ROBERT PENN WARREN'S ARCHETYPAL TRIPTYCH: A STUDY
REBIRTH IN THE CAVE, WILDERNESS, AND FLOOD

APPROVED:

Graduate Committee:

Richard B. Sale
Major Professor

J. W. Logan
Minor Professor

E. W. Mitchell
Committee Member

Saw H. Henderson
Committee Member

E. S. Clifton
Chairman of the Department of English

Robert B. Toulouse
Dean of the Graduate School

Robert Penn Warren, historian, short story writer, teacher, critic, poet, and novelist, has received favorable attention from literary critics as well as the general reading public. This attention is merited, in part, by Warren's narrative skill and by his use of imagery. A study of his novels reveals that his narrative technique and his imagery are closely related to his interest in myth. Myth is defined by Warren as "a fiction, a construct, which expresses a truth and affirms a value." He believes that "myth represents a primary exercise of sensibility in which thought and feeling are one. It is a total communication." In all of his novels, but particularly in The Cave, Wilderness, and Flood, Warren suggests his interest in the past, in violence, and in man's constant search for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. Warren illustrates these themes by his use of three archetypal myths: the Garden Myth, the Myth of the Journey, and what Mircea Eliade has called the Myth of the Eternal Return, i.e., the Myth of Rebirth.

Several characters in each of these three novels encounter both true and false gardens during their journeys toward self-fulfillment and self-knowledge. Isaac Sumpter in The Cave
succumbs to the temptation to retreat into a false garden existence; at the end of the novel Sumpter dreams of his life amid exotic, siren-like women in a world of Seconal and Scotch. Adam Rosenzweig, the protagonist in Wilderness, resists the false gardens presented to him along his route from New York to Kentucky. He finds knowledge and partial fulfillment in the wilderness glade—his true garden. In Flood the two protagonists, Yasha Jones and Bradwell Tolliver, come to Fiddlersburg, Tennessee to witness the last days of a town and its people, facing relocation because of the flood waters of the Tennessee Valley Authority's dam construction. This garden-like atmosphere of the old Fiddler home provides the setting in which both men find a large measure of self-knowledge and self-fulfillment.

The Myth of the Journey is also illustrated in each of these three novels. Isaac Sumpter journeys from his home in Johntown, Tennessee to a university in Nashville before he returns to Johntown. His is a negative journey in that he does not accept knowledge about himself, and his last journey is flight to a passive existence in a false garden. Adam Rosenzweig's journey from Bavaria to America is a positive journey in that he experiences self-knowledge and achieves self-fulfillment. In Flood both Jones and Tolliver find self-knowledge and fulfillment at the end of their journeys.

The Rebirth myth is suggested several times in the novels. In The Cave Isaac Sumpter contemplates putting out an artificial
light, which he has carried with him into the cave in which Jasper Harrick is trapped, and staying forever in that womb-like existence. He eventually emerges, but his emergence is an aborted rebirth since he refuses to accept life-giving knowledge. In Wilderness Adam Rosenzweig feels "as if he has been reborn" from the glade in Kentucky. Yasha Jones, in Flood, marries Maggie Tolliver and together they journey to Greece where Jones is working on a new film that he can finally be proud of while they await the birth of their first child. His friend, Tolliver, realizing that "there is no country but the heart," faces his new life after having been almost killed by a bullet from his former brother-in-law's pistol.

The archetypal images of the protagonist's journey, his rebirth and regeneration, and his integration into society are complementary to and symbolic of the process which Warren's characters go through during their journeys through life and their consequent re-evaluation of their own relationships with other men. The archetypal image study illuminates aspects of Warren's philosophy of "cosmic osmosis." Warren has said, "If poetry does anything for us, it reconciles, by its symbolic reading of experience (for by its very nature it is in itself a myth of the unity of being), the self-devisive inter-necine malices which arise at the superficial level on which we conduct most of our living." This myth-psychological approach to Warren's novels, particularly to his use of three archetypal myths--the Myth of the Garden, the Journey, and
Rebirth—in *The Cave*, *Wilderness*, and *Flood*, shows how Warren richly illustrates his themes and expresses his philosophy of the unity of being.
ROBERT PENN WARREN'S ARCHETYPAL TRIPTYCH: A STUDY
REBIRTH IN THE CAVE, WILDERNESS, AND FLOOD

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Billie Ray Phillips, M. A.

Denton, Texas

December, 1971
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. ROBERT PENN WARREN AND MYTH CRITICISM:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A RELATIONSHIP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ROBERT PENN WARREN AND THE CRITICS:</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A REVIEW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. WARREN'S USE OF THE MYTH OF THE GARDEN</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Garden Myth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True and False Gardens in The Cave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilderness Gardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Garden Myth and Flood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. WARREN AND THE JOURNEY MYTH</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Myth of the Journey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Journey in The Cave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wilderness Journey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood: The Journey Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE MYTH OF REBIRTH</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Myth of the Eternal Return</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebirth in The Cave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purification after Battle: Wilderness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood: Redemption by Love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. ROBERT PENN WARREN AND FUTURE JOURNEYS:</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A CONCLUSION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

ROBERT PENN WARREN AND MYTH CRITICISM:

A RELATIONSHIP

Robert Penn Warren is an anomaly; he is a kind of Renaissance Man who lives in a twentieth century world that encourages specialism. His work shows him to be vitally interested in detail and specification. Rather than limiting Warren's scope, his attention to detail and specification has contributed favorably to his reputation as a knowledgeable teacher of both English and drama, a respected critic, and an acclaimed playwright, novelist, short story writer, and poet. When he was sixteen he went to Vanderbilt University to study science. In 1923 his first published poem, "Crusade," appeared in The Fugitive, a journal which he helped edit with Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and Donald Davidson. One of the early fruits of his association with the Fugitive group was "The Briar Patch," which was collected and published along with eleven other Fugitive essays in I'Ll Take My Stand (1930). A year earlier his biography, John Brown: The Making of a Martyr, had been published. He began teaching at Louisiana State University in 1934, where he helped to found The Southern Review and edit it from 1935 to 1942. His first collection of poems was published in 1935, Thirty-Six Poems. In addition to biography and poetry,
Warren's body of social and literary criticism and short stories has grown.

By the winter of 1937-38 he was working on a verse-play, Proud Flesh, which he later rewrote and published as the novel All the King's Men, for which he was awarded his first Pulitzer Prize. With the writing of Night Rider (1939), At Heaven's Gate (1943), All the King's Men (1946), World Enough and Time (1950), Band of Angels (1955), The Cave (1959), Wilderness (1961), and Flood (1964), Warren has steadily published a body of material which has merited the respect and attention of his contemporaries. In 1951 he published Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices. In addition he has been teaching both drama and English at Yale, editing textbooks, recasting both historical events and mythology for young people (Remember the Alamo!, How Texas Won Her Freedom: The Story of Sam Houston and the Battle of San Jacinto, The Gods of Mount Olympus), and reviewing books. He is also becoming recognized as an historical journalist who is concerned generally with common problems all men face but specifically with the problems mentioned in the titles of his books—Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South (1956), The Legacy of the Civil War (1961), and Who Speaks for the Negro? (1965). While Warren's 1951 play, The Wedding Ring, has yet to be published and his proposed dramatic television series with David M. Clay, "This Very Spot" (1952), did not reach the production stage, these
attempts serve as reminders of the many areas of interest of the author.¹

Warren's prose fiction has been generally well received by the critics, by students, and by the reading public. The more perceptive of his readers have recognized his many variations on the theme of man's quest for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. His success in dealing with this eternal search is due to his scholarship and interest in history and to his creative, narrative artistry. In the Foreward to Brother to Dragons Warren labels history "the big myth we live" and poetry "the little myth we make."² Such a statement challenges critics to explore at least three areas. It challenges critics to explore the relationships between history and poetry, particularly between the recording of fact and the creation of fiction, and it challenges them to search out Warren's concept of myth and its uses in his work.


² Robert Penn Warren, Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices (New York: Random House, 1953), p. xii. Further references to this work are noted in the text by the abbreviation BD and line number.
Warren's abiding concern with the artist's treatment of history, not only as a record of the past but also as a presentation that man can look to in order to justify his existence, seems to demand more of a critic than either historical, comparative, or stylistic analyses can provide. Several studies are available which provide historical information about a nineteenth century episode which is generally referred to today as the Kentucky Tragedy, and a cursory reading of Louisiana history enables one to spot similarities between Huey Long's administration and Willie Stark's. What a study of history reveals about Robert Penn Warren's literature is that some elements of creativity, not yet fully accounted for, have allowed Warren to use the historical facts of the Kentucky Tragedy in such a way as to create a more widely accepted fictional account of the Beauchamp-Sharp affair than either Edgar Allan Poe or William Gilmore Simms was able


to create—have allowed for the creation of Warren's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *All the King's Men*, and have been absent from John Dos Passos', Hamilton Basso's, and Adria Locke Langley's forgotten attempts to create fiction from the historical events in Louisiana.

In his quotation from and discussion of William Wordsworth, Richard Chase suggests an answer: "There is," he says,

> a dark
> Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, makes them cling together
> In one society.

This 'dark inscrutable workmanship' is what I call the Prometheus function of myth. Just as historical knowledge and stylistic dexterity alone do not always enable one to "make" poetry, critical approaches that are limited to considerations of history or to stylistic analyses of literature will illuminate the "dark inscrutable workmanship" only partially.

Warren's attitude that scholarship, history, the creative act, and literature are inseparably bound together should not be ignored. In order to achieve that special effectiveness which results from Warren's creation of fiction from fact, Warren infuses the language of poetic imagination into his historical narrative. That infusion is necessary before history becomes poetry. It is necessary for the communication of the historical interpretation. It is necessary because history is

---

once removed from fact, and the fact may not have been comprehensible to man in the first place. The recorded fact, history, is then reality as man understands, interprets, and records it, but this understanding of factual event is often incomplete or faulty, or both. The "little myth" which the artist makes allows man to conceive of both the past and the present more completely than a rendition of the fact, filtered through the historian, allows him to. The making of the "little myth" provides a mode by which man can see connections and relationships and understand motivation and conduct that might otherwise be hidden if his knowledge were limited to recorded history. Poetry has the power to re-create symbolically even non-discursive motivation and conduct by its use of image, symbol, and metaphor—the language of myth. Poetry is not only a record of factual event, but also the re-creation of otherwise ineffable epiphanies.

Warren's novels suggest the need for a critical approach that allows for careful examination of image, symbol, and metaphoric language as these elements function in literature; such an examination of Warren's language and its function belongs to an approach to literature that has become known as myth criticism. This approach has found support in the criticism of Northrop Frye and others. Lately John Vickery has

attempted to assimilate and summarize some of the general principles of myth criticism.

First, the creating of myths, the mythopoeic faculty, is inherent in the thinking process and answers a basic human need. Second, myth forms the matrix out of which literature emerges both historically and psychologically. As a result, literary plots, characters, themes, and images are basically complications and displacements of similar elements in myths and folktales. . . . Third, not only can myth stimulate the creative artist, but it also provides concepts and patterns which the critic may use to interpret specific works of literature. Knowing the grammar of myth, it is argued, gives a greater precision and form to our reading of the language of literature. In recognizing that mythic features reside beneath as well as on the surface of a work, myth criticism differs substantially from earlier treatments of the mythological in literature. Fourth and last, the ability of literature to move us profoundly is due to its mythic quality, to its possession of mana, the numinous, or the mystery in the face of which we feel an awed delight or terror at the world of man. The real function of literature in human affairs is to continue myth's ancient and basic endeavor to create a meaningful place for man in a world oblivious to his presence.7

Northrop Frye, Maud Bodkin, and John Vickery have suggested guidelines, and Robert Penn Warren has created a body of literature to be explored. However, caution must be taken;


7Myth and Literature, p. ix.
for as J. R. R. Tolkien, writing to critics about their approaches to *Beowulf*, warns:

> The significance of a myth is not easily to be pinned on paper by analytical reasoning. It is at its best when it is presented by a poet who feels rather than makes explicit what his theme portends; who presents it incarnate in the world of history and geography. . . . Its defender is thus at a disadvantage: unless he is careful, and speaks in parables, he will kill what he is studying by vivisection, and he will be left with a formal or mechanical allegory, and, what is more, probably with one that will not work. For myth is alive at once and in all its parts, and dies before it can be dissected. It is possible, I think, to be moved by the power of myth and yet to misunderstand the sensation, to ascribe it wholly to something else that is also present: to metrical art, style, or verbal skill. 8

This comment leaves the critic without a vocabulary, and the only way he can discuss myth as it is embodied in a work of literature is to write his own poem or novel. To artists, who are also critics, that course is sometimes taken; to others is left whatever critical approach to literature each feels will illuminate the work without killing it by vivisection. The promising approach of myth criticism attempts to illuminate a work by showing how myth functions in it. My discussion of Warren's work, particularly his last three novels, *The Cave*, *Wilderness*, and *Flood*, would attempt to point out how Warren's language and narrative skill make expressible the myths that illuminate universal realities.

One need not know Warren's critical precepts before he approaches the novels; however a critic of Warren's stature can offer valuable insights to his own work. While he is not usually considered a myth critic, the approach to literature practiced by the New Critics, with whom Warren is usually considered, makes use of techniques sympathetic to the myth critic's approach. It is not wise to attempt to summarize the tenets of any critical approach to literature, but the tenets of both the New Critics and the myth critics do include a close examination of the work studied. Both approaches necessitate close analyses of literature with particular attention being paid to the use authors make of symbol, image, and metaphor. Neither approach requires biographical study because neither approach attempts to psychoanalyze the artist. This lack of biographical interest suggests that a work of art exists independently from the artist, but one should remember Leslie Fiedler's warning, in "Archetype and Signature," to the effect that any dogmatism in literary criticism is dangerous, including a critic's refusal to consider biographical material in his study.9

Of primary interest to the myth critic, as it would be to the New Critics, is the narrative itself, Warren's symbolic rendering of man's quest for self-knowledge and for self-fulfillment. This central theme of his novels is succinctly

stated in *Brother to Dragons* when Robert Penn Warren, the narrator, asks, "What is any knowledge?" To which he provides the answer:

*The recognition of the direction of fulfillment is the death of self*

*And the death of the self is the beginning of selfhood. All else is surrogate of hope and destitution of spirit.*

(ED, 214-17)

The myth critic approaching Warren's work would explore beyond the changing social forces in the world. The statement's suggestion concerning those forces would interest the historian of ideas. The myth critic would explore beyond the arrangement and sounds of words—technical qualities that would interest the formalist-textual critic. And the myth critic would search beyond the suggestion in the statement of either neurosis or death wish, suggestions of interest to Freudian-psychological critics. The myth critic would examine twentieth century uses of the archetypal myths of rebirth and the journey, myths which this passage suggests and which Warren's other fiction embodies. While there are other myths in Warren's prose fiction, these two, particularly the myth of the journey, are central in Warren's work. The myth critic would also concern himself with the question of how novels which embody these archetypal myths are made vital and appealing to readers.

For example, the American Civil War has been alluded to in all of Warren's novels; a myth critic would search for the enduring appeal such allusion has for modern man. The answer
is probably twofold and goes beyond the United States' present involvement in Southeast Asia and its previous involvements in Germany, Italy, and France. The appeal resides in Warren's language, what Fiedler calls a particular artist's signature. Although hundreds of writers write about the Civil War, each artist leaves his own signature upon his creation. Each artist's experience and poetic imagination imbue the historical event with special and different images, symbols, and metaphoric language.

The appeal also resides in an "archetypal pattern which is indelibly stamped on each man's action. War is migration; it is pilgrimage, analogous to the pilgrimage which Chaucer's characters take to Canterbury. The principle of pilgrimage--each man in search of rejuvenation toward his highest identity--is the one truth which, pure, leads to salvation and, perverted, leads to ruin."¹⁰ This particular archetypal pattern is rebirth; a myth which is often used to complement the pattern is symbolically expressed by the journey. The myth critic might examine Warren's creative presentation of war as one archetypal pattern in literature symbolizing man's search for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment and including man's journey toward these goals. This search begins, as the narrator of Brother to Dragons suggests, in the "death of self" which

"is the beginning of selfhood." The suggestion of death and beginning again illustrate the archetypal pattern of rebirth.

Thus far the terms myth, archetype, symbol, image, metaphor, and motif have been used in this discussion; these are the terms that make up a partial vocabulary for the myth critic. They have been defined differently by the several writers who have used them in the past. At this point in the history of myth criticism each critic is responsible for defining his terms so that some measure of agreement will allow for communication of his comments.

Certain patterns that emerge from a study of literature may be called motifs. Motifs are necessary elements of the language of myth. The central motif in Warren's novels is that of the quest, often symbolically suggested by the Myth of the Journey and the pilgrimage of a central character. The Myth of the Journey is complemented by the metaphors and

11 This usage agrees with the definition "A simple element which serves as a basis for expanded narrative; or, less strictly, a conventional situation, device, interest, or incident employed in folklore, fiction." from A Handbook to Literature, eds. William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, Revised Edition (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 294.

12 Although the claim for this motif as the central one is mine, other students and critics who have recognized the importance of the journey are Leonard Casper, "Journey to the Interior: 'The Cave'," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Spring, 1960), 65-72; Casper, Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1960); Marden J. Clark, "Symbolic Structure in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Diss. Univ. of Washington 1957; Joe Davis, "Robert Penn Warren and the Journey to the West," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Spring, 1960), 73-82; Norton Girault, "The Narrator's Mind as Symbol: An Analysis of 'All the King's
images of such objects as highways, paths, and labyrinthine passages. The quest motif re-creates a reality common to man, the experience of the search for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. Often the central quest motif will be surrounded by minor motifs such as the birth, initiatory rites, search for paradise, and the death of the hero. The quest may be symbolically re-created in the cycle of birth, initiation, sacrifice, death, and rebirth.

Although there are an infinite number of images to re-create the innumerable, particular journeys of individual men, there are only a few of what Carl Jung calls "primordial images" or archetypes, which serve to clothe man's reactions to common situations, emotions, and experiences. Jung believes that "Archetypes are, by definition, factors and motifs that arrange the psychic elements into certain images, characterized as archetypal, but in such a way that they can be recognized only from the effects they produce." Elsewhere, Jung suggests the archetype is within man's psyche; it is a

---

13 For a discussion of the highway as "archetypal symbol" see Elizabeth Kerr, "Polarity of Themes in 'All the King's Men'," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Spring, 1960), 23-46.

universal possession; however archetypes do not become recognizable until they are clothed in metaphor by individuals.

A myth embodies certain of these "primordial images"; a novel may embody several myths in some kind of structural order which an artist imposes and which the critic can call narrative. The narrative of a novel is the container for myth. "Man's reaction to reality" is thereby re-created by the images, symbols, and metaphoric language in which each particular artist chooses to contain the universal patterns.

For Jung the image itself was created because some emotion or experience called it into being; because all men inherit the capacity to conceptualize the primordial images, Jung believed that only the motivation for such conceptualization was needed to call up an archetype. He said:

The changes that may befall a man are not infinitely variable; they are variations of certain typical occurrences which are limited in number. When therefore a distressing situation arises, the corresponding archetype will be constellated in the unconscious. Since this archetype is numinous, i.e., possesses a specific energy, it will attract to itself the contents of consciousness—conscious ideas that render it perceptible and hence capable of conscious realization.  

Robert Penn Warren presents the moment in time when an image is called into being. He clothes that image in language, and thus re-creates the emotion of the moment when the image was first suggested. Thus, the image, as it finally appears


in literature, allows for the re-creation of an emotion in the reader. Writing about Joseph Conrad's achievement in *Nostromo*, Warren says that Conrad wanted "to arrive at his meanings immediately, through the sensuous renderings of passionate experience, and not merely to define meanings in abstraction, as didacticism or moralizing." The "passionate experience" is rendered in literature by the images of the philosophical novelist, or poet ... for whom the documentation of the world is constantly striving to rise to the level of generalization about values, for whom the image strives to rise to symbol, for whom images always fall into a dialectical configuration, for whom the urgency of experience, no matter how vividly and strongly experience may enchant, is the urgency to know the meaning of experience. (SE, p. 58)

In "The Great Mirage" Warren is focusing on a creative artist, Conrad, who created fiction in order that he might know truth. "For him the very act of composition was a way of knowing, a way of exploration" (SE, p. 58). Another valid "way of exploration" lies in the act of reading while paying critical attention to the images that strive to "rise to symbol," remembering that image, as it is presented in literature, may appeal to any of man's senses. Rene Welleck and Austin Warren's chapter "Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth," points up this quality of the image:

> There are not only "gustatory" and "olfactory" images, but there are thermal images and pressure

17 "The Great Mirage," in *Selected Essays* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 57. Further references to this collection are noted in the text by the abbreviation SE and the page numbers.
images ("kinaesthetic," "haptic," "empathic"). . . . The use of colour imagery may or may not be traditionally or privately symbolic. Synaesthetic imagery (whether the result of the poet's abnormal psychological constitution or of literary convention) translates from one sense into another, e.g., sound into colour. Finally, there is the distinction, useful for the reader of poetry, between "tied" and "free" imagery, necessarily aroused even though one reads to oneself and approximately the same for all adequate readers; the latter, visual and else, varying much from person to person or type to type.18

According to Welleck and Warren "Imagery is a topic which belongs both to psychology and to literary study. In psychology, the word 'image' means a mental reproduction, a memory, or a past sensational or perceptual experience, not necessarily visual."19 An artist attempts to re-create the psychological effect of an image by his art.

Symbol differs from image in that it does not necessarily re-create a sensation; it may suggest a sensation and, additionally, recall the imagery that re-created the sensation. In "Pure and Impure Poetry" Warren speaks of words which "are symbols without the sensuous character of the things they stand for; and yet it is only by the net of new connections which words throw over things, in recalling them, that poetry arises at all" (SE, p. 26). This suggests the importance of a trope which embodies within itself universal, cultural, and national suggestions that are not exhausted by explication.

19 Ibid., pp. 186-87.
A metaphor is also a trope differing from a symbol in that it implies analogy. Its use allows the artist to point up comparisons and contrasts more strikingly than otherwise. The metaphor provides a method of illuminating old concepts with new lights as well as defining new concepts by comparisons and contrasts with old ones. Jung used metaphoric language in his 1922 lecture concerning the relationship of the artist to his work.

The impact of an archetype, whether it takes the form of immediate experience or is expressed through the spoken work, stirs us because it summons up a voice that is stronger than our own. Whoever speaks in primordial images speaks with a thousand voices; he enthrals and overpowers, while at the same time he lifts the idea he is seeking to express out of the occasional and the transitory into the realm of the ever-enduring. He transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind, and evokes in us all those beneficent forces that ever and anon have enabled humanity to find a refuge from every peril and to outlive the longest night.20

Jung was acknowledging in metaphoric language a potential, unifying function of the archetype, a function also attributed to myth. Not only do the tropes of the language function in close relationship, but that relationship is in large measure responsible for whatever potential effectiveness the language

possesses. The inter-relationship can be discussed by the myth critic who approaches a work of literature that embodies one or more myths, expressed by image, symbol, and metaphor.

To define the whole of myth is more difficult than to define the language which communicates myth. George Whalley suggests that myth "is a direct metaphysical statement beyond science. It embodies in an articulated structure of symbol or narrative a vision of reality. It is a condensed account of man's Being and attempts to represent reality with structural fidelity, to indicate at a single stroke the salient and fundamental relations which for a man constitute reality. . . . Myth is not an obscure, oblique, or elaborate way of expressing reality--it is the only way."21 While I would not support the statement that myth is the only way of expressing reality, it is most certainly often the best way of expressing it.

Joseph Campbell speaks of myth as "the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation."22 And Mircea Eliade, pointing out the timeless quality of myth, defines it as a form of collective thinking which represents a "true history of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behaviour."23


Several differing opinions about the definition, origin, and function of myth were summarized in 1936 by Lord Raglan in "The Genesis of Myth." A later, similar summary has been provided by Joseph Campbell:

Mythology has been interpreted by the modern intellect as a primitive, fumbling effort to explain the world of nature (Sir James George Frazer); as a production of poetical fantasy from prehistoric times, misunderstood by succeeding ages (Max Müller); as a repository of allegorical instruction, to shape the individual to his group (Emile Durkheim); as a group dream, symptomatic of archetypal urges within the depths of the human psyche (Carl G. Jung); as the traditional vehicle of man's profoundest metaphysical insights (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy); and as God's Revelation to His children (the Church). Mythology is all of these. And because mythology is all of these, man is still interested in the study of myth and in the contributions to the understanding of literature promised by the myth critic's approach to literature. The approach and study promise to show man the communal stimulus that will re-integrate him with his fellow men. Man feels he has lost the sense of community and communal responsibility that he has shared with others and benefited from sometime in his past.

It is in the work of the late nineteenth century Cambridge Hellenists, R. R. Marett, Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray, G. M. Cornford, and Sir James G. Frazer, that one finds the


earliest series of publications concerning myth and significantly affecting literary criticism. Their discoveries and subsequent discussions of common sacred motifs and myths found in historically and geographically separate cultures directly influenced many critics' applications of their findings to literature.

Jane Harrison's definition of "myth [as that which] arises out of rite" and is the "spoken correlative of the acted rite" can be helpful if it is not applied in a statically limiting sense to the formation of myth. Eric Dardel's previously quoted definition, "myth is man's reaction to reality," is not counter to Harrison's definition if one understands that the "reality" is whatever situation, emotion, or experience that stimulated the reaction. The response is the ritual act, but it need not be a conscious act. Dardel says that "Every period declares 'its' truth in this way and is warmly attached to it. Our 'truth' of the moment is often only a myth that does not know it is one, and as M. Jourdain says 'we make myths every day without knowing it'."^27

These attempts at definition should not suggest that one man, in a single instant of time, can decide to create a myth; for, as David Bidney has said, "Myth is not something freely invented but a necessary mode of feeling and belief which

27 Diogenes, p. 37.
appears in the course of history and seizes upon human consciousness." Sometimes this "mode of feeling and belief, which ... seizes upon human consciousness," cannot be comprehended logically by man. This does not mean that the "mode of feeling" and the "reaction" is ineffable. It means, as Susanne Langer suggests, that myth is non-discursive, and the language of myth must, necessarily, be the language of symbol, image, and metaphor.

When Robert Penn Warren says that poetry is "the little myth we make," he means, I think, that poetry is made by the artist in order to clothe the otherwise ineffable "reaction to reality." The reality is man's history, which Philip Wheelwright says is a repetition of motivations and conduct—universal patterns that become recognizable as one studies literature. Myths express "a profound sense of togetherness of feeling and of action and of wholeness of living."

The myth critic is especially interested in two things. He is interested in explicating the novel to understand how each myth unifies and contributes to the finished form—the


total, containing narrative. It is not the isolated image which interests him; for that image may not present a total, universal pattern. Only the image clusters, combined with symbol and metaphor, present the pattern that is the myth. The critic is also interested in the ways myth functions in the novel. Myth may function, as Susanne Langer believes, as

a recognition of natural conflicts, of human desire frustrated by non-human powers, hostile oppression, or contrary desires; it is a story of the birth, passion, and defeat by death which is man's common fate. Its ultimate end is not wishful distortion of the world, but serious envisagement of its fundamental truths; moral orientation, not escape.31

Its function may be to define a community's "place in time, its relationship to the past and to the future";32 to demonstrate "the inner meaning of the universe and of human life";33 or to supply "fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment."34 Warren's own opinion about the function of myth is stated in his introduction to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "If poetry does anything for us, it reconciles, by its symbolical reading of experience (for by its very nature it is in itself a myth of the unity of being), the self-decisive internecine malices which arise at the superficial level on which we conduct most of our living" (SE, p. 272).

31 Philosophy in a New Key, p. 176.
I believe that a myth critic's approach to the study of Warren's imagery, which he uses to complement three myths that appear in The Cave, Wilderness, and Flood, will show how Warren richly illustrates his themes concerning the importance of self-knowledge and self-fulfillment and expresses his philosophy of the unity of being. The first of these myths, the Myth of the Garden, expresses man's dream of blissful existence in a paradisiacal place from which he believes he has been separated and to which he longs to be returned. The Myth of the Journey communicates either man's movement toward or his regression from some goal in his life. The last of these three myths, the Myth of Rebirth, narrates a desire of man to achieve regeneration.

This study will be incomplete in that I have not attempted to make a definitive study of the historical appearances of the various myths. Such a study offers a challenging future research project, because each myth merits separate and extended study. My study is also incomplete in that I could not make an extensive investigation and explication of all the myths that Warren uses in all of his novels. I have limited my study to the three myths which I consider to be three of the most important ones in his work. I have also limited my consideration to the three novels which have not received so much critical attention as his early works.

Warren is right when he says "we have to remember that there is no one, single, correct kind of criticism—no complete
criticism. You have different kinds of perspectives, giving, when successful, different kinds of insights. And at one historical moment one kind of insight may be more needed than another.35 I think that my study, using the myth critic's approach to literature, will provide insight into Warren's philosophy of and hope for man's potential unity of being in this century of fragmentation, and that it, therefore, will be a valuable study.

CHAPTER II

ROBERT PENN WARREN AND THE CRITICS:
A REVIEW

Because of its form the novel is a formidable challenge for the myth critic. It does not readily lend itself to succinct explication. The myth critic searches out relationships among the myths in a novel, explores the language in which the myths are expressed, examines how the myths function as structural elements, and points up the relevance of the myths to the modern reader. Because the relevance of myth lies in some universal, immediate, and timeless appeal, the appearance of a particular myth can be traced backward through chronologically and geographically separate cultures. As a necessary part of his critical knowledge the myth critic should bring to his study of the novel the history of each particular myth.

Although some work has been done by scholars outside the literary field,1 tracing the appearance of specific myths that appear in literature is just beginning to interest literary students and critics. An important early work, The Legend of Perseus (1894-96), by Sidney Hartland traced the appearance of

the myths of supernatural birth, the life token, and the witch throughout several literary genres. Important work has also been done by Robert Graves, Thomas Greene, Richard Chase, and Bartlett Giamatti. That scholarship which has been done in this area has generally been neglectful of American Literature.

In the following section I have attempted to review the scholarship relating to the study of Warren's use of myth and metaphoric language in his novels. Since no one has attempted to relate the history of particular myths to Warren's work, that area of this review is necessarily omitted. Most of the Warren scholarship has been done on the novels written before 1959, that is, before The Cave was written.

