In the foregoing chapters I analysed Warren's fiction on the basis of the perspectives that converge on his fictional procedures and thematic and enunciating modalities. In discussing a novel, as Forster long ago observed, the story element cannot be ignored although it is not very significant. The other elements like connexity, closure, and character merit attention when we try to reconstruct the thematic complex of the novel. Going a little further, we have to focus attention on the narrative mode. These are self-evident principles in fiction criticism. From a close reading of Warren's novels it is not difficult to notice that his narrative mode may be called the interiorization of experience. The process of interiorization makes the characters' minds transparent. But this inward turn makes the communication with the reader somewhat subtle. In a novel like Night Rider the events and their significance are filtered through the consciousness of Percy Munn. This is in tune with the modern movement in the Anglo-American Literature. As Stephen Spender observes, "It made possible that fusion of the creative and the critical
impulses which were so formidable in the modern movement. It resulted, during the '20's and the '30's, in the view that the truth not only of poetry but also of fiction was poetic: "that Virginia Woolf and not Arnold Bennett understood Mrs. Brown. The famous interior monologue of James Joyce was the method of the image, resulting from the immediate impact of outer event on inner sensibility projected into the consciousness of invented characters." But in structuring the consciousness of his invented characters, Warren seems to have in mind not the Joycean method but the Conradean method. *All the King's Men* is a good example. *At Heaven's Gate* employs the monologue method to make the reader see for himself the predicament of man in Warren's *Waste Land*. *World Enough and Time* is a fusion of the creative and the critical method. While the narrator tells the story of Jeremiah Beaumont, he occasionally quotes from the documents so as to make Jeremiah talk to the reader directly. *Band of Angels* and *A Place to Come To* are first person narratives in which the narrative mode seems to be appropriate to the experience and the feel of the characters. But the variety of narrative modes Warren employs highlight the inwardness of experience. It is his conviction that, "Literature springs from the attempt to inspect

one's own soul rather than from the attempt to cure the souls of others, although it happens that good literature may cure souls, but not because it set out to do that."

The narrative framework which is outlined in the above paragraph embodies within itself the imaginative perspectives like the human frame and the metaphysical frame. Commenting on the significance of *The Gentle Boy* as a precursor of *The Scarlet Letter* Warren says:

In this connection, as an aside, we may guess that in Hawthorne's emotional involvement with the violence of the New England past is some feeling that in that violence there was at least a confronting of reality which was lacking in the doctrines of transcendentalists, Brook Farmers, and Unitarians, and in Emerson, along with the current horde of reformers. If there was violence and cruelty in that older society there was also, in that very fact, a sense of reality and grim meaningfulness, something that paradoxically appealed to the Hawthorne who could not find the 'Warm secret', and who by the same token, could write, in an early journal, of the contemporary world. 'The fight with the world, this struggle of a man among men — the agony of the universal effort to wrench

the means of a living from a host of greedy competitors — all this seems to be like a dream to me.' But the past was not a dream. It had, literally, happened. And blood, for fundamental convictions, had been shed there — and by men who had, as demonstrated by that fact, a sense of 'reality'.

American literature and also in Warren suggests that the Original Sin cannot be easily dismissed, as Warren's comments on Hawthorne suggest. But the Scholarly Attorney in *All the King's Men* says, "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." \(^4\) The import of the citation seems to be that evil is inherent in man, maybe the consequence of ephoria. But his sinful state is not irredeemable. As Warren himself says, "Man eats the fruit of the tree of knowledge and falls. But if he takes another bite he may get at least a sort of redemption. And the precious redemption." \(^5\)

Violent deaths and murders punctuate the novels of Warren. In *Night Rider* Percy Munn kills *Bunk* Trevelyan. Professor Ball kills Turpin and foists the crime on Munn. Munn tries to shoot Tolliver. He himself was shot dead by the soldiers pursuing him. In *At Heaven's Gate* Slim Sarret strangles Sue Murdock. In *All the King's Men*, Adam Stanton kills Willie Stark. In *World Enough and Time* Jeremiah Beaumont murders Colonel Fort. The slave procuring adventures of Hamish Bond in *Band of Angels* demonstrate blood-thirsty lust. In this way

