CHAPTER TWO
CHAPTER I: TWO

TURBULENCE TO TRANQUILLITY

In his fiction Warren reveals the complexities of life in the South. He exhibits concern for the effect of technological changes on the South, which is deprived of a sense of belonging either to the place or the community. Historical factors such as the plantation system which enforced discipline had such an adverse impact on the South as to make it an embodiment of violence, because the farmers who were feeling free earlier felt restricted. In their immense longing for freedom, they hated the discipline imposed on them and turned against it vehemently. Warren has used the historical sources of violence like the Kentucky Tragedy (1826) for literary purposes. 1

In Warren's fiction though there is violence on the surface, an underlying social order is always maintained, as the civilization of the South was founded on the concept of a harmonious society. The Agrarianism of the South always believed in the order of human existence and was against industrialization and material progressivism. In the twentieth century the South gradually tended to adapt to the ways of the machine civilization and lose its identity. Like most Southern

1 James H. Justus in his discussion of Warren's novel World Enough and Time (1950) points out that the Confession of Jeroboam Beauchamp, widely known as the 'Kentucky Tragedy' was the source for Warren's novel. In his footnote Justus states that a Library of Congress copy of the Confession was shown to Warren by Katherine Anne Porter. James H. Justus, "Warren's World Enough and Time and Beauchamp's Confession," American Literature, 3 (January 1962), 500.
writers Warren tries to recall the old order which has yielded place to the new. Due to the violence that has crept in, man feels agitated. The fundamental requirement to live in peace is self-knowledge. Through the various experiences of his protagonists, warren depicts the problem of perturbation that a man faces and his attempt at finding calm. Man is depicted as an eternal seeker. The very fact that he searches, is good as we find him doing it earnestly. Though the warren protagonists are only seekers and not finders they acquire an equipoise in the end. They make a steady progress from turbulence to tranquility.

Three of the novels of warren which deal with this theme of the perturbed self's journey from turbulence to tranquility — Night Rider (1939), world Enough and Time (1950), and Band of Angels (1955) — are examined in this chapter.

The principal theme of warren's novels is man's attempt at achieving wholeness or full identity. His novels dramatize the consequences of such a condition. Man tries to unify the divisions of his self.

The efforts of the protagonist (deficient in self-knowledge) to emerge from isolation into solidarity are portrayed in Night Rider. The novel opens with the return of Percy Munn, a young lawyer from law school at Philadelphia, to
his native town Bardsville, Kentucky. His wife May is a devoted and loving woman. Munn wins his first case, in which he saves his client, Bunk Trevelyan from a murder charge. Munn becomes a member of the Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco, a local co-operative organization, founded recently to fight the price rise. Many farmers refuse to join the Association. As it fails to impose its terms, the buyers purchase somewhere else and the funds run low. They establish a terrorist organization, 'The Free Farmers' Brotherhood of Protection and Control' and plan raids on non-co-operating farmers and the victims are forced to destroy their own crops. Inevitably violence follows; a murder is committed and enemy warehouses are dynamited. Benton Todd, the son of Captain Todd, is killed when soldiers open fire. Al Turpin, who gives witness against Dr. Mac Donald and his secret Association is murdered. Percy Munn is informed by Isabella Ball that the Federal soldiers are hunting for him mistaking him for the murderer. Eventually he has to hide in Willie Proudfit's place. It is Professor Ball who has killed Al Turpin to save his son-in-law, Dr. Mac Donald. However, Munn does not try to prove his innocence.

Later, on hearing about Bunk Trevelyan's attempt to blackmail one Mr. Sorrell for five hundred dollars and sensing him to be a betrayer of the Association, Munn goes with a band of men and shoots him dead. Though his is the first shot, he does not know whose shot had killed Bunk Trevelyan.
May deserts Munn and goes to her aunt's house. Munn is drawn into a passionate love affair with Bill Christian's only daughter Lucille. After her father's death Lucille asks Munn to marry her. She visits him when he is in Proudfit's place. In the course of their conversation she tells him that Senator Tolliver had made advances to her. Munn, who is already angry with Tolliver for having let down the Association, wants to kill him. When Munn is in Tolliver's house, the soldiers surround the place. While he tries to escape into the neighbouring woods, Munn is shot down.

Percy Munn's hollowness has a telling impact on the progress of the story. Charles Bohner points out that Warren takes a risk in telling the story of *Night Rider* from the point of view of a befuddled and divided character like Percy Munn, because in doing so he might have blurred his effects and made his work ultimately obscure. Since we see the story from the point of view of one of the hollow men "we must infer his hollowness from the complex of situations and relationships which constitutes the structure of the novel." ²

In the beginning of the novel we find Percy Munn wedged into the aisle of a train packed with farmers. When the other passengers merge their identity in a noisy crowd, Percy Munn

keeps aloof. He feels that his identity is threatened by the crowd. He wants to join the rally to show that he is down to earth in nature. At the same time his revulsion from the crowd proves his hatred of the coarseness of the mob.

Percy Munn is depicted as a man with numbed sensibilities. He has a strong wish to act. But he surrenders himself to the desires of the strong-willed people around him. He acts according to their wish. He thinks that his thirst for action will be fulfilled in the dynamiting of the warehouses. But his truth, as Warren comments, is "blind" (NP, 365) as it is the truth of many fallible human beings and not that of Munn alone. Richard Law remarks:

Munn's deepest desires are always at war with what he is. The fundamental concept of what he is also changes radically in the course of the novel. So as a result there seems to be neither a center nor a continuity to Munn's being.

What Warren tells about Munn proves this:

every object in the room in its familiarity, proclaimed a difference, the shot gun ... the dusty papers filled with his writing ... He had written on those pages for some purpose; the purpose was gone now, ... There the shot gun was, as it had been; but the unnameable impulse that had made him lift it and press the trigger that afternoon was gone ... The acts remained ... but the impulse, the desire, the purpose had gone (NK, 352).

Roma King Jr. points out that Munn's "social role and myth of himself become under stress, a suffocating mask which distorts his vision and disguises him from himself." Warren observes that Munn "felt that all of his actions had been as unaimed and meaningless as the blows of a blind man who strikes out at the undefined sounds which penetrate his private darkness" (NR, 114). Munn never indulges in displays of his emotions. But his problems are revealed by his actions.

The spiritual division in Percy Munn, is suggested by the contrast between his daytime activities and what he does at night. He is asked to address the rally of the Association of Tobacco Growers. Though he fumbles for words in the beginning, he feels elated later. Warren tells us,

He could not tell whether they were listening to him, and found that he did not care, for his own voice filled him and he was completely himself. ... Though he could not later, recall the words he had spoken, or even, very certainly, the ideas he had wanted to express, he could remember how the speech had welled up powerfully in him, ... (NR, 26).

Munn's emotions are entirely different at night. He feels a sense of despondency growing in him. He tries to fix his attention on his client, Bunk Trevelyan's, trial. He is struck by the thought that Trevelyan might be guilty. Finally he tries to compose himself. He realizes that the present unrest is not

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due to the excitement of the day or doubts about Bunk Trevelyan but to the fact that he is alone. He goes near the window and sees the members of the Association of Tobacco Growers outside drunk and feels sad as they are indifferent to the serious purpose for which they have come there. His disgust mounts:

... not only for them but for himself, for what he had said that afternoon and for the pure poise and exaltation he had felt as his words came. ... He felt cheated and betrayed (NR, 30).

Possessed by this feeling he watches the people in their aimless movements. Then it occurs to him that one man is very much like another. He is like those men, one of them. When this idea of oneness with the other comes to him unbidden, warm and pulsating, 'that exaltation' (NR, 30) he felt in the morning while addressing the rally, returns to him. This indeterminate aspect of Munn's life is suggested skilfully by Warren in a neatly woven structure of the happenings of the day as contrasted with his emotions at night, portraying clearly the division in one's self.

