hemingway's code Warren says:

> . . . the code and the discipline are important because they can give meaning to life that otherwise seems to have no meaning or

> justification. In other words, in a world without supernatural sanctions, in the God-abandoned world of modernity, man can realize an ideal meaning only in so far as he can define and maintain the code. The effort to do so, however limited and imperfect it may be, is the characteristically human effort, and provides the tragic or pitiful human story.[15]

And again, Warren sees as the "point" of Faulkner's fiction the juxtaposition of the "new order," represented by the Snopeses who entertain "no idea of virtue," against the "old order," which at least permitted man "to define himself as human by setting up codes, ideas of virtue, however mistaken; by affirming obligations, however arbitrary; by accepting the risks of humanity."[16]

Even within these essays, however, Warren is quick to point out the liabilities of such "ideas of virtue." Hemingway's code does not work satisfactorily toward the moral regeneration of men, but produces "only the little secret community of, paradoxically enough, individualists who have resigned from the general community."[17] As for Faulkner's old order, it suffered from "bad conscience and confusion of mind" and "did not satisfy human needs, did not afford justice, and therefore was 'accurst' and held the seeds of its own ruin."[18] Increasingly in his later essays Warren has tended to abhor the consecration of codes and orders which appeal to special interests and privileged insiders, thereby excluding the larger, general human community. In Democracy and Poetry he regards the creation of such made-up moralities as "fictive values seized, or yearned after, by fictive selves."[19] The imposition of meaning through the solitary assertion of self makes man the "victim of self," because "the true self, among the many varieties of fictive selves, can develop only in a vital relation between the unitary person and the group. That is, the self is

possible only in a community."[20] In this same book Warren practically dismisses Hemingway as "a late and more hairy manifestation of Emerson's infantile vision of the 'egotistical sublime.'"[21]

Warren denies his own characters whatever comfort private ideas of virtue may offer in their God-abandoned worlds. His characters do succumb to secret and subjective codes, but far from achieving victories over meaninglessness as Hemingway's heroes sometimes do, Warren's code followers seldom even survive by them. Mr. Munn adopts the "idea"[22] promulgated by the clandestine society of night riders, but his ensuing crimes against established social values destroy him. The quasi-intellectuals in At Heaven's Gate frenetically try to conform to their prevailing notion of sophistication, leaving them among the emptiest of Warren's characters. Willie Stark might be said to be Warren's rendering of an "egotistical sublime" fictional character; after receiving a blow to his political innocence early in his career, Willie concocts his personal version of good and evil and enforces it upon the world much as Melville's Ahab, his literary forebear did, with equally fatal results. In Warren's fiction the establishment of moral ideas is inevitable when men combine into society, and is valid if it results in responsible law and control, but such ideas are anti-communal when they justify criminal acts and function hierarchically, dividing men into camps of moral subservience and domination. Even though Warren understands why men feel compelled to devise private ideational strategies, as evidenced by his essays on other writers, he does not in his own fiction condone the creation of the "fictive selves" or "fictive values" settled upon by other writers as their solution to man's moral dilemma. Ideas of virtue can cause evil through an excess of the self and, instead of giving the self the meaning it longs for, result in a multiplicity of ethical standards practiced by lone communities comprised of still lonelier men.

Idea also functions consistently in Warren as part of man's moral dialectic, but the operation of this dialectic is peculiar in that it usually results in the abrogation rather than advancement of morality as idea. The terms of Warren's moral dialectics are idea versus experience and idea versus idea. Either way ideas of virtue invariably lose, and his characters' educations are really a kind of uneducation, teaching them to shuck off inauthentic identities by which they have managed to make themselves sub or super-human, and so eventually bringing them to a recognition of their true selves, as beings morally identical to each other. Jack Burden learns this "nightmare truth" about himself near the end of All the King's Men when he takes a closer look at Tiny Duffy. To Jack, Tiny had been the monster who set up the Boss' murder, and Jack had seen himself as the "avenging hero": "I had kicked Duffy around and my head was big as a balloon with grandeur." But Jack's illusion of grandeur cracks with his realization that he too was part of the conspiracy which led to Willie's death, and collapses when he sees himself, through Tiny's eye, enmeshed in even "a more monstrous conspiracy."

> . . . suddenly I knew that I had tried to make Duffy into a scapegoat for me and to set myself off from Duffy, and my million-dollar meal of heroism back-fired that yellow taste into my gullet and I felt caught and tangled and mired and stuck like an ox in a bog and a cat in flypaper. . . . It was as though in the midst of the scene Tiny Duffy had slowly and like a brother winked at me with his oyster eye and I had known he knew the nightmare truth, which was that we were twins bound together more intimately and disastrously than the poor freaks of the midway who are bound by the common stitch of flesh and gristle and the seepage of blood. We were bound together forever and I could never

> hate him without hating myself or
> love myself without loving him.[23]

Education of this sort--the contrast of idea against idea and the testing of idea against experience--is essential to the moral awareness and growth of Warren's characters. Much as in the works of Søren Kierkegaard, Warren frequently uses reason to combat reason and contextual reality to undermine logic, and so works defeat upon abstractionism. This dialectical process may even lead, as it does in Jack's case, to knowledge of a moral rule, a universal law or imperative which obliges men, since they are creatures intimately bound together, to do to other men only what they would have done to themselves. This law commands restraint and control. Having the power literally to change history by telling Sugar Boy who instigated the Boss' death, Jack almost gets out the name "Duffy" when in his mind he again sees Tiny's eye and recalls the hard lesson he had learned.

> (Sugar Boy) would do it (murder Duffy if he knew), I knew he would do it. And it was such a joke on Duffy I almost laughed out loud. And as the name of Duffy flashed across my mind I saw Duffy's face, large and lunar and sebaceous, nodding at me as at the covert and brotherly appreciation of a joke, and even as I opened my lips to speak the syllables of his name, he winked. He winked right at me like a brother.
>
> I stood there stock still.
>
> Sugar Boy's face began to twitch again. He was going to ask again. I stared down at him. "I was kidding," I said.[24]

While for Warren ideas of morality are unacceptable, ideas about morality clearly are not, as evidenced by the abundance of moral rumination in his fiction. For his characters, moral ideas

serve utilitarian ends, as artificial constructs to impose meaning upon an otherwise incomprehensible universe. But the novels present a highly rational critique of morality, and for Warren the end served thereby is theoretical. He does not necessarily regard the simultaneous inclusion in a single novel of an innate distrust of idea and a utilization of idea to achieve meaning as incompatible. Each has its particular purpose and excellence. A distinctive feature of his novels, of course, is their peculiar mixture of rednecks and eggheads, of uneducated hill people who scorn learning and of poets and university types who are at ease with ideas. We are reminded that this same feature is no less biographically distinctive of Warren, who was reared in Guthrie, Kentucky, and has almost always gone by the nickname "Red," and who has spent years teaching at a number of prestigious universities, including most recently a long tenure at Yale. The earthy side of Warren's divided nature is capable of giving us exceedingly physical images which draw us close to the experience of the shapes and sounds and smells of the land and its people, while his academic side produces highly intellectual character and author moral commentary. In "Knowledge and the Image of Man" Warren acknowledges that in the American heritage we have accorded preferability to felt, instinctive expressions of morality over knowing and learned expressions of it, but he adds "this does not mean that, in the end, we have to take Davy Crockett as a philosopher superior to Immanuel Kant."[25] Our suspicion of that part of man's nature which appeals to reason and idea does not mean that we should look solely to the "self of appetite and action" as our guide to moral understanding. In Warren's view the "self that observes and ponders appetite and action" is better suited to supply this understanding.