Heretofore a few critics have recognized that certain myths appear consistently in the early novels of Warren. The effectiveness of their analyses of his writings is partially limited, however, by their failure to agree upon a critical vocabulary. The myths are referred to as "motifs," "symbols," or "themes." Generally when a critic has recognized a myth appearing in several novels, he has collected instances of


4 The Quest for Myth.

that myth as it appears in each of the novels and has attempted to point out how it functions structurally in the work. No critic has attempted a sustained myth approach which would include a history of the various myths as they appear in the novels of Warren. Instead the criticism has resulted in such works as Marden Clark's chapter on Night Rider. Clark's analysis of this novel consists of a listing of the light/dark imagery and a declaration that the images suggest the Myth of the Journey.6

Clark's considerations of the journey-quest myth in At Heaven's Gate, All the King's Men, World Enough and Time, and Band of Angels are more helpful than his chapter on Night Rider in which he simply examines in detail the words which suggest darkness, light, heat, cold, and pressure. From the first description of Percy Munn (whom John Lewis Longley later called "the archetypal modern man"7) as he boards the train until the last description of his self-willed death in a flash of gunfire, "The pattern of the journey . . . shows a near-consistent development."8 Clark goes on to examine the function of the Myth of the Journey in the other four novels. He does not, however, discuss the historical aspects of the myth.

6 Clark, pp. 1-44.

7 Robert Penn Warren, Southern Writers Series, p. 5.

8 Clark, p. 243.
Although Clark believes that Munn's journey "is complete for him: a journey of discovery of the inner darkness and emptiness that he only partially glimpses but we cannot miss," he believes that Willie Proudfit's journey is the most meaningful one in Night Rider. Proudfit's journey is the embryo "of the whole journey structure of the novels to come: the journey toward self-knowledge, toward acceptance, toward responsibility. In something of the same way, Munn's journey involves, in embryo, many of the basic symbols that are to be realized more fully: the desire for escape into inwardness, the escape into the West and into abstraction, the attempt to kill the father."\(^9\)

While Proudfit's journey is certainly meaningful, it is no more meaningful than Munn's journey. Proudfit's journey ends in his achievement of self-fulfillment and self-knowledge; in that sense his is a meaningful journey. Munn's journey ends in his death; however the journey has been illustrative and complete, and in that sense it too has been a meaningful journey, albeit a negative one. Warren uses a negative illustration of the Myth of the Journey later in both The Cave and Wilderness. Neither Isaac Sumpter nor Jedeen Hawksworth achieves self-knowledge and self-fulfillment; yet their journeys are very significant.

Alvin Ryan's 1961 essay also considers the "theme" of Night Rider to be "the search of the hero for self-definition

\(^9\) Clark, p. 244.

\(^10\) Clark, p. 244. See also Robert Slack, "The Telemachus Theme," in All the King's Men: A Symposium, pp. 29-38.
and self-knowledge . . . a theme that has frequently been pointed out as central to all of his fiction." 11 Ryan says that Munn searches for solidarity, but the Tobacco Association does not fulfill a desire for solidarity that "respects the individual human person and the imperatives of his sole self, not one that swallows up the individual in some absolute." 12 Both Ryan and Marden Clark believe that Munn's journey and search are completed. Frederick Altgelt pointed out what he thought was the microcosmic first paragraph of the novel. In this paragraph, Munn is caught in a crowded train and unable to brace himself or to control his own actions. He is, in effect, swallowed by the group, but he regains his balance—he regains control of himself. Altgelt sees in this action the foreshadowing of Munn's achievement of salvation in the final self-willed act of the novel. 13

Ryan, Clark, and Altgelt fail to consider Munn's last wish—to be absorbed into the woods—to escape reality. It is true that Munn experiences a wild joy as he leaves the Tolliver house and runs "Down the slope, where there were the voices calling, sharply, hollowly, like the voices of boys.


12 Longley, A Collection, p. 51.

At that sound, so empty in the darkness, an astonishing delight sprang up in him, a wild and intoxicating contempt. But it is difficult to believe that Munn regains himself in this passage. There are too many connotations to the contrary: Munn "fell," suggesting an unwilled act; he knows that beyond the slope "Would be the woods, the absorbing darkness, the safety"; there may be safety in darkness, but the very darkness suggests lack of knowledge and vision. "As he lifted the revolver, he was certain. He was certain. But without thought—he did not know why—"; he possesses some kind of animal volition but no knowledge. After he has been hit he fires "once more, almost spasmodically, without concern for direction": his physical inability to fire parallels his former mental and spiritual inability to direct his life into really self-fulfilling actions. The pattern of the journey appears in the novel, but Munn's journey ends at the time when he might have begun to re-direct his life, when he might have gained self-fulfillment because of self-knowledge.

Clark and others also discuss what they see as the approaching completeness of the journey pattern as well as the developing pattern of limited regeneration appearing in Warren's second novel, At Heaven's Gate, even though a central character, Sue Murdock, like Munn, dies as the novel ends.

All references in this paragraph are to Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 460; further references to Warren's novels are noted parenthetically in the text.
Discussing these characters, who flee from their parents, Andrew Lytle's review mentions the pattern which consists of both pilgrimage and flight. "In this flight there is hate and a sense of shame. The fathers represent some failure or betrayal of what they should be, as persons and as symbols of their place in society." Lytle points out two mythic elements, the journey of the protagonist and his alienation from and hostility toward his parents, particularly his father. Lytle simply recognizes these elements; he does not attempt to explore Warren's use of the journey motif in the novel.

Almost as brief in his recognition of the journey-quest motif is John Bradbury, who writes of Sue Murdock as "the modern questing spirit," who attempts to fill her "blank heritage" with a series of liaisons: first, with the American dream hero, up from poverty through football to success (Jerry); then with irresponsible aestheticism (Sarrett); finally with Communism (Sweetwater). Bradbury's essay is interesting in another way, however. In it he discusses Warren's artistic ability to create physical detail which reaches symbolic levels of suggestion. Bradbury attempts to show that Warren's novels, "patterned to the archetypal quest motif, are created, from the structural skeleton up, to the Tate-Gordon specifications. On the textural...


16 "Robert Penn Warren's Novels: The Symbolic and Textural Patterns," Accent, 13 (Spring, 1953), 81.
surface a sharply observed and colloquially recorded realism consorts with rich rhetoric and a profuse imagery, which is restrained and directed by the patterns of its symbolic extensions..." The technique Bradbury is pointing out is one suggested by Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon in *The House of Fiction*. They explain the technique as consisting "mainly in making active those elements which had hitherto in fiction remained inert, that is, description and expository summary," and in the manipulation of "what at first sight seems to be mere physical detail into dramatic symbolism." One method of charging the descriptive and expository material with symbolic suggestion is by embodying myth in language. Unfortunately Bradbury's consideration is brief (14 pages) and limited to *Night Rider*, *At Heaven's Gate*, *All the King's Men*, and *World Enough and Time*.

In 1960 John Longley pointed out how Sue Murdock's quest is structurally tied to the quest of Ashby Wyndham. Although Sue's quest begins and ends in the city in the 1930's and Ashby's quest begins before the turn of the century and takes place mostly in the country, both characters search for self-fulfillment and self-knowledge, and both lose their lives, Sue literally when she is murdered and Ashby figuratively when he is jailed. Longley correctly points out that "nowhere


in his agonized journey does Ashby (or the author) seem to think that the effort, the attempt, the quest, should not have been made."19

Warren had suggested earlier that "a poet is like the jujitsu expert; he wins by utilizing the resistance of his opponent—the materials of the poem. In other words, a poem, to be good, must earn itself. It is a motion toward a point of rest, but if it is not a resisted motion, it is motion of no consequence" (SE, p. 27). If one can apply this critical dictum metaphorically, a journey, to be good, must earn itself. And if there is no resistance along the way, the Ashby Wyndhams and Percy Munns will not have illustrated the agony that precedes and often results in self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. A character's journey will be incomplete without the agony, and the poem will fail. Jerry Calhoun's journey is incomplete because he does not achieve sufficient self-knowledge. His journey has been a "toboggan slide, or a fall through space" (SE, p. 27). This character never becomes more than minimally active in the novel; so Calhoun's quest is perhaps the most artistically unrealized and, consequently, unsatisfying one in the novel.

Allen Shepherd, who also points out the developing patterns of the completed journey, is not convinced that Warren has

19 "Self-Knowledge, The Pearl of Pus, and the Seventh Circle: The Major Themes in At Heaven's Gate," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Spring, 1960), 23; also in Longley's A Collection, p. 73.
brought any of his characters in *At Heaven's Gate* to the full
measure of their potential self-knowledge.

The novel is the record of a number of fathers and sons, and of the rejection of the former by the latter. Bogan Murdock uses his father, Sue Murdock violently rejects Bogan, Slim Sarrett creates both mother and father, a New Orleans whore and a barge captain; Jerry Calhoun rejects his father, attempting to find another in Bogan Murdock, and Duckfoot Blake treats his parents kindly as witless pets. The past, then, as personal history, as family history, as the repository of traditional values, has virtually no relevance to the present.\(^{20}\)

It is partially because the characters cannot see the relevance of the past to the present that they fail to achieve more than limited knowledge and fulfillment. It is true that Sue's final acts are those of rejection of her past: she kicks the note of appeal that Bogan Murdock has sent her away from her bed, and she laughs at Slim Sarrett. After Sue's murder and Jerry Calhoun's release from jail, Calhoun is still passively resentful of his past and his family:

*Home,* Jerry had echoed in his mind, *home,* and had seen Lew's face and Aunt Ursula's face and his father's, and had felt the wild impulse to run across the square—for they were standing in front of the jail then—and run down the street under the murky lights, and keep on running, out where it was dark, where there wouldn't be anybody, where they would leave him alone, where everybody, everybody, would leave him alone.\(^{21}\)


But Jerry comes home to his old room, "which was familiar and yet so treacherously unfamiliar" (At Heaven's Gate, p. 383). And he watches as his father stirs the glowing coals in the fireplace. Like Billie Potts in Warren's ballad, Jerry "stood there like a stranger who, neglected, waits to be asked his errand . . ." (At Heaven's Gate, p. 384). But, unlike Billie, Jerry is recognized by his father: "He listened to the clock, and knew that in a minute that big, sagging, creased old face would turn toward him, not in accusation, not in rancor, not even in despair, but simply in recognition and acceptance, which would be most horrible of all. For against that there could be no defense" (At Heaven's Gate, p. 384).

As Jerry is lying in the old room, newly painted and papered, he begins to feel "Under the paper there was the old wall, secret, aware, with eyes to see the old Jerry Calhoun under the new" (At Heaven's Gate, p. 386). The past begins to pull at him as he lies on his bed--on the mattress "like a quicksand into which he would sink, imperceptibly but steadily, forever, drawn down by the numberless, nameless fingers that plucked feebly but inexorably, ceaselessly" (At Heaven's Gate, p. 386). But the past is of no comfort to Jerry; he lies on the bed feeling "a kind of grim glee, a vindication, a vengeance" against his past and his family.

Jerry begins to face the truth about himself and his destructive feelings toward his father shortly before the novel ends. He attempts only once to get out of his womb-tomb-like
Jerry Calhoun heaved himself up on bed, and the springs creaked" (At Heaven's Gate, p. 388). This is just after he has recognized the possibility that he wants his father dead. Jerry refuses to completely accept that truth and falls back on his bed. Shortly thereafter, in an imagined dialogue with his father (who only says, "Yes, son"), Calhoun finally admits that he has wanted the old Calhoun dead so that he could take his place—could "sit by the fire—" (At Heaven's Gate, p. 388).

Jerry knows now that he can admit his hostility toward his father, and the father will not reject him, but this is a small reward to gain after such a soul-journey as Jerry has made. It is difficult to ignore the passage's allegorical suggestions. Jerry is Everyman, returning home from the City of Sin without having completely rejected its temptations. As Everyman, Jerry has rejected his father—has rejected God, but the father says that he understands his son's feelings, indeed, that he knew all along that the son was going to fall into error. As in the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jerry is recognized, reinstated, and perhaps changed by his limited acquisition of self-knowledge. Unlike the Prodigal Son, however, Jerry Calhoun did not come home of his own free will. His father, Mr. Calhoun, came into the city to get him. The Calhoun son is disappointingly passive in his search for and acceptance of self-knowledge. And Warren, while he agrees
that the soul should have a period of contemplation so that it can regard itself, would have that contemplation end and the soul prepare itself "for the moment of action, of creation . . . ." Jerry Calhoun may never be prepared for a moment of action. His is an arrested journey. He might continue his journey toward self-knowledge or he might regress and never experience any more self-knowledge and self-fulfillment than he has gained in the past. Warren abandons Jerry Calhoun at heaven's gate.

Warren's next two novels, All the King's Men and World Enough and Time, have elicited far more criticism than either his earlier Night Rider and At Heaven's Gate or his later three novels, The Cave, Wilderness, and Flood. The more developed journeys of Jack Burden and Jeremiah Beaumont have been discussed in relation to the archetypal pattern of the hero's flight from reality and toward the West and his eventual return and rebirth.

Leslie Fiedler has suggested that Warren's characters flee toward "an imagined innocence, pursuing the Ideal." Their patterns of flight were westward, following the "westward movement of the fathers, and the sons hunting the past.

22 "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, 63 (Spring, 1955), 192. Further references to this work are noted in the text by the abbreviation KIM and page numbers.

for a vanished certainty." The journey may be forward in movement, but it is backward in time; man seeks to learn something from his past or to regain an imagined innocence from the web of guilt each man feels. Fiedler says,

Unable to bear the burden, most of us attempt to flee toward an imagined innocence, pursuing the Ideal, maintaining the illusion of Time. Time is beginnings only, the forever new, the mirage of innocence, the Dream, in terms of America the Dream of an inexhaustible West . . . And at last, in despair at the failure of escape, we accept the brute world, turn back to nature, go home, hoping to exercise our haunting by returning to the place of its origin; and at the point of no-Time our parents await us, not in welcome, but in the Oedipus horror, the son killing the father like Jack Burden, or slain by him like Little Billie Potts; the womb holds not peace but the death we did not suspect we wanted, the "mistake" plotted from our beginnings.

In his discussion of the return to the womb as a character's attempt to escape life, Fiedler is leaning heavily upon a Freudian interpretation of the journeys. Such a reading is only helpful up to a point, for both Jeremiah Beaumont and Jack Burden leave their womb-like retreats. They have both been rejuvenated--in effect reborn--by their retreats.

Fiedler's discussion of Warren's use of language is more illuminating than his limited interpretation of the heroes' quests. Fiedler writes of Warren's "symbols of illusory Innocence which are roads and rivers, the 'strip' down which Sugar Boy drives Willie," and "the streams penetrating

---

24 Ibid., p. 121.

25 Ibid., pp. 121-22.
virgin land...[and] Home [which] is quiet water, a dim pool or the deep underneath of a lake, even Jeremiah Beaumont’s last dismal swamp."26 It bears repeating here that Jeremiah rejects the swamp as "home."

Jeremiah is the first of Warren’s major characters to fully accept his guilt. He leaves the swamp in order to find what he refers to as "a way." The suggestion of "a way" as means or method is present in Jeremiah’s words; also suggested is The Way, a rite of passage to self-knowledge through initiation. The way Jeremiah seeks would lead him into the condition "Whereby loneliness becomes communion without contamination. Whereby contamination becomes purity without exile" (World Enough and Time, p. 460). So he clearly does not think of the swamp as his home; home is a community of men who exist because they are individuals functioning as a communal group. Communal living is an ideal but achievable state in which a man understands and accepts himself, his sins, his goals, his ability, and his lack of ability. If he understands himself only partially he may be either a beast that indulges all its appetites indiscriminately or a self-exile who cannot find a place among the communion of men.

Critics have pointed out that Warren illustrates a more complete achievement of self-knowledge and self-fulfillment in Jack Burden, who rouses himself from his Great Sleep, leaves

26 Ibid., p. 122.
the West to which he has fled, and returns to Burden's Landing, his home. John Bradbury sees "All the King's Men" as a novel of redemption and the only one of Warren's four which permits the protagonist, who is again like Sue Murdock a symbol of modern man in quest of self-identification, to emerge from his ordeal to the hope of a new life."27 The emergence of the protagonist from "his ordeal" had been one of the major points in Norton Girault's essay, "The Narrator's Mind as Symbol: An Analysis of 'All the King's Men'." Girault's essay, one of the first and most helpful essays published on the novel, discusses Jack Burden's flight to the West as a "search for the womb-state of innocence in nature, drowning himself in nature."28

Paying attention to Warren's use of language, Girault suggests, "A study of those metaphors indicates that they support a basic symbolism of rebirth that runs through the novel and unifies it. . . ."29

Burden experiences two abortive attempts at regeneration and rebirth. Because he was afraid to understand the truths about life that Cass Mastern's journal suggested to him, Burden abandoned his dissertation material and entered into the sleep that made him feel "like a diver groping downward into dark water feeling for something which may be there and which would

27 Bradbury, "Symbolic and Textural Patterns," p. 82.
28 Accent, 7 (Summer, 1947), 220.
29 Ibid., p. 221.
glitter if there were any light in the depth . . . " (All the King's Men, p. 201). He flees from reality a second time when he realizes that his marriage to Lois is not providing either of them with satisfaction. He begins to "study Lois with a clinical detachment and a sense of mystic regeneration" (All the King's Men, p. 324). By considering Lois in this detached manner, Burden gains "great spiritual refreshment" (All the King's Men, p. 324). The third "flight" occurs after Burden discovers that Anne Stanton is Willie Stark's mistress. This third attempt to escape from reality illustrates what Sam Hynes has called the "journey-in-ignorance."30 This journey, "which originates in ignorance but issues in knowledge," is an embodiment of the timeless myth of the quest. Hynes partially traces the myth to

Homer's tribes who symbolically cast off criminal responsibility by leaving the land on which the crime occurred. In popular superstition the scene of violence becomes a haunted house. Somehow, and particularly in agrarian societies, man's guilt is transmitted to the soil, and absolution is achieved in flight.31

Hynes goes further in his exploration of the Myth of the Journey; he points up the relevance of the myth not only to Americans of the past but also to today's searchers.

In American society, particularly in its migratory days, this notion of symbolic absolution through physical withdrawal combined with the general conviction that all new things were better things, and

31 Hynes, p. 280.
that the West, being newest, was superlatively best. Migration westward was for guilt- and debt-ridden alike a hope of heaven; to "move on" was to escape without consequence the responsibilities of a stabilized society, to migrate into a new Eden where each man shed his past like a snake skin and became as Adam, without sin or blemish. That this spiritual therapeutic is still appealing in our own guilt-ridden, cure-seeking time one might argue from the population increase of Los Angeles County.

A second article which concentrates on Warren's use of the Myth of the Journey is Joe Davis's "Robert Penn Warren and the Journey to the West." Davis recognizes the journeys in the four early novels and Band of Angels. He points out that the flight to the West follows generally the same pattern in all five novels: "when a hero finds it seemingly impossible to continue a particular course of action, Warren introduces him to the West; and in each instance the West comes to represent to the persons involved a new land of refuge and promise." Although neither Hynes nor Davis examines Willie Proudfit's journey, his is an embodiment of the Myth of the Quest and the Myth of the Garden in miniature. In some twenty-five pages, Warren allows Willie to describe his loss of the dream of innocence in the symbolic migration and slaughter of the buffalo. Willie left Kentucky and spent his youth following the herds across Oklahoma and Kansas, and then he went west to New Mexico where he discovered a strange land that he took to be Eden:

32 Hynes, p. 280.

33 Modern Fiction Studies, p. 75.
For all its beauty, the land is a sterile place for Willie, who watches the grass go and the snows come and who, after five years there, becomes ill and dreams of his pilgrimage to regain paradise in Kentucky where the grass was

layen fresh, and trees, maple and elm and sich. And my feet was in the road, and me a-move-en down hit. They was a fire in me, and thirsten. Hit was a green country, and the shade cool, but the fire was in me. I come down the hill, and seen houses setten off down the valley, and roofs, and the green trees stan-den. I taken a bend in the road, and thar was a little church, a white church with a bell hangen, and the grass green a-fore hit. There was a spring thar, by the church, and I seen hit and run to hit. I put my head down to the water, for the fire in me, lak a dog gitten ready to lap. I didn't take no water in my hand and sup. Naw, I put my face down to the water, and hit was cool on me. The coolness was in me, and I taken my fill.

(Night Rider, p. 424)

Of course, Willie's illness has caused him to burn with fever but the images in the dream-passage have risen to symbols, as Warren suggested images should rise, and Willie's dream of baptism in the spring is a kind of quenching of the fever of sin thereby cooling the wanderlust of the pilgrim, cleansing and welcoming the prodigal home. Fittingly, in his vision,
Willie sees the woman he is later to marry, seated by the spring watching his ritual. She symbolized the promise of procreation not to be found in the barren, false Eden of the West.

Marden Clark and others note the similarity in the structure of the journeys to the West in the first four novels. Clark particularly suggests that Jack Burden's is the most fully realized soul-journey in any of the four novels. "Warren has Jack in his rebirth imagery carefully spell out the pattern [of the journey] to its final implications: rebirth and regeneration through acceptance of the past and hence of himself and finally through the acceptance of positive responsibility and action." Clark, p. 245. Robert Slack has suggested that Jack Burden fled Westward in an odyssey and speaks to the twentieth century like Telemachus, "the dispossessed young man who is searching for a spiritual father and striving to re-establish a lost relationship with his home, his community, and his world." Slack, p. 29.

In spite of his eloquence, Burden does not, at first, really know why one goes west any more than Willie Proudfit, who said that folks went west "to git a start. And fer one reason or 'nuther" (Night Rider, p. 403). Burden's explanation is a kind of ritual incantation that does not literally explain anything:

34 Clark, p. 245.
35 Slack, p. 29.
West is where we all plan to go some day. It is where you go when the land gives out and the old-field pines encroach. It is where you go when you get the letter saying: Flee, all is discovered. It is where you go when you look down at the blade in your hand and see the blood on it. It is where you go when you are told that you are a bubble on the tide of empire. It is where you go when you hear that thar's gold in them-thar hills. It is where you go to grow up with the country. It is where you go to spend your old age. Or it is just where you go. (All the King's Men, p. 286)

Jack Burden does not know why he goes West because he does not know who he is or really what he needs for self-fulfillment. Part of his problem is the lack of guidance; so in a sense All the King's Men is a narrative of one man's search for his father. Jack Burden repeats the mythic pattern of journey away from home and return to it—a journey which also includes the mythic pattern of the search for a father and patricide.

As a child Jack accepted the Scholarly Attorney as his real father; during his adolescence he partially accepted Governor Stanton as a father-image; as a man, Jack found his father-image in Willie Stark. Only after Jack's flights west, his unsuccessful marriage, his discovery of Anne Stanton's liaison with Stark, and his investigation of the judge does Jack experience rebirth, paradoxically with the death of Judge Irwin, his real father. Norton Girault has discussed Jack's flight as resistance to rebirth—rebirth that John Bradbury and James Simmons also point out is mirrored in the passage which describes the lobectomy which Adam Stanton performs on a patient symbolically like Jack Burden. Simmons, who sees
All the *King's Men* as "primarily a novel of one man's search for self-realization, culminating in the development of his moral awareness and his acceptance of individual responsibility," compares the physical condition of the man on the operating table with the spiritual condition of Burden. The man on the table has part of his brain seared away so that he can return to the community of men and live a "normal life"; in partial death the man has been reborn. But Simmons points out that Warren is careful to remind the reader "this is an aborted rebirth, a death-in-life existence." Just as the brain damaged man will emerge, fragmented and partially will-less, Burden's flights westward will only produce a fragmented, incomplete man.

The spiritual journey of Jeremiah Beaumont, his flight into the swamp of La Grand' Bosse, and his redemption from that womb-like place has received as much critical comment as Jack Burden's journeys. Leslie Fiedler's 1950 review pointed to the appeal of *World Enough and Time*, as an historical novel which is "one more avatar of an eternal myth: the Knight-Errant slaying the Dragon (who is also, Freud save us, the Father) to rescue an incarcerated and tormented Princess."  

36 "Adam's Lobectomy Operation and the Meaning of All the *King's Men*," *PMLA*, 86 (January, 1971), 84.
37 Ibid., p. 88.
38 "'Toward Time's Cold Womb'," p. 126.
Jeremiah Beaumont rejected his maternal grandfather Marcher's offer of his estate. In order to gain the estate Beaumont would have had to renounce his own father's name and take his grandfather's name. Beaumont refused this token acceptance of Marcher as father. But he also refused to accept his own father. The surrogate father-son relationships of Tolliver-Munn, Murdock-Calhoun, and Stark-Burden are echoed in *World Enough and Time*; for Colonel Fort is the most acceptable father-image Beaumont finds. No financial failure, as Beaumont's father had been, Fort is intelligent as well as materially, politically, and socially successful. But because Fort has conceived a child with Rachel Jordon, whom he cannot marry, Beaumont believes it is his duty to seek retribution for Rachel and punishment for Fort. Beaumont seeks out Fort, kills him, and returns to Rachel like a knight back from the lists:

> When he was well up the lane, and in full sight of it, he reached into his saddlebags and drew out the red sash. He tied it to the butt of the little switch he carried, tying it so that the two ends flowed free. Then he grasped the switch in the middle, butt upper-most, and set spurs to his tired mount. (*World Enough and Time*, p. 246)

The knight has returned to the castle after slaying the dragon; it is an old, mythic pattern behind which Leslie Fiedler says we glimpse eternity, the "unwinking eye." And we learn finally what the "historical novel" has all the time been trying to mean through its costumes and nostalgia. When that form has been rid of sentimentality, it can serve us as a mirror that destroys time and shows in the experience of the
past what we cannot perceive in the flux of the present; the typical mechanisms of self-confusion and damnation, of illumination and hope.40

Two other myths are recognized by Robert Heilman when he links the pattern of rebirth with the Myth of the Garden; Heilman is particularly interested in the connotations of the words Warren uses.

Honest trial witnesses make him [Jeremiah] "as reborn." He is passionate about his "innocence." He seeks "peace" by confession. He is agonized by Munn Short's story of his spiritual death and his recovery by faith. In fact, with his early conversion establishing the pattern, Jerry has always led a kind of pseudo-religious life; he needs an all-embracing, peremptory spiritual command, but his way of finding it is to universalize an unidentified cry from within. Nowhere is the falseness of his devotion more apparent than when he finds "peace" and "grace" in the ex-pirate's stinking sanctuary. He is aware that it is a horrible parody of grace and innocence, but he clings to his raw Eden.41

Bradbury also notes Beaumont's flight into the swamp that is "a constant false innocence motif in Warren."42 Leonard Casper has called attention to the pattern as one of escape and rebirth, supported by the images of water: "Movement on the water, into the deep, western swamps, is mere removal to a new uterine remoteness. Jerry dreams again of absorption by a current without destination . . . he sinks into the timeless forest world."43 According to Casper, this "abortive

40 "'Toward Time's Cold Womb'," p. 126.
41 "The Tangled Web," Sewanee Review, 59 (Summer, 1951), 118.
43 Robert Penn Warren: The Dark and Bloody Ground, p. 142.
flight" which is crucial to the structure of the novel and the development of the characters takes them into "The Arcadia of their wandering [which] is no green garden regained, but a swamp, the backwash of crime and unremembered relic civilization. . . ." Casper says this Adam and Eve, "driven back to seclusion and a second chance," must make "their latter-day choice between animal ignorance and awful knowledge . . ." 44

Warren's novels illustrate his belief that man must not allow himself to sink into nature at the price of his own self-will. The romantic concept of the beneficent and healing powers of nature is partially rejected by Warren. If man allows himself to succumb to the hypnotic attraction of nature, he is in danger of forfeiting a part of that which makes him human--his power of reasoning. In so forfeiting he would become less of a man and more of a beast. This warning was sounded in Warren's analysis of Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," titled "The Themes of Robert Frost":

The beauty, the peace, is a sinister beauty, a sinister peace. It is the beauty and peace of surrender--the repudiation of action and obligation. The darkness of the woods is delicious--but treacherous. The beauty which cuts itself off from action is sterile; the peace which is a peace of escape is a meaningless, and, therefore, a suicidal peace.

(5E, p. 123)

If Percy Munn had reached "the woods, the absorbing darkness, the safety" (Night Rider, p. 460), it would have been a meaningless escape for him. When Sue Murdock makes of the

44 Ibid., p. 142.
apartment in which she exists a retreat from the world and escapes daily into an alcoholic stupor, she is choosing a meaningless peace. If she rejects her uterine atmosphere and passive attitude, her journey toward a meaningful life might begin. Ironically, however, just as Sue begins to make some decisions, she is murdered by Sarrett. This is a paradox of mankind; just as one gains self-knowledge and volition, he may lose his life.

Robert White and Marden Clark have discussed Warren's ironic use of the American myth of the return to the garden in the flight to the West. White's helpful essay relates Henry Nash Smith's historical concept of the West as the garden of America to Warren's treatment of the Myth of the Garden in literature. Warren's ironic treatment illustrates his attitude toward the conflict between industrialism and agrarianism. Warren's works express "the absence of idealization, the refusal to romanticize and sentimentalize the past, the willingness to examine the myths which have dominated American thought throughout our nationhood."45 White believes that it is this examination which Warren has given to the inadequacy and false concept of "primitive innocence" in America that sets him apart from and above other American writers.

Clark also points out Warren's myth-breaking "aimed largely at the myth of early America in popular literature, history, Fourth of July oratory, and movies. It [Warren's treatment] 

is a telling attack on the myth of the American frontier as The Garden, the rugged but inviting and benevolent West waiting and asking for the equally benevolent settler.  

By using the imagery of the garden, Warren makes the old myth relevant again; his variation on the true garden is the false garden which tempts the traveler to enter and to remain within. Warren is employing the universal appeal of the Myth of the Journey and the return to the source of innocence, hence rebirth. He is suggesting that man today must act of his own free will and not accept ready-made attitudes, traditions, panaceas, and myths until he first examines them in the light of his particular situation. When the characters in Warren's novels stop their journeys in womb-like atmospheres of the Louisiana swamps and California Great Sleeps, they arrest their development--like the fetus too long in the womb, growth stops and death begins.

The pattern of escape into the garden of nature is illustrated once in Band of Angels, and the more acceptable retreat into another garden--the community of men--is also illustrated. Mandy Starr is led by the slave, Jimmee, into the Louisiana bayou where Rau-Ru, Hamish Bond's K'la, is about to hang the man who has been a stern but protective father-figure to him. Hugh Moore interprets this passage as Mandy's surrender to a

Clark, p. 265.
a garden venture, as her escape from responsibility into nature.\textsuperscript{47} However, because Manty leaves the bayou, she illustrates an exercise of will, an acceptance of responsibility. Manty moves out of the natural womb-tomb of the swamp much as Jeremiah moved away from the swamp. Manty is allowed to complete her journey into responsibility that Beaumont only began. She spends the last years of her life in self-knowledge after having gained a large measure of self-fulfillment.