From beginning to end. _Night Rider_ is the story of Percy Munn's search for himself. The novel uses Warren's birthplace Kentucky as its setting. The tobacco war (1905-1908) - the local turmoil - is employed to reveal the intensity of moral confusion in the protagonist and the other characters. For
Munn, life begins only after his return to Bardsville from law school at Philadelphia. He becomes a member of the board which directs the organization and management of the Association of Tobacco Growers. When Mr. Christian, Mr. Sills and Senator Tolliver inform him that he is to complete the unexpired term of one Mr. Morphee, the word, 'No' bursts from his lips. He tries to clarify to them that he is temperamentally opposed to the demands of the post. But the Senator does not accept his refusal. Senator Tolliver advises him not to allow his modesty to stand in the way of his duty. Munn strongly feels that it is not modesty but something else. Warren puts it:

If he had been able to give a name to the secret but violent promptings that thrust the 'No' to his lips, he might have obeyed them and stood his ground against the courtesy of the Senator, the bullying of Mr. Christian, and the dry, satirical silence of Mr. Sills. Munn's common sense, his logic, had conspired with his friends to force his acceptance (NR, 32).

Later in his life he remembers this impulse which had prompted him to refuse. Even when he is wrapped up body and soul, in the business of the Association and knows, without any regrets, that more and more the Association is claiming, not only his energies and interest but also the inner substance of his being, he still speculates upon the meaning of his impulse which he had that afternoon in his office. It is neither modesty nor fear concerning his own capacity. It is something more fundamental in his nature that has moved him powerfully
to refuse. After accepting the appointment he feels 'unmanned and ashamed as though an unsuspected weakness had betrayed him' (NR, 33). Immediately, he wants to get home because he feels that his wife May, might help explain himself to him. He thinks that he might discover from her something about the meaning of that nameless impulse that had prompted him to blurt out his refusal to the Senator and others. He is sure that she would banish his conviction of weakness and shame and help him realize his own nature. But to his disappointment, when told about his membership in the Association, she is pleased. Under different circumstances, this would have given him satisfaction. But now it disappoints him. She responds to his dissatisfaction and asks him if he is not glad. He is given a chance to be helped out of the turmoil, as Warren elaborates:

"Why Perse', she said, 'what's the matter? Did anything else happen, something bad?"
"Nothing's the matter."
"Aren't you glad?"
"Yes,' he answered, thinking, yes, he supposed he was. "But you looked at me so funny."
"Did I?" he asked, having intended his question to be light and jocular, but catching in his own tone a hint of something else, a hardness. ... He shouldn't be disappointed, he told himself, that she could not name for him the impulse which he himself had been unable to name. (..R, 35-36)

Munn is an incomplete man trying to draw his strength from others. Richard Law observes that Munn knows that he is not sure of his identity - an alienated creature-in the grip
of forces beyond his understanding or control. There remains the paradoxical knower of these things - the existential consciousness - which, as it is hurried to annihilation, "has power at least to recoil in disgust and nausea from what it cannot control." Munn is spiritually perturbed often and he endeavours to move towards equanimity. He joins the Association not because he has any passion for justice but because he is lacking in the essential self-knowledge which he thinks the others have. Munn's joining the Association is an empty turn to escape his own weakness. Munn always acts against his better judgement. Though he does not have any plan to attend the meeting, he is persuaded by Mr. Christian to do so and in the meeting, though he has no intention to address the people, he is made to deliver a speech. John Burt says:

He declines to address the meeting, delivers an eloquent speech despite himself, and yet feels his eloquence to be alien to him, as if he were listening to his speech rather than making it.6

While delivering the speech he sees a farmer in the crowd in whom he discovers an individuality that he has not found in anybody else. It fills him with enthusiasm and the selfhood that he senses in the stranger gives power to his


voice and only then does he feel completely himself. Munn covets an inner secret life. He wants to know how May behaves in his absence. In Warren's words,

He thought, ... that, that was the way she looked when she was alone, for it had become a habit of his mind to try to picture her as she must be in solitude, or to seize on such glimpses as this, as though these images could give him a clue as to what she truly was in herself, in her essence (NR, 34).

Through Munn's story Warren presents one of his characteristic themes - how the weak and the empty turn to some public cause or politics in order to escape their weakness. Munn's weakness is the suspicion he always has that there is a secret, a knowledge which can transform a person, which he alone is deprived of and throughout the novel he tries to trace its workings in others. Thus for instance, we come across a description of Munn's thoughts about Bunk Trevelyan's wife:

He wondered what that world she lived in was really like, what she herself was really like. But it was complete and individual and important ... He had an overpowering curiosity to know what it was like, to know what she was like, ... (NR, 54-55)

Earlier, Munn thinks that Bunk Trevelyan's wife was like the other women clients who tell him their troubles in a monotonous voice. When they met for the first time she introduced herself in a tone expressive of pride as the wife
of Bunk Trevelyan, taller than most other men. Warren describes the scene:

'I don't reckon I know him by that name,' 'He's a right tall man, taller'n most,' she had said with a flicker of pride in her voice. ... 'I think I know him,' Mr. Munn had said, and nodded as though on sudden recollection, not having ever laid eyes, as far as he knew, on the man who was named Harris or Bunk Trevelyan (NR, 50).

Warren implies that Mrs. Trevelyan's impressive voice made Munn acknowledge an unknown man as some one he remembered on recollection. Bunk Trevelyan's wife, then, told Munn, that Trevelyan had quarrelled with a man named Tad Duffy for taking water from the spring which was on Trevelyan's side. Since water was getting low in the well, they were using water from the spring. In spite of Trevelyan's warning to keep away from the spring, Duffy was seen filling the barrel, set up in a wagon. In his anger, Trevelyan ran home, took the rifle and came back to the spring to threaten Duffy. When Trevelyan's wife grabbed his arm and asked him to put the rifle down, Trevelyan said that he was just going to fill the barrel with holes and scare Duffy. Wher asked to tell the exact words Trevelyan used in the quarrel, Trevelyan's wife hesitated saying that the language he used was strong and that she could not repeat it. After the description of this scene it is told
Munn had begun to feel that Trevelyan was innocent. Warren narrates it elaborately:

'Well, tell me the rest,' he ordered. At that moment he had begun to feel, for some reason, that Bunk Trevelyan was innocent...
'I'm going down to the jail and talk to him' Mr. Munn said, 'You better wait here till I get back. I won't be gone very long'. ... But at that time she had been in no true sense real to him. It was not until he saw her in her own house, the day when he went out there to ask her again about the quarrel before Tad Duffy was killed that he understood her to be 'complete and individual,' the center of a world as real and important as the world he knew concentric to himself (NR, 53).

Munn has a curiosity to know what she was like and what she really was. Then he realizes that he cannot penetrate to the essence of his own wife May. When it is so with his life-time partner, he discovers that he cannot know Mrs. Trevelyan whom he has seen only twice or thrice. His desire to capture the reality of others is to fill his own emptiness. Impressed with Mrs. Trevelyan he argues in Court on behalf of Trevelyan and saves him. This episode explains how Munn's craving for knowing another individual like Trevelyan's wife motivates him. Only the depth of Mrs. Trevelyan's personality which Munn sees makes him handle Trevelyan's case skilfully. We see how the objects of Mrs. Trevelyan's house impress Munn and make him understand her "to be complete and individual"(NR, 53):

- and all those objects insinuated upon him, as with persistent whispers, the new knowledge about her. Because of the scrubbed pine top
of the table, the small, dry, cracked hands themselves became in their motionlessness eloquent and, as it were, beckoned him on to a fuller penetration and knowledge. And the rickety bed, covered by the patchwork quilt with colors faded and washed dim, implied to him with secret integrity and purity of her passion - (NR, 54)

There is an expectation of discovery and fulfilment in Munn's gestures as he scrutinizing the face of someone with whom he is talking or grasping May's shoulders so tightly between his hands as to hurt her. Through Munn's small cruelties to May, Warren shows how Munn tries to assert his essence of being. Warren observes that Munn is "aware of something behind the words" (NR, 50) as he listens with "professional care" (NR, 49) to the words May would be forced to utter after his cruel display of love. Munn feels that such harshness extracts the satisfaction and the assurance which cannot be otherwise extorted:

... he would seize her in his arms and press her to him so tightly that he could feel the resilience of her ribs giving, as though by this small cruelty he might extort the satisfaction and the supreme assurance not to be had merely by love. "Don't, Perse," she would then gasp out; 'don't, not that way! ... He would not relieve the pressure in the slightest degree, a small germ of hardness sprouting in his mind, ... Then, when she would again say, Breathlessly, 'Don't Perse,' he would slacken his hold ... (NR, 49)
Soon after the murder of Bunk Trevelyan too Munn behaves in a similar manner to May. He goes home late and May asks him why he is late.