Ideas about morality have led to Warren's most direct expression of his solution to man's moral dilemma in "Knowledge

and the Image of Man," where he states that man can return to his lost unity: "The return to man and nature is the discovery of love, and law." Although love and law appear in his novels in all their possible manifestations, and although Warren never actually defines in either his essays or his fiction what he means by them, it is nevertheless apparent that as moral standards he intends them to be interpreted in special senses. Law occurs as legality in the novels, but as moral law it refers to a higher standard which takes precedence over the trappings of jurisprudence. Legal law, as Mr. Munn realizes in Warren's first novel, has little to do with establishing the truth of a matter, for the truth which derives from such law is only a function of the tellers and results in a confusing assortment of piecemeal and contrary truths.

> He thought: the truth. Each person there, on the stand today, was telling the truth. The officials, with their pieces of paper on which the figures were written, down to a last penny, they were telling the truth: their truth. That was what the truth was to them. And the constable, the truth to him--what had stuck in his mind and what he would always mention, for years to come now, when he told anybody about that night, what would stay in his mind when he was very old and his past had begun to flow from him and leave only a few little, dead fragments, stranded out of time--the truth to him was the way the men had had trouble with their masks when they tried to spit. And Miss Mayhew would always remember the tangle of cut wires in the office, just that, and the man's holding her arm coming down-stairs. That was the truth to her. But her truth, and the constable's truth, and the truths of the others, they were not his own, which was, if any one thing

> seizable and namable, that reeling moment of certainty and fulfillment when the air had swollen ripely with the blast.[27]

In Warren's last novel, attorney Leroy Lancaster has a "dream" of a mechanical ideal of legality, whereby "the guilty declared themselves, the innocent were saved and did not have to suffer, the crooked was made straight, and justice was redeemed."[28] But when his accused but innocent client, Angelo Passetto, willingly indicts himself according to man-made law by crying out before the jury his love for Cassie Spottwood, Leroy realizes that Angelo has appealed to a justice beyond any legal ideal or the ability of a court of law to weigh and measure. Similarly love occurs in its more literal and mundane senses in the novels as romance and sexual passion, but as a moral standard its meaning is more diffuse, a love for all aspects of humanity rather than a particular object. Like law, love is not intended by Warren to represent an idealized abstraction, but whereas moral law gains its diffusion beyond fixity by being shown to appeal to a justice higher and more rarefied than cumbersome jurisprudence may reach, moral love usually acquires its diffusion by infiltrating its way into materiality and particularities. Much as Coleridge's Ancient Mariner must learn to love all things, Warren's characters must be educated to a love of even lowly things before moral love of humanity can emerge. Warren's "love," as he elaborates it in "Knowledge and the Image of Man," "is not a thing detached from the world but a thing springing from the deep engagement of spirit with the world."[29] It involves both "the ugly and the beautiful," and such a sublimation of "fear and disgust" that "the world which once provoked the fear and disgust may now be totally loved in the fullness of contemplation."[30] Warren's characters seldom arrive at this conception of love without a violent wrenching of their romantic ideals which forces them to

accept materiality. Band of Angels is a novel on this very subject, wherein the immersion of Amantha Starr into physicality baptizes her eventually into a love of all things, and she comes at last to understand Tobias Sears' reasoning that "the power of soul must work through matter, that even the filthiness of things is part of what Mr. Emerson calls the perennial miracle the soul worketh."[31]

Each of Warren's novels, from first to last, contains at least one character--albeit sometimes only a minor one, like Willie Proudfit in Night Rider and Ashby Wyndham in At Heaven's Gate--whose behavior exemplifies living according to the moral standards of love and law. But the novels seldom present these standards in equal distribution. Considered as a whole, one of the most apparent and notable features of his novels is a shift in their moral emphasis from a stronger concern with man as a social being in the earlier novels to a more profound interest in humans on personal or interpersonal levels in the later fiction. Corresponding to this social to personal shift is a movement from greater attentiveness to violations of law to those of love. So pronounced is this shift that if we compare Perse Munn, the protagonist of Night Rider, with Cassie Spottwood, the heroine of Meet Me in the Green Glen, we notice that the anti-communal traits for which Mr. Munn is condemned in Warren's first novel are actually those by which Cassie is ennobled in his last. It is the individual who drifts from the community of men which is criticized in Night Rider, but in Meet Me in the Green Glen the alienated self is justified against a villainous society which fails to understand and provide for the moral strength and spiritual unity of its members. This is not to say that violations of love and personal relationships do not enter into the theme of Night Rider, or that law is not a component of the moral standard of Meet Me in the Green Glen. It is to suggest, rather, that Warren has vacillated widely in his moral focus, and, as we shall

see more clearly, the extent of his wavering implies that he has been deeply discontented with his double standard solution and sought to remedy man's moral division ultimately through a more unilateral than bilateral approach.

The moral standard principally violated in the early novels is Warren's law. Against this law men fall prey to the evil lure of abstractionism and refuse to live responsibly, as men and brothers, with other men. On the narrative level the violations are depicted as stemming from legal transgressions, and these early novels, in contrast to subsequent ones, abound with the shady dealings of politicians and their corrupt machinery. In the background are Warren's "cipher" people, swayed and manipulated by the political abstractionists, and sometimes, rarely, practicing benign resistance to the ways of the world through brotherhood and good works, as with the Proudfits in Night Rider, Ashby Wyndham and Jerry Calhoun's father in At Heaven's Gate, and the Scholarly Attorney, Lucy Stark, and the redeemed Jack Burden in All the King's Men. Warren's chief concerns, in especially the first two of these three novels, are with law and idea; the expression of his concerns is primarily in terms of the adverse effects of illegality and the excess of idea; and for his moral paradigm he selects those few characters who choose not to live by human and material exploitation. The moral solution offered involves love, but more emphatically law, restraint upon trespassing the rights of others, as a means of combatting a threat to the moral regeneration of men which, at least at the outset of his fiction, is more ominous than the one posed more emphatically in later novels, man's insufficiency of love.

All the King's Men is probably Warren's only novel where the moral standards of love and law are accorded approximately equal importance, and so are fictionally commensurate with his formal pronouncement of them in "Knowledge and the Image of Man."

In this novel they are treated with relative separateness, being arrived at independently by means of different precipitating agencies, and are best evidenced through their workings in the life of Jack Burden. Much of the novel portrays Jack upon a cognitive step-ladder, ascending successive rungs as each of his defensive ideas of morality, "idealism" and the "Great Twitch" philosophy of mechanism, is aborted. Unlike Willie, whose moral will remains frozen from the days of his reaction to being a political sap in the MacMurfee vote, Jack displays an ability to change his moral outlooks, punctuating his abandonment of each with periods of "Great Sleep." It is, finally, the Boss' death which reveals to him the law of his brotherhood with other men. As for love, Jack ponders that it was hearing his mother's scream upon her learning of the death of Judge Irwin which "filled in the blank space which was perhaps the center of the new picture of the world which had been given to me by many people."[32] For years Jack had condemned his mother as a "woman without heart."[33] She had lived, he thought, "in a strange loveless oscillation between calculation and instinct."[34] But her "silvery scream" proved to Jack that she was capable of living beyond illusion, that she was genuinely capable of feeling pain. Jack concludes that "Then I knew that she was telling the truth. And I felt at peace with her and myself."[35] This act of emotional honesty by his mother is sufficient incentive for Jack to act the same, and soon after he sees her onto the train out of Burden's Landing he marries Anne Stanton, proving that he too at last is able to love.

Paradoxically the separate standards of love and law do effect a kind of unity in Jack, allowing him to function for the first time as a whole human being, loving others and respecting the integrity of other men's rights, neither of which he was able to do before. But in the process of establishing his standards Warren

seems to have discovered the ability of love itself to make whole, and perhaps it was the view of love he expressed in All the King's Men--as something capable of removing the "oscillation between calculation and instinct," capable, that is, of reconciling the halves of man's divided nature, and of filling in the "center," the abyss between man's selves--which encouraged him to attend more closely to the workings of love in his following novels.

