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An analysis of the use of light and dark imagery for thematic purposes in the fiction of Robert Penn Warren

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF LIGHT AND DARK IMAGERY FOR THEMATIC PURPOSES IN THE FICTION OF ROBERT PENN WARREN

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CHAPTER I Introduction

A prominent feature of the interwar period, and of that since 1945 in American literature, was the Southern Renaissance. This literary rebirth had important consequence in poetry and criticism through the work of a number of writers. Robert Penn Warren was one such writer who "sowed the seeds" for this Southern rebirth of literature. Warren, along with such recent American writers as Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, J. D. Salinger, and John Updike, endeavored to unearth the answer to the question of how a man should live in a fragmented and fractured society. In seeking this information, man was in turn seeking his own self-identity. Robert Penn Warren understood this dilemma which plagued man, and he incorporated this major theme of recent fiction into all of his novels. While such writers as Bellow, Malamud, and others utilized their own method for developing this self-identity theme, Warren thought it appropriate to use light and dark imagery as his means for theme development, and in doing so, Warren has ingeniously merged the two elements--theme and imagery--to achieve a truly worthwhile artistic goal.

The connotations derived from such words as "darkness," "black," "gray," "dark," and "blackness" are, for many peo-

ple, more than a quality or shade of hue. Most people will associate, in one way or another, certain things in our society which are of a black hue with something ominous, threatening, or derogatorily harmful. The early definition of the word black was "menacingly or cruelly," and this could account for its adverse connotation today. Harry Levin, in The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, has another idea for its significance. Levin believes that this connotative power of the word black goes back to the very beginning of things, the primal darkness, the void which our Creator formed by bringing forth light and dividing night from day. He says further that

> This division underlies the imagery of the Bible from Genesis to the Apocalypse, and from the world of life to the shadow of death. It is what differentiates the children of light from the children of darkness in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Puritans were fond of invoking it to distinguish themselves from other sects; and it reverberates with added poignance in the lines of their blind laureate, Milton....Although civilization moves in, its respective colors of good and evil are still reducible to light and dark.[1]

That very separation of light and dark, when the world was created, had opened the flood gates for a significant connotative power to be applied to whatever light or dark was associated with. Scripture immediately made this evident by

[1]Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness (New York, 1958), pp. 29--30.

having darkness or the color black represent sin, sorrow, and death. Early, then, in our civilization, the light and the dark had a marked influence upon mankind, and its influence has been felt right through history to the present day. In the fourteenth century, thousands of lives were lost by what was termed the "Black Death." In the sixteenth century, Ben Jonson used black to describe a melancholy "humour." "The Black" was a name given to marauders and poachers in England during the eighteenth century. An outlaw organization composed of Chinese rebels in the late nineteenth century was given the name "Black Flags." Today, this connotative power of blackness is even more prevalent. Such examples are a black eye, a black cat, a black sheep, black or gray clouds, and a black hearse, all of which carry this ominous connotation. Children will often be introduced to this "world of dark" early in life when they become afraid of the dark. Our society also uses the color black in conjunction with death, and consequently, black garb is considered appropriate dress for our funerals. The term "blackball" exists in our society to describe an act whereby one is excluded socially or ostracized.[2]

[2] black art: art practiced by conjurers and witches.
black bourse: an exchange market which lacks official sanction.
blackguard: the criminals and vagabonds of a community.
blackmail: to coerce as by threats.
blacklist: a list of suspected persons or of those to be punished, refused employment, etc.
black mouth: to talk derogatorily of someone.
Black Hand: a group of Sicilian immigrant blackmailers in New York.

These examples are some of the major instances where we find this connotative power of the "dark" in our society, and it would follow logically that anything on the opposite end of the "darkness scale," such as white, would suggest an opposite connotation, a connotation suggesting a healthy atmosphere. The existence of one, then, establishes the effectiveness of the other, just as the joy of good health is appreciated more after having experienced pain and sickness at one time or another.

Robert Penn Warren was aware of this special connotative power of the "dark" and employed it in the imagery of all his novels for the purpose of developing his major theme--the quest for self-identity or self-knowledge in man. Warren is not the only writer to use light and dark imagery in literature, but his approach and handling of it make him a worthwhile subject for the study of this particular type of imagery for thematic purposes.

Imagery, in its literal sense, is defined as "the collection of images within a literary work or unit of a literary work."[3] In a broader sense imagery is defined as "a special usage of words in which there is a change in their basic meanings."[4] This definition may be taken a step further by classifying imagery into four types: images, symbols,

[3]William Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature(New York, 1960), p. 233.

[4]Thrall and Hibbard, p. 232.

simile, and metaphor. This classification is made for functional purposes, and most literary reference books state that of these four types, images are not really a type of imagery, because they do not change their basic meaning when they are used, whereas the other three types do show a change in meaning. Because of this differentiation, any images which have value only in relation to the rhetoric of a polished sentence, and do not sustain a meaning beyond that sentence, but function merely as a rhetorical device, will be classified as "rhetorical" imagery. This type of imagery is generally adjectival in nature, and does not, as an image, make itself meaningful beyond the sentence in which it is used. On the other hand, imagery which is employed purposefully to establish the tone in a piece of literature, either through symbols, simile, or metaphor, and thereby works in relation to the action by adding to a character, feeling, or idea, may be called "functional" imagery. I have found that such "functional" imagery may, on occasion, be of an adjectival nature, but the majority of the time it seems to be used substantively. A number of English and American writers provide fine examples of "functional" and "rhetorical" imagery in literature.

One of the best examples providing for a contrast of these two types of imagery may be found in the drama of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare employs light and dark imagery in a few of his plays, but <u>Romeo and Juliet</u> and <u>Othello</u>

lend themselves extremely well to a contrast of the purposes for, and the effects of, the employment of light and dark imagery in literature. After a brief review of the various examples of the light and dark imagery in these plays, one can readily perceive how this imagery does more than just take up space in a play. Shakespeare, in writing Othello, has developed a poetic language which is all-important to the reasoning with which the play is concerned. The imagery in this play works in relation to the action of the play by adding to a character, feeling, and idea. Robert Heilman, in Action and Language in Othello, refers to this as "verbal drama."[5] In Romeo and Juliet this light and dark imagery is used differently. The imagery here is only of a secondary nature, and does not affect the play as a whole; it merely serves as a rhetorical device. Therefore, in contrasting these two plays in respect to light and dark imagery, we can view how the symbolic references, which underlie the real action of Othello, contain the real meaning of the play, whereas the imagery in Romeo and Juliet does not lend itself to such an observation, because it is of a "rhetorical" nature.

John Milton's Paradise Lost is another example of the employment of "functional" light and dark imagery for the specific literary purpose of acting or working directly in relation to the whole texture of the work.

[5]Robert Heilman, Action and Language in Othello(Kentucky, 1956), p. 6.

Hail holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is Light,
And never but in unapproached Light
Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
. . .
Through utter and through middle darkness borne
With other notes than to th' Orphean Lyre
I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend.[6]
. . .

This seventeenth century epic abounds in "functional" imagery, and close scrutiny of this passage will disclose a major purpose for its use. Milton's stated purpose for writing this epic--to justify the ways of God to men--is achieved through a negative means by showing that Satan, not God, is responsible for the sins of either angels or men. This purpose is fulfilled by establishing two distinct worlds in the epic: the world of Satan and Darkness, and the world of God and Light. As may be seen in the previously cited passage, Milton has expertly used functional light and dark imagery in Paradise Lost to complement each other in their own particular worlds.

Henry Vaughn, the seventeenth century metaphysical poet, is still another writer who uses functional light and dark imagery, as may be seen in his major metaphysical poem, "Ascension-Hymn."

[6]John Milton, Paradise Lost, ed., Merritt Hughes(New York, 1962), Book III, lines 1-6, 16-20.

They are all gone into the world of light!
  And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is face and bright,
  And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy brest
  Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
Or those faint beams in which this hill is drest,
  After the Sun's remove.

I see them walking in an Air of glory,
  Whose light doth trample on my days:
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
  Neer glimering and decays.[7]

Vaughn employs his light and dark imagery in this passage in much the same way as Milton in Paradise Lost. Vaughn pits his light imagery against his dark imagery so as to establish two distinct and meaningful worlds through this "functional" imagery.

The English are not the only writers who realized the powers of light and dark imagery. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in The Scarlet Letter, for instance, provides one example for viewing "functional" imagery at work. The red letter "A" is set on a field of sable, set off against the usual background of somber blacks and Puritan grays. The initial sentence introduces a chorus of elders clad in "sad-colored garments," standing before "the black flower of civilized society, a prison,"[8] and Hester is dark-haired. Hawthorne embodies his

[7]Henry Vaughn, "The Ascension-Hymn," Metaphysical Poetry (New York, 1962), p. 149.

[8]Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter(New York, 1955), p. 1.

dark imagery in The Scarlet Letter for the functional purpose of symbolic reinforcement. His dark images symbolically parallel the events of his novel.

Herman Melville is another American writer who appreciated the connotative power of light and dark. He designated this crucial trait, which fascinated him, as the "power of blackness"; a power which derives its force from its appeal to the Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free.[9]

Thus, after examining various instances of light and dark imagery in English and American writers, we can observe a type of imagery for imagery's sake in some cases, and in others an imagery which works as part of the whole. While these men are not the only writers to indulge in such imagery, it has been shown that this specific kind of imagery of light and dark has a definite place in literature, although its purpose in various works may differ.

Robert Penn Warren is, then, as was mentioned previously, a writer who displays a thorough, extensive, and purposeful use of light and dark imagery. To state that all of his imagery belongs either to the "rhetorical" or the "functional" class would, after close scrutiny, be in error. Warren employs both types of imagery in his fiction in order to pre-

[9]Harry Levin, The Power Of Blackness(New York, 1958), p. 26.

sent the conflict that arises when man seeks a more meaningful self. To show man in quest of his self-identity is Warren's ultimate purpose in his novels, and he chose light and dark imagery as a means for developing this theme, because he realized that, after these particular images had appeared and reappeared over an extended period of time, they began to take on special meanings, and ultimately, symbols were formed. The French writer, Baudelaire, explains this emergence of the symbolic light and dark.

> It is not works only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of mind, and that state of mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. Light and darkness are our familiar expressions for knowledge and ignorance.[10]

Warren, as well as Baudelaire, was aware of the symbolic relationship of light and dark, knowledge and ignorance, and thereby applied his self-knowledge theme, using light and dark imagery as symbolic and tonal reinforcements in his novels. A fine example which points out this use of light and dark imagery for symbolic reinforcement for a self-identity theme is found in Warren's verse tale, Brother to Dragons.

[10]Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness(New York, 1958), p. 28.

He saw the dark hand set the white dish down.
He felt the darkness growing in his heart.
He saw the dark faces staring, and they stared at him.
He saw poor George as but his darkest self.
And all the possibility of the dark that he feared.
And so he struck, and struck down that darkest self.[11]

The functional light and dark imagery in this passage works as both symbolic and tonal apparatus to develop Warren's theme of self-knowledge.

This quest for self-knowledge or self-identity in man is not only a modern day quest, but has existed since God formed man "of the dust of the ground,"[12] and located him in a garden eastward of Eden. A mysterious air of uncertainty of self has seemed to maliciously hover over mankind ever since then, and many writers, such as Socrates, Alexander Pope, and William Faulkner, have shown their awareness of this struggle to find a meaningful motive for existence in their writings, whether with a simple, laconic proverb, a lengthy poem, or an entire novel. Socrates, in the fourth century B.C., urges us to "Know thyself."[13] In the seventeenth century, Alexander Pope stresses the importance of self-identity in his "Essay on Man."

[11]Robert Penn Warren, Brother to Dragons(New York, 1953), p. 189.

[12]Holy Bible, Book of Genesis, Chapter 2, line 8.

[13]Plutarch ascribes this saying to Plato. It is also ascribed to Pythagoras, Chilo, Thales, Cleobulus, Bias, Solon, and Socrates. The quotation is, however, generally ascribed to Socrates.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.[14]

. . .

In more modern literature, too, there are a number of men who have dealt with the human response for self-identity in life. As Frederick Brantley writes in Modern American Poetry, "Warren shares a task with Joyce, Hardy, Faulkner, Melville, and Conrad in striving to illuminate the tragic experience by presenting it imaginatively in the light of the conflict of self, the private struggle in a world of public action to achieve self-definition."[15] A thematic treatment such as self-identity, then, is not a facet of life which only today's writers are concerned with, but one in which various writers have found relevance and significance to their own particular times in history, and a facet, therefore, which has a prime meaning for all of us today. Warren must have realized this, and in attempting to demonstrate verbally this quest in mankind, wished to employ a technique whereby his readers could appreciate the human despair and despondency existing in the world of the "unknowledgeable self." In order to achieve his purpose, Warren mingles characterization and imagery; he develops his theme through characterization working in the midst of light and dark imagery. His characters are continuously surrounded by dark imagery as they pursue their own

[14]Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man", College Survey of English Literature, ed., Alexander Witherspoon (New York, 1951), p. 561.

[15]Frederick Brantley, Modern American Poetry (New York, 1962), p. 22.

self-identity. We also may observe light imagery being used as a means of accentuating the effects of the dark imagery. In studying this particular imagery, literary references suggest that such a study of the imagery of a literary work may center itself on five different areas.[16] I have chosen to examine Warren's imagery in relation to how the pattern of the images reinforce plot and action while developing theme. There are a number of other ways to examine imagery, but this particular means of imagistic study lends itself very well to the works of Robert Penn Warren.

While studying and evaluating Warren's light and dark imagery, I will use two terms which should be explained prior to looking at each of his novels, individually. I will use the term "image pattern" to describe the use of either light or dark images to parallel the action of the story at a particular time. An image pattern may contain any amount of light or dark images, and may extend through an entire chapter as long as it parallels and reinforces the action at the time. An image pattern which parallels an ominous event will contain mostly dark images, whereas an image pattern paralleling a joyous or uplifting event will contain light images.

The other term which will be used is "image cluster," which is merely the use of light and dark images in close proximity to each other. An image cluster will usually not

[16]William Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature(New York, 1960), p. 234.

extend beyond five or six sentences, and may exist within an image pattern. This cluster may contain either light imagery, dark imagery, or a combination of both, as long as the cluster works in relation to thematic development. I have found that the majority of Warren's image clusters are used symbolically in his novels.

In conclusion, Robert Penn Warren has drawn together the very useful connotative power of light and dark, with the quest for self-identity in man; this merging of the two provides not only for an interesting study, but for a valid literary examination. A more detailed study of each of Warren's novels will attest to this.

CHAPTER II Analysis of Night Rider

Robert Penn Warren's first novel, Night Rider, published in 1939, deals with the Kentucky tobacco wars of 1905-1908 in which growers organized themselves against the big buyers. But more importantly, Night Rider deals with Perse Munn and his struggle to gain a knowledge of himself. As Alvan S. Ryan points out in his essay, "Robert Penn Warren's Night Rider," the theme of the novel is the "search of the hero for self-definition and self-knowledge. This is Warren's first treatment of a theme that has frequently been pointed out as central to all his fiction."[17] Not only is this particular theme basic to all of Warren's fiction, but so, too, is the use of light and dark imagery to develop the theme. Warren portrays this quest to rid the self of "interior darkness" through the embodiment of symbolic light and dark imagery. The symbolic use of this type of imagery is much like that of Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe who employ the light and the dark to correspond to a state of mind, whether it be an awareness of self or a lack of self-knowledge.

[17]Alvan S. Ryan, "Robert Penn Warren's Night Rider", A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John L. Longley Jr. (New York, 1965), p. 31.

The story of Night Rider is basically a story of two distinct worlds delineated for the reader by means of symbolic light and dark imagery. There is the world of Perse Munn; a world set in the "dark of mortal understanding"[18] where life is like a "great dark cavern full of shadowy moving forms and the insistent rise and hum of voices"[19], attempting to prevent man from traveling "erratically backwards through a self-imposed dark night of the soul."[20] In direct contrast to this dark world of Perse Munn is the world of his wife, May; a distinct world of lightness, sunshine and understanding; a world without harassment from the imposing threat of that "interior darkness of self." From the very beginning of Night Rider, Warren has systematically laid the foundation for these two "Miltonic worlds" for the purpose of delineating the gradual deterioration of Perse Munn in his misguided quest for self-identity.