4. *All the King's Men*, p. 462.
examples can be multiplied, but the point is that man's evil 
propensities are too strong to be checked or explained away 
to form the basis of a salvation doctrine. What is noticeable 
is that the theological concepts and their secular 
manifestation are subsumed under the human frame. Given the 
reality and the dream of human condition, the option before 
the self is one of rigorous introspection and sober accommodation. 
These virtues are very well exemplified in Jerry Calhoun and 
in Jack Burden. Jack Burden is the crucial character in 
Warren's fiction and we may say that Jack Burden's 
ostervations on human condition constitute in a way Warren's 
epistemology of the problem of being human. In summing up 
his experience as a participant in and explorer of human 
relationships Jack Burden says:

He had seen his two friends, Willie Stark 
and Adam Stanton live and die. Each had 
killed the other. Each had been the doom 
of the other. As a student of history, Jack 
Burden could see that Adam Stanton whom he 
came to call the man of idea, and Willie 
Stark, whom he came to call the man of 
act, were doomed to destroy each other, 
just as each was doomed to try to use the 
other and to Yearn toward and try to 
become the other, because each was
incomplete with the terrible division of their age. 6

The emphasis in the above citation is on the dichotomy between the idea and the fact. "The terrible division of their age" is the terrible division in the human frame itself. Within the human frame, the Jeffersonian ideal and Lilburn's butchery meet and coexist. It is this life's awful illogic which ought to be the goal for man's pursuit of knowledge. In *World Enough and Time* Jeremiah Beaumont is a good specimen of the man of idea and Wilkie Barron, the man of fact. Towards the end of the novel, Jeremiah confesses that "all the lies and false witnesses against me told truth, but in my anger and betrayal I did not guess, that's all we need: knowledge. That's not redemption. But it's always better than redemption." 7 The self-division about which Jack Burden talks is not only a cultural reality but a contemporary malice. The best way to heal the split and achieve an integrated selfhood is to understand the invaluable significance of the past. Warren admires Hawthorne and Faulkner for making the American past something vital for American life and significantly profound for American

6. All the King's Men, pp. 461-62.
imagination. In assessing the value of their contribution to American literature as a whole he says, "But is the achievement of these American masters different, in the end, from that of all other masters looming behind the past? If literature — and in another mode, history — does anything for us, it stirs up in us a sense of existential yearning. The truth it presents come in the images of experience, and the images tease us out of thought toward truth as experience. The truth we want to come to is the truth of ourselves, of our common humanity, available in the projected self of art. We discover a numinous consciousness and for the first time may see both ourselves in the world and the world in us. This drama of the discovery of the self is timeless." 8

The timeless drama of the discovery of the self which is the thematic core of Warren's fiction runs in terms of dichotomy, polarity, and antinomy. Percy Munn's apparent self-contained attitude and an incoherent apprehension of the significance of an idea makes him a victim not of heroism but of heroics. The characters in At Heaven's Gate appear to be in Dante's limbo for trying to achieve what they want, in various ways. Except Ashby Windham, all the other characters refuse to recognize the past and are always in

search of what they want. The endless want is a kind of lust for possession, which makes the self divest its own moral identity. So each character creates a world of his own in which he or she can pursue his or her wants. Meticulously relating his fabricated past, Slim Sarrett says, "the past is valuable only in so far as one can recognize it as past. Living is metaphorically a temporary art like poetry or music. It's dynamic and consecutive in structure. Nostalgia is a vicious denial of this fact. So is the thirst for immortality. The chord must be resolved." 9