An even more likely encouragement was his 1945 study of Coleridge, composed while he was working on All the King's Men, from which he derived his understanding that "the moral concern and the aesthetic concern are aspects of the same activity, the creative activity."[36] Coleridge wished to abolish "the opposition between thought and feeling," and Warren evaluates this endeavor as no less than Coleridge's "great central insight and great contribution to modern thought."[37] Judging from the altered shape of his novels after All the King's Men, the insight profoundly influenced Warren's thought. Its significance to him was that if morality is in the active province of feeling rather than that of staid, fixed principles, his emphasis upon idea as the source of and law as the solution to man's moral dilemma had been misplaced. His initial approach had been too conservative, seeking a moral solution more in concept than emotion, in compromise rather than the energetic assertion of man's "creative activity." Since excess of idea was fundamentally the most serious moral wrongdoing he had detected, the answer for Warren had seemed to lie totally in moderation, in reining in man's terrible proclivity for extremism, especially of idea, by advocating a universal law commanding restraint and respect for all men. A by-product of this approach was the inactivity of his early moral heroes; they had, after all, learned that excess was evil and that the forceful extension of their ideas of good and evil over other men only caused waste and violence.

Warren's further development of his moral theme after All the King's Men, however, is characterized by a more radical stance. Abstractionism is combatted not so much by his recommending the relative passivity of moderation as by his more actively stressing the emotional resources available to man which, in his drive for mechanical absolutisms, have been if not ignored, then deprived of their status in making him "full-bodied." These resources exist internally, in the deep dark territory of man's inwardness, and the exploration of this territory is the emphasis of Warren's later novels. The product in a number of important ways is virtually a new fiction for Warren: in its increasing lyricism and personalism, contrasted with the previous dramatizing of human masses; in its slowly evolving tendency toward the creation of more truly heroic characters (culminating in his moral giantess, Cassie Spottwood), rather than subdued practitioners of balance and harmony; and in its depiction of society, particularly in The Cave, as lost to illusions and superficial values, instead of, as is more true in Night Rider, a community to which wayward extremists must discipline and reconcile themselves.

As Warren points out in All the King's Men, however, "All change costs something. You have to write off the costs against the gain."[38] The price of the increased emphasis upon feeling in his new fiction was the loss of idea as a component of morality. Indeed from certain statements in several of the more recent novels Warren appears to have abandoned his double moral standard and reverted to a single felt one, a morality entirely of the heart. There is, for example, Brad Tolliver's conclusive pronouncement in Flood that "There is no country but the heart,"[39] and in Wilderness Adam Rosenzweig declares "Only in my heart can I make the world hang together."[40] With morality placed exclusively in the realm of contingency and feeling, rather than the thinking half of man's nature,

a clear advantage was avoidance of the danger of its becoming fixated as an abstraction, for as feeling its truth was fluid and lively. But as feeling what was its truth? Lacking in all the conceptual apparatus of the mind, without the ability to quantify, to formulate, to demonstrate itself inductively, to deduce logically and so gain universal understanding and assent, how could the heart communicate its felt message?

Unless the heart, like the head, also "knows." In fact, Warren does not intend that the heart in these novels be regarded as a mute moral terrain, but as a vital knowing agent, or at least an agent catalytic to moral knowledge. The heart may be a stone for some men, and indeed it is for many of his characters, but for others, like Adam Rosenzweig, it is a source of reconciliation and understanding and, in his case, the only possible agency for making moral sense of the world. As for what kind of moral sense the heart offers men in the God-abandoned world, Warren has struggled with this question in several of his essays and has produced an argument which, while not utterly convincing (even, we may suspect, to him) in its attempted definition of the heart's knowledge, does successfully combat the notion that the only possible means we have for attaining knowledge and truth is scientific.

In Democracy and Poetry Warren asks whether "all knowledge must come to us from science"[41]--whether, that is, all knowledge must be of the rational, logical sort.

> Even though overwhelmed by the grandeur and apparent inevitability of the scientific project, does man, nevertheless, still yearn for other kinds of knowledge? Not in place of, but in addition to, scientific knowledge, in order to make a world more humanly habitable?[42]

He defines what literature does for man in romantic terms, as "the voice of the passion of the soul--though that lingo is hi falutin. Even a nourishment of the soul, and indeed of society, in that it keeps alive the sense of self and correlated sense of a community."[43] We will not, he says, derive from literature "definitions and certainties,"[44] for these are now altogether in the province of science. But can it therefore be said "that the arts offer us no knowledge?"[45]

His answer in Democracy and Poetry is, of course, that the arts do supply us with valuable information about ourselves and the world, but a more consciously philosophical response lies in his difficult concept of "knowledge of form" contained in "Knowledge and the Image of Man." It is essentially the same response in the realm of ethics as in that of aesthetics: that truth and beauty are one. His doctrine of moral truth results in a knowledge which is in no sense absolute, rational, logical or empirical: "I mean the farthest thing possible from any doctrine that might go as sheer formalism."[46] It is not "knowledge by report" or "knowledge by symptom," but it is to him no less valid as knowledge for all of that. It is:

> . . . a vision of experience, but of experience fulfilled and redeemed in knowledge . . . the flowering of that deep engagement of spirit, the discovery of its rhythm . . . known, by creator or appreciator, only by experiencing it, by submitting to its characteristic rhythm . . . the image of a dance on the high wire over an abyss . . . as it were, a myth of order, or fulfillment, an affirmation that our being may move in its totality toward meaning . . . the flowing vibration of the soul, the abstraction of experience by imagination.[47]

We may well wonder whether Warren's calling this procession of rhetoric "knowledge" makes it so. Or, if we agree that it is knowledge, we may be tempted to analyze it, to ask how it is accessible through experience, whether it is transferable identically from one person to another, and what makes it "knowledge" when it is so evidently unlike other kinds of knowledge. Warren would no doubt reply that since this "knowledge" is not a product of that part of man which yields "definitions and certainties," such questions are inappropriate. He might even find us guilty of that same "innocent boneheadedness" which he reports Louis Armstrong accused against those who failed to comprehend his musical meanings: "There's some folks that if they don't know, you can't tell 'em."[48] Despite the problems attendant to defining "knowledge of form" accurately, we may even agree with Warren that for all the merit of its exactitude, scientific knowledge has the defect of a narrow and limited range. Certainly all that we know about the world is not directly a product of mental conception. There is a kind of knowing activity which is beyond the purely mechanical operations of logic and reason, which these operations, because they are enclosing and constraining, in fact can never reach. It is a knowing which is creative and differentiating, and which serves to distinguish man not just from the animals, which in Warren's view we need have little concern about, but from the by far greater danger in modern times of confusion between man and his machines. Man does not exist to be schematized; he is in the world, Warren explains, "not as a billiard ball placed on a table, not even as a ship on the ocean with location determinable by latitude and longitude."

> He is, rather, in the world with continual and intimate interpenetration, an inevitable osmosis of being, which in the end does not deny, but affirms, his identity. It affirms it, for out of a progressive understanding

> of this interpenetration, this texture of relations, man creates new perspectives, discovers new values--that is, a new self--and so the identity is a continually emerging, an unfolding, a self-affirming and, we hope, a self-corrective creation.[49]

The culmination of Warren's fictional moral evolution occurs in Meet Me in the Green Glen. Even more deliberately than its prototypes, The Cave, Wilderness, and Flood, it is a journey into man's interior where great awakenings and discoveries take place. At the very outset of the novel, Angelo Passetto's eyes follow the road he is traveling to where it goes, significantly, "into the darkening woods." He thinks about himself in relation to the road: "He thought how, if a man's life stretched out like that ahead of him, there was nothing to do but go on."