Early in chapter one we see Perse Munn void of "full light" as he is in an almost dark room, representing his conception of self, "with the curtains drawn together and the shade down so that only a "narrow pencil line of sunlight lay across the rug"(8). This "narrow pencil line of sunlight" is symbolic of the degree of self-knowledge Perse actually pos-

[18]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 104.

[19]Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider(New York, 1939), p. 6.

[20]Paul West, Robert Penn Warren(Minnesota, 1964), p. 25.

sesses at this time. He is not, at this point, in complete darkness relating to the self, and this incompleteness is not the cause of his fall; it is his faulty means by which he attempts completeness that brings about disaster. The destruction comes because, as Leonard Casper states in The Dark and Bloody Ground, "Munn, himself, meaningless alone, submits to the involvements of the world. Munn has submitted to violence in the hope of self-realization..."[21] In succeeding pages we visualize Perse or his "counterparts in darkness" in rooms "not too well-lighted" with a "black shadow blotting out the reflection of the lamp flames and the faint silvery glint the water made streaming down the pane," and "shutting off the light coming from other rooms"(8). As Perse gets more deeply involved in his misguided quest, that pencil line of sunlight seems to withdraw from his environment until total blackness prevails, and as one, who is first introduced to darkness from the light, gradually regains his vision in the dark, so, too, does Perse find his own way through that black darkness that is his self; "As Mr. Munn rode through the darkness....His eyes were more accustomed to the darkness now, or the overcast of cloud was becoming lighter, for he could make out the line of the road ahead of him"(42). It is at this point that Perse first becomes aware of that blackness which is enveloping him.

[21]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 102.

> And then it came to him that all he knew was blackness into which he stared and the swinging motion and the beat of the blood. But was he staring into blackness, a blackness external to him or was he the blackness, his own head of terrific circumference embracing, enclosing, defining the blackness, and the effort of staring into the blackness a staring inward into himself, into his own head which enclosed the blackness and everything? And enclosed the snow that gently fell in darkness. (109)

We see the final manifestation of Perse's plight, which is darkness, through a symbolic use of nature in chapter fourteen. Warren has compared Perse's ordeal in quest of self-identity to the changing seasons, in this case, spring and fall.

> The trees were getting on toward leaf, now. But you could still see through their branches, across the square to the courthouse, and beyond. When they were in full leaf, you couldn't. Then, above the massy depth of the green, you could only see the roof of the courthouse and the squat, square brick tower with the clock. That happened all at once. For a while after the buds began you could see the individual boughs hung with that uncertain, irregular green that in the fading light, as now, seemed gray, or seemed, on the very highest boughs where the last ray of sun struck, a pale gold. For a while, day after day, there would be the boughs, visible and individual, and through them you could see the courthouse, the benches under the trees, and the buildings on the other side of the square; then suddenly, one morning, you could see nothing, or for the first time you realized that you could see nothing, and you were surprised as though it had all happened, at one stroke, that night. The season had turned. (350)

Yes, the season had turned for Perse, also, who could no longer see through his confused darkness of self to perceive the "distant point of light in the darkness"(252). May's world

of light has escaped Perse, and through a gradual and sustained search for a more distinguishable self, Perse becomes aware of his senseless ambitions. As he is fleeing like a dog from the authorities, "He lay, feeling the slow, minute suction of the mud beneath his body, and stared at the treetops, the heave of the dark mass of the sky. The light was growing on the sky. His mind named that: light"(382). Perse is now capable of observing something besides black in his darkness. That narrow pencil line of sunlight is coming back to him, and it becomes wider and wider.

Again in chapter fifteen, he notices "the impersonal light grow on the sky, above the dark trees"(390). On the morning of his death, Perse awakes and sees "the shaft of sunlight striking through the window, the green bluffside beyond, and the rough boards of the wall"(397). Perse has not only escaped his darkness, but he can now perceive life in a new world of lightness. He realizes his wrong, and, at the same time, knows that if light is to prevail, he will have to meet the consequence of his acts; he tells Lucille, who has asked him to escape with her, "I owe it to myself to stay here"(440). He has changed from the passionate and emotional man of senseless actions early in the novel to a stable man who says before his death, "Love, it's not anything, not when it's not a part of something else"(440). Shortly before he does face death, Perse's self-realization finally bursts through as Warren employs more light and dark imagery to portray this sym-

bolically.

> Once toward the middle of the afternoon, he noticed the steady, black fleck of a buzzard which spiraled up, southward, into the area of his vision. He watched it for a while, then grew tired and turned away. When he looked again, it had been lost in the central reaches of the throbbing brightness.(448)

The faint, black speck of the buzzard symbolizes the remaining darkness of self existing within Perse's mind, and his dark world leaves him for a lighter, brighter world when, although he is annihilated in the end, he comes to some understanding of his self. Perse really was not capable of seeing in his "darkness," but had merely reached the point where darkness had enveloped even his judgement; his inner certainty of self in regard to the world outside himself was as vague as the shape of blackness in the dark.

Warren realized, as did Harry Levin in his book, The Power of Blackness, that "blackness stands out more, for our writers, because of its continual interplay with a not less pervasive sense of whiteness. The running contrast between them sets forth all our dilemmas and is as inevitable as black print upon a white page."[22] Thus, the dark world of Perse Munn is accentuated greatly as a result of Warren's utilization of a contrasting world of lightness based upon

[22]Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness(New York, 1958), p. 28.

Perse's wife, May, who is the embodiment of light. May is first introduced to us in Night Rider, as wearing a white dress and having very blonde hair; and from that point on, she appears in the novel with some form of lightness symbolically pertaining to her. After Perse becomes a member of the board which directed the organization and management of the Association of Growers of Dark Fired Tobacco, he decides to visit May, after being away for many months. While riding toward May and home, he "could see before him the expanse of white, dusty road stretching westward. On each side of the white road lay fields of tobacco. He rode too fast, and knew he was riding too fast, and cursed himself for a fool even as he leaned forward a little...."(33) Warren has symbolically described the road to May as a white road, and has inserted, on either side, tobacco--that crop which will ultimately cause Perse to leave that white road leading to May and possible self-realization. Perse remains on the road this time and finds May, whose smile "had touched him as clearly and simply, and in fact as impersonally, as the sunlight falling over an entire landscape"(36). Perse realizes that within May is his chance for survival of self, for she is sunlight to his being, and as he says, "If that was not enough, it wasn't her fault"(36).

With a compelling and pervasive urge, Perse leaves May to return to the darkness of the Association. The next time

he visits May, she is sitting before a fire as a "great flake of ash scaled off one of the logs, releasing a new puff of smoke and revealing, beneath, the steady brilliant redness of the heart of the burning wood"(57). It could very well be that Perse is that ash falling from the firm log, [May], and Perse is releasing that new puff of smoke that is his dark ambition.

Later in the novel Perse returns home for Christmas, and Warren employs the use of snow to symbolize the true awareness of self which is fast escaping Perse. It is Christmas but there is no snow this year as May had wished, and she states that "If there was snow on the ground, everything would be different"(85). She is well aware of her husband's journey into a disastrous private darkness.

On the next occasion which brings Perse home to May, he finds that "the pale light that washed through the budding trees accented delicately the yellow of her hair"(126). The lightness around May seems, to Perse, to be less bright and her hair no longer seems so light but yellow, as light is also escaping from him.

Perse will again return to May in chapter six, and as he rides toward home, he realizes the "valley was quite dark now, even though when he looked above the undifferentiate mass of hills, he saw that a little light lingered in the upper air"(150).

Chapter seven again finds May referred to as lightness,

as Perse looks "across the darkness [that is himself] to the lighted interior of the room where she [May] sat"(160), or "toward the lighted window, where May was now"(161).

Chapter eight, which finds Perse slipping into almost total darkness as he kills a man, is followed in chapter nine by May's departure from Perse, because of his abandonment of her personal desires on his behalf. Warren presents a very symbolic paragraph at this point, as Perse realizes May has left him. Warren uses the dove to symbolize Perse in doubtful quest of a prey.

> The first dove came over, high, from the west, and dipped and swung back. It sank, flutteringly, at the edge of the water, downstream. He had had two chances for a shot, when it first swung back and then when it started to flutter down. The gun had been raised, and his finger on the trigger, but he had not fired. Now he watched the bird, that too far away for a good shot, was prinking at the edge of the water. The bird rose, and flew off downstream. He was a little ashamed and irritated that he had passed up the shot, but, unreasoningly, he had not been able to bring himself to press the trigger.(220)

Perse, unreasoningly, was too obsessed with power and the cause of the Association to bring himself to the act whereby he could have the dove that is May. All chance for conquering darkness with light has escaped Perse, and the only other glimpses we have of May are in the form of recollections of the past by Perse, who remembers "One bright morning in early spring, a clear day that seemed in its softness of air and penetrating brilliance to promises...she [Miss Burnham] sat by an open window and brushed the child's [May] yellow

hair"(224). Perse, because of the ensuing interior darkness of his mind, can no longer find tangible lightness in his May.

Warren, then, has employed a symbolic light and dark imagery in Night Rider to express a theme of human incompleteness. This incompleteness is shown through the systematic and well-planned employment of light and dark image patterns which work in conjunction with the actions of Perse Munn, the major character. Dark imagery is consistent through the first thirteen chapters (sixteen per chapter average) until Perse finally comes to some realization of himself in chapter fourteen. At this point Warren employs only three dark images, which parallels Perse's defeat in his battle against his dark world. The light imagery is employed much the same way--in relation to events in the novel. Warren uses some eighty-three examples of light imagery when May is a part of Perse's life, as opposed to only nineteen from the point in chapter nine when May leaves until Perse's final realization of self in chapter fourteen. We can evidence an increase in light imagery at this time to correspond to this self-realization which is attained by Perse. Night Rider contains 249 instances where dark imagery is employed and 119 instances of light imagery. Of the total 368 light and dark images which appear in Night Rider, seventy percent are dark. Other novels by Warren show a greater percentage of dark imagery due to the fact that, in Night Rider, much light imagery was required to contrast the two worlds presented in the novel.

CHAPTER III Analysis of Wilderness

Warren's eighth novel, Wilderness, published in 1961, is the story of Adam Rosenzweig, the clubfooted son of a Jewish Bavarian, who travels to America at the time of the Civil War in search of his self-identity. It is, as Leonard Casper writes in The Dark and Bloody Ground, "the inadequacy of the Western dream, that compulsion to salvage innocence through restless migration and repeated beginnings...."[23] that brings Adam Rosenzweig to America. Warren's major character in the novel seeks self-knowledge in the form of a search for justice and freedom in a land where such rights are supposedly unquestioned. In his essay, "Trial By Wilderness," Leonard Casper writes, "Adam's role throughout the novel is that of the outsider, in search of the light of a livable self, resurrection from the limbo of his inheritance."[24] Leopold Rosenzweig, Adam's father, "loved mankind and wanted men to

[23]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 102.

[24]Leonard Casper, "Trial By Wilderness," Robert Penn Warren, p. 11.

be fully man,"[25] and as Adam states early in the novel, "He gave me that name that I might try to be a man in the knowledge that men are my brothers"(92). Thus, Adam has to face the cruel realization that, in order for him to truly live, he has to discover "how you could be worth nothing, and yet be worth something"(192) in a form of existence where identity seems to be slipping away, and where man, in his basic humanity, "was no more to any other man than a stir or voice, a sloshing in the dark"(193). Unlike Perse Munn in Night Rider, who attempts to discover self-identity through his own actions, Adam will have to seek his real identity in the human condition of the world about him, and will triumph in his quest only if his observations of humanity prove favorable to himself.

Light and dark imagery play an important part in this quest for self-identity, and the progression of this quest in the life of Adam is paralleled by symbolic dark and light image patterns. When Adam experiences a low point in his quest as a result of his intercourse with humanity, a distinct increase in dark imagery is seen to reflect this obstacle to self-identity. On the other hand, when Adam experiences favorable observations of the human condition, and seems to have arrived at some understanding in regard to his selfhood, an abundance of light imagery prevails. These light and dark symbolic image patterns are comprised basically of pastoral

[25]Robert Penn Warren, Wilderness(New York, 1961), p. 92.

elements. Just as a wilderness connotes a darkness of location, so, too, in Warren's implementation, does the use of trees or a forest connote, or symbolize in this case, the darkness of mind that is Adam's. Above that darkness of the trees stands the snow-capped mountain which symbolizes justice and freedom, but more importantly, ultimate self-identity in life for Adam Rosenzweig.

The first page of Wilderness provides a valuable insight into Adam and his urge to find true understanding. Adam relates that "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 one puff of cloud, white as whipped cream, had not lounged high in the washed glitter of blue"(225), he would not have had the urge to seek out his identity. Adam was aware, from the beginning, of his incompleteness in life, as symbolized by the darkness of the fir forest, and if that mountain, so white, which was his compelling quest to find himself in darkness, had not driven him as it did, he "might have fled inward into the self, into the ironies of history and knowledge, into that wisdom which is resignation"(3). He might have forgotten his father's advice that "there was no nobler fate for a man than to live and die for human liberty"(4). Adam was a Jew subjected to abominations, and his father's words had lifted his eyes above those hardships to the gleaming whiteness of that mountain of identity he yearned for, and he recollected the opening lines of a poem his father had written for him.

> If I could only be worthy of that mountain I love,
> If I could only be worthy of sun-glitter on snow,
> If man could only be worthy of what he loves.(7)

Adam wanted to know what he was, but more importantly, he wanted to be worthy of attaining that self-realization which would rid himself of that "blackness in his brain"(5). As Adam departed for America, he remembered the wise words of the old shoe cobbler who had made the special boot for Adam's deformed foot, which could very well symbolize his incompleteness. The cobbler said, "Even I must have something more than knowledge that I have learned to live"(14). Knowledge that would allow Adam to escape his private darkness, and live in a world of light was what he sought in America.

The ship had left Bremerhaven when Adam, "in the shock of sunlight and seaglitter"(31), felt the sensation of climbing toward that white-peaked summit of self-realization, and was aware that "that green shore, in glittering bright of morning"(18), was America. From this point in the novel until chapter four, the light and dark imagery exist side by side as isolated elements, void of any specific symbolic image patterns, serving the purpose of setting the tone for the action to come. The horizontal plot line of these four chapters may account for these isolated elements of light and dark imagery.

In chapter four these isolated elements, light and dark images, form symbolic image patterns, and parallel the events, thereby reinforcing plot and action in the novel. The dark

image pattern evolves as a result of Adam's first glimpse of the tarnished justice in America; as the "evening light laid a coppery sheen over the upper bulges of the greasy blackness"(29), and a gull "stared at a hanging body, screamed, and was gone into the gathering darkness"(41), Adam experiences his first setback on his journey to that "white mountain." He sees a black man hanged, and he watches a dog lick the blood-soaked stones beneath the dead body--a brutal, but fitting initial glimpse at a not so "light" world. Adam asks himself, "Is this me?"(46), for he is shocked that a land of freedom and justice, such as America, should condone such an act. It is at this point that the symbolic light and dark image patterns come forth. The first three chapters contain twenty dark images, but the dark images increase to forty-three in chapters four and five as a result of Adam's dark setback. The thirteen instances of light imagery in the first three chapters may be contrasted to the existence of no light imagery at all in chapter four when Adam views the hanging, and only three light images in chapter five. The awareness of the existing condition of humanity by Adam, and consequently, an awareness of the incompleteness in his self, has been symbolically paralleled by the image patterns of light and dark for the first time in the novel.

In chapter six Warren instills a bit of optimism into Adam. A mass killing of Negroes occurs, and Adam becomes involved while attempting to stop the act. After being saved by a man, Adam, who is traveling down a white, dusty road in

a wagon with a white canvas top, discovers and meets the Negro man who had risked his life to save him. Proper visions of his "white mountain" have come back to him, and he sees hope for humanity and, ultimately, for himself as he says, "I am moving down this road because I believe"(67). The white road and other light imagery associated with this portion of his journey is symbolic of the path to self-identity. Adam wandered into the wilderness of the dark forest in chapter five, but is now back on the road to clarity of self. The dark imagery at this point in the novel [chapter six] is almost nonexistent as a result of this optimistic occurrence.