Manty Starr and Jack Burden experience what Warren calls "beauty and peace at the end of the journey, in the terms of the fulfillment of the promises . . . an earned beauty stemming from action" (SE, p. 123). Although Perse Munn, in Night Rider, did not live long enough to fulfill his search, and Jeremiah had just begun his journey back into the world when he was beheaded, there is some measure of fulfillment in the decision to act and in the glimpse of the vision of life outside the false garden.

Leonard Casper's discussion of the American dream as it is expressed in Warren's "The Ballad of Billie Potts" might well be applied to his first five novels. Casper says that

The American Dream was to be able to begin over each day, to absolve oneself from old duties . . . But daily changes sliver man. Constant altering of profession converts the mind into compartments, neurotic cells. Finally realizing that his

\textsuperscript{47} "Robert Penn Warren and History: The Big Myth We Live," Diss. Emory Univ. 1964, pp. 78-79.
substance has been wasted, he returns home to his source for replenishment . . . [But] The very belief that childhood innocence is possible even for children is a sin of pride that must be expiated. The prodigal grows "weary of innocence and the husks of Time."\(^4\)

In "Knowledge and the Image of Man" Warren explicitly states his belief that man must sliver himself in the necessary process of self-definition. Man "disintegrates his primal instinctive sense of unity, he discovers separateness" (SE, p. 187). Man must separate himself from home, the world, and his fellow men so that "In the pain of isolation he may achieve the courage and clarity of mind to envisage the tragic pathos of life, and once he realizes that the tragic experience is universal and a corollary of man's place in nature, he may return to a communion with man and nature" (SE, p. 187). When any part of man's journey stops short of the final goal, which is unity, he will have little chance for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment.

Warren says that

> Man eats of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and falls. But if he takes another bite, he may get at least a sort of redemption. And a precious redemption. His unity with nature will not now be that of a drop of water in the ocean; it is, rather, the unity of the lover with the beloved, a unity presupposing separateness. His unity with mankind will not now be the unity of a member of the tribal horde with that pullulating mass; his unity will be that of a member of sweet society. (SE, p. 187)

The Myth of the Garden is an eternal one; it is part of the universal quest of man. Casper calls it "the eternal

\(^4\) Dark and Bloody Ground, p. 73.
instinct to return[which] unites all life in a design far grander than man's dreams." For "As birth was the beginning of death, so death may be rebirth."\(^{49}\) Man must use his judgement and make sure that his journey has taken him into a garden refuge and not a smothering retreat from life. He must be ready to take the next step on the journey and go out of the womb-like garden that might rejuvenate the man, but that must not be used as a permanent escape from life.

When Marden Clark writes "perhaps the most significant of the realized patterns of *World Enough and Time* is the actuality of escape into West, into ultimate innocence, the return to the Garden,"\(^{50}\) he neglects to stress the most important aspect of the journey. The journey is not complete with the return to the womb-like swamp. The culmination and importance of the journey lies in the journey back to the East--out of the swamp--away from the West. It lies in Jeremiah's decision to journey literally backward but spiritually forward. He realizes that knowledge "is not redemption, but it is almost better than redemption" (*World Enough and Time*, p. 460). He writes, "I go home through the wilderness now and know that I may not have redemption. 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" (*World Enough and Time*, p. 460). Jeremiah has

\(^{49}\) Dark and Bloody Ground, p. 73.

\(^{50}\) Clark, p. 247.
experienced the vision of the unity of all men and has sought to make that vision reality.

As Clark points out, Manty and Tobias' journeys are complete in Band of Angels "and still form the primary symbolic structure. And there are still the images of escape, of the garden, of the stream (Manty comes down the stream into slavery, she would have to go up it to freedom; but she must go up it under her own power—simply time on the boat could not possibly mean freedom)."\(^5\) Both Clark and Leonard Casper recognize that Warren is shifting perspectives in Band of Angels. Casper writes of "Manty's western flight [which] becomes pursuit:

in the image of Halesburg's beggar, and of Old Slop, being embraced by a son to whom self-respect is more important than commonplace pride, she contemplates herself. Her stumbling tremulous progress towards self-realization coincides with the progressive suffrage which Tobias Sears advocates until, rebelling against his father by carrying the old man's beliefs to their absurd conclusion (as Bond had done with his mother's), he demands immediate and full extension of privilege.\(^5\) The characters in Band of Angels have made a journey as they searched for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. Their searches have become pursuits after self-respect, self-realization, or freedom from various kinds of bondage. Marden Clark believes that Warren has allowed the characters in Band of Angels to achieve fulfillment. Since these characters have reached the

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 247.

\(^5\) "Miscegenation as Symbol: Band of Angels," in Longley, A Collection, p. 147.
ends of their journeys, Clark believes that Warren can "go no further with this series of symbols" [the journey, escape, and the garden].

However, Warren has indeed gone further in the three novels that he has written since Band of Angels--The Cave (1959), Wilderness (1961), and Flood (1964). He has gone further by beginning later in the lives of the major protagonists, by including several journeys in each of the novels, and by illustrating motivations and conduct after the journeys to the West are completed.

In using another group of older characters, Warren has risked alienating readers who like their heroes and heroines youthful and who generally believe that one learns life's lessons before he reaches middle age. If he has not learned by that time, a character is usually portrayed as a fool, an object for comedy but not as one worthy of the reader's serious attention. But Warren has illustrated that "Man can return to his lost unity, and if that return is fitful and precarious, if the foliage and flower of the innocent garden are now somewhat browned by a late season, all is the more precious for the fact, for what is now achieved has been achieved by a growth of moral awareness" (SE, p. 187). In illustrating his philosophy that man can "return to his lost unity" during or after

---

Clark, p. 247.
middle age Warren embodies the Myth of the Journey, the Garden, and Rebirth in *The Cave, Wilderness*, and *Flood*. 
CHAPTER III

WARREN'S USE OF THE MYTH OF THE GARDEN

The Garden Myth

"Gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world." Thus Nick Carraway speaks about "a transitory enchanted moment [when] man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder."¹ Fitzgerald, through Carraway, expresses a lament for the failure of America to provide a new world garden. America promised a place of repose after labor and contentment forever that man has always longed for. America, the last western land, was to be the realization of the Garden Myth—was to be a paradise regained.

An unconscious, literal quest for a garden existence may have begun when man left his cave on the hillside and found that the coastal plains provided water without labor of carrying it and food without the labor of hunting it. But the windswept coastline provided no shelter when the summer changed

to fall and winter. Man may have returned to the protection of his dark home in the cave and longed for the sunlight of the valley, coast, and meadow and for the abundant fish and fruit of the streams and meadows. The desire to have the best of both geographical areas may have come early to man. Today he is still torn between the desire to live near the sea or in the mountains. The protection of the cave holds man's allegiance, but his desire for the freedom from daily labor and extreme changes in climate that the meadows and coasts offered is still with him.

An island paradise that is never buffeted by monsoon winds or volcanic fires enchants man but is rarely available to him. The quiet, womb-like promise of the caverns and caves appeals to man, but the threat of the numinous unknown frightens all but the most heroic men. Thus man dreams of a place of perfect peace and fulfillment—of Eden, the Blessed Isles, the Elysian Fields. But he has often found himself in Acrasia's evil Bower of Bliss, Mammon's Cave, or on Alcina or Armida's Circe-like islands. He has found false gardens that "pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams"—the dream of returning to the garden.

In the preface to his study of the Myth of the Garden in Renaissance epics, A. Bartlett Giamatti writes that man has always searched

^ Fitzgerald, p. 182.
for the lost state of bliss and innocence. Indeed, the hope of finding it seemed to increase enormously with the discovery of the New World, and American literature itself is constantly read as a record of the quest for happiness and innocence in the great unspoiled garden. And though we no longer have any hope of finding Dilmun or Elysium or Eden in the outer world, the search still goes on; for many, it seems to be the road of psychological therapy which may lead to the oasis of harmony across the awesome wastes of the mind. Man's need to find the place has in no way diminished; though, the more he turns in, the more his hope of arriving there has waned. 8

From Homer's description of the Elysian Fields through the twentieth century American writers, certain characteristic elements appear in almost all of the garden passages. Although the west promises a garden-like existence, the true garden is usually believed to be in the east. 4 Often the garden contains fair maidens, jewels, a clear stream of water—a lake, river, or fountain—to water the abundant fruits that grow in the garden, lush grass, shade trees, flowers, and herbs. It contains either vocal or instrumental music. Closely connected with the garden imagery in literature has been imagery of caves, cool and moss covered. The weather in the garden is temperate,

3 The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic, pp. 6-7.

with breezes that cool the traveler, who need fear neither excessive heat nor cold. A gentle dew falls, or perhaps a shower, but the inhabitant of the garden never suffers from the chill of rain.

One of the earliest gardens in literature appears in the fourth book of Homer's *Odyssey* when Menelaus is told

> the immortals will send you To the Elysian plain at the outermost bounds of the earth, Where tawny Rhadamanthus lives and where life is most easy For men. There it never snows, no storm winds blow, Nor does it rain, but the cool West Wind blows always briskly off the stream of Oceanus to refresh men there.  

Hesiod, in *Works and Days*, records that "Zeus the Father, the Son of Kronos, gave them a life and an abode apart from men, and established them at the ends of the earth afar from the deathless gods: among them is Kronos king. And they with soul untouched or sorrow dwell in the Islands of the Blest by deep eddying Okeanos: happy heroes, for whom the bounteous earth beareth honey-sweet fruit fresh thrice a year." In a land of virtuous men is recorded by Pindar a "life without labor," and Virgil, in the *Aenead*, sings of those souls that "are sent through wide Elysium, / The Fields of the Blessed. . . ." The garden described in Horace's "Sixteenth

---


Epode" becons men to journey "beyond the Etruscan coast" in order to seek the fields, the happy fields and the islands of the blest, Where the earth is not plowed, but yearly it yields the grain, and the vine is not trimmed, but forever flourishes and the branch of the olive never fails to blossom, and the black fig, ungrafted, adorns its own tree, honey drips from the hollow oak, from the lofty hills the light-stepping spring comes splashing down. There the goats need no orders to come to the milking pails, and the flock returns gladly with swelling udders, and the bear does not growl as he circles the sheepfold at evening, and the earth does not swell up with vipers.9

In addition to these sources, Ovid's Metamorphoses and Ars Amatoria contain descriptions of similar gardens. Both Patch and Giamatti discuss the "Fortunatae insulae" described by the Christian writer Isidore of Seville. Giamatti quotes Isidore as writing of the islands that are located "to the west in the stream of ocean and are marked by fruit, precious trees, slopes covered with vines, crops, and garden vegetables. Because of the 'fecundity of the soil,' says Isidore, gentile and pagan poets have confused these islands with Paradise. Isidore's desire to maintain the proper distinction is wholly justified from the perspective of the Church, [sic] and offers a clue to what had been happening on a secular level: early Christian descriptions of the earthly paradise owed as much to ancient literature as to Christian Biblical literature, and finally

the two strands became inseparable. Giamatti is pointing out the blending of pagan and Christian concepts which can be historically documented. But the beginning of the concept is lost to history.

As poetry records and re-creates reality in myth, the uses of the Garden Myth become more and more evident. The appeal of the return to the garden can be seen in all cultures, in all times. Theocritus' Idyll VII expresses such a desire.

Many a poplar and elm murmured above our heads, and near at hand the sacred water from the cave of the Nymphs fell plashing. On the shady boughs the dusky cicadas were busy with their chatter, and the tree-frog far off cried in the dense thorn-brake. Larks and finches sang, the dove made moan, and bees flitted humming about the springs. All things were fragrant of rich harvest and of fruit-time. Pears at our feet and apples at our side were rolling plentifully, and the branches hung down to the ground with their burden of sloes.

These are expressions of true gardens; the false garden is illustrated by Edmund Spenser in The Faerie Queene. The Bower of Bliss and Mammon's Cave are examples of those false gardens which Giamatti suggests are places where reason is overcome by passion, duty by pleasure, man by woman, spirit by sense. These places "of beauty and vicious illusions"


12 Giamatti, pp. 289-90.
are in the tradition of "Alcina's island, Acrasia's garden and Armida's island. . . ."13

Whereas the imagery of the true garden suggests "order and stability," Giamatti believes that the imagery of the false garden becomes symbolic description of the false paradise which embodies the split between what seems and what is; it looks like the true earthly paradise, but in the end it is not. It looks like the image of all a man thinks he has sought in his spiritual wanderings, but in the end it is the scene wherein he learns he was wrong; where he learns that his inner wishes were only the illusions a man creates for himself, and through which he must pass in his quest for true inner harmony, for a true earthly paradise existence.14

"The Garden" of Andrew Marvell re-creates a tempting Eden-retreat in which man could live forever, away from the races men run, away from the competition of the world. In this garden man might lead a "wonderous life" where

Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass.15

13 Giamatti, p. 290.
14 Giamatti, p. 85.
The poet-speaker in "The Garden" does not learn that he is wrong to passively accept the escape from the world. Giamatti suggests the false garden was used to stimulate the wanderer into the realization that he is wrong to stay in the garden and that he must continue to search for his "true harmony, for a true earthly paradise existence." But the wanderers do not always face reality and leave the gardens. Often they remain in the protective, womb-like atmosphere of the false gardens. The will-less, stumbling motion the inhabitant of "The Garden" experiences is characteristic of other inhabitants of false gardens in literature. The insnaring flowers suggest the passive yielding of man's reason and will. Many of the garden inhabitants do not leave the gardens; they give up their reason for the luscious gifts of the false garden.

Pointing out another false garden, Giamatti says of the garden of Circe,

The challenge lies not only in combating these gardens and what they represent, but also in recognizing them; for they offer a life of love and ease which may well be evil, but is also profoundly appealing. Exercising great attraction, these paradises offer satisfaction for deep, almost buried needs. The gardens are therefore most dangerous precisely in the area they are most appealing—in their invitation to relax.16

His point might well have been made about the Southern United States. The appeal of the agricultural South, with its plantation system and casually paced living, has been pandered to

16 Giamatti, p. 125.
in much literature of both the North and South. A dream of ease and plenty was nurtured in the South and fostered by other parts of the world long after the factories replaced the cotton fields. The idea that the South was a garden which promised leisurely existence was a false dream, but the Myth of the Garden is one that is still particularly appealing to the Southern United States.

Cut off socially, politically, and economically from the Northern and Eastern United States, the South became dependent upon agriculture for its economic survival. With the destruction of the slavery system and the coming of the Civil War, the South became, to a degree, culturally isolated. Later the factory system of the North seemed to threaten the Southern concept of the "good life," a life dependent in many ways upon the products of the soil. In 1930 the Nashville Agrarians called for a renewal of faith in the Myth of the Garden. In the United States, the country that had sent doughboys into Germany and France on battleships and had financed the building of weapons of war from munitions factories in both the North and South, the call seemed to be an idealistic, even foolish one. The call was largely either ignored or misunderstood.

After the disillusionment Europe experienced concerning Hitler's attempt to create a garden and a particular kind of

Golden Age, after the massive destruction made possible in Japan by science, and after the voyage to the moon, also made possible by scientific knowledge, as man begins to face the problems of overpopulation and the threat of mass pollution, he is beginning to doubt the dream of "progress" and to reassess his potential. He is beginning to realize that the Southern Agrarians' call is not so farfetched in the 1970's as it had seemed in the 1930's. The twelve Southerners sent out a plea for man to return to the garden in order to regain his lost sense of place and his communion with the soil and with other men. Ecologists now point out the destruction man has wreaked upon his environment because he has not been conscious of the soil, the water, and the vegetation in his new world garden.

Men came to this new world to escape their native lands and the tyranny there--tyranny of poverty, of worn out soil, and of other men. Ironically, the new world garden has suffered from the same tyranny. So the pilgrims migrated from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast--to the promised land of California--the land of golden dreams. The promises of the golden coast went largely unfulfilled, and the people have begun to return.18 Perhaps man is realizing that he cannot find paradise by running away: there is a "land of beginning again," but it is not in the false, golden glitter of the

Pacific. As Giamatti implies and as Robert Penn Warren illustrates in his novels, peace and the true garden is home, and home is in man's own mind.

True and False Gardens in The Cave

This Edenic myth, which Charles Sanford says "has been the most powerful and comprehensive organizing force in American culture," is re-created in Robert Penn Warren's novels. He re-creates the false garden with its apparent beauty that offers escape but not regeneration to the characters who enter it. Such gardens are the retreat of Jeremiah and Rachel Beaumont in World Enough and Time, the false garden in the West that Willie Proudfit of Night Rider reached after he left Kentucky, and the neon-lighted womb-like room in California in which Jack Burden allowed himself to be hypnotized by the Great Sleep in All the King's Men. The imagery of the false garden suggests a haven of return for the wanderer in which he can experience a return to the womb and escape from his responsibilities and cares. Warren also re-creates the true garden with its images of fruitful, womb-like rebirth. At the end of All the King's Men Jack and Anne go out of the house at Burden's Landing; for they realize that the property at Burden's Landing is not their home. Jack tries to explain that each person must accept his past and its burden; for without a past there is no rebirth--there is no future (All the King's Men, p. 461).

19 The Quest for Paradise, p. vi.
By accepting their past and by leaving the false garden—the landing—Jack and Anne can go confidently into the world. Likewise, Manty Starr accepts the fact that while she cannot reject her past neither can she build a future with bitterness in her heart for her past. On a beautiful, moonlight night Manty sits in her kitchen in Halesburg, Kansas and lets the old bitterness of betrayal and hatred slip away. In its place comes a "kind of quietness, sweet with a steady hope, as when you are a girl" (Band of Angels, p. 312). Manty, in her middle years, begins a kind of rebirth. In addition to repose, regeneration, and rebirth, the true garden traditionally holds the tree of life and the tree of knowledge; in Warren's novels the characters who do make their ways out of the false gardens enter into true gardens and are blessed with some measure of self-knowledge and self-fulfillment.

Nicholas Papadoupalous is one of several characters in Warren's 1959 novel, The Cave, who is in Tennessee because it is a place of escape. Papadoupalous, the proprietor of Ye Olde Southern Mansion Cafe, has fled from one failure to another, from Indianapolis and the Marathon Marvel Restaurant and Steak-House to a "crummy room in an area back of the railroad yards in Nashville, and then on to Johnstown to the shotgun bungalow and Ye Olde Southern Mansion . . ." (The Cave, p. 50). All along the way, Nicholas Papadoupalous carried with him a dream of paradise. In a strip joint in Indianapolis he met the woman he thought could live with him in that paradise. He had watched Giselle Fontaine dance and had
fled that he could not live without her, because he suddenly loved her. Or rather, he thought he loved her, which is sometimes the same thing, and sometimes even better. He loved her because something in the scene before him was different from the hundred or so such scenes he had witnessed in the fifteen years before. Something was different, too, from the number of similar scenes which he had witnessed at closer quarters. Something, perhaps the way the blue smoke coiled and curled like a dream, perhaps the way the yellow hair twitched and twitched with the neck-jerk, made him feel that time stopped and this was Truth. (The Cave, p. 43)

Warren's images suggest that this dance floor is in a kind of false garden. The woman dances with snake-like motions in a timeless world. Papadoupalos is to find out later, to his disappointment, that the yellow hair is really muddy brown and that the real truth about the woman who dances before him is even more disappointing. But at this moment, Nicholas Papadoupalos believes he is seeing his dream come to life.

Time, as a matter of fact, had stopped, because some mysterious element in the scene—the smoke-veil, or neck-jerk—made an old forgotten fantasy come alive. It came alive out there on the handkerchief-size patch of floor, in the stunning, shattering, noiseless collision of the dimension of Time and non-Time, Dream and non-Dream, which is what we call Truth with a capital T. (The Cave, p. 43)

So Mr. Papadoupalos, who becomes Nick Pappy to the people of Johntown, Tennessee, takes Giselle Fontaine, whose name is really Sarah Pumfret, to live with him in a dream world—in a garden that proves to be false. Giselle develops tuberculosis and Nick Pappy begins to feel, week by week, the hand he held getting puffier and puffier. He saw the shape on the bed getting more shapeless. He saw the face puffing out moonwise, vaguer and vaguer, till it looked like the moon rising deliquescently beyond gray mist over marshland. He
saw the platinum blondness of the hair retreat, day by day, week by week, toward the end of each strand, strand by strand, and the muddy brown crowding up from the scalp. (The Cave, p. 53)

Part of the reason that Nick Pappy had never really loved Giselle Fontaine lay in the fact that he had never been able to face reality. Instead of falling in love with Sarah Pumfret, the woman he married, he continued to live in a dream world in which Sarah represented Jean Harlow. He worshipped Miss Harlow's image on the screen, and he sought to find himself a woman to be Jean Harlow. He felt guilty in that desire; he felt he was being untrue to Miss Harlow in accepting a substitute for her. Therefore he suffered doubly in his guilt and in the disillusion of his dream world.

Everything was the violation of everything, and it was bye-bye, my billion-dollar baby, and far away in Glendale, California, her mausoleum surrounded by the artificial, arsenical greensward of the famous Forest Lawn Cemetery, the platinum, swivel-built darling fell more vindictively into nothingness, and Giselle Fontaine swelled more and more into her somethingness, which was worse than nothingness, and Nick Pappy blames his luck sometimes, but more often blamed himself, for it was as though what was happening to Jean and Giselle was all his fault, and all had come by a defect in fidelity. (The Cave, p. 53)

Pappy's garden becomes inhabited by bloated, bed-ridden, brown haired Sarah Pumfret, who insists on clothing herself in seventy dollar French pink nightgowns while Nick Pappy's dream world fades.

The woman who might have been the real, fruitful goddess of his garden was never acknowledged as a person--Dorothy Cutlick, "the towheaded girl that heaved out the hash, that wolfed
down the genteel waffles, that slipped as quiet as smoke, in shabby gray coat, up the street of Johntown, that would steel herself, when question time came at school, to put up her hand, and then would answer in a thin, shaky voice" (The Cave, p. 60). The answer would almost always be correct because Dorothy Cutlick studied, worked hard, and accepted whatever her body had to accept in order to get the formal education that promised to give her independence.

Dorothy Cutlick eventually becomes the efficient bookkeeper for Mr. Bingham, Johntown's banker. She is like an automaton, expressing no outward emotion. Toward the end of the novel, however, Dorothy Cutlick watches as Mr. Bingham goes to his office after having willfully destroyed his false garden by his decision to break up his marriage and to send his wife back to her father. And Dorothy Cutlick appears as a feeling human being who will probably become the real goddess in Mr. Bingham's true garden.

Bingham has endured an emotionally sterile marriage to Matilda Bollin Bingham in an outwardly lovely home. The house is a trap, a kind of false garden into which Bingham has retreated for the years in which his daughter, Jo-Lea, was growing up. After having escaped his responsibilities as a father and man of the house, Mr. Bingham begins to gain self-knowledge with the coming of his self-assertiveness. When Mrs. Bingham talks him into asking Nick Pappy to arrange for an illegal abortion for their daughter, Bingham initially expresses
hesitation to carry out her will. Bingham is seated in his special easy chair, "the kind that brings your knees gently up, the kind executives rest in to forestall the coronary" (The Cave, p. 314). The chair is described as a kind of womb, and Bingham is resting in a fetal position. Twice he stirs from the chair in reaction to Mrs. Bingham's proposals; then he swings himself forward and gets to his feet, but she intimidates him so thoroughly that he sits "down in his chair" and lets "the mechanism drop him back. He closed his eyes and thought of himself dead, and being lowered gently down. He wanted to die" (The Cave, p. 315). The imagery has shifted from the womb imagery to tomb imagery. This is Bingham's last attempt to escape responsibilities, however. From this point he begins to assert his own desires and opinions.

Bingham realizes that his life is being wasted, that he has lost the promise that he thought had been given to him on a "porch, in Nashville, a million years ago, behind vines, waiting for Matilda Bollin to come down and go to the dance ..." (The Cave, p. 398). Eventually he tells his wife that she can have half of all their wealth, that he will put her on a bus back to her father's house, and that he will undertake to make Jo-Lea and the father of her unborn baby financially independent. Then, after sitting on the porch all night, "He rose from the swing. He could not stay here. A man simply could not sit around and think about life. He squared his shoulders. If a man just did one thing, and then the next thing as it came
along, he wouldn't have to think about life. So he couldn't stay here, behind the vines" (The Cave, p. 398). Taking one step at a time, Bingham leaves the false garden and goes into the world. Because of the events of the passage and the imagery used to describe those events, the suggestion that Mr. Bingham has left the false garden for a promising journey toward self-knowledge and self-fulfillment is made.

The immediate event which stimulated Bingham's decision to change his life was a telephone call from John T. Harrick. Old John T., dying of cancer and having just learned that day of the death of his oldest son, Jasper, called Bingham to tell him that Jo-Lea was going to stay the night in the Harrick house. The Harrick house becomes a symbol in the novel of several things to different characters. To John T. (Jack) Harrick, the heller-blacksmith, grown old, it is a building-cage that he has never quite been able to feel happy and contented in. He had lived with his mother in the house before Celia Hornby Harrick became his wife. The house has changed, architecturally, the Harrick house, a one-story structure that, over the years, had sprawled out farther and farther from the original two-room cabin of hickory and walnut logs. The growth along the lane gave him a bit of coolness, and the house itself, set on rich grass and flanked by the great cedars that must have been big when the first Harrick ax blade rang in the cove there, looked deep and cool. (The Cave, p. 180)

What would ordinarily pass for simply a descriptive passage becomes a passage of symbolic suggestion. The atmosphere that surrounds the house is garden-like, seemingly peaceful and
protective. John T. Harrick's efforts over the years to "improve" the house and grounds are symbolic of his efforts to conform to civilization and a world that he doesn't quite understand.

Because he thought it was what his wife wanted, John T. Harrick replaced the wood stove with an electric one and he boarded up the fireplace. He placed old tractor tires along the drive and painted over their blackness with silver paint. Celia asked him to remove the boards from the fireplace, but she could not bring herself to admit to him how "tacky" she thought the tires in the drive were. The tires are symbols of the misplaced kindness and other actions in the home that pretend to be what they are not. They are reminders of the gilt that veneers the true feelings of the people in the house.

John T. Harrick has been tricked into false gardens before. When he was forty-five and Celia Hornby was twenty, John T. Harrick courted her in a garden-like woods. Feeling foolish and not understanding why he was proposing or really whom he was proposing to, Harrick yielded to the garden atmosphere.

There had been a time when he had Celia Hornby out in the dark in dogwood time, and the peepers down the valley had been making their sound like opening and closing squeaky little silver hinges. (The Cave, p. 142)

The two of them drifted along, playing that game in their dream, and his mind went emptier and emptier as the dream grew and seemed not only to fill up his body, but the dark trees and the dark, barely star-teased sky above the trees, included not only now, this minute,
but all the times he had ever lived and walked in the dark. He found himself sucking in his guts tighter and tighter and wasn't even sure he felt the soft sod under his feet. Then clear as a bell, a voice seemed to say in his head: I'm not ever going to die. (The Cave, pp. 143-44)

Harrick is lulled into thinking that the garden promises immortality for him. He believes that he has "found the great secret that everybody had always hunted for" (The Cave, p. 144), but he really didn't even know who the woman in the garden with him was.

It was a light-colored shape there in the woods-dark, real, yes, but which shape, with what color eyes and waist-feel and name and address, he would have had to be damned from hell to bell-time if he had to say that minute. (The Cave, pp. 145-46)

When he returns to reality he is not himself; he is no longer Jack Harrick:

Nobody had ever called him John T. He was Jack, he was Jack Harrick. Hearing that other name, even as it answered his need and desire, he knew that something was happening to Jack Harrick. What, he didn't know. He had turned and fallen on his knees and cried out because, for that one terrible instant, he had felt that he, Jack Harrick, was being snatched up into darkness like the field mouse by the hoot owl. Now as that hand drew him back to reality, he wasn't Jack Harrick after all. He was John T. (The Cave, p. 146)

He returns to reality with very little self-knowledge. He returns to his old homeplace and lives there, experiencing another rebirth in Christian baptism, but he experiences very little self-knowledge from that act. Harrick has been for forty-five years a kind of Pan, free to hunt animals and women in the forest, and he never quite understands why he has traded that freedom for civilization. Harrick thinks in the images
of the woods and garden; Celia is the garden and Harrick
"reckoned he was on firm ground there, and, by God, it was
ground he himself, and no other God-durn man, had bought and
paid for, cleared, broke, seeded, weeded, laid by, and brought
to harvest" (The Cave, p. 145). And, dying, Harrick cannot
understand why Celia, his garden, is not dying with him:
"... he wished she were dead and six feet under so he could
love her. So he could be the man in the house, even as he was
dying" (The Cave, p. 151). With the next thought, he refuses
the idea of death and thinks that if he had not proposed
marriage to Celia Hornby, if he had just

ripped out of her what he wanted, and flung her
aside on the grass and run on over the mountain,
his feet scarcely touching the rocks as he ran
under the dark, barely star-teased sky, then
nothing would ever have happened like this. All
would be different, he would not be dying in a
wheel chair. He would have run on forever, over
the mountain, under the dark sky. (The Cave, p. 151)

This blacksmith who married the third grade teacher probably
never knew about Zeus and Pan and the woodland gods, but his
thoughts about his own former freedom suggest those gods. And
the woods of west Tennessee are described in imagery that sug-
gests classical gardens inhabited by gods and goddesses.

But John T. Harrick left the woods and improved the house
in which he now sits. After the news has come that Jasper is
dead, Harrick hears the moths and insects battering themselves
against the screen door. Those wild creatures kill themselves
trying to get into the house of artificial light. The mention
of the moths that "damaged themselves against the screen with the soft, anguishing insistence that he could not bear" is a refrain that is repeated throughout the last chapter of the novel. It becomes a refrain symbolic of Jack Harrick, the woodsman who became John T. Harrick, inside the screen. Jack, the natural man, hunted in an untamed garden-like woods but was taken into the artificial light of the house presided over by a near-goddess, Celia Hornby Harrick.