Amantha Starr in Band of Angels, in spite of uttering philosophical propositions like "Who Am I?" and "history lives our life for us," is nostalgic and does not come to terms with her past. Hence he failure to achieve self and moral identity. Warren's early fiction, although it dramatizes the timeless theme (the discovery of the self), is a meticulous documentation of the world, which earns the symbolic status and spread that signify the division in man. Wholeness can be achieved by a rigorous self-scrutiny, which is not easy to practise because of the perennial human situation in which man has to choose between pure and impure, ideal and the factual, self-promotion and altruism,

personal ambition and human welfare — in short, between endless opposites which surround him and sometimes stifle his decision. This does not mean that one should cultivate a negative and cynical attitude to man and his condition. Percy Munn, Jerry Calhoun, Willie Stark, Jeremiah Beaumont and Amantha Starr, each in his or her own way and each in his or her limited evaluation of the experience, affirm that it is possible for man to earn his own humanity. The human frame as liberating perspective in Warren’s fiction has an another dimension of signification. Discussing the relevance of Faulkner to our own time, Warren says that “as a kind of short hand we may say that literature may carry a sort of built-in rebuke to the hubris of its age and that the more powerful the drives of an age, the more successful they appear, the more powerful, radical, and complex maybe the literature of rebuke.”

It may be safely asserted that Warren’s early novels may be characterized as a sort of built-in rebuke to the hubris of our age. Crimes against nature, especially the crimes of those who use others for their own ends, according to Dante, have a place in the Seventh circle of Hell. Most characters in At Heaven’s Gate, Willie Stark, and his stooge Wilkie Barren and Hamish Bond

are no better or no worse than the Popyes and Jasons and Snopes of Faulkner.

Madison Jones, discussing the relationship between Warren the novelist and Warren the poet, says, "As the young man in The Cave is trapped, a prisoner (the novel's epigraph is from Plato's allegory), so is each one of the many characters trapped in the cave of himself, his own darkness, or world of shadows, that is his own false self. To be led out, educated, into the world of light is the need of every one, and necessarily involved is each one's recognition of his own entrapment and the causes that maintain it. This is the recognition of our human limits, of the flawed humanity we share with all men. Recognizing this, accepting the darkness within and without, we make possible community and love which generate the light." Madison Jones may or may not agree with my interpretation. But the vocabulary in the citation, especially the words "darkness" and "light" and their analogues, in his assessment of The Cave do suggest that the assessment appears more metaphysical than the exigencies of criticism would require. The novel makes use of these terms. Monty Harrick's song makes use of these

terms the concluding line of which is "Oh, God, bring him out to daylight bright and clear!" Cave, death, and darkness are kept in a precarious balance with world, life and light. Most modernist writers use the image labyrinth which has the signification that critics of The Cave give to the image of cave. Any conceptual system that would like to make explicit the meaning of life and death in terms of light and darkness, descent and ascent may be called metaphysical. In Flood we have the same framework within which are located the typological deluge or the end of the world in its secular manifestation. Russel M. Goldfarb has pointed out that Warren's novel alludes to one of the classics of English literature, George Eliot's Mill on The Floss. Central to both the novels is the relationship between the brother and the sister. Flood is an indirect comment on the incestuous relationship between Maggie and Tom Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss. Apart from this very interesting comment, Russel M. Goldfarb does not suggest anything that is not suggested by the other critics of the novel. As I have pointed out in my discussion on the novel, it is a romance in the sense that most romances demand a double perspective from the reader.

(Interpreting what is seen and telescoping what is seen with what is implied and this ought to be a simultaneous process).

There are innumerable references to "inward darkness" and its outward manifestation and these imply that any kind of quest is a perennial quest and is above and beyond place and time. The quest itself is generated by a sense of doom, or to put it in other words, the end of the world. Hence crisis necessitates the quest and the quest is from darkness to light; from a geographical location to the centre of the self, from a moment in time to what is timeless. This is summed up by the two words, "location" and "relocation," which I discussed in my chapter on Flood.