Adam will again see the good in America in chapter seven when he meets Mrs. Meyerhof, a woman who cares faithfully for a new-born baby and at the same time nurses a dying husband. In conjunction with this altruistic side of humanity, a symbolic light image pattern will emerge in chapters six and seven, encompassing twenty-six instances of light imagery as opposed to only sixteen in the entire first five chapters of the novel. In the remaining chapters of Wilderness, excluding the last chapter, there will be a marked decrease in light imagery as Adam finds himself deeper and deeper in a wilderness of darkness. Only twenty-one instances of light imagery are recorded in chapters eight through fourteen.

Adam has found, then, in chapters six and seven, some hope for completeness in life. He will, however, be rudely set back again in his quest in chapter ten when he becomes witness to three heartbreaking events: Mollie, a servant

girl, is whipped and treated like an animal; a Negro undergoing surgery is treated like an inconsequential object not worth saving; Adam finds that his Negro friend had the letter "W" branded high on his right thigh by whites, because they had no compassion for a Negro. These three acts are paralleled by dark imagery which again symbolically expresses a mood of depressing darkness for Adam. This chapter alone contains twenty-two instances of dark imagery in contrast to an average of eight per chapter for the other ten chapters which do not contain symbolic dark image patterns.

Adam will not come back onto his "white road" to self-identity until the last chapter when, after being wounded, he looks at the "twisted whiteness of his poor foot"(301), and realizes that this deformity, which his father had indirectly given to him, was the answer to that great secret of self-identity. Adam felt that everything he had known was false, and that "he was on the verge of a great truth in his life" (303). Adam had lived in a world which he thought to be entirely free from injustices and wrongs, and he sought his identity in his colorfully optimistic world. He soon found that no such world exists, and if the world were void of such freedom and justice, it was a joy for him to know it. Adam found his identity, but not via a white road leading skyward to a "white-peaked mountain;" he found it in the darkness and violence of the wilderness where humanity was at home with itself. Adam's final realization comes, for him, when he no longer despises the deformed foot, which he has cursed all of

his life, but accepts it as he accepts and recognizes the deformities of the world. "There was a boot on the foot. It was a good boot. That was the way the world was and he would put on the boot"(303). With this act, Adam was again a part of lightness, having escaped from that bewildering wilderness. Deep in his being he was "aware, fleetingly, of an image, a sick room glittering with crystal and silver, yellow hair falling unbound, candlelight winking redly through wine, a white breast lifted to his hand"(304).

This final realization of self by Adam is paralleled, then, in chapter fifteen with a light image pattern to symbolize Adam's escape from the dark wilderness of selfhood. Chapter fifteen contains fourteen light images in its image pattern in comparison with chapters six and seven which contain twelve and fourteen light images, respectively, in their patterns. Of the twelve chapters not containing such light image patterns, there is an average of three light images per chapter, showing the reinforcing effect the image pattern has upon the action at this point in Wilderness.

CHAPTER IV Analysis of *All the King's Men*

All the King's Men, Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, is probably his most widely read, and therefore, his most well-known piece of fiction. As do his other novels, *All the King's Men* deals with man's quest for self-identity, and the epigraph of the novel, taken from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, is synoptic of that theme--"By curse of theirs man is not so lost that eternal love may not return; so long as hope retaineth aught of green."[26] Leonard Casper suggests, in *The Dark and Bloody Ground*, that this curse of man is his identity, which is his "separateness and therefore his incompleteness."[27] For, if man is to overcome this curse, he shall have to, once again, dedicate himself to God, wherein completeness may be found.

Willie Stark and Jack Burden are the two characters in *All the King's Men* who are confronted with this problem of self-definition for good or evil. Willie, the man of fact,

[26]Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Lawrence White (New York, 1948), p. 70.

[27]Leonard Casper, *The Dark and Bloody Ground*(Washington, 1960), p. 128.

lives in the present, and seeks identity through his actions which ultimately become a corrupting force. Jack, on the other hand, is a man of ideas and reflection who seeks his identity in the past. Jack explains this self-knowledge, and the effect it may have upon man, early in the novel.

> But the clammy, sad little foetus which is you way down in the dark which is you too lifts up its sad little face and its eyes blind, and it shivers cold inside you for it doesn't want to know what is in that envelope. It wants to lie in the dark and not know, and be warm in its not-knowing. The end of man is knowledge, but there is one thing he can't know. He can't know whether knowledge will save him or kill him.(9)

Jack is like the little foetus, happy in his dark world, and warm in his not-knowing. He realizes that self-identity may be his curse or his exultation, but either way, knowledge is the end of man. Jack and Willie know enough of themselves and the world to relate their own self-identity quest, unlike Perse Munn in Night Rider. Both Jack and Willie are Humpty-Dumpty characters; heroes elevated upon a wall of success and honor, only to come crashing downward; and only by striving for salvation, no matter what the cost, may Humpty be put together again.

This self-identity quest is developed in All the King's Men quite differently compared to Warren's novels discussed earlier. Light and dark imagery is employed to reinforce the action and plot, but this imagery does not always parallel the action in the form of entire image patterns. All the King's Men, unlike Warren's other novels, is the composite

story of two men in search of themselves, and thus, any light or dark image patterns found in the novel, if analyzed with only one major character in mind, would prove to be erroneous patterns; for they would not be paralleling merely the action of one character but two. Thus, an image pattern could well be paralleling Jack Burden's involvement in the novel, and at the same time working in direct opposition to Willie Stark's action. Because of this, Warren had to isolate his image patterns so they would reinforce the actions of Willie and Jack on an individual basis. Instead of an entire dark image pattern being used in a chapter to parallel a character or ominous event, Warren uses a different pattern of light and dark images, namely image clusters. As was brought out in the introduction, these image clusters are merely patterns of images which appear in close proximity to one another to reinforce a specific action in a novel. The first page of All the King's Men provides a fine example of thematic imagery working in the form of an image cluster.

> You look up the highway and it is straight for miles, coming at you, with the black line down the center coming at you and at you, black and slick and tarry-shining against the white of the slab so that only the black line is clear, coming at you with the whine of the tires...and you'll come to just at the moment when the right front wheels hook over into the black dirt shoulder off the slab, and you'll try to jerk her back on but you can't because the slab is high like a curb....(1)

We see both light and dark imagery within this symbolic image cluster. The white slab highway is that "winding white

road"[28] which Adam Rosenzweig followed in Wilderness, and the "expanse of white, dusty road"[29] traveled by Perse Munn in Night Rider. The black line is symbolic of the path the incomplete man follows while on the road of life. Willie and Jack are in the big, black car, symbolic of their incompleteness, on the white road of life, and they will both find themselves off the road, on the "black dirt shoulder," as a result of their misguided quests for self-identity. Just as the dark rows of tobacco drew Perse Munn from his white road, so, too, does a force drive Jack and Willie from their road in life. This particular image cluster, then, provides an immediate symbolic awareness in relation to Willie and Jack, and their quest.

Again in the first chapter, we may view another image cluster much like the cluster mentioned previously. Willie and Jack are still on their journey--Willie moving through the present to the future, and Jack living in the past, and thereby always reliving the journey, much like the Ancient Mariner.[30]

> We would go gusting along the slab, which would be pale in the starlight between the patches of woods

[28]Robert Penn Warren, Wilderness(New York, 1961), p. 382.

[29]Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider(New York, 1939), p. 33.

[30]John E. Hardy, Man in the Modern Novel(Washington, 1964), p. 203.

> and the dark fields where the mist was rising. Close to the road a cow would stand knee-deep in the mist, with horns damp enough to have pearly shine in the starlight, and would look at the black blur we were as we went whirling into the blazing corridor of light which we could never quite get into for it would be always splitting the dark just in front of us. The cow would stand there knee-deep in the mist and look at the black blur, and blaze and then, not turning his head, at the place where the black blur and blaze had been, with the remote, massive, unvindictive indifference of God-All-Mighty or Fate, or me....(36)

Light and dark imagery, existing side by side in a cluster, reinforces the incompleteness theme as Willie and Jack proceed like a black blur down the white highway, always eyeing that blazing corridor of light ahead, which is their identity, but never quite grasping hold of the fleeting light. While they suffer from incompleteness, they are still striving for identity and salvation as long as they attempt to attain it via the white slab and not by way of the "black, dirt shoulder."

Another image cluster appears at the end of chapter two; the cluster is employed as a analogy to Jack's living in the past. Burden's Landing, Jack's birthplace, "is not," as Paul West writes in his book, Robert Penn Warren, "simply a backwater where his mother and former friends have obliviously sustained an outmoded, questionable way of life; it is a symbol of the incompleteness of modern man's knowledge.[31] Jack, while trying to assemble other people's lives, is aware of

[31]Paul West, Robert Penn Warren(Minnesota, 1964), p. 29.

his own incompleteness, but he tries to live as if the world of time were not real.

> You stop going to sleep in order that you may be able to get up, but get up in order that you may be able to go back to sleep. You get so during the day you catch yourself suddenly standing still and waiting and listening. You are like a little boy at the railroad station, ready to go away on the train, which hasn't come yet. You look way up the track, but can't see the little patch of black smoke yet. You fidget around, but all at once you stop in the middle of your fidgeting, and listen. You can't hear it yet. Then you go and kneel down in your Sunday clothes in the cinders...and put your ear to the rail and listen for the first soundless rustle which will come in the rail long before the little black patch begins to grow on the sky. You get so you listen for night, long before it comes over the horizon, and long, long before it comes charging and stewing and thundering to you like a big black locomotive and the black cars grind to a momentary stop and the porter with the black, shining face helps....(110)

Jack is much like that small boy at the railroad station, but Jack is not waiting for a train; the little patch of black smoke is his dark past, which, Jack believes, if it arrives at the station, will bring self-identity and salvation for him. That little patch of black smoke gets bigger and bigger, because Jack does not know that one "cannot know the past but only some destructive conception of it. Knowledge about the past does not make the past meaningless but makes the past and future real."[32] This image cluster sets Jack apart from Willie in that we may visualize the dark situation that con-

[32]Arthur Mizener, Twelve Great American Novels(New York, 1967), p. 179.

fronts Jack, because he attempts to deny that life in the past, at one time, took place in a real and timely world, just as does life in the present.[33]

As Jack looks into the past and remembers his visits to his fickle mother and alcoholic father, we can share the almost bewildering sensation which Jack experiences. He is a man who is, at one time, disregarding the present, and at another, attempting to see if present reality can sustain him in life.

> I would wonder even though I knew what would happen, even though I would always know that the scene into which I was about to step and in which I was about to say the words. I would say, had happened before, or had never stopped happening, and that I would always just be entering the wide, white, high-ceilinged hall to see across the distance of the floor, which gleamed like dark ice, my mother, who stood in a doorway, beyond her the flicker of firelight in the shadowy room, and smiled at me with a sudden and innocent happiness, like a girl. (180)

This image cluster, containing both light and dark imagery in oxymoron-like fashion, is characteristic of Jack's confused conception of life, just as it is incongruous to have light and dark exist side by side in a balanced medium. The incongruity of "dark ice" reflects the haphazard light and dark world of Jack; a world in which distinct rules for existence are seemingly unheard of.

When Jack does visit his mother at Burden's Landing, im-

[33]Mizener, p. 180.

age clusters again appear to develope the uncertainty of self existing within Jack's being. Again, too, the imagery is used in such a way that it exists in an oxymoron-like relationship.

> In the morning it had stopped raining, and there was sun. I went out and saw the thin pools of water standing on the black ground, like sheets of isinglass. Around the japonicas, the white and coral petals, which had been shattered from the blossoms, floated on the blackly gleaming pools.(115)

We see on the black ground the "blackly gleaming pools" which could well be Jack's darkness of self, with still a glitter of salvation seen. Some petals float upward in those pools while others, like Jack, float upside down, incapable of basking in the warmth of the sun or self-identity.

Two more image clusters may be noticed while Jack is visiting Burden's Landing.

> And the next day I walked up the bay...where the pine grove came down close to the white sand. I walked...then I came out to a place where a half-charred log lay, very black with the wetness and around it the sodden ashes and black butts of driftwood, blacker for the white sand.(116)

> By that time clouds had begun to pile, working in over the whole sky, except toward the west, beyond the pines, where the light struck through the break. The water was very still, and suddenly dark with the darkness of the sky, and away across the bay the line of woods looked black now, not green, above the whiteness of the line which was the beach way over there. A boat, a catboat, was becalmed over in that direction, nearly a mile away, and under the sky and over the dark water and against the black line of the woods, you never saw anything so heartbreakingly white as the sharp sail.(116)

Jack's incompleteness stands out more when he is viewed in relation to those aware of themselves, just as the black of a butt of driftwood is accentuated and "blacker for the white sand." Man, at times, requires a basis for comparison when attempting to evaluate success in relation to his existence as part of humanity. Jack sees the darkness of the sky against the whiteness of the beach-line as he again sees himself in relation to others, and becomes a bit somber in realizing that such a distinction is as heartbreakingly painful as is a sharp white sail against the dark water and black line of the woods.

Another significant image cluster appears in chapter five as the journey of Willie and Jack continues down the white slab of pavement.

> The black Cadillac made its humming sound through the night and the tires sang on the slab and the black fields streaked with mist swept by. Sugar Boy was hunched over the wheel, which looked too big for him, and the Boss sat straight up, up there in the front seat. I could see the blackness of his head against the tunnel of light down which we raced. Then I dozed off.(191)

Jack views the black fields and the white slab of pavement, but as soon as the tunnel of light appears, which represents his self-realization that one cannot live in the past, he dozes off and, thereby, again becomes elusive of the present.

The presence of such light and dark image clusters does not negate the existence of any other symbolic light and dark

imagery in All the King's Men. The novel abounds in light and dark imagery used for symbolic tonal purposes, that is, to help establish the mood of the characters at a particular time.

Throughout the novel are isolated examples of light symbolic imagery used in reference to Anne Stanton, the girl Jack Burden loves. We see the first example in chapter three. Jack says, "The image I got in my head that day was the image of her face [Anne's] lying in the water very smooth, with the white gull passing over"(119). In chapter seven we see "her face turned up to the purple-green darkening sky, her eyes closed, and the white gull passing over, very high"(276). Again in chapter seven Jack says, "I thought of the image of the face on the water, under the purple-green darkening sky, with the white gull flying over"(277). A third time in the chapter Jack recalls seeing Anne "floating in the water... and the violent sky above, and the white gull passing over" (295). The fourth example of the symbolic use of the dove appears again in the chapter as Jack says, "But lying there, she had seemed to be again the little girl who had, on the day of the picnic, floating on the water of the bay, with her eyes closed in the stormy and grape-purple sky, and the single white gull passing over very high"(310). Anne Stanton, then, represents Jack's hold on the past, as he continuously tries to escape the present by recalling Anne and her past. Anne exists in a darkening environment, which is Jack's incomplete-

ness of self, and the only salvation for Jack is his realization of his existence as such, as symbolized by the fleeting white gull, so very high and far away at the present moment.

Thus, the varied image clusters existing in the novel have served a purposeful task, that of exemplifying the void that exists in the selfhood of Jack Burden. While the image clusters never pertain to Willie Stark directly, they do, in a negative way, develop his quest for identity and ultimate salvation. Just as Jack was a man of ideas, so, too, do the image clusters exist as a part of his ideas when they concern him directly. And just as Willie is a man of actions, a detailed study of the light and dark imagery reveals a paralleling between the image patterns and the action. Although it would be extremely difficult to analyze thoroughly such imagery when dealing with two distinct characters such as in All the King's Men, for reasons mentioned previously, it might be worthwhile to point out two of the more obvious image patterns used in relation to Willie Stark.

The novel opens with Willie as Governor and in full bloom with a corruptive power. This chapter of immediate darkness, in regard to Willie, boasts sixty-four dark images, as compared to an average of only thirty in the entire ten chapters of the novel. This abundance of dark imagery denotes the darkness prevailing in relation to Willie Stark's motives and means for securing self-identity.

A second image pattern appears when Willie is shot in

chapter nine; this pattern contains only five light images as opposed to an average of fifteen light images per chapter in the ten chapters of the novel, thus reinforcing the dark event by having it exist without substantial light imagery.

Symbolic imagery exists, then, in All the King's Men, in the form of varied image clusters, and in the form of a lesser number of image patterns. Although the imagery has taken different forms, both types have reinforced the action of the novel and have quite effectively developed the theme of the quest for self-identity.