Either the woodland garden or the house could have been a true garden if John T. Harrick had achieved self-knowledge earlier in life than he did. Instead, he has allowed things to happen to him until Jasper dies in the cave and Harrick faces reality. When Harrick faces himself in the room with nature struggling to get in, he realizes the feelings he has had about his son, Jasper; he realizes that he really is dying and says, "I'm trying. I'm trying to learn Ceeley" (The Cave, p. 403), picks up the bottle of pills which he has refused all during his illness, and takes a pain-killing pill. He picks up his guitar, which he has also avoided, and hits "a big clanging chord that filled the room" (The Cave, p. 403). It is suggested by the imagery in this chapter that John T. Harrick can now accept those things which he formerly thought were signs of weakness, the pills and the guitar, as objects that can help a man over a bad time. He does not take the two things to escape life, he takes them as aids to accepting both life and death.
The kind of realization and self-knowledge that Harrick experiences is not experienced by the younger protagonist, Isaac Sumpter. Isaac returns to his home in Johntown from an odyssey. He has been to the city, been inculcated with academic facts by intelligent professors at college, been initiated into sexual knowledge by Rachel Goldstein, a beautiful, rich, young Jewish sculptress. Isaac has spurned the fraternal companionship of other young men and, after a brilliant beginning on the newspaper staff, failed to achieve success because of his lack of self-knowledge. He drinks too much, becomes listless, and is unable to reconcile his past—the fact that his mother died in childbirth and his father is a Baptist minister—with either his present life or his future. He finally returns home to sit in his box-like room and read the poetry and letters of John Keats.

Isaac has returned home, and, although he doesn't know it, that is the symbolic place he needs to be. For Isaac does not know who he is. At school he has allowed himself to be mistaken for a Jew; at home he allows his father to believe that he still holds his scholarships to the university. The cave, which is on the land left Isaac by his maternal grandmother, could have been the womb of rebirth for Isaac. Isaac made a partial descent into the cave after Jasper Harrick became trapped in it, but Isaac brought back lies. He claimed to have been visiting with the trapped man; instead Isaac never crawled far enough into the cave to find Jasper. Isaac refused to
allow anyone to enter the cave without his permission, and he
gave that permission to only one young man—Jeb Holloway.
Isaac permitted Jeb to go with him into the cave because he
knew that Jeb would be afraid to crawl into the mysterious,
inner depths of the cave alone, that Jeb would accept any sug-
gestions that Isaac offered him, and that Jeb, eager for at-
tention, would claim to have talked with Jasper if Isaac gave
him the chance. By limiting the number of "witnesses" to
Jasper's plight, Isaac was able to send exclusive news reports
to television and newspaper editors and thereby gain fame and
money for himself.

After his manipulations became complex and the physical
strain of maintaining the ruse that he is administering aid
to the trapped man tires Isaac, he wants to lie down in the
dark, garden-like womb of the earth. The imagery that sur-
rounds the cave is garden-like; it is also suggestive of a
cathedral, which is a kind of sanctuary. The cave has "great
galleries of onyx, stalactites like pipe organs" (The Cave,
p. 132), and "a greater gallery, high, almost beyond the beam
of the flashlight, populated with the monster statuary of a
dream, stalactite and stalagmite, the high ceiling studded
with gypsum flowers" (The Cave, pp. 132-33). When Jasper earlier
struck the stalagmite with a stone "It rang like a great bell
and the bell-tone echoed up into the dome" (The Cave, p. 133).
The imagery might well suggest a garden of God, a womb for re-
generation and rebirth. The description includes the character-
istics of traditional gardens in literature, jewels, flowers,
and music. There is water in the fourth chamber, where the "great cathedral pillars" rise "to the arches of ceiling" (The Cave, p. 184). This cave defied mutability in that there are no changes here; the weather is always the same, temperate. Jasper once told his mother "It's a nice temperature down there... It is not summer and it is not winter. There aren't any seasons to bother about down there" (The Cave, p. 240).

As Isaac Sumpter sits in the comfortable semi-darkness of the cave, he experiences a desire to return to this static, vegetating world. He wants to escape from the activity of life and to withdraw into the darkness.

He could reach up, he knew, and shut off the little valve, and then it would be dark forever. He could throw the matches away, the extra flash away, and just sit here forever. He did not do that but he shut his eyes, and it was almost as though he were in another place, and in another time, and nothing had happened yet or perhaps nothing might ever happen and he would not have to suffer. (The Cave, p. 277)

At this point in his life Isaac could begin to gain a measure of self-knowledge; he could face reality and leave the womb-like cave. Instead he experiences a re-charge of psychic energy which leads him into another false garden. He realizes that he does not want to be anybody else, that he wants the fame and money his adventure is bringing him, and then "He felt, all at once, full of energy, as though by his words he had been magically released from his own distress" (The Cave, p. 278).

Sumpter carries through with his ruse and leaves Johnstown a relatively wealthy and famous man. He goes into an existence
described as another false garden where he dulls his senses with drugs and alcohol and lives in the company of siren-like women. An airplane takes him away from Tennessee into a world "where he had money in the Dutch Trust" (The Cave, p. 370):

Where he would sit in a high, spacious office, with walls tinted the cool of woodland shadow, with a suffering and hieratic canvas of Rouault smoldering on one wall, with a wide window giving over the majesty of the river and the land spreading westward. (The Cave, p. 370)

It is a land

Where it didn't do any harm to be called Ikey among those smart or beautiful Jewish girls who moved like houris across that world of Big Media, the pale-skinned, dark-eyed ones with slow, opulent thighs, the enameled, glittery ones with sharp, prancy ankles and shrewd, challenging wit ... all of whom Isaac Sumpter regarded as devised for his personal delight and nightly passport to oblivion. ... (The Cave, p. 371)

It is also a land where

he tried not to think of Jasper Harrick, and not to dream of a dark weight of stone, and usually managed, for success and Seconal were readily available to him, the most famous product of Scotland was still in long supply for the export trade, and the caravan of Eastern beauties, to the faint servile clink of small gold chains, came footing slowly toward him, with humble yearning in their eyes, over the golden sands of the desert waste:

Where he, Isaac Sumpter, Ikey, Little Ikey, who wanted to be good, and had paid the price, could at last be totally himself. (The Cave, p. 372)

The last two lines, perhaps the most bitter and ironic of the whole novel, point up what Ikey has finally become, nothing. The price he paid was his own manhood. He has escaped the responsibility of decision making and the suffering that experiencing spiritual communion with people brings sometime. Ikey will not suffer the pain of love because he, in
his drugged existence, has traded the agony of living for the pleasures in the false garden. Sumpter emerged from one garden-womb, the cave, into another, more frightening than the first. The second garden-like existence disallows the functioning of Isaac's will power. He is trapped in a world of Seconal and Scotch, for, perhaps, as long as he exists.

Because of Warren's descriptive techniques, several of the other characters in the novel are surrounded by images that suggest the Myth of the Garden. James Haworth is an unsatisfied, unfulfilled city editor of the Nashville Press-Clarion. Mr. Haworth's wife has grown fat and busies herself with campaigns in the clubs to which she belongs. Haworth is left alone with a glass of Scotch, a dream of an ageing television actress—the only goddess in his garden—and a death wish. This misplaced Yankee from New Jersey, who couldn't make good there, sought retreat in a southern garden. He had wanted to pay off the mortgage on his home just in time to retire, but now he was worried about the plumbing, he sort of hoped he would die, quietly in his sleep of course, before too long and not have to think any more about the rotten deal they had handed him on this lemon of a tepee, or the fact he couldn't ever get ahead financially speaking, or even at the paper where they should have made him assistant managing editor instead of that s. o. b. Smather . . . (The Cave, p. 243)

Haworth offers himself the excuse that the bosses are prejudiced against him,

They would have promoted him, too, he was damned sure, if he hadn't been a Yankee, which was one of the things they did not let you forget, even after
twenty-five years and you married to a Southern belle, even if she was third-string. He wished he had stayed in Jersey City, where maybe he would have made out, and never come to the Athens of the South, the capital of the Buttermilk Belt, and never—

He hoped he would die. . . . (The Cave, pp. 243-44)

What Haworth doesn’t realize is that it would not have made much difference whether he had stayed in New Jersey or had come to the Buttermilk Belt. A man with no self-knowledge and only the desire to sink into oblivion is not to be helped very much by a change of geographical location. Haworth would have compromised himself in New Jersey had the chance of marrying someone’s politically, financially, or socially desirable daughter presented itself.

Warren has told the stories of several characters struggling to achieve self-fulfillment. He has set these stories, for the most part, in a glade, just outside the little town of Johntown. The glade is itself a garden-like retreat, but, like the other retreats in the novel, it is not always a pleasant garden. In the beginning of the novel, when the two young lovers walk into the glade and discover in its solitude that Jasper Harrick has been there, left his boots and his guitar, and has probably descended into the cave, the glade is described as a peaceful, perfect garden:

The boots are set in the middle of a little glade benched into the ridge, and one strong ray of the June sun, past meridian but not yet well caught in the weight of westering, strikes through the upper frills of beech leaf and finds the guitar. The ray strikes the strings to a glitter, and you think that that glitter might almost be sound, so startling is it, a single chord stabbing the afternoon silence. (The Cave, p. 4)
The following images suggest that there is something wrong in this garden:

this is the year of the locusts. In fact, there has not been silence at all, for the air has been full of a dry, grinding metallic sound, so penetrating that it has seemed, paradoxically, to come from within the blood, or from some little buzz saw working fiendishly away at the medulla oblongata. It is easy to forget that it is not from inside you, that glittering, jittering, remorseless whir so much part of you that you scarcely notice it, and perhaps love it, until the time when you will really notice it, and scream.

The locust sound is like that rising from the long, wooded ridges and the coves, hollows, gaps, water gaps, and valleys, westward where the land breaks toward the river, eastward toward the higher ridges that heave up, rock snagging above woods-growth. ... You can't bear the silence. Something has got to happen. So when the ray of sunlight strikes the glitter off the guitar strings, you hear it like a big whang. (The Cave, pp. 4-5)

This passage is a kind of envelop description. It is echoed in the central action of the novel and in the last chapter of the novel when Jack Harrick picks up the guitar and hits "a big clanging chord that filled the room" (The Cave, p. 403). The first description of the glade introduces the imagery of the Myth of the Garden, a myth that encompasses the whole narrative.

In the central section of the novel, the glade is described as a false garden—after the manipulations of Isaac Sumpter bring thousands of strangers to the mountainside, after the television cameras and reporters converge upon the site—when the barbecue begins to sizzle, and the sun goes down. The glade takes on a hellish appearance:
The glaring lights were there. The trees rose beyond the light, and the leaves that that light hit had the incandescent sick green of the light before a storm. The trees out of the light rose up blacker than black. The ridge was black above them.

(The Cave, p. 249)

Out of the natural description of *The Cave*, Warren has created garden imagery which has risen to the level of symbol, just as Warren suggested that images would rise in the work of the philosophical novelist (*SE*, p. 58).

**Wilderness Gardens**

*Wilderness*, Warren's 1961 novel, differs in several ways from any of his previous novels.20 One of the major differences is in its fewer characters. *Wilderness* is the story of Adam Rosenzweig's journey from Bavaria to the Wilderness Forest in Virginia. During his journey, Adam enters several garden-like atmospheres; some are false gardens which promise to fulfill his dreams, but Adam Rosenzweig does not yield to the temptation to remain in any of the false gardens. Instead he makes his way into the Wilderness Forest which proves to be the true womb of his rebirth.

As the novel begins, Adam is living in his father's house in Bavaria. His father has just been buried, and Adam is refusing to return to the room in which old Rosenzweig lay in state. Not only does Adam refuse to return to the room, but he also refuses to follow the Jewish religious laws of his

20 For discussions of several differences see Shepherd, pp. 224-44, and Moore, pp. 183-96.
kinsmen. The twenty-nine-year-old Adam realizes that the beauty of the world summons him in a more powerful way than the duty of family and religion. In fact, if Adam had not realized that the world was beautiful,

If the mountain had not gleamed so white.
If yonder, under the peaks, the snaggled line of the fir forest had not been so blue-black, against the white.
If the sky above that glitter of snow on the Zelzsteinberg had not been heart-breaking with the innocence of new blue. . . . If the world had not been absolute in beauty.
If none of these things had been as they were, he, Adam Rosenzweig, might have fled inward into the self, into the ironies of history and knowledge, into that wisdom which is resignation. (Wilderness, pp. 3-4)

Adam does not flee inward in resignation; he does not return to the womb-tomb atmosphere of the room of his childhood. Instead Adam thinks, "I am alive" (Wilderness, p. 4), and he begins his journey across the sea to the new world garden.

He makes his journey in order to be worthy of the things he loves, the beauty of the world, liberty, and freedom. Adam wants to help the Union forces fight for freedom in the land where the Civil War is raging. He prepares his wardrobe and takes with him the satchel his uncle forces upon him—a satchel that contains the ritual items of his abandoned religion.

After the captain of the ship on which Adam sails discovers Adam's lameness, he thinks that the Union forces will not accept Adam. After he forces Adam to work for his passage to America and vows to return Adam to Bavaria, Adam sneaks off the ship as soon as it docks in America.
Adam is swept up in lynch-crowd violence when he reaches the shore. He finds himself trapped in a womb-like cellar with water from an inserted hose rising around him. The people of the town are trying to flood out the Negroes who have fled into the cellar. Adam cannot see anything for the darkness of the cellar, but he knows that the water is reaching his collarbone. He does not think what he is doing; he instinctively "tried to clamber up," onto a shelf. He feels a hand helping him up onto the shelf and remembers nothing more until he awakens in a strange room, in strange clothes.

His eyes opened to a high ceiling, light beige in color. . . He felt the downy softness of the pillow under his head. He caught the starchy, clean, sun-bathed, herby smell of the sheet which lay across the jut of his chin. His eyes fell shut again, and in the hypnosis of that scent, he thought of lying on a high field, in late summer, smelling the gorse, watching the unmoving blueness of the sky.

(Wilderness, p. 55)

Adam has awakened in a garden atmosphere. The imagery of the passage also suggests the antiseptic atmosphere of a room prepared for childbirth. Adam thinks that he has lain, "once in such a place. His mind probed back, trying to remember"

(Wilderness, p. 55). But he cannot remember the room of his own birth or a room similar to it at this moment.

As soon as Adam becomes fully awake his kinsman, Aaron Blaustein, whose real son, Stephen, has been killed a few months earlier at Chancellorsville, enters the room. Blaustein offers to become a father to Adam, but Adam refuses to accept the riches of the old man and the position in his family.
Instead Adam accepts the proposal that he hire on to drive a sutler's wagon under the orders of one of Blaustein's men, Jedeen Hawksworth. To accept the paternity of Blaustein would be to place himself in a false garden.

The first false garden that Adam encounters along the road to Virginia appears as a tempting escape from reality:

Adam swung his gaze from the road, to the trees, to the green meadows, the green swell of hills. In a flicker of time, less than an instant, he had some sense of himself leaping from the wagon, running across a meadow, flinging himself down, face down, in the secret depth of a green thicket. Then the craziness of that vision of flight was gone, as though it has not existed at all. But he kept his eyes turned away. (Wilderness, p. 86)

Warren recalls this passage later with the imagery of another womb-like garden escape which he introduces with a refrain that echoes the introductory phrase of the earlier passage.

Adam looked off into the woods. The first shadows were beginning to gather. Deeper and deeper the woods recessed, in vault after dimming vault of shade and coolness to that inward point where shade was beginning to coalesce to darkness. Adam, looking into the depth, thought of Time moving deeper and dimmer, into coolness and peace. (Wilderness, p. 109)

For a man who had almost "fled inward, into the wisdom which is resignation" this possibility of escape into darkness is most tempting. He does not yield to the temptation but continues his journey until the wagons stop to make camp, and Adam is faced with the temptation to remain in a pastoral garden.

While the men are bathing in the creek they become aware of

A woman, a girl . . . standing there on the bank, frozen too in her surprise, her mouth making a little
O to shape the exclamation she was, actually, too surprised to utter. She was a large girl, wearing some kind of a long blue dress, yellow hair braided and wrapped around her head, a fat baby propped on one hip, on the other side an arm dangling to hold a flattish basket, heaped high with purple grapes, and behind her was a tangle of leaves, brightened to gold and translucent green by the last sunlight striking through them. (Wilderness, p. 110)

This description of Maran Goetz Meyerhof suggests that she is a kind of fertile goddess presiding over this pastoral garden. The woman is attempting to take care of the vineyards and the farm chores which her husband cannot look after. He has been wounded while fighting with General Howard's troops at Chancellorsville. His wound is infected and he is often out of his head because of the fever. During the days the sutlers' wagons camp by the water, Adam becomes her friend, attempts to talk with her husband, mends fences, and milks cows. Adam takes the husband's duties on the farm, but he does not take the husband's pleasure. Adam is ready to move on with the rest of the sutlers, but he realizes what he is leaving—a promise of peace and material abundance. As the other sutlers moved on "Adam stood there, in the shade of the trees and felt stripped naked, as though by an icy blast" (Wilderness, p. 131). The description of Adam's feelings suggests a rebirth in that the newly born creature is naked and alone. It also suggests the escape from a false garden; for there are no icy blasts in the true garden. The icy blast of reality will help Adam to find self-knowledge and self-fulfillment that he might not have found had he usurped the dying man's place in the vineyard.
Adam soon enters into the retreat of Nonmorancy Pugh, a 
wild, natural hideout for Pugh, who has become a bestial 
wanderer. John Longley has said that Wilderness "is a marked 
departure from the other novels. It is a stripped, direct 
narrative, done without very much introspection, self-searching, 
stream of consciousness, or enfolded counter-plot." But 
Wilderness does contain a counter-plot, which is the interpo-
lated narrative of the Pughs.

When Adam discovers that Mose Talbutt Crawfurd has killed 
Jedeen Hawksworth, Adam hides the Hawksworth wagon and leaves 
the troop camp secretly. He becomes lost in the woods and 
comes upon the cottage of the Pughs. The description of the 
woods and the cottage itself reads like a Grimm's fairy tale.

Deep in the woods, the lane had become little more 
than a trace. Turf absorbed the sound of hoof and 
wheel. New grass was up to the fetlock. Here and 
there some bushes, or a switch of maple or gun boldly 
rooted in the very lane, brushed the length of the 
horse's belly, then bowed beneath the axle. Boughs 
hung with fresh green, and leaves fully formed but not 
yet thickening to summer fleshiness, brushed the sides 
of the wagon. (Wilderness, p. 246)

There is "a little stream" that crosses the trace with "crystal 
clear water." Moss covers the stones with green "deep pile."

He got down and flung himself flat with his face 
against the cold silkiness of the water. He sucked 
the water in, feeling the cold go veining out from 
his stomach. Under the crystal water he saw tiny 
flecks of something like mica caught by the sun and 
filtering against the velvet blackness of the stream 
bed. (Wilderness, p. 247)

21 Robert Penn Warren: Southern Writers Series, p. 28.
Adam realizes that this is a beautiful world. He is in an enchanted garden where the stream bed cushions the mica flecks so that they appear to be jewels. That appearance which suggests something that is not true should warn Adam that this is not a true garden. It is perhaps the most dangerous garden Adam has entered. It is dangerous to Adam's physical being as the earlier gardens were dangerous to his moral and spiritual well being. In this garden, beyond the "leafy brush that screened the spot" (Wilderness, p. 247), Adam saw the cabin; "... he thought it was abandoned; it was in such grim disrepair, the door sagging, and the mud-and-stick chimney crumbling under weather. But then he saw the woman" (Wilderness, p. 247).

She had been crouching, and now his gaze caught her as she rose. He came into the open space, an area rank with new growth already knee-high, the green broken here and there by the black stalks of ironweed from the year before. The woman had moved into the trodden space near the cabin door, which gave inward on a blackness like a cave. (Wilderness, p. 247)

This is a garden of nature, completely without reasonable care. No one attempts to curb the natural growth of the plants or to repair the house someone once built. The two inhabitants of the garden have likewise returned to a bestial existence. They exist much like Rachel and Jeremiah Beaumont after they sank into the swamp of the Grand Bosse in World Enough and Time. Both the Beaumonts and the Pughs have escaped from the world outside and live a deranged, hopeless kind of existence in the woods.
Because Mrs. Pugh has not fallen to the extent that her husband has, she is able to feel a human relationship to Adam. She tells him of Monmorancy Pugh's plan to murder him and steal the goods in the wagon. Because of her directions, Adam is able to save his life and escape from the womb-tomb atmosphere of the false garden.

After travelling throughout the day, Adam finds himself in a man-made glade, the complete opposite of the natural garden of the Pughs. This clearing is surrounded by the wilderness,

set around by sizable timber, oak and gum, and a thick tangle of brush... among the stumps, fern grew knee-high. To one side ran a thin trickle, scarcely a stream. With summer it would be gone, but it would serve for now. (Wilderness, p. 284)

With the coming of summer Adam will also be gone from this garden which helps him to gain self-knowledge. He will no longer need the stream that answers his needs at this time; for when Adam loses his fear for his physical life and begins to feel terribly lonely for human companionship he begins to gain self-knowledge in this glade. By noon he can hear battle noises, and he begins to remember his past. He begins to understand his life and reconcile his past with his present. Long ago he had experienced another "waking" (Wilderness, p. 285), a waking from childhood. He realized at that time that he loved freedom more than he loved his family. For that realization and the confession of it to his mother, he felt that he paid the price of losing her love. He exchanged the love of
his mother for freedom from her maternal influence. Today he again breaks loose. He spends the night in the glade and wakes "amid ferns wet with dew" (Wilderness, p. 287), and by afternoon "loneliness overwhelmed him" (Wilderness, p. 288). He knows that he came to America to fight for freedom and that America didn't want him. He knows that he had to come anyway, "Because you have to know if there is a truth in the world" (Wilderness, p. 289). Then, like the Ancient Mariner, who also suffered intolerable loneliness, Adam blesses his former comrades.

And sitting there... Adam was filled with a tenderness, even a love, for Mose Crawfurd. Let him go in peace, he thought. Oh, God, lead him to peace. (Wilderness, p. 290)

At this point

Adam heard the windy roar sweep north, then south. In the center of the whirling of the storm, he remembered having read, there is a cold, minute eye of stillness in the storm which was the world. The world broke into the thicket. It plunged into the glade. (Wilderness, p. 290)

Adam's garden is invaded by a band of retreating, starving soldiers. Adam must finally kill in order to save his own life, figuratively and literally. He realizes that he is guilty of no sin in having saved his own life; he had come to America to fight for freedom. That rather vague notion had long been in his mind, but he did not know that he would have to fight and to kill in order to gain his own freedom.

The reader cannot be sure whether the summary passage about Adam's knowledge is spoken by the omniscient narrator of the novel or is Adam's thought. But the passage reminds
the reader that the gardens through which Adam has come have indeed been threats to his completion of his journey.

Yes, he had come. Everything in the world had tried to stop him, temptations, disillusion, fear, the blankness of the world and time, all the betrayals of his dream. But he had come. By God, he had come here. (Wilderness, p. 249)

As Adam prepares to leave the garden he feels "energy flooding him like wine" and "the exaltation of one who discovers the great secret. He felt that if this was the way the world was, it was a joy to know it" (Wilderness, p. 303). Adam realizes another important fact—that he is only human; he knows that he will pick up a pair of ordinary boots and walk lamely out of the Wilderness, carrying "the boots that had, in the fullness of time and human effort, been passed from one dead man to another . . ." (Wilderness, p. 310). With the red fire of battle raging around the glade, Adam leaves the dead men in the Wilderness that has been his regenerative garden.

The Garden Myth and Flood

Bradwell Tolliver, Warren's middle-aged hero of Flood, has been in Fiddlersburg, Tennessee for three weeks when the novel opens. After having made a respected name for himself, writing film scripts in California, Tolliver has returned to his home, which is gradually being inundated by the flood waters held by a newly built dam. Over the years Tolliver has lived in the house in Fiddlersburg, off and on, with his father, his wife, Lettice Poindexter Tolliver, and his sister, Maggie Tolliver Fiddler. He has achieved a measure of
self-fulfillment and security in the house, but he has not achieved self-knowledge to sustain him in the world. When his marriage to Lettice ended, he left, seeking, once again, the promise of the west. California was a promised, golden dream for Tolliver, just as the west had been for Willie Proudfit, for Jack Burden, for Amantha Starr, and for Jeremiah Beauchamp. The promise was never fulfilled; for Tolliver the west provided only a place of escape and a temporary hiatus from suffering.

Tolliver returns to Fiddlersburg, the geographical womb of his infancy, in order to find strength and regeneration, to find a measure of self-knowledge that will enable him to continue his search for self-fulfillment. During the time Tolliver spends in Fiddlersburg he remembers his past life, his failures and successes, his wives, his father, and his friends. His past is a part of him that he must accept in order to become a whole person, independent of crutches and false gardens that have sustained him in the past.

As he has done in The Cave and Wilderness, Warren suggests the Myth of the Garden throughout the novel by interspersed descriptive passages. The imagery in the later passages is reminiscent of the earlier imagery in Flood. One of the early passages records a simple opinion of Yasha Jones as he looks at Maggie Tolliver,

in the Tennessee moonlight, here in a doomed, God-forgotten little town, by a deep-bellied, silt-laden river, in a poorly maintained garden where, even in moonlight, it was plain to be seen that
the rose trellises, those not already beyond repair, badly needed attention. *(Flood*, p. 43)

The description might easily be overlooked were the garden and the images surrounding its description not recalled two pages later:

A big TV aerial, he observed, rose anachronistically above it. Below the house, shelving down toward them, he could make out two levels of the terracing, retained by old brick, overgrown and crumbling, and the brick walk that led down, between the disreputable rose trellises, to the ruinous gazebo that hung over the river. *(Flood*, p. 45)

In addition to the ruined rose trellis, the river, the moonlight, and the gazebo, there is a timeless quality about Fiddlersburg: Maggie Tolliver explains to Yasha Jones that

"... all my life things fell down in Fiddlersburg and never got picked up. Maybe that was some kind of wiseness, after all. Suppose all those years everybody in Fiddlersburg had gone around all day picking up things and trying to put them back together again." *(Flood* pp. 47-48)

Her cousin, Blanding Cottshill goes on,

"It's funny," Cottshill said, "why things do fall down here. You think of things falling down, decaying, as something that happens in Time--the category of Time. But why do things fall down in a place where there isn't any Time? *(Flood*, p. 48)

When Jones surveys the landscape he sees, in addition to the river and the ruined terracing, the silver on the water, "the moon riding infinitely high, and with disdainful ease, across the milk-pale emptiness of the sky," and he hears "The mockingbird burst out again" *(Flood*, p. 50). He also looks carefully again at the woman who lives in this garden:
The mockingbird obligingly gave a long cadenza. Over the edge of his brandy glass he looked at the woman. She sat there in the moonlight, quite erect in her chair, the pale shawl laid with mathematical exactitude over her shoulders, the hair parted with exactitude on the good skull, and she looked westward over the great bend of the river and the dim land as though she were alone. (Flood, p. 50)

This garden contains all the traditional characteristics of other literary gardens. Although it is in west Tennessee, its geographical location does not keep it from being a replica of an Eastern garden. Yasha Jones reminds Bradwell Tolliver of that quality of Fiddlersburg:

"What you make--it will not be exotic," Yasha Jones said. "Ah, that is the danger--you don't know how exotic Fiddlersburg is! But there is something else here, too. Archetypally human, archetypally simple, and therefore precious." (Flood pp. 261-62)

It is this precious, valuable aspect of Fiddlersburg that both Yasha Jones and Bradwell Tolliver must recognize before they can capture it on film, before they can create a work of art, before they can gain a fuller measure of self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. Throughout the novel Warren uses the images of the garden--either a true garden that supplies life-giving support for the people who inhabit it or a false garden that smothers creativity and growth--as he re-creates the experiences and thoughts of people, past and present, for whom Fiddlersburg has been a haven.

Lank Tolliver, Brad and Maggie's father, had come "boiling up out of the swamp" to financially capture Fiddlersburg. He had bought mortgages on the church and on the home of Dr. Amos Fiddler and eventually foreclosed on those mortgages. But the
financial success was not enough to sustain Lank Tolliver; he was not satisfied with the land and buildings, not satisfied with his son, and he fled into the swamps every time the world became too much for him to understand. Instead of thinking about the problems of being a landowner and a father, Lank Tolliver retreated into the deep, dark swamps with a Negro to fan the mosquitoes and flies from his alcohol-soaked body and cried like a baby until the alcoholic stupor took away his ability to think about the world and his responsibilities.

Lank's son, Bradwell has also retreated into the swamp with his friend, Frog-Eye, several times, but the promise of regeneration in the swamp was never fulfilled. Another place of retreat for Bradwell Tolliver is the house itself. Bradwell takes his second wife, Lettice, to live in the Fiddler home. Lettice is a false goddess in the garden, described several times as a kind of Eastern goddess:

Lettice Poindexter leaned down at him a little . . . or rather had let her head bend a little forward and sidewise so that she could scrutinize his face while, to the accompaniment of small, weaving gestures, merely from the wrist, on the left wrist two heavy gold bracelets, East Indian or something, with barbaric jangling things hanging from them, she explained to him the deeper meaning of his work.

(Lood, p. 59)

Living with Lettice is a kind of promise that Bradwell will come to that deeper understanding about his work and will, therefore, be able to create other works. That promise is not fulfilled.
Lettice said, there was only one way, in the modern world, to find happiness. She had found it. She was explaining to him how he could find it and, at the same time, bring forth the deeper meaning of his work. (Flood, p. 59)

Lettice thinks that she has found happiness through analysis and the help psychiatric treatment has given her. She is free in the sense that her body is no longer distasteful to her; she can share affection and enjoy sexual intercourse, but she can share and enjoy only with someone who needs her. The other person's need is Lettice's crutch. She is not a complete woman without the need of another to feed her own needs.

Lettice's "happiness" fails her in the last days of her marriage to Bradwell, and she does not help him to create a work of art. Both people are incomplete and they cannot find completion by depending upon one another. Warren's characters have illustrated over and over that a person must find fulfillment in himself and not depend totally upon another person to provide it. Warren has illustrated many times that the desirable unity of man does not depend upon a parasitic relationship. Moreover, the symbiotic relationship exemplified in many marriages does not always provide the fulfillment one seeks. The unity of man depends instead upon "a unity presupposing separateness" ("Knowledge and the Image of Man," p. 187).