> That thought hung in his mind, with a slow, dawning, glowing surprise. He had never before had a thought like that--about the way life was.[50]

It is the novel's first awakening, to be followed midway through by Cassie Spottwood's "I feel I just got born,"[51] to Cy Grinder's anguished realization about his wife on the novel's last page: "He wondered what she had ever thought, what she had ever felt. He realized, slowly, that never, in all the years, had he wondered about that."[52] What each of these characters is being initiated into is Warren's "knowledge." Contrasted against these discoveries is the dreary, mechanical round of their existence--existence lived, as it were, without the emotional side of man's nature. There is Cassie's ritual feeding and caring for her invalid husband, the rote formality of courtroom law, and the stifled lives of Murray Guilfort, Leroy Lancaster, and virtually every other character in the novel to each of whom the discovery of the interior realm, when it comes, is the cause of overwhelming amazement. If their discoveries appear

ironic, due to the inordinately long time it takes for them to occur in the characters' lives and the total surprise registered when they finally do occur, the irony is assuredly intentional, for in a sense the narratives of this and Warren's other recent novels are the fictional counterparts to his essayistic indictment of the modern world. Only the novels are more compelling and moving than the essays in their presentation of the view that man has so lost his wholeness of being, has so forgotten his capacity for love and beauty, that life for these characters has become normatively devoid of feeling. The novelist's role in such a world must be consciously "therapeutic,"[53] as Warren describes it in Democracy and Poetry, to offer a "corrosive criticism"[54] against our atrophied way of life and to restore to man felt perspectives of which by now he is no longer even aware.

A society like that in Meet Me in the Green Glen which scarcely recognizes the value of love can only "wonder what that crazy Spottwood woman had got out of life that you never got."[55] What she got was "a whole new kind of truth,"[56] as Cy Grinder sarcastically tells Murray Guilfort, who goes after many years to visit Cassie at the mental institution where, with further irony, a demented society has confined her. Cassie's thoughts are all undeviatingly on Angelo, on how he had called her "piccola mia" and made her feel beautiful and how she too "made him happy, for oh, I loved him--"[57] Murray cannot comprehend the "luminous joy" on her face, "her face calm and pure, not looking at him, but into distance, like a lamp in the darkening room."[58] Like everyone else, he thinks her mad and flees from her light, only to confront, a page later, his own knowledge of the "brilliance of the world" which came "flying into the enormous, wounded, bleeding eye that was his brain."[59] In this society Warren creates an inversion of sanity and madness, or merely reproduces what he has finally come

to see in his fiction as the real condition of the modern world. And out of it he also produces something rare in his fiction: a character of truly heroic stature in Cassie Spottwood, who through her love defies, quite literally, the mental imbalance (the excess of scientific reason) of mankind.

Decades before the publication of Meet Me in the Green Glen, Warren had received from his publisher a rather adverse review of All the King's Men. Joseph Blotner reports in his biography of William Faulkner how Faulkner had liked the Cass Mastern episode, which he felt should have been expanded into the substance of the entire novel, but had disapproved of the remainder.

> The rest of it I would throw away. The Starke (sic) thing is good solid sound writing but for my money Starke and the rest of them are second rate. . . . I didn't mind neither loving him nor hating him, but I did object to not being moved to pity. As I read him, he wanted neither power for the sake of his pride nor revenge for the sake of his vanity; he wanted neither to purify the earth by obliterating some of the population from it nor did he aim to give every hillbilly and redneck a pair of shoes. He was neither big enough nor bad enough.[60]

Warren was not the only novelist against whom Faulkner directed such disparaging remarks, and in fact it was usual for Faulkner to employ a standard of daring and experimentation (his scale of a writer's "splendid failure to do the impossible"[61]) when critically appraising any author he was asked about. In fairness to Faulkner, his was the same kind of criticism other critics had also levelled against Warren's work, and especially his heroes, like Jack Burden, who seemed to many readers unheroic.[62] Yet in Cassie Spottwood, Warren created a character of whom even Faulkner would have approved, not merely because she is daring and experimental, but

also because she is reminiscent of several of his own morally triumphant heroines, Dilsey and especially the Nancy Mannigoe of Requiem for a Nun. Indeed if we seek elsewhere in contemporary literature for a parallel to Warren's morality of the heart, we find it nowhere more strikingly than in Faulkner. Ethically and even aesthetically Warren's fiction has progressively moved toward alinement with Faulkner's, and while there are unquestionably important and instructive differences between them, the similarities are intriguing and also noteworthy, and help to illuminate, along with the differences, Warren's later moral position.

More than one critic has forfeited the task of systematically defining Faulkner's moral views, agreeing with Irving Howe that "Faulkner's insights into human conduct finally evade the grasp of formula."[63] His public expressions of his moral views, in classroom sessions, interviews and formal talks, do lack consistency, are contradictory, and furthermore, much like Warren's "knowledge of form," cannot sustain even casual analysis. Unlike Warren, Faulkner made no serious attempt to justify his views intellectually. At West Point he candidly confessed his lack of education and declared his categorical reliance upon heart rather than mind.

> I don't have enough education. I don't know anything about ideas to write an essay. Like all uneducated people I have a certain distrust of ideas. I think that, if I had to depend on something, I would depend on what my heart tells me, not on what my mind tells me, because I have no confidence in my brain.[64]

In fact, Faulkner was not at all unread, or even poorly educated. He admitted to being influenced by Balzac, Shakespeare, Flaubert, Proust, and "by Bergson, obviously,"[65] and his dependence upon the heart must have been as much a product of the romantic ambience of his bookshelves as any alleged ineptitude in shaping ideas. The

truth would seem to be that Faulkner preferred belief to reasoned argument, instinct to idea, and feeling to abstract formula, and the elusiveness of his moral views is accountable in terms of the elusiveness of these preferences.

He spoke often of "truth," though what he meant by it is no more in the realm of "definitions and certainties" than Warren's "knowledge of form." Sounding very much like Warren in "Knowledge and the Image of Man" making his distinctions concerning "knowledge by report" and "knowledge by symptom," Faulkner told interviewer Jean Stein that

> If the writer concentrates on what he does need to be interested in, which is the truth and the human heart, he won't have much time left for anything else, such as ideas and facts like the shape of noses or blood relationships, since in my opinion ideas and facts have very little in common with truth.[66]

He repeatedly insisted that he, and even all other writers, wrote about a single truth ("All artists, all writers, deal in the same truth."[67]), and on at least one occasion he explained what he meant by truth in highly moral terms:

> . . . truth to me means what you know to be right and just, truth is that thing, the violation of which makes you writhe at night when you try to go to sleep, in shame for something you've done that you know you shouldn't have done. That to me is truth, not fact. Fact is not too important and can be altered by law, by circumstance, by too many qualities, economics, temperature, but truth is the constant thing, it's what man knows is right and that when he violates it, it troubles him.[68]

Again very much like Warren, who conceived the truth of the heart not as something subjectively peculiar to individuals but available to all men because it, too, like ideas and facts, is knowable, Faulkner also insisted upon truth as universally accessible. To Faulkner, however, the universality of truth was simply self-evident, and needed no deliberation or transformation of it into "knowledge" to make it so. "I mean by truth," Faulkner stated tautologically, "the things that are true to all people, which are love, friendship, courage, fear, greed . . . the primary basic truths which everyone recognizes."[69] And at West Point shortly before his death, Faulkner described as the primary job of any writer to convey the

> universal mutual experience, the anguishes and troubles and griefs of the human heart, which is universal, without regard to race or time or condition. . . . the writer is simply trying to tell the story of the human heart in conflict with itself, or with others, or with environment in a moving way.[70]

Despite his occasional moral interpretation of truth and his universalization of it, however, Faulkner did not regard his truth, as Warren intends his morality of the heart to be regarded, as a standard for moral judgment or a guide to moral meaning. To Faulkner truth meant, above all, artful reproduction of the reality of life and human emotion, and not a criterion of moral behavior. Warren has always seen the role of the artist as therapeutic, and the purpose of art as a corrective to a society gone awry in its worship of abstraction, but Faulkner was quite insistent upon the artist's amorality. Faulkner declared that the writer is "not following any right nor duty to improve you."[71] The artist should not be a moralist, for "when he gets involved with right and duty, he's on the verge of becoming a propagandist, and he stops being

an artist then."[72] The function of literature to Faulkner was not to teach a lesson: "The lesson is coincidental, even accidental."[73] The literary artist's goal is not "to preach a sermon,"[74] but "to arrest motion, which is life."[75] Following Bergson, Faulkner equated life with "motion," and more often than he construed truth morally, he construed life as devoid of moral meaning.