CHAPTER V Analysis of *At Heaven's Gate*

Robert Penn Warren's second novel, *At Heaven's Gate*, treats the familiar Warren theme of self-identity, but does so on a much broader scale than *Night Rider* or *Wilderness*. Perse Munn and Adam Rosenzweig are, in their respective novels, major characters who strive, individually, for completeness of self. Perse Munn is the only person in *Night Rider* characterized as lacking self-identity, as is Adam Rosenzweig in *Wilderness*. While this major theme of Warren's is prevalent in *At Heaven's Gate*, it is expanded to many levels and characters. Sue Murdock is the major character who is attempting to define herself, but she is enveloped by minor characters who, also, because of their inadequate and, oftentimes, misguided attempts toward identity, are "violators of the natural order."[34] Sue reveals the ultimate futility of defining oneself through other people, people such as Bogan Murdock, her father, who is seen as a being someone thought up in the night; Jerry Calhoun, a man created because of Sue's need; Slim Sarrett, an invention of his own need; and Sweetie

[34]Leonard Casper, *The Dark and Bloody Ground* (Washington, 1960), p. 114.

Sweetwater who fails to believe in himself, because he is unable to forget his transgressions against humanity.[35] Sue, then, is the primary focus of a novel in which many characters attempt to seek self-identity at the expense of natural order.

The prolific light and dark imagery of At Heaven's Gate is employed in much the same way as Warren's use of it in Night Rider. The imagery is methodically employed at specific instances in the novel in the form of light and dark image patterns for the purpose of paralleling and, consequently, reinforcing the action of the novel. Since Sue's quest for identity is initiated through the actions of others, she is the primary character, and thereby justifies the use of image patterns as a valid tool. Whether in relation to herself only, or to others in the novel, her actions are the basic criteria for the literary existence of these image patterns. Warren does employ image clusters on three occasions, but always as part of Sue's recollections of the past; this is the same type of image cluster employment as seen in All The King's Men when Jack Burden slips into the past. A more detailed study of these image clusters will be brought forth after the light and dark image patterns are explained.

The novel begins with a seemingly stable group of individuals at discourse. Sue Murdock is presented, at the onset, as a girl who is seemingly in control of her faculties and

[35]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 114.

not visibly lacking completeness of identity. We do not gain direct insight into Sue concerning her incompleteness until almost halfway through the novel when she says, "Oh, what am I?"(155), as compared to the very first words of Band of Angels, another Warren novel, when Amantha Starr cries, "Oh, who am I?"[36]

Because of this lack of either a dark mood or a gay optimism in the opening chapter of At Heaven's Gate, a balanced image pattern may be observed in chapter one. The sky is "drenched in sunlight"(3), reflecting upon a "black coupe"(7). A white fence surrounds the Murdock stable, and "the darkening fields"(13) can be seen from afar. There are fourteen dark images and fifteen light images employed in this chapter. These images coexist in a balanced medium, much like the neutral action which is neither ominous nor encouraging to the reader at this point.

This balanced mood changes in chapter seven as a result of the first glimpses of the not-so-bright world around Sue. We meet Rosemary, a crippled invalid with "her body twisted over on her left hip, her leg crooked, and her right leg pale in the shadow"(98). She lives in a house with a dimly lit doorway with "dingy unpainted wooden gingerbread work on the porch...."(99) Then, there is Ellie May, a common slut, and old man Murdock who lives in a painful and hurt-filled world

[36]Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels(New York, 1955), p. 15.

of harassment, because he had killed a man. Such dark pictures of Sue's environment are paralleled by a dark image pattern consisting of fifteen dark images as compared to an average of seven dark images per chapter in the novel. This doubling of dark images in this chapter and the manner of their employment are significant then.

This dark world subsides momentarily in chapter nine when Sue and Jerry Calhoun talk of marriage, and a bit of optimism enters their world. The second balanced image pattern of the novel, consisting of seven dark and seven light images, parallels this neutral action. We see the "lemon-colored wintry sunlight"(127) as Sue and Jerry "slide darkly down the street"(140). This counter-balancing of dark and light imagery causes a suppressment of both light and dark, and thereby has a neutralizing effect.

Again, this neutral arrangement between dark and light is lost when, in chapter eleven, a very significant image pattern arises. Sue, who at this point is seeking identity through Slim, is told of the very dark happenings in Slim's life; his mother is a prostitute and his father is an alcoholic bum. Sue is immediately thrown into great despair and heartbreak as a result of a bitter look at humanity. Slim and Sue converse as they walk "under the black warehouses, through the patches of mist she never knew"(155), and watch the sky sag "blackly, heavily down, just above the roofs of the black hulks of the warehouses"(154). Sue hears of Slim's

unhappy past, and while a gray cat scrambles across the cobblestones (155), Slim tells her "...she had to learn to be alone, and she felt that would be easy to learn, that you could pull the silence, the darkness, and the mist about you, like a blanket"(155). Slim further tells her that she has to learn never to make up a picture of herself, but to be what she was. It is at this point, after hearing of Slim's sad plight in life, that Sue cries, "Oh, what am I?"(155) For the first time in the novel, Sue lets the world know that she is aware of an incompleteness in her self, and is in quest of this selfhood. Warren, then, has reinforced the action in this particular segment of the novel with a dark image pattern. This chapter contains eighteen dark images and only four instances of light imagery, thereby paralleling the darkness of Sue's world at this time.

This excess of dark imagery in chapter eleven is made more prominent and striking in chapter fifteen where not a single light image appears. Sue finds herself in an apartment and extremely unhappy in a life void of joy. From this point in the novel, the light images continue to decrease, with only thirty-five seen in the remaining twelve chapters. This lack of light images reflects Sue's darkness of self, because she is incapable of achieving self-identity.

The first image cluster of the novel appears in chapter thirteen as Sue recollects her past, and, in doing so, views this past as a mixture of light and dark.

> The girl is wearing a gray dress and it is not a very good dress.... Behind her is a gray house, for the paint is peeling off. There has just been a storm, for the leaves of the maple tree glitter yellow-green with wet in the now clear, but late, sunlight, and the trunks of the trees are black. Great hailstones...glitter whitely. The wings of the wet maple seeds glitter as they flutter down in the remarkable light.(184)

Sue's world of the past seems to be a confused mingling of light and dark. She sees herself as a gray-clad girl living in a gray house; this is significant because, at this time, Sue is extremely depressed and unhappy. The image cluster balances this confused and dark portion of Sue's life.

Another dark image pattern appears in chapter fifteen when Sue sees Jerry again after many months. They make love, and Sue throws him out, because she can no longer see the bright sunshine in life, but only the shadowy ceiling of her room(229), symbolic of the dark shadows pervading her own being. It is at this point that she must escape to the past for some semblance of light, and we thus evidence the second image cluster of the novel--an image cluster existing within a dark image pattern.

> Her face [Sue's] is very still and smooth and except for the brightness of her eyes, is like the face of the little girl in the white dress in the old picture which she once showed you, a long time back, when you sat beside her on the couch in the library. Then the light goes out, and in the first moment of darkness, which seems absolute because your eyes have not yet adjusted themselves, you feel that she isn't there at all, that it was all a dream, and that you are alone in the dark.(228)

Sue realizes, in this symbolic image cluster, that she is no longer the little girl with the white dress sitting in a well-lighted library. The lights are gone out for Sue now, symbolic of her darkness of identity. She is unable to adjust herself to this new darkness where she is always alone and must face it as such. Her recollection of the past has allowed her a temporary escape from her darkening world, but this recollection has also made her even more aware of that darkness. Thus, this image cluster becomes a part of a large dark image pattern consisting of fourteen dark images as compared to only three light images.

Later in the novel, in chapter seventeen, Sue's world becomes darkened a little more. Sue begins living with Slim, and later discovers he is a homosexual when she finds him in a compromising position with another man. The somber mood of the story is again paralleled by a dark image pattern consisting of twice as many dark images as light images in the chapter.

With the events in chapter twenty-two, the dark imagery begins to increase steadily, while the light images remain at a very low level. In this chapter [twenty-two] Sue starts living with Sweetie Sweetwater and becomes pregnant. As Sweetie and Sue walk the dark, empty streets to their apartment, Sue tells Sweetie she wants something, not just anything in life(30). Although her life depicts her confused ideas regarding a means for attaining self-definition, Sue

expresses the sentiments made by Sweetie in the chapter.

> Whatever you are, there's just one way to find out what you are. Everybody stands for something and till you know what you stand for, you ain't anything. You ain't anything in the world, no matter how God-damned fascinating you think your personality is.(307)

Sue hears the words of Sweetie but finds it difficult to find the path that led to her self. And so they live "like petals floating on a black water"(313). The dark image pattern paralleling this action contains nineteen dark images compared to only one light image in the chapter.,

Probably the most significant image pattern is found in the chapter where Sue is strangled by Slim. Before Sue's death, an extended dark image cluster may be observed, which is completely void of light, and is existing within the broader dark image pattern. Again, this cluster is contained within the recollections of Sue's past.

> ...and when I was little, they put me to bed as soon as I finished my supper, as soon as it began to get dark.(357)

At this point, Sue comes back to reality for a second and "reaches out in the dark--it was very dark, for the curtains were drawn to cut off any reflections of the light from the street below"(357), and she begins to drink her whiskey as she again recalls the past.

> ...but I didn't go to sleep, I lay in the dark, and I didn't go to sleep because I was by myself in the dark and I am afraid of the dark and the teddy bear is not good and a teddy bear is full of sawdust and stuff and does not love you and isn't any good, and people are down stairs...and they laugh and talk where the lights are and they love me, they love me they say, but they put me to bed in the dark and by myself and a teddy bear does not love you....(357)

Again Sue awakes from the past, puts out her hand in the dark to the whiskey, and slips back to recollection.

> ...but there were people downstairs laughing and talking, I knew, and I had lost something and I was afraid to tell and I cried in the dark where they put me while they were laughing and talking and I had lost something...my little gold ring, or my locket or the silver spoon, oh! oh, it looked like a spoon. (358)

After drinking in the dark a third time, Sue goes back to her world of youth.

> ...and I lay in the dark and cried out but I had hunted for it, I had hunted for it, I had hunted and hunted, for I had lost it but didn't know where, down at the farm or under the bushes....(359)

Sue's mind is sliding slowly off into blackness and she feels that she is "rising slowly to a surface, like a diver who has gone down deep"(359). She feels, also, like a trapeze performer who

> ...at the end of a long, wonderful arc, releases her hold on the bar and sails effortlessly, superbly, royally over all the lights and faces upturned so far below, the darling of the circus sailing away from them into the dark, for there is no tent

> at all and it is dark and there are no stars in the sky but you go sailing and smile in the dark and hold out your hands to touch the strong hands held out to you in the pitch dark and you know they will catch and hold your hands. (360)

At this point her heart is beating faithfully in the warm darkness, and Slim Sarrett takes her breath from her.

Sue, very early in life, seemed to have confronted the problem of discovering who she was. We can visualize her crying and lying in the darkness of self, not because she had actually lost a silver spoon, locket, or gold ring, but because she had lost what they might have symbolized--her self-identity. Sue Murdock lacked the love which is most important in life, and she views herself as a mere object in the eyes of God. In his essay, "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Warren says, "Every soul is valuable in God's sight, and the story of every soul is the story of its self-definition in good or evil, salvation or damnation.... Each of us longs for full balance and responsibility in self-knowledge, in a recognition and harmonious acceptance of our destiny...."[37] Sue was not wise enough to handle her confused and darkening situation early in life, and sought a defective or inadequate self-knowledge through others. Before her death she felt the complete submission of the drowning person going down for the third time, and at the same time, she felt the security of

[37]Robert Penn Warren, "Knowledge and the Image of Man," Swanee Review, LXII(Winter, 1955), pp. 182, 189, 190.

sailing through the sky, knowing she will not fall, for someone will catch her. Sue had hung onto life, as does a trapeze artist, but she has to let go. Death comes to Sue before she can discover self-identity or a means to attain this identity, while Perse Munn, Adam Rosenzweig, and Jack Burden, who, although they do not find self-identity, at least have found the place where they should look.

This extended dark image cluster is contained in two pages of Sue's recollections, and boasts some twenty-two dark images. While the cluster is a part of the entire image pattern paralleling the events of the particular chapter, it does contain the majority of the twenty-nine dark images of the chapter.

The novel's last chapter finds Bogan Murdock seemingly unchanged by his daughter's death or by the bizarre events surrounding his corrupt business. Bogan continues to live, unlike Sue, in a dark existence where identity is only a matter for others. The action is again paralleled by a dark image pattern consisting of twenty-two images.

At Heaven's Gate is truly a work of art, because of Warren's skillful blending of light and dark imagery with particular events, and his purposeful omission of others, for a reinforcing and paralleling effect on plot in the novel. And as John Longley, Jr. writes in his essay, "The novel is essential to any understanding of the total Warren cannon.... The themes are various, and the approaches differ, but the

focus is always the same. Man in relation to his cosmos, to good and evil, and to God."[38] Warren has portrayed man in quest of identity, whereby, a discernment of good and evil may be gained. The imagery of light and dark helps formulate this cause and effect relationship between self-identity and salvation by working in harmonious conjunction with the dominant events of _At Heaven's Gate_.

[38]John Longley, Jr., ed., "Self-Knowledge, The Pearl of Priscilla," _Robert Penn Warren_(New York, 1965), p. 61.

CHAPTER VI Analysis of Band of Angels

Band of Angels, published in 1955, is a novel very similar to At Heaven's Gate, a novel in which Sue Murdock attempts to discover her real essence of identity in life, uttering the words, "Oh, Who am I?"[39] In Band of Angels the same quest is dealt with, but in this case, through another female character, namely Amantha Starr who, uttering the first line of the novel, "Oh, What am I?"[40], gives us the theme of Band of Angels, that being the quest for self-identity. Manty, as she is called, wants to be free and belong to nobody, but she is confused as to the meaning of freedom. She does not realize that it is herself she is fleeing from as she "refuses to accept the absolute denial of self imposed by slavery and retreats into fever to the other extreme, absolute selfishness."[41] Like Sue Murdock and Willie Stark, Manty seeks herself in others and discovers later that this is not possible. Manty, in her quest for self-understanding, believes herself only an

[39]Robert Penn Warren, At Heaven's Gate(New York, 1943), p. 155.

[40]Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels(New York, 1955), p. 3.

[41]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 161.

expression of history where "you do not live your life, but somehow, your life lives you, and you are, therefore, only what history does to you"(134). This statement by Manty shows her almost complete lack of faith in herself as a rational being with enough knowledge of self to strive to a purposeful end in life, that being self-knowledge. As Manty is told that "One works in order to be able to live with oneself"(272), she realizes just how important such a goal is in life.

> To live with oneself: The words seemed, in a strange, bright way, to be healing a wound in me. Then I saw them like a bright miraculous unguent laid over the weals and humped, corded scars of the black back. As soon as it was laid on, the scars were gone, simply gone. The back was there with its unmarked sheen and molded musculature.(273)

This healing, then, is what Manty wants; a cure which will provide her with self-identity, and thereby permit her to live with herself as a knowledgeable person in regard to herself.

Warren, then, has, in Band of Angels, confronted the same problem he faces in all of his novels, that is the portrayal of a being in search of self-identity in a world where such knowledge seems nonexistent to the seeker. Again, too, Warren has developed this thematic topic through the use of dark and light imagery in the novel in the form of both light and dark image patterns and image clusters.

As was noted earlier, the novel begins with an immediate

look at Amantha Starr's plight in life, an inability to find identity of self.

> Oh, Who am I? For so long that was, you might say, the cry of my heart. There were times when I would say to myself my own name--my name is Amantha Starr --over and over again, trying, somehow, to make myself come true. But then, even the name might fade away in the air, in the bigness of the world. The world is big, and you feel lost in it, as though the bigness recedes forever, in all directions, like a desert of sand, and distance flees glimmering from you in all directions. Or the world is big and the bigness grows tall and close, like walls coming together with a great weight and you will be crushed to nothingness. Nothingness--there are two kinds, the kind which is being only yourself, lonely as the distance withdraws forever, and the kind when the walls of the world come together to crush you.(1)

Immediately, then, Manty is portrayed through her dialogue as a girl existing in a darkness of self. She is living in the first "nothingness," which is existing without coming to some realization of selfhood, and she wants to move from this darkness toward identity, but will ultimately find herself with that second "nothingness" where the "walls of the world come together to crush you." Manty says, "If I could only be free ...free from the lonely nothingness of being only yourself when the world flies away...."(3) This dark and dismal portrayal of character in regard to the self is reflected throughout the first chapter in the form of a dark image pattern. Manty relates her past to us and this, too, lacks a bright side. She tells of her mother's death, her father's terrible actions in destroying her doll, and her being sent off to

school, because her father did not have time to love her as he should have. All this background information, in regard to Manty's early childhood, attests to her understandable quest to find herself, and thus be free. The chapter abounds in dark images to stress this dark past. Manty remembers "piled-up masses of black cloud"(10), "flickering impressions" in the sky, which "collapse in sudden darkness"(10), the "ensuing darkness"(11) coming to meet her, the "dark halls" of Starrwood (8), and the "shade-dark grottos"(5) of her home. This immediate rendering of the dark sets the tone for the novel in relation to Amantha Starr. In At Heaven's Gate, the reader has to wait until late in the novel before Sue Murdock utters her cry of despair, because of her lack of self-identity. In all, there are eighteen dark images within this dark image pattern as opposed to only one light image in the entire chapter.