Bradwell felt, at one time, that he could enter into a relationship with the blind Leontine Purtle and find satisfaction in providing for her needs—in taking care of the sightless
woman. The imagery with which Warren re-creates Bradwell's idea suggests the false garden.

as he touched his fingers to his face, he knew where he was. And who he was. There had been a promise in that moonlight that spread over all the world westward without end. Where had that promise gone? (Flood, p. 360)

Then he felt that

Something could be redeemed. Everything could be redeemed.
He rose and ran water into the basin and picked up a pale green washcloth with a brown dwarf on it, and began, slowly, to wash himself. He was thinking, with deep calmness, what life could become. He could marry Leontine Purtle. He could build a house high up, looking westward over the lake. He could take care of her, and when her foot was set on the strange stone, her hand would be in his. (Flood, p. 360)

This is, however, no garden; it is the bathroom of the Seven Dwarfs Motel in Happy Dell. The ritual cleansing is in preparation for intercourse with Leontine. What he feels for Leontine is pity, not love, and the need to be needed. These emotions will not take the place of a redeeming love.

Another character in the novel who fails to differentiate his emotions is Yasha Jones. Jones knows more than most men about himself and about the world in which he lives. He has experienced success, knowledge, and a measure of self-fulfillment. He realizes, for example, that he is not immortal, and he takes some joy in realizing that he, like his art, is evanescent.
But Jones

was not aware that, long back, he himself had mistaken the warmth of pity for the warmth of joy. He was not aware that the pity in a little book written by a boy from Fiddlersburg, some twenty-five years earlier, was what now put him in this ruined garden, in the
moonlight, waiting for sleep. He was not aware that the pity in that little book had come before him as an image of the pity in his own heart which he thought was joy. (Flood, p. 57)

Another of Jones' realizations is that the world is beautiful (Flood, p. 33) and that part of what makes it beautiful is humanity.

He saw a light come on, far off there, in one of the houses clutching at the shadowy base of the hill. He thought of the human moment in the midst of the land. His heart stirred. He thought of the preciousness of that moment. That, he thought, was all he had ever tried to get; that moment of preciousness.

But he had never managed to do it. At least, not the way he dreamed it. Perhaps he would, this time. (Flood, p. 41)

Yasha Jones won't capture the dream this time. He will probably not film the flooding of Fiddlersburg because he will not gain enough self-knowledge to allow him to create the art he dreams of creating. He will, however, be able to approach his dream later, after he has learned to accept love in a true garden existence with Maggie Tolliver.

Jones makes box-office hits that are failures in his own eyes because he has never been able to capture the "moment of preciousness." Jones can't capture the moment because he has shut himself away from humanity. He has isolated himself and had most things. He had tasted the good things and found their exact worth. He had seen men do worthy things and had found that he had the gift to recognize their worth. He had worked hard and had earned a vision of the structure of the world. He had known danger and fear. He had had, he thought wryly, fame, or what passed for fame in the world of time.
He had had—and here he was aware of having to push himself to the admission, as though it were shameful or incriminating—love. (Flood, p. 100)

What he realizes that he has not had is joy. He has not had the joy that unity with other human beings can provide. He recognizes the value of being a part of humanity, but it is very difficult for him to expose himself to the suffering that entering into and becoming a part of the community of mankind sometimes demand.

Once, when Maggie Tolliver had attempted to talk with Jones, he felt that her advance was a threat to his isolation. He inwardly rejects her friendship because he feels defenseless in the presence of that friendship.

He felt even more defenseless, for the lame, irrelevant, mysteriously extorted explanation. Somewhere, deep in his being, he knew that something was saying: I don't want to explain anything. I don't want to explain myself. If I do not try to explain I can at least endure to the end. (Flood, p. 95)

Warren is illustrating in fiction what he stated in his lecture at the conference on the Unity of Knowledge at Columbia University in 1954. He said that

Man can return to his lost unity, and if that return is fitful and precarious, if the foliage and flower of the innocent garden are now somewhat browned by a late season, all is the more precious for the fact, for what is now achieved has been achieved by a growth of moral awareness. The return to nature and man is the discovery of love, and law. But love through separateness... (KIM, p. 187)

Both Yasha Jones and Bradwell Tolliver are middle aged men; they have both sailed the seas and fought the wars, and each has found fame in the eyes of the world. But the concept that
one must find unity through separateness, neither has realized. Yasha Jones has, because of his self isolation, separateness without love, and Bradwell Tolliver has had love but no separateness. In the browned garden of the Fiddler home, Jones begins to open his heart to the joy that Maggie's love promises,

And now looking out westward over the moon-washed land, he felt his joy in the thought that now, even this late, he had stumbled upon this place, and its doom, and the place and doom would give him—in spite of, no, because of, his very abstraction from place and event—the perfect image of his pure and difficult joy. (Flood, p. 100)

Ironically, Jones will find joy in the very lack of abstraction he now expresses faith in. Jones sinks "into the expectation of fulfillment which was Fiddlersburg" (Flood, p. 120), but what he expects and what he experiences are two quite different emotions. He is thinking of the completion of his film that he hopes will capture the preciousness of the human moment, but what he gets is the completion of himself. He achieves the unity of separateness with Maggie's help.

At this point, however, he is still resentful toward her because she presents a threat to the isolation he has built up around himself.

He sat there and wondered how he had come all the years, and miles, to sit here in this undistinguished garden in Tennessee, in the middle of the night, and fall perilously into the shadowy depth of himself. In that moment he felt, suddenly, an angry envy of the woman who had sunk away, triumphantly, contemptuously from his reach, into her dark inner ease. In that moment of desolation he lifted his eyes to stare at her. (Flood, p. 187)
Maggie Tolliver Fiddler is able to sink away into herself because she has a measure of self-fulfillment in that she has chosen to remain in the ruined garden and take care of her mother-in-law, old Mrs. Fiddler. She is not fulfilling the promise of her youth, she has little, if any, joy, but she is content to wait for her rebirth. The home provides security and safety from the world for Maggie, who has achieved a large portion of self-knowledge. She is aware of what she has given up to live in Fiddlersburg; she loves and is still separate; she does not depend in a parasitic way upon any other human being. She is not bitter, and she is open to new love. Her escape into the womb-garden of the Fiddler home for all the years she spent there was a kind of preparation for rebirth.

"... all those years, waiting and not knowing what I was waiting for, having Mother Fiddler to take care of, going up the hill all those times—whatever it was, it wasn't trying to make up for something. How could I ever make up for anything? And believe me— you've got to believe me— I wasn't feeling grand or proud about giving up anything, for I guess I know as well as anybody that renouncing—to use that horrid word for giving up—can have something nasty and weak about it. . . . And as far as Mother Fiddler is concerned, maybe I took her on just so I'd be stuck, just so I'd be trapped into whatever it was I wanted to be trapped in. And I know enough to know that the way I lived all those years wasn't what they call normal. Maybe it all was crazy.

"But maybe that craziness was the only kind of normal for me. Maybe it was just what I had to do in order to be, in the end, myself. Not, not to be me—to become me, if I could. (Flood, p. 337)

Before the novel ends Maggie is ready to become herself away from Fiddlersburg. Her husband, imprisoned for life, also experiences a kind of rebirth which helps Maggie to be able
to divorce Calvin Fiddler, to leave Fiddlersburg, and to go into a true garden with Yasha Jones. Bradwell tells Calvin that she lives on some isle of Greece. In the Aegean. Yeah, in a shepherd's hut and reading Sophocles. At least, Yasha is reading Sophocles—in the original, I warrant—while with one hand Maggie fans the fire of twigs with a dried gull's wing to make it burn and with the other stirs the soup with, very probably, a spoon fashioned cunningly from a billy goat's horn. By the way, she's pregnant. (Flood, p. 407)

Calvin accepts this news from Bradwell and is glad for his ex-wife, but not so long ago he had tried to kill the man whom she now lives in the garden with. Calvin had always lived in the shadow of Bradwell Tolliver. Although they seemed to be friends, Calvin always felt the differences between them that precluded real friendship, differences caused mainly by the relationships of their fathers. Bradwell's father foreclosed on Fiddler and was not glad because of his action; he escaped into the swamp. Fiddler lost his place and became a narcotics addict. Bradwell escaped Fiddlersburg for the promise of California, and Calvin Fiddler also tried to flee, but he returned, as Bradwell returned. Calvin tells Tolliver,

At first, when I was a boy, I thought it was just Fiddlersburg, Father losing the place and all, taking to dope. So I thought all I had to do was to get away from Fiddlersburg. So I got away. Then it seemed like the only way to escape it—whatever it was—was to trick it, was to cut back on my track, to come to Fiddlersburg. It was as though I wouldn't be noticed here. I wouldn't be noticed in Fiddlersburg because my name was Fiddler. Protective coloring, like a field mouse hiding in dry grass, and that thing up in the sky looking down like a hawk wouldn't see me. (Flood, p. 284)
Calvin did not find protective covering in Fiddlersburg. Instead he found Bradwell Tolliver and the woman he had brought out of the city to inhabit the old Fiddler place with him. Fiddler found Lettice Poindexter who, with her tables of cosmetics worked magic on Bradwell's sister and made her into a siren who enchanted Calvin Fiddler. Calvin tells of his impression of Maggie:

coming into that house, which was not my father's house anymore, and seeing her coming down the stairs wrapped half-naked in some fancy shawl that that fancy wife of yours had wrapped around her, barefoot on the stairs and one shoulder bare, and her eyelids painted purple as though she were an expensive whore who had just earned her money, and her mouth painted purple like a wound swollen or as though her underlip had been bitten by somebody and was swollen. (Flood, p. 288)

Maggie was really no siren; she was just an ignorant Eve who did not know what she was doing. Neither Calvin nor Maggie had self-knowledge, and neither of them achieved self-fulfillment together. Neither understood the other's ignorance and need. Finally Calvin Fiddler killed a young engineer who had had intercourse with Maggie in the garden of the Fiddler house. For that act, Calvin went to prison. When he tried unsuccessfully to escape, he was returned to prison for life under the habitual criminal act.

Upon his return the prison became a protective, false garden. Fiddler existed in prison not as a physician but as a servant with no confidence in his own abilities. Mr. Budd, the warden, tells Yasha Jones,
"A guy gets real sick we got to call in a outside
doc," he said, "Not we ain't got a good inside doc.
Went to Johns Hopkins. But he has lost confidence.
He says he is afraid of doctoren now. He just sort
of piddles around the place. Hell, he'll even empty
bedpans, do stuff the nigger orderlies is supposed
to do. He helps out, but he has lost confidence."

The prison is a place where the man who has lost confidence
can piddle around; it is a timeless world for Calvin, who
"don't look no age. . . . He looks like he was not much more'n
a boy. A boy what has got gray . . ." (Flood, p. 157). Calvin
Fiddler is vegetating in prison, not living, not growing, not
even ageing.

It takes the rumor of Maggie and Yasha's nightly walks to
stimulate Calvin Fiddler to break out of prison once more. He
faces Yasha Jones, with Tolliver and Maggie, and shoots Tolliver
in his attempt to kill Yasha Jones. He then realizes that he
is a physician who can save a wounded man. He saves Bradwell's
life and is returned to prison a changed man. The breaking out
of prison and the subsequent actions of Fiddler have led to
his rebirth. After Bradwell's wound heals he goes to see
Fiddler. Fiddler tries to explain what has happened to him.

"As soon as that gun went off I knew that that--
not shooting Yasha Jones--was what everything had
been moving toward, forever. To use your phrase
again," he said, "that, too, was, I reckon, a coming
ture. And--" He paused. Then: "And when every-
thing has finally come true, maybe that's when you
can feel free." (Flood, p. 409)

Calvin Fiddler learns that "life is beautiful" (Flood, p. 412)
even in prison. He now not only ministers to the ill prison-
ers, he creates. Had he not returned to Fiddlersburg, to the
garden-womb of his youth, he would not have almost killed one man and succeeded in killing another; but he might not have gained self-knowledge and fulfillment either. Fiddler says,

"Guess if it hadn't been for Fiddlersburg—I mean for feeling I had to get back here, to the place where my protective coloring could really protect, but didn't protect—I guess I would have gone into research. Well"—he laughed—"I've got it both ways now. Fiddlersburg, and research." (Flood, pp. 413-14)

Those two words, "Fiddlersburg, and research," symbolize both security and growth which Fiddler has now in a true garden; for, physical—geographical and architectural—boundaries don't matter since, as Bradwell Tolliver is later to say, "There is no country but the heart" (Flood, p. 440).

Before Bradwell Tolliver could understand that fact, however, he had to explore several false gardens and escape into several womb-like retreats—retreats he can even joke about on occasions:

"Yeah," he said, "I have come back to Fiddlersburg. I have come back to touch base. And mysteriously, mystically, I relax and am born again. Is that it?" (Flood, p. 243)

During his escapes to California, into marriage with Suzie Martine and Lettice Poindexter, into the false retreat promised by Leontine Purtle, he does learn some things about himself. He realizes that his own youth is "light years away—and dead" (Flood, p. 29), that he might have to come back to Fiddlersburg to escape the world as "his father had to go back to the swamp, to lie in the mud and weep" (Flood, p. 128), that people return to the Fiddlersburg house in a communal effort to escape loneliness (Flood, pp. 166-67), and that just to be home is not
enough. Home, without valuable creativity is suffocation. At one time Bradwell felt that "Fiddlersburg was rising and closing around him like a fog, like a trap. He could not breathe. He stood there and hated Fiddlersburg" (Flood, p. 306).

Later Tolliver begins to make something valuable of his knowledge; he realizes there are no fulfilled promises in the golden west and there is no satisfaction in pandering to the needs of the Leontine Purtles in the world. Satisfaction will come to the man who struggles against the odds the world flings at him and who struggles bravely; in this sense, the middle-aged protagonist, Bradwell Tolliver, becomes a hero. He realized finally that one doesn't have to "twitch and jerk and pule and mutter and twist his face in craziness and call it all something else. At least a man did not have to lie" (Flood, p. 439).

One of his last actions in the novel is tearing up the false promise of fulfillment in California: "He grasped the telegram in both hands and tore it across" (Flood, p. 439). His final realization concerns Fiddlersburg and the necessity of seeking a valuable knowledge.

Over the years, he had run hither and yon, blaming Fiddlersburg because it was not the world, and, therefore, was not real, and blaming the world because it was not Fiddlersburg and, therefore, was not real. For he had not trusted the secret and irrational life of man, which might be the truth of man, and which was both more and less than the moment when, as a boy, in a skiff on the swollen river, he had seen the winter sun setting red beyond the black swamp woods, or that moment when he had seen . . . his father lying in the black swamp
ill mud, asleep after weeping. For he, being a man had lived, he knew, in the grinning calculus of the done and the undone.

Therefore, in his inwardness, he said: I cannot find the connection between what I was and what I am. I have not found the human necessity.

He knew that that was what he must try to find. ([Flood, p. 439])

Warren has used the Garden Myth in The Cave, Wilderness, and Flood to illustrate a theme that Man is often tempted by a false garden existence, but if he recognizes that passivity is not a condition that man should welcome for the remaining years of his life and if he accepts the challenges offered by an active life, he will reject the temptation to remain in a false garden. He will leave the false garden with its temptation of peace and passivity and seek the active life and the true garden.
CHAPTER IV

WARREN AND THE JOURNEY MYTH

The Myth of the Journey

In his essay, "Religious Symbolism in Contemporary Literature," Nathan A. Scott, Jr. has pointed up several examples of what he terms the Myth of the Voyage—"the journey of life itself which all must take, since its aim is salvation."¹ While the characters in literature sometimes make outward voyages in the forms of trips, journeys, voyages, quests, and pilgrimages these are usually symbolic re-enactments of inward spiritual, mental, or moral voyages. Scott mentions that Joseph Conrad's Razumov, Kafka's Joseph K., Joyce's Stephen, and Sartre's Mathieu "journey through the world, the world that contains them is the soulscape of contemporary man—which they explore, over all its devious terrain, in their search for 'The Good Place'."² Scott says "The way that leads toward health and blessedness involves, in other words, first of all, a descent into those dark and deep places of the soul which Dante, under Virgil's tutelage, takes us through in the first


² Scott, p. 179.
cantica of his poem.\textsuperscript{3} The voyager must make the journey be-
cause he cannot receive the knowledge he seeks for salvation
until he realizes his own shortcomings and has journeyed "be-
yond the 'hither' world of ignorant complacency into the
'nether' world of dread and trembling. What is required is
humility:

\begin{quote}
The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
is the wisdom of humility:\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

Joseph Campbell has also written of the importance of the
journey:

\begin{quote}
The standard path of the mythological adventure
of the hero is a magnification of the formula repre-
sented in the rites of passage: separation--initia-
tion--return. . . .

A hero ventures forth from the world of common
day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous
forces are there encountered and a decisive victory
is won. . . .\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

One of the oldest of these recorded journeys in litera-
ture was taken by Gilgamesh, the Babylonian epic hero. The
Gilgamesh epic dates back some 1500 years before Homer's Iliad,
another record of a journey. Gilgamesh, a king of Uruk, se-
parated himself from his city because of his sorrow over the
death of his friend Enkidu. Gilgamesh journeyed in search of
the only mortal to whom the gods had granted everlasting life,
Utnapishtim. The fourth book recounts Gilgamesh's search for
everlasting life. He plucks a miraculous plant that has "a

\textsuperscript{3} Scott, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{4} Scott, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{5} Campbell, p. 30.
prickle like a thorn, like a rose" and will "wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man."\textsuperscript{6} Gilgamesh intends to return to Uruk, his city, and share the plant with the old men. While Gilgamesh drinks from a well a serpent seizes the plant and dives into the water. Saddened and disappointed at his loss, Gilgamesh returns to his city: he, who "went a long journey, was weary, worn out with labour, and returning engraved on a stone the whole story."\textsuperscript{7} The remainder of the epic tells of the returned king's adventures after he has become a more humane ruler.

The wanderings of the crafty hero of the \textit{Iliad}, Ulysses, are recounted in the \textit{Odyssey}, a better known account of an epic journey than the \textit{Gilgamesh} account. Ulysses' journey took him from Greece to Troy and thence through several perils and temptations before he returned to his home a wiser man than when he began his odyssey. Another Greek wanderer was Orpheus who made a perilous descent to the underworld. The Finnish epic, \textit{Kalevala}, recounts the epic journey of Väinämöinen, and various Irish legends tell of Oisin and Cuchulain's journeys in search of the land of youth. The various journeys of Arthur's knights in quest of the Grail are well known to students of literature. Spenser's \textit{Fairy Queene} is only one of several works which

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Gilgamesh}, p. 115.
deal with the Myth of the Journey as the Red Cross Knight, Guyon, Britomort, and the other characters make dangerous journeys.

In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Mircea Eliade theorizes that man makes a journey because he is striving to return to a time, *in illo tempore*, in the beginning, at the time of the creation of the world from the chaos that preceded creation. The chaos that preceded the cosmos—the creation—has come upon man once again, and he strives to make his way back to the garden that represents a lost time of paradisiacal existence. This represents "a very distant epoch when men knew neither death nor toil nor suffering and had a bountiful supply of food merely for the taking."\(^8\) The striving to return to the garden takes the form of a journey in Robert Penn Warren's three novels, *The Cave*, *Wilderness*, and *Flood*. The journey toward self-knowledge and self-fulfillment, actually an inward journey, is represented in Warren's writings as an outward journey.

The center of creation, the garden, the symbolic representation of the cosmos that stands in opposition to the chaos man finds himself travelling through today, is what Eliade calls "the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality."\(^9\) "The road leading to the center is a 'difficult road' (durohana), and this is verified at every level of reality. . . ."\(^10\)


\(^9\) Eliade, pp. 17-18.

\(^10\) Eliade, p. 18.
Eliade discusses the dangers of the arduous journey, the pilgrimage, and the perilous voyage—each expedition a symbolic re-creation in literature of man's journey to the center of his being. Man makes this journey in order to attain "the center which is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation; yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives place to a new life that is real, enduring, and effective."  

From the mythological treatments of the Journey Myth, to the allegorical treatment in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, through the twentieth century novelists' re-creations of the quests of modern man, literature has continued to record the Myth of the Journey. Perhaps the best known of these modern re-creations is the journey of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Other well known works containing the Journey Myth were written by the actual expatriates of the United States who journeyed to France and Spain in the 1930's. Such writers as Hemingway with *The Sun Also Rises* and John Dos Passos with his *U. S. A.* trilogy left fictional records of actual quests for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. William Faulkner in *As I Lay Dying* and Robert Penn Warren in *Band of Angels* and *World Enough and Time* re-create the Myth of the Journey with America as the locale.

11 Eliade, p. 18.  
12 Eliade, p. 18.  
The Journey in The Cave

In reminding the reader that instead of The Cave Warren preferred another title, The Man Below, for his novel, Allen Shepherd says that the "novel's Platonic epigraph is as well best broadly interpreted, suggesting as it does the problem of knowledge or of that self-knowledge which all men seek. Inherent in the struggle for self-knowledge are the tensions of familiar dichotomies, of idea and fact, of spirit and flesh, or past and present."14 Shepherd has pointed out a problem in Warren's novel, a problem that has concerned all of Warren's major characters: how can man find self-knowledge and gain self-fulfillment? To answer those questions, the major characters in The Cave make spiritual journeys, and, by the end of the novel, the reader is assured that most of the characters will have gained enough self-knowledge to allow them to continue their searches for self-fulfillment.

It has been pointed out in the previous section on the Garden Myth that as the novel opens Isaac Sumpter, having returned from school, is lying in a womb-like box of a room in Johntown, Tennessee. By a series of flashbacks scattered throughout the novel, Warren presents Sumpter's journey through young manhood, from small town, to city, back to Johntown, and, finally, back to the city. Sumpter has been fleeing, in a sense, from himself during his journey; for he is like "an animal"

14 Shepherd, pp. 210-11.
who sees his own image in the mirror and feels "as though the
gaze itself were claws scraping the wood walls, witlessly
trying to claw out" (The Cave, p. 99). Shepherd rightly ob-
serves that Isaac "is a classic case of self-absorption, of
concentration on the gnawing of the bosom serpent." 15

Throughout this passage Isaac repeatedly looks toward the
mirror. The technique allows Warren to describe Isaac for the
readers ("He saw a handsome aquiline face"); more importantly,
however, the gazing into the mirror suggests Isaac's search
for self.

His gaze found the mirror of the marble-topped
walnut dresser. He went toward it, stopped, leaned,
and looked at himself in the mirror. He studied the
face, with clinical detachment, trying to think what
the world saw when the world saw that face.

(The Cave, p. 99)

He is also trying to see that face himself and to understand
himself, but he fails. Although Isaac's self-dialogue seems
to say "that now he had, indeed, discovered all" (The Cave,
p. 100), he only mimics the thing that he is not. He resumes
a disguise that he has worn during much of his stay at a uni-
versity in Nashville:

He shrugged, dropped his hands, palms outward, in a
parody of the classic gesture of the Jew's resigna-
tion and irony, and repeated, in the accent of the
stage Jew: "Ikey--Little Ikey." (The Cave, p. 100)

At this point in the novel Warren begins a series of flash-
backs which recount Isaac's boyhood, a boyhood spent in study

15 Shepherd, p. 211.
under the pretense of having to make good grades so that he can become a preacher. Actually, Isaac said he was going to become a preacher so that the other boys his age would not make fun of him for studying instead of joining in their pranks. Isaac received his scholarship and journeyed to Nashville to school where he isolated himself from other people and studied obsessively. He was granted a full scholarship in his second year which relieved him from working in a restaurant. The scholarship also made it possible for him to refuse help from the church group which had originally helped to pay his way to the university and to more completely isolate himself from other people.

It is Isaac's acquaintance with Rachel Goldstein that keeps him from total isolation. The acquaintance also marks the initiatory phase of Isaac's journey—initiation into sexual communion and knowledge. Because Isaac is not sufficiently prepared for his initiation, he does not find the self-fulfillment with Rachel that one possessing self-knowledge might have found. Isaac enters the relationship with selfish motives. He does not share himself with Rachel, perhaps because he is not sure who or what he is. He has not yet found himself, and so he cannot share that self so totally and so unselfishly as he might otherwise share. Isaac exists in ignorance and illusion throughout the relationship:

That spring it was as though he had entered a dream, or, perhaps, had left the dream and, at last, entered reality. (The Cave, p. 111)
Warren is careful to write "it was as though"; for Isaac has not "entered reality." He has not accepted his past; he only feels that he has nothing to give Rachel:

he felt suddenly overcome with a sense of his poverty, his unkemptness, a mysterious weakness, and the blind malignancy of time which, he knew, would never, never, keep its promises. "I can't give you anything," he said, in grinding misery, the words wrenching out of him. "I haven't got anything to give." (The Cave, p. 113)

With nothing to give but himself and not really possessing a self, Isaac is literally without a gift. Rachel tells him that he can give her herself:

"Ikey, you give me the only thing I want." She paused, then: "You give me, me. Ikey. I wasn't ever myself before. You give myself to me, Ikey." (The Cave, p. 114)

Warren returns to the bird imagery at the end of this passage to suggest that Isaac will not accept his potential for giving, but instead he will retreat into the darkness of passivity and self-ignorance. He feels only defrauded after he kisses Rachel, and "After a while, her eyes still shut in the now thickening dusk, she said: "Listen to the robins, Ikey. They are almost ready to go to sleep, Ikey. They will put their heads under their wings, and go to sleep" (The Cave, p. 114).

Through the summer, spring, and fall, Isaac exists in this initiatory period, hiding throughout the time in the disguise of a Jew, refusing to accept his own heritage, refusing to acknowledge the value his true self would have for Rachel. After Isaac yields to the sexual temptation of Rachel's friend, Eustacia Pinckney Johnson, because Rachel has refused to be used "for some kind of Grade-A masturbation" (The Cave, p. 122)
and because he feels Rachel betrayed him "by telling him the truth" (The Cave, p. 123) that she had thought he was a Jew when they met and did not accept him for what he really is--the son of a Baptist "Bible-thumper," Isaac and Rachel's liaison ends. Isaac compounds his deception from this point on. Rather than gaining self-knowledge from his initiatory phase, he leaves the city "stuck in the bend of a beautiful river in the middle of a patch of country once beautiful with grass, stone, beech and cedar but no longer beautiful" (The Cave, p. 93). He flees from the former garden site which has now become a place to the west where "the soot-crusted limestone window ledges of hotels, the soot-streaked Parthenon, the gas-choked and flesh-crammed streets, the gilt flash of the Capitol on its hummock of prinky grass, the glittering approaches where chrome flashed and tires screamed and where, after dark, there would be a hysteria of neon ablaze from a thousand highway diners--west, that is, to Nashville, Tennessee" (The Cave, p. 93). Warren has carefully juxtaposed the imagery of the garden with the imagery of a hellish city. What might have been a garden of self-knowledge for Isaac becomes a nightmare from which he flees back to Johnstown to stare at himself in the mirror and know that he also must leave his home "and never come back" (The Cave, p. 132).

During the first days that Isaac spends at home he and Jasper Harrick find a cave on Isaac's land. Jasper, the cave-crawling son of John T. Harrick, had encouraged Isaac to journey with him into the interior of the cave, but Isaac had
refused. This brief flashback, one of the few passages in the novel which presents Jasper before he became trapped in the cave, suggests that Isaac is given one more opportunity to make a journey into the unknown for self-knowledge and has refused.

There was the pit. It blocked the far end of the chamber. From its blackness, deep down, came the sound of water. "We can make it," Jasper said, flashing his light along a narrow ledge at the edge of the pit. "Yeah, we can make it. And Great God, Look yonder!" Beyond the pit the light showed a gallery, grander, higher. "Come on!" Jasper said, and moved forward to the ledge that skirted the pit on the right. But Isaac had not been able to make it. He simply hadn't been able to face that ledge and the sound of water from the deep dark.

(The Cave, p. 133)

The image of Jasper with a light to illuminate the way suggests the leader and the lighted path that Isaac might follow to self-knowledge. But Isaac could not follow; instead he crawled out of the unknown darkness, went to "his room and hated Jasper and hated the thought of having to see that smile on Jasper's face. He wanted to flee, to go far away, forever" (The Cave, p. 134).

Isaac Sumpter's flight does come toward the end of the novel. The fact that it is a flight, and not a journey toward self-fulfillment and self-knowledge, suggests that Isaac is one of the few characters in the novel who does not experience the completion of his rite of passage—that he does not benefit spiritually from his journey. In fact, the journey is only flight from one false garden to another.

On the other hand, Nicholas Papadoupalous' flight becomes a journey toward self-knowledge that will eventually provide him with the ability to gain self-fulfillment. Pappy fled
from monetary bankruptcy in the midwest to failure in Nashville
and, eventually, to the Ye Olde Southern Mansion in Johnstown,
 fleeing always in a relatively new automobile, his symbol of
 the dream-world that he could not possess. During the flights
 Nick Pappy carried with him "the romance, the mystery, the
 mana, the glory, of the dream that had glimmered in the dark
 of his head" (The Cave, p. 52). He did not face reality but
 lived, instead, in his dream-world in which his wife, Sarah
 Pumfret, represented Jean Harlow and in which Nick Pappy always
 felt a guilt because he was unfaithful to the memory of Miss
 Harlow.

 The flight of Nick Pappy slowly becomes his journey toward
 self-knowledge as he begins to face reality and to recognize
 people for what they are and not for what he would like to
 believe they stand for. He prepares to make waffles for John
 T. Harrick in the Harrick kitchen while Celia Harrick watches
 him. The first reality has been suggested when Pappy told
 Celia Harrick that his name was not really Nick Pappy but
 Papadoupalos, and she attempted to utter the correct name:

 nobody here, nor even in Kobeck County, has ever
 said my name. Except maybe that Mr. Eingham at the
 bank when I went to get my account opened. And he
 can't say it now. (The Cave, p. 304)

 Mrs. Harrick does not respond and Pappy continues in explana-
 tion,

 they got things they call you. Like Nick Pappy.
 But if it is not your right name, it looks like
 sometime you don't know who you are, maybe.

 (The Cave, p. 304)
Finally, when Celia Harrick manages to pronounce the name, poorly, Papadoupalous' face twists so that she has difficulty recognizing him. In the pronunciation of the name, a kind of magic ritual, Celia Harrick realizes that

Something had started to claw its way out of him, like a crazy cat trying to claw out of a dark sack, and the claws were, it looked like, cutting his insides to pieces. The thing had started to claw out as soon as she began to thank him for being nice.

(The Cave, pp. 305-306)

Warren used the same kind of clawing, animal imagery to describe that something that clawed to get out of Isaac Sumpter (The Cave, p. 99).

