CHAPTER: SEVEN
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CONCLUSION

...You can't legislate the future of anybody, in any direction. It's not laws that are going to determine what our great grand children feel or do. And you can't legislate virtue. The tragedy of a big half of American liberation is to try to legislate virtue. You can't legislate virtue. You should simply try to establish conditions favorable for the growth of virtue.1

- Robert Penn Warren

By stating that we cannot legislate virtue Warren implies that our future is not in our hands. Laws cannot determine how our future will be. None knows whether our future will be virtuous, according to our idea of perfection. We may be desirous of perfection and virtue. The only possible thing for us to do is, just work for that ideal and be contented. What Warren wants us to acknowledge is that man can have a craving for perfection and virtue and can sincerely render all his effort to attain that perfection. He can establish conditions for the fulfillment of his ideal of being virtuous and perfect. But he cannot legislate virtue. This is the reality which every man must know and accept. These words also show the contrasting principle of the real against the ideal. Many people in Warren's world suffer as they legislate virtue. Jeremiah Beaumont of World Enough and Time is such a man, who reaps the consequences of legislating virtue.

warren's faith in man's effort is delineated in his novels. The notable themes of warren's concern brought out in the present study, are the possibility of man's release from all the barriers that restrict him and hope for regeneration; the working of man's intellect against his emotion; man's aspiration for glory as well as his proneness to guilt; his insight into the past which clarifies his views about the future; his sense of belonging to the place; integration of the self and his experience of the turbulence due to guilt and punishment and then the joy of reconciliation. The unifying principle that runs through all these major themes is the conflicting doctrine of the real against the ideal.

There is perceivable progression on this theme of the conflict between the ideal and the real in terms of plot and characterization from Night Rider, warren's first novel to A Place to Come To, his final attempt in the genre. Warren makes us realize that happenings in life may be intense and significant even in the simple story of a humble person like old man Calhoun of At Heaven's Gate as in that of such a politically powerful personality as Willie Stark of All the King's Men. Moderate men of integrity populate warren's world. One noteworthy character is Colonel Fort of World Enough and Time and another such character is Judge Irwin of All the King's Men. warren's novels show warren's ample and thorough knowledge of life.
Warren deals only with characters with whom he is familiar -- Southerners. Rozelle's third husband, the Hindu swami in *A Place to Call To* is an example of a stranger whom Warren does not introduce directly in any scene but makes Rozelle, the swami's wife say about his prospects.

Another factor to consider is Warren's art of storytelling. The parts of the novels are skilfully arranged with a due sense of balance and proportion. The incidents of the story evolve spontaneously from one another in a natural sequence. Warren proves himself to be a skilful novelist by making commonplace things appear significant by his careful handling of them. James H. Justus points out,

work clothes, farming implements, the furniture of a gentleman's study or a graduate student's apartment, the food of blacks and poor whites: they are never itemized as general categories but broken into their resonant specificities: overalls drying after the work day; rusted plowheads weighting rickety garden gates; the cheese-smelling leather bound books among the framed Piranesis, ... the roach-and ant-infested kitchen; ..."2

The catastrophe of every novel is natural and sums up all that has gone before it. It is a logical product of the earlier incidents and acceptable. Thus every novel of Warren contains all the necessary requisites of a good novel. Added to these

facts the novels show the author's sincere involvement in the development of events.

Each novel is an exemplar of the genre proving Warren's dedication. He handles every minute detail that goes into the making of the novel with care. His involvement in the work and concern for the accuracy is manifested in the plot, the characterization and the theme of every novel. Warren, in a discussion with William Styron and Robert Coles, of the problem of violence points out:

A work, to be effective, must involve you ... we also have to know the nature of our involvement -- discover it bit by bit -- the context of our involvement. And it seems to me that the effective thing is when you begin to sense the context of your own involvement -- the thing that's there, mirroring your own possibilities. That's where the significance comes. 3

In Night Rider, Warren's first novel, it is seen how a man becomes a victim of events when he lacks the knowledge of who he is and how his aspiration for social justice ends up in actual life as injustice. The private destiny of Munn, as we have seen in the second chapter of this study is viewed against the public scene of the tobacco war and how the social forces mould the characters in the novel. Munn, as observed by Irene