Chapters two and three are similar to the first chapter in regard to the use of dark image patterns to parallel the events. In chapter two, Manty experiences a very unhappy Christmas at home; Seth Paxton provides some foreshadowing when he warns Manty of her father; and later, Manty learns that her father has died in lust with Miss Idell, a girl whom Manty respected greatly. At the funeral, Manty discovers that her father had not been buried, as requested, close to the house and next to her mother. The fourteen dark images in this dark image pattern reinforce the dismal events. The

chapter contains only two light images so as to stress the dark atmosphere at the time.

Chapter three contains similar dark instances which are paralleled by twenty-six dark images and only two light images. Cy Marmaduke tells Manty she is a bankrupt daughter's slave and will have to be sold as such. She is sold to a Mr. Calloway, a trader, and after some very disrespectful treatment is sent to New Orleans. Throughout these two chapters, Manty refers to the dark woods quite often, which are symbolic of her imposing darkness. She says, "I was whirled away, under the declining light, past the wintergone pastures and the darkening raddled woods...."(62) on the "westward shore, against the black forest...."(79) Manty has been sold into slavery, and her fight becomes an inquiry into the nature of freedom and the quest for individual identity. At the time, however, her identity is as dark as the forest she sees.

Chapter four continues with a one-sided and purposeful use of dark imagery, and in doing so, presents the first image cluster of the novel. Manty has just been bought by Hamish Bond, a plantation owner, and she again thinks of her inward darkness, symbolically referred to as a dark pit.

> ...I became aware of the inwardness of my body, of the blood moving in darkness, and as one could mysteriously see into the total inward darkness, I had an actual vision of the heart's slick, wet, muscular movement, ruby-red, and glistening despite darkness, a vision of the intricate loops and swollen bulgings of inwardness, the grayness, the lymphic whiteness, blood-redness, sweet flabbiness, softness, darkness. It was as though, there in the

> bright daylight, I were falling inward, were flowing inward, as though myself were some dark delicious pit into which I fell inexhaustibly like sleep, like dying....(93)

This symbolic dark image cluster reinforces our first look at Manty at the beginning of the novel when she had two choices for nothingness. Here she is comparing herself to a dark pit. Bright sunshine, or self-identity, exists in her world; but she will never see it in her pit of darkness.

All the events up to chapter five have been ominous to Manty, and dark imagery has prevailed. In chapter five, light imagery comes forth in the form of a light image pattern to correspond to Manty's partial awakening to life.

> The season, with its strange somnambulistic, submarine muffling and mutting, moved on into summer. The heat and dampness hung like gauze in the afternoon brilliance. The shadows in the courtyard lay on the sun-glittering stone like black tin, the straight-edged black shadow of the wall, the jag-edged shadow of vine, the ovoidal shadows of the orange trees. Sometimes, lying in my room for the siesta, seeing the black jags against the brilliance of sky....(113)

Life is not quite so dark now for Manty, and the forest is not so black. Summer becomes symbolic, for sunshine has entered her life in the form of Hamish Bond, whom she realizes she loves. She asks Hamish why he brought her to his plantation, but his only answer is that she may leave if she wishes. Manty cried earlier for freedom, and now that she has her physical freedom, she realizes that freedom must come from within if one is to be truly free. Manty notices Rau-Ru's

eyes, and observes "How white, in the shadowy hall, his eyeballs shone against the enameled blackness of his face"(120). Through Rau-Ru and Hamish, then, a whiteness, or self-identity, is found to overpower the dark. This chapter, even though it contains fifteen light images, is still predominately dark with images, but this increase in light images is significant in that it parallels Manty's hope for success in her quest.

The light images begin to decrease immediately in chapter six and never increase beyond ten through the end of the novel. This immediate and sustained decrease in light images reflects upon Manty's lack of success in finding her identity. Not only do the light images become fewer, but the dark images increase to more than twice as many as in the opening chapters of the novel.

It is at the beginning of chapter six that Manty expresses her dissolutionment with life as a result of her failure to find self-knowledge.

> You live through time, that little piece of time that is yours, but that piece of time is not only your own life, it is the summoning-up of all the other lives that are simultaneous with yours. It is, in other words, History, and what you are is an expression of History, and you do not live your life, but somehow, your life lives you and you are, therefore, only what History does to you.(134)

This deterministic attitude and belief in predestination is what Manty is being forced to surrender to, because she cannot be free, nor is she able to answer the question of who she is.

At this point, Manty compares herself to a bird in the wilderness.

> We stood there in the wilderness, our feet in the sun-cracked mud of the track, the incongruous luggage of our feet. Beyond the level rose the forest, darkening now. A bird, far off there, called with a compulsive, irascible lament...I only said: "What is that bird?"(138)

Manty is much like Sue Murdock here when Sue is symbolically compared to a white dove, fleeting far away in the sky. Here, Manty realizes that she is that bird, far off, but she cannot name it, because she cannot know herself. She again is moving into the dark shadow of the forest, and ultimately into her own inward shadows of darkness. From this point on, she never leaves the blackness of the grove, but lives inside the dark of that bulk which is her self.

The real flight to escape inward darkness now begins for Manty. At this time the war breaks out between the North and South. This takes place in chapter seven, and, as the dark war exists until the book's end, so, too, does the dark imagery. Chapter eight contains thirty-five dark images in an image pattern reflecting, very appropriately, the darkening self in Manty. The "dark woods over there was full"(246), and is "stirring darkly in the very depth of her being"(246).

Another image cluster may be seen in chapter seven as Manty talks about Rau-Ru.

> But no, that darkness of the past into which Rau-Ru walked was not, I suddenly knew, the darkness of the thing fulfilled. No, it was, rather, a teeming darkness, straining soundlessly with forms struggling for recognition, for release from that dark realm of undifferentiated possibility.(262)

This again brings us back to Manty's two kinds of nothingness. Manty sees her lack of self-identity as a "teeming darkness" straining furiously, but without sound, to come to the light. Because she has no concept of what it is to be free, Manty is prevented from freeing this "teeming darkness," and ultimately herself.

> And I would be breathless with my waiting. Waiting to know what? To know my life, myself. It was as though your life had a shape, already totally designed, standing not in Time but in Space, already fulfilled, and you were waiting for it, in all its necessity, to be revealed to you, and all your living was merely the process whereby this already existing, fulfilled shape in Space would become an event in Time.(265)

Manty, then, is waiting for the time when she will escape from darkness to her self. This deterministic viewpoint, however, never allows her such a moment. Manty lets her life live her without endeavoring to pursue a proper course to self-knowledge. This pessimistic outlook is reinforced in the forty-one dark images present in the chapter, as compared to only nine light images. This dark image pattern does not parallel events in this case, but feelings, namely, those of the despondent Amantha Starr.

Chapter ten contains a dark image pattern which does par-

allel events in the novel. In this chapter, Manty discovers that her lover, Hamish, has been sleeping with a colored girl. Also, Hamish is hanged, and Jimmee, her close friend, is shot to death. These dark events for Manty are contained within this dark image pattern consisting of forty-one dark images as contrasted to only six light images.

This chapter contains a significant symbolic dark image cluster also. Manty, Jimmee, and Rau-Ru are being chased by enemy soldiers, and Manty recollects.

> ...and I could see the light only far ahead seeking the channel that was only black water spreading and threading insiduously into the blackness that vibrated, whirred unrelentingly, with a horrid unseen life of air, like a nerve being tortured inside the enormous blackness of night. The owls were calling, far off. Once a great owl swept downward out of the darkness, eyes glaring into the beam of light ahead, flattened its flight over the heads of the first perogue, and swept over us, right down at us, just a whoosh of appalling air, darker than the darkness.(315)

Manty has failed so in achieving self-identity that all is blackness to her now. The night is enormously black, and she, unlike before, can now describe the bird flying overhead. That bird is definitely not Manty, nor can she associate herself with this animal, so free in the sky. The owl will fly into the beam of light ahead, but like Willie Stark, who never seems to catch that tunnel of light ahead in the road, Manty never reaches this light either, but suffers in a dark that is "darker than darkness"--a darkness of self.

Later in the chapter, Manty is able to distinguish an-

other bird, this time a white heron. The white heron "moved ahead of us, white over black water, and the gloom of moss, far off"(319). Again, Manty is left behind in darkness while the white heron, like the dove in At Heaven's Gate, flies off to freedom.

Manty finally comes to realize, in the last chapter, how she should seek her self-identity.

> I looked down at the hump of earth. I looked across the cemetery, and saw the roofs of the town...I thought of the towns beyond...and I was about to burst into tears as I thought of people in those places.... But if they were good, if they were good, I cried out, why hadn't they set me free? Well, I couldn't help them. Nobody had helped me. Nobody had set me free. Nobody can set you free, I thought. But the words came: except yourself.(363)

Manty learns that only through separation is identity learned, and that without identity, personal and social fulfillment cannot be possible in life. She, much like Willie Stark and Sue Murdock, tries to find her identity in others; by this erroneous endeavor, Manty learns that an individual can be set free only through and by himself, and not through the actions of others. Manty, too, is like Perse Munn, Sue Murdock, and Adam Rosenzweig, in that Warren allows all four characters to come to a realization of their self, but they all die before they can continue their quest.

Band of Angels is written, as was noted, in much the same way as At Heaven's Gate, in reference to theme, characterization, and employment of imagery. The novel does con-

tain a greater percentage of dark imagery compared to At Heaven's Gate, but this is primarily because Manty is presented as a girl seeking identity from the beginning of the novel, whereas Sue doesn't begin her quest until halfway through the novel. Also, Band of Angels contains more image clusters as compared to other Warren novels, but the clusters are employed in the same symbolic way.

CHAPTER VII Analysis of World Enough and Time

World Enough and Time, like Warren's other novels, deals with the problem of finding self-identity; this ultimate cry for identity is similar to that of Sue Murdock's and Amantha Starr's in the two novels discussed previously. Sue Murdock cries out, "Oh, Who am I?"[42] while Amantha Starr asks, "Oh, What am I?"[43] In World Enough and Time, Jeremiah Beaumont yearns to define himself through spectacular actions, and he utters, "Myself, oh, What am I?"[44] Jerry, as he is called, attempts to seek his identity in isolation, much the same way Sue Murdock sought her self-knowledge. Jerry considers identity "synonymous with detachment and innocence,"[45] and this isolation ultimately leads to annihilation. Leonard Casper writes, in The Dark and Bloody Ground, that "Jerry is more than an island to himself, he is an archipelago, fragmented

[42]Robert Penn Warren, At Heaven's Gate(New York, 1943), p. 155.

[43]Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels(New York, 1955), p. 3.

[44]Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time(New York, 1950), p. 296.

[45]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 45.

within."[46]

The light and dark imagery which Warren employs in World Enough and Time serves the purpose of developing the theme by paralleling the action and feeling in the novel. He uses both image patterns and image clusters for this purpose, as he does in all of his novels.

The novel begins with a dark history of Jerry's life. His father dies when Jerry is thirteen. Jerry later refuses to change his name to Marcher, and is thrown out of his grandfather's house. Sometime later, Jerry has his first sexual experience, that being with an old hag, and this turns out to be a traumatic experience for him. These and other historical events in Jerry's life are reinforced in chapter one by thirty-three dark images as compared to only six light images. Jerry remembers back to his childhood on the farm "with the black stumps" and the wild pigeons that would "black the sky" (12). He sees himself as a man who "might plunge into nature as into a black delirious stream and gulp it in and be engulfed"(12). Jerry lived in a house with "shiny dark wood and big, black-streaked mirrors which exposed his darkness of mind"(43).

These dark images in the image pattern, then, set the tone for World Enough and Time; a tone of darkness of self which prevails throughout the work.

[46]Leonard Casper, The Dark and Bloody Ground(Washington, 1960), p. 146.

Following this brief history of Jerry and his background, chapter two concerns itself with Jerry's law training and his first meeting with Rachel, a girl whom he later marries. Jerry discovers that he loves Rachel, and such a feeling is paralleled by more light images than dark in the chapter. Jerry sees Rachel as whiteness; Rachel is dressed in white, and her bosom "was of great whiteness"(79). He sees her sitting with the white drapery of her skirt, and views the "golden hair where sunlight fell through...."(81) Because of Jerry's idealized conception of Rachel, the chapter does possess more light images than dark, and twice as many light images than the first chapter; however, this light imagery is used only to reinforce Jerry's feeling for Rachel, and does not indicate that he is out of darkness. On the contrary, it is in this chapter that Jerry tells us how he will seek his self-identity.

> That only when you are truly alone, can you begin to live? That when you truly begin to live you must construct your own world and therefore have no need for words written on paper, words that can only give the shadow of a world already lived.(64)

Jerry asks these questions in regard to Rachel's life, but he eventually retreats to isolation in his attempt to find his identity. Colonel Fort tells Jerry that "we live in the world, boy, and when the sun is down, it is a place of darkness where the foot knoweth not the way"(54). For Jerry, the sun is still in the sky; but isolation and sunset are not far

off.

In the following chapter, Jerry becomes involved in the elections, is impelled to fight physically for his beliefs, and makes a deal with Rachel that will result in marriage to her if he kills Fort. These actions, which draw Jerry farther from his goal of identity, are reinforced by a dark image pattern. Within this image pattern appears the first two image clusters of the novel. Jerry has just met Percival Skrogg, a satanic political figure who eventually leads Jerry to ruin, and the image cluster is used to describe Skrogg and his environment.

> He had shoulders like a bull, a black beard to his middle, a fist like a rock, and terrible voice and terrible silence, and his house was a place of darkness. In its shadows avarice masked itself as thrift and egotism as righteousness. A gold coin and God's will were the only realities bright enough to gleam in a dark world damned from birth.(92)

This dark symbolic cluster not only describes the physical realities of Percival Skrogg, but it also transcends to the void world of Jerry, himself. Jerry's world is a dark one, because self-identity is absent, and this world's only bright spot is the possibility for eventual identity. Skrogg lived in a darkness of self, and sought his identity via political interaction. It is ironic that he quits his job to do this, and explains that, because of it, he had "come from darkness into light"(93). Jerry follows suit, and as a result, he can no longer distinguish light from darkness and proper actions

from misguided procedure. An excellent image cluster explains this change in Jerry.

> Night and day were not clearly marked. At noon you could not locate even the fainter spot in the pervasive gray to mark the point of the sun. The light of noon was a sad twilight fading away rapidly to dark. The light itself seemed to drip from the sky and be trodden underfoot and absorbed into the neutral heaviness of earth. Night came with kind relief, for the dark was absolute and betrayed no promises.(115)

This light and dark image cluster is used symbolically to point out Jerry's impending dilemma with the self. The lightness of day represents self-identity, while the darkness of night is the lack of such knowledge. For Jerry there is no difference between night and day, since he hovers in a world which does not contain self-identity but in a world which still possesses the possibility of this type of identity. Jerry's world is a world of sunset, where the light does drip from the sky ever so slowly, and a world where sanctuary can be found in the darkness of night. Jerry is determined to find his identity only through isolation, and he is prepared to live in such a dark world if his quest cannot be attained by this isolation.

Chapters four, five, and six abound in dark imagery, while the light images decrease to an almost negligible degree. This again is due to the events in the novel. In these three chapters, Jerry does act, and he does not isolate himself physically from society; he enters a private isola-

tion in which identity cannot come.