The bestiality that does get out of Nick Pappy leaves him more human and more humane than he has ever been before. Pappy experiences a series of revelations: "feeling things go askew," "feeling that everything was tilting and falling and he was going to slide down the tilting floor"; "That lack of relation, the suddenness, the shocking fact that whatever it was bursting out of her was bursting out for him, for Nicholas Papadoupalous, it was all like snatching a curtain back and there she was, standing there shining white and not a stitch"; "He was thinking"; "He realized"; "he thought"; "Then his mind said something it had never said before"; "he was thinking, or knowing without thinking, that this was the first human face, it seemed, he had ever looked into. Really looked into, just for its humanness" (The Cave, pp. 306-307). The words that point up Pappy's new awareness in these two pages mark his recognition of another human being for what she is rather than for what he is.
to think that she is. Before these moments in Pappy's existence he has lived in a dream world in which any blond haired woman was likely to become Jean Harlow, an object of sexual desire, for him. This is a turning point in Pappy's life from which he will eventually return to his brown haired wife and accept her for what she is.

Of this recognition scene Allen Shepherd has said that

As Nick stands with his arms around Mrs. Harrick, in the novel's central scene, he contemplates seduction, but comes out of the kitchen "shy and happy," never before having looked into another face "just for its humanness." [pp. 309-308] This experience it is which eventually brings him back to his wife, for it constitutes his first meaningful communion with another human being, which is itself a prerequisite to the discovery of his own identity.16

While this is an important scene in The Cave, Shepherd is not justified in calling it the central scene. There are several others which rival it; the scene in which John T. Harrick recognizes that he is not immortal is one such scene. And the confrontation scene between Isaac and Brother Sumpter is another. Shepherd is otherwise correct in his statements that the experience presented in this scene eventually causes Nick Pappy to accept his wife for what she is.

Toward the end of Nick Pappy's journey, in the next to the last chapter in The Cave, he "woke up," "groped his way," "realized," and "knew." These words suggest Pappy's further coming into knowledge. When he looks at his wife under the

16 Shepherd, pp. 203-204.
sheet she has pulled over her face and body, "It was as though he had loved somebody and they were dead and the snow was falling on their grave" (The Cave, p. 363). Pappy is experiencing the death of his dream and the symbolic covering with a sheet of the woman who represented both guilt and love to him. It is a new experience for him: "he did not know what it was. It had never been there before" (The Cave, p. 363). Although he is talking literally about his ignorance of the import of his considering to arrange an abortion for Jo-Lea Bingham, Pappy's statement connotes the import of his own self-knowledge when he says, "There was a lot of things I just didn't know" (The Cave, p. 363).

He promises his wife a trip when she gets well, lifts "his eyes to look at her face," and thinks that "She wouldn't be a bad-looking woman, if she got shaped down some... For a brown-haired woman" (The Cave, p. 365). The scene ends with Nicholas Papadoupalos wondering what his wife looked like when she was a child and vowing to ask her to tell him sometime.

Pappy has come to the final part of his journey; he has found self-knowledge in being able to look into another human being's face "just for its humanness" and in the ability to destroy his dream of a golden world that was not providing him with self-fulfillment.

A third character in The Cave to make a journey is Brother MacCarland Sumpter, who married Mary Tillyard knowing that she was pregnant at the time with Jack Harrick's child. Mary Tillyard Sumpter miscarried, and it is only now, forty years later,
that MacCarland Sumpter "realized that that night when Mary Tillyard had suddenly seized her middle and fallen to the floor, and brought forth the dead child, his heart had leaped with joy" (The Cave, p. 90). Sumpter also faces the fact that "It was not joy that he was to be spared shame. He could have stood up before the eyes of men, in the arrogance of a man who would move in God's eye. No, it had been joy, he now knew, in the fact that what would have been the son of Jack Harrick was dead . . ." (The Cave, pp. 90-91).

Sumpter has never before accepted responsibility for his desires; he has not accepted the fact that he alone is responsible for his feelings. Heretofore he has excused any unacceptable thoughts and acts by believing that "all was God's will" (The Cave, p. 91). But

Now, standing in the water-green glimmer of vine-light, MacCarland Sumpter shook with his first knowledge of the dark deviousness of that God who knows how to wait. The terror of God is that God conforms His will to man's will. The terror of God is that He bends ear to man's prayer. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. And when it is opened, who can withstand the horror of that vision of prayer fulfilled? (The Cave, p. 91)

If man desires something, even unconsciously, he must take responsibility for the coming true of the desire. Only now is Brother Sumpter acknowledging the fact that he had wished Jack Harrick's unborn son would die. Only now does he acknowledge that he never possessed Mary Tillyard's heart as Jack Harrick had done and that he resented her because she was attracted to Harrick. He had heard the moan that Mary Tillyard made when
she yielded her body to Harrick in the glade, heard it "in the darkness. Yes, he had heard that moan a million times. But he [Sumpter] had never heard it uttered for him" (The Cave, p.92).

The darkness of Brother Sumpter's mind suggests the ignorance of humanity that he has; although he ministers to the souls of the citizens of Johntown, he does not have the self-knowledge to minister to his own soul. His journey toward self-knowledge and self-fulfillment is coming very late in his life.

When this knowledge first begins to come to Sumpter, he acknowledges the fact that he wished for a son of his own in order that the son might "rise up, to redeem all." He wants the son to "redeem the fact that MacCarland Sumpter lived in the knowledge deeper than any acknowledged knowledge that he had never truly had that white body that had lain down beside him for twenty years" (The Cave, pp. 91-92), and that he had prayed that that body "should age, should fail, should go blotched and stale so that it might become more truly his, and then that prayer was answered, too . . . (The Cave, p. 92). Perhaps MacCarland Sumpter feels guilty that their own son's birth caused the death of Mary Tillyard Sumpter and that in giving him birth—in giving birth to that which might "rise up, to redeem all," she had given her life. In the redemptive act Isaac would also redeem his father; consequently the mother gave her life that MacCarland Sumpter might be redeemed. At this point, MacCarland Sumpter does not acknowledge that possibility; instead he only tells himself that he loves his son,
and the reader is left wondering whether he really loves Isaac or loves the potential redemptive power of his son.

Later MacCarland Sumpter recognizes that his son is not the redeeming figure for which he had hoped, and he convinces himself that Jasper Harrick has been led into the cave and has died there so that Isaac might be saved. But Sumpter is not able to accept Isaac's words on faith that the son has been with the dying Jasper Harrick. The older man must make his own journey into the cave to confirm or refute the facts of Jasper Harrick's entrapment.

MacCarland Sumpter, out of a need deeper even than his need to go and minister to the dying man, out of the need to escape the anguish of the uncertainty which, until that moment, had been unacknowledged and denied, had entered the cave. He had done it so quietly that nobody realized what he was up to until he had already got too far for protest to do any good. (The Cave, p. 329)

When Isaac realizes that his father has crawled into the cave, he believes that all his dreams for success and fame are doomed to be shattered by the truth with which his father will confront him. Isaac wishes that his father might not return from the cave, but he also realizes that his father is strong and will come out, that "The old man would take him upon a mountain and bind him and set a knife at his throat and--" (The Cave, p. 331). As Abraham would have sacrificed his own first born son, Isaac believes that MacCarland Sumpter will return from the depths of the cave to sacrifice him.

Sumpter does emerge from his journey with the truth; how-
"He is dead," Brother Sumpter says, but Sumpter vows that Harrick told him "that no girl or woman was in trouble because of him. He said it before he died, and in the knowledge of death, and I must tell you" (The Cave, p. 334). It is because of this lie which compromises Sumpter's principles that his son is able to destroy him in the eyes of the people. Isaac calls on the perfidious Jebb Holloway to confirm his word that Jasper Harrick did indeed tell Jebb he had conceived a child with one of the girls of Johntown. When Brother Sumpter confirms Isaac's lie (that Jasper was alive) but adds a lie of his own making (that Jasper says he did not make any girl of Johntown pregnant), old Sumpter utters the lie that is the actual truth, "Jasper never said that" (The Cave, p. 355). For Jasper had never said anything to any of the cave searchers.

For his efforts to save his son, Brother Sumpter is attacked as a liar because he has to "tell my lie to undo the lie you [Isaac] told" (The Cave p. 355).

Because the older Sumpter took the journey into the cave and found the dead man, he knew for certain that his son, Isaac, was not a redeemer but a liar and, perhaps, even a murderer; for Jasper Harrick's body had still been warm when Brother Sumpter reached him. Isaac had been the cause of Jasper's dying alone. When Sumpter comes into his son's room after the crowd on the mountain has dispersed, Isaac is making ready to leave Johntown; his father says, "I--I saw the light," (The Cave, p. 354). He literally means that he saw the electric
bulb in the son's room; his words point up the fact that he has come into new knowledge during the last few hours. He exists in the light of that knowledge.

The extent of the self-knowledge that Brother Sumpter has gained is evident when he admits to Jack Harrick that he knew—at least he believed that Isaac had not crawled into the cave all the way to Jasper but that he refused to admit that knowledge and instead supported his son. "If I had not supported him, other people would have gone in" (The Cave, p. 379).

Sumpter explains why he supported Isaac—why he wanted his son to be right:

It was for his salvation. I said to myself, he must show courage. He must crawl into the ground for another. He must do something, whatever, in expiation. If he should do these things, I said, it would be the beginning of his salvation. He stood—he stands—sorely in need of salvation.

(The Cave, p. 37)

It was actually for MacCarland Sumpter's own salvation. He needed the son to redeem the guilt feelings that he had experienced when Jack Harrick and Mary Tillyard's son died before him and when Jack Harrick's second son also died. He also needed the redemption for having felt joy at both deaths. But MacCarland Sumpter is not granted the feeling of redemption; for Jack Harrick confesses that he too needed the sacrifice of his own son's life. He too had wanted his son dead: "I wanted my son—my own son—to die" (The Cave, p. 381). Jack Harrick cries, "Oh, God, I loved my son—but" (The Cave, p. 381).
In this scene the two older men face one another, naked because of their mutual confessions; they share with one another the burdens of their guilt—guilt that neither can expiate and that both must bear. In that self-knowledge, Jack Harrick convinces MacCarland Sumpter that he must carry out the lie that is a truth by preaching the funeral of Jasper Harrick. When MacCarland Sumpter protests because the people will know that Isaac lied if Harrick attends the funeral preached by Sumpter, Jack Harrick explains that people will believe what they want to believe, which is that Isaac "is a hero, a success, a something" (The Cave, p. 384).

When Sumpter says, "We have come a long way," his idiom reminds the reader that his journey is not finished but that it is almost over. He still has things to learn before he can accept himself for what he is, before he can stand before the people and be for them that which they can believe in. But Warren leaves the reader with the suggestion that the morning will come for Sumpter when he can again pray and that he will be able to "Put in a couple of licks for" Jack Harrick, who asks him, "pray for me, Ole Mac" (The Cave, p. 385). Brother Sumpter's journey into the cave has not resulted in the expiation of guilt but it has resulted in self-knowledge and the strength to accept his own guilt.

When Jack Harrick is able to admit that he wanted his son to die, when he admits to himself that he wishes his wife were not youthful and healthy, when he asks Brother Sumpter to pray
for him, and when he reaches for the pain killing drug, Old John T. is much closer to self-knowledge than he has ever been before. He is rapidly approaching death and the literal end of his life's journey, yet perhaps Harrick can find his fullest measure of self-fulfillment when he realizes that he is not immortal, that he is not guiltless, and that he can experience joy even in death.

Years before Jack Harrick had apparently come to the end of a worldly journey and begun a spiritual journey in the world. Harrick had confessed his sins before the community and had been baptized by Brother Sumpter. But Harrick's new journey was taken without joy; he put away his box and did not sing anymore. He felt that something was missing from his life that should be there. Although he wondered why he had given up his life of freedom in the woods, he did experience a kind of contentment in his house that had gradually been changed from a two room cottage into a sprawling, rather unattractive house bounded by silver painted tractor tires. The contentment was interrupted periodically, however, by the nagging doubt about the freedom that he had given up in order to marry Celia. It was, perhaps, the nagging knowledge that he did not have joy in his salvation and in his new life which worried Harrick.

At the end of his journey, Harrick's last gesture in the novel is to pick up the box—the symbol of creative joy, action, and life. Harrick strikes a clanging chord on the guitar, grins "rather sheepishly," and tells Celia that he does not
want to "bust the box" because it is their son Monty's guitar. The journey of Harrick ends optimistically because Warren's description of this last scene suggests that Monty will inherit the joy that his father renounced during the last half of his life. So Warren suggests that the journey toward death has been a journey filled with misgivings and doubt for Jack Harrick, but that Harrick gains joy, knowledge, and self-fulfillment is also suggested in this last scene when he shouts, "Let that anvil ring!"

The Wilderness Journey

The journey of Adam Rosenzweig begins in Bavaria as he looks at the snow capped Zelzsteinberg and refuses to re-enter the room where he has last seen his father's dead body. In leaving the room, Adam also leaves behind him the traditions of the Jewish law as he is soon to leave his country, Bavaria. Adam realizes that he has "lived only in the dream of his father's life, the father's manhood, the father's heroism" (Wilderness, p. 9). Believing that he can fulfill the dream, Adam longs to begin his journey. The fulfillment, he believes, will come to him in America where "this minute—men are fighting for freedom" (Wilderness, p. 13). Rather than stay in Bavaria and fight for the freedom of the Jews, Adam chooses to quest for freedom across the sea. Adam is an idealist who believes that he can find freedom and self-fulfillment by fleeing from the oppression in his homeland.
Although he makes elaborate preparations for his journey, by having a special boot made and by enduring much pain to get used to wearing it, Adam is disappointed as he finds himself an unwelcomed passenger on Meinherr Duncan’s ship, a run-away from the Elmyra when it docks in New York, and, finally, a hungry, lost non-person:

he had run after the Marines and their recruits, he had then cut into a side street, he had run until breathless. He had paused, gasping, and in that moment had realized that nobody, not anybody, had tried to stop him. Nobody had even yelled after him. He had escaped, he was free, and in that moment of freedom felt completely devalued. Nobody, nobody in the world, cared what he did. He could go or come, like a leaf in the eddy of a stream, like a mote of dust in the wind. (Wilderness, p. 40)

This is a key passage in the novel. It recounts Adam’s first realization that he is not now what he has been in Bavaria. He is free and he is not cared for. He has journeyed away from the kinsmen who would remind him of his ancient heritage and of the laws of the Jewish people. He has found freedom—that which he sought. But Adam has also found that freedom alone does not make a man satisfied; for Adam feels "completely devalued."

Adam has, in a sense, experienced a rebirth; now he must experience growth. He must make of the devalued man a whole man. He must make himself and his freedom valuable.

This passage looks forward to the passages later in the novel in which Adam witnesses other men who are literally "free" but who are not spiritually free. Other characters
whom he will encounter are free under the law, but they are bound in misery by moral, spiritual, or economic fetters. One of the characters who is bound is Hose Talbutt Crawford; no longer legally a slave, Talbutt suffers from the cruelty of Jeeden Hawksworth. Another character who is legally free but spiritually bound is Monmorancy Pugh, the former pacifist who has sunk into bestiality in the woods and has turned into a murderer and a thief during the war being fought in the name of freedom.

Allen Shepherd makes these same points that man must be responsible for his freedom and that freedom by law may be freedom in name only. Man must do more than accept the abstract concept of freedom as being good for all; he must also acknowledge "the oneness of man and of time. One must hold to the possibility of virtue, while accepting man's potentiality for evil and not denying the deterministic aspects of man's existence. Freedom is a state of mind or of spirit, evolving from a determination of what honest basis there is for moral growth and redemption."17

But Adam must witness many events and meet many men before he realizes and accepts a more practical concept of freedom than that which he brought with him in the beginning of his journey. He must witness the hanged man, the Negro who was murdered in "free territory" by a crowd of men and women

17 Shepherd, p. 241.
shouting "Shag them niggers!" (Wilderness, p. 49). He must share the terror of near drowning in the cellar being flooded by the white crowd's hoses and fear to run outside the cellar more than to remain in the darkness of the flooded hole. His early step toward self-knowledge comes when he denies the temptation to become Aaron Blaustein's foster son.

When Blaustein attempts to dissuade Adam from his journey, Adam tells him that he will walk to Virginia if he has to in order to join the fighting men (Wilderness, p. 80). Blaustein then arranges for Adam to drive one of his wagons, under the supervision of Jedeen Hawksworth, and to sell merchandise and goods to the troops in the field. As Adam readies himself to begin his journey to the battlefields he watches a butterfly hanging from a flower. The imagery of the blossoms of butterfly weed and "A fritillary—a swallowtail, tigerishly black and gold" with wings pulsing "slowly in the sunlight, opening, shutting" (Wilderness, p. 82) in the blazing sunshine recalls to the reader another illusive butterfly, the ephemeral butterfly suggesting an illusory dream of glory in Shakespeare's Coriolanus:

O' my word, the father's son! . . . I looked upon him o' Wednesday half an hour together. 'Has such a confirmed countenance! I saw him run after a gilded butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again. . . .

The butterfly image in Wilderness suggests the quality of Adam's dream which he carries with him during the beginning of his

---

18 I, iii. 55-59.
journey. Adam, like Marcius, is following a dream that was suggested to him by his own father's actions in the battle of Rastatt.

The dream of freedom becomes a nightmare on the road as Adam witnesses such ugly reminders of cruelty as the "old welts plaited and criss crossing grayly on the dark skin" of Mose Talbutt Crawfurd (Wilderness, pp. 85-86). Such reminders make difficult Adam's attempts to justify his journey to himself. He fails, thinking "I am moving down this road because I believe," but that which he believes will not formulate itself in his thoughts and "his mind let go, like a tired hand" (Wilderness, p. 89). Adam cannot objectify his idealistic concept of freedom. His journey is toward a vague, abstract goal of freedom, and he will have to go further and experience more before the abstractions become realities.

Allen Shepherd is partially correct in his belief that "the story of all Warren's novels is the story of a journey or quest," and "only once has a journey been central, in Billie Potts." It is difficult to accept the statement that implies that the journey is not central in Wilderness since it is on the road that Adam encounters his maturation experiences that culminate in the Wilderness glade at the end of the novel. Additionally, as Shepherd rightly points out, ",... all the other characters introduced draw their chief importance from

19 Shepherd, p. 233.
their relation to Adam's journey: They draw him out of the right way, arouse his anger, encourage him to despair, or show by contrast the fate he is to avoid."^20

Hawksworth, "long back in North Carolina," had attempted to testify for a black man accused of murder. Because Negroes were not allowed to testify in court, Hawksworth turned against his family's interests in order to uphold a moral law and to testify to the facts as he had seen them. But his "word had no effect" (Wilderness, p. 101). The Negro had been hanged and Hawksworth had been beaten and tarred and feathered by a mob.

Jedeen Hawskworth supported a moral right in North Carolina; for upholding an abstract ideal of what was right—for a cause—he lost his standing in the community. Hawksworth does not, however, respect the individual black man—or any man for that matter. He speaks depreciatingly of Aaron Blaustein, "a durn Jew," whom he considers to be in the unpleasant situation of "Scrimping and starving, living like a nigger in some rat hole, living with niggers right now . . ." (Wilderness, p. 104). The white Southerners are "Rebel sons-of-bitches" whom Hawksworth plans to make work for him on the plantation he dreams of buying in Peacham County for "nothing plus gnat spit" (Wilderness, p. 105). Hawksworth taunts Hose Talbutt while he seemingly supports the cause of black freedom. At the cemetery, filled with the bodies of the troops killed less than three

^20 Shepherd, p. 234.
weeks earlier at the Battle of Gettysburg, Hawksworth, Talbutt, and Adam meet Dr. Mordacai Sulgrave and his companions. They begin to pass around a jug of liquor. Sensing the hesitation of the other men at sharing the jug with Talbutt, Hawksworth speaks to Sulgrave:

"That's fine booze," he said firmly, "yes, sir! And I'm sure you want my nigger to have him a snort. Yeah, give the nigger a snort right here where they kicked the be-Jesus out of Ginnal Lee. Les have us a nigger drink to kicking the be-Jesus out of Ginnal Lee. Hell, don't a nigger git just as thirsty as a white man?" (Wilderness, p. 141)

Hawksworth's concern for Talbutt's thirst has very little to do with his requesting a drink for the Negro. Hawksworth is perverse to both the owner of the jug and to Mose Talbutt, whom he calls a black son-of-a-bitch, the one appellation that Talbutt allows no man to call him.

That evening the three travelers are finishing supper when Talbut challenges Hawksworth:

"Mr. Hawksworth," Mose said, "all this time I bin with you, you ain't done nuthen. You ain't done nuthen fer me, ner nuthen agin me. Not till this evenen." (Wilderness, p. 155-56)

Talbutt tells him, "... no man ain't a-callen me no black son-of-a-bitch." Hawksworth replies, "I done it" (Wilderness, p. 156).

Hawksworth's noncommittal attitude toward Talbutt underscores his attitude toward mankind. He does not value men as individuals. He is on the road to make money from the troops. His journey is toward a dream of a plantation supervised by Negro drivers and worked by Rebels.
Warren never allows Talbutt to visualize or vocalize his dream. Travelling as if he were a legally freed slave, Talbutt is really a haunted, hunted run-away who has been psychologically as well as physically scarred by a W--branded with the letter that stands for worthless. He believes that he will benefit if he can learn to read and so he prevails upon Adam to teach him his letters.

The imagery of another passage points up the bestiality of the men who associate with one another on this journey. The passage also expresses Adam's guilt because he has not yet learned that some attitude toward another man is natural; even if that attitude is aversion, at least one person is conscious of another. Adam, Jedeen Hawksworth, and Talbutt witness the bestiality of Simms Purdew and Pullen James at the Company C "shin-dig" where Negroes are encouraged to put their heads into flour-filled casks to try to draw out money with their teeth. Just before this event Adam watches Simms Purdew.

The men were huddled in those lairs. Adam knew the names of some. He knew the faces of all, hairy or shaven, old or young, fat or thin, suffering or hardened, sad or gay, good or bad. When they stood about his tent, chaffing each other, exchanging their obscenities, cursing command or weather, he had studied their faces. He had had the need to understand what life lurked behind the mask of flesh, behind the oath, the banter, the sadness. (Wilderness, p. 164)

Adam sees Purdew and hears a voice within himself saying "I must not hate him, I must not hate him or I shall die" (Wilderness, p. 165). Adam's heart becomes joyful and he longs to have Purdew tell him something of his past when Purdew was
a child. Adam wants to share the other man's memories, a desire that was expressed by Nicholas Papadoupalous in *The Cave* as he was beginning to accept his brown haired wife for what she really was. Papadoupalous longed to have Sarah-Giselle tell him what she looked like when she was a child. The difference in the two men's desires is that Nicholas Papadoupalous's desire is unselfish in that he does not want to know of his wife's childhood in order to save himself. Adam longs to elicit information in order to save himself from death. Adam has not reached the end of his journey; he has not gained the self-knowledge and self-fulfillment that recognition of the value of the individual might offer to him.

Instead he selfishly strives to save himself by making use of others. He has not learned to accept others for what they are; nor has he learned the secret of sharing oneself that Papadoupalous learns.

When Jedeen Hawksworth asks Adam what makes him "such a durn nigger-lover," Adam makes plain the feeling he has for general humanity and the disregard he has for individuals:

Adam stood there a moment. He felt himself sinking into a mire, a morass. He felt, literally, the physical impossibility of speech. Then, with an effort, he said: "I don't think I love them any more or less than I love other people. I don't know that I love any people it is only that I think they—the black men, I mean—ought to be free." (*Wilderness*, p. 179)

Later in his journey Adam will learn that in order to be valuable himself—to escape the feeling of devaluation that he has carried with him from the Elmyra to New York and into Maryland—
he must acknowledge that other individuals are valuable. He must exchange the abstract concept of freedom for a specific concept of what freedom can mean for one man. As Hugh Moore says,

In fact, one of Adam's major faults, which his experiences correct, is that he, like many idealists in Warren's novels, ignores facts in a devotion to the abstraction of human freedom. He learns that in the enormous complexity of history such absolutes are not easily come by—that one cannot care for Mankind without caring first for men and that one cannot formulate truths and ideals until one has mastered the facts.21

In addition to this knowledge Adam will eventually accept the guilt and the responsibility for historical events that he has refused to accept earlier. Jedeen Hawksworth never learns to accept such responsibility; he says "It ain't me made um start killen each other off" (Wilderness, p. 131). Since he takes no responsibility for the war, he feels free to benefit from the profits accrued on his journey. A few pages later Adam declares a similar belief about himself; Adam has just decided to leave Maran Meyerhof and the Meyerhof farm, but he is still telling himself that it would have been all right for him to have stayed: "What harm to have stayed? And he answered: None. None, for nothing was ever his fault" (Wilderness p. 133).

Moore rightly points out that Adam "rationalizes that it would have been no sin for him to have stayed with Maran, for he was not responsible for Hans' lingering death. "Nothing was

his fault' (p. 40). This is the same self-justification that Jed and Monmorancy Pugh indulge in." Isaac Sumpter, in The Cave, also indulges in this same kind of self-justification.

At this mid-point in Adam's journey he begins to realize that his lack of commitment to a concrete, individual reality is keeping him from really living. Maran Meyerhof is looking at him for, perhaps, the last time when

he asked himself if he knew why he was here on this dusty white road, moving southward through late sunshine. Was it because he would never have had the courage to reach out a hand to her?

And then:

Whatever else had impelled him, or drawn him—had it withered away, leaving only this? Was it only because he lacked the courage to live that he might have the courage to die? (Wilderness, p. 134)

The decision to leave the Meyerhof farm marks the unconscious beginning of Adam's taking responsibility for his acts and for the events of history. Allen Shepherd has said that "Wilderness is the account of an idealist's education, and this is always a painful process, for he is made to see... the falseness of many proclaimed values—his own among them—and the hypocrisy which defiles many a worthy cause." When Adam reads of Aaron Blaustein's death the long desired but unexpected "access of guilt" (Wilderness, p. 191) comes with the

Moore, p. 212.

Shepherd, pp. 238-39.
concern one man feels at the death of a kinsman. With the acknowledgment of his feelings toward Blaustein, Adam expects to be relieved—perhaps rewarded that he has, in a sense, confessed his accessoriness; instead he feels the sadness once again of "total devaluation" (Wilderness, p. 193). He realizes that he is alone and that he is worth nothing but that there is a hope for him if he can "be worth nothing, and yet be worth something. He thought: I must find that out. If I am to live" (Wilderness, p. 193).

In something like the Biblical sense, Adam has just lost his life in order that he might find it. Warren allows Adam's journey to continue until he does find his life in the Wilderness glade. During his journey into the wilderness, Adam begins to recognize men as individuals; he witnesses cruelty and inhumane treatment meted to people like Molly, the camp prostitute. Although the troops in camp pay Molly to stay among them, they also scorn her and delight in her misery when she is publicly whipped. When Adam recognizes Molly as a person and feels sorry for her, he begins to regain his own life; for part of man's humanity depends upon his treatment of his fellowmen.

Another act for which Adam takes responsibility is the destruction of the evidence of Mose's murder of Jedeen Hawksworth. With his images Warren has suggested a microcosm of pilgrims on a journey—albeit these are ignorant pilgrims with little sense of direction, scrambling like ants because some
force they do not comprehend has set their winter quarters awry. Adam has followed the camps with only a vague notion of what it is that he seeks. However, after he has made his decision to become Mose Talbutt's unknown accomplice, Adam leaves the drove of people and scorns the collective mankind it represents. When he leaves the road on which the procession moves, Adam realizes that "the pain of lostness was gone" (Wilderness, p. 245). He looks at the crowd of people on the road and thinks that he did not come to America to be caught up in such a throng. "I came here to find something, he thought" (Wilderness, p. 245). With that realization and with Adam leaving the crowd, Warren illustrates that Adam has gained a measure of self-knowledge and is now free to continue his journey toward self-fulfillment.

His journey takes him into the wilderness world of Monmorancy Pugh where he must make other decisions in order to save his life and from which he emerges lacking complete self-knowledge but better prepared to go into the uninhabited wilderness forest than he would have been without the experience.

Jedeen Hawksworth's journey ended in his murder, and he never became any more cognizant of individual worth than he was at the beginning of his journey. His is a negative journey in that he journeyed spiritually and morally backward. He sank further and further into himself, and he became more obsessed with economic gain than with either spiritual or moral gain. The novel does not follow Mose Talbutt Crawford's
journey after he kills Hawksworth. Of his flight from the scene we are told only that he carried with him the letters Adam had taught him to make. Perhaps these were the remnant signs to him of the society of men to which he wanted to belong but which constantly rejected his membership.

In pointing out the comparisons between Wilderness and the Oedipus cycle, Hugh Moore has said that "Adam like Oedipus has a club foot; Adam like Oedipus has a violent fight on the highway over the right-of-way, and both lose control of themselves; and both in the end find truth and peace in a sacred grove."\(^24\) Warren has not given us a Wilderness trilogy, as Sophocles gave us the Oedipus trilogy; his hero's journey is never really completed. We only know that Adam will be able to leave the "sacred grove" and go into the world, prepared to meet its challenges with self-knowledge. And because of this self-knowledge he will undoubtedly be able to gain for himself self-fulfillment. Shepherd rightly sees Warren's decision to end the novel before Adam leaves the Wilderness as a proper decision. In World Enough and Time and Band of Angels Warren "had to continue the stories beyond the point where they should have ended dramatically in order to allow his characters to complete their philosophical, spiritual journey. And the final scene [in Wilderness], while it is precise enough to be capable of an almost allegorical

\(^24\) Moore, pp. 176-77.
interpretation, arises convincingly and naturally from the story itself.\textsuperscript{25}

The final scene describes Adam's confrontation with the eight men who burst into the glade and attempt to kill him. Adam kills one man during the ensuing melee. When the battle ends, Adam is alone again, reconciling himself to the act he has just committed. He finds that he can accept responsibility for his act along with the talith and seddûr that he has brought with him from Bavaria. These last two items, symbols of the past he would not accept earlier, recall to him the act of kindness of the maid at Aaron Blaustein's house who had pressed the prayer book with a warm iron to save it from destruction. He acknowledges his gratitude toward that person.

Adam puts on a pair of ill-fitting boots and makes ready to leave the glade. Hugh Moore convincingly argues that these boots represent the traditions that man must embrace in order to exist in the world. "And like traditions they do not fit exactly and may even be quite painful. But just as to Adam any boots are better than none in his present predicament in the middle of a forest, a fire, and a war, so too man in the wilderness of history, crippled by his sinful nature and his human limitations needs guides for his life."\textsuperscript{26} In accepting the ill-fitting boots, in praying the prayers of his people, and in acknowledging the work of Blaustein's maid, Adam

\textsuperscript{25} Shepherd, p. 220.