> Life is not interested in good and evil. . . . Since people exist only in life, they must devote their time simply to being alive. Life is motion, and motion is concerned with what makes man move--which is ambition, power, pleasure. What time a man can devote to morality, he must take by force from the motion of which he is a part.[76]

In these terms the novelist is a morally neutral presenter of life's morally neutral movement. He may attempt to capture life's activity, like Chaucer omnisciently describing the procession of variegated pilgrims to Canterbury, but it is not directly his function to judge life's procession morally, to determine whether his characters' actions are good or evil. If any such judgment is possible, it is only that vitality, being life, is good, and stasis anathema. Intermediate moral discriminations about the quality of life are simply not possible; if they are made, they are completely the responsibility of the reader, the writer to Faulkner having no part in them: "I think that any book should have on the first page, 'The author declines to accept responsibility for the behavior or actions or speeches of any of these characters, because he is simply trying to tell you a story.'"[77]

One book, of course, has already famously posted such a notice, Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, although in Twain's case, according to Warren, the disclaimer was based upon the author's seeing all life finally as illusion. Warren comments

about Twain that "If nothing is real, there is no guilt. And there are no problems of politics, society, justice, or history."[78] Conversely, in Faulkner's case, we might say that if everything is real, there is equally no guilt, for if all characters are justified by their existence alone, there is no basis for judging them for they are all morally the same and equally morally neutral. "The first thing that a writer has is compassion for all his characters," Faulkner stated at West Point.

> He himself does not feel that he has the power to judge, and these characters, these evils are there. In the story he's telling, it seems to him necessary and good and the best way to tell his story to use this. He doesn't advocate it, he's not condemning it, it's there, and in his clumsy way the first thing he must do is to love all mankind, even when he hates individual ones. Some of the characters I've created, I hate very much, but it's not for me to judge them, to condemn them; they are there, they are part of the scene that we all live in.[79]

We might say further that whether one views humanity with total compassion or, as with Twain, totally as "muck,"[80] the net outcome, of there being "no problems of politics, society, justice or history," seems much the same.

This moral assessment of Faulkner is not intended to be conclusive, and indeed there is more than sufficient evidence in the novels of both Faulkner and Twain to disclaim their disclaimers and to discredit them as amoralists. But perhaps this assessment does successfully isolate an important problem inherent in the moral views of Faulkner and no less in the moral views of the later Warren insofar as they approximate Faulkner's, and that is the problem of the communication of moral value. Indeed, Warren's presentation of his morality of the heart is subject to the same difficulties of

intelligibility as Faulkner's truth, and although it has not been his intention, Warren's later moral position, as offered in Meet Me in the Green Glen particularly, is nearly as undiscriminating in judging the quality of man's emotional self as anything we may find in Faulkner. The moral argument in his last novel is schismatic and deficient in qualification: there are, it says, most individuals who live mechanically, and some individuals who have discovered life's desirable other side, which is all feeling and resistant, when it is "known," to analysis by reason. Warren presents us with a compendium of his morality of the heart solution in the novel's closing chapter, but ironically it is also almost unwittingly a paradigm of his moral problem. Cassie has been confined by society in a mental institution for years, and apparently all the efforts of mental analysis, whose function it is to dissect emotion into its constituent parts for the patient to determine qualitatively what should be retained and what discarded, have had no effect upon her. Her feeling is impervious to reason, and presumably to Warren, admirably so. Much like Faulkner's "nigger-dopefiend-whore,"[81] Nancy Mannigoe, who appeals to an authority far beyond man-made law, Cassie's teleological suspension of legality for the sake of her love for Angelo places her above mankind's capacities to understand and judge. Cassie has committed adultery and murder, but is vindicated because the context in which these acts occur, like Nancy's context, justifies her beyond all reason. We may agree that she is a moral heroine, but whether we may hope to know, to follow her moral lead, to reproduce the standard she and Nancy appeal to, and how this standard shall ever make possible the moral regeneration of society, justifying violence for the sake of a higher good as it does, are questions which neither Warren nor Faulkner sufficiently and satisfactorily answer in their fiction.

Nor has any writer, philosophical or otherwise, ever fully and finally resolved man's moral dilemma, though few have tried quite as deliberately and as hard as Warren. In the process he has spared himself few illusions concerning the terms and dimensions of the dilemma--his final fiction, perhaps, being his only real concession to settling upon a solution despite serious shortcomings of which, at least in his essays, he seems well enough aware. Characteristically he has acknowledged the existence of man's mutually preclusive halves and not sought an easy remedy in effecting a unity between them. If anything, he has made the terms of reconciliation more difficult by presenting man's duality as warring, by establishing powerful oppositions which no army even of all the king's men could hope to put back together again. And in proposing solutions to the dilemma he has presented in its most severe terms he has generally sought to respect both halves of man's nature. If he has himself become one-sided, biased in favor of emotion in his later fiction, it has not been without an attempt, albeit unsatisfactory, to bestow cognitive status upon his internal morality, to carry over from the head the capacity of knowing to the heart. He has struggled to produce for man ways to heal his divisiveness, and has never lost hope, in all his fiction, in full recognition of man's despair, that an ultimate solution is possible. We are reminded of his epigraph to <u>All the King's Men</u> derived from Dante's <u>Purgatorio</u>: "By curse of theirs man is not so lost that eternal love may not return, so long as hope retaineth aught of green."[82] And from his essay on Conrad, we have his exhortation to strengthen and sustain us in our own dark watch for reconciliation:

> But nothing is to be hoped for, even in the most modest way, if men lose the vision of the time of concord, when "the light breaks on our black sky at last." That Platonic vision is what makes life possible in its ruck and confusion.[83]

NOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1]Robert Penn Warren, "'The Great Mirage': Conrad and Nostromo," Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 54.

[2]"Ernest Hemingway," Selected Essays, p. 88.

[3]Robert Penn Warren, "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, LIX (1955), p. 182.

[4]Preface to Selected Essays, p. xi.

[5]Ralph Ellison and Eugene Walter, "The Art of Fiction, XVIII: Robert Penn Warren," Paris Review, IX (Spring-Summer, 1957), pp. 115-16.

[6]Robert Penn Warren, Democracy and Poetry (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 92-93.

[7]Ibid., p. 49.

[8]Warren attributes the expression to Hannah Arendt in Democracy and Poetry, p. 50.

[9]"A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading," Selected Essays, p. 272.

[10]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 187.

[11]See Chapter III, especially pp. 130-31.

[12]"Ernest Hemingway," Selected Essays, pp. 89-90.

[13]"William Faulkner," Selected Essays, pp. 65-66.

[14]Democracy and Poetry, p. 84.

[15]"Ernest Hemingway," Selected Essays, p. 88.