> He knew that he would soon go out into that world of action and himself speak words and lift his arm, but he would still remain detached from the self that went out, in the "quiet room" looking out through the glass of the window. For the quiet room might be reality, and the sunlit hurlyburly outside nothing but the dream.(34)

Like Willie Stark in All the King's Men, Jerry is fully aware that he has to act in order to find his fulfillment and peace, but when he acts, it is only his physical being that responds, and not his inner self. Because his self remains in that "quiet room", he will find identity to be unattainable. The acts then that show this are his marriage to Rachel and the murder of Fort. Jerry seeks to cleanse himself through the condemning of Fort, much the way Perse Munn acted in Night Rider. As Leonard Casper writes, "Jerry's romantic image of himself as a knight makes him think one earns innocence by acting as judge and executioner."[47] We are able to watch Jerry slide into darkness, as a result of his actions, through Warren's dark image patterns in the three chapters; but two dark image clusters provide more perceptible evidence of this. As Jerry first sets out for Frankfort to kill Fort, the surrounding environment takes on a darkened nature to parallel the same darkness in the nature of Jerry.

[47]Casper, p. 45.

> It was dark on the fourth day when he approached Frankfort...and long before he saw the few lights of the town...they spotted the country around in the maple groves...then in the full dark like stars far off, for you could not see where the darkness of the hillside left off and the darkness of the sky began.(140)

Jerry's conception of a proper road to self-identity is so misguided that he cannot find light but only darkness in his world. The darkness of the earth under his feet blends into a darkness of the sky; this is extremely symbolic in that not only does darkness exist in the world, but it thrives within Jerry himself at this point in his life. Even the water is black, and the hills are seen as a black mass, as Jerry enters the dark town via a dark street(141).

The second dark image cluster in this series of chapters comes as Jerry seeks Fort in Bowling Green. Again, darkness prevails as it did in Frankfort.

> But he rode on long past dark. He was now entering the region he had first known when he came to visit his unknown grandfather, old Marcher, and he thought of his old errand in that part...heading south in the dark...then he had gone away, blind, toward nothing, toward a future completely shrouded in darkness. Now, he moved through the dark, and into a dark future, but he felt like a man who sees, far off, a light, a spark, in the middle of the blackness and knows that he will find there what he seeks.(150)

Here we have a comparison of Jerry's present life to his life as a boy. He says he was in darkness when young, but now he is moving through darkness to a light. This is the same symbolic light which Willie Stark sees as he rides in his black

Cadillac,[48] but Willie, like Jerry, never reaches that light which is self-identity. Darkness is victorious over Jerry as evidenced by the pervading darkness throughout the novel. Jerry, like Perse Munn in Night Rider, always acts when it is dark; never does he enjoy the light of day when he acts in conjunction with his quest. Rachel is always seen by Jerry, from this point on, as being in darkness, while it is he who is without light. "He leaned toward the darkness where she lay..."(174). Jerry "could not imagine how it would be tomorrow, in daylight, when they had to face each other across the breach made in the darkness"(174). Jerry waits for daylight, but only darkness greets him each day when he sees Rachel. Symbolic of this darkness in relation to Rachel is the brown mark which suddenly becomes very bold on her left cheek(184). This impending darkness reaches its peak when Jerry kills Fort in the dark. While waiting to accomplish his ghastly act in the dark of night, he decides that "the world was but the world, and its ways crooked and dark"(235). He has been off tract for so long, in regard to his quest, that he rationalizes that it is not he, but the world, that is dark. The scene and circumstances surrounding the killing reflect Jerry's own dark nature through Warren's dark images. The time is the first autumn dark in Frankfort, and the few lights of the town are backed "by the black, solid escarpment of the

[48]Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men(New York, 1950), p. 191.

hills"(248). Jerry puts on a long black silk, and then proceeds to Fort's home via the "black ruins of the recently burned capitol..."(254) to kill in the dark like an animal of prey.

These three chapters [four, five, and six] contain ninety-six dark images compared to only six light images. One may analyze the three chapters as containing three separate and distinct dark image patterns, or one dark image pattern encompassing all three chapters. Certainly such an interpretation is valid, since all the actions occur in darkness, and lead to the death of Fort. Within this image tripart, Warren has employed two dark image clusters to develope the thematic basis for Jerry's act.

After the brutal killing of Fort, the remaining events of the novel are all downhill episodes for Jerry Beaumont. He never sees even a spark of that light in the distance, but progresses further away from his goal of self-identity. It is in chapter seven, after the killing, that Jerry utters the words, "Myself, oh, What am I?"(296) Jerry finally starts to realize that there might be something "deeper and darker" in his being, other than isolation, which will open the door to himself.

The dark images are not as pronounced in this chapter [seven], because Jerry does come to some realization of his plight, even though he fails to gain any headway. The chap-

ter has only eight dark images compared to one light image. While still favoring the dark images, Warren has related to us that Jerry has an awareness of the self; and Warren gets this point across by substantially decreasing the dark images at this time.

Chapter eight finds Jerry unable to face up to his condition in life in regard to his identity, and he therefore blames the world; and later, he blames justice for his acts against humanity(324). Jerry can only think of the "valley in the West where the sycamores glimmered white as bone..." (341). At this point, Warren introduces a dark image cluster which establishes Jerry's futile situation and complete lack of hope for survival.

> And the darkness was absolute. You could lie and be lost in that darkness. So he thought of how he had crouched at night in the dead lilacs by Saunder's door...groping deeper into the dark earth.... It was a smell cleanly and rich...you breathed the dark and the dark were about to pulse. And while I lay there, I thought how I might be able to return, but would lie there forever, and I saw how my father might at that moment be standing in a field full of sun to call my name wildly and might run to all my common haunts to no avail. I felt a sad pity for him, and for all who ran about thus seeking in the sun and shade. But I felt no terror. It was like a dream of terror with the terror drained away, and the dark was loving kindness.
>
> Thus, it was now as I lay on the decent bed in the dungeon cell. No, it was different, too, and more inward in its truth. It was dark, and in that darkness you could lie and not know the perimeter and boundary of your being if you did not lay finger to your face, for the darkness entered into you and you dissolved into the darkness and were absorbed like a body thrown into the sea to sink forever and flow away from itself into the profundities of no intrusive light.(345)

This image cluster shows us Jerry's complete recognition and acceptance of his darkened world. The dark which has entered his world has taken over his being and even possesses its own pulse. Jerry can no longer find justification in his father's world of identity, where darkness had no home. While darkness was rejected earlier, now Jerry equates darkness with kindness. He has been completely dissolved into darkness, and, like that body thrown into the sea, he has forced his uncovered self-identity to flow away from him, never to return.

Chapters nine and ten, as do the remaining chapters, deal with the gloomy events following Jerry's act of murder. Warren has purposely omitted all light images in these two chapters to reinforce Jerry's darkness. Forty-five dark images enhance greatly the impact of the absence of light imagery. The dark image patterns do parallel the action in these two chapters. Jerry is convicted of murder, and is sent to jail, which he continuously refers to as a black hole. Rachel later joins Jerry in jail as an accomplice in the crime, and the hole that Jerry is in seems to get darker and darker. It is in the depth of this dark hole that Jerry claims to have found the "knowledge" that will save him. He realizes that it is "horrible to think that the poor body of man is so blind that it does not know life from death or light from dark, or love from hate..."(426) Jerry is guilty of possessing this faulty trait, but he definitely thinks, at this time in his life, that he has become aware of life, be-

cause he has become aware of his failings in that life. His only real knowledge is that he "longed for light to come"(427), and that he will never see such luminance again. Warren has emphasized this lack of hope for an escape from the darkness of self with his dark image patterns in chapters nine and ten to parallel the action.

The last chapter of World Enough and Time puts a final touch upon the dark wilderness that is Jerry Beaumont's before his death. Jerry and Rachel escape from jail and seek refuge in a land that offers no protection. They follow the "pathless woods and dark entrails of America"(457), brushing laboringly through "black velvet mud"(450), and breathing in the dark atmosphere; they can only use the "black space of rough timbering"(450) for a guide, and they suddenly find themselves sucked in by a river and being carried "away from empty sunlight, into darkness"(451). The darkened environment is ubiquitous and so too is Jerry's own inner darkness. He realizes that "he will never see the bright fire"(480) of self-identity, and that "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God," but, for him, "in the end there is mud and the mud is with me"(479). Warren postpones Jerry's death until Jerry has had time to admit things to himself about the impossibility of identity in isolation. Jerry comes to this realization just before he is killed. He says

> I killed Cassius Fort in darkness and deceit, and that was a crime....
>
> No, that crime for which I seek expiation is never lost. It is always there. It is unpardonable. It is the crime of self, the crime of life. The crime is I.(503)

For Jerry the crime against himself was greater than any crime against humanity. When one loses his perspective in life by following a dark path, such as Jerry did, identity is lost and can never be attained. Jerry realizes, too, that "Man will use the means of the natural world, and its dark ways, to gain that end he named holy by the idea"(503). Jerry sought his self-identity through a means which was not conducive to the seeking of such knowledge. He had attempted to use the world's dark ways, but found it led only to the "dark" of the world. In this novel where innocence is sought, only a wilderness exists where all is innocence, just as all is the same in darkness. Jerry easily found his way into that wilderness which was the darkness of himself--a wilderness more trackless than any physical region on the earth. But he had deviated too far from the path to return successfully to the world of light.

Warren, in this final chapter, has employed forty dark images and three light images to reinforce the particular events at this time in the novel. This dark image pattern sets the tone for the impending crisis that befalls Jerry and Rachel.

In World Enough and Time, it is quite evident that Warren has employed image patterns and clusters to his advantage in developing a theme of a quest for self-identity. While not at all unlike the previous novels analyzed in this respect, this particular novel does show that Warren uses more dark images than light to develope his theme. Of the total 325 images of light and dark in this novel, eighty-six percent are dark. This may well be due to the fact that Jerry Beaumont, much like Amantha Starr in Band of Angels, is shown in immediate quest of self-identity, without prior activity or involvement in the novel. Jerry's dilemma in his search for self-identity seems to come off much more effectively in this novel than in any of Warren's other novels, possibly because of the extreme emphasis upon dark imagery to relate the human condition of Jerry Beaumont.

CHAPTER VIII Analysis of The Cave

Robert Penn Warren's eighth novel, The Cave, published in 1959, again deals with self-recognition in man, but in this novel, Warren has worked out, more ingeniously than ever, the theme of self-identity. Not only does one major character seek identity, but all characters involved directly in the plot strive for this goal of self, as evidenced by one of the characters who, at the mouth of the cave, says that all were trying to "break through to the heart of the mystery which was themselves."[49]

The story concerns itself primarily with Jasper Harrick, who has just returned from the Korean War, during which he had attempted to find himself in combat. He had failed to find identity by this means, and he takes to exploring caves around his home in Tennessee. Jasper is eventually lost in one of these caves and, as Paul West writes in Robert Penn Warren, "Major and minor characters alike find Jasper's entombment catalytic in resolving their own lives. They ex-

[49]Robert Penn Warren, The Cave(New York, 1959), p. 396.

plore and rediscover themselves and one another, seeking also, through such self-venting and self-exposure, to make themselves firm."[50]

To develope this "labyrinthine study of the way in which diverse people reveal in thought and action their basic nature,"[51] Warren has employed light and dark imagery in the form of a few major dark image patterns and an unusually large number of image clusters compared to his other novels.

Warren opens The Cave with an excerpt from The Republic, by Plato.

> You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners. Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave? True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?[52]

This is Plato's figure of mankind in a dark cave. Warren, too, feels that man is living in a dark cave when he is void of his self-identity, and the above passage underlies the theme of The Cave. Those without identity see only their dark shadows, and not their true being; this void makes them prisoners within themselves.

[50]Paul West, Robert Penn Warren(Minnesota, 1964), p. 42.

[51]James Hart, The Oxford Companion to American Literature, 4th ed.(New York, 1965), p. 897.

[52]Plato, "The Republic," Plato's Dialogues(New York, 1942), pp. 398-399.

In the first chapter of this novel, we are given a brief history of Jasper Harrick and are introduced to Monty Harrick, who is presently seeking the affections of Jo-Lea Bingham. We also learn that Jasper is trapped in a cave. All the action of this chapter is either ominous, foreboding, or sexually undesirable for our society. These events, then, are paralleled by a dark image pattern consisting of twenty-six dark images. This dark image pattern is reinforced by two dark image clusters which reveal the theme of The Cave.

The first image cluster occurs as Monty imagines Jo-Lea sleeping in her room.

> But she wouldn't want to wake up. She wanted to lie under that suffocation, the pressure more and more imperative and conniving on her chest, breath short and sweeter, drowning deliciously under the weight of softness of self into the deeper and softer recesses of herself, like a body relaxed and glimmering whitely into the darker depth of water...surrendering itself in voluptuous fluidity to the element. She would be, somehow, both the body and the dark envelopement, the self drowning into self, self-glutting in its own fulfillment of softness. She...as night after night, under the cloudy-white weight of self, she drowned darkly inward into herself, he felt that she had no need of him.(12)

Monty, like the other characters in The Cave, is seeking his identity. In this cave, it is Jo-Lea whom Monty is using for his identity; he sees her self drowning in dark water simply because he cannot find himself in her. Jo-Lea's only attraction for Monty is sexual, and this is the reason he pictures

her drowning, much the way Jerry Beaumont sees himself drowning in a dark stream."[53]

Later in the chapter, the second cluster appears, and this one, too, gives added insight into this theme of the quest for self-knowledge. Through the omniscient author, we are able to look back into the life of Jasper Harrick and see his attitude regarding life.

> ...Jasper striding along musing and laughing to himself in that contemptuous good-humored way at a Sallie Mapes, just because he was not just those drawers-happy ones like Sallie-would do anything for him, roll over like puppies and lick his hand, and he would toss 'em what they craved and just laugh his easy-going way and off to the woods again, or drift down the river in his skiff, miles and miles, nobody knew where, flat on his back in the skiff, his hat over his face against the sunlight, dreaming of the darkness of his head, drifting on past afternoon into bullbat time, into night-time, all night long, and alone, or go wandering off, not merely to deep woods or down river, but crawl down into the ground, in the caves, deeper and darker, lying in the ground with his dreaming, as though he had cave-crawled into the earth like it was some sort of joyous dark-dreaming he was crawling into, to lie snug and complete with the whole earth tucked around him.(19)

Pluto's cave of mankind prevails throughout this dark image cluster. Jasper hides from society and refuses to find his identity, much like the way he puts his hat over his face to block out the sunlight. Because of this denial of self-identity, or any means of obtaining it, Jasper drifts always

[53]Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time(New York, 1950), p. 345.

alone and in the night; he even resorts to crawling down into the ground where he will be farther from human life. The cave may be real, but it is himself he is crawling into, and this is where he finds the real darkness of life. This dark image cluster establishes a mood of darkening quandry of self that persists throughout The Cave.

Chapter two is similar to the first chapter in respect to the light and dark imagery. While a dark image pattern of twenty-five images appears, there is, however, a marked reduction in the number of light images in the chapter. This is due to the necessity of paralleling the actions of the particular time. We learn of the dark past of Dorothy Cutlick and Timothy Bingham, and the unhappy marriage of Nick Pappy, the Greek, to Gislle, the prostitute. Nick, Gislle, Dorothy, and Timothy are all seeking their identity; and the dark images reinforce the novel, since all three individuals have yet to find such knowledge. Mr. Bingham is described as wearing a dark suit and black shoes and as walking down a dark hall(36). Dorothy is shown later as running "into a night of black forest and brilliant stars, down the rutted track, under the black, leafless oaks and whirling black void of sky"(38). Nick, the Greek, is described as wearing a "black pelt on his belly"(41), and being controlled by that "deep, dark, angry secret center of his being"(42). All these examples aid in the paralleling of imagery and action in this chapter.

A dark image pattern appears in chapter three, also, to parallel the events of Isaac Sumpter's dark past. The thirty-three dark images contrast sharply with the seven light images in the chapter. There is a mixed image cluster within this image pattern which displays Brother Sumpter's confused state of being regarding himself. Brother Sumpter thinks of his wife, Mary Tllyard.