\textsuperscript{26} Moore, p. 219.
is beginning his reconciliation process. He is making use of his past and accepting whatever the present has to offer him; additionally, he is aware that another individual has been worthy of his praise and recognition. Warren has used the Myth of the Journey to re-create Adam Rosenweig's spiritual journey toward self-knowledge.

_Flood: The Journey Home_

In _Wilderness_, Adam's journey began in Bavaria and continued in New York, Maryland, and Virginia. The novel was presented in a chronological manner with very few flashback episodes. _Flood_ is largely viewed through flashback episodes. The journeys of the characters are hardly ever presented chronologically. The two central characters, Bradwell Tolliver and Yasha Jones, are middle-aged men; their journeys through life have been literally half-way finished. The reader learns about other portions of their journeys from differing vantage points, sometimes only partially, and often through means of a flashback within a flashback.

For example, one of the first characters to appear in _Flood_ is Mortimer Sparlin, an honors graduate of the University of Chicago and a graduate student from Fisk University who has been granted a fellowship to the University of Rome. Sparlin has made a journey to work in a motel on the highway leading from Fiddlersburg, Tennessee to Nashville. He wears the fantastic cap and bells of a court jester and is called Jingle Bells,
affects a fake Southern Black accent, and attempts to learn what it is "like to be a Negro in the south" (Flood, p. 366).

The novel does not present Sparlin's journey to the south; it does not follow his journey to Rome. It only presents a view of the Negro as he gains a certain amount of self-knowledge during his encounters with the lonely white woman who welcomes him to her room, the men who bring Leontine Purpule to the Seven Dwarfs Motel, and Bradwell Tolliver whom Sparlin believes to be a Californian affecting a southern accent.

Sparlin's self-knowledge is not pleasant for him, and we do not know if he will be able to accept himself for what he is and to find self-fulfillment in his own abilities and knowledge or not. The last description of Sparlin in the novel comes after he has hit Bradwell Tolliver and convinced the older man of his superiority at boxing. Sparlin returns to the motel room with the pink light where Tolliver and Leontine Purpule have been. He falls on the still rumpled bed and reviews his journey from Chicago to Nashville and the motel here in Happy Dell. In doing so he realizes that he has not found what he wanted to discover during his trip to the south. His quest has been fulfilled in what seems to him now to be a most unpleasant way. He now knows what it feels like to be a Negro in the south—"It felt like being himself" (Flood, p. 366).

And that self is what he fears. In Rome Sparlin will still be that same self; "he was shaking with the thought that he himself would not be different in Rome. In Rome he would be
himself, and that was what was happening to him and would happen to him forever, and, oh, he was not sure that he could bear it." (Flood, p. 366). Allen Shepherd says "What he discovers is not a local, but he fears, an everlasting identity, which he finds difficult to bear."27

Warren has used the Myth of the Journey in two ways in his presentation of Mortimer Sparlin. He has presented a partial journey and he has presented a man much in need of a tradition that he can live with. Warren suggests that Sparlin does not want to accept his ethnic background. Sparlin is an alienated black man, since he does not want to accept the heritage of the southern Negro, and he is not satisfied to be a scholar. One more of Warren's characters who cannot reconcile himself to his past, Sparlin denies his own tradition. Just as Adam Rosenzweig cannot wear his heritage comfortably, as Hugh Moore suggests, so Mortimer Sparlin cannot wear his. He exchanges his academic robes for the costume of Jingle Bells in order to search out another tradition that he thinks he needs to know.

According to Moore, myth has the power to reconcile men to their heritages:

Since much of history has no meaning inherent in it, man must make sense of it. The sense he makes of it is part of the myth, and today the burden of our time is that with the old values and beliefs destroyed by science and the ideal of progress we must each construct our own myths. But myths are also needed to explain and justify traditions. Finally, we need them to help us bear the horror of historical reality, for man cannot bear too much brutal truth and maintain
his equilibrium, his sanity. Myths should never go
counter to the facts of history unless to meet an
urgent human need, but they are justified in order-
ing the facts to make them more bearable or in filter-
ing out some of the horror of existence.\(^8\)

Sparlin has broken with tradition in that he has become an edu-
cated, respected scholar. He has apparently not accepted this
identity; for he has needed to come south to achieve another
identity—that of a stereotype Negro in the south. In breaking
away from his heritage, he has found himself a nothing, a non-
person with no background. His journey then is from the state
of this non-identity toward becoming a person that he can
accept—a black man who is also a brilliant scholar. Since
Warren chooses not to pursue Sparlin's quest for self-knowledge,
we only see him at mid-point in a kind of Slough of Despond—
the pink room in Happy Dell's motel.

In re-creating the Myth of the Journey in \textit{Flood}, Warren
has achieved "total communication appealing to the imaginative,
emotional, and spiritual side not just the intellectual."\(^9\)
Warren has presented only portions of a few of his characters' lives; yet because he has suggested, throughout the novel, the
Journey Myth, the fragmented portions (such as the few, brief episodes that contain information about Mortimer Sparlin) are acceptable to the reader. The fragments themselves become unified by the Myth of the Journey.

\(^8\) Moore, pp. 12-13.

\(^9\) Moore, p. 13.
Shepherd points out that Bradwell Tolliver's second wife, Lettice Poindexter has reached a less credible self-fulfillment in the novel than other characters. Shepherd may believe this partially because he fails to recognize the unifying function of the Journey Myth. Lettice seeks fulfillment by joining the Communist Party, by entering into a period of psychoanalysis, by taking up an interest in physical culture, by devoting herself almost completely to satisfying Bradwell Tolliver's every whim, and, finally, by becoming a lay-member in an order of Roman Catholic nuns.  

Shepherd does not believe that her conversion and retreat into the nunnery bespeak credibly a change in the character. However, if one considers her allegiance-switching as points of hesitation during a journey through life, the final characterization of Lettice Poindexter Tolliver may be more acceptable.

Lettice never becomes independent in the sense that Maggie Tolliver or Calvin Fiddler becomes independent. She is a woman who finds fulfillment in giving herself to others. If that is not what one would like to do with his own life then it seems the problem is within himself or with Shepherd, the critic, and not with Warren, the artist.

Lettice has been ready to give of herself all of her life; her mother was so independent that she neglected her daughter for her own affairs. Lettice, the rejected daughter, came to believe that she hated her mother. She found little self-fulfillment in Communism and only problems in her relationship

30 Shepherd, p. 257.
with her mother. Therefore, she sought help in psychiatry. The fact that psychiatry helped her to recognize the beauty of her own body shows no failure in Warren's creation of the character; it shows the characterization of a dependent, weak woman. The recognition did enable Lettice to give of herself freely to her husband; in that way analysis helped Lettice to become a more fulfilled woman than she had been before.

What Lettice does not find throughout much of the novel is the joy of sharing—not just giving but also sharing. Warren spoke of the danger of being totally absorbed into the mass of humanity in his lecture "Knowledge and the Image of Man." He also spoke of the beauty of becoming a separate part of the oneness of humanity and thus of man's finding "in the world with continual and intimate interpenetration, an inevitable osmosis of being, which in the end does not deny, but affirms, his identity" (KIM p. 186). What Lettice could not do early in her journey was to disintegrate her "primal instinctive sense of unity" and discover separateness (KIM p. 187).

When she does discover her own separateness she can and does go into the nunnery with the same fulfillment Warren speaks of when he says "unity with mankind will not now be the unity of a member of the tribal horde with that pullulating mass; his unity will be that of a member of sweet society" (KIM p. 187).

Rather than the series of "wrong answers" that Shepherd believes Lettice has been indulging herself in, Communism, psychoanalysis, physical culture, and marriage have been way
stations on Lettie Poindexter Tolliver's journey toward self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. The fact that Warren has abbreviated her journey from marriage to the nunnery is less objectionable artistically if one accepts once again the structural technique provided by the Myth of the Journey in *Flood*.

The Myth of the Journey is also apparent in the narrative of Bradwell Tolliver and Yasha Jones, the two central protagonists in the novel. As the novel opens Tolliver is driving over a new concrete highway, in his "Jaguar XK-150, in which, three weeks back, across mountain and desert and swelling prairie and the black soil of Arkansas, he had come rolling from the Coast" (*Flood*, p. 8). From the Golden State of California, Tolliver is going to meet another traveler, Yasha Jones, who arrives at Berry Field in Nashville on a DC-7.

The period covered by *Flood* is a late one in the journeys of both Tolliver and Jones. Both have passed through the traditional rites of birth, initiation, and quests. Jones, who has gained his measure of self-knowledge, lacks the self-fulfillment that his journey to Fiddlersburg will provide him with. Tolliver, who has found self-fulfillment in sex, fame, and monetary reward, lacks self-knowledge. The two men are incomplete halves, and it is fitting that Warren involve them in each other's journeys to the isolated town of Fiddlersburg where the flood water of the new TVA dam is steadily rising. Both men have come to create a beautiful motion picture—the writer, Tolliver, and the director, Jones.
Several times in his life Tolliver has attempted to find his own identity by his contact with other people, that is, he has asked others to supply an identity for him. In the university, as a young man who had just written an acclaimed collection of short stories, I'm Telling You Now, Tolliver approached an insensitive dean and haltingly attempted to get the answers to questions he could not even verbalize. Tolliver managed to burst out, "I'm afraid" (Flood, p. 8), but he did not know of what he was afraid.

Later he attempted to find self-knowledge and identity in marriage to a talented artist, Suzie Martine. This marriage was unsuccessful because Suzie cared too much for Tolliver and he too little for her. He had just not cared for her: he didn't dislike her, "it was that he simply didn't care" (Flood, p. 25). Warren does not add much more information about Suzie Martine to the narrative, but he adds enough information to enable the reader to realize that Tolliver was unable to accept her smothering love. Suzie is not really so different from the other women in his life—women who, with the exception of Maggie, his sister, want to give their love instead of sharing love with Tolliver.

These women mark stages in Tolliver's progression away from Fiddlersburg, to the university, to Hollywood, to the war in Spain, back to Hollywood, and, finally, to Fiddlersburg again. During the journey Tolliver does not find an identity for himself that he can take pride in. His films are successful
at the box office, but Tolliver believes that he can write more significant scripts. The women in his life are devoted to him, but he cannot return that devotion.

Tolliver attempts to find self-knowledge and self-fulfillment in an affair with Prudence Brandowitz and afterward with Lettece Poindexter. After the liaison with Lettece becomes very precious to her, Tolliver flees to Spain to join the troops fighting there. It is as if Tolliver began to flee when he discovered his father, face-down in the swamp, weeping, that is, after the son discovered the weakness of the father.

The series of flights from Fiddlersburg and the swamp, to school, to the arms of various women, and to the war takes place as Bradwell Tolliver tries to create an identity for himself. He begins to write film scripts shortly after he leaves school. But he does not find self-knowledge. He loses himself in alcohol and sexual escapades as he continues his quest for a lasting fulfillment and self-knowledge. The novel presents this information by flashback after the return of Tolliver to Tennessee. The present-time in the novel is the final journey of Tolliver toward self-knowledge.

This knowledge comes after he has experienced failure to satisfy Jones' requirements for the film script of the flooding of Fiddlersburg, after he has failed to create a script for their motion picture, after he has attempted, once more, to satisfy the longing within him to find peace and communion in sexual intercourse--this time with Leontine Purtle--after
soaking himself in brandy, sleeping with the aid of Seconal, being almost fatally wounded by a bullet from his brother-in-law's gun, and watching the citizens gathering for the last service in Fiddlersburg before the water reaches the town.

Watching the citizens and Brother Potts, who will "go to the hospital tomorrow and not come back" (Flood, p. 438), Tolliver thinks "that everything he himself had ever done, the good and the bad, had been like the grimace and tic and pose and gesture of the crazy man, who, by repeating the empty pose, tried, over and over, to re-establish the connection that had existed before the weight of ice broke the wires" (Flood, p. 438). With the imagery of the insane man's reason that is split like ice-broken wires, Warren communicates to the reader Tolliver's knowledge that he has been a puppet-like man imitating what he has believed to be real but what actually was not. Tolliver suddenly knows that he no longer has to pose and to lie, that he can be himself (Flood, p. 439), and that he must "find the connection between what I was and what I am: I have not found the human necessity. He knew that that was what he must try to find" (Flood, p. 439).

If he does not subjugate his total being to the past, does not live a lie, does accept the knowledge that he must reconcile his present life with his past then he may find that connection he searches for. If Tolliver leaves "his country," Fiddlersburg, which he undoubtedly will, he will not leave his heritage
behind. He realizes that "There is no country but the heart" (Flood, p. 440), and he will carry his heritage with him wherever he goes. It will be in his heart.

Yasha Jones, a man to whom success has come in abundant measure, has intelligence, charm, and material wealth. He understands himself as well as any other character in Warren's novels. He has, however, disciplined himself so that he feels very little personal emotion for other people. Several years before his journey to Fiddlersburg, Jones had lived closely with death. He had been in constant danger with the OSS in France during the war and had seen his comrades and friends die (Flood, pp. 264-65).

After the war Jones had financed a documentary film and had gone on from that venture to direct a series of successful pictures, pictures which he "loathed." He fell in love with a Hollywood secretary, married her, and was happy for a while. The woman was killed in an automobile accident, and Yasha Jones suffered for a long time believing himself to be somehow guilty for not having saved her life by rescuing her from the burning wreckage even though the physician told him that she had been killed immediately.

Because of these experiences Jones has cut himself off from individual human companionship and has "lived in the joy of abstraction—which means participation in all that is not yours, since you have lived past all that was yours. Having nothing, he had all. He had known how light falls on a leaf.
He had known how a hand turns on the wrist. He had known how a heart fills with longing. But it had not been his heart. For he was, he had told himself, past longing" (Flood, p. 26k).

Jones, in all his wisdom, is a self-exile from the communion of other individual human beings. Only after he travels to Fiddlersburg and falls in love with Maggie Tolliver Fiddler does he become reinstated into the communion of others. Warren does not let Jones speak of his self-fulfillment except indirectly. In a letter Tolliver receives from Maggie, Jones' fulfillment is suggested. The two of them have journeyed to Greece where Jones is involved in directing another film. Maggie, pregnant, writes that she is very happy and that Jones' picture is "really the kind he ought to make" (Flood, p. 420).

Warren has recounted the lives of several characters who journey from various parts of the country to meet in Fiddlersburg, Tennessee. After their own experiences lead them to self-knowledge and prepare some of them for self-fulfillment, they disperse to continue their journeys through life in other parts of the world: Maggie and Jones go to Greece, Mortimer Sparlin to Italy, Lettice Poindexter to Chicago, and Bradwell Tolliver to anywhere in the world, since "There is no country but the heart" (Flood, p. 440).
CHAPTER V

THE MYTH OF REBIRTH

The Myth of the Eternal Return

In *The Golden Bough* Sir James G. Frazer has pointed out the corresponding aspects of the Dying and Reviving God concept in various cultures. Tammuz, Adonis, Mithra, Attis, Osiris, and Jesus Christ are only a few of the heroes whose deaths and resurrections illustrate the Myth of Rebirth after a journey has been made. Joseph Campbell has discussed the journey and rebirth of Gautama Sakyamuni, Buddha, whose rebirth ("Enlightenment") corresponds to Christ's crucifixion:

"This is the most important single moment in Oriental mythology, a counterpart of the Crucifixion of the West. The Buddha beneath the Tree of Enlightenment (the Bo Tree) and Christ on Holy Rood (the Tree of Redemption) are analogous figures, incorporating an archetypal World Savior. . . ."¹ Campbell goes on to suggest examples of heroes "dying in the world" in order to be reborn into knowledge: for Oriental philosophers Buddha was this representative figure as Moses was for the Occident, Prometheus was for the Greeks, and Aeneas was for the Romans:

the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit . . . a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a

¹ Campbell, p. 33.
life-enhancing return. The whole of the Orient has been blessed by the boon brought back by Gautama Buddha—his wonderful teaching of the Good Law—just as the Occident has been by the Decalogue of Moses. The Greeks referred fire, the first support of all human culture, to the world-transcending deed of their Prometheus, and the Romans the founding of their world-supporting city to Aeneas, following his departure from fallen Troy and his visit to the eerie underworld of the dead. Everywhere, no matter what the sphere of interest... the really creative acts are represented as those deriving from some sort of dying to the world; and what happens in the interval of the hero's nonentity, so that he comes back as one reborn, made great and filled with creative power, mankind is also unanimous in declaring.  

Campbell speaks of the heroes of these myths as "symbolic carriers of the destiny of Everyman."  

One of the many "symbolic carriers" is Väinämöinen, hero of the Finnish epic, Kalevala. Väinämöinen remained in his mother's womb for thirty years until

he pondered and reflected
How he could continue living
In a resting-place so gloomy,
In a dwelling far too narrow,
Where he could not see the moonlight,
Neither could behold the sunlight.  

Väinämöinen releases himself from "the little nest that holds" him and falls into the ocean where he must exist, unprotected, for eight years. Runo I is the narration of a second birth—of the hero who passes from the womb of the Water-Mother into

2 Campbell, pp. 35-36.

3 Campbell, p. 36.

a second womb, the sea, where he exists until he is possessed of knowledge ready to live outside the womb-like ocean on the land.

Joseph Campbell mentions other examples of these returns to the womb: "The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale." The variations on the story include the Zulu tale of children swallowed by an elephant, Finn MacCool in Irish legend who was swallowed by a peist, Red Ridinghood, swallowed by the wicked wolf, the Polynesian Maui, swallowed by his great-great grandmother, "And the whole Greek pantheon, with the sole exception of Zeus . . . swallowed by its father, Kronos." Campbell says "This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation . . . instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again. The disappearance corresponds to the passing of a worshiper into a temple . . . The temple interior, the belly of the whale, and the heavenly land beyond, above, and below the confines of the world, are one and the same." He further suggests, "Allegorically, then, the passage into a temple and the hero-dive through the jaws of the whale are

5 Campbell, p. 90.
6 Campbell, p. 91.
7 Campbell, pp. 91-92.
identical adventures, both denoting, in picture language, the life-renewing act." In order to make this return to the womb, the hero has had to make a journey to an unknown zone, represented "as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky. . . ." 

Both literature and history suggest that man yearns to return to the womb, not in the Freudian sense of an infantile escape gesture but in order to recharge his psychic powers—as a return to the source of life. Pre-historic ice-age men made their way literally into dark and unknown womb-like caves to carve and otherwise establish representations of the animals they killed in order to live. "The magical and sacral significance of these paintings and of the caves in which they are found is today unquestioned. But it is also evident that the 'hard and dangerous way,' by which alone these caves could often be reached, formed a part of the ritual reality of the mountain temples that we now see in them." 

The journey, so closely connected with the return to the womb, is a metaphorical expression, common in the religions of many cultures, of the path toward a sacral goal. However, be the goal heaven or Nirvana, the religious belief connected with the metaphor involves another metaphor—the ascent of the hero

8 Campbell, p. 92.
9 Campbell, p. 58.
10 Neumann, p. 8.
preceded often by his descent. The descent is often terrifying, but if the hero ascends he is fortified with knowledge and vitality. He is reborn from some cave-tomb. Jolande Jacobi says that "every cave is a womb and at the same time the site of a mystery." Of course the cave is only one representation of the womb, which may be symbolized by almost any womb-shaped container such as a nest, cradle, ship, grail, cup, or wagon. One is reminded that Hercules made a journey in a golden bowl and Noah built an ark in which he survived the flood.

One of the oldest natural manifestations of the cycle of birth, journey, death, and rebirth is seen in the phenomenon of the sun which is born in the East, travels across the sky, is swallowed in the West, and is reborn from the East each morning.

There is a terror implicit in the journey toward the unknown womb: will the sun be reborn? will the hero return from his descent into the bowels of the earth? The journey to the womb is necessary in order for the hero to regenerate himself; it is terrifying in that he does not know what the unknown area holds for him. Carl Jung speaks of this kind of journey toward what he calls the Terrible Mother. Eric Neumann traces the idea which is involved with the more inclusive concept of the Eternal Feminine in his study The Great Mother. The Great Mother concept contains both positive and negative elements; for the

Great Mother not only gives and protects life (cradle-womb imagery), but she "also holds fast and takes back [coffin-tomb imagery]; she is the goddess of life and death at once."

The hero must make the journey and the descent into the womb in order to be reborn—in order to experience "the moment in his life when he achieves illumination—the nuclear moment when, while still alive, he found and opened the road to the light beyond the dark walls of our living death."13

Mercia Eliade, who traces the Myth of Rebirth from pre-Socratic cultures through both Eastern and Western cultures in *Cosmos and History*, writes:

> The death of the individual and the death of humanity are alike necessary, even as the three days of darkness preceding the "rebirth" of the moon are necessary. The death of the individual and the death of humanity are alike necessary for regeneration. Any form whatever, by the mere fact that it exists as such and endures, necessarily loses vigor and becomes worn; to recover vigor, it must be reabsorbed into the formless if only for an instant; it must be restored to the primordial unity from which it issued; in other words, it must return to "chaos" (on the cosmic plane), to "orgy" (on the social plane), to "darkness" (for seed), to "water" (baptism on the human plane, Atlantis on the plane of history, and so on).

> We may note that what predominates in all these cosmico-mythological lunar conceptions is the cyclical recurrence of what has been before, in a word, eternal return.14

This concept of the eternal return is what each of Warren's last three novels, *The Cave*, *Wilderness*, and *Flood*, have moved

12 Neumann, p. 45.
13 Campbell, p. 259.
14 Eliade, p. 88.
toward. The Myth of Rebirth, that is of eternal return, is discoverable in all of them; what waits at the end of the protagonists' journeys is the hope of regeneration and the promise of rebirth into the communion of other men. In this sense, all three later novels represent a departure from the earlier novels which suggested the concept of rebirth in the shadow of the more obvious illustration of physical death at the end of the protagonist's journey. The fulfillment of Ashby Wyndham, Munn Short, and Willie Proudfit was overshadowed by the physical deaths of the central characters in each of the novels that contained the less apparent illustrations of these fulfilled journeys. Sue Murdock in At Heaven's Gate was strangled before she could gain self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. The other protagonist in the novel, Jerry Calhoun, is alive, but he has not yet gained heroic stature as the novel ends. He has not made his journey toward rebirth and regeneration; instead he has regressed into a passive state of ignorance and non-volition. Jeremiah Beaumont, whom Munn Short guards in World Enough and Time, does gain some measure of self-fulfillment and much self-knowledge, but he is beheaded before he can fully emerge from his dark journey; and Willie Proudfit's story, in Night Rider, suggests the peace and fulfillment that might come to one after an heroic journey, well-made. But Mr. Munn's violent death as he runs toward the sanctuary of the woods almost makes one forget the more hopeful end of Proudfit's journey.
Rebirth in The Cave

Warren's variation of the Myth of Rebirth appears in The Cave as the narration of Jasper Harrick's descent into a womb-like cave. Because the people of Johntown look upon Jasper as a kind of hero, his descent suggests to the readers that the people depend upon him to bring them special knowledge from the cave. Jasper, like his father, John T., is known for his adventures. Old Harrick's adventures did not end with middle age; for many years he continued to kill bears and woo maidens, incurring during that time both the envy and the admiration of the other men of Johntown. John T.'s skill as a blacksmith did not fall to disuse with the coming of the automobile; instead he conquered the machine when he learned to repair it. He learned to repair tractors and automobiles as he had earlier repaired the worn shoes of horses.

Harrick was, in these respects, a conqueror of time—a man by whom even the process of aging was arrested. His son, Jasper, was becoming the same kind of hero to the people. As a kind of reincarnation of John T., Jasper became a hero in the war and returned to make music on John T. Harrick's "box" and to break the hearts of the women. He was seeking, in a sense, to conquer time; therefore he appreciated the timelessness of the world inside the cave where the temperatures never changed (The Cave, p. 240). Jasper would leave the society of men to wander into the labyrinthine passageways and search for secrets he did not find on the surface of the earth (The Cave, p. 241).
The feelings of the townspeople about John T. and Jasper Harrick are voiced by "that awful old drunk Mr. Duckett" (The Cave, p. 297). Duckett appears several times in the novel; each time he speaks as a kind of chorus figure, expressing the citizens' attitudes toward the two men, attitudes which Celia Harrick resents very much. When Duckett sees Monty Harrick, the younger son, walking down the street, he accosts Monty:

tee-heeing in an awful old-man snicker, before launching into the praise that somehow was intended to make the praiser the peer of the praised: "Yeah, Ole Jack, he was a heller. He was ring-tail...

I'm a-telling you, strong men, when they met him they give him the high side of a hill track... and wasn't no woman under age fer putting on the calico cap didn't swallow sweet spit and look back over her shoulder when she passed him on the big road... Yeah, you Ole Jack's boy?"

"Yeah, and that Jasper Harrick, yore Big Bubba? Yeah, and him a Big Bubba to have now. Yeah, he's the spit and image of Ole Jack. A chip off the old block." (The Cave, p. 14)

Celia blames the townsmen for Jasper's having gone into the cave:

"It's like everybody made 'em," she said. Everybody in Johntown made my baby get killed. He walked down the street in his uniform before he went to Korea and everybody stopped him. They would put their hands on him—that awful old drunk Mr. Duckett, he put his hands on him—and they said—"

"They said, 'A chip off the old block.' They said, 'Boy, you do like Old Jack would do.' They said, 'You're Old Jack's boy, you show 'em.' They said, 'Old Jack got him a medal, you git two.' And they--"

"--they put their hands on him. They kept putting their filthy hands on him." (The Cave, p. 297)

Celia resents the strength the townspeople seem to get from touching Jasper, yet she too regrets not having touched him:
"I didn't reach out and touch him" (The Cave, p. 292). The act of touching Jasper suggests that he represents some kind of hero to them and that their physical contact with his body will somehow transmit his heroism or strength to them. It is a way the community can share the power and mysterious qualities of the hero.

Jasper represents the hero who is also the scapegoat in that he dies so that the people can experience salvation. Warren's variation on the use of the scapegoat concept involves a rather bitter irony. The people experience salvation-in-mass (The Cave, pp. 268-73), or so they believe. However, the individual souls are ignorant of their sins. Nick Pappy believes that he has been saved and will "not have to go into the ground and suffer. Because Jasper would be doing it for him" (The Cave, p. 270). But Nick Pappy does not know from what he is saved; he is only seeking to be relieved from the guilt and worry he feels but does not understand.

Warren seems to be suggesting that this kind of salvation through the suffering of another is not enough, especially if the person who considers himself saved has gained no self-knowledge. Only later, when Pappy accepts his responsibility to suffer does he begin to experience a valuable salvation because this later salvation is a redemption brought about by self-knowledge and acceptance of his sins and guilt.

One of the characters who does not share in the salvation on the mountain is the very one who is urging his flock to
accept salvation. Brother Sumpter, who thanks God for Jasper Harrick (The Cave, p. 271), finds that he cannot join in the singing.

He thought: I cannot sing.  
He thought: I was glad he is in the ground. 
He could not sing.  
He thought: It was for the hope there would be salvation. (The Cave, p. 272)

Sumpter cannot sing because he feels guilt in his heart that he wanted Jasper Harrick to descend into the ground in order to give Isaac Sumpter a chance to make a descent of his own:

He thought: It was only for the hope, God, that Thou had'st moved in this way for the salvation of his soul. (The Cave, p. 273)

What follows is an almost overly contrived statement of an equally contrived act: "At that moment Isaac Sumpter emerged from the cave" (The Cave, p. 273).

This emergence might signal the return of a hero from the depths of the earth, might signal the bringing out of secret knowledge to be shared with the community, might introduce the returned, regenerated hero. But Warren has allowed the hero, Jasper Harrick, to die in the ground, as a scapegoat-sacrifice for the people. And he has allowed the unregenerated man, Isaac Sumpter, to emerge. Warren has, metaphorically speaking, left the hero trapped within the darkness of the cave and brought the pseudo-hero, a pretender to the title of hero, into the light.

During the span of the novel Isaac is given several opportunities to gain self-knowledge, to face the unknown, and to
experience rebirth. Early in the novel, after challenging his father in an argument and winning his point, "Isaac Sumpter looked at the closed door, in a calm joy past triumph, like the general who sits his horse on the knoll, in gathering dusk, and sees, beyond the litter of carnage, the last stand of the enemy broken, and sees them scatter into darkness" (The Cave, pp. 97-98). The "calm joy" is not true joy; for Isaac feels that the moment of triumph is dust in his mouth.

While Isaac and his father have been talking, Isaac has been holding his old copy of The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats from which he has been reading "Ode to a Nightingale." The imagery of the bird that will not be trod down by "hungry generations" suggests a force for knowledge inside Isaac that attempts to make itself known. The passage suggests a kind of aborted birth in that the force does not result in knowledge:

He closed his eyes. A cool sweetness was dewing into the darkness of his breast. It was as though something that had mattered was, slowly, not mattering. He did not know what it was that was not mattering, because the cool dew fell in his darkness, or what made that cool dew suddenly begin to fall so sweet, but he did know that if he stirred, if he even drew a single breath, the dew might cease to fall, the not-mattering would again be that dark, grinding mattering which was every breath you drew. So he held his breath, as long as he could, letting himself slip loose into the coolness of that dark dewfall.

Then he had to breathe. But he did not open his eyes. (The Cave, p. 98)

Isaac exists—he breathes as a newborn breathes—but he has no knowledge; he won't open his eyes. He is still blind to
self-knowledge. He has just won his point in the argument with his father, but as the victory turns to ashes, he almost realizes that his father does matter. His father, symbolizing all the guilt and boyhood shame that Isaac has felt, also represents Isaac's past which he has never acknowledged and to which he has never become reconciled. He almost accepts his father and his past—they almost matter—but his callous shield takes over and the not-mattering again envelopes him.

That which is trying to be born, which is symbolized by the imagery of the bird, is "his self." "It was, he knew in a knowledge that was not quite knowledge, at least not quite words, a self of the self, a free, immortal self, ready for song, being born this instant in the darkness of the self that suffered and was not free" (The Cave, p. 99). And so Isaac does not breathe for a moment as he waits for the knowledge to be born. When, at last, he does breathe, the words of the poem of Keats, "No hungry generations tread . . ." plunge him back into his darkness of ignorance and he acknowledges the world outside his room

the blaze of sunlight out the window, heard the frazzle and grind of the locusts over the whole God-damned Sovereign State of Tennessee. . . .
(The Cave, p. 99)

Warren's use of animal imagery in the following passage suggests that Isaac has not yet achieved self-knowledge, that which the recognition of his father's feelings and the acceptance of his past might have provided him: "It was as though he were
trapped in a box, an animal, as though the gaze itself were claws scraping the wood walls, witlessly trying to claw out” (The Cave, p. 99).