Hendry is a "divided man who turns to the objective world of action and organization and there loses his subjective existence." 4

Warren is aesthetically successful in introducing Willie Proudfit's story to contrast Proudfit's realization of identity with Munn's descent to nothingness. The conflict between the ideal and the real, that is, the aspiration to find identity of the self and the consequent realization that there is safety awaiting him, making him feel an "astonishing delight and intoxicating contempt" (NR, 460) at the same time. Munn's joy over the possibility of human brotherhood and contemptuous disapproval of man's betrayal are traced skillfully by Warren.

Warren's second novel At Heaven's Gate is inhabited by "figures from a moral bestiary." 5 Individual human beings feeling fragmented like Jerry Calhoun turn to other seemingly stronger human beings like Bogan Murdock in the hope of losing their sense of isolation. All other characters except Jerry Calhoun prove the principle of the real conflicting with the ideal as all of them aspire for something and do not attain it. Jerry alone gets reconciled in accepting his father. All of them live in a private dream of their own and meet with failure and thus in their lives they enact the conflict of the ideal versus the real.


All the King's Men, Warren's third novel has a firm political base and a strong moral import. The story is of the entanglement of the main figures of Burden's Landing—Jack, his mother, Judge Irwin, Adam and Anne Stanton. It is a static world as it is depicted from Jack Burden's memory. In Willie Stark we find a fatalistic and joyous acceptance of things as they are. He has a simple philosophy that badness is all that exists and we have to struggle to make goodness out of it. Willie Stark accepts the fact that evil is inevitable.

We find Willie's actions being prompted by his idealism and his aspiration being corrupted by his abuse of power. All the King's Men discusses the real problems in life like the forces operating around a man and how he deals with the situation. Jack Burden believes that we must accept the past in order to make a future. It settles the doubts as those brought forth by Warren:

Is the past then, merely a nest of errors which we must analyse in order to avoid? ... You study the past to avoid repeating its errors. Can the past teach us not merely to avoid wrong decisions but to make right ones?

The novel shows how we can discover in the past the laws that govern human events—Jack's been drawn to his ancestor Cass Mastern as a kindred seeker after moral redemption. Jack's

weak spirit is viewed against Cass Mastern's moral integrity. Forrest G. Robinson points out:

However, where Jack is inclined to minimize his role in his father's death and even to lie about it, [He tells his mother that Judge Irwin died of ill health]. Cass accepts his part in Duncan's undoing and the remorseful suffering that goes with it.7

Duncan Trice, Cass's friend commits suicide as Cass Mastern cuckold him. Cass tells the truth and dies towards the end. Unlike Cass, Jack is unwilling to accept his role in the tragic end of Judge Irwin. Finally wisdom dawns on him only after he accepts the past.

The ideal of everyman is to be tactful. Man gets tact "out of the study of the past," says Warren (NSE, 41). In order to conquer the future, one should be free of the past (NSE, 38). Jack is free of the past as he has acquired knowledge of his own past by probing into Judge Irwin's past. So he now has the tact as Warren observes. He can now hope to conquer the future. The dynamic understanding of the past gives him the possibility of a future towards the end of the novel.

The ideal of Millie Stark to bring good out of the evil is shattered due to man's limitations — he does not

live to bring about the good for which he aspires -- Thus we find the principle of the real being in conflict with the ideal. Cass Mastern fulfils his ideal of freeing the slaves in Warren's fourth novel *World Enough and Time*. It traces the conflict between the ideal and the real in the story of Jeremiah Beaumont who deludes himself into thinking that he can set things right. In his attempt at reparation of the wrong done to Rachel, by remaining just a man of ideas, Jeremiah is an inert figure. He takes the roles of both the rescuer of Rachel's honour and the persecutor of Colonel Fort's sin.

"For some people" says Warren, "those who fancy themselves harried headed and realistic -- the business of role-taking is as reprehensible as indulgence in a day dream ..."