[16]"William Faulkner," Selected Essays, pp. 66-67.

[17]"Ernest Hemingway," Selected Essays, p. 102.

[18]"William Faulkner," Selected Essays, p. 66.

[19]This quotation occurs in the context of Warren's discussion of Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths in Democracy and Poetry. Warren refers to the American pursuit of illusions as "the 'tragedy' of America, a land of fictive values seized, or yearned after, by fictive selves." p. 27.

[20]Ibid., p. 25.

[21]Ibid., p. 30.

[22]See the discussion of Perse Munn's downfall because of his worship of the "idea" in Chapter III, p. 126-27.

[23]Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. 442.

[24]Ibid., pp. 445-46.

[25]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 184.

[26]Ibid., p. 187.

[27]Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider (New York: Berkley Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 292-93.

[28]Robert Penn Warren, Meet Me in the Green Glen (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 273.

[29]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," pp. 191-92.

[30]Ibid., p. 192.

[31]Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 352.

[32]All the King's Men, p. 458.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

[36]"A Poem of Pure Imagination," p. 253.

[37]Ibid., p. 252.

[38]All the King's Men, p. 417.

[39]Robert Penn Warren, Flood (New York: The New American Library, 1965), p. 368.

[40]Robert Penn Warren, Wilderness (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 310.

[41]Democracy and Poetry, p. 92.

[42]Ibid., p. 47.

[43]Ibid., p. 92.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

[46]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 191.

[47]Ibid., pp. 191-92.

[48]Introduction to All the King's Men, p. v.

[49]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 186.

[50]Meet Me in the Green Glen, p. 11.

[51]Ibid., p. 177.

[52]Ibid., p. 376.

[53]Democracy and Poetry, p. 42.

[54]Ibid., p. 3.

[55]Meet Me in the Green Glen, p. 345.

[56]Ibid., p. 355.

[57]Ibid., pp. 358-59.

[58]Ibid., p. 360.

[59]Ibid., p. 361.

[60]Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 1214. Despite physical proximity over the years, these two leading American novelists met only once, at a New York restaurant in 1952 at the instigation of a mutual publishing friend, Albert Erskine. Faulkner, after some initial reticence not untypical of him when meeting new personalities, began discussing the differences between the fact of a thing and the truth of a thing--a theme important to the fiction of both writers--and paid Warren the indirect compliment of recounting details from several of his works (an early short story Warren had printed in The American Caravan and a section from At Heaven's Gate) to illustrate his arguments. There is reason to doubt whether Faulkner really intended any compliment, however, since he oddly did not acknowledge to Warren at their dinner meeting that he knew Warren had authored these works, and subsequently, at the 1955 Nagano interviews, Faulkner denied having read anything of Warren's but All the King's Men, and publicly declared that "I would have kept that (Cass Mastern) story and thrown the rest of the book away." See Faulkner at Nagano, ed. Robert A. Jelliffe (Tokyo: Kenkyusha Ltd., 1956), pp. 41-42. A decade earlier, in 1945, Faulkner had given privately his identical but amplified version of the Nagano opinion of All the King's Men to Warren's publisher, Harcourt, Brace.

[61]Jean Stein, "William Faulkner: An Interview," in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 68. According to this standard, Faulkner ranked Thomas Wolfe first and himself second. By Warren's critical standards, Thomas Wolfe's novels are excessively egocentric: "his work illustrates once more the limitations, perhaps the necessary limitations, of an attempt to exploit directly and naively the personal experience and the self-defined personality in art." From "A Note on the Hamlet of Thomas Wolfe," Selected Essays, p. 183. Warren's reaction to Faulkner was mostly full of praise. In 1946 he published in The New Republic his landmark essay on Faulkner, which probably did more to elevate Faulkner's critical reputation and to place him in a more appropriate critical perspective than any previous, and perhaps even subsequent, scholarly writing. "Here is a novelist," Warren wrote, "who, in mass of work, in scope of material, in range of effect, in reportorial accuracy and symbolic subtlety, in philosophical weight can be put beside the masters of our own past literature." Warren chastised critics for their near silence about Faulkner, or worse, for the misrepresentation of those "whose reading has been hasty, whose analysis unscholarly and whose judgments superficial," resulting in a

portrayal of Faulkner as "a combination of Thomas Nelson Page, a fascist and a psychopath, gnawing his nails . . . usually accompanied by a grudging remark about genius." Intended as a review of Malcolm Cowley's The Portable Faulkner, and also no doubt as a defense of Faulkner at a time when his literature was unread and mostly out of print in America, Warren's essay is devoid of negative comment about Faulkner. Curiously, in a revision of this essay Warren prepared for a collection of his own essays in 1950 (Selected Essays), certain notable additions and deletions give the impression that Warren's esteem for his literary peer had diminished during the four years intervening between the two versions. In the opening paragraph of the 1950 version, Warren points to "grave defects in Faulkner's work. Sometimes the tragic intensity becomes mere sensationalism, the technical virtuosity mere complication, the philosophical weight mere confusion of mind." And he adds that "Faulkner is a very uneven writer." Deleted almost wholesale is the resounding praise which characterized especially the conclusion of the earlier version.

[62]See Chapter I, p. 58.

[63]Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 145.

[64]Joseph L. Fant, III and Robert Ashley, eds., Faulkner at West Point (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 121-22.

[65]James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate, eds., Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962 (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 72.

[66]Ibid., p. 252.

[67]Nagano, p. 35.

[68]Ibid., p. 101.

[69]Lion in the Garden, pp. 202-03.

[70]West Point, pp. 50-51.

[71]Ibid., p. 57.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., p. 82.

[74]Ibid., p. 51.

[75]Three Decades of Criticism, p. 80. In an interview with Löic Bouvard (Lion in the Garden, p. 70), Faulkner spoke about the correlation of several of his own views with those of Bergson: "'Naturally,' he continued, 'I'm not talking about a personified or a mechanical God, but a God who is the most complete expression of mankind, a God who rests both in eternity and in the now.' When I asked if he were thinking of the God of Bergson, he said, 'Yes, a deity very close to Bergson's. Listen, neither God nor morality can be destroyed.' I repeated this remark to myself, for he had said it with great emphasis. Since we had brought up Bergson, I next asked Faulkner to explain his conception of time. 'There isn't any time,' he replied. 'In fact I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity.'"

[76]Three Decades of Criticism, p. 80.

[77]West Point, p. 118.

[78]Democracy and Poetry, p. 22.

[79]West Point, pp. 82-83.

[80]See Warren's discussion of Twain, Democracy and Poetry, p. 21.

[81]William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun (New York: Signet Books, 1961).

[82]From La Divina Commedia, Purgatorio, III, "Mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde."

[83]"'The Great Mirage': Conrad and Nostromo," p. 54.

CONCLUSION

With little exception, the ends of art and philosophy are quite the same in that both strive to interpret experience; hence the fascination of Warren and other literary artists with philosophy, and the participation of philosophers, particularly the existentialists, in mediums of literary art. But the means practiced--the kinds of understanding produced by art and philosophy in reaching their interpretations--are distinctive. The demands of rationality, logicalness and consistency of argument imposed upon the philosopher are not incumbent upon the poet or novelist, the communication of whose understanding of life may depend largely upon his readers' abilities to infer meaning, and whose only intended meaning may be his ultimately unanalyzable evocation of character, scene and incident. The artist's transmutation of reality through his creative imagination is a deterrent to the methods of the philosopher, even the speculative philosopher, whose interpretation of experience, though it may be as far removed from common reality as the wildest imaginings of the artist, still must be coherently and credibly argued. Art and philosophy do not necessarily preclude each other; they may even be mutually enhancing in their pursuit of a common end. But their methods are inherently conflicting, and any writer who undertakes to act the roles of both philosopher and artist in a single work accepts an intricate and onerous challenge.