He reached out as if to pluck at the flowing garment. But she stood too far away from him. 'It's too late; you stayed out so late.' And then: 'you've been drinking Perse ...

'God damn it' he uttered, and stepped quickly to her and seized her by the shoulders. you're hurting -'

'well', he said, He drew her to him more tightly. ...

Then, suddenly, she was as passive as a dead body, although her hands remained crushed against his chest as in resistance and revulsion. (NR, 205-206).

Munn finds an inner certainty in Doctor MacDonald and he feels that it is this that keeps him unperturbed. Likewise, he attributes Captain Todd's fullness of character to his experiences in the Civil war. He acknowledges the firm conviction of Captain Todd and wishes that he could then be as confident as Todd. Munn's goal in life is to be nothing beyond himself. "If he desired anything of life, that thing was to be free and himself" (NR, 13). As the novel progresses we find his attempts at realization of himself in action and violence.

Munn's emptiness is made clear by the contrasting story of Willie Proudfit. Proudfit's story "contains an over-explicit metaphor of the alternative to Munn's life and meaningless death," says Marshall Walker.

James H. Justus points to Warren's reliance upon parallel story lines to emphasise the main narrative:

In technique, too, Night Rider establishes certain standard westernesque dispositions; delight in action, resourceful manipulation of language, ... creation of secondary characters and situations that functionally parallel major ones, even the use of the interpolated tale that, as precedent and model for alternativeellungen of moral dilemmas, serves as ironic contrast to similar dilemmas of the protagonist. 8

Towards the end of the novel Proudfit's story is set to act as a contrast to Munn's downfall. Proudfit, the farmer who shelters Munn tells of his own career in the West as a buffalo hunter. There his companions were as rough as himself. When he fell sick, the Indians cared for him. In his fever, he had a vision of Kentucky and a young woman waiting near a stream. After the vision, his strength returned and he came back to Kentucky to see the same woman of his vision there. He says that he is living in the same farm which he saw in his vision, with the same woman as his wife.

Proudfit's story is unique for its underlying myth of death and resurrection. His humble redemption is a contrast to Percy Munn's sin and damnation. Both Proudfit and Munn have a period of withdrawal, with time to think over their...

past and plan their future. After such withdrawal and contemplation the mythic hero returns to his homeland as a new person. But Munn is not transformed. He becomes obsessed with the Negro who has been unjustly sentenced to death in the murder trial against Trevelyan. But Munn does not remember the Negro's name. Here, Warren as Katherine Snipes says:

... is admitting, perhaps, the existence of a moral vacuum where traditional values have been eliminated in a society concerned primarily with status and wealth.  

Munn's is the story of the impact of some impressive events upon the young lawyer, an ordinary conventional man. Munn is irritated by Lucille's snobbery. He feels that he had been in Philadelphia as she had been in St. Louis and he does not understand why she must feel superior. He is manipulated by more dynamic and forceful people. Against his wish, he is drawn into the Association. Professor Ball and his son-in-law advocate a society within the association which will destroy the new tobacco plants of those who refuse to join the strike. The rational arguments of the members make the reluctant Munn ready to go 'nightriding' to destroy the plants. The next step in Munn's way to perdition is that Bunk Trevelyan whom he had defended earlier against the charge of murder, betrays the sacred oath of the Night Riders and sells out to the enemy.

Snipes, Robert Penn Warren, p.38
The group decides on death as the punishment for the betrayal and cast lots. Munn is to take the role of the avenger. Now he feels a satisfaction deep inside. For Munn, this is a ritual of retribution: an act of self-condemnation for having defended the murderer earlier and having been the cause of an innocent Negro's death. As Robert Berner puts it:

When Munn realizes that the Negro's seemingly preposterous claim of innocence was true and that he has condemned an innocent man and given life to a Bunk Trevelyan who is completely lacking in moral sense, he kills him as though to kill an evil future which he helped to create. 10

Professor Ball, Munn and Dr. MacDonald lead an assault on the company warehouses to destroy the tobacco supply, the companies have accumulated in spite of the boycott. There are some casualties like Benton Todd, an ardent admirer of Munn. Munn is accused of murder. After a blank period of withdrawal in the shelter provided by the poor farmer Proudfit, Munn returns to murder Senator Tolliver. As Munn realizes that the Senator is as empty as himself and would welcome death, he does not kill him. Munn is shot down by the soldiers outside Tolliver's house.

inadequacies that keep him from establishing his separate identity and fulfilling himself as a man. If he were self-sufficient he would be sufficient for others as well.11

Though the series of violent activities change his life, his character is static. His wife May is also empty like Munn and even in tender moments he has to hurt her to make an impression on her. Even when he is most involved in the activities of the Association he feels that he is an outsider, feeling alienated from the others. His relationship with Lucille also does not lead him to self-knowledge. She comes to him feeling that he would fill up the vacuum in her though outwardly she appears to be strong and energetic. She tells him that when they had been together they were shut in, closed up, away from others and cut off even from what they really were. Ryan Alvan rightly observes that Munn "discovers only his own emptiness in his relations with his mistress Lucille Christian."12

Madison Jones believes that Night Rider is "the most flawless novel" of Warren, putting into fiction the fullness of the picture as he sees it.


Warren introduces a fulfilled character. Munn's aunt Ianthe Sprague copes with the world by isolating herself from it. She is significant, as Munn recognizes in her an image of fate as the fulfillment. As we see Patience itself being personified in Shakespeare's Viola of Twelfth Night, Munn finds Ianthe Sprague an image of fulfilment. In spite of her ill-health, she is cheerful.

Munn thinks of Ianthe Sprague when he is alone at home, missing his wife May, who has left him. When Munn had been in Philadelphia he used to visit Ianthe Sprague, who had spent a few weeks with his mother in Thermopolis Springs, a small summer resort in South-Central Kentucky. Munn's mother and Miss Sprague never met again but wrote to each other.

During his visits, Munn had found Ianthe Sprague confined to a chair due to her ill-health. Even though Munn was well acquainted with the letters between his mother and Sprague which revealed the poor health of Ianthe Sprague, Munn had raised in his mind an image of delicacy and beauty about Miss Sprague. In Philadelphia Munn had found Sprague almost totally blind and though she would not have been more than fifty, looked seventy. On her lustreless, black silk dress, there had been spots left by spilled food. When Munn first began to

visit her he tried to lead her into talking about his mother and of herself. He tried to make her picture for him the self she had been, that summer a long time ago, but it was of no use. She could not do it. She could not, because she had always been what she was right then. There was none of the pathos of the falling off from youth, beauty and vitality.

This present being had always been, he was sure, her real being, and now she was merely achieving it in its perfection of negativity and rejection. ... In the thought of his mother, there was pathos, but in Miss Sprague, none. She lived, in this overheated, motionless air that reeked of camphor, as in her true medium. This was her triumph. (NR, 211)

Warren uses images splendidly to convey the normal experiences of life like the alienation and insecurity that a human being feels or the elated feeling that a man has at times. The sorrowful feelings are depicted by the images of night or darkness and joy by those of light.

The main theme of the novel is "that each man must earn the meaning for his life by his own efforts," says John L. Stewart, "otherwise the night takes him." Even a stable, self-sufficient and humane person like Captain Todd is not able to save his son Benton Todd from the darkness. Each character's engagement in illegal conduct is only under the cover of the night. Whenever Munn feels his weakness he is in darkness.

Warren portrays Munn as standing in an unlighted room:

And then it came to him that all he knew was the blackness into which he stared and the swinging motion and the beat of the blood. But was he staring into blackness, a blackness external to him and circumambient, or was he the blackness, his own head of terrific circumference embracing, enclosing, defining the blackness, and the effort of staring into the blackness a staring inward into himself, ... (NR, 109)

Munn never finds out as the blackness obliterates every thing. Light gleaming upon water thrusting through a cover of leaves to illuminate some quiet glade is beautifully portrayed by Warren to illustrate the darkness in Munn in 'the cover of leaves' and the knowledge he gets in the light gleaming through them. He refers to the empty, blue, brightness of the sky too as having some significance. For instance, as discussed earlier (on page 34) when Munn addresses the meeting he sees a man in the crowd and observes his individuality.