It leads us to the creation of the self ... some sort of unifying self, the ring master self, the official self. The official self emerges but the soul, as Plato long ago put it, remains full of "ten thousand opposites occurring at the same time." All our submerged selves, the old desires and possibilities are lurking deep in us, sleepless and eager to have another go. (NSE, 58-59)

Jeremiah Beaumont undergoes this process of experiencing ten thousand opposites occurring within him in his role-taking. Throughout the novel he moves around with the idea of wreaking revenge. What lies in wait for him -- the real -- is the
question he asks himself, "was all for naught?" (*NET, 512). His willingness to surrender on account of his guilt and shake the hangman's hand proves the fact that he has accepted his role as one in human community and not different. Such an acceptance of the human brotherhood towards the end of the novel is like that of the protagonist Adam Rosenzweig of *wilderness* when all the novels are considered in progression thematically, i.e., work after work, Warren investigates between alienation and bondage and arrives at a conclusion that all his characters can have both individuality and brotherhood.

_Band of Angels_, the fifth novel of Warren examines the evils of racism, the turbulence in the human soul seeking identity and the sin of estrangement in man. The protagonist Amaquita Starr, who feels, "The world is big, and you feel lost in it, as though the bigness recedes for ever, in all directions, like a desert of sand ..." (*BOA, 3), changes her mind and discovers that none else but one's own self has to liberate a person. She realizes that nobody can set her free but herself. James H. Justus remarks, "The transferral of roles -- the pattern of the slave enslaving others -- is Amantha's for most of her life."8 She is happy when the novel ends. The ideal of knowing the self and getting liberated makes her soul feel perturbed, a feeling which she redresses with much difficulty and a life-time of yearning.

All the five novels listed above, covering a period of twenty six years in Warren's life time examine identity-crisis and alienation which are the abstractions in the mind of the modern man. These abstractions will dry the active spirit of man. Warren speculates that a study of the past will settle all the inadequacies that man feels.

A study of the past gives man a sense of time. Warren points out, that the

Past must be studied, worked at, in short created. In creating the image of the past, we create ourselves and without the task of creating the past we might be said scarcely to exist. (NSE, 51)

The characters in these novels starting from Willie Proudfit of Warren's first novel Night Rider, invest their existence with significance by creating the past. For instance Proudfit (Night Rider) thinks of his past - having a vision of his present wife and the present farm then itself, while he was suffering from fever -- and how his strength returned after the vision; Amantha Starr (Band of Angels) justifies the actions of her father in the past and feels peaceful only after that and Jeremian Beaumont admits towards the end that all the happenings of the past were not meaningless. Towards the end of the novel he asks the question whether all was for naught implying that everything that had happened is meaningful.

The other five novels which cover two decades in Warren's literary career also celebrate the conflicting principle of
the real against the ideal. Warren concretizes the theme of this conflict in characterization and narration of the story

Every novel of Warren as analysed in the present study depicts the drama of the past and all our struggles to be human. Warren portrays with understanding, the complexities of man's struggles to be virtuous. The struggle itself is of recognizable merit whether virtue is attained or not. Warren gives a similar message in one of his poems too. In his poem "What was the promise that smiled from the maples at Evening," remembering his own parents, Warren decides that if something was lost and the promises to fulfil which the parents died were not realized, "they at least achieved a serenity and glory in reaching towards them." ⁹

The present study traces the theme in these novels, that, to exist, man projects an image of himself as being unique, and separate. For his survival man has to submit his heroic image to some public cause. Though the protagonist knows his uniqueness, he wants to acknowledge the limitations which will unite him with the community. His motives and actions are directed towards general welfare. For instance, in World Enough and Time Jeremiah Beaumont seeks justice at the cost of his reputation and in All the King's Men. Jack Burden pursues truth unmindful of the hurdles.

An adequate reading of Warren's novels gives us an answer to the question. 'How shall man live?' The novels give us an image of the human soul confronting its fate.

In work after work Warren investigates the crucial problem of how to live according to one's aspiration without becoming a victim of events. The preliminary requisite for man is that he should know himself and then proceed with his endeavour. The drama of the self is played in the midst of differences.