For Robert Penn Warren there is a special difficulty in his accepting this challenge, for he not merely tries to combine art and philosophy, but also attempts to produce a systematic philosophy in an art which he aspires to make organic in its fusing of message and story. The problem is not simply that Warren is philosophical, which is really no insurmountable problem for the narrator intent mostly upon his art and secondarily upon the methods of philosophy,

which such an artist can practice partially without damage to the organic and imaginative qualities of his work. No more, we can say, is being literary impossible for the philosopher, as long as the philosopher does not allow his imagination to interfere with the rational and orderly development of his ideas. But Warren wants to have both his philosophy (and not merely philosophizing or being philosophical) and his art (not just artistry, but an art fully integrated in idea and narration of incident) in his fiction, with the predictable consequences that he cannot and does not have both simultaneously, and that when he does have one it is with detriment to his conception of the other.

It is, however, surely not from ignorance of the difficulty of undertaking the feat of combining art and philosophy in his fiction that Warren has so labored, for the conflict between the two is emphatically an aspect of the central philosophical problem of dualism which he has chosen to investigate and solve. Upon the novels themselves is laid the contest of opposing factions, philosophy and art vying for supremacy, with their author seeking to reconcile and harmonize them as he also seeks to treat the oppositions of dualisms within the novels. Itself a dimension of the central philosophical problem, the literature thus reflects outwardly the internal dualisms, and radiates back to them its own configuration of the problem. We may critically reprimand Warren for lapses in his art and philosophy, but we may also consider that he has not hesitated to use even his fiction itself as a kind of experiment for resolving certain of the disparities arising from dualism, and so critically praise him for his intentions though we fault his execution. His aim has been the impossible one of uniting the contrary halves of man's brokenness, and, like the king in the nursery rhyme, he has used every possible means to put back together again what has fallen. In finally assessing Warren's

achievement, we may appropriately use Faulkner's critical standard of a writer's "splendid failure to do the impossible," and rank Warren very highly by it.

Warren's multiple-level treatment of dualism, within his fiction and the fiction itself serving as a dimension of the problem, is indicative of how he sees dualism generally. For him it is pervasive. He does not confine it--or, it does not confine itself for him--to a single, predominant set of counters, as it is confined, for example, in Henry James' devotion to contrasts between America and Europe, in Hawthorne's obsession with good and evil, and in Hemingway's preoccupation with heroic idealism versus materialism. There are certain dichotomies in Warren's novels which do receive greater attention than others, such as abstractionism/mechanism, love/law and angelicism/animalism, but Warren's impulse is to discover, describe and harmonize opposing doubles comprised of any terms. The abundance of Warren's dualisms suggests that he is not concerned exclusively with settling the issues involved in the conflicts he raises--conflicts which are very real in their issues and which he treats seriously--but more, in his perceiving doubles virtually everywhere, it is apparent that he is concerned with the problem of dualism as dualism, in an abstract, more purely philosophical sense than is true of James, Hawthorne, Hemingway, or the many writers who engage conflicting pairs as the substance of their fiction. Their approach is to deal with the terms of the crises they create, which is Warren's approach too. But it is also his purpose to deal with the problem behind the problems--dualism itself--and this, along with his concerns for the individual issues of his multiple dualisms, has contributed to making his fiction uniquely complex and, sometimes, as fragmented as the world he describes philosophically.

His fiction is extraordinarily complex when we consider that he does not compartmentalize his dualisms, boxing his thoughts about each and presenting them, discretely labeled, as ideational packages. He does attempt to classify and present his ideas coherently, to an extent, in his essays, which are thus indispensable aids to the study of his fiction. And in a somewhat more piecemeal, less organized fashion he also tries to present his ideas directly in his fiction, with liabilities to his art. But the obvious fact is that Warren is a novelist as well as a philosopher, and if, as has been a major emphasis of this study, his philosophy has been influential in shaping (or more accurately, misshaping) his art, it is no less true that his art has impacted (also negatively) upon his philosophy. If Warren simply presented his philosophical views in a straightforward manner, with no attempt to fictionalize them, to filter them through his art, then we might consider him solely a philosopher and judge him satisfactorily by rational and empirical criteria. To the extent that we can discern philosophy in his fiction we can, in fact, do this. But his views are not altogether transmitted as ideas; his views are also charged with his imagination, and, for the sake of his art (though not for his philosophy), they are better when they are so charged, since his fiction then more nearly approximates his organic ideal. We cannot, therefore, do Warren justice critically by assessing his philosophical views entirely by standards which we would appropriately apply to philosophy; these standards of logicality and verifiability have, at best, only limited relevance to ideas conceived and rendered imaginatively. Our critical task with Warren, then, must be not merely to ascertain what his views are and what they mean, but, just as important for his novelist half, to enter into the imaginative life he has given them and experience, as John Ciardi might say, how they are and how they mean. Because of his methods of handling ideas, Warren's philosophical views are

far more locatable in and separable from his fiction than those of many other novelists, but because his ideas also interact with his art, we shall be disappointed if we expect from Warren the clarity, coherency and consistency of views we rightfully demand from the philosopher whose business is not also the writing of fiction.

To the extent that we can extract his philosophical views from his fiction and essays and present them schematically, they are, in summation, these. Ontologically, Warren sees being in a condition of war, the opposing camps armed on one side with conceptual, abstract tactics, and on the other with material, sensual apparatus. The world is terribly divided between those who would reduce all experience to ideas and those who would regard it as only mechanical and unthinking. In some primal state, being was unified. But this condition of unity was innocent and its peace was bound, inevitably, to be broken. The result has been excesses of idea and fact struggling to assert themselves and usurp each other, the respective sides ironically proclaiming universal righteousness and, by doing so, ever widening the split.

In Warren's fiction this war is waged on a number of overlapping fields of battle: within each man as an indecisiveness as to which internal extreme, idea or sensation, he should rely upon; between each man and his external world as a crisis between his idea of himself (his self-image) and the outward, usually violent facts of his behavior which belie his self-image; and among men as the conflict between those who have alined themselves with abstractionism and those who have forfeited idea for attention to materialism as their defensive stance against the primal break.

Impelled by his will to appease his warlike distress and to return to his unhappily lost condition of oneness again, man grasps at any solution, including the easy answer of domination by one side or the other. The unity of oppositions does not occur to the unaided

will, which readily accepts the facsimiles of wholeness offered by idea and by fact. Both sides claim to have solved man's dilemma, although inspection of their solutions reveals that the tempting unities they offer are achieved only by suppressing their oppositions. The false oneness of idea recommends itself by trying to envelop the contingencies of experience with abstract strategems. Idea is all, and if individual facts do not happen to coincide with or support the idea, the realm of idea has in its arsenal reason and logic, which can dismiss diverging facts as mere exceptions to the rule, or by cunning argument squeeze them into the abstract mold they don't fit. Against this onslaught by idea, fact can offer only the mute testimony of its contradictions, since by its nature fact is not equipped with the conceptual apparatus of idea. But this mute testimony of contradiction, if sufficient in quantity, can overwhelm idea. At its extreme, fact destroys idea by evidencing that there are no ideas which can explain experience, that we are therefore free from abstract strictures and can enjoy our appetites mindlessly, and that the universe is unpurposeful impulse and event.

For Warren the end of warring dualisms may be destruction, the mutual cancellation of oppositions. Or, if mediation between the extremes is permitted to occur, a precarious, side-by-side unity, which presupposes the rights of each side to exist separately, may be achieved. Warren suggests monitors of compassion and order appropriate for restraining the excesses of the respective sides. Through love, the tendency of fact to break down experience into mere sensation and unthinking particularities can be qualified, and through law the tendency of idea to swallow up all contingency by abstractionism can be governed.