Wilderness may be construed as an image where a battle takes place to save and earn freedom for the self. The novel foregrounds American Civil War in which a club-footed Jew tries to make a sense of the why and what for the people are fighting. As the second Adam, he overcomes a number of temptations and clarifies to himself what the metaphysic of freedom means. This powerful idea is not represented following the conventions of realism but is made to emerge in all its complexity by the juxtaposition of contraries. From a specified place and time the reader is transposed to a context which is not restricted by time and
place. Placed in wilderness, it is the cry of every soul that the protagonist of Wilderness utters: "I don't understand things, I don't understand anything. Oh, God, I want to understand." The cry of most characters in Heaven's Gate is, "I want, I want," but the cry of most characters in later novels is "I want to understand."

Meet Me in the Green Glen deals with the problem of understanding love in its physical and metaphysical connotations. There are not many significant women characters in Warren's fiction. The two important characters are Amantha Starr and Cassie Killigrew. They give us not a complementary but a contrastive view of Southern Womanhood in Warren's fiction. Warren's Southern gentlemen show a rigid and Chivalric attitude. May in Night Rider, Rachel in World Enough and Time, Celia Harrick in The Cave represent the old image of the Southern woman. Maggie in Flood, Cassie in Meet Me in the Green Glen represent the new woman in the sense that they do what caddy does in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury. As Louise Westling argues, "In The Sound and the Fury Quentin is finally unable to bear the burden of his past; he commits suicide, leaving behind an idiot castrated brother and his sister Caddy. She is the

new woman of the South, soiled but fertile and defiant, having rejected the hollow code of her patriarchal culture. If Caddie represents new life, it is not the kind Quentin hoped for or Faulkner himself desired."15 Maggie's marriage and her departure from Fiddlersburg is a symbolic act of emancipation which disturbs Brad Tolliver. By killing her husband, Cassie strikes at the heart of the traditional image of the Southern woman who is viewed as a delicate doll kept in a show case. More Hardyean than Lawrentian, the novel capitalizes on the image of red colour, which is an implicit reference to the purity of passion. By killing Alec, Tess seems to free herself, and women from their enslavers. Tess is caught and hanged as a criminal, but Cassie, enjoying the benefit of greater civility, finds herself in a lunatic asylum. Apart from these meanings that emerge from the novel, we find that love is more angelic than human (Angelo is the name of her lover). But the point we stress is that the angelic state of love does not exist without the human. In a male-dominated world, there are innumerable hurdles which a woman has to cross before understanding what sort of love she is capable of bestowing on man. Cassie's stunning example gives a reorientation to the attitude of most male

characters toward women characters. The pastoral and idyllic atmosphere in the novel is juxtaposed with modern life and temper. Cassie Killigrew experiences life as descent and ascent, darkness and light, enervation and joy.

In *A Place to Come To*, a Southerner's quest for the positive values of the spirit are dramatized in terms of life and death. More academic than the other novels of Warren, *A Place to Come To* is rooted in a scholar's experience of reading Dante. To a creative writer and critic nourished on Eliot's poetry, the spiritual and contextual meaning of Dante's *Commedia* is invaluable. In any scheme of things which tries to incorporate the life of the spirit, man starts from a lower sense of the self to higher selves. Jed Jewksbury launches his career by disowning everything that smacks of his origins. But as he matures what he disowns becomes a part of his being. In his last fictional work, Warren seems to provide an elaborate gloss on the osmosis of being, about which he talks in "The Knowledge and the Image of Man." The humility he achieves is the consequence of what he learned from Dante. His earlier critical philosophical exercises like "Dante and the Metaphysics of Death" at a later stage appear as spiritual exercises, devoid of intellectual hubris.
In fine, it may be said that Warren's fiction shows a remarkable variety, which we do not often come across in modern literature. Without disowning his past and always keeping it alive, Warren in his fiction dramatizes the tensions that are generated in American history by persons who suffer from all kinds of hubris. But the human condition and man's hubris are not irredeemable. A study of Warren's novels makes us realize that the implicit faith behind their creative power is the awareness of Saint Augustine with which Warren ends Democracy and Poetry: "There is a dim glimmering of light unput-out in men; let them walk, let them walk that the darkness overtake them not." 16