'My friends,' he managed to begin, wetting his lips. Then he said that he was unprepared to speak, ... While he uttered the words his glance fell upon a man who stood on the ground directly at the edge of the platform. ... The man's red rimmed dull eyes were fixed directly upon him... he realized... that man there was an individual person, not like anybody else in the world. He realized the fact more profoundly than he had ever realized it about his friends or even his wife; ... (NR, 25)

Then he sees the blue sky. Though he does not remember the words he utters, he remembers the man, who stood just below the
platform and the power that welled up in him. In the beginning of the speech Warren says that Munn hates himself for the sterile phrases that formed on his tongue. After seeing the man in the crowd he feels his own voice growing stronger. Warren uses images like 'night' and 'light' to convey aspects of life like 'emptiness' and 'hope.' Quite often the protagonist watches the sky pouring light over the landscape. Munn associates it with perfection as seen in Munn's recollection of his speech:

Though he could not later, recall the words, ... he could remember how the speech had welled up powerfully in him, how still and sharp the distant Oak trees had appeared and how incredibly brilliant and empty had been the sky (NR, 26).

and later in Proudfit's place after taking his meal with others,

He lay on his back and looked up at the sky, absorbed in that emptiness, that perfection. There were no clouds, ... (NR, 448)

At Proudfit's house Lucille comes to his room to tell him that she is going away. She tells him that he could also go with her and they can get married. When they converse there is a small crawling flame in the lamp. After letting him know her plan to go away her gaze leaves Munn "returning to the insufficient flame of the lamp" (NR, 440). This flame and the insufficient light it emits are symbolic of the aspired joy of Lucille - That is, her wish to begin life anew with Munn in future and she
hopes to enjoy life to the core as indicated by the flame.
The insufficient light the flame emits indicates the uncertainty
she senses, not knowing whether Munn would accompany her when
she goes away from there and if he would be willing to marry
her as she wishes. After she stops speaking,

... the night sounds seemed to creep back
into the room, gradually and as though timidly
returning the sound of the insects ... (NR, 440)

signifying the monotony of the future that awaits them.

Munn pursues selfhood in the novel. Towards the end,
when Munn goes to kill Tolliver, he tells the latter: "I do
know. I'm nothing" (NR, 456). He adds that he has come to kill
Tolliver and that when he does it he won't be nothing any longer
Munn says,

It came to me, Do it, and you'll not be
nothing ... I came here. To kill you ... not because you are filthy but for myself. (NR, 457)

But seeing Tolliver unafraid of death Munn is puzzled. The
hand holding the revolver sinks until it rests against the bed
and Munn is not able to kill Tolliver. Munn's emptiness and
lack of self-awareness would have been filled if he had acted.
But till the end of the novel the emptiness remains. Before
his death he identifies even the voices of the boys and
recognizes Proudfit's nephew Sylvæstus as the one who had told
the soldiers his whereabouts. But he does not identify himself
Before falling dead, Munn

... saw to oneside and above him on the slope,
vaguely against the field and paler sky, the
standing form of a man. But there — there,
beyond that form — would be the woods, the
absorbing darkness, the safety, the swift and
secret foot (NR, 460).

Critics have not so far analysed the significance of the
woods which Munn sees beyond the form of man. Warren does not
stop with just the mention of the woods but goes on to say that
there is the absorbing darkness, there is safety, the swift and
secret foot.* Warren describes Munn as hearing the voices
calling. "At that sound, so empty in the darkness, as astonishing
delight sprang up in him, a wild and intoxicating contempt"
(NR, 460). Munn who seeks self-definition throughout the novel
dies hearing the sound that gives him delight because he is not
alone — human company is there. The same sound instils an
intoxicating contempt in him as he thinks of the betrayal of
Sylvestus. Munn has had a yearning for the ideal — the know-
ledge of the self.

Munn dies with the knowledge that there is some safety
awaiting man, though he does not quite achieve self-knowledge.
He is able to define that which is beyond but not that which is

*As he had been running before being shot, he does not feel
the ground beneath him under his plunging stride. He skims
over the ground. Then he falls again and sees the darkness.
Hence it is said that it is secret.
within himself. He identifies the objects around— the voices of the boys, the woods etc.—the truth that he is not alien.

The story of *World Enough and Time* (1950) is told by a modern narrator who has the skills of a professional historian. By being the narrator, Warren maintains a distance from the action of the novel. Beaumont's story depicts the conflict between the ideal and the real as Justus H. James puts it:

 Beaumont's story, both the self-chronicled parts and those summarised by the narrator, turns on the paradoxical relationships of dream and drama, the private plans and the public acts.16

The source of Warren's *World Enough and Time* is a historical incident of 1826, known as the Kentucky Tragedy. Literary interest in the Kentucky Tragedy began with T.O. Mabbot's edition of Poe's *Politian* (1923). Writers such as Simms, A.S. Mc Ilwaine and Kate T. Irvine treated the same theme in their works.17 In 1826 Jeroboam O. Beauchamp was sentenced to death for the assassination of Colonel P. Sharp. His wife Ann Cook committed suicide in jail and both were buried in the same coffin. Beauchamp wrote his confession while awaiting his punishment and it was published after his death.


Many experiences of Jeremiah are portrayed as being narrated by Jeremiah himself in the journal he writes. Jeremiah Beaumont is born and brought up in Glasgow county, Kentucky. His father Jasper Beaumont fights in the revolutionary war and is bankrupt. Incurring the displeasure of her father Morton Marcher, Jeremiah's mother marries Jasper Beaumont and lives in poverty. After his father's death, Jeremiah is asked to reject his father's name 'Beaumont' and take his grandfather's, 'Marcher.' He loses his grandfather's property as he refuses to do so. Leicester Burnham, Beaumont's teacher takes great interest in his welfare and introduces him to Colonel Cassius Fort. He trains Beaumont in law and is very affectionate. Once Jeremiah is informed by his friend Wilkie Barron that Fort has treacherously seduced the rich lady Rachel Jordan. Jeremiah is struck by the idea of justice and wants to make up for the wrong done to Rachel and hence courts her. Rachel who lives in seclusion, after much hesitation and reluctance, accepts Jeremiah. He goes to Frankfort to challenge Fort to a duel. As Fort leaves the place Jeremiah comes home.

Jeremiah is dragged into politics by Wilkie Barron. Wilkie asks Jeremiah to fight for Skrogg, an editor of a newspaper which is an organ of the Relief Party. Skrogg has come to Frankfort to vote in Saul county. Fort is then in the Relief Party. Jeremiah is persuaded by Skrogg and Wilkie to represent the Relief Party in Saul county as Cassius Fort has
gone over to the Anti Relief side. Jeremiah accepts the offer to establish his honour. By then Rachel's mother has died and Jeremiah and Rachel are married. Rachel, who is pregnant, requests him to be out of politics.

During the election campaign, he sees two broadsides—one accusing Fort of seducing Rachel and deserting her with her still-born child and the other signed by Fort, chiding Rachel for having had the still-born child by the Negro Coachman, Gabbo. The second broadside is seen by Rachel and she has a miscarriage. Rachel who soon after marriage does not want Jeremiah to kill Fort, now feels that Fort should have been killed. Fort who has good plans for the reconciliation of the old Court and the New Court and the parties supporting Anti-Relief and Relief, is killed by Jeremiah.

In jail Jeremiah and Rachel plan to commit suicide but fail in their attempt. Wilkie helps Jeremiah escape from the prison. Jeremiah and Rachel flee to live in the wilderness. There Jeremiah is informed by Mr. Lilburn that Wilkie and Skroogg were the people who sent the broadside in the name of Fort. Jeremiah is disgusted. He accuses Rachel of having given his letter to Captain Marlowe in which he has revealed his plan to tutor Marlowe for giving false witness on his behalf. Jeremiah charges Rachel with unkindness as this letter which Marlowe in turn gives to the Prosecution causes Jeremiah's
conviction. She refutes him saying that she never wanted Fort to be killed and accuses Jeremiah of having used her to kill Fort. Then she stabs herself and dies. Jeremiah realizes that he had been wrongly used by people and that he is the murderer of a great man. He pays a loving tribute to Fort as to a father. Jeremiah feels that he must make himself known to the world as being guilty and flees towards 'expiation.' Jeremiah writes in his journal,

    I no longer seek to justify. I seek only to suffer. I will shake the hangman’s hand and will call him my brother (WEB, 506)

Now he is ready to accept death. Before Jeremiah goes to 'shake the hangman's hand,' one-eye, a man in the wilderness, kills him and receives the reward for the capture of Jeremiah

Jeremiah's question in the last sheet of his manuscript "was all for naught?" (WEB, 512) is significant as it suggests that all is not for naught. We understand that good grows from evil. In the story of Jeremiah the first evil that we come across is the seduction of Rachel. It leads to a further evil, the killing of Colonel Fort by Jeremiah. The good that comes out of the evil is the knowledge that Jeremiah acquires in the end that Fort had been good and that for having killed Fort he deserves punishment. For Jeremiah, this knowledge is better than redemption itself.
In Warren's portrayal of the feelings of Jeremiah too we find both evil and good.