Mediation is possible through an epistemological tool man has at his disposal: Warren's "knowledge." Through its synthetic function, this knowledge can direct the urge of blind, unaided will to

a restoration of both parts of being. To Warren, the kind of knowledge which so directs the will cannot consist of the disparities of idea and fact, for each of these seeks unity only by negating the rights of its opposition. With due recognition of the proprieties of knowledge by idea and knowledge by fact ("by report") to supply man with abstract and empirical comprehensions, these knowledges tend to enclose or diffuse, generalize or particularize, and do not operate toward the wholeness and harmony of vision necessary for true reunification to occur. The kind of knowledge which Warren has in mind, therefore, is not of idea or fact, but of what he calls "form." It is a unique, non-analytic agency which creates a new being out of discordant halves by dialectically interceding between them. Fact cannot verify or contradict it, and reason cannot fully explain it, but Warren asserts that it is as valid as any knowledge by fact or idea. Knowledge of form is beyond their apprehensions by being dynamic and not reducible to formula or example.

In developing his aesthetic views, Warren equates this new knowledge with art, and specifically with literature--with what literature does or can do for man. Literature seeks to make man aware of unified perspectives which he previously did not know or could not know while atrophied by the persuasion of idea or fact. The most desirable way for literature to convey wholeness and harmony of vision is through its synthetic ability to unite the disparities of idea and fact. Literature should never present its message through the "poverty of statement," by idea alone. And a narrative without implicit meaning conveys no knowledge except that of particular facts. Knowledge of form cannot, then, communicate its meaning by idea or fact, but rather by form itself, by the organic melding of idea and fact. The novelist achieves this organicism by implication and indirection, by utilizing style to convey an aura of meaning, by adapting the universal significances of myth to modern

circumstances, and by alluding to rather than elaborating upon previously developed stocks of ideas. The artist, finally, can do what the philosopher cannot, for the philosopher is limited by his resources of reason and logic. The artist, however, is not constrained by conventional modes of knowledge, and he alone can create a total fusion of disparities to serve as a model for the fragmented world.

Through much of his career Warren has believed in a mediational, Aristotelian morality. He has steadfastly denounced the would-be "Angels-of-light" who seek through idea to elevate man beyond his physical nature, as he has also condemned man's descents from his rational nature into animalism. Of the two extremes, far greater danger, especially in modern times, derives from the first, since by means of it power states are erected which subserve men as cyphers to political ideologies, and also men become the victims of the abstractions of science. Men submit to hierarchic master/slave roles willingly enough, since the strong motivation underlying either role is man's longing to reestablish even the semblance of deity in this God-abandoned world. But Warren maintains that the loss of sensation and feeling as a result of systematization by idea deprives man of part of his very being, his physical nature. The alternative moral solution by fact is not much better. It releases man from the restraints of idea, but in doing so bereaves him of uniform judgmental criteria and offers no guidance at all, justifying sensation for the sake of sensation and the liberty of anyone's doing anything no matter how much the thing may violate the canons of reason. The one-answer approach to solving man's moral dilemma must be avoided, Warren believes, for a morality based dominantly upon either side of man's divided nature invariably makes him less than what he fully is. The moral solution

which Warren recommends to preserve man's complete humanity has thus been his double standard, to accommodate both sides, of love and law.

Warren intends that his synthesizing knowledge should operate in the realm of ethics somewhat as it does in aesthetics. Its method should be identical; knowledge should mediate between and balance and harmonize the diverse parts of man's moral being. But the moral unity achieved thereby is a "precarious" unity which "presupposes separateness," and so is unlike the aesthetic unity attainable by the artist, who ideally creates a whole whose composite parts are indistinguishable. Moral disaster befalls man when he plays God, and it is essential ethically that men maintain the individual integrity of each half of their divided natures. But the separate maintenance of parts is no asset to the artist, whose unity must not be precarious, but fully integrated and organic.

We may account in a variety of ways for the change of emphasis which began to occur in Warren's moral views midway through his career, and no doubt there was a complex of contributing factors. The change may be described as a gradual shift from a mediational to a hierarchical emphasis, and may have been caused by the encroachment of his aesthetic upon his moral views, by the necessity of compromising his moral philosophy if he were to have a successful art, and by his dissatisfaction with a bilateral ethical approach and his very human wish to achieve an ultimate, unequivocal solution to morality. As supplied in Chapter IV, there is evidence to accommodate all of these possibilities.

Warren's "knowledge of form" has an ascendent, Platonic cast which, while it does not oppose his mediatory ethics as long as it performs its assigned function of playing dialectically between extremes, nevertheless has higher ambitions than merely policing warring factions. In art, which for Warren is knowledge of form,

it seeks to reach beyond contrarieties to total encompassment and resolution. Applied to morality it may, unchecked, aspire to art's synthesis, but then morality also inherits the same limits upon interpretation and standardization as art. In art these limits, while frustrating, also constitute part of the appeal, for we go to art either not at all for or not just for instruction, but also, following Sir Philip Sidney's formula, for delight. But in the realm of morality these limits present very serious problems for a world needful of cognitive comprehensions of good and evil, and for whom the inaccessibility of "form" to its rational and empirical grasps may be a matter neither of instruction nor delight.

In a sense Warren's movement away from a mediational morality toward one which is synthetic and hierarchic was almost necessitated by the perfection he sought for his art. The mediational view, which insists upon the separate maintenance of idea and fact, simply does not lend itself well to an organic art, and, in Warren's case, seems to have been very much responsible for the breaking up of his early fiction into ideational and factual parts. It is no coincidence that his moral views began to change their shape as the artistic shape of his fiction also started to move closer toward his ideal of complete integration. Where in his earlier fiction his art suffered fragmentation due to the upholding of his mediational moral philosophy, in his later fiction his ethical views have been compromised by being made conformable to the organic requirements of his art.

In its fully evolved form in his later fiction, Warren's new ethical position prescribes that although neither idea nor fact alone can satisfactorily supply a basis for morality, there is a single, third term which can. He calls this third term "heart" in his latest novels, and he seems to mean by it something very close or identical to what he means by knowledge of form. "Heart" is not

ideational, but not at all unmeaningful; it is not directly available to sensory perceptions, but not at all unfelt. It is a process melding of the elements of idea and fact, of love and law, and so becomes finally in ethics, like its counterpart in aesthetics, a kind of knowing-feeling.

To try to define it further seems futile, for although knowing is one of its components, it is a knowing bound to feeling, and so is vital and protean, and not a matter of static definition and certainty. Yet Warren suggests, perhaps paradoxically, that once the individual beholds the light of this moral vision, this knowledge of form, he understands that it is absolute, and loses his desire to revert again to his former blindness. In such Platonic terms Warren depicts Cassie Spottwood in his last novel. She has learned the truth of this vision and becomes, in her serene radiance, almost angelic, literally bedazzling the eyes of the less comprehending characters who, slowly twisting their faces toward her truth, begin to envision a new way to reconcile the disparities of their existences and restore their lost unity. We are struck, of course, by the irony that although Cassie is not an abstractionist, she is nevertheless very much like the would-be angels Warren condemned morally in his early fiction in that she too possesses and wields, albeit passively rather than by active force, a single key to the universe.

We are confounded by the further irony that although Cassie has a single-answer solution, neither she nor we are able to say just what her vision of experience is. Though we long and try to do so, it simply does not yield itself to the logical formulations of idea, or as evidence by facts assembled before our senses. Warren suggests that we may hope to experience it--in its ideally-realized pattern in art, and through the balanced rhythms of our lives--and so determine, by empathy rather than categorical definition or verifiability, not what, but how it is and how it means. But then we

can never fully express this truth, other than through art, or through the perfected process of living itself.

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