Wherever we turn, we find differences being accommodated. Warren observes, "without differences, any recognition of identity would be meaningless. For we need difference and identity fused in a thing created by the imagination" (NSB, 46) For instance, Willie Stark of Warren's All the King's Men is identified with Huey Long. At the same time Warren portrays Stark's separate independent individuality also.

Warren tells Ellison, the interviewer, "Man is interesting in his differences. It's all a question of what you make of the differences. I am not for differences per se, but you just let the world live the differences, live them out." Warren sees the necessity of the conflict and has experienced accommodation of opposites as discussed in Chapter I (p.1).

10 Floyd C. Watkin's and John T. Hiers, ed., Robert Penn Warren Talking, p.49
In *The Cave*, Warren's sixth novel each character except Isaac Sumpter is brought to the recognition of his sublimated moral conflict and from it comes his capacity to fulfil his obligations to himself and others affected by his actions as analysed in Chapter IV of the present study.

Warren's seventh novel *Wilderness* traces man's yearning for being unique and heroic by fighting for freedom. It depicts the misery of rejection suffered by man and his craving for recognition. Adam Rosenzweig conceals his deformed foot as he does not want to be rejected from enlistment among the mercenaries. Towards the end his firm faith that he need not hide his clubfoot and can be one with all others, shows how Warren is attuned to the joy of human brotherhood. Adam's ideal to fight for freedom to prove to the world that he is worthier than the others is at variance with Adam's final recognition that he is one among the many.

*Flood* is the eighth novel of Warren. In an interview with Richard Sale discussed in p.101 of the present study, Warren points out that he had been carrying the story in his mind for several years, from the time he saw a village in floods where a house had been floating. He had been at the novel for three decades. It took its final shape and was published in 1964. In all his novels he delineates the darker forces of nature bringing about many calamities in the life of man. Here
Bradwell's drunkenness leads to his creating a situation for Maggie's sin and the consequent murder of Alfred O'Tuttle by Calvin. Man's weakness thus leads to adultery and murder.

Had Brad stayed back with Maggie, Tuttle would not have raped Maggie and Calvin would not have killed Tuttle. Warren's opinion that victory is never won and redemption should be continually reyearned is voiced forth in this novel. Brad stresses the fact that the heart is important for man, for his yearning for virtue is born only there. He keeps his heart ready for attaining equanimity.

_Meet Me in the Green Glen_, Warren's ninth novel exposes the problems of guilt without solution. Cassie's murder of Sunderland goes unpunished. The novel traces the complications caused by Cassie's confession. The epilogue of the novel retraces the memorable events in the lives of the main characters. Love, envy, hatred and vengeance are the qualities highlighted in the novel. Cassie Killigrew lives in an illusion whereas Cy Grinder and Murray Guilford are tormented by recognition of their drawbacks in reality. The novel ends with an insight into the power of love. The aspiration of the alien man for love and companionship and the conflicting reality of his frustration and anguish are clearly brought out in the novel.

The last novel of Warren, _A Place to Come To_ ends with a hope that the aspiration of man will be fulfilled. The
protagonist Jediah Tewksbury expresses his longing for love effectively in his letter to his wife whose reunion he seeks after a twelve year-separation. As John L. Stewart points out:

In each work the crisis weakens or destroys the customs and authority of the community and compels men to rely on their own resources and consciences. When the crisis ebbs, the self-sufficient survivors have earned the knowledge they need to push on, and they may have friendly alliance with another survivor.11

Here Jediah Tewksbury, for his survival seeks the alliance of Daiphine sinkell.

The salvation in the later novels of Warren comes from man's readiness to accept the humanness of others and form a renewed relationship with them. In Meet Me in the Green Glen, had Murray's wife Bessie been alive, he would not have committed suicide and would have just experienced the anguish of his loveless partnership as Cy Grinder does. In the later novels as self-sufficiency is well established in man, there is a hope of sustenance of human brotherhood.

Each novel of Warren reflects Warren's idea of man's moral aspiration being in conflict with man's moral capability. Norman Kelvin feels that there is hope that "the power of evil can be reduced for if capability can be enlarged and made to

The ideal of man, to get fulfilled, depends on his capability to work for it. Even if he works for it the real that comes about, may be just the reverse of his ideal.