I had longed to do justice in the world, and what was worthy of praise. Even if my longing was born in vanity and nursed in pride, is that longing to be wholly damned? (wET, 511)

The evil here is the vanity of Jeremiah that makes him think that he is incorruptible. The good born out of the evil is the longing to do something that would establish justice in the world.

Towards the end of the novel Warren brings another picture before us to speculate on — a child dropped by a drab in a ditch. Warren says that despite the mother's fault and tarnishment we know the child's innocence and human worth. Likewise Warren wants us to see the ultimate emergence of moral value even in the crime and vaingloriousness of Jeremiah — the good that comes out of the evil.

In *World Enough and Time*, Warren elaborates the tragedy of a man who suffers due to inner insufficiency. All of Warren's novels portray the tragic wasting of human resources through a continuing failure by the protagonists, however admirable they are, to attain wholeness of vision. The flaw in Warren's heroes is their inability to assess their idealism objectively. The protagonist of Warren does not assess his idealism. He assumes that he is always on the right. Without analysing the pros and cons of his actions, he blindly follows an idealism.
Therefore, it is unexamined idealism). They are sure about their temperamental uniqueness but fail to understand the implications of what they do. Though Jeremiah becomes aware of the wide gap between the longing for glory and the actualities, he is powerless to dispel the disruptive force of that disparity. Frederick P.W. McDowell observes:

the dynamic qualities of Jeremiah, traceable to an unreflective immersion in environmental romanticism, are a self-conscious innocence, an obsessive individualism, self-deception, an aggressive self-aggrandizement, an infinite longing for a disembodied ecstasy or a merging with the "Absolute," an impatience with limitation, a need for single-minded purity in psychology, a histrionic pretentiousness, an idyllic optimism alternating with posturing despair, a sadistic gusto, a pantheistic exaltation, a blunting of moral distinctions and a disregard of social obligations.18

Jeremiah Beaumont is always indecisive. The mystic experience he has when he tastes an icicle from a tree-feeling one with the tree itself and then pass beyond into all the land and sunlight - shows his split soul. When Jeremiah experiences oneness with the tree he is also aware of the fact that he is a separate individual feeling one with the tree. Thus there is oneness and separateness experienced by Jeremiah at the same time showing his split soul. He says,

  My own strength seemed to pass away through my fingers into the very tree. I seemed to

become, the tree, and knew how it was to be rooted in the deep dark of earth and bear with my boughs the weight of glittering ice like joy. Then my substance seemed to pass beyond the trees and into all the land ... spread in the sunlight itself (Web, 31-32).

He is at once Jeremiah and the tree. He mingles with the world when he feels one with the tree and is aloof when he realizes his oneness with the tree and the land beyond. His identity thus remains fragmented. The moments as that of the mystic experience keep fleeting. Every thing happens in time's stride, without prior planning. His impulse to cast off the self occurs after listening to McClardy, a religious man. A mysterious joy descends upon Jeremiah and he has his first sexual experience then, when he goes howling into the woods and finds another creature there. His frenzied, brutal copulation with the nag is impulsive. On another occasion he instinctively plunges into the river seeing a boat and stops knee deep in the water, forgetful of his nakedness. As James H. Justus points out, "The unfulfilled self has been completed neither in romantic gestures of abandonment nor in spiritual enthusiasm." He displays his sense of abandonment when he plunges into the river and spiritual enthusiasm when he feels the power passing through his finger into the tree. Though Jeremiah answers the demands of his impulse and instinct he

remains hollow because he surrenders selfhood. William Bedford Clark states,

"To retreat from life's ironic dimension by taking temporary comfort in facile abstractions ... is to surrender selfhood in favour of a grotesque mask."

The romanticism in Jeremiah inspires in him the quest for infinite achievements and impatience at his limitations. He chooses to live in a world of illusion. It is because of this temperament that he is easily trapped by Skrogg and Wilkie Barron into doing anything that they want. He is thus led to think of Fort as a sacrificial being whose blood will wash away the stain in his honour. Jeremiah tries to make actual events conform to his heroic illusions. He plans a magnificent end for himself and Rachel and consumes laudanum. They do not meet with the expected exalted death, proving to him the falsity of such a subjective ideal. Jeremiah is melodramatic because he wants to establish his identity against the common happenings of the world. He is obsessed with the idea of his own uniqueness.

From the jail Jeremiah and Rachel go to a wilderness in the West. Gran Boz, a pirate, reigns over the region. Gran Boz and his slaves lead a life of degradation as they do not

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follow any moral principles. Jeremiah sleeps with Gran Boz's prostitute. This unscrupulous life Jeremiah leads signifies his inner degradation. In the wilderness Rachel's beauty fades. Jeremiah acquires a venereal sore and Rachel has a blotch on her face, both the sore and the blotch signifying their spiritual decay. Towards the end of the novel the actual world in which he lives is the exact reverse of the world of justice, beauty and perfection which he aspires for, from the beginning of the novel. He longs for an absolute order of the world. In the early chapters of the novel, he reads Plato's *The Symposium* to Rachel and has a vision of the highest beatitude. He despises the actualities of the world due to his aspiration for such a world of Absolute Beauty. Though Jeremiah has moral fervour it is not directed to the community. He is self-centered and rejects society. His own wife charges him with unkindness for merely using her and not loving her. She says,

"Oh, for yourself!" ... "Not for me. For yourself. You came and you used me. You made me hate Fort and you used me. Oh, I didn't hate him, I loved him, and you used me, to kill him (WET, 497-498)"

He realizes his sense of responsibility only towards the end. He also recognizes the evil inherent in man out of which the good has to come. There is a transformation in him as he is ready for punishment. Though we observe romantic excesses in him earlier, towards the end, we find him triumphing over the
forces that thwarted his spirit. He attains Grace by feeling deeply remorseful for murdering Fort. The rigid moral code he sets externally makes him live in an alleged greatness and has instigated him to kill Fort. The internal awakening is effected in the end.

Warren's heroes share some qualities with Shakespeare's tragic heroes Othello and Hamlet. Robert B. Heilman points out,

"Jerry plays Othello to Wilkie's Iago, in a variety of situations. More markedly Jerry is Hamlet, the stunted, the questioner, plotting a revenge ..."\(^{21}\)

John W. Rathbun also finds a similarity between Jeremiah and Hamlet. He observes that both Jeremiah and Hamlet have a talent for thinking too precisely upon the event, but they differ, in Hamlet's hesitancy and Jeremiah's compulsion to define himself through act. Jeremiah is completely responsible for the two climaxes of the novel - the minor climax - where Rachel asks him to kill Fort and the major one where Fort is actually murdered. Jeremiah never becomes aware of the extent to which the worldly intelligence of Wilkie Barron shaped them. Rathbun points out:

Jeremiah's motivations are obscure even to himself, so that what begins as dramatic

self-definition invariably ends in an intenser self-scrutiny that disintegrates the new-found personality. 22

Jeremiah does not want to commit the murder when it would appear incomplete. When Jeremiah gets an opportunity to kill him on the road he does not use it because he feels that Fort should have his secret weakness exposed and he should be killed on the street when people are there and he should feel ashamed. Only then according to Jeremiah will the murder be complete. His delay is Hamletian. In the beginning of the novel we find Jeremiah being obsessed with the recollection of a picture of a female martyr in flames. He always imagines himself as either helping to destroy or rescuing. Though he repeatedly says that he is an unbeliever, he believes in interpreting experiences (as the above mentioned recollection) religiously. He wants his idea to redeem the world and he calls his plan to murder Fort a mission. His final reconciliation comes only after a long search. He thinks that he should admit his guilt and accept the punishment for the sin. Towards the end of the novel it is made clear that everything is for redemption and transformation of the self. Jeremiah's faith in the worth of suffering is .in a sense justified. (implied by his question "was all for naught?", WET, 512.)