> From the photograph you could tell little of what that woman had been like, not pretty, not unpretty, not old, not young, with dark hair and dark eyes-yes, you could tell that much, the eyes were large-wearing a dark-blue dress, with a round white collar, held by a brooch....
>
> Brother Sumpter rose from his knees to his rickety height of black trousers, white shirt, and cheap white elastic suspenders, and stared across at the photograph. "My son, my son," he whispered, "I did not die for thee."(82)

This short excerpt clearly defines the confused being of Brother Sumpter; he is trying to find his identity just as are the other characters, but his identity is as hazy as the picture we acquire from this paragraph. Brother Sumpter sees his wife as both light and dark, and is therefore unable to make a valid judgement upon her. His incapability and confusion is accentuated when he says that he did not die for his son. This is ironic for a clergyman, who supposedly believes that God's only begotten son died for us. Brother Sumpter is truly a man in search of his identity; but for the time being, he lives in a world of both light and dark hues, where vic-

tory over darkness will have to wait.

The second image cluster of the chapter is found in relation to Brother Sumpter's son, Isaac, who also is in quest of self-knowledge. Brother Sumpter has just lectured Isaac concerning God and the necessity for a belief in such a being.

> For a moment Isaac Sumpter looked at the closed door...like the general who sits his horse on the knoll...and sees them scatter into darkness.
>
> He stopped again. 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 on his darkness...the not-mattering would again be that dark, grinding mattering.... 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. He said aloud: "Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird!" and felt...that something stirred now in his dew-dark inwardness. It was as though the bird awoke in that inner darkness, as in a dark glade, and stirred, preparing the first note.
>
> No, it couldn't be the bird stirring in that sweet, leafy dew-darkness. But it was something like the bird, and when its utterance came in that darkness, wasn't the bird. It was his self.
>
> No, it couldn't be his self, for his self was the self that knew that this being now stirred in the dew-darkness. But it had to be a self, for it was contained in the darkness which was himself. 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.(98-99)

Again, as in other novels of Warren's, the symbolic use of the bird is employed to express the freedom which one enjoys when self-knowledge is attained. The "immortal Bird" is Isaac's self which now lives in "dew-dark inwardness," and seeks escape from the death that is equated with living without knowing who or why a person exists. Isaac possesses the knowledge that one must find identity, but this knowledge will not bring him self-identity; it will merely lead one forth in the direction of such a goal. Isaac seems to speak here for all of the characters in The Cave who are seeking identity, and thus, this symbolic cluster significantly explains the conflict within Isaac and the others.

Again, in chapter four, there is a dark image pattern which parallels the unjust actions of Nick and Jebb Holloway who seek to become rich from the disaster which has befallen Jasper. The image pattern contains thirty dark images as compared to only four light images. The light images have steadily decreased from thirteen in chapter one to four in this chapter, and they will continue to do so until only one light image appears in the last chapter. This imagery of the dark parallels the cave-darkness of the characters, both physical and mental.

Another dark image cluster appears in chapter five in relation to Isaac Sumpter. Since most of the dark images of the chapter appear in this cluster, it is quite significant in understanding Isaac's feeling toward self-identity, as he

recalls a journey into the cave to Jasper.

> He shut his eyes and he heard the cold, deep sound of the water from the pit of the cave in the fourth chamber. In the absolute darkness of his head-and the pit-he saw a body in the absolute darkness of the boiling water, and even wondered how he could see it, in absolute darkness. He himself was that body in that water, and he himself was that knowledge in that absolute darkness.(193)

Isaac thinks back to the time he entered the dark pit, and he realizes that the "absolute darkness of his head" is just as dark as the pit which he entered. He continuously refers to the darkness as being absolute; and again we have the allusion to a body submerged in water, floating farther and farther away, down the stream of life, always alone and always in darkness.

Chapter seven provides another dark image cluster which is both symbolic and thematic. Brother Sumpter, while waiting to see if Jasper will come out of the ground alive, offers this prayer to God, as many people join in to pray with him.

> Oh, Thou Who hast in darkness and the dark ground laid the stone on the leg of Jasper Harrick, lift him up in Thy glorious light. Lift up our hearts that lie under the stone of darkness. Oh, God, let us in our striving to lift the stone from our hearts, help lift that stone from Jasper Harrick, in the dark ground. Oh, God, bring all forth!(238)

Brother Sumpter, in this symbolic dark image cluster, is praying to God to have Him lift that "stone of darkness," which

is the lack of self-identity, from all mankind, especially Jasper Harrick, so that Jasper may come out of the ground. This cluster is reminiscent of the resurrection of Christ when a stone was rolled away so He could also escape from a cave-like formation. If Jasper can escape from that absolute darkness, all the characters of the novel will benefit from the event, just as all mankind benefited by Christ's resurrection.

In chapter eight, Jebb plays the role of hero before radio and television audiences, when he was actually a coward while attempting to rescue Jasper in the cave. Jebb also lies when he says that Jasper told him that Jo-Lea was to have Jasper's baby, and that the people of the community should take care of Jo-Lea and the baby. These nauseating events are paralleled by a dark image cluster consisting of seventeen dark images and six light images. Jebb Holloway realizes that he, too, is seeking something, and is trying to escape from the "darkness that was himself"(256), as are many others in The Cave.

Isaac Sumpter comes to a realization of himself in chapter nine.

> So he, Isaac Sumpter, shut his eyes and thought of being in a warm, comforting darkness, where 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.... What price man will pay for just a little ego satisfaction.(278)

Isaac finds comfort in the physical darkness of the cave, because he does not have to face himself and the everyday relations with mankind. This thematic symbolic image cluster shows that Isaac was seeking identity through and ego-building process and is aware of his misguided failure in that respect.

In this particular chapter, Warren continuously refers to the physical environment of the cave with such terms as "a black slit of a hole," the "bottom of that black pit," where the "black water ran"(281), and "some dark recess"(287). The impending crisis of Jasper's death in the cave is foreshadowed by these dark images and more so by the image cluster containing seventeen dark images.

A mixed symbolic image cluster appears in chapter ten; this cluster developes Warren's theme a little more fully, and also reinforces the action at that particular point in the novel. The cluster is again in the form of a prayer by Brother Sumpter, who seems to have become the spokesman for the self-identity seeking group in the novel.

> Brother Sumpter preached again. He said that whoever lives with a guilty secret lives in a dark cave and cannot breathe for the weight of sin. He cried out that those who were in the dark cave should come into the daylight bright and clear.(320)

Brother Sumpter equates lack of identity with a lack of true conscience in regard to one's actions. Anyone who is void of

self-identity lives in a dark cave where air is sparse and illumination impossible to attain. Only by finding oneself can one escape to daylight. The thematic analysis remains the same in regard to self-identity, but when it is seen from Sumpter's point of view, the religious element can be understood.

A significant dark image pattern emerges in chapter eleven as various characters come to a realization of their need for identity. Nick Pappy opens his eyes "from the darkness of himself"(328) and realizes that money will not obtain one's self-knowledge. Monty Harrick also comes to an awareness of himself. It was Monty who had made Jo-Lea pregnant; but he was not man enough to admit it, and he allowed Jasper to take the blame. A dark image cluster explains Monty's feelings in regard to this event.

> He was paralyzed by a sense of betrayal.... Jasper had been his Big Brother, and now he was not. He felt alone, and powerless, as though a dark wind were driving over the mountain, bending down the trees and stripping them bare and white in the darkness....in his numbness, he stopped stock-still, and turned. He made out the forms, rather a sense of darker darkness, in the shadow of a tree, merging with the darkness, and caught the whiteness of faces. Then from under that blackness of the tree there was a voice....(343)

Monty, too, realizes that he has failed in his quest to find himself. In attempting to find identity, he has stepped upon his own brother, and a "darker darkness" has resulted for

Monty. Betrayal, he discovers, can never lead to a knowledge of the self.

The final image cluster of the novel appears in chapter twelve as Isaac Sumpter tries to run from the dark cave where Jasper lies dead. He can only recall Jasper in the cave.

> At that sight, snatched quickly back into darkness, he thought of himself remembering it forever, all the years of his life, as he would always remember the night of his flight. But that sight--the new white pillars, the spotlight on the fountain... would go with him, forever and ever, to negate, somehow, the very flight he was making....
>
> Somewhere along there, while it was still dark, he saw a light on in a house up a draw. He couldn't really make out the house, just the dirt track leading whitely in starlight across a field to a black clump of trees where the light showed....
>
> The house with the light, all the other houses were snatched away one by one, mercilessly and mercifully into darkness beyond him. As that simple glowing spark of reality that was himself fled westward, all things behind sank, at that withdrawal, into their undifferentiated sleep of nothingness and the darkness of unreality.(366)

Isaac is much like Willie Stark and Jerry Beaumont who see that symbolic light ahead, which is their self-identity; but like Willie and Jerry, Isaac never reaches the light that will bring him from darkness. He sees the white pillars and the spotlight, but the house, which is light, is snatched away from him. He loses all hope for identity, because he fails to face up to what actually is in life. Isaac has only to fall back into complete darkness, never to find that light

that is salvation for him.

Robert Penn Warren, in writing The Cave, set out to show man in quest of his identity, just as he has done in all of his novels; however, this particular novel is unique for Warren, since he employs so many isolated image clusters to develop his thematic purpose. While he does use a dark image pattern in every chapter of the novel, the image clusters include the majority of the dark images within each chapter, unlike the other Warren novels in which image clusters usually contain only a small number of images within the overall image pattern. Warren may have used these isolated clusters to reinforce the theme of isolation of self, which is achieved through the symbolic use of the cave, the cave being the darkness of self.

CHAPTER IX Analysis of The Flood

Robert Penn Warren's last novel, The Flood, published in 1963, is very similar in many respects to The Cave. Like The Cave, The Flood concerns itself with a variety of people who are in search of their identity. Unlike the majority of Warren's novels, there is, in The Flood, more than one character who is attempting to find himself in life. This novel is also similar to The Cave in respect to the light and dark imagery, and its ultimate employment. While each of the thirty-two chapters in this novel contains more dark images than light, the image patterns do not parallel the action of the story. Instead of image patterns, Warren uses a vast number of image clusters to achieve the purpose of thematic developement; however, on occasion, these image clusters contain so many images that they become image patterns within a particular chapter.

The Flood is basically the story of a handful of people in a small western Tennessee town that is to be obliterated by the construction of a dam, and who are thereby compelled to face their real self. In The Flood, as Paul West writes,

"Warren resumes and raises to a beautiful symphonic level the same allegorical method, this time combining his profound concern for the past with the problem of durable identity."[54] Much of the novel is concerned with the past, and it is this same past that brings reality to the present crisis at hand. Each character whom we met in Fiddlersburg is, in some way, forced to find his true identity in life, due to the impending crisis; each seeks self-identity the best way he knows how, so that relocation will not be an end, but a beginning. The Flood is both the story of a physical flood and a man-made flood; a story of man sailing upon the river of life, seeking a knowledge of himself which will keep him afloat, no matter how terrible a physical or spiritual deluge he may encounter.

The first few chapters of the novel concern Brad Tolliver's trip back to Fiddlersburg, his home. Brad drives a white Jaguar and passes the white limestone bluffs which line the countryside. On his way to Fiddlersburg, Brad thinks of his unfortunate past and discovers that what had happened to him occurred only because he had not known who he really was. He says, "It is not me"(10). A poem written by Brother Potts and read by Brad sums up the feeling which thrives in Brad at this time.

[54]Paul West, Robert Penn Warren(Minnesota, 1964), p. 44.

> When I see the town I love
> Sinking down beneath the wave
> I pray I'll remember then
> All the blessing that God gave.
>
> When I see the life I led
> Whelmed and drowned beneath the flood--(82)

The flood that causes Brad to submerge his identity in black water is seen in the scandalous events which destroyed his marriage.

As Brad and Yasha Jones, a famous director who plans to produce a movie concerning the dilemma of this town, drive toward Fiddlersburg, the dark imagery of the novel foreshadows the coming events concerning this little town. They travel along the "black asphalt"(22) where the "cedars looked dark and solid against the paleness"(25). The cedars eventually become totally black as they approach the town, as though a darkening before a storm(28). At this point, the first image cluster of the novel appears.

> Directly across the river, the low fields, some of them plow-land, stretched miles away, cut here and there by the brush of fence lines or the dim-glinting meander of ditch or creek, lifting far away to a darkness that must be the woods on the western horizon. The sun was sinking beyond the rim of darkness.(40)

This cluster is symbolic in that the darkness of the environment is the lack of identity. The sun is symbolic of the self-identity which Brad and the others are seeking. For these individuals, sunset is almost upon them, just as the

final sunset approaches for Fiddlersburg. As one can see by the cluster terminology, the darkness lifting far away is not labeled as a darkness of woods, explicitly, but only as a possibility.

Later in chapter five, Brad adds a little information about the coming crisis of Fiddlersburg and its inhabitants by explaining what it is like to be in such a situation.

> Yes, sir, Fiddlersburg is the place where God just forgot to wind His watch.... Let'em flood us, never was a place--or a society, for that matter--didn't deserve drowning out. He paused again, and resumed. But you know, that moment when some place is just overpassed but still extant and waiting for the flood, that's the time you can see its virtues and vices most clearly. Like the queer light before a storm in summer. You get a queer feeling then.(48)

Fiddlersburg, too, is attempting to find its real identity as a town, just as its inhabitants are seeking the essence of themselves. Brad realizes that one must come to a truth with the self before self-knowledge may be attained; this coming to truth involves an honest appraisal of oneself, not a negating of vices. And as Brad says, such a quest for identity is like the "queer light" that always seems to precede a storm in the summer; one never really knows what harm may come from such light, and yet one really never finds out until a situation such as this is tested. Brad Tolliver is aware that he must accept the good with the bad, that is himself, and only in this way can he not "feel cramped and bound

in some dark mystery which was himself, like a box"(68).

In chapter seven, Brother Potts is introduced to the reader. This religious man of Fiddlersburg tries to ward off a serious illness and possible death, so that he may conduct the memorial service for the town. Brother Potts is not only attempting to provide a fitting end for the town he has known all his life, but he is also attempting a fitting end to his own life. He does not feel that he and God have attained a relationship in life which would warrant an eternal relationship in the hereafter. This pessimistic outlook may be viewed in the last completed lines of a poem which Brother Potts wrote.

> When I see the life I led
> Whelmed and drowned beneath the flood--(82)

Brother Potts explains that this is as far as he has gotten with the poem and that he is stuck for a conclusion, just as he is stuck now that he is coming to the conclusion of his own life. He says, "I know how I feel, but the words, they won't come"(82). If this clergyman enjoys the freedom and joy that comes with self-identity, the words will flow freely for him; and it is only when he discovers self-knowledge that he will be capable of finishing his poem.

A short image cluster appears in chapter nine, and it helps to explain Brad's outlook in regard to his identity. Brad says to Yasha:

> ...juicy blind girl. Young engineer roaming in house. Sympathy. Wonders what it is like to be blind. Light is dark, dark is light. To be in velvety darkness which is your light, to be free of something, to fall deeper into something-Jesus!(125)

Brad is talking about the blind girl, Leontine Purtle, Leontine may be blind, but she sees more in her darkness than Brad presently can see in his supposedly light world. Brad says dark is light and light is dark; this confusion regarding the light and the dark is caused by his lack of self-knowledge, something which Leontine apparently possesses, even in her world of physical darkness.

In chapter twelve, Mr. Budd, the warden of the Fiddlersburg penitentiary, is introduced by means of another dark image cluster.

> The Warden--glittering black, hundred-and-fifty-dollar, custom-made boots, gray pants with black stitching on the seams hanging too short over the boots, black frock coat long enough to exaggerate the literal height of his strung-out bone, a bony sepulchral face with a gray goatee....(152)

From this description of the warden, it is quite evident that Warren used the dark images for the purpose of paralleling the feelings of Mr. Budd; he is a Deputy Warden who is bemused with overconfidence, which is caused by a distinct lack of real security in himself.

In chapter thirteen, Brad becomes aware of what it is to live with one's identity. Brad speaks of old Izzie Goldfarb,

the oldest resident of Fiddlersburg. "He was alone. He would sit there absolutely alone and watch the sun go down. But he was complete. Alone but not lonesome"(165). Izzie Goldfarb had found himself, and would be complete in life no matter what the circumstances. Brad's task, now, is to find that special something that allows one to feel the completeness which Izzie enjoys.

Chapter sixteen has one of the best image clusters of the novel; this mixed image cluster of light and dark imagery is extremely significant, both thematically and symbolically. Warren has, in the cluster, brought us back to the past when Brad was married and was on his way back to Fiddlersburg for a short visit.