In Warren's fictional world as David M. Wyatt points out, the voice of one's origin keeps calling one "homeward." For instance in the present study we find how Jediah Tewksbury had experienced joy in the old familiarity of the objects at his Dugton house and how Professor Stahlmann's yearning homeward is the cause for his suicide.

In her introduction to *One Time One Place* Edora Welty speaks about the "living relationship between what we see going on and ourselves." She analyses the necessity of both exposure to the outside world and reflection on it. Reflection, according to Welty is a slow process, "demanding the gift of sympathy." A similar idea is voiced forth by Jediah Tewksbury in *A Place to Come To*:

Something is going on and will not stop. You are outside the going on and you are, at the same time inside the going on. In fact, the going on is what you are. Until you can understand that these things are different but are the same, you know nothing about the nature of life. I proclaim this. (AFCT, 5)


Jerry Calhoun of *At Heaven's Gate* is a character who in the beginning of the novel fails himself, the more he tries to be someone else. His trying to be someone else is his way of reflecting on the world which he sees. He remains an outsider and admires the qualities of Bogan and at the same time from within, (inside him) he tries to be like Bogan. Leonard Casper points out aptly "Here one sees the Southern principle of equality but separation, requiring mutual respect for differences ..."\(^{15}\)

In addition to confronting the conflict between ambition and achievement the Warren characters try to escape from reality when their ideal fails. When, what they attain does not measure up with what they expect, they do not have the courage to face the reality. Thus for instance, Jack Burden goes West (to California) when Anne Stanton becomes the boss's mistress; Amantha Starr and Tobias Sears go west (to Kansas and St. Louis) in their irreconcilable anguish due to their filial rejection; In *A Place to Come To* Jediah Tewksbury goes to different places seeking peace. In *Night Rider*, Willie Proudfit's journey to the west is significant in proving his strength of character and as a contrast to Munn's weakness. Joe Davis observes that Jack Burden and Proudfit agree that men journey to the west to create something new and better "to replace the old and the defiled."\(^{16}\) Jack acquires a new perspective while in the West.

\(^{15}\)Leonard Casper, *Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground*, p.9

\(^{16}\)Joe Davis, "Robert Penn Warren and the Journey to the West," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 6, No.1 (Spring 1960), 75.
Warren uses the journey to the west as a structural device. Apart from the geographical escape there is the physical escape as that of Jack Burden's keeping away from involvement in the events of the world, a state to which he gives the name "Great Sleep" (AKM, 201).

Katherine Snipes defines the word Angel in the title Band of Angels as suggestive of escapism in the novel. She observes that "angel" is derived from "'angelism' used by Jacques Maritain to indicate a flight from the real world into an abstract world of idea."17

There is the psychological escape as seen in the case of Slim Sarrett. He lives in an illusory world created by himself. He is not happy with the father who sells washing machines and the mother who teaches in a Sunday school. He fabricates substitute parents of his imagination in order to project his own importance as one who had come up in life in spite of a poverty stricken background of moral depravity.

Amantha Starr in Band of Angels and Angelo Passetto in Meet Me in the Green Glen represent another type of escape. Amantha mingles with the commonality of the world to escape from the torments of reality. Angelo engages himself in repair work. "Daily he flees into the reality of work,"18 says James Grimshaw


Escape to keep the self aloof is thus neatly dealt with by Warren. Each novel of Warren is a study of alienation, in which Warren endorses the principle of human fallibility and the effectuality of man's character and believes in man's undaunted march towards triumph.

The zeal with which man maintains his bond with other human beings is another point discussed in the present study. Warren tries to understand the complexities of one man's struggles to keep up his humanness. In some characters Warren renders human behaviour mechanistic and hence inhuman as in Bogan Murdock. Human events such as the rescue activities at the cave mouth in The Cave bring people closer and enable them to understand their interdependence. They realize that there is the bond of sin and suffering that unites them with the others.