Munn Short, the prison keeper's story in *World Enough and Time* is like Proudfit's story in *Night Rider*. When Munn Short tells Jeremiah his story of sin, repentance and conversion, Jeremiah ignores it. Later he has the same type of experience as Short.

Warren uses the images of fire and blood frequently in the novel to signify destruction. When Jeremiah and his maternal grandfather Marcher discuss the bankruptcy of the recently deceased father of Jeremiah, the old man is staring at the flame of the candle. He tells his grandson that he would inherit the property if he rejects his father's name 'Beaumont' and if not, the old man would burn down with his own hand, the house he had built and let his bones rest in the ashes (*WET*, 21). Jeremiah very often thinks of the flames surrounding a young woman martyr bound to the stake. When Wilkie Barron and his mother converse they are seated by the fire and Mrs. Barron throws the core of the apple she is munching into the fire (*WET*, 41). There is revivalist imagery in the murder of Fort. Jeremiah thinks that "the blood of Fort will clear him...." (*ET, 180*). He would bathe in it and be clean. When he goes on his errand he wears a red ribbon (in the colour of blood). Soon after the murder, he thinks of his own blood to be shed in retribution and then gets a feeling of great lightness and cleansing. In the end Wilkie Barron shoots himself through the heart without having left a single
spatter of blood on the floor (\textit{\textsc{wet}}, 509). It is an echo of the theological principle that one's sin is wiped out in the shedding of blood. Since Wilkie Aarron does not shed blood in spite of having shot himself through the heart, it is implied that there is no remission of sin for him.

In novel after novel Warren uses images to convey the meaningful aspects of life. The clearing and the forest in the concluding part of the novel are symbols of the inner division of the self.

When Jeremiah recollects the picture of the young martyr, he is torn between the desire to rescue her and also at the same time the wish to light the fire himself. Charles H. Bohner feels that the picture becomes a "paradigm of his relationship with Rachel Jordan and his meditation on the 'paradox and doubleness of life' (\textit{\textsc{wet}}, 114)."

From the beginning to the time when the murder is committed we find Jeremiah's longing for reparation of the wrong done to Rachel. Out of a sense of chivalry he goes to her and compels her to tell him about the seduction and the loss of her still-born child and extracts from her the command to kill Fort. Jeremiah takes the vow that he and his wife will make what world they will. Immediately he wants to commit the gratuitous act of killing Fort and redressing the wrong. (Since Jeremiah wants to do it without expecting anything in return

\textsuperscript{23} Charles H. Bohner, Robert Penn Warren, p. 111.
and because he is doing it on his own it is a gratuitous act) He feels that it is the perfect act and "self-defining and since defining self, defining all else" (WET, 181). Jeremiah sees Percival Skrogg abused by greater force and plunges to his defence, an action as selfless and uncalculated as his championship of Rachel's honour. Wilkie Barron the man of world and Skrogg the man of idea use Jeremiah as their tool.

About Wilkie Barron Warren tells us that whatever Wilkie does is only,

For the fun of being Wilkie Barron, who was all the world, or rather was the mask of the world and was therefore nothing (WET, 502).

In Jeremiah's words:

Wilkie was but the world, either seed of the world or mask of the world, ... and would justify himself only by the world. ... So Skroogg for his idea of justice had, in the end, sent Fort to my knife, and me to the rope (WET, 505).

Thus Barron (indicating barrenness) and Skroogg who are emblematic of the division in man - world and idea - draw Jeremiah into politics. Jeremiah who wants to purify himself in privacy, awakened "to the fullness of life" (WET, 41), decides "to show [to] the world in the world's way" (WET, 182). To Jeremiah the world is nothing and he is safe in it only because of the fact that he is redeemed by the "idea" (WET, 233). He feels that
very soon the idea will redeem the world: "I would submit the idea to the way of the world." (WET, 233)

When Barron schemes an escape from the prison, Rachel and Jeremiah flee into an entirely different world. This is another stage in his search for selfhood. Here we get the story of the pirate Gran Boz, who leads a community in the heart of the wilderness. In the forest, Jeremiah develops an attitude to live according to his natural inclinations and contracts venereal disease. In the past he had been cherishing an idea that he should redress the wrongs of the world. But now he takes life in its stride. He is happy now as he is one with the world: "to deny the idea and its loneliness and embrace the world as all" (WET, 505). Unable to bear the strain, Rachel loses her mental balance and before stabbing herself to death she accuses Jeremiah of having used her to kill Fort whom she loves. Her death makes Jeremiah realize his sin:

I killed Cassius Fort, in darkness and deceit, and that was a crime. But I do not seek expiation merely for that nor for what I did to Rachel, greater crime as it is, to go to her not for her sake but my own and to defile her mind, and torture her until she cried for Fort's blood, and lead him into ruin for my vainglory. ... Nor that I entered upon politics and fought for New Court, not for conviction and love of justice, but for a black need within me. ... No, that crime for which I seek expiation is never lost. It is always there. It is unpardonable. It is the crime of self, the crime of life. The Crime is I." (WET, 504-525).
Finally, Jeremiah sees himself as a murderer, a guilty man. He writes:

I no longer seek to justify. I seek only to suffer. I will shake the hangman's hand and will call him my brother, at last. (WET, 506).

He is willing to surrender and accept death by hanging. His knowledge gives him identity. In Warren's words:

Fulfillment is only in the degree of recognition of the common lot of our kind. And that is the death of vanity, And that is the beginning of virtue. 24

What Jeremiah believes now is that salvation lies in expiation. When he writes that he wants to shake the hangman's hands, he means that his salvation is to come publicly. Jeremiah who had been living in spiritual pride assuming that he had been better than all the other people in the world realizes his sin after Rachel's death and is ready to shake the hangman's hand accepting the fact that he is superior to none. He is redeemed as he readily acknowledges himself as an ordinary human being like the hangman.

Warren has taken the phrase for his title from Andrew Marvell's poem 'To His Coy Mistress': "Had we but World Enough and Time/This coyness Lady were no crime." The message

Andrew Marvell conveys in the poem is that we should seize the present moment and try to understand its significance and make the best use of it. In spite of the forces that threaten Jeremiah, he has established an order. This order that is set finally in actuality is different from the order he seeks to bring about. In the early part of the novel he takes law into his hands and tries to make the world obey his law by relentlessly killing Fort. But in the end he wants to abide by the world order which sees him as a criminal, a murderer.

The epigraph to Band of Angels (1955) the third novel discussed in the present chapter sums up the theme of the novel

When shall I be dead and rid of the wrong my father did?

The heroine Amantha Starr (Kanty) wants to acquire self-knowledge as revealed in the beginning of the novel by her question: "Oh, who am I?" (BOA, 3) She achieves self-knowledge only when she accepts her past. The novel is told from the first person view of Amantha Starr. The story explores the painful answer to the question 'Who am I?' (BOA, 3). She has another desire - to know who everybody else is. The significant theme of the novel is the search for selfhood in each individual whom the protagonist meets.
Amantha's father, a white plantation owner, who loves and protects her, dies suddenly. Since her mother is a negro slave he should have given her the manumission papers to free her. But he fails to do so and Amantha is sold as a chattel. Hamish Bond who buys her is kind to her and she becomes his mistress. When he manumits her and sends her away she meets Tobias Sears and gets married to him. She hides her negro identity from him. Seth Parton an idealist, her companion during her school days at Oberlin, blackmails her saying that he would tell her husband about her past. Finally she herself reveals it to Tobias.

Both husband and wife try to resolve the problem of identity which plagues them. Both Amantha and Sears run from their origins which pursue them faster than they can escape and they both face the reality. They realize that the world is not made of bands of angels but of human beings. They both accept their fathers as they are touched by the affection existing between one Mr. Lounberry and his father, Uncle Slop. She realizes that it is her father's affection for her that stood in his way of accepting her as a negro and give her the manumission papers. Thus she acquires knowledge of her father and herself. A similar change occurs in Tobias Sears. He is reconciled to his dead father Leonidas Sears. Mr. Lounberry's cleaning and clothing of his dirty father Uncle Slop is like...
a ritual of purification for Tobias Sears — an honour rendered
to the father and an acceptance of the past.