> He drove through town. No one was on the streets. A light burned dimly...a gray-bearded man with a large paper sack.... A light was on, too, in the Rexall store. He could see the chrome and marble glint of the soda fountain, but nobody was visible.
>
> He drove on.... The front windows of all the houses were dark.... From the darkening land...life had withdrawn back....
>
> As he drove slowly out River Street, past the last lighted window...where darkness seemed tangled in the tumbled fences, past the last street light.... He sat there a moment, staring at the lightless bulk of the house....
>
> Inside, the house was pitch dark...beyond the bare black trees....
>
> After a little, he caught the reflection of a candle flame in the window glass to his left. When he turned his gaze back to the sky, the light there was gone.

> He left the kitchen. He began to wander the cold dark house.... He would stop in a hall...the flashlight dark in his hands.... He had the sense that he himself was, somehow, the dark house. He was the dark house, in which he stood and, at the same time, the person standing there, holding his breath, in that enclosed darkness. He had no memories. He relived nothing. He simply lived into the silence and darkness. The rectangle of a window would hang dimly gray in the black air. It would be merely a shape, giving no light. Some piece of furniture would begin to assume identity--not a form, merely a special density of shadow. It was as though the very silence and darkness of the house were a rising flood, a medium that rose deeper and deeper around him, and in him, absorbing him. In his calmness, he had a sense that the house was, in the darkness and silence, slowly forgiving him.(195)

Within this important mixed image cluster, there are seventeen light and dark images which expose Warren's basic thematic premise in all of his novels--man's need for and quest of self-identity. Brad Tolliver is just one of these characters in search of that vital necessity of life. He is traveling home, and quite symbolically, he sees only dim lights in the stores and houses, for the land seems to have darkened. At this point, he sees himself as a dark house, where lightlessness is a massive bulk within. His self is that "dark house," a shape giving off no light. While a piece of furniture in that house assumes identity, Brad still suffers from the flood that is the overpowering darkness within. Warren uses flood imagery in all of his novels, and it seems fitting that his last novel concerns itself primarily with a flood.

A smaller image cluster appears in chapter eighteen, as Brad becomes sexually involved with the symbolically blind

Leontine Purtle.

> He himself now lay back comfy in the chair, and wondered what it was like to be blind, and saw in the dark of his head how, in the dark in the middle of the night, which to her would be as clear as day, Leontine Purtle, in a white gown that glimmered in the dark, her pale hair down and glimmering....(229)

Leontine Purtle, the blind girl who is supposed to see nothing, symbolizes self-identity in this image cluster and in the novel. She may not be able to see from without, but her self-knowledge allows her to see from within; this is just what Brad cannot do. In the dark of his head, he sees Leontine ironically dressed in white, while he stands alone in the dark, incapable of seeing himself the way Leontine sees herself. It is ironic, too, that, while thinking of the blind girl, Brad wonders "what it is like to be blind," when it is he and not she who is really "blind."

Another important image cluster of seventeen light and dark images may be found in chapter twenty; and again, this cluster concerns itself with the "dark house" of Brad Tolliver and the light world of Leontine Purtle.

> Bradwell Tolliver got up from the table...and the frost, gray as the film of cataract...would thicken on the windowpane against the absolute glassy blackness of night, and he would lift his eyes....
>
> He cut off the light and felt his way out of the dark house: Far off yonder, the moonlight washed to whiteness the bulk of the penitentiary. It paled to nothingness the beams of the searchlights in the corner turrets. The moonlight flooded the

> land. In that light, River Street would float like a vision.
>
> In front of the Purtle house, he stopped. He stared at it, the white weather boarding, the darkened windows...above the black ground and the clotting blackness of shadow; then, above it all, the black composition roof where some hard granules of texture caught...tingling gleams of the moon.
>
> The front of the house was in shadow. The house was withdrawn.... He thought of Leontine Purtle sleeping in the house. He thought of a room with the curtains closed tight, darker than dark, and in that dark she lay naked in her remarkable whiteness. She was sleeping and she glimmered in the dark. In that soft, fragrant, absolute darkness, he could see nothing. But he knew that her whiteness glimmered around him in the dark, around his thrust-down, blinded face.(253)

Again, Leontine symbolizes self-identity here; and from this passage, it is quite evident that Brad realizes that identity of self is what he lacks. He feels his way from the dark house that is his self, but still the darkness prevails outside the house. He cannot stay away from Leontine and self-identity, and though she lies in the dark, her body (self-identity) is glimmering in remarkable whiteness. Brad is incapable of vision in his absolute darkness, but he still sees well enough to know what he needs in life, and he acquires this knowledge of his necessity through Leontine Purtle.

Yasha Jones, too, lives in darkness; but he realizes the darkness in his head long before Brad Tolliver comes to such a similar realization. As we learn of Yasha's past, a dark image cluster is employed by Warren to express Yasha's feelings on this matter of identity.

> ...for the German sentry had surprised him in that dark alley.... In that instant now he remembered very explicitly, as though a strong ray of light cut into the dark to specify the scene. how, long ago, he had stood in the dark alley, and it was over, and he had risen from the darker heap huddled there. He now remembered the terrifying ecstasy as he had stood there over that darker heap. But he remembered how, finding himself in the grip of that ecstasy, he had been, suddenly, sick of himself, and the world.(268)

A mere robot, acting by command, was what Yasha Jones was during his years in the service. He was a man unable to think for himself, because he possessed no knowledge about himself. It takes a dark alley and the killing of a German soldier for Yasha to see the "strong ray of light cut into the dark" which is his self-knowledge. Yasha has become capable of thinking and acting like a human being, and this makes him capable of hating himself for what he has done; this awakening to himself and the realities of the world eventually provide him with his identity.

Blanding Cottshill is another character in The Flood who, after losing his rich acres and his mulatto mistress, broods in his loss of real self-identity. Warren describes Blanding's office and surroundings through the use of dark images to emphasize the lack of identity.

> But Bradwell Tolliver entered the dark door of the stairway to the floor above.
>
> The little hall above was dark.... The lettering, black, on the door indicated the office of Blanding Cottshill, attorney.

> Brad stared at the typing table, at the machine with a black hood on it that made him think of the black hood that Mr. Budd had said always made the sewing shop run up for....(292)

One readily sees the darkened world around Blanding Cottshill through this image cluster of Warren's. Blanding is usually seen dressed in a black suit and black tie, which, in itself, relays to us a dark atmosphere.

Warren again employs the symbolic use of a light in the distance to symbolize the reaching for identity. Willie Stark,[55] Jerry Beaumont,[56] and others have seen this light, and so, too, does Brad Tolliver in an image cluster in chapter twenty-five of The Flood.

> Bradwell Tolliver stared into the dark. He saw two tiny glowing points that were cigarettes, down by the black dark of the gazebo. He leaned into the dark and did not know what had happened to anybody. He did not know what had happened to himself.(320)

Brad's mere observation of this symbolic light in the distance negates the possibility that he does not realize he needs his identity. He is leaning forward and striving to escape the darkness, even though he does not know what he is in the dark. There is a grayness of the sky, and this grayness explains the nature of things in relation to Brad.

Brad again sees the light in the darkness toward the end

[55]Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men(New York, 1946),

[56]Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time(New York, 1950).

of the novel; but this time he makes no attempt to pursue the light.

> It was night now, starlight but no moon. The shores were dark, and the river, on each side toward them, black; but the mainstream, sliding ahead, seemed to gather and give back what light there was, like a blade in shadow. Brad looked back over his right shoulder and saw the sparse lights of town, and above them, on the hill, the black hulk and searchlight of the penitentiary.
>
> Then he faced downstream. Far off, to the left, he could make out now the reach of deeper darkness that was the swamp woods. A little later he spotted the glow. It seemed to be hanging in the darkness of the wood. He began to cut in....(371)

Brad sees himself as that black hulk of the penitentiary, and the searchlights for identity are shining with great luminance as he becomes aware of his need for this particular knowledge. The shores are dark and the water black, as he flows through his life; but the flood will not come if that spotted glow can be captured in time. The interior darkness, then, will be no more.

In the concluding chapters, Warren introduces a change in his self-identity theme, which he had never used previously in his novels. Brad Tolliver is about to leave Fiddlersburg after coming there to rid himself of his inner darkness.

> There, in the inner darkness of himself, as the black beast heaved at him from some corner of deeper darkness, he thought: Why the hell did I come here anyway?
>
> He thought: What was there ever here for me?

> And with that thought, even while the sun burned on his shoulders, he felt now, deep inside, the very breath of that blackness blowing cold on his inner-most soul.
>
> But he had learned that you can live with anything, and had, in the long months, come to a grim acceptance of that black beast with cold fur like hairy ice that drowned in the deepest inner dark.... He had even come to have an affection for that black beast. For in the hours before dawn the beast, weary with its own heaving and snarling, would lie down beside him and snuggle, as though trying piteously to warm itself from whatever warmth there was in Bradwell Tolliver.(404)

This image cluster, then, displays a complete acceptance of the lack of self-identity, as evidenced by the feelings of Bradwell Tolliver. Although Brad accepts the fact that the lack of self-identity is that black beast within him, he has also accepted the fact that he can and will live without his knowledge of self; he is capable of doing just this simply because he is aware of the "beast's" presence. When one is not aware that self-identity is necessary and lacking, then the black beast devours one, instead of snuggling warmly.

With masterful precision, Robert Penn Warren brings The Flood to a climax, whereby all the characters are able to salvage themselves and their belongings, and re-locate in another town. Brad, Yasha, Brother Potts, Blanding, and others succeed in recognizing the need for the knowledge of self that makes light out of absolute darkness.

Robert Penn Warren, in this novel, The Flood, has put complete faith in his image clusters to develop his theme.

As was mentioned previously, Warren has used light and dark image clusters only sparingly in all of his novels except in The Cave and The Flood. The Cave contained many more image clusters of light and dark than any of Warren's other novels which used image patterns for thematic developement; but The Flood contains more than twenty significant image clusters which reinforce a feeling, action, or idea in the novel. Warren may have changed his technique of light and dark imagery employment as an apropos conclusion to his writings of the self-identity quest in man. Throughout his previous novels, flood and cave imagery can be found on many occasions. Darkness is usually associated with a cave, and so, too, with a flood. Warren brought these two types of imagery to a fitting conclusion, as he isolated the elements of imagery by means of image clusters, and thereby, reinforced his self-identity theme all the more powerfully.

CHAPTER X Conclusion

After analyzing the imagistic and thematic aspects of the eight novels of Robert Penn Warren, one can hardly escape the powerful effects of a Warren novel; through a close doting observation of the physical and emotional world, Warren "sees life, captures it, and makes the page tremble with it."[57] Because of this quality, a Warren novel is not an exercise in discipline or didacticism, but, as Warren, himself, once said in an interview, "It is a field study; it is a study of man and his excursions into the land of self-knowledge, and ultimately, human dignity."

Warren has not only written fiction that arouses an awareness of life in his readers, but he has successfully accomplished this through the literary merging of light and dark imagery with the quest for self-identity in man. This merging of theme and imagery of light and dark can be found in all eight of his novels, in his verse tale, Brother to Dragons, and in his poetry.

The employment of light and dark imagery by Warren is

[57]Paul West, Robert Penn Warren(Minnesota, 1964), p. 8.

handled quite ingeniously through a strategic and purposeful execution. Warren will consistently, in his novels, make his dark images comprise about seventy-eight per cent of the total light and dark images. In the eight novels discussed, there was a total of 2905 light and dark images; 2235 were dark images and 670 were light. Besides this preference for dark images in his novels, Warren very skillfully deploys his images to meet the thematic requirements of the plot. To accomplish this thematic developement through the use of light and dark imagery, he uses image patterns, image clusters, and isolated images.

The use of the image pattern is the most common way in which Warren reinforces a feeling, action, or idea in his novels; these image patterns may be dark, light, or mixed as far as image content is concerned. All of Warren's early novels exhibit a large number of image patterns, whereas his last two novels, The Cave and The Flood, use this type of imagistic employment very sparingly but put the image cluster to use very frequently.

The image clusters, which Warren employs to serve the same purpose as his image patterns, are usually symbolic in nature, and are very useful in developing his theme of self-identity. Two good examples of the symbolic image cluster at work may be found in Night Rider[58] and Band of Angels,[59]

[58]Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider(New York, 1939), p. 448.

[59]Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels(New York, 1955), p.315.

where a bird is used as an image to symbolize self-identity. As was mentioned, Warren's last two novels rely very heavily upon the image cluster for thematic reinforcement.

The third method of employing light and dark imagery is the isolated image. Warren inserts images of light and dark throughout his fiction for the purpose of a tonal quality that will enhance and reinforce his major self-identity theme. These isolated images act as a bridge between the various image patterns and image clusters in the novels. Through the use of this technique, Warren keeps the tone of his work consistent, and thereby sustains his desired effect throughout the piece of work. All of Warren's early novels contain these isolated images for tonal quality, but Warren employs more tonal images in World Enough and Time than in any of his other novels.

There are many light and dark images in Warren's novels which are employed so often that they become symbols. Some of the more common images associated with his dark imagery are the cave, the flood, the dark hall, and wilderness. Warren's use, also, of a light and a dove as light images attribute to their symbolic effect in his novels. By means of juxtaposing these specific light and dark images with particular elements such as the cave, Warren successfully establishes a symbolic rapport in his novels.

This light and dark imagery of Warren's would be inef-

fective as a literary device if a proper theme were not developed along side of it; without a suitable theme, the images of light and dark would be mere images, and would not take on a symbolic nature, consequently, losing all effectiveness as a thematic image. The theme of the quest for self-identity is an excellent choice, simply because of the connotative power of the dark and its relevance to knowing the self.

In all of the eight Warren novels, the major characters seek self-identity. Some, like Adam Rosenzweig in Wilderness and Amantha Starr in Band of Angels, seek their identity from the very beginning of the novel, while others such as Sue Murdock in At Heaven's Gate and Perse Munn in Night Rider, need time to realize such knowledge is a necessity of life. Even though some of Warren's characters are a little slower in attaining this awareness of a need for self-knowledge, all do, eventually, become aware of this need, but Warren does not allow these characters to live long enough for them to find their identity. All of the major characters, with the exception of Brad Tolliver in The Flood, die after coming to a realization that identity of the self is the only means by which one may truly live one's life.

The major characters in Warren's novels seek their identities in a number of ways. Some seek identity through action, because they feel that a man is measured by his deeds,

and will, therefore, find himself only by that means. Willie Stark of All the King's Men is a fine example of this type of self-identity seeker. Another means by which Warren's characters seek self-knowledge is through ideas, the way Jack Burden of All the King's Men attempted to find himself. The third means is through others; Sue Murdock, Amantha Starr, and Willie Stark felt that only an association with humanity could bring identity for the self. No matter what technique is used for developing this theme, Warren seems to have succeeded in masterfully portraying different individuals attempting to attain their identities through varied means.

Robert Penn Warren successfully incorporated his light and dark images into his writing and, with great precision, blended in the theme of self-identity. Scholars, clergymen, and men from all walks of life have attempted to expound upon man and his desire to know himself in a world in which self-knowledge is a must. Socrates, Pope, and Faulkner have put forth their wit and eloquence to explain this "gray area" that concerns the self, while writers like Melville, Hawthorne, and Milton have attempted to relay the powerful force of light and dark in our world. While the attempts of these well-known men along these lines cannot be negated, an unknown poet by the name of Carmen Bernos de Gasztold has, in a seemingly incidental poem about the common mole, touched at the very heart of what Robert Penn Warren and others have

been trying to say for years. The poem, like the Warren novels, deals with the quest for self-identity, and this theme is also developed by means of light and dark imagery.

A MOLE'S PRAYER

I dig and dig.
Looking
for life itself.

You have chosen darkness
for me, Lord,
and my tunnel
lengthens
in cavernous night.

A hidden life,
Lord,
but not a poor one-
my velvet coat shows that.

In shadowy gloom
one can walk without presumption
and be perfectly safe-
but the sun
can turn one's head.

Lord, keep me from
the vanities of the world,
and guide the strivings
of my little paws
so that they reach
some secret Paradise.

Robert Penn Warren, in his novels, has shown that man is no different from the inconsequential mole in the earth who is also looking for life, itself. We, as human beings, walk in a never-ending darkness, just as the tiny mole crawls and tunnels his way through life. Man, too, must tunnel his way through life, reaching for that light ahead, which is self-identity and that "secret Paradise."

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