Isaac's most significant opportunity to be regenerated and to gain self-knowledge comes when he crawls alone into the cave to see if Jasper is alive or dead. He brings out the lie that Jasper is alive, and he compounds that lie by an elaborate ruse of saving Jasper. Isaac, who cannot save anyone because he will not risk his own life—will not share his own life—ironically promises to try to save that man who symbolizes salvation for so many other citizens of Johntown.

Isaac Sumpter's selfishness precludes his functioning as a hero. He is not concerned with his responsibility to the community when that responsibility includes a disadvantage to him. The regeneration that Isaac does experience is consumed by him and not shared with others. His sexual relationship with Rachel Goldstein illustrates this as do his educational achievements at the University. What success Isaac experiences in the classroom is absorbed and not shared. Each time he receives an A for his work he experiences a regenerative rebirth, but the process neither serves to satisfy him—to provide self-fulfillment—nor to benefit anyone else. If the class grade for Isaac is not an A, he receives "the information with an equally icy detachment, but under that icy surface he would begin to feel a slow coil and dark eddying and would know that in a few hours he would fall through into that black despair."
So he would lie on a bed and stare at the ceiling. And then out of that blankness would come a new, grimmer energy" (The Cave, p. 101).

Warren describes in detail Isaac's descent into the cave in Chapter Nine. Sumpter experiences a desire to escape the world and to "sit here forever"; in the timeless, "comforting darkness, here he would be outside of what he had to go through, in a darkness which had none of the deep, twisting strain of life, and yet was life, a state of being which was, at the same time, both peace and achievement, both non-life and life" (The Cave, pp. 277-78).

Isaac also experiences a partial regeneration in the sense that "He felt, all at once, full of energy, as though by his words he had been magically released from his own distress" (The Cave, p. 278). This is a short-lived regeneration, however; for Isaac convinces himself that he is not responsible for the events that have happened to him. He thinks that because "Nobody is pulling the string" on him, he is a better man than Jebb Holloway and the other people who are taking orders from him. Isaac is actually as much a puppet as the townspeople because he will not assert himself and recognize that each man must take responsibility for his actions and for what happens to him. Isaac excuses himself from responsibility when he rationalizes that he has not planned Jasper's entrapment (The Cave, p. 280), that he had not initiated the affair with Rachel Goldstein (The Cave, pp. 285-86), and that
So far he hadn't had to plan anything, and everything had worked out. Even when one of those cretin reporters, that skinny red-headed one who had flown down from New York, had insisted on going into the cave to interview Jasper, things had worked out. Folks had backed him up, had backed Isaac Sumpter up—that Bible-thumping Old Sumpter the Baptist Prophet had backed Isaac Sumpter up. (The Cave p. 284)

Isaac bolsters his philosophy of passive acceptance when he thinks, "Yes, you had to trust to the logic of things. You had to read the flight of birds in the heavens. You had to follow your star. And things were working out" (The Cave p. 284).

When Isaac feels the surge of power growing in him, Warren is careful to describe it as a force that Isaac cannot control; the force has a hold on Isaac who will never be able to make decisions for himself:

He felt a power grow in him. But it did not feel like his own power. It was as though forces beyond him were filling him, possessing him. It was like destiny. He felt like a crap shooter riding it out, knowing that when the bones turn all will again be well, again and again, and he can say: "I let it ride."

He crouched there, with that strange paradoxical sense of powerlessness in power. He was nothing, merely the guiltless instrument of power. . . . (The Cave, p. 285)

Isaac, crouching there in a fetal-like position in the womb of the earth, experiences a rebirth into willlessness. When he finds that Jasper is not in the part of the cave that he explores, Isaac cries

like a baby while the darkness stretched away among the looming forms, and water murmured in the depth of the pit. The tears were tears of joy, after all the pain. He thought of those people outside, before the cave mouth, who, last night,
had fallen on the ground and wept in the joy of salvation.

*I'm saved, he thought, and his heart overflowed with gratitude to Jasper Harrick, who had saved him.*

(The Cave, p. 28)

Isaac has not made an heroic descent into the cave; he has penetrated the first chambers of the unknown cavern. He has not, symbolically, reached the life-giving source of knowledge, because he has been afraid to go any further into the cave. He has experienced an abortive rebirth, and the regeneration he feels only supports his willingness to be moved by the forces of chance and not to struggle against them as the true hero would.

A heavy irony of Warren in the following passages underscores the ignorance of Isaac and the condition of willlessness in which he may spend the rest of his life:

For Isaac Sumpter wanted to be innocent. He wanted to be good. He had always wanted to be good. And now, in some dark recess of the self where all bargains are debated, and all transactions are made, and all potions brewed and mysteries performed, he was promising—promising whom, what power: his father, himself, the dead face of Jasper Harrick white under water in the dark of earth?—that he would be good for always.

He could be good now forever, for he was, he knew, entering upon that success which was his due, and for which the price had been paid. He could afford to be good now. (The Cave, p. 287)

In the earlier section, "The Myth of the Garden," Isaac's entrance at this point into the false garden existence in the city has been pointed out. His "goodness" is valueless in so far as it is an individually static and communally unproductive condition.
Although Isaac Sumpter's father, Brother MacCarland Sumpter, does not receive the peace of redemption on the mountain when many of his church members receive salvation, he experiences rebirth later because of his descent into the cave. He does not quite understand why he has to go into the cave, but he makes the descent anyway. Upon his return he faces the decision of either lying or of following the doctrines of his religion—doctrines about which he has been extremely conscientious in the past—and telling the literal truth that Jasper Harrick is dead and that Isaac never did speak with him while he was trapped in the cave.

Brother Sumpter brings back from the depths of the cave and gives to the people a lie, a lie that is, paradoxically, the truth. It is a lie that Jasper has spoken to Isaac; for he has not spoken to anyone during his entrapment. Yet Sumpter chooses to support the belief of the people in the pseudo-hero by telling the people what they need and want to believe. The information which he transmits is not what happened, but it is a lie that conveys a truth. After Brother Sumpter tells Isaac that he found Jasper dead, Isaac says,

"Then you—you—lied? But you—you couldn't lie. I thought you wouldn't tell a lie."
"Yes, I lied. I had to tell my lie to undo the lie you told."
"But what the hell made you? You heard what that girl said. She admitted it."
"I don't care what she admitted. That's between her and God. But Jasper Harrick never said that, or anything else to you. You never got near him—so don't you understand I had to lie—for the sake of Jasper—for the sake of the living—for the sake of truth. . . ." (The Cave, p. 355)
The father is also protecting the son in another way. While he was inside the cave, Sumpter moved the heating pad near Jasper; Isaac had only pretended to have gone far enough into the cave to have placed it near Jasper. Actually the heating pad had warmed a rock, not Jasper's body.

When Isaac learns that his father has done this he feels "growing in him, too, the weakness, the suffocating sweetness, the insidious fear of unmanment. He felt the gush of gratitude, the welling of tears in his heart, the beginning of the terrible self-betrayal which love is" (The Cave, p. 358). But Isaac does not accept love and return it. He does not accept his father; instead he feels "the fear of being thrown absolutely upon his own frail resources, alone, dropped into a sea, at night" (The Cave, p. 359). Isaac is not strong enough to attempt the sea voyage. The prototype of the hero, Väinämöinen, was dropped into the sea after having spent thirty years in his mother's womb. After eight years in the womb of the sea he was reborn. But Isaac is no hero. He cannot fall back "upon his own frail resources."

Warren has illustrated the journey of Isaac Sumpter toward partial self-knowledge: since Sumpter would not accept responsibility for the events of his life that a man should accept, would not accept his past, would not share love with others, his narrative is a representation of the unfulfilled journey, and his rebirth into the unity of man never takes place.
Purification after Battle: The Wilderness

Closely related to the symbolic rebirth of the hero who has experienced a descent is the purification of the existing cosmos by either fire or water. "According to the Stoic doctrine of the cyclic conflagration, all souls are resolved into the world soul or primal fire. When this universal dissolution is concluded, the formation of a new universe begins . . . and all things repeat themselves. . . ."15

In order to make the return to the womb and to bring about the regeneration of the cosmos, Campbell suggests that the hero has to make a journey to an unknown zone, represented "as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky. . . ."16 Warren illustrated the Myth of Rebirth in the hero's journey into the kingdom underground in The Cave; in Wilderness Adam Rosenzweig's rebirth comes after he has journeyed into a forest. He experiences rebirth in a wilderness glade after having made his journey from Bavaria across the sea in a ship and across the Eastern United States in a wagon. These vehicles convey him into the Wilderness, where he faces death, experiences rebirth, and prepares to go out into a new world. The fires of battle that Adam sees reddening the skies suggest the universal conflagration which Eliade

15 Campbell, p. 262; see also Cicero's renovatio concept; Seneca De Consolatione ad Marciam in Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 4, p. 74; Mercia Eliade, pp. 87-88, 123.

16 Campbell, p. 58.
and Campbell write of as symbolic of a purifying force in the world that makes way for new life.

Allen Shepherd suggests that "A river crossing, as in The Pilgrim's Progress, has frequently been used to suggest the protagonist's entrance into a new state of being, this followed, as in Wilderness, by final enlightenment." Adam rode the sutler's wagon out of the false garden inhabited by Monmorancy Pugh with Pugh guiding his horses toward the river. After Adam had crossed the river he travelled on alone until he reached "a little glade, set around by sizable timber, oak and gum, and a thick tangle of brush" (Wilderness, p. 284). Here he rests the night and wakens to the sound of battle far away.

He sat there and felt strangely disembodied and pure. He felt as he had once felt when, as a boy, he had been recovering from a long fever. He had awakened that morning, years ago, feeling himself adrift in air, light as a feather, pure. (Wilderness, p. 285)

Adam's feelings in the glade suggest that he is changing, feeling "disembodied and pure."

This memory of long ago calls up another memory of Adam's mother and of what he feels "was the last time she ever loved me" (Wilderness, p. 286). Adam had purposely cut himself loose from his mother at that time when he confessed to her that he sided with his father, who the mother thinks loved the idea of liberty more than he loved her. For Adam, then, this was

17 Shepherd, p. 235
a kind of rebirth in that it was a second birth that separated him from his mother.

Adam stays a second night in the Wilderness glade, and toward the evening he feels compassion for his former comrade, Moses Crawford: "Let him go in peace, he thought. Oh, God, lead him to peace" (Wilderness, p. 290). Like the Ancient Mariner in Coleridge's rime, Adam blesses Crawford, "unaware."

During the two nights and days that Adam has spent in the glade the sounds of battle have been growing closer; finally "the world broke into the thicket. It plunged into the glade" (Wilderness, p. 290). Foreigners from the world have broken into the sanctuary. "The eight maniacal scarecrows burst into the glade" (Wilderness, p. 291). And, in order to save his own life, Adam, "for the first time in his life, pulled the trigger of a charged weapon" and kills a man (Wilderness, p. 297).

After the skirmish, Adam has to face his responsibility and attempt to reconcile himself to his guilt. He knows that he has at last been forced to defend what had been to him earlier only an ideal concept—to fight for freedom. Then,

He lay there and marveled that a strength should be growing in him, that with the death of that nameless man he himself should feel so much more a man. (Wilderness, p. 299)

Adam is feeling the power of his regeneration; he accepts the philosophy of responsibility: "We always do what we intend" (Wilderness, p. 300). This was the concept that Isaac Sumpter could never accept. Instead of ignoring the events of his
life as having been caused by fate—as that which he did not plan and could not help, Adam knows that man does what he intends to do. Warren calls it Adam's "discovery." To accept the guilt of the event, to acknowledge one's responsibility for history is not, however, enough to give one strength to be completely reborn into the world.

Adam must also experience a change of heart; for before "he had come in hardness of heart" (Wilderness, p. 302). Now Adam feels a sense of unity with Mose Crawfurd along with a sense of responsibility and compassion at the death of Jedeen Hawksworth. He accepts his communal guilt for the murder of Hawksworth:

He thought how Mose Talbutt—Mose Crawfurd—would not have been driven forth, with crammed money belt, greasy alphabet cards, and bloody hands, if—

He could not think that if. But he had to. He knew that in the end, he would have to think every if—every if which was life.

If he, Adam Rosenzweig, had not told the black man to shut up, to stop talking.

Thinking that, feeling again as he had felt that night when, after having called the black man that name, he had stood panting in the dark, he realized that Mose might have killed him, not Jed Hawksworth. (Wilderness, p. 302)

A few passages later Adam remembers the maid at the Blau-stein home whom he did not thank for repairing his seddur, and he regrets his omission. He also looks into the face of the man he has killed and longs to understand something, he
does not quite know what, that the face might communicate to him, but he cannot see that something. What he longs to see is his kinship with the dead man. Adam then realizes that night is coming and that the forest is on fire. He longs for the sound of a human voice (Wilderness, p. 308), falls on his knees, and begins to utter the prayers of the religion he has attempted for so long to ignore. After he asks blessing for himself he begins to "feel, with a slow, painful, dawning sense of awe, like dawn through the clouds, that after a little, soon now, he might be able to rise" (Wilderness, p. 310).

Adam will soon leave the womb-like glade to continue his journey. He has experienced a rebirth that better prepares him to face the world and to endure whatever hardships or temptations the world, newly cleansed by fire, offers him.

Campbell suggests that "The battlefield is symbolic of the field of life, where every creature lives on the death of another." In Wilderness the battles of the Civil War have been outside the narrative of Adam Rosenzweig's journey toward rebirth, but the battleground inside of Adam illustrates the statement that "every creature lives on the death of another." Adam has found the compassion that he needed to have in order to become one with the community of men, partially because Mose Talbutt Crawford killed Jedeen Hawksworth. He has found redemption partially because he accepts his responsibility for having killed another man in order that his own life might be

---

18 Campbell, p. 238.
saved. Adam has paradoxically been struggling against temptation in order to free himself. He has met and bested the temptation to live a life of material ease in the household of Aaron Blaustein, resisted the temptation to usurp Hans Myerhof's place on the farm with Maran Myerhof, and escaped the temptation to murder Monmorancy Pugh in the hide-away of that former passivist-become-predator. Adam has been released from his guilt of the past in that he no longer feels he has anything to fear from the memory of having rejected his mother's wishes that he be like her and not share his father's desire to strive for freedom. Even more important, Adam discovered a specific, objective goal for himself instead of the idealistic and general concept of freedom. He came to recognize the value of the individual and the individual's proper relationship to freedom. Warren has, then, illustrated Adam's maturation, and his acquisition of self-knowledge by the use of the Myth of the Garden, the Myth of the Journey, and the Myth of Rebirth.

**Flood: Redemption by Love**

In Flood Warren brings the wanderer home; he brings Yasha Jones to Fiddlersburg and introduces him to the woman who lives in the womb-like garden of the old Fiddler house. Warren brings together two people, Jones and Maggie, and suggests that their love for one another will provide both people with self-fulfillment in a new garden existence after the flood that will destroy Fiddlersburg has come. Warren shows Bradwell Tolliver's search for and discovery of self-knowledge and his
rebirth from the isolated womb-like town that is soon to be symbolically cleansed by the flood. The novel has made use of the Myth of Rebirth as several characters make ready to leave Fiddlersburg, fortified with heroic strength.

The cleansing power of the flood waters is an ancient idea; from Genesis to Ovid the concept of a deluge, of flood, can be found in literature. The flood "puts an end to an exhausted and sinful humanity and a new regenerated humanity is born, usually from a mythical 'ancestor' who escaped the catastrophe..."  

Ovid, in Metamorphoses, records a flood after the world has become a wasteland, "A dismal desert, and a silent waste." Deucalion cries to Themis,

"... if the pow'rs above
By pray'rs are bent to pity, and to love;
If human miseries can move their mind;
If yet they can forgive, and yet be kind;
Tell how we may restore, by second birth,
Mankind, and people-desolated earth."

The second birth can only come about by the flooding of the world:

And this bad world, so Jove requires, destroy.
Let loose the reins to all your watry store:
Bear down the dams, and open every door.
The floods, by nature enemies to land,
And proudly swelling with their new command,
Remove the living stones, that stopt their way,
And gushing from their source, augment the sea.

19 Eliade, p. 82; see also Eliade, pp. 59, 87-88.


21 Great Classical Myths, p. 17.
An account of the Myth of Rebirth as that rebirth is accomplished by flood waters is found in the Bible which tells of Noah, the hero of the deluge which the Lord sent to destroy the wickedness of the world:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. (Genesis, 7:11)

And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. (Genesis, 7:12)

As a result of the flood,

all the flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. (Genesis, 7:21-23)

After the flood waters had receded Noah was commanded to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis, 9:1). The world was fresh and ready to be replenished for the glory of God.

Utnapishtim, to whom Gilgamesh went to get the secret of immortality, was also the hero of a flood. When Gilgamesh asks Utnapishtim to tell him the story of how he gained immortality, Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh that the god Ea warned him in a dream that the warrior Enlil and the other gods were
sending a deluge upon the earth. Utnapishtim was to build an ark and prepare to live on it during the flood. Lest the people of the city try to also get inside the ark, Utnapishtim was to keep his knowledge of the flood a secret and to tell them only that the god, Ea, was angry with him and that he no longer dared to walk on the earth.

Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh

"For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world; tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay."22

Like Noah, Utnapishtim sends out birds, and when the last bird, a raven, does not return to the ark, he knows that the waters are receding. Unlike the Christian account of the flood, the Babylonian epic tells of puzzled gods who did not know what to do with the wise man, Utnapishtim, who had survived the flood. Enlil makes Utnapishtim and his wife kneel in the ark while he blesses them and gives them immortality.

Utnapishtim then tells Gilgamesh how he can find the plant that will give him everlasting life, and Gilgamesh is taken out onto the sea at the bottom of which the magic plant grows. Gilgamesh ties rocks to his feet and plunges into the water. From this baptism the hero, Gilgamesh, returns with the

plant in his hand. On his way back to the city, Uruk, Gilgamesh loses the plant to a wily serpent when he stoops to drink from a well.

The serpent captured the plant before Gilgamesh could return to his city and share the magic with his people. Like Gilgamesh, Bradwell Tolliver in Flood has plucked the precious plant out of the flood. Whether or not he can return to the people with the gift, Warren does not explicitly say. We know that Tolliver is an artist, that he has written a collection of short stories and that he has also written several film scripts. We do not know his potential. Joseph Campbell discusses the hero's return as his rebirth "from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection)" and "the boon that he brings [which] restores the world (elixir)." Tolliver's elixir could come from his talent--his writing which has been enhanced by his own experiences. From literature truth might come; hence an elixir in the form of knowledge for readers may be Tolliver's boon to the world.

During the last passages of the novel, Tolliver is remembering the months that have just passed. He leans on a cane for support since he is still weak from the bullet Calvin Fiddler put in his throat. But the crutch will not be needed much longer; for the physician has assured him that he will soon "be as good as ever" (Flood, p. 437). What Bradwell

23 Campbell, p. 246.
Tolliver then wonders—as do Warren's readers—as, how good was Tolliver? Tolliver seems to be more concerned with his moral and spiritual "goodness" than with an evaluation of his talent. However, the concern of the reader is built up for each of these aspects of Tolliver's "goodness" by the imagery surrounding his actions and thoughts in the last passages of the novel.

"As good as ever, he thought, and a black shiver shook him, even in the sunlight. . . ." (Flood, p. 437). The brightness of the sunlight in which he stands suggests the realm of knowledge into which he has moved during the past months. He has learned to accept himself, his past, and his relationships with the women in his life, but he still fears for his future and the unknown quality of the days that he faces. The "black shiver" that shakes him connotes this unknown future of which he is fearful. Still, Tolliver has gained a large measure of confidence in his ability to accept whatever the future presents him with. He has also gained the ability to recognize the individuality and reality of Lettice Poindexter Tolliver, to whom he could never admit the fact that she was a real person because he had not himself recognized her individuality:

He slowly began to realize, as you realize the first dull beginnings of a headache, that now, for the first time . . . Lettice Poindexter was real to him. She had really existed. Somewhere, in her way, she existed now. (Flood, p. 436)

And Tolliver wonders why he has never been able to travel to her and tell her "that he knew, at last, that she was real" (Flood, p. 437). Tolliver realizes that he could never tell
her because he had not known it until that moment. Because he had not known that Lettice was real, Tolliver wonders if, perhaps, he had not been real himself (Flood, p. 437).

These passages present a mental dialogue of a middle-aged hero who has literally been reborn after he has been shot in the throat and is being spiritually reborn because of the knowledge with which his time spent in Fiddlersburg and his experiences there have provided him. Ironically, Tolliver's wound in the throat, that is, in the anatomical area of speech, has probably made him able to communicate more significantly now than ever before. He has not lost the power of speech, but he has gained the power of interpretation and, possibly, can now write the script of which he will be proud. He may be the hero who "comes back as one reborn, made great, and filled with creative power" which he will share, in the form of either films or books, with others. His destruction of the telegram offering him a chance to continue to write the same kinds of scripts in California that he has been writing earlier suggests his destruction of a false promise of fulfillment and also a destruction of part of Tolliver's identity. He destroys the part of him that accepted fame and money through a kind of prostitution of his art. Now he can give up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, [for he] no longer resists the self-annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization

24 Campbell, pp. 35-36.
of truth, and so becomes ripe, at last, for the great at-one-
ment. His personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no
longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may
come to pass in him; he becomes, that is to say, an anonymity."

Perhaps "an anonymity" is too strong a label for Warren's
character who will undoubtedly make decisions and accept re-
sponsibility for his actions and for the events of his world.
He is, on the other hand, receptive to the channeling of his
talents in new directions. He is ready for change. Blanding
Cottshill says it this way: "and when Fiddlersburg is under
water, God-A-Mighty will jerk our passports. We will be state-
less persons. We will be DPs for eternity and thence for-
ward. We will have no identity" (Flood, p. 423). One feels
that Tolliver will gain a new identity in the heroic contribu-
tion he makes to the literature of films, novels, or short
stories.

The coming deluge will symbolically wash away the errors
of the past—not only those of Tolliver but also of his father,
his brother-in-law, and the townspeople such as old Miss Petti-
few, who returns in the middle of the night to exhume the fruit
jar containing the fetus that might have developed into her
child. The flood will, symbolically, make way for a new cosmos,
already signalled by the marriage of Yasha Jones and Maggie
Tolliver Fiddler.

25 Campbell, p. 237.
Allen Shepherd rightly sees *Flood* as a love story with the "love and marriage as Warren figures them ... a kind of redemption, signalizing or making possible man's return to his lost unity, this return achieved by a growth of moral awareness."^25 When Jones accepts Maggie Fiddler's love and gives his in return to her, the past is in a sense both accepted and wiped out. The past exists for Jones, and he accepts responsibility for his actions in that past, but he cannot face his guilt and know the difference between actual guilt and assumed guilt. He can accept his responsibility for the acts he performed during the war and also the possibility that he had wished his first wife to die in the automobile crash. But he can also face the fact that he did all he could to carry out the awful responsibility that was his duty during the war and that he could not have saved his wife's life after the automobile crashed. The coming of the flood symbolizes the cleansing from Jones' past life of the burden of an enduring guilt. Jones will now be able to accept relief from his burden in the form of a new love.

The concept of the cleansing power of the waters is also illustrated in the lives of the other characters in *Flood*. For Brother Potts, who is rapidly being killed by cancer, the power of the flood symbolizes victory in several ways. The victory over death is his in that he has been able to live

until the time when not only he but all the citizens of Fiddlersburg must leave the town. His victory comes in the creation of verse that expresses his hope that all the people of the town will have the self-knowledge that the lives they have lived have been blessed (*Flood*, p. 424).

To Lettice Poindexter, in a nunnery in Chicago, Tolliver speculates that the flood will cleanse away all traces of her past burdens—burdens caused in large part because she lived in ignorance of her potential to share, not just give, love. Tolliver wonders if Lettice will "sleep easier for that knowledge, sink more handily into that inwardness of self which is sleep, if she knew wherever she was, whoever it was she lay by in the dark—that soon water would seal over Fiddlersburg with no trace?" (*Flood*, p. 421).

For Brother Pinckney, the Negro preacher, educated at Harvard, "very intelligent, tactful with white folks, devoted to good of [sic] flock . . ." (*Flood*, p. 93), the flood symbolizes the promise of a new world that will not be marred by prejudice. He works in Fiddlersburg for understanding and communion. By his final refusal to worship with the white people at the service to mark the coming of the flood waters, Leon Pinckney hopes to make the white people recognize the existence of the black people and to know that they cannot salve their consciences by a short trip into the Negro church to worship one time. The people of Brother Potts' church have made plans to go in token unity to pray in the Negro church. Instead,
Pinckney, intelligent man that he is, holds out for a more difficultly attained communion that might possibly be significant and sincere communion rather than a token communion.

Cottshill knows what Brother Pinckney aims for:

When the prayer was over, Cottshill said: "No, Brother Pinckney was not going to let Brother Potts, or any of us white folks—just in case two or three got that hopped up—make it easy for himself just by walking over there and praying together in the open air. He was not going to let anybody just clean out his system so easy, not merely, you might say, of his nigger-constipation but of everythings else in his colon-congested self by using the nigger-purge as a substitute for other and more appropriate, and perhaps even more painful, cathartics. You see, my friend Leon Pinckney is a very deep fellow, and he knows that white folks are human, even if they are white folks, and he knows, therefore, that we like the cheap and easy way to feel good. Like praying with colored folks." (Flood, p. 425)

Pinckney is a hero leading his people out of bondage. He may, as Cottshill later suggests, just not have been ready to pray with the white people, but then, "is anybody ever ready to pray with anybody else?" (Flood, p. 425). Pinckney is the character in the novel who promisses to "begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece" to his people.

Campbell suggests that "The effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world." Pinckney suggests a hero who will unlock and release the potential of the black people to gain greatness, and Tolliver suggests the hero who

27 Campbell, p. 40.
will provide inspiration, communication, and translation of the secrets of greatness by way of the literature he creates.
Despite the titles of two of Warren's novels, *World Enough and Time*, *A Romantic Novel*, and *Flood, A Romance of Our Time*, he is generally and correctly considered to be a writer of realistic fiction. The symbolic and mythic undercurrents in *The Cave*, *Wilderness*, and *Flood* which this paper has discussed are not intended to suggest that Warren is either a writer of romance, in the generally accepted meaning of the term, or exclusively a creator of myth. Neither does Warren's work properly belong to any one of the categories Northrop Frye mentions in his essay "Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes." Warren writes neither myth "in the common sense of a story about a god,"¹ nor romance in which the hero "moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established."² Warren's novels are not in

² Frye, p. 33.
"the high mimetic mode, of most epic and tragedy,"³ but they do fall into Frye's fourth and fifth categories, the low mimetic and the ironic modes.

Of the low mimetic mode, Frye writes "the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience."⁴ Speaking of the ironic mode, he continues, "irony, then, becomes simply the study of tragic isolation as such," and the "hero does not necessarily have any tragic hamartia or pathetic obsession: he is only somebody who gets isolated from his society."⁵

One example of the isolated hero is Bradwell Tolliver in Flood, who, by the end of the novel, realizes that he must find "the human necessity"—that he must not be alienated and isolated from other men. Just as he did not allow the characters in The Cave or Wilderness to enjoy their self-fulfillment and self-knowledge completely, Warren does not narrate this hero's survival of "the impact of the world."⁶ Traditionally,

When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female . . . the adventurer still must return with his life-transmitting trophy. The full round . . . requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds.⁷

³ Frye, p. 34. ⁴ Frye, p. 34. ⁵ Frye, p. 41 ⁶ Campbell, p. 226. ⁷ Campbell, p. 193.
Tolliver's journey is incomplete in *Flood* in that Warren does not present him during the "labor of bringing the runes of wisdom" to the people. The hero's gift, which he traditionally brings to the community, might come about as a result of the experiences he has had on his journey—in Tolliver's case the gift would be literature, the combination of his experience and his talent for writing fiction. Truth might come from the literature; hence an elixir promising knowledge to others might be Tolliver's gift to the world. But Tolliver's "return and re-integration with society, which is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world" is not illustrated by Warren.

While Richard Sale's comment is correct that Warren, as a writer of realistic and ironic fiction, "is not obliged to fit his novels to a complete mythic pattern," the fact that he has used the Myth of the Garden, the Journey, and Rebirth in these last three novels strongly suggests that Warren is approaching a different mode that Frye terms the "return of irony to myth." Frye maintains that "Ironic descends from the low mimetic: it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it."  

8 Campbell, p. 36. 9 Personal correspondence.  
10 Frye, p. 62. 11 Frye, p. 42
If another journey is called for in the future novels of Warren, perhaps the novels will present the hero bringing back the precious gift of knowledge and entering into the communion with others so that he becomes a "member of sweet society." In so doing, Warren would be illustrating the Myth of the Eternal Return to a perfect existence—to Eden, but to Eden after the Fall and the Resurrection of man. He would be illustrating a unity achieved through struggle and endurance and not one passively accepted because the existence involved innocence by way of ignorance. It is man's endurance, not his innocence, that will finally make him able to create his own garden existence. Warren's characters have endured much hardship during their journeys; their struggles have been meaningful ones. Still the journey back to the true garden has not been narrated by Warren, and the illustration of the hero's return from the underworld, the forest, and the flood would be an interesting and valuable illustration.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Works


"A Note to All the King's Men." Sewanee Review, 61 (Summer 1953), 476-80.


"Why Do We Read Fiction?" Saturday Evening Post, 20 October, 1962, pp. 82-84.


Secondary Works


Davis, Joe. "Robert Penn Warren and the Journey to the West." Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Spring 1960), 73-82.


---


---


---


Girault, Norton. "The Narrator's Mind as Symbol: An Analysis of 'All the King's Men.'" Accent 7 (Summer 1947), 220-34.


Kerr, Elizabeth. "Polarity of Themes in 'All the King's Men.'" *Modern Fiction Studies, 6* (Spring 1960), 25-46.


Unpublished Works


Moore, Littleton Hugh, Jr. "Robert Penn Warren and History: 'The Big Myth We Live.'" Diss., Emory University, 1964.