Warren's perception of America — his American vision — is seen clearly in his novels. Hugh Ruppersburg states that Warren's work reflects a recurrent, obsessive concern with the representative American individual, a person of stature, a rebel leader or a novelist or a bomber pilot who personifies the essence of what Warren perceives as American. Ruppersburg further observes:

But his work evinces a deep concern with the common citizens of the nation, the farm women, or frontier man or cart driver, who embody the same American essences as the Great Men who contributed significantly
to the building of the nation, though perhaps without the conscious intention of the Great Men in whom they believe.19

Simple characters as Willie Froodfit in Night Rider, old man Calhoun in At Heaven's Gate, Perk Simms in A Place to Come To and many others in their unassuming nature and goodness project their humanness which is essential for the building of the nation. In their recognition of human brotherhood and sympathy they prove their significance as Americans.

Warren's preoccupation with questions of identity leads him to address racial themes. Band of Angels is Warren's first novel on a racial theme. Robinson points out that Warren himself has mentioned in an interview in 1957, "in the real world I was trying to write about, there existed a segregation that was not human."20 In Wilderness he points out the guilt and the darkest forces in man instigating him to treat the blacks rudely. In the present study there is an analysis of how racism remains in the soil though slavery has been abolished. Warren elucidates the impact of racism on society in such minor details as his narration of how Jed and his mother are seated in the wagon driven by a negro:

We were there in the wagon, Mr. Tutwaylor's negro, or black, as is now preferred --


driving, me on the seat beside him, and
my mother, being a lady and not to sit on
the seat with a creature of complexion,
on a straight backed chair just behind
us, ... (APCT, 12)

When Jed narrates his mother's displeasure with his
father, warren highlights the issue of racism in just mentioning
how the whites keep their reserve before the negroes. Jed's
mother throws away his father's sabre which Jed had believed
(from his father's version of it) as the one being used by his
great grand-father to fight the Yankees with. When Jed tells
her that, immediately she retaliates:

"If he was like your dad," she said,
"he never fought nothing but a bottle" --
and I remember, after all these years,
my thrill of shock as she said the words,
for I knew, even at that age, that there
were certain things that you never said
before a nigger. (APCT, 13)

Warren shares his idea about racism with Ralph Ellison and Eugene
Walter:

Race isn't an isolated thing -- I mean
as it exists in the U.S. -- it becomes
a total symbolism for every kind of issue.
They all flow into it. And out of it ...
You know the kind of person who puts on a
certain expression and then talks about
"solving" the race problem. ... Basically
the issue isn't to "solve" the "race problem" ...
you don't solve it, you just experience it.
Appreciate it.21

21 Interview of Warren by Ralph Ellison and Eugene Walter,
"The Art of Fiction XVIII: Robert Penn Warren," Paris Review,
4, No. 16 (Summer 1957), 135.
As discussed so far, the present work examines the major themes finding expression in the novels of Warren such as a sense of the past; a sense of belonging to one's place; alienation; split in man; the differences in man; man's aspiration for humanness; escape of three types — geographical, physical and psychological and racism. Underlying these major themes is the conflict between the ideal and the real explicit and intense. Thus for instance Warren's escapist hero keeps away because his idea of perfection collides with actuality. His ideal gets locked up in his mind and his action is the reverse of what he wants. The desire for the fulfilment of the ideal becomes irksome as the possibility of its fulfilment is doubtful. Hence, the attempt at an escape, as the present study vividly describes. Likewise racism shows American's sorrowful plight even in a success. Though slavery has been abolished as they wished, racism has come to the American scene. The prevalent racism which is worse than slavery is the conflicting principle of reality against the American ideal of abolition of slavery. Similarly man in his craving for humanness, an ideal, reaps in reality a violent and vicious consequence as happens in the murder of Willie Stark and Adam who start working for the construction of a hospital to serve the poor.

The impact of the conflict between the ideal and the real is that the characters who have a yearning for the fulfilment of an ideal live in a shadow world. To cite Warren's ninth novel,
eet Me in the Green Glen for instance, in the case of Angelo assetto, Cassie Killigrew and Murray Guilfort, their recognition of the self in the novel is varied. These characters oscillate between appearance and reality. James Grimshaw opines that recognition of the self is effected in Cassie by her release from the loneliness of the past; Murray's guilt complex leads to partial recognition and that "Angelo's locked-in-ego prevents recognition of the self."22 Cy Grinder recognizes the difference between what he is and what he ought to have been. Since he gains self-knowledge, he comes out of his shadow world of unreality.