The minor gestures of love that Joshua Lounberry extends
to his father bring about an awakening in Tobias and he
realizes that it is to make him understand his responsibility
that his father had repudiated him in his will without giving
him even a cent of his land. He is redeemed by this acceptance
of his father, which in turn leads to accepting the negro
blood of his wife too. Thus both get reconciled to their
origin. Amantha accepts her father and understands his worth.
She realizes that her father did not give her the manumission
papers because as she thinks:

that would declare me less than what he had
led me to believe I was, his true and beloved
child; ... was seeking, hopefully, some way
to send me North, keep me North, see me
established in a land far away, and he had not
believed that he would die (BOA, 373-374).

Rau-Ru, a negro slave who was with her in Hamish Bond's place
and Seth Parton her companion at Oberlin who keep reminding
her of the past, are the cause for her turmoil. Since she
does not want Tobias to know her past identity — as the
daughter of a negro woman — she feels perturbed. Tranquillity
is acquired when she readily accepts the past and reveals
everything to Tobias.
Faith and forgiveness are the two aspects of life which find their meaning in *Band of Angels*. As one begins to read the novel one would be puzzled at the first words, "Oh, who am I?" (BOA, 3). Warren's characters have asked this quite often. As we continue reading the novel we find Amantha to be an egotist trying to escape from things as they are. She does everything as she pleases and in John L. Stewart's view:

... let[s] someone else take all the responsibility. She wants to remain a privileged child for ever ... Only after much wandering and suffering does she win freedom by accepting them and their claims upon her. At last she has something outside her own willfulness to tell her who and what she is.25

Warren introduces the theme in the very first sentence of the book. The protagonist gains sympathy for the anguish she is experiencing. She is deprived of her identity because of her mixed blood. Hamish Bond who comes to protect Amantha's honour, is one of the lost people in Warren's world. He is said to be one of the lost people because in his childhood he nurtures hatred for his mother. He dislikes his father who hunches his shoulder. He runs away from home as his mother is against his wish to join a ship as a common labourer. Having lost his right leg, he has a phycial loss too. Though he is rich and well-placed, his fate is also bound up with race as Amantha's is. In his childhood Hamish Bond's name was

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Alec Hinks; his youth is affected by an estrangement with his mother. His mother keeps boasting about owning thousands of slaves. He remembers her lamentations for the negroes who served her and just to spite her, has now become a slave trader.

After leaving his parents Hamish Bond takes his job in the ship and makes money. While he is in the army, his right leg is wounded and doesn't heal properly. He meets Prieur-Denis, a cousin in Paris, who makes secret investments with Bond. Bond then writes to Prieur-Denis in New Orleans that he has a document to be sent to him—a document from his grand kinsman in Paris—and thus he comes to New Orleans as Hamish Bond the cousin of Prieur-Denis. The very fact that he is not known to anybody as Alec Hinks is proof enough that he already has lost his childhood identity. He seeks self-definition by accepting the past in a negative way. Warren repeatedly stresses that Bond's kindness is his disease.

By extending kindness to the slaves Bond is actually accepting his mother whom he always rejected because of her ideas about the slave. His kindness to the slaves is an action against his mother's wish. Having lost his identity as Alec Hinks he is not to be identified as his mother's son. Yet the present Hamish Bond asserts the identity of the former Alec Hinks' mother by going against her will as he remarks sarcastically:
slave-trading is not respectable. It is just respectable to own them. The more you own them the more respectable. "Yes my mother always wanted me to be respectable" (BOA, 199).

In the end when the negroes come in a rally and kill the white masters, Bond sees Amantha coming with them. Amantha is not a participant in the Negro cause but has just aimlessly come walking along the road to where the negroes are. Hamish Bond is tied with ropes and stands on the top of a cotton bale. Seeing Amantha, he imagines that she is one of the negroes who have come to kill him. Unable to bear her ingratitude he jumps down from the top of the wagon hanging himself and dies uttering "you too" (BOA, 323). Here again we are reminded of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar breathing his last with the words: 'Et tu Brute.' Without identifying the deeper self of Amantha, Hamish dies. This scene shows that the emphasis in the story has shifted from the private suffering of Amantha to the public ordeal of the Civil War. It is the common practice of a historical novelist like Warren to amalgamate the public and private actions. According to Walter Sullivan if such an amalgamation is properly done and if the character is,

truly drawn in terms of the historical context, then it is essential to the scope and success of the work that the smaller, private images participate in and at best become one with the larger configurations which have been constructed out of the alarms and exigencies of the past.26

Another character drawn to the historical cause is Sears. He volunteers to lead the Negro troops and later works for the Freedman's Bureau. He seeks a new identity in the cause of the negro. Amantha again tries to get self-definition by identifying herself with the whites first and then with the negroes. The negroes' plight and the concern of the white for the negro is a historical fact.

Warren has given her a half-caste status, which implies that she can have no identity either with the whites or with the negroes. After the death of Hamish Bond, she tells Cromwell's soldiers that she is white. Here she does it only to protect herself and not because she has found her identity as a white. Rau-Ru who till then accuses her of having been the cause of Bond's death, joins her and tells Cromwell's men that she is not a nigger. When he says this to save her, he does it because he has acknowledged her identity as a negro and wants her at least to be saved. She then takes some money from Tobias' house and flees. She tells herself that she would hide in the daylight:

"I would hide in the commonness of daylight; which is a darkness deeper than the darkness of sleep and of nightmare for that darkness is a blaze that lights up everything" (BOA, 334).

How can one hide in daylight? She means either that she will mingle with the others without allowing her individual identity
to be noticed or that in the daytime she will be wearing a mask as the others do hiding the secret recesses of her heart and mind like those, that Oliver Goldsmith is disgusted with in his 'City Night Piece.' Goldsmith sees the secret recesses of the cunning people allowed a free play in the night. He remarks that their masks are removed only in the night and the real depths are seen then. Why does Amantha say that it is a 'darkness deeper than that of sleep or nightmare'? (BOA, 334). Because even the intellectuals may not be able to probe into the depth and understand one's identity as one really is. Appearances are deceptive. In the daylight what every individual has is only an appearance and what he really is cannot be known. This darkness is 'a blaze that lights up everything' (BOA, 334) because the probing starts only from here - that is, analysis starts as to why the person's identity is concealed in the mask. When an analysis begins, one will arrive at a solution tearing the mask and in this examination the identity will be achieved. Similar to her question 'who am I?' (BOA, 3). Amantha has another wish 'if I could only be free' (BOA, 3). She asks herself 'free from what?' (BOA, 362). She says that all the men she met did not set her free. Hamish Bond's kindness is hateful and it is not he who has set her free. Tobias had left her at the moment she felt free and Rau-Hu preferred his own death to setting her free. She realizes in the end: 'Nobody can set you free ... except yourself (BOA, 363-364).
Amantha Starr is not sure of herself. At Cincinatti, when she is a nine year-old-girl, she is under the 'glittering infection of Miss Idell' and 'yearned toward the brightness of Miss Idell (BOA, 26). Later on, at Oberlin at the same age she says that her 'religious sense ripened and she has wept for her incorrigible vanity' (BOA, 26). Her heart 'yearned for some poor ribbon' and she 'strove in prayer against' (BOA, 26) her yearning to be beautiful. She is torn between the two selves in her.

Amantha relates the incidents that led to a change in her feeling for her father. It begins with her request to him to set the negro slaves free. In her words: "I told him that he jeopardized my soul by making me live on black sweat" (BOA, 30). She sees a mixture of puzzlement, distress and irritation on her father's face. She says that she was then a little girl of thirteen, not knowing her own identity as a negro woman's daughter, without realizing negro blood in her, she vomits thinking of her living on negro sweat. She puts it:

... and one night I vomited, I must confess that this last was caused less by moral horror than by the sudden image of myself spooning happily into a steaming cauldron of black sweat (BOA, 29).

She continues that she then saw a picture of a little girl wearing white clothes pleading with her father, convicting him
of error and saving his soul. She also sees the negroes Jacob, Marthy and Aunt Sukie clad in white. Though Amantha feels strange, this picture that comes to her mind is significant as she herself is of mixed blood as revealed later.