A vivid portrayal of how a human relationship should be, is given by Warren in Jediah Pewksbury's relationship with Professor Heinrich Stahlmann. For a short span in Jed's life the ideal and the real are in congruence. Jed, the narrator points out that Stahlmann presents Jed with a blessed actuality—a world where experience seems vivid and meaningful. The professor calls it "imperium intellectus" (APCT, 63). With these words Stahlmann summons a placeless, timeless world. These words order all the sad blunders of Jed's past into a perfected meaning of life. Jed remarks, "...we are all stuck with trying to find the meaning of our lives, and the only thing we have to work on, or with, is our past" (APCT, 19). Diane S. Bond observes that "the Professor's suicide destroys the pattern of Jed's life."23


23 Diane S. Bond, "Vision of Being in A Place to Come To," *Southern Review*, 16 (Autumn 1990), 817.
According to Warren, a good fiction presents a good vision. "A grasp of the precious human moments when one has the past and the future in a present vision is a worthy experience and knowledge," as Arthur Mizener points out. The ideal for a man is to know such moments which link the past and the future. Analysing Brad's character, Mizener says that Brad could find such a present when he was fifteen years old -- in the moonlight which is a promising sight for all, at all times. But later he loses sight of such a promising experience as he persuades himself to find such a promise in Leontine Purtle, the blind girl. By depicting what Brad ought not to have done, Warren makes it clear where there is the promise of the past and the future in the present. As he finally realizes it is there in the heart, or the "self" of man and not in the transient joy as in the company of a woman.

Each novel of Warren is an attempt to portray the plight of the individual against society. The ideal of each character is to acquire the ability to exist in a group if one wants to survive. An individual may suffer by the way the society views the events in the individuals' life as in the case of Jed the protagonist of *A Place to Come To*, who suffers because of the way society views his father's ignominious death. Even at a young age he learns to cope with society by making his tragic

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25 Mizener, *loc. cit.*
plight a comedy -- by enacting his father's death as a parody

David Stiff points out:

Warren's major theme is the diminishment of the self in modern America. This clearly places him within a conservative orthodoxy, seeking to defend the individual against the depredations (real or imagined) of the collective. But Robert Penn Warren's orthodoxy is modified by the degree to which he identifies the collective not as a future danger but as a present reality: the business culture of America with its overweening need for a machine oriented, media-manipulated, accusative, undifferentiated "public" rather than for a real society of free souls. 26

As a proof of what David Stiff says we have incidents in Warren's novel, The Cave. The plight of each member of Jasper Harrick's family is depicted. The individual's suffering against the collective -- against the business culture of America, the mass media and other acquisitive and manipulating public -- is nowhere better delineated than in The Cave. The ideal of Jasper Harrick to explore the cave and earn a good name as a hero ends in reality as a financial profit for Isaac Sumpter, the media men and Nicky Pappy, the restaurant keeper. Each novel of Warren is rich with Warren's discovery of irony in different experiences in life.

To an interviewer who asks Warren whether he is the man he creates in the novel, Warren replies:

But all the images I think that for anybody ... are basic are gained at a very early age. And attitudes, I don't mean opinions, but I mean attitudes, are gained very early and you work from those all your life ... 27

Warren's attitudes that have gone into the making of his novels have been analysed in the present study. This present study elucidates the protagonist's pursuit of self-knowledge and equipoise; the alien human being's longing for love and human company; the protagonist's dream about a perfect father, his estrangement and reconciliation with the biological parent. It traces the conflict between the ideal and the real as the unifying principle running through all the major themes of Warren novels.

May 13, 1989

Dear Mrs. Meenekshi:

Mr. Warren very much appreciates your interest and your work in connection with his novels and wishes you the best of good fortune in your enterprise.

Unfortunately, Mr. Warren is very ill at this time and unable to answer personally, so any specific questions will have to go unanswered for the time being. But he does send you all best regards.

Sincerely,

Lori L. Somerville
Lori L. Somerville
Assistant to Mr. Warren