The incidents narrated by Amantha shows the gradual alienation she develops. When her father feels sorry for his inability to free the slaves she says,

... there came to me some hard sense of an advantage just gained, not to be exploited yet but held in reserve, some possibility of self-justification and of revenge. So I made no reply (BOA, 32).

She feels a sneaking sense of loss and alienation when she discusses with Ellie, her father's salvation. About Ellie and others she remarks: "How well I knew them already! And how fully I believed them" (BOA, 37). Such a statement is ironical as she does not know her own identity and is confused more as she rejects her father as well. She keeps finding fault with him even for gestures of affection, she states: "But I noted, without quite putting my observation into words, a certain excess in his attention to me" (BOA, 42).

She feels that "something denied his very identity" (BOA, 43). Even after his death, before she knows about her negro blood she reveals, "I was suspended in the vacuum of no identity," (BOA, 62). After her mixed racial identity is
revealed, her hatred for her father is complete. She is not able to accept the fact that her mother is a negro. She is frustrated and feels that life is monotonous.

As the story unfolds we find Amantha feeling a failure of the self. We are sure that it is because she is not able to impose a discipline within herself for freedom of action. It is clear from her preoccupation:

If I could only be free, I used to think, free from the lonely nothingness of being only yourself when the world flees away and free from the closing walls that would crush you to nothingness (BOA, 3).

Just before thinking thus she questions herself, 'Oh, who am I?' (BOA, 3). She wants to be free from the burden of not knowing her identity - "the lonely nothingness of being"

Her lack of knowledge of self curbs her free action. Craving for freedom and knowledge of identity which are the key themes of the novel are interlinked in Amantha's case.

Amantha is happy about being known by others at least. While at Hamish Bond's place, Bond waits for her before dinner, getting her place set. She thinks: "Had he been sure I would come? I felt a flicker of anger at him for being sure" (BOA, 113) She continues,

Then, coming right with the anger, I felt a kind of warm comforting peace at the thought that somebody did know or care, what you were going to do (BOA, 113).
At night she imagines how it would have been, had the place for her at the dining table not been set. She is struck with a chill at the thought of such a coldness and rejection. This condition of hers proves her inability to cope with life as an adult is expected to do. She demands freedom as an adult does, but requires care as a child does. She is also trying to escape from any responsibility as she herself admits on two different occasions:

So I learned the trick of sinking into the day's occupation, into human commitment, into the night's dream of Tobias' return. He would come again... and save me (BOA, 250-251).

... I would flee into the commonness of life, the life of people one saw on the street, into the common meaninglessness, or meaningfulness, it did not matter which so long as it was different from whatever had been I would escape into the averageness, the dullness (BOA, 334).

She thinks that the world is cruel and develops a feeling of insecurity. In her need for love and protection she cries when alone, in her bedroom. In her self-pity she becomes self-centered and betrays all the men who try to protect her - Her father, Hamish Bond, Tobias Sears and Kai Ru. Amantha, for instance, is the cause of the death of Hamish Bond. For her to attain freedom she has to first acquire self-identity. Self-identity is hard to attain as she is confused and is in anguish at the treachery of her father. She does not know whether she has identity as a white or as a negro. Leslie A. Fielder believes that,
... she longs with equal attraction and shrinks with equal repulsion from both her poles, black and white. 27

When she fears that Tobias might not accept her negro identity she goes to Rau-Ru asking him to show to her the welts on his back which he received for protecting her earlier from the white man Charles de Marigny Priéru-Denis. Annoyed at her belated concern for the negroes he strikes her. Later, after Bond's death when the men from the pirogues (the men of Lieutenant Oliver Cromwell, i.e. Rau-Ru in his new identity) arrive, she tells them: "I'm not nigger, I'm not nigger - I'm white and he made me come" (MOA, 332). Thus she shifts her identities as it suits her convenience as she has a double identity - as a negro and a white.

Tobias and Amantha go to the West and are away there for about twenty years. They seek certainty of self. When they are in Halesbury, Kansas, Amantha finally realizes that nobody else but one's own self can set one free. The story of Uncle Slop and his son Lounberry open their eyes to reality. They both accept the past by getting reconciled to their fathers.

In Band of Angels Warren uses the image of the human hand, to indicate a sense of protection it extends to one in trouble. Because of the self-imposed morality of the Oberlinites

Amantha changes her attitude to her father. Then Ellie and Seth Parton tell her that her father exploits the negroes and gives them whiskey to fool them. Seth Parton advises her not to be concerned with persons but with truth. As he speaks he waves in a sweeping motion his long angular right hand against the sky. Amantha recollects:

The hand opened, all at once, at the end of his gesture, as though it released something, and flung that thing away. I had the distinct image that the hand flung my father away. (BOA, 37)

After this experience Amantha suffers "perturbation of spirit" (BOA, 40). Her father seems very far away and she feels guilty as she loves him too. She prays to be delivered. The next morning Seth Parton tells her that love must be in the name of Truth. Amantha explains:

The spla-jointed fingers of the big hand on the family bible of the Purpins' were spreading and unspreading in a slow, desperate rhythm. Suddenly, he jerked his hand off, as though he had touched a hot stove. He studied the hand with enormous curiosity. Then fortified he returned to me,... (BOA, 40-41)

He tells her that he would have made himself clear to her. Later Seth Parton offers to teach her Hebrew. She works on a book specified by him. She says that in these days she yearned to touch, even with the most fleeting touch of a finger, the cold-redened, raw-boned wrist that extended before her on the board (BCA, 48).
Later she holds Hamish Bond's hand and feels secure as she relates:

I hung on to Hamish's hand, tighter, and tried not to think what he was saying. If I thought too much about that, I didn't know whose hand it was, and I felt that if I let that hand go, I would slip off the edge of something and go falling (BOA, 189).

The turbulence of Amantha caused by the fear that she is alone and nothing, is wiped away by the sight of a hand as that of Seth Parton that gives her the direction to fling away the father or like that of Hamish Bond which indicates love or protection to her. The hand thus signifies many hopeful aspects of life to Amantha.

With the rejection of her father Amantha's search for identity begins. When the search begins, she suffers uncertainty and even the temporary pleasures she experiences from the flattering attentions of Seth Parton vanish. Exposed as a negro, her sole purpose in life is to seek her true identity. She is now reduced to being a chattel. Hamish Bond tries to have a hold on her by giving her an illusion of freedom. She readily submits to his desires. The identity she has gained now is as the favourite slave of Bond. He is kind but is afraid that he might cease to possess her. Charles H. Bohner observes:
Each relationship is defined by an incident in which an older man leaps quixotically to the protection of a young girl, from which she gains some hard secret sense of advantage (BOA, 185). 28

When Hamish Bond puts to test the weakness of Charles, by instructing him to teach Amantha horse riding, he tries to seduce her. Rau-Ru, the negro comes to her rescue. Here again Amantha's black-white polarity is maintained according to Charles H. Bohner. The identity she has gained now is that of a young lady who can attract both white man and nigger alike, demonstrating her negro blood and white blood. But, Amantha feels aloof and does not understand why they are destroying themselves for her sake. After marrying Tobias she feels that, by the denial of her past history she will get an affirmation of her identity as his wife. Then again Seth Parton and Miss Idell shatter her peace. Now her past seems to be a shaping force in her present. She confesses her negro identity to her husband and then hopes to have an assertive identity. But, loses again, as a seeker. Because she sees him biting his finger till it bleeds, not being able to digest the fact of her being a negro. Seeking her identity as a negro she goes to Rau-Ru. For a long period of time she is only a seeker and not a finder. But finally when she accepts her past and gets reconciled to her father about whom she tells us in the beginning:

he didn't believe in whipping ... Also my father was a humane man, and in the years of my recollection he had never had to sell off a soul. In fact selling your people was against his principles (BOA, 17).

After the reconciliation she sees only this kind and noble man in her father and gets self-knowledge as to who she is and understands that "nobody can set you free ... except yourself" (BOA, 363-364). In this respect of the protagonist finding her identity, Band of Angels differs from Night Rider where the hero dies without knowing his identity. In World Enough and Time too, the hero is reconciled by being ready for punishment for his sin like the protagonist of Band of Angels. All these protagonists and the other characters in the novels realize that ideals and illusions however admirable, exist only in their minds. These are different from what reality is.

The conflict between the ideal and the real is settled by achieving the realization that they can be reconciled only by accepting their polar existence in the realm of the mind and the world